

The Language Learning Hub: Reframing Fandoms as Communities of Practice
for Language Acquisition in Bangladesh

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A thesis submitted to the Department of English and Humanities in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in English

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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

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2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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Approval

The thesis/project titled “The Language Learning Hub: Reframing Fandoms as Communities of Practice for Language Acquisition in Bangladesh” submitted by Seetun Mahyan (ID 21103003) of summer semester 2025 has been accepted as satisfactory in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in English on 28th October 2025.

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Ethical Statement

All used sources in this study will be paraphrased and quoted with proper citation. Otherwise, I will only include words that are my own; no ideas or information will be included from different sources without due reference. Information used and cited for this research will also be solely acquired from credible primary and secondary sources. I fully acknowledge that noncompliance with the statements above may lead to disciplinary actions against me and I fully intend to accept said actions without refutation. I also understand that unethical conduct on academic grounds can lead to my expulsion or suspension from BRAC University.

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Abstract

This research explores how global fandoms can be proven to be “communities of practice” especially in terms of the collective pursuit of language learning (Wenger, 1998, p.3). It reframes the idea of a fandom using Etienne Wenger and Jean Lave’s concept of communities of practice and highlights the participatory, collaborative and productive nature of fandoms as active language learning communities. Moreover, this effort reveals how practices within fandom communities impact Bangladeshi language learners. The study applies a qualitative phenomenological approach to interview individuals who have attained expertise in specific languages through interactions within fandoms to determine the nature of their involvement with other fans and the resources they encounter that have impacted their language learning. Through the interviewees’ self-reported experiences this study reveals how various interpersonal and parasocial engagements within fandoms bolster language exposure, provide affective reinforcement, increase accessibility to unique user-generated language resources and broaden the scope of regular language practice through the development of specific linguistic codes and ensuring accountability and growth with continuous feedback. Eventually, this research portrays how the communities of practice constructed by global fandom culture supports language absorption in learners in informal settings through unconventional methods within the Bangladeshi context.

Keywords: Communities of Practice, Fandom Practices, Language Learning, Participatory Culture, Collaborative Learning

Dedication

For my parents, without whom all of this would have been meaningless.

Acknowledgement

I am eternally grateful to Allah (SWT) for granting me the opportunity to wield my voice and apply my abilities in this endeavour. I would like to earnestly thank my family and friends for their astounding support and affection throughout my research efforts. I also want to convey my gratitude to my brilliant supervisor, Dr. Md. Al Amin, for his unwavering patience, guidance and faith in my capabilities.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1. Context

The chief objective of this research is to look into language learning in a dynamic communal space such as a fandom as language learning and linguistic skill enhancement are concepts that are critically attached to the idea of community. This is due to the fact that linguistic development above all enables communication among different parties. Such an idea is undeniably relevant to the transfer of information and content that occurs within fandoms. Fans of particular kinds of media or cultural commodities engage in ways that significantly impact language use. They are able to encounter languages that are generally absent in their immediate physical environments by communicating with fans in close proximity and also with the ones existing worldwide on virtual platforms. Examining such a phenomenon is critically important because it unravels unique and unprecedented possibilities for language learners, compelling one to consider new and more effective language absorption methods that greatly deviate from the ones followed within traditional classrooms.

A lot of language learning within fandoms transpires inductively as fans' casual and spontaneous correspondence with others naturally bolsters language learning efficiency. However, through multiple activities that are simultaneously conducted within fandoms, fans also consciously share meta-linguistic information in an effort to willingly learn the dominant language that is relevant to the media or culture they passionately enjoy. Dubbing shows, translating content, sharing notes on mistranslations, creating memes and spreading inside jokes that require understanding of sociolinguistic forces are all common activities that fans partake in on a daily basis as a part of their respective fandoms. These community-based

goings-on support the exchange of linguistic input.

Therefore, it is justified to say that fandoms as communities can encourage collaboration, engagement and communication for the specific goal of learning particular languages. Such a framework, henceforth, immediately validates the relation of fandoms to the concept of ‘communities of practice’, first introduced by Etienne Wenger and Jean Lave (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). Recently this framework has been defined as “a flexible group of professionals, informally bound by common interests, who interact through interdependent tasks guided by a common purpose thereby embodying a store of common knowledge” (Jubert, 1999, p. 166, as cited in Davenport & Hall, 2002, p. 171). Reframing fandoms with the use of this theory enables one to closely consider the communal activities that transpire within fandoms and how these activities support language acquisition. This concern is of particular importance within the Bangladeshi context due to the changing attitudes, motivations and needs of the language learners of the country. These changes reflect learners’ increasing engagement with newly available media and their preference for new learning methods that are relevant to the media they are fans of.

1.2. Fandoms and Language Acquisition

Fandom, which is seen as “a sociocultural phenomenon” inherent to the modern capitalist landscape, engages with “electronic media, mass culture and public performance” (Duffett, 2013, p. 28). Digital media, including interactive games, blogs, chat rooms, fan pages, fan fiction, fan-edited videos and so on, are mainstays of the experiences within a fandom (p. 41). Members of a particular fandom, as they engage within digital spaces, are inclined towards new dialects, sociolects and languages. Interest in a product of media naturally encourages interest in new cultures. Fandom culture cultivates motivation to acquire expertise in foreign

languages and it also helps create the environment required to do so (Rodríguez & Torres, 2020, p. 86-88). Within a shared community consisting of like-minded people, there is constant exposure to authentic input of foreign target languages.

Membership within a fandom allows one to build a community of individuals with shared passions and opens up opportunities for mutual engagement. Fans connect emotionally over different elements of fandom culture; engaging within a fandom is not an isolated experience and fans invariably engage in communal activities. Fans become key players in groups, they partake in networking and sharing experiences (Duffett, 2013). Hence, individuals are motivated to learn a new language to become involved in discussions and activities surrounding their favorite media products (Rodríguez & Torres, 2020). Fans are also able to persist in their language learning endeavours due to the presence of constant online communities.

1.3. Communities of Practice

Wenger (1998, p. 3) challenges institutions that continually function on the basis of the tired and uninspired notion that learning is an individual, insular process that occurs at the behest of a teacher. He restructures the definition of learning, framing it as being a social process and the result of individuals' lived experiences. His ideas culminate into the concept of "communities of practice". Liedka (1999) defines this notion as a community united in collaborative action that prioritises the process over the end-product and evolves through time. Wenger (1998, p. 85) cements how communities of practice are a "force to be reckoned with" as they accelerate engagement, interpersonal connections, proliferation of knowledge, negotiation of ideas and much more.

The idea of communities of practice is widely established within the field of sociolinguistics. Meyerhoff & Strycharz (2013, p. 526-527) express how the boundaries of a community of practice are more restricted and specific than a normal “speech community”. The members of a community of practice are bound by mutual engagement towards a common pursuit. It is defined by a unique set of activities and the members’ different personal experiences. These specific social practices can then lead to the examination of various linguistic variables. Communities of practice can be crucial in terms of analysis of linguistic behavior and variation.

1.4. Fandoms as Communities of Practice

Fandoms, with their specific set of activities and scope for very unique personal experiences for the members or ‘fans’, can be argued to be active communities of practice themselves. According to Meyerhoff & Strycharz (2013, p. 528), communities of practice in totality hinge upon “processes of social learning” involving participants constructing their “self-image”. Fandoms, similarly, involve rethinking and reformulating ideas through different perspectives in a social sphere. Activities within fandoms involve ‘imagined memories’. Through these simulations, fans are able to engage with synthesized narratives about different cultures. While boasting membership within a fandom can be considered a hobby, it often overwhelms and transcends this definition to become an extension of a fan’s entire identity. Fans enthusiastically integrate media representations into their own social perspectives and experiences (Duffett, 2013).

1.5. Fandoms in Bangladesh

Bangladesh is no stranger to fandoms emerging and expanding leading to the creation of opportunities to learn languages. These fandoms function as full-fledged communities of

practice with fervent fans partaking and collaborating in various projects. Arif (2022) characterises fanaticism in Bangladesh by referring to its participatory culture. She insists on the impact of user-generated content such as blogs, forums, memes and so on, portraying how they enrich the fandom greatly. The fandom's significance as a community is highlighted as the interactions and support observed transcend "physical or spatial boundaries" (p. 104).

