

FROM EDUCATION TO PROFESSIONAL LIFE: LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AND SOCIAL ADAPTATION CHALLENGES FACED BY BANGLADESHI MADRASAH STUDENTS

By

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the requirements for the degree of
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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my/our own original work while completing degree at BRAC University.
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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Ethics Statement

As the author of this thesis, the researcher is committed to conducting this study in accordance with all ethical principles and guidelines. This study has been designed and conducted with integrity, honesty and openness to ensure the protection of the participants' privacy and welfare.

The study's main objectives and purpose were initially kept confidential from participants but were disclosed during the interview. Before taking the interview, participants were given a consent form that included the purpose of the study, potential risks, and benefits of participation. The information collected from the participants was kept confidential, and to ensure their privacy, pseudonyms were used.

Abstract

The increasing demands of globalisation have made the English language a gatekeeper for entering the professional world. Despite having opportunities to enter the job market, madrasah students face difficulties with English. The current study focuses on their English language learning, leaving a gap in understanding their communicative adaptations in the workplace. Thus, to address this gap, this study explores how Bangladeshi madrasah students experience their communicative challenges, how these challenges affect their social adaptation, and what coping strategies they use to overcome them. Employing a qualitative case study, this research captures the lived experiences of five Bangladeshi madrasah students working across multiple sectors through semi-structured interviews. Data were analysed using thematic analysis to identify the themes. The findings reveal that English-language education in madrasah is mostly exam-oriented and focuses only on reading and writing, leading participants to face challenges with spoken English, professional writing, formal norms, and accent-related insecurities, which sometimes hinder their professional interactions. Social adaptation challenges include interactions with the opposite gender and discrimination based on attire and in the job sector recruitment. However, participants have developed strategies such as self-directed learning using online tools, writing books and dictionaries, and becoming more flexible in adapting to secular settings. This study recommends curriculum reforms for CLT and provides teacher training to better prepare madrasah students for the professional environment. The findings make a significant contribution to understanding employability, educational equality, and the gatekeeping role of English in a postcolonial context.

Keywords: English language proficiency, social adaptation, madrasah education, professional transition, communicative competency.

Dedication

Ma and Baba, who have always been my sources of inspiration throughout my life. Their unwavering love and encouragement are my keys to success. Mimi, who left me alone with an empty heart but many motivations to walk the road of success through heavy storms.

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Table of Contents

Declaration.....	ii
Approval	iii
Ethics Statement.....	iv
Abstract.....	v
Dedication	vi
Acknowledgement	vii
Table of Contents	viii
List of Tables	xiii
List of Figures.....	xiv
Chapter 1 Introduction.....	1
1.1 Background of the Study	1
1.1.1 Importance of the English Language in Professional Settings	2
1.1.2 Impact of English Language Education in Madrasah Contexts.....	3
1.2 Transition from Madrasah Education to the Workplace.....	4
1.3 Language Proficiency and Social Adaptation.....	5
1.4 Statement of the Problem.....	6
1.5 Central Research Objective.....	8
1.6 Research Questions	8
1.7 Limitations of the study	9
1.8 Significance of the Study	9
1.9 Scope of the study	10

1.10 Definition of Key Terms	11
Chapter 2 Literature Review	12
2.1 Introduction.....	12
2.2 Part 1: Language Proficiency	12
2.2.1 Concepts of Language Proficiency	12
2.2.2 Importance of English Language Proficiency in the Professional World.....	14
2.3 Part 2: The role of Social Adaptations and its importance.	17
2.3.1 Concepts of Social Adaptations	17
2.3.2 The Role of Social Adaptation in the Different Settings	19
2.4 Part 3: Madrasah Education System and Language Proficiency and Social Adaptation.....	21
2.4.1 Bangladeshi Educational System.....	21
2.4.2 Madrasah Education System.....	22
2.4.3 Language Proficiency at Different Levels (Dakhil, Kamil, Fazil).....	23
2.4.4 Challenges of the English Language in Bangladesh.....	25
2.4.5 Challenges faced by Madrasah Students in achieving English language proficiency.	27
2.5 Research Gap	30
2.6 Theories Related to this Study	31
2.6.1 Communicative Competency.....	32
2.6.2 Social Adaptation.....	32
2.7 Conceptual Framework.....	33