Akter (2020) portrays an increasing number of Bangladeshis fully committed to acquiring the Korean language after exposure to Korean media and engaging with other fans. Additionally, Islam (2024) outlines how despite the cultural differences, Bangladeshis are invested in language learning and are motivated by their desire to garner knowledge about foreign cultures. The fans often interact on various platforms partaking in activities such as quoting their favorite Korean dramas, Japanese anime etc., bridging cultural gaps and sharing knowledge that promotes language learning and practice.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

In this chapter, existing scholarly research on the theoretical framework of ‘communities of practice’ is discussed in tandem with literature on global fandom culture and language learning patterns. Specific sources featuring data highlighting Bangladesh specifically have been used to further contextualise the research purposes of this study. This section begins with elaboration on what constitutes a community of practice and how fandoms coincide with the criteria.

2.1. Wenger’s Criteria

Broadly, 3 main requirements need to be fulfilled for the social collective to be considered a community of practice, they are mutual engagement, involvement with a jointly negotiated enterprise and having a shared repertoire. Meyerhoff & Strycharz (2013, p. 527-528) stress on Wenger’s (1998) iteration about how communities of practice consist of both friendly and conflictual interaction as both kinds meet the requirement of “mutual engagement”. Shafirova (2020) conveys how a fandom, despite having members sharing a deep passion for the same entity, also consists of members constantly engaging both genially and inimically leading to both friendly and unfriendly interactions. The constant discourse and exchange makes these communities effective spaces for language learning and enhancement. Arif (2022) asserts how both positive and negative interactions engage fans in the fandom’s participatory culture. Similarly, Wenger (1998) asserted how the mutual engagement in communities of practice primarily entails “complementary contributions” in a number of complex permutations that allow relationships and networks to form (p. 76).

Members of a community of practice are entwined due to their joint loyalty and pursuit of a

very specific common purpose that they are all cognizant of (Meyerhoff & Strycharz, 2013). Individuals belonging to a fandom, similarly, are not merely “alienated recipients”. Fans are active “networkers, collectors, tourists, archivists, curators, producers and more”. They are connected due to very particular shared motivations and therefore, are able to hold each other accountable. Communities of practice have members involved in various activities of “submission and assertion” depending on the requirements of the community and this is observed in fandoms as well. Every member does not agree on the same aspects but they communally negotiate to reach a point of understanding (Duffett, 2013, p. 55; Wenger, 1998, p. 78). Even disagreements are seen as stimulants and as a way of directing social initiatives within the communities.

Communities of practice lead to the active generation of resources and histories that are accessible to and developed by all of its members (Meyerhoff & Strycharz, 2013). These entities enable the accumulation of “social and collective knowledge” and the development of different concepts, experiences, templates and frameworks for the members to benefit from (Davenport & Hall, 2002, p. 172). These resources materialise due to the members’ “internal negotiations”. It can be seen how consumption of media is not the only facet of becoming integrated within a fandom (Duffett, 2013, p. 52). Activities within a fandom involve active production of content that is shared and propagated throughout different social spaces. The shared resources are often very heterogeneous in nature, including routines, stories, gestures, symbols, ideas and so on. These resources are in continuous use within the communities and perpetually create new meanings (Wenger, 1998, p. 82-83).

2.2. Beyond Institutional Learning

Wenger (1998, p. 7-10) proposes the idea of a community of practice claiming that an

individual's purpose while learning is to contribute to different communities and the community's purpose when learning is to enhance practices and involve increasingly more members to perpetuate and develop said practices. Wenger suggests that traditional classroom settings and "institutionalized processes" fail to consistently bring productive results. Instead, inventive methods of engaging learners as active members of a community tend to be the most effective. This notion intuitively aligns with language learning processes as well. Additionally, Lave (1991) also makes an argument promoting methods of learning that transcend mere direct teaching targeting individual learners and stresses on the importance of "practice" of activities within communities.

Fans actively participating in fandom culture are in constant interaction with the language of the media they enjoy. Learning within communities that have no academic associations and flourish informally is often even unintentional. In Wenger's own words, the idea of practice that cultivates learning is both "explicit and tacit" (p. 47). Language acquisition is integrated into natural fans' quotidian lives and routines; they do not feel the common burden of needing to excel academically in these informal spaces and can continue without trepidation (Calderón Rodríguez, 2024, p. 17). Here language practice is undeterred by the need to impress academic authority or superiors in institutions and classrooms. As communities of practice are not strictly deadline or goal driven, seamless and unrestrained "synergy" and "sharing" is able to exist (Davenport & Hall, 2002, p. 182).

Furthermore, Lave (1991) highlighted how working and educational spaces in the commodified and capitalistic landscape tend to be alienating and prevent learners from becoming "masters of their own productive activities". Standardized exams and curricula, formal grading systems, authoritative control in classrooms and so on often result in student

classifications and insecurity ultimately stifling the meaningfulness and engagement needed for learning (p. 76-78).

2.3. Affective Support and Identity Strengthening

In the current capitalistic climate, it is perceived widely that knowledge acquisition is made possible through isolated, individual cognition. Lave (1991, p. 55) claims, however, that a sustained community of practice provides the support and motivation needed for learning to be successful. Activity within the communities help develop personal identity and knowledgeability. Exposure to different practices perpetuated by the community helps inculcate meaning within the entire learning process. The value of skill is heightened further by the construction of individual identity (p. 74-76). Development of identity according to Wenger (1998) is crucial to communities of practice as it leads to members reflecting and learning from the complex relations in their collective. This kind of affective support is essential to promoting language acquisition. According to Krashen (1985, as cited in Arnold, 2011), minimising negative affect and maximizing positive affect is required for successful language learning.

Through digital media and fan participation in online communities, the common anxieties associated with in-person interactions are eliminated. Fans interact in spaces such as Facebook groups and engage in “silent learning” (Calderón Rodríguez, 2024, p. 11-13). Fandoms provide safe spaces for language learning in which individuals do not dread discrimination, harm or intimidation and are able to freely express themselves. This sense of comfort improves their levels of linguistic confidence and reduces insecurities. Moreover, virtual spaces also allow anonymity if someone is uncomfortable with practicing language overtly (p. 26-27). As a result, cognition is enhanced and development of the whole self is

made possible within the language learning process (Arnold, 2011). Fans also become involved in parasocial or imagined relationships with media personalities and characters. The “quasi-friends” they make also become a source of comfort and companionship (Koenig & Lessan, 1985, as cited in Perse & Rubin, 1989, p. 61).

Therefore, it is the emotional draw that fans feel that make them take on multiple initiatives within a fandom. Many choose to learn a foreign language to enjoy content independent of translators and subtitles. The impatience felt by these individuals coaxes them to pick up new languages. Moreover, wanting to enjoy the content in its “original form” also encourages language acquisition. Fans also associate feelings of happiness and support within a fandom. The content they enjoy and interact with alleviates stress (Rodríguez & Torres, 2020, p. 91-93). Individuals “feel closer” to a celebrity or certain characters by learning their language (Calderón Rodríguez, 2024, p. 8). Shafirova (2020, p. 23-24) asserts how a “sense of belonging” is constructed and individuals establish secure entrance into a community by making use of languages as instruments.

2.4. Online Communities and Resource Sharing

Virtual communities of practice that have formed with the advent of technology unite people from across different time-zones and areas. Such communities develop in ways that contrast traditional place-bound ones. The members, therefore, despite collaborating in collective online spaces, maintain more individual control and agency. These communities have specific goals and collaborative platforms through which they share ideas and communicate. Moreover, expectations from traditional group interactions do not apply as directly to these communities such as backchanneling, gestures, candor and more (Palloff & Pratt, 1999). This lends the communities more flexibility and accessibility. Digital spaces occupied by fans

become rich networks of knowledge and information. These spaces bolster learning as a continuous process (Siemens, 2005).