Chapter 3 Methodology	37
3.1 Introduction.....	37
3.2 Philosophical Assumptions and The Qualitative Paradigm.....	37
3.3 Research Design.....	39
3.4 Setting	40
3.5 Selecting the Participants	40
3.5.1 Participants' Profile	41
3.6 The Researcher's Role	41
3.7 Data Collection Procedure	42
3.7.1 Deciding Interview Protocol	42
3.8 Data Analysis Procedure.....	44
3.8.1 Data Analysis Framework.....	44
3.9 Analysing Interviews	45
3.10 Ethical Considerations	45
3.11 Establishing Trustworthiness and Credibility	45
Chapter 4 Results and Discussion	47
4.1 Introduction.....	47
4.2 Section 1: Brief Introduction to the Participants' Background.....	47
4.2.1 Participant 1: Bilal	48
4.2.2 Participant 2: Nazmul	48
4.2.3 Participant 3: Sabbir.....	48

4.2.4 Participant 4: Nasiruddin	49
4.2.5 Participant 5: Sagor.....	49
4.2.6 English Language Learning Experiences in Madrasah.....	50
4.3 Section 2: Communicative Challenges while Transitioning from Madrasah to Professional Life.	51
4.3.1 English Proficiency as a Barrier to Professional Transition	52
4.3.2 Contrast between Madrasah and Workplace Communication.....	53
4.3.3 Lack of Grammar Competency in Advanced Writing	54
4.3.4 Mistakes Create Barriers in Communication	56
4.3.5 Accent and linguistic Standardness create inequality.....	57
4.4 Section 3: Overcoming the Adapting Challenges in Professional Settings	58
4.4.1 Self-Directed Learning Strategies.....	58
4.4.2 Formulaic Writing to Advanced Writing.....	59
4.4.3 Error Correction Through Digital Tool.....	60
4.4.4 Audience-Sensitive Style Adjustment	61
4.4.5 Clarification and Repair Strategies in Workplace Communication.....	62
4.4.6 Confidence Growth Through Exposure and Social Support.....	63
4.4.7 Section 4: Social Adaptation in Professional Life	64
4.4.8 Challenges of Navigating Professional Norms	64
4.4.9 Interaction with the Opposite Gender and Perceived Discrimination in the Workplace	66
4.4.10 Behavioural and Linguistic Adaptation	68

4.5 Section 5: Identity Reconstruction	71
4.5.1 Negotiated Madrasah Identity with Secular Places	71
4.5.2 Confidence grows through reflection and Experience.....	72
Chapter 5 Conclusions.....	74
5.1 Major Findings.....	74
5.2 Contribution of the study	75
5.2.1 Implications for Knowledge	75
5.2.2 Implications for Theories	76
5.2.3 Implications for Pedagogy	76
5.2.4 Implications for Society	77
5.2.4 Recommendations.....	78
References.....	79
Appendix A. Letter of Consent for Participants	98
Appendix B. Interview Question	99
Appendix C. Notational Convention.	102
Appendix D. Sample Transcription of a Participant.....	103
Appendix E. Sample Coding	101
Appendix F. Sample Theme Generation.....	103
Appendix G. Inter-Rater Reliability Table and Scores.....	104
Appendix H. Email for Member Checking.....	105
Appendix I. Audit Trial of the Study	106

List of Tables

Table 1: Philosophical Assumptions and Research Paradigm	38
Table 2: Participants' Profile	41

List of Figures

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework	35
Figure 2: Thematic Data Analysis Framework.....	44

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Madrasah education, broadly referring to Islamic schooling, exists on the boundaries of national education systems, which are increasingly influenced by global linguistic and economic forces. In this broader context, recent international studies are continually shaping the view of language proficiency, especially English, as a form of human and linguistic capital that underpins engagement in the modern global economy. From the economic and sociolinguistic perspective, when a common language is used in transnational and multilingual settings, it increases efficiency in production, coordination, and exchange (Grenier & Zhang, 2021). Within this international system, English has established itself as the lingua franca of international business, tertiary education, and professional communication, and this remark is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future because of network effects and changes in mobility worldwide (Grenier & Zhang, 2021; Tan, 2024).