Individuals belonging to fandoms are often referred to as “prosumers” as they concurrently consume media and produce content of their own to celebrate, discuss and proliferate the original content they enjoy. They write and share fanfiction, translate content and provide subtitles for other fans, curate and maintain fanpages, draw fanart, construct original websites and so on. Furthermore, there are multiple avenues through which they encounter foreign texts such as memes, inside jokes, official posts and more (Shafirova, 2020). These frequent interactions with content and content creators leads to the construction of strong and active online collaborative communities. In these social spaces, “mutual intent to help” and the sharing of known information promotes growth and performance (von Krogh, 1998, p. 141, as cited in Davenport and Hall, 2002, p. 192). Individuals’ being motivated to produce more output eventually allows them to identify gaps in their own knowledge and become more linguistically proficient (Swain, 1995, as cited in Peker & Arslan, 2020, p. 104).

2.5. Feedback and Accountability in Fandoms

Black (2005) stresses on the particular benefits of fanfiction and how it encourages rigorous collaboration, constructive feedback and motivation for learners of language that are foraying into creative writing. Fans often edit each other’s works, leave encouraging comments, suggest changes and supply required criticism. This cultivates an environment of active growth and creativity among language learners. Moreover, fans that provide subtitles for foreign media have also been seen organizing themselves and assigning each other roles such as editor, translator and so on depending on their expertise. They also assign authoritative roles to certain individuals to assist and lead the others to ensure accountability and order

(Zhang & Cassany, 2016).

Fan translators interact and observe other fans' demands and reactions as they proceed, many provide notes along with the subtitles consisting of ideas about different figurative language, social cues and references (Vazquez-Calvo et al, 2019). Fernando (2022, p. 195) conveys the way Sri Lankan fans of Korean dramas provide "fansubbed" versions of popular dramas for free on local websites when content revealed by professional translators on TV networks do not suffice. Mustafiz (2024) found that many Bangladeshi Turkish language enthusiasts that started out just liking Turkish dramas correspond with other fans to determine who remembers the most words from the shows they watched, creating scope for feedback and mutual exchange of knowledge.

2.6. Global Fandom Communities of Practice in Bangladesh

The endeavour to digitize Bangladesh along with several other Asian countries made new cultures accessible to consumers. Individuals actively create connections and reshape their identities as a result of the media they consume (Roy & Das, 2022). Roy (2022) presents how fan groups persist for entire lifetimes for some individuals, providing critical reviews and notes on fandom content, sharing and analysing lyrics of songs by their favorite foreign artists and so on. Moreover, Akter (2020) reveals how interest for very specific linguistic aspects attract attention with the example of how fans of Korean media have taken a particular interest in 'hangul', the Korean writing system.

Arif (2022, p. 105) refers to Benedict Anderson's concept of imagined communities to elucidate the "camaraderie and kinship" in global fandoms and their impact in Bangladesh. Particularly in the transnational digital spaces, despite never encountering all of the fans in

person, each fan individually is able to feel a sense of bonding and community. When it comes to learning the Turkish language, Bangladeshi youth have taken to Turkish dramas and use the language they hear in their social encounters and among fans naturally enhancing language acquisition. Not only that, fans also acquire paralinguistic attributes as well such as body language, expressions, gestures and more (Mustafiz, 2024).

2.7. Research Gaps

A crucial gap that exists in the existing literature on language learning in fandoms surrounds actual interactions and communal activities. There is significant research on how fans absorb languages inductively and deductively through individual consumption of media. The research revolves primarily around language learning through independent watching, reading and listening. However, elaboration on the impact of the activities that transpire within fandoms beyond mere consumption that support language learning—proactive information sharing through diverse tools, the forging of various kinds of relationships, communal creative initiatives, resolution of conflicts and friction through feedback and so on—remain absent in the studies.

Furthermore, fans’ language learning pursuits within engaging, collaborative communities and how these pursuits can be fundamentally linked to the concept of “communities of practice” have yet to be explored (Wenger, 1998). Wenger’s framework has not been utilized to examine how interactive social engagement within fandoms can support the development of learners’ identities and accelerate language absorption. Also, credible insights on the activities occurring within transnational fandom communities and what they signify particularly within the Bangladeshi context have also not been supplied. Therefore, this study endeavours to address these gaps by portraying how Bangladeshis exist in global fandoms

that function as “communities of practice” and participate in interactive, synergic and affective ventures to attain proficiency in various languages.

Chapter 3

Methodology

This chapter includes crucial ideas related to the development, progress and conduction of this research. The section includes information outlining research focus, methods, design, procedure, instruments and so on. Information concerning the participant access, data acquisition and data analysis methods have also been discussed here at length.

3.1. Research Objectives

1. To examine how existence within a fandom aligns with the idea of membership within a community of practice for language learning.
2. To identify the specific collaborative practices that impact language acquisition.
3. To investigate the language learning tools applied within the fandom.
4. To characterise the nature of the interactions occurring among fans and how they impact language learning.
5. To explore how active participation within the fandom as a community of practice has impacted language learning in Bangladesh.

3.2. Research Questions

This research was conceptualised with one main research question and four sub-questions for further in-depth study. The main research question justifying this study is “how can membership within a particular fandom be reframed as membership within a community of practice specifically for language acquisition?”. The four sub-questions that explore more specific aspects within the main research question are:

SQ1: What are the specific practices within global fandoms that impact language acquisition?

SQ2: What language learning tools have fans discovered and used as a part of the fandom?

SQ3: What are interactions among fans like and how do they impact language learning?

SQ4: How do active participation and interactions within fandoms impact language learning perspectives and approaches in learners of Bangladesh specifically?

3.3. Research Design

For this study, a qualitative research method was chosen to thoroughly explore and interpret the various practices within fandoms that support the learning and absorption of various languages. This method enabled in-depth consideration of the various nuanced, collaborative activities that occur within a fandom and a close analysis of how they align with the tenets of the quintessential community of practice. Various open-ended research concerns could be answered as a result. Furthermore, a phenomenological approach was adopted to delve into the lived experiences of fans belonging to a range of different fandoms. Fans’ subjective perspectives and the “meanings” they assign to their experiences revealed the crucial information that was required to bolster this study (Tuffour, 2017, p. 2).

The phenomenological approach allowed for a more comprehensive and varied look into the

perspectives of various fans from multiple fandoms. To reliably construe the nuanced impact that fandom membership and activity has on language acquisition, a number of fans' multifarious observations about themselves and their own fandom environment was necessary. The effectiveness and novelty of the language learning methods adopted consciously and subconsciously within fandoms could only be interpreted and evaluated through the close examination of fans' own experiences and opinions. Their subjective analysis of the linguistic changes that they noticed and continue to identify within themselves and others during the time of their involvement within fandoms is what fundamentally supports this research endeavour, making the phenomenological approach the most suitable to this study.

3.4. Data Collection

The instrument deemed appropriate for the collection of data for this research was the conduction of semi-structured interviews. In-depth interviews were conducted both on online platforms such as Zoom and Google Meet and offline, proceeding as one-on-one conversational interviews. Participants that were uncomfortable with in-person interviews or found them inconvenient were specifically approached online. Pre-set interview questions such as “how have your activities within the fandom changed your perception of the language of the media/practice?”, “are there language learning tools and resources that you have discovered as a result of being a part of the fandom and are these normally accessible outside of the fandom?”, “do you think that you’ve built language proficiency due to bonds made with other fans, as a result of interactions involving code switching for instance?” and so on were prepared ahead of the interviews but follow-up questions were asked according to the participants' responses. See appendix for the entire list of interview questions and sample interview transcript.

A pilot study was conducted through a preliminary interview before the structure and questions of the interviews were finalised to make adjustments and to gauge how the interviews may proceed in the future and what potential responses may be encountered. Following the interviews, data was also collected over phone calls, text messages and e-mails. In some cases, participants themselves willingly offered evidence and additional information they had not brought up in the interviews and in others they were approached to elaborate on certain aspects discovered in the interviews that needed more clarification and consideration. The main interviews' audio was recorded to be revisited and analysed afterwards.

3.5. Participants

The setting of this study was Bangladesh. All of the participants approached were Bangladeshi and native speakers of the Bangla language. The participants were contacted through personal acquaintances and also through multiple posts made on various Facebook groups requesting individuals belonging to one or more fandom(s) that have experience with both inductive and deductive language learning and claim to have attained some level of expertise in their target language to get in touch to share their insights. The participants that were willing to sit for interviews were given consent forms and an overall idea of the interview format and procedure was conveyed to them orally prior to the main interviews.

A total of 13 participants were selected and interviewed. They belonged to different age groups, economic backgrounds and had varying levels of academic credentials. Participants were approached through purposive sampling and convenience. The only requirement for appropriateness for the interview was being an active member of at least one fandom and having experience with language learning and attaining confidence in terms of language usage through their membership within said fandom(s). Purposive sampling ensured the selection of respondents that were more likely to supply “appropriate and useful information” that was relevant to the focus of the study (Kelly, 2010, p. 317, as cited in Campbell et al., 2020, pp. 653-654).

Participants	Gender	Highest Level of Academic Achievement	Language(s) Learned through input from Fandom	Years of Language Exposure within Fandom
Participant 1	Female	Bachelor’s Degree	Korean	14
Participant 2	Female	A Levels	Japanese and Korean	Japanese: 5 Korean: 1
Participant 3	Female	HSC (Higher Secondary Certificate)	Urdu and Turkish	Urdu: 11 Turkish: 10
Participant 4	Female	HSC (Higher Secondary Certificate)	Urdu and Turkish	Urdu: 10 Turkish: 5
Participant 5	Male	A Levels	Japanese	10
Participant 6	Female	O Levels	Korean	9
Participant 7	Female	HSC (Higher Secondary Certificate)	Korean	7
Participant 8	Female	SSC (Secondary School)	Korean	10

		Certificate)		
Participant 9	Male	A Levels	Japanese and Korean	Japanese: 10 Korean: 10
Participant 10	Female	Bachelor's Degree	English Japanese	Japanese: 11 English: 11
Participant 11	Female	O Levels	Korean	2
Participant 12	Male	O Levels	English and Japanese	English: 15 Japanese: 15
Participant 13	Female	Master's Degree	Hindi	17

Table 1 Participant Information

3.6. Data Analysis

To appropriately analyse the collected data, the conducted in-depth interviews were each transcribed for thematic analysis. Member checking was conducted to ensure the appropriateness and accuracy of each of the transcriptions. The transcriptions from the participants provided the data that was coded to determine key pieces of information. For instance, “encouragement from other fans”, “lack of motivational barrier”, “inside jokes within the fandom”, “free access to content and feedback”, “different approaches to learning different aspects of language” are all examples of codes identified from the sample transcript provided under appendix C. Separate codes found from the different interview transcripts were compared side by side to pinpoint specific recurring ideas concerning language use and acquisition within fandoms.

The codes that appeared multiple times and were cohesive were then identified. These ideas were then refined to form thematic categories under which more specific, related patterns could be discussed. The thematic analysis enables a ‘bottom-up’ approach so that ideas can organically and inductively unfold from the available data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). For example, recurring and related codes such as “support”, “encouragement” and “motivation” were all categorized under the theme “affective support and validation” and ideas pertaining to “conflict”, “fandom toxicity” and “mutual assistance” and “feedback” were all organized to be discussed under the theme “conflict, accountability and feedback”.

3.7. Ethical Considerations

The participants were verbally informed about the study and also received consent forms with relevant written information. Their participation was entirely voluntary and their identities have been protected throughout this research paper. Moreover, participants had full freedom to withdraw from the study whenever they wished to. The data they provided was kept fully confidential with only the researcher being able to access the recordings. Consent was also acquired to maintain the participants' confidential recordings for the entirety of the research period after which the material will be deleted forever. The transcripts of their interviews will remain with the researcher for a period of 2 years. See appendix for the complete consent form.

Chapter 4

Findings and Discussion

This section delves into the findings from the individual interviews of the participants of the study by grouping similar, coinciding ideas. For elucidation of the ideas found and to discuss them at length, recurring concepts and insights have been categorised into 6 primary themes that explore the activities within fandoms that mirror quintessential communities of practice and how they aid language learning. Additionally, this chapter examines the nature of fan interactions, their consequences and what they suggest in terms of language learning prospects in Bangladesh.

4.1. Fandom Activities and Code Development

Participants reveal a wide range of activities that transpire regularly within fandoms. Their responses reveal how activities and interactions change depending on the different fandoms and the various social media platforms that the fans actively use. Alongside these changes, the different fandom communities tend to develop codes or language varieties specifically used and understood by members of the fandoms. These codes are characterised by distinct morphological, phonological and lexical variations that the fans naturally internalise. Metaphorical code switching often occurs in fan interactions to convey different nuanced meanings (Nilep, 2006, p. 7-8). The information that is shared through these codes can be considered to be a part of the 'shared repertoire' that exists in the language learning community of practice. Also, the codes also promote 'mutual engagement' among fans towards common goals by enabling comprehension of subtle yet significant sociolinguistic messages (Wenger, 1998).

Participant 1 attests to feeling connected to others within her fandom due to the inside jokes and memes they share. While learning Korean, she has also developed an understanding of memes and inside jokes that are prevalent among Korean speakers of the fandom. The participant elaborates, “we often discuss fan theories in English but as we do so we naturally use Korean words when needed, we know that the others will understand what we mean without further explanation.” Similarly, participant 6 recalls actively participating in a group chat of over 100 people to discuss lyrics, fan lore, jokes and so on. These codes helped them develop a unique understanding of the Korean language and how meanings differ in varying contexts.

“The members (of NCT Wish) have to promote in both Korea and Japan so they all speak fluent Korean and Japanese. Due to this, fans have also started using these languages naturally like (the members),” participant 2 says as she claims to be an avid fan of the K-pop boy group NCT Wish and speaks about how as a result of following the activities of the boy group, the fans have developed a very specific code of their own. The fans communicate using very specific vocabulary and stylistic features resembling the speaking habits of the members of NCT Wish. Hence, it can be said that consciously and subconsciously mirroring the members’ “idiolects” allows the fans to further enhance their own individual linguistic characteristics (Hirniak et al., 2022, p. 94).

An online content-creator, participant 3, speaks about making memes and edits surrounding popular Turkish and Pakistani dramas. She mentioned how she was introduced to Urdu poetry through these shows and makes use of them in her captions. The language she uses with fellow fans of Pakistani dramas also happens to be replete with “poetic” words and quotes from the likes of Mirza Ghalib. “I used to make use of Google Translate to understand

a lot of the words back in the day and now I can use them with friends online and in person,” she says relaying how her understanding of the languages has deepened. Encountering ideas in media and discussing them with other fans clearly deepens understanding of the culture, history and literature associated with the language.

Participant 4 refers to how she often speaks to her cousins and friends who are also fans of the same shows as her using Turkish words as a conscious exclusionary effort so that others in close proximity are unable to understand them. Codes used by fans, therefore, lend them a sense of exclusivity and affinity that set them apart from others. “I learned a lot of Korean and Japanese keywords from being on different Discord servers, (...) my accent has been impacted by talking to gamers from different places”, participant 9 reports, portraying how fans pick up esoteric terms and how paralinguistic features are impacted due to hobbies. He interacts with global fans, most of whom are Korean and Japanese, and has absorbed a lot of their vocabulary and tendencies. The “social learning” allows him to naturally acquire the language with a nuanced understanding of meanings (Meyerhoff & Strycharz, 2013, p. 528).

Likewise, participant 10 also corresponds with online friends from across the world who share her love for video games. She claims that she discovered role-playing, fanfiction and fanart at a young age and also started drawing and selling commissioned art herself. With experience as a fanfiction writer and artist on platforms such as Quotev, Discord and Instagram, she claims to have seen a clear shift in the way she communicates both verbally and through text. A lot of the words that she has learned through the fandom, she claims, can exclusively be understood by other JRPG (Japanese Role-Playing Game) enthusiasts. Participant 13 creates memes and news posts for Facebook related to Hindi movies and series. She conveys how she texts other Hindi speaking fans and also Bengali fans of Hindi

content in a manner that is unique to their circle. When asked about how code switching occurs in her community, she says,

When I speak to (other fans) I sometimes switch to Hindi. The native Hindi speakers often tell me that I sound like I could be one of their school friends although the way we speak (...) can be considered a little filmy.