This industry has shown that English proficiency is directly related to employment, career advancement, and organisational involvement. Labour markets show that language skills play a significant role in the selection of employees and employer ratings, despite the fact that other qualifications are similar (Carlsson et al., 2023). Within the context of multinational corporations, where the quality of communication mediated by the English language influences the results of trust, collaboration, and innovation (Worakittikul et al., 2025). These results position language proficiency not only as an individual ability but also as a structural resource integrated into the world economy.

Meanwhile, international studies indicate that linguistic capital is not equally distributed, creating new forms of inequality within transnational economic orders. People and

communities with limited access to dominant languages have restricted mobility and less exposure to education and skills (Rössel & Schroedter, 2021). This imbalance in the distribution of linguistic capital reinforces stratification across social, educational, and professional spheres, especially when English is used as a key resource for entering the global job market (Grenier & Zhang, 2021).

Bangladesh is an especially relevant context within this global backdrop. The education system in the country is pluralistic, with general, technical, and religious streams coexisting, and madrasah education being a major route for many students. In the madrasah sectors, the Aliyah stream is state-regulated, partially integrated with general subjects, whereas the Qawmi stream is more autonomous and religion-focused (Akhter et al., 2022). In spite of these structural variations, graduates of both streams are more and more interested in becoming members of higher education and the contemporary labour market, where English serves as one of the main means of academic and professional communication (Rattan, 2024). This institutionalised location places Bangladeshi madrasah graduates at the point of convergence between global linguistic needs and locally specific educational conditions.

1.1.1 Importance of the English Language in Professional Settings

Currently, English proficiency has become a pivotal factor in career and social mobility in modern society. Learning a dominant or international language is a strategic investment that can yield quantifiable economic benefits, such as increased income, better job opportunities, and higher productivity at work (Grenier & Zhang, 2021). Research on international business environments also proves that English helps organise and coordinate teams with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, conduct international transactions, organisational success, and international cooperation (Tan, 2024).

In addition to economic performance, English proficiency has been shown to affect employees' ability to contribute significantly to organisational processes. A study on multinational enterprises has shown that a language barrier inhibits staff contribution of ideas, innovativeness, and the development of trust in organisations, thus limiting personal and institutional performance (Worakittikul et al., 2025). Dwivedi and Sharma, (2023) expressed the same idea that English communicative competence promotes innovation at workplaces driven by employees, knowledge exchange, and adaptive performance within dynamic global workplaces. The significance of English proficiency is also applied to college education and career training. Lack of English proficiency restricts the students' academic activity, access to disciplinary knowledge, and facilitates the shift to professional settings where the communication norm is mediated by the English language (Nizonkiza & Kris Van De Poel, 2022). Consequently, the English proficiency serves as a process by which social and professional inequalities are replicated at the global level (Rössel & Schroedter, 2021).

1.1.2 Impact of English Language Education in Madrasah Contexts

Islamic and madrasah education settings across South Asia demonstrate that English-language education in madrasahs is conditioned by unique curricular, pedagogical, and ideological factors. Countries such as Indonesia, Pakistan, and Singapore demonstrate that English is often offered as a secondary or instrumental course rather than a primary academic and professional one (Helmiati, 2021; Putra & Siregar, 2023). Consequently, the teaching methods in madrasahs are often biased, with religious courses receiving more time, resources, and emphasis, whereas the English language receives little teaching time, resources, and institutional focus. Again, teaching English in madrasahs and Islamic boarding schools tends to be characterised by exam-based methods, poor communicative language use, and limited exposure to authentic language. Student records indicate that students face a consistent challenge across the four language competencies, especially speaking and listening, which is attributed to a lack of interactional

opportunities, limited use of English outside the classroom, and curriculum limitations (Sofyan et al., 2023; Usama, 2023). These issues are further exacerbated by teacher-related factors, such as a lack of professional training in communicative language teaching and limited access to pedagogical materials (Ali et al., 2020; Sukmanasa & Novita, 2023).

At the institutional level, madrasahs operate in a complex sociocultural setting, reconciling religious identity with the needs of modern, globalised education systems. According to comparative studies, there are tensions between the maintenance of Islamic educational practises and the external demands to modernise the curriculum, integrate technologies, and make the workplace more relevant (Helmiati, 2021; Sungkowo et al., 2024). Although recent changes in certain settings have brought about technology-enhanced learning and curriculum revision, it has been indicated that the implementations have not always resulted in better English communicative competence among graduates (Putra & Siregar, 2023).

1.2 Transition from Madrasah Education to the Workplace

The transitions from madrasah-based education or Islamic schools to the workplace require language proficiency and post-graduation. There is a gap between students' communication competency and employers' demands, specifically in professional communication (Ismail & Pek, 2023; Ong et al., 2022).

The experiences of madrasah and Islamic education systems suggest that graduates frequently face challenges when adjusting to English-dominant educational and professional settings. Such problems include a lack of confidence in oral communication, an inability to engage in discussions, and an inability to create academic or job-related written texts (Javanmiri & Bdaiwi, 2021; Putra & Siregar, 2023). The same challenges are found in service-related fields, such as medical and professional settings, where poor communicative competence limits task

performance and professional integration (Chan et al., 2022; Glomo-Narzoles & Glomo-Palermo, 2021).

In addition to language barriers, there are broader social and cultural adaptation challenges during the transition process. Students and workers within the Asian community face the fact that the lack of English proficiency contributes to the feeling of marginalisation, decreased engagement with institutional networks, and diminished professional development (Alasmari, 2023; Kurnia Sari et al., 2024). As a result, the transition from madrasah education to employment is not only an academic change but also a multidimensional process in which language competence is the key mediating factor.

1.3 Language Proficiency and Social Adaptation

The transition from madrasah to professional settings requires social and language-related adjustments. Social adaptation is a dynamic process that helps people adjust their behaviours, expectations and competencies according to the norms and requirements of a certain social environment (Terziev, 2019). In this process, language serves as a pivotal tool that helps people to negotiate belonging, participation and identity.

Currently, language barriers are among the primary causes of psychological stress, social isolation, and decreased involvement in institutional life (Savka et al., 2023; Soheili & Lanz, 2025). And proficiency has been linked to anxiety, reduced communication with peers and colleagues, and challenges in finding a way to manoeuvre academic and professional demands, thus limiting sociocultural and psychological adaptation (Soheili & Lanz, 2025). On the other hand, communicative competence helps build confidence, engagement, and adaptation to new social environments due to higher levels (Pikulytska, 2022). The workplace scenario also shows that language proficiency determines adaptive performance, teamwork, and organisational inclusion among employees in organisations undergoing either cultural or

structural change (Gajda, 2015; Katsaros, 2025). These results highlight that adaptation is not only an individual process within the psychological domain but also a highly mediated one, mediated by access to linguistic resources. On the global stage, English proficiency is identified as a determinant of the relationship among education, employability, and social adaptation in transnational and multilingual professional environments.

1.4 Statement of the Problem

In the era of globalisation, fluency in English and social mobility are the keys to professional and social advancement. Ideally, the education system in Bangladesh should prepare graduates with balanced communicative competence: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. They must also be socially flexible and therefore fit well in the workplace. English, now considered the lingua franca of business, science, and education, provides individuals the opportunity to “integrate socially, develop professionally, and obtain an education” (Adawiyah & Gumartifa, 2022; Prajapati, 2022). Thus, in the ideal scenario, Madrasah students who possess a strong command of English but also the interpersonal and intercultural skills needed to thrive in diverse workplaces are now considered to have essential employability conditions in Asia (Ismail & Pek, 2023; Rattan, 2024; Stakhova & Stakhova, 2022). Such a combination of language and social adaptation skills can enable graduates of Bangladeshi madrasahs to engage fully in teamwork, cross-cultural communication, and knowledge sharing in today’s multilingual workplaces (Islam et al., 2022; Rahman, 2022).

However, studies in Asian Islamic and boarding-school settings have indicated that English is usually restricted to basic literacy and exam-based learning, with little space for engaging in real-life communication and using English for future employment (Ismail & Pek, 2023; Sofyan et al., 2023). Nevertheless, the Bangladeshi Madrasah education system is not ideal. Although there is a rising international need to understand English, Madrasah learners are systematically

hindered from achieving communicative competence. In most cases, “the concentration in teaching language methods in Madrasah is heavily focused on reading and writing, often neglecting speaking and listening skills,” which results in limited proficiency when students encounter “real-world communication that involves proficiency in the English language” (Ruman, 2022). Moreover, Qawmi Madrasahs primarily focus on religious education, with English taught only as a subject, thereby creating a generation of students who are poorly equipped to communicate professionally (Golam & Kusakabe, 2020; Ruman, 2021).