The participants' naturally partake in translanguaging, making use of all of the knowledge in their language repertoire and exploring different facets of their identities as they do so (Hirniak et al., 2022, p. 95).

Overall, the establishment of codes within fandoms can be understood to be crucial to the communal activities that fans partake in. They exchange nuanced ideas and meanings with each other. The fans' use of language is directly impacted by the mass media and cultures they follow but they also creatively modify the language to make it their own. As a result of their fandom membership, individuals also explore related cultural entities such as poetry and music that they also integrate into their communication. As communities of practice, fandoms nurture exchange of knowledge and linguistic input forming a shared repository of ideas. Moreover, fans also make use of unique codes to access exclusive identities and status and to adapt socially, creating even more opportunities and motivation for language absorption.

4.2. Affective Support and Validation

Across all interviews, to varying degrees, fandoms are accredited as the participants' source of confidence and social acceptance. Participant 2 conveys how she learns Japanese from dramas from the 1990s and early 2000s and reports how she has found a community of fans who find comfort in fantasising about an era that they did not even experience. She says,

while mentioning her experience with the fandom during the COVID-19 pandemic,

People would probably laugh if you just normally tell them that you find old school

Japanese sensibilities to be appealing but among us fans that is what got us

together. I think we beat the COVID depression by collectively obsessing over

Kimura Takuya.

Communities of practice are characterised by the support and encouragement members lend to each other (Lave, 1991, p. 55). Integrative motivation that is cultivated in fans as they connect deeply with foreign cultures supports efficient language learning (Gardner, 1985).

Participant 3 claims to owe an enormous amount of self-confidence to her fandom and community. As a contributor to different pages on Facebook, she often finds herself giving advice to the page administrator and conducting herself with confidence when she speaks in Urdu and Turkish. Fans like her find a great sense of pride and achievement through interactions such as these. Participant 4 also refers to how seeing other fans excel at languages and speak well inspires her to make an effort herself. Participant 5 echoes this sentiment by saying, “I find other fans learning and speaking Japanese to be quite aspirational. I would love to keep improving also.” Moreover, participant 6 conveys how she can claim to know the most number of languages within her family thanks to her activities within the k-drama fandom and as a result is able to make her parents proud.

Participant 7 elaborates on how her close friends from school were all part of the same fandom as her. They all enjoyed the same Korean shows and music and therefore pursued learning the language around the same time. Sharing conversations and information with them lent her confidence to step out of her comfort zone in social settings to practice and

refine her language skills. Participant 8 also mentions how it was easier to connect with friends at school and then university due to common interests and affinity towards the Korean language. What individuals outside of the fandom might consider to be “cringe-worthy”, the fans encourage and this undoubtedly applies to language learning and application as well. As a result a sense of belonging is inculcated within fans. Uniformly, participant 10 draws emphasis to how she felt less like an outsider with her friends online. She says,

I couldn't relate to most of my school friends, especially the way they talked and the things they talked about. (Interactions) online were different (...), I felt like I was actually enjoying myself and improving my language skills in the process.

These observations portray the interinfluence between affect and cognition (Bless & Fiedler, 2006, as cited in Arnold, 2011) and show how affective aspects impact worldviews, data processing and memory in language learners (Forgas, 2008, as cited in Arnold, 2011). Ultimately, fandoms allow individuals to locate niche communities for themselves and find acceptance. This cultivates an immense amount of confidence and sense of achievement within fans. This kind of emotional support, trust and encouragement are integral to the maintenance of mutual engagement in communities of practice. Members are able to find peers with shared goals and interests making their involvement in activities undeterred by affective restraints such as anxiety and embarrassment.

4.3. Imagined Relationships

An aspect that reappears in multiple instances of the interviews is that of loyalty towards specific personalities, characters and pairings and how fans interact surrounding these proclivities. Such tendencies among fans supplies them with compelling reasons to learn specific languages. Participant 5 communicates how a mainstay of the typical fandom

experience is that of reading and writing fanfiction about fictional characters and media personalities. He says that fans become involved in parasocial relationships with the characters and celebrities they like and they create and consume content exploring such assumed relationships. Language is transferred rampantly as fans engage in dialogue assuming different roles. The participant shares, “Celebrities and franchises encourage such behaviour themselves a lot of the time, they bait the fans and it inspires a lot of content.” This portrays how fans apply the constructs they are familiar with in their own interpersonal relationships to form parasocial relationships and generate linguistic material by imagining simulated realities for themselves to escape from their actual lived realities (Duffett, 2013; Perse & Rubin, 1989).

“Self-inserts” are very common in the fandom sphere where individuals imagine themselves in fanfiction and fanart, creating further motivation for language acquisition. The parasocial relationships give fans a common goal or purpose for immersive mutual engagement. Participant 8 reveals how “Y/N” fanfiction is popular. “Y/N” or “your name” fanfiction actively engages readers by directly involving them as protagonists of different stories alongside their beloved characters and celebrities. The participant explains, “There are different tropes such as “enemies to lovers”, “mafia romance” (...), (fans) enjoy reading about these settings and imagine themselves in the stories”. Participant 13 similarly conveys how it was more motivating for her to see celebrities as “friends” or even “romantic partners” when engaging in discourse about them than it was to see them as “idols” or “other-worldly” beings. She spoke to fans with similar views as her and claims it definitely led her to engage more closely with the Hindi language.

Furthermore, fans do not only create and share linguistic content while engaging in parasocial

relationships themselves, they also enjoy “shipping” or supporting particular relationships and pairings in media. Fans surmise about relationships between different characters and celebrities that they think to be well-suited and create content such as fanart and fanfiction of those individuals together. Participant 7 particularly explains how she used to read fanfiction involving real public figures. She would “ship” members from the k-pop groups she liked such as Seventeen and Red Velvet and read fanfiction exploring their relationships. Her love for the pairings motivated her first to read fanfiction in English but later on she would seek out works written in Korean and translate them by herself. Participant 11 conveys how “real person slash” or fanfiction involving actual people as opposed to fictional characters is immensely popular and how she herself has read Korean fanfiction on sites such as PosType. She says, “I got so obsessed with (the ship) that I would read fanfiction in Korean even when my understanding of the language was not that good. I translated different words manually to understand the stories properly.” Fans are increasingly passionate and efficient about language learning due to their attachment to various imagined pairings.

Fandoms as communities of practice thrive through the simulation of relationships and the imagination of virtual realities. Parasocial relationships and shipping compel fans to consume and produce more content, making these phenomena joint enterprises. No matter how separate their actual realities may be, fans can relate to and communicate with one another with the understanding of their shared virtual realities and imagined relationships. A shared repository of linguistic material is maintained as fans engage in these activities. Language learning is enhanced as fans enjoy a sense of belongingness in the content they encounter. Imagined relationships in content also cultivates familiarity with the foreign mass media and cultures they enjoy. Their passion for said imagined relationships motivates them to seek out new material, giving them clear shared goals that they can achieve together.

4.4. Conflict, Accountability and Feedback

Alongside the positive reinforcement that participants attest to finding in their respective fandoms, they also clearly cite instances of unfavourable interactions and conflicts. This aligns with the concept of a community of practice that functions due to both harmonious and discordant interactions among its members as affairs of both kinds can be considered to be “complementary contributions” (Wenger, 1998, p. 76). These diverse interchanges reinforce language learning efficiency and accuracy. Multiple interviewees note how the aforementioned parasocial relationships and shipping culture can cause friction within fandoms. Participant 5 relays how while following voice actors from the anime voice acting industry and VTubers (“Virtual YouTubers”), he encounters fans that cross boundaries, revealing and creating content that is questionable and offensive.

Participant 10 introduces the concept of “yume relationships” with “yume” meaning ‘dream’ in Japanese. This phenomenon involves a female fan imagining herself as an “OC” or “original character” and inserting herself into a fictitious romantic relationship with a specific male character. This sort of incessant ‘self-insert’ shipping leads to a lot of original content such as fanart and fanfiction that are rich sources of language input. However, the participant conveys, “These relationships lead to many arguments between fans over character loyalty(...). Fidelity is very important for them. They don’t want other fans to claim their characters. They get very possessive”. Moreover, participant 8 mentions complications that occur within fandoms as a result of mistranslations and misinterpretations of media. “As (a fandom) is a free space, there are fans that translate videos without checking properly and this can lead to misunderstandings,” she says.