Ahasan et al. (2024) observed that “Madrasah curriculum is outdated, and it is not aligned with the teaching materials,” while Rahman et al. (Rahman et al., 2021) emphasised that “students from lower-income backgrounds face obstacles in learning language” due to socio-economic constraints. Similarly, Uddin (2020) found that teacher training facilities were poor because the capacity of the Madrasah Teachers Training Institute (BMTTI) in Bangladesh is limited, leaving most teachers unprepared to teach communicative English. These gaps result in less exposure to the world of English-speaking people, less integration with technology, and reduced social adaptation. Consequently, Madrasah graduates face two issues when they take the next step in their lives, from academic to professional life: a language barrier and socio-professional adjustment problems. Although the general education students can grow in terms of the skills of interaction due to being exposed to modern pedagogy, Madrasah students cannot cope with the issue of the so-called professional adaptation, based on which English fluency, interpersonal adaptability, and cross-cultural communication are prioritised (Ahasan et al., 2024; Islam et al., 2021).

This gap in professionals’ preparation and expectations has severe consequences. The factors that make Madrasah graduates struggle to find jobs or advance their careers are commonly attributed to a lack of communicative competence and social adaptation, which impede their success in the national and even global markets (Rahman, 2022; Ruman, 2022). The subsequent

professional alienation contributes to educational inequality and reinforces the marginalised madrasah-educated people.

Unless the challenges faced by madrasah students and their strategies for overcoming them are explored, their transition from madrasah education to professional life will not be fully understood. Also, it is important to understand how their current communicative skills in Bengali and English may support the transition process. Hence, the research fills an important gap in the current literature by conducting an empirical study of how Bangladeshi Madrasah students overcome communicative competence and social adaptation challenges when entering the professional world. It is anticipated that the findings will inform education policy (curriculum reforms, teacher training, and intervention) that is aligned.

1.5 Central Research Objective

This paper aims to analyse the communicative competency challenges faced by graduates of Bangladeshi Madrasahs upon their transition to professional life, based on their English language proficiency levels. It also aims to investigate their social adaptation in mainstream academic and workplace environments, as well as their coping with language and interaction requirements. Another objective is to learn how they use their existing communicative abilities in both Bangla and English in professional settings, and how the results can be used to shape curriculum, teacher education, and policy in the Madrasah education sector.

1.6 Research Questions

1. What communicative challenges do the Bangladeshi Madrasah students face while transitioning from student life to professional life?
2. How do they overcome the challenges of adapting to professional life?
3. How do they adapt to their current professional life?

1.7 Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to a narrow sample of Aliyah and Qawmi Madrasah graduates in specific regions and employment sectors. Thus, the results will not apply to all Aliyah and Qawmi Madrasah graduates in Bangladesh. Research predominantly relies on self-reports and interviews, which can be affected by recall bias and social desirability bias.

This study has several limitations. To begin with, the information is primarily based on self-reported experiences, semi-structured interviews, and the researcher's analytical interpretation of communicative and social adaptations and is therefore prone to recall and social desirability biases.

Secondly, there is a limitation in the accessibility of internal Madrasah records, employer ratings, and systematised observations of workplace interactions, which minimises triangulation between interview results and institutional or observational findings. The results can thus be interpreted as contextual and descriptive rather than general.

Finally, all the participants agreed to the interview; later, a few denied.

1.8 Significance of the Study

This study explores communicative competence in Bangla and English, as well as the social adaptation of Madrasah graduates to higher education and working environments, an area that has been little explored in Bangladesh. It identifies a research gap that has been widely divided into language proficiency, employability, and marginalisation, focusing on graduates' experiences of difficulties, strategies, and language use.

The results will also be of value to Madrasah curriculum planners and policymakers in assessing the influence of language policies, syllabi, and teaching practices on the preparedness of Madrasah graduates to communicate effectively and integrate in the workplace. They will

also enlighten teacher educators and institutions such as the Bangladesh Madrasah Teachers Training Institute on priority areas for professional development in communicative language teaching and adaptation assistance.

The study suggests ways for ELT practitioners, material designers, NGOs, and employers to incorporate communicative and workplace-based language tasks into madrasah programmes. It also proposes how to support students' social adjustment in these programmes without disrupting religious goals. More broadly, the research brings together issues of educational accomplishment and workplace performance. In doing so, it contributes to debates on equity, inclusion, and the gatekeeping role of English in postcolonial contexts. It also offers a qualitative research framework that can be applied to other disadvantaged educational pathways.

1.9 Scope of the Study

This paper addresses the challenges of English-language proficiency and social adaptation among Bangladeshi Madrasah graduates in professional settings. Since these issues have not been explored in the Bangladeshi context with sufficient depth, the study is qualitative, aiming to gain insights into participants' lived experiences, and employs purposive sampling to select information-rich participants who meet the study criteria.

The study location is Dhaka, a large professional centre where most Madrasah graduates seek employment and where professional communication in English is more prevalent across various work environments, making it an appropriate setting for exploring the transition experience in a constrained context. The participant selection was limited to Aliyah- and Qawmi Madrasah-educated respondents who were already employed in the professional world. Thus, the study is not intended to give a national scenario of all Madrasah graduates or a critical review of all Madrasah English curricula in Bangladesh.

1.10 Definition of Key Terms

Madrasah: Madrasah education refers to an Islamic educational institute that provides religious education and some general subjects (Akhter et al., 2022).

Aliyah Madrasah: In madrasah education, Aliyah Madrasah provides both religious and secular education, and it has been officially recognised by the government (Akhter et al., 2022).

Qawmi Madrasah: Qawmi Madrasah is regulated by its own religious curriculum, which focuses solely on Islamic studies. Qawmi education does not receive government funding or support (Al-Hasani, 2023).

Dakhil and Alim: Dakhil is a level of madrasah education which is considered equivalent to the SSC certificate in Bangladeshi mainstream education. And Alim is considered as HSC Akhter et al. (2022).

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This study primarily investigates Language proficiency and social adaptation challenges faced by Bangladeshi Madrasah students in the professional world. Thus, in this chapter, the researcher discusses prominent scholarly works relevant to the language proficiency and social adaptation challenges in the professional area. It also aims to identify a gap in the literature on language proficiency and social adaptation difficulties in the Bangladeshi professional context. This section has been divided into four parts as follows:

2.2 Part 1: Language Proficiency

2.2.1 Concepts of Language Proficiency

The notion of language proficiency is complex and encompasses various aspects of understanding and using language across different contexts. It encompasses beyond the mere ability to use language accurately; it also includes the skill to utilise language effectively across diverse contexts. Language proficiency significantly impacts academic environments, social integration, and cognitive development. The terms “competence” and “communicative competence” are closely connected to “language proficiency” (Aslonova, 2020). A group of scholars defined language proficiency as the ability to use English skills, such as reading, writing, speaking and (Rössel & Schroedter, 2021) understanding a language effectively and accurately in different contexts (Grenier & Zhang, 2021; Javanmiri & Bdaiwi, 2021) specifically, while communicating with others (Jaén & Flores, 2020) in a written text or a meaningful way (Andrade, 2020). Prior knowledge, information-seeking behaviour, teacher expertise, classroom setting, and real-world language usage experiences influence proficiency

(Vajirakachorn et al., 2023). This proficiency and knowledge of the social and cultural contexts in which language is integrated are necessary for effective communication (Stakhova & Stakhova, 2022).

However, Dai et al. (2022) argued that language proficiency constitutes an interactional competency that enables an individual to utilise language for functional purposes in real-world contexts, emphasising interactions with others over language skills. On the contrary, Grüter et al. (2023) emphasised the four skills of the English language as a proficiency. Nevertheless, effective communication in language also requires pronunciation, oral fluency, grammar, and vocabulary (Kopparapu & Panda, 2024). Another investigation found that language proficiency is an integrative achievement, emphasising vocabulary selection skills' role in improving EFL students' communication abilities (Wardana, 2023). Therefore, studies suggest that language proficiency encompasses areas such as functional communication, English core skills, and vocabulary selection. All of these contribute to fluent and effective communication.

Scholars have also remarked that language proficiency can be defined as an individual's strong understanding of a second language (Lizarazu et al., 2021). Others highlighted a bilingual individual's abilities and competence in their languages, particularly in education settings (Thanissery et al., 2020). A different study found that to engage effectively in English medium Instructions (EMI), students need to develop language proficiency (Margić, 2024). In the educational field, as well as in the language competency, it provides communication, lecture and report preparation in a foreign language, and professional business (Mukan et al., 2021).