When disputes break out within fandoms, it turns out that the fans themselves carry out negotiations and hold each other accountable. Participant 5 goes on to mention how he himself has experience reprimanding misdemeanours on online platforms. Furthermore, participant 1 conveys how she remembers messaging fans on Twitter and Instagram to correct mistranslations she encountered. Participant 3 outlines incidents she experiences as a content-creator involving other fans commenting and pointing out grammatical, spelling and vocabulary usage errors in her posts. “I have personally helped fans fix their Korean pronunciation when I interacted with them in group chats and in real-life,” participant 6 conveys. On various platforms and through numerous methods, fans actively seek out and provide feedback and advice on language use. Feedback on conduct and objectionable behaviour also supports sociolinguistic awareness. Language learning is also fundamentally supported by the connected environment consisting of a wide variety of different opinions (Siemens, 2005).

Additionally, participant 7 reveals how she downloaded a Korean mobile application to message individuals within her fandom who happened to be native speakers of Korean. She attests to how fans on the messaging app provided her with valuable feedback. She also says,

I had a very good friend from school who saw me practice writing in Korean and asked for help. She used to use Duolingo at first but it was not very helpful. I knew videos on YouTube and Instagram that I used to watch so I sent her those videos to help her. (...) A lot of people used to approach me (on my fan account) to ask about my language learning methods.

Furthermore, participant 8 unveils how fans who are native Korean speakers correct erroneous translations and provide feedback on various platforms. Participant 10 recalls

maintaining a writing blog where readers would comment on the language and content of her work. The participant also shares, “Many users use AI chatbots for help with language. Later, they share it with others in their circle.” These insights portray how with the changing technological landscape, newer tools such as AI are being applied in language learning efforts as well.

All of these instances emphasise how despite the freedom and variety existing within fandoms, fans also regulate and ‘control’ activities, providing each other with feedback, specifically as a response to the language use. Conflicts and harmony coincide within communities of practice and these complementary phenomena allow dynamism and growth to constantly exist among the members. While fans can cause problems as they cross boundaries and overestimate their comprehension abilities as translators, fans can also support each other’s learning and development through these instances. More experienced or knowledgeable fans actively share their repertoire of information with the ones that need guidance, maintaining a cycle of both oversight and improvement.

4.5. Accessibility

Interviewees’ responses for this study consistently reveal fandom membership enables fans to access content that assist with language learning, the kind of content that is otherwise difficult to locate virtually and physically due to censorship and restrictions. Participant 1 says, “I used to translate Korean news articles, memes and other social media posts for my friends when they asked,” revealing how she herself became a source of translated content for other fans. Moreover, she conveys how when she first became a fan of k-pop, starting with girl groups like Girls’ Generation, there was hardly any available content for international fans. She asserts, “Fansubbing communities like ‘soshisubs’ used to publish videos with

subtitles and notes for global fans. So many of those videos were originally not available with English subtitles (...), they were restricted in Bangladesh.”

Participant 2 also shares similar experiences outlining how she found fans single-handedly adding subtitles to old Japanese dramas for fans to enjoy. These subtitled files are circulated within the fandoms and the links and passwords required to view them are available to them exclusively as well. Additionally, fans also provide translations for old Japanese radio broadcasts conducted by the celebrities that appeared in their beloved dramas. Participant 5 credits fans strongly for their contributions in helping translate and spread videos of the Japanese voice actors he likes and the shows they appear in. According to him, those videos are what inspired his interest and eventual fluency in the Japanese language. “Voice actors, maybe because of their profession, speak very clearly and eloquently. Fansubbed videos of them talking (...) helped me realise how cool the (Japanese) language is.” Fans contributions allow audiences to enjoy content in various languages and also develop new interests.

Comparably, participant 7 speaks at length about how fanfiction allowed her to discover language that cannot be found in standard language learning platforms and materials. Traditionally published Korean texts are difficult to come by so fanfiction written and posted by fans provides glimpses into authentic written storytelling in Korean. Also, she mentions how she found different methods and materials in Korean from native speakers in the fandom. These speakers, in exchange for the knowledge they shared regarding the Korean language, would seek help from her about English. This sort of collaborative language transaction is a common phenomenon in fandoms. To elaborate participant 7 says,

Actually the people that I spoke to for help in Korean would speak to international

fans to learn English. Many times what would happen was that I would reply in

Korean and they would reply in English. In that way we could help each other. They spoke with the clear intention of seeking help themselves by providing guidance with Korean.

Participant 10 reveals how fans consume and produce “requested work” or “commissioned work”. Fans can easily convey what they want to see in their fanfiction and fanart to writers and artists in the fandom, some fans respond to these demands for free while others do it for a sum of money. This does not only become an income source for fans but also gives them access to the opportunity to enjoyably fashion content with linguistic input for themselves. Furthermore, participant 11 conveys, “I like reading works and comments on PosType to improve my Korean. They are relatively easy to follow.” Likewise, participant 12 claims to have found stories in English and Japanese that aided his language learning in the form of fanfiction on platforms such as Pixiv, Archive of Our Own and Syosetu. According to him, being a part of the anime and video game fandom has helped him sort through the barrage of content on the aforementioned sites as well. Fans constantly share recommendations of the best works they have read, making it easier for beginners in the fandom to locate appropriate content that may interest others.

Hence, fandoms greatly minimize accessibility issues and provide solutions for fans in their pursuit of authentic linguistic material in foreign languages. Fans translate content such as bodies of text and videos for global audiences. They also allow international fans to access content that is unavailable in their native regions. Rare content such as videos and radio shows that were broadcasted a long time ago are also shared by fans. Being in a fandom allows learners to access native speakers for guidance and recommendations. The kind of authentic and spontaneous responses they receive can supply crucial knowledge that is

unavailable elsewhere. Additionally, fans are able to tailor content for themselves as they have access to creators within the fandom. Writers and artists take requests and comply with other fans' needs when they write and make art. Fandoms, as a result, support rich collections of accumulated resources and tools. As communities of practice, fandoms fundamentally promote the growth of this shared repertoire for language learners.

4.6. Transcending Learning Conventions in Bangladesh

The interviews unravel wide-ranging insights on unconventional learning methods and prospects that could potentially be applied more systematically by language learners in Bangladesh. Across all responses, interviewees expressed a positive outlook towards language learning in informal and unstructured spaces. Participant 1 remarks,

I think YouTube is a great source. In school my friends and I even opened a channel (...). We got together to think of a Korean channel name. We also looked at other Korean videos for inspiration (for our videos). We naturally learned a lot because of this. A lot more than it would have been possible from textbooks.

Participant 3 expresses how she makes use of different creative AI mobile apps for her Turkish and Urdu content and learning the languages without having to shoulder the pressure and anxiety associated with a classroom setting. She also insists that her interest in reading and writing Urdu poetry was sparked by the prevalence of practices within the Pakistani drama fandom, a classroom setting would have deterred her from ever developing and enjoying such a hobby.

Participant 4 also discloses how she feels motivated by content posted on fanpages related to her favorite Urdu and Turkish dramas and how institutional learning has never inspired her in

the same way. She remarks, “I enjoy learning naturally as a fan. Even with Bangla as my mother language, I can say easily that I would find learning Bangla formally in a classroom to be very boring.” This shows how fans willingly look beyond traditional and straightforward language learning tools and methods. She further says,

Becoming a fan has made me find particular interest in Urdu and Turkish. Perhaps with a more academic approach I probably would have wanted to learn languages like French or German as these are quite popular in Bangladeshi academic circles but the drama fandoms made me want to learn languages that we normally don’t learn academically.

Overall, participants promote inductive learning within uncontrolled environments and believe it to be more effective and satisfactory. Participant 6 expresses these sentiments by recalling how making use of sites and apps solely designed for language learning was monotonous for her. Interacting with other fans and dealing with authentic input proved to be more useful. “Here it is likely that you will learn with other Bangladeshis for a set amount of time in a classroom but in a fandom you can freely talk to people from around the world,” she says to support her claims. Exposure to other language learners with diverse outlooks and experiences are portrayed to be catalysts in the language acquisition process. While diversity is often seen as a challenge for teachers in formal classrooms, learners are seen to benefit from it in language learning environments as they are naturally exposed to different kinds of stimuli (Arnold, 2011).

Moreover, participants also admit to having their language input and output being largely diversified as a result of fandom membership. Participant 7 shares how delving into

conversations on the messaging app KakaoTalk, on Twitter and Instagram—platforms where Bangladeshi fans like her naturally interact with global fans—exposed her to authentic Korean and also other global language learners. She elaborates saying that a hybrid language learning process with both informal input and formal instruction appears to be ideal for her to achieve proficiency in a language. Furthermore, she mentions how some fanfiction written by foreign fans was later published online, leading to opportunities of paid writing work for the writers. Similarly, she attests to having seen translators within the fandom also take on professional work. Participant 8 supports learning from other fans and content creators as well. She shares her ineffective experience taking an online Korean language course and believes that the classes would have been a lot more successful if interaction with different forms of media and fandoms was incorporated into the coursework. This portrays the flexibility with which learners within fandoms prefer to learn.

Participant 12 addresses cultural conditioning and motivational barriers saying that fandoms make it easier for beginners in the language to become familiar with foreign cultures. Seeing other Bangladeshis enjoy the same content made cultures appear less distant and obscure. In fact, the video games and anime he enjoys are translated into multiple languages. He says, “I plan to try and learn French by watching anime dubbed in French and following French anime fans and creators on social media,” expressing excitement about the possibilities of learning the language without having to immediately seek out content that is unfamiliar to him. Participant 10 reveals how her overall understanding of English and Japanese literature was inspired by fandom culture. She developed her writing style through feedback from other fans that she claims she never received in the language classes she attended in school. Likewise, participant 13 discovered Hindi literature and forayed into writing in Hindi due to

her love of Hindi media. She says,

I think Bangladeshis overall understand and speak Hindi well but (...) no one really thinks of learning Hindi here, they just enjoy it as simple entertainment without thinking about it more. I think I would not enjoy learning it in school but learning it with friends while enjoying different shows has really inspired me to dig deeper.

Undoubtedly, language learning endeavours within communities of practice such as fandoms presents a plethora of possibilities for learners in Bangladesh. Participants' opinions show their inclination towards informal environments for language learning. They express how being in fandoms has inspired them to creatively make use of different social media platforms and mobile applications. Fans are able to balance collaboration and independent decision making in their learning processes. They also enjoy the diversity that they find within their fandoms as they are able to connect with not just native speakers of their target languages but also other international learners. Moreover, learning in such dynamic and flexible environments enables learners to transcend spatial and temporal barriers that restrict learning in traditional classrooms. Learners are able to modify their own language materials in fandoms and choose different methods to learn different linguistic skills and aspects. Above all, it can be seen how language acquisition within a fandom presents exciting prospects. Fans are able to find professional translation work, publish their own creative work, build a dynamic network and so on.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

This concluding chapter aims to summarize the overall findings of this study. It connects the research questions it poses to the eventual findings and addresses further implications this research has concerning language learning and the conceptualisation and application of fandoms as communities of practice in language learning pursuits in Bangladesh.

5.1. Fandoms as Communities of Practice

This study reevaluates fandoms as a prime example of a community of practice by considering the main facets of such a community as proposed by Etienne Wenger and Jean Lave. Fandoms are seen as such as they are collectives of individuals with common interests that engage in several practices as a community. The research explores the inherent instances and examples of mutual engagement, joint negotiated enterprise and shared repertoire of resources in fandoms in terms of language exchange and acquisition by delving into insight from actual language learners belonging to different fandoms. One is able to see how the various sources of language input in fan curated spaces inspire language output and creativity. With the various quotidian activities in fandoms that support language learning, fans are able to identify and creatively implement various unique tools and methods. Communities of practice dismantle the idea of solitary learning and promote it as a communal activity. In such a community, both conflict and cooperation coexist to enable the formation of mutual trust and accountability.

5.2. Language Learning Practices and Tools in Fandoms

In fandoms, collective activities involving fans of foreign media are observed such as discussion surrounding said media, content creation, sharing, commenting, transaction and so on. Fans themselves take on collective efforts to make different kinds of content enjoyable and accessible for individuals speaking various languages in different regions. Fans' shared dedication to different cultures and media impels them to innovate. They provide translations for existing work and also produce creative derivations of the media they follow in the form of fiction and art. Fandom environments encourage fans to navigate creative media in unique ways through different collaborative interactions. These phenomena involve rich development and exchange of language. Different fandoms develop unique sets of vocabulary and syntax and these linguistic facets often involve a collection of languages, including the primary language that their most consumed media is propagated in. The unique forms of language allow fans to code switch and absorb language quicker.

It is within complex domains like fandoms that fans are able to access materials, data and sources for efficient language learning that is difficult to avail outside of the fandom. Fans knowingly and unknowingly create and proliferate material that may be used for language absorption and practice. Along with inductive learning, active conscious feedback is sought out and supplied with regard to language use. Along with mainstream social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook, lesser known domains such as PosType, ArchiveOfOurOwn, Pixiv and more commonly host a wide range of fan creations and allow other fans to respond to them in various foreign languages. Moreover, fans make use of unique mobile phone applications such as KakaoTalk, AI chatbots etc. Fans utilize these tools for more than their most commonly known functions as they exchange feedback with fans and find specific answers to their questions.

5.3. Nature of Fan Interactions

The different exchanges occurring among fans in fandoms cultivates a sense of belonging in them and provides positive reinforcement and affective reassurance. Often fans are able to find acceptance and respite in fandoms while engaging in parasocial relationships and partaking in shipping characters and celebrities. These activities are enjoyed collectively through various kinds of content consisting of valuable linguistic material. Existence within a fandom reduces the impact of negative affect such as fear and anxiety. Contrarily, disharmonious interactions also occur in fandoms due to contentious behaviour displayed by some fans. However, this kind of conduct elicits conversations within the fandom and the fans themselves educate and demand accountability from each other. Both harmonious and discordant interactions within fandoms allow for important linguistic information to travel and provide ample opportunity for fans to learn and practice new languages. In communities of practice both types of exchange account for meaningful experiences that promote learning.

5.4. New Prospects for Bangladesh

The outcomes of this study convey how communities of practice such as fandoms can prove to be inordinately useful for language learners in Bangladesh. Learners in fandoms accrue the ability to flexibly locate and utilise different kinds of linguistic input and materials. They are able to transcend spatial and temporal restraints by interacting with global fans whenever required in virtual spaces. As a result, learners are exposed to languages that they would have scarcely even understood or encountered otherwise. Moreover, the learning happens mostly without lack of motivation, pressure and anxiety as deterrents. The social learning that Wenger promoted in his conceptualisation of communities of practice occurs freely in fandoms. Fandoms contradict the prevalent isolated techniques of language learning in the

institutional spheres of Bangladesh by motivating learners and allowing them to enjoy the process of language learning instead of only anticipating standardised results.

The findings of this research are crucial as they highlight how language learning preferences and conditions are changing with newer technologies and motivations. It portrays how language learning methods may be adjusted to incorporate specific beneficial facets of fandoms into the course content to meet learners' needs. It can be seen that looking into the subject of this study entails the possibility of further research at a broader scale. More concentrated studies may be carried out concerning how the youth of Bangladesh in particular have attuned themselves to fandoms and learning environments within them. Moreover, an examination of how language learning has evolved with the changing nature of fandoms can also be inspired by this study as fandom communities have and continue to operate vastly on different physical and online platforms, using diverse technologies throughout the decades. This can allow researchers to look into the specific features and interfaces that support communal learning of languages and take valuable social learning domains further.

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Appendix A.

Interview Questions

1. What fandoms of foreign media or culture do you belong to?
2. How have your activities within the fandom changed your perception of the language of the media/practice?
3. Describe your language learning mindset and experience. How has belonging to the fandom aided your learning?
4. How have interactions with fellow fans affected your language learning experience?
5. What aspects or practices within the fandom have specifically contributed to your learning?
6. Are there language learning tools and resources that you have discovered as a result of being a part of the fandom? Are these normally accessible outside of the fandom?
7. Have you interacted or utilised resources and tools shared by other members of the fandom? Fanart, fanfiction, other content?
8. Do you think that you've built language proficiency due to bonds made with other fans, as a result of interactions involving code switching for instance?
9. Did seeing other fans' pick up languages ever inspire you personally?
10. Which are the quotidian real-life or online fandom activities do you regularly partake in? Do these practices impact your language learning?
11. Have you ever participated in activities to integrate someone into your fandom? Have these activities involved the sharing of linguistic tools and knowledge?
12. How have you observed creators in fandoms hold other fans accountable and supply feedback in terms of linguistic practices?
13. How has the language learning experience within your fandom informed or impacted your self-esteem and identity?

14. Do you think your involvement with other fans has presented you with linguistic practice and opportunities you otherwise would not have been able to access in Bangladesh?

Appendix B.

Research Participation Consent Form

- I _____ voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.
- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.
- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that participation involves partaking in an interview, either online or in person and answering a set of questions related to language acquisition and fandom culture.
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
- I agree to my interview being audio-recorded.
- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.
- I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.
- I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in an undergraduate thesis paper.
- I understand that if I inform the researcher that myself or someone else is at risk of harm they may have to report this to the relevant authorities - they will discuss this with me first but may be required to report with or without my permission.

- I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in confidentiality with access only available to the researcher until the results of the researcher's dissertation are revealed.
- I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for a period of 2 years.
- I understand that under freedom of information legalisation I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.
- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

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Signature of research participant

Signature of participant

Date

Signature of researcher

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study.

Signature of researcher

Date

Appendix C.

Interview Transcript Sample

Participant 7

Interviewer: You can start by talking about the fandoms you belong to and the languages prominently used and learned in said fandoms?

Participant 7: So, I am the kind of person that gets obsessively involved in the things she likes and while liking them, is unable to see anything other than that one thing. When I first started using the internet regularly in 2015 or 2016, I immediately entered different fandoms. I was first obsessed with One Direction. Every single Instagram post and tweet would hover over my head. After their hiatus, I found k-pop. I discovered k-dramas first as my friends introduced it to me and I ventured into k-pop from there. I found the k-pop group Seventeen and it was after seeing them that I felt that I should learn their language. I mentioned how I used to watch k-dramas and my obsessive nature, so watching dramas continuously helped me subconsciously learn the language. After that, stanning Seventeen helped me more. Around 2020, I found the messaging app KakaoTalk, Koreans use this app similarly to how we use WhatsApp. There, I started talking to actual Korean people. Mostly they were students belonging to

the same fandom as me. I started out by just talking to them verbally but then I started to text them. So they used to find my mistakes and help me learn grammar. I still think Korean grammar is very hard to grasp but they helped me a lot.

Interviewer: Do you still practice Korean now as much as you did then?

Participant 7: I still watch k-dramas regularly and practice it now as well.

Interviewer: You know how becoming a fan changes how a person perceives the language?

Participant 7: Yes! Firstly, the Korean letters were very easy to learn, it did not even take me a day to learn them all. My problems were grammar related. Their grammar is quite complicated, it is different from the grammar we know in Bangla and English. The sequence of the words does not match. It took time for all of that to make sense to me. I had to consume different kinds of input, learning how they talk and how they use certain words. After that I was able to grasp it better. I am fairly competent at understanding, speaking and writing now.

Interviewer: Do you actively engage with the fandom still?

What do you normally do? Consume media or share content like edits, art, posts and things like that?

Participant 7: Yes yes, I was very active on Facebook and used to interact with fans there through posts before. I then started a fan account where I talked to fans from Bangladesh, Korea and other countries. I am still very good friends with some of the people I found then. I am less active now but I still have those accounts.

Interviewer: You know, you have learned Korean in a very unconventional manner. People often learn from language learning apps or actual courses but you had a different experience altogether, are there other instances in which you learned in unusual ways and from uncommon sources?

Participant 7: I would say Twitter is a great place to learn. I have seen people there actually say outright when they are not fluent in the language and ask for help. They would say, "I am not fluent in Korean so if there are any errors in my content please let me know." There are a lot of Korean fans there that help out. It is actually quite fun to talk to everyone like that. There were a lot of people from my own friend circle who would do that.

Interviewer: You know as a fan of a particular group, I expect

there are memes and inside jokes that only the fans can understand and use to communicate uniquely? Do you think these terms that fans use to code switch with each other have helped you learn the language in some way?

Participate 7: Yes, obviously. There is a famous Seventeen meme that goes "kimbap kidding". It came out of an interaction between 2 members of the group. So fans use such terms a lot and it impacts our communication a lot. Things like this help a lot considering I named my own fanpage "kimbap kidding" to reflect that meme. Instead of using our real names on the internet we would use memes and other Korean words. I don't think anyone that is not a fan of Seventeen would understand us. Also, Koreans say "juseyo" which sort of means 'please' or "do this" and we used to use it a lot as well when we talked to each other.

Interviewer: You mentioned how you put in conscious effort at some point to learn Korean as a fan, were the other global fans around you also intentionally trying to learn languages?

Participant 7: Actually the people that I spoke to for help in Korean would speak to international fans to learn English. Many times what would happen was that I would reply in Korean and they would reply in English. In that way we could help each other. They spoke with the clear intention of seeking

help themselves by providing guidance with Korean.

Interviewer: How interesting, and after helping each other out and finding that the fans were reaching different levels of success in their language learning efforts, did you ever find that inspiring or motivating?

Participant 7: For sure. There were fans I met who were very fluent in Korean and also went to Korea to study. There was a time that I wanted to do the same but it did not turn out that way. Seeing them made me want to learn more. It was very common to see fans who learned Korean passionately and were offered scholarships at good universities in Korea.

Interviewer: As a practiced language learner and a fan of Korean content, have you ever tried to introduce the linguistic tools that are known to you to others? Did you ever try to guide them somehow?

Participant 7: Yes! I had a very good friend from school who saw me practice writing in Korean and asked for help. She used to use Duolingo at first but it was not very helpful. I knew videos on YouTube and Instagram that I used to watch so I sent her those videos to help her. And you know the fan account that I mentioned? A lot of people used to approach me there to ask about my language learning methods. I tried to help as

much as I could but it took up a lot of my time.

Interviewer: So this language learning experience within a community, how did it impact your sense of identity, self-esteem and confidence?

Participant 7: I would say the impact of this has been huge. Ever since I was little I was not able to make a lot of friends. At school, my first ever proper friend was through the fandom community. At that point I found a big group of friends consisting of people who would consume Korean media. I would say that being with them helped me develop the confidence that I did not have when I was little.

Interviewer: So I keep saying this but you have learned Korean in a very unusual manner especially compared to common language learners in Bangladesh. Normally, people would opt for formal classes or long-term courses. Do you have any opinions on the prospects an unstructured and informal learning method might have in Bangladesh? Do you think both methods work or do you have a preference?

Participant 7: I feel like learning in paid courses leads to a lot of frustration. It takes the fun out of the process. When I learn by myself, it is my responsibility. I have the option of stopping midway or taking it slow and because I have this

option I feel like I can learn comfortably. I think that if I had done classes when I was first learning Korean or If I had paid to start a language course, I would have been unsuccessful because of the liabilities and the lack of enjoyment. I would not have been able to proceed following my own flow. But this is my opinion. A lot of people learn better in classrooms but I don't.

Interviewer: You know how you said that learning the Korean writing system was easy but the grammar was complex.

Personally, do you think this specific difficult aspect of the language would have been made easier with formal classroom guidance or do you still think you would have preferred to learn by yourself within the fandom?

Participant 7: For this particular thing, I think classes would have been helpful. If I were allowed to practice there it would have been fun. Like learning grammar in class and then using it in the classroom with others probably would have helped me learn faster.

Interviewer: So, that is all for now. Thank you so much and I am sorry for taking up so much of your time.

Participant 7: No no please I enjoyed this a lot, you let me talk about my favorite things. This conversation brought back

a lot of memories from my school days.