In conclusion, language proficiency is a complex phenomenon that goes beyond the ability to use language appropriately. It entails the competency to share information effectively in academic and professional arenas, and these competencies require mastery of reading, writing, speaking, and understanding in a number of situations. Language also requires social and

cultural contexts, and in this case, an individual must adapt their communication strategies to the environment. Besides that, proficiency in technical accuracy is not limited; however, the integration of interaction competency is essential, where an individual can engage in real-world interaction.

2.2.2 Importance of English Language Proficiency in the Professional World

Globalisation has rendered English a lingua franca through which individuals can communicate across boundaries, whether between regions, industries, or cultures. As the most powerful language in the world of business, science, technology, and education, language proficiency provides people with a vast number of opportunities to integrate socially, develop professionally, and obtain an education.

The acquisition of English language proficiency in non-native English-speaking nations has been explored by various studies that emphasise the significance of English in business in the global arena. As a global lingua franca, English plays an important role across business, education, and the professional sphere, making it indispensable to global trade and economic development (Adawiyah & Gumartifa, 2022; Prajapati, 2022). English language proficiency, especially in Asia, is regarded as a key to business communication and education, and countries are able to adopt new strategies to meet global needs (Ismail & Pek, 2023). In India, although there are numerous regional languages, English is acquired as a second language to conduct official business, access various opportunities, and establish economic connections (Prajapati, 2022). Economic growth through the English language also contributes to sustainable development and cooperation between countries, as nations incorporate English into their curricula to equip human resources to compete globally (Adawiyah & Gumartifa, 2022; Isadaud et al., 2022). There are, however, challenges to adopting English as a means of

education. For example, English is not used at any level of education in Indonesia, which makes it difficult to train students to compete in the global market (Isadaud et al., 2022). English-language hegemony in the Filipino context may undermine the multilingual policy expected to improve the quality of education and reduce inequality (Salomone, 2023). However, global demand for English is still increasing, and individuals must acquire English proficiency to remain relevant in the new global economy.

A number of studies have been done to explore the relevance of language proficiency in the professional fields. In the modern world era, English has become an important platform for sharing ideas. The ability to speak English effectively opens numerous opportunities, including higher education, friendship, business collaboration, and social advancement. A Swedish study found that there was a correlation between improved language skills and an increased rate of callback due to a job interview during immigrant hiring (Carlsson et al., 2023). The significance of English proficiency in worldwide business and employment prospects was also evident in the results, including the tourism and hospitality sector, aviation, research scholars, and roles in multinational firms. Because of its global significance, the English language has gained a second language in most countries, such as India, where it is widely used as an official language, despite the presence of a number of regional languages (Prajapati, 2022).

Agustina et al. (2024) conducted a business study and found that smooth business operations were strongly associated with higher English proficiency. They discovered that the more proficient the participants were, the better their business communication results were compared to those of less proficient participants, leading to fewer communication barriers and misunderstandings during business meetings. The statistics also highlighted that organisations that train their workers in language are viewed as more competitive, as they can operate in global markets more efficiently. Studies on lingua franca English in international business have revealed that English proficiency in global communications facilitates collaboration and

investment (Tan, 2024). Rattan (2024) also emphasised that in India, English proficiency plays an important role in business success. English proficiency is considered one of the most valuable keys to cross-border communication in terms of international exchanges.

However, nowadays, English proficiency has spread across the STEM disciplines. In engineering, medicine, technology, and scientific research, excellent communication skills facilitate teamwork worldwide, the publication of discoveries, and the utilisation of knowledge. For instance, engineers, Shrestha et al. (2020) discussed the crucial importance of English proficiency for engineering graduates, highlighting that engineers must have good English proficiency along with their technical proficiency throughout their academic and professional lives. From writing applications or CVs for the job market, seeking a job, working in professional environments globally, to publishing research articles, English proficiency plays an important role for engineers. In the medical field, Chan et al. (2022) studied the multilingual medical students' perspective on English language proficiency, where students highlighted that English proficiency plays an important role in shaping their experience with peer collaboration, stimulation, and communicating with real patients, as well as in further education abroad. In a study by Hussain et al. (2022). It was established that English, as a global language, has shortcomings that can interfere with teaching and learning.

Conversely, language barriers in medicine pose challenges for both patients and medical workers in safeguarding and providing quality healthcare. Research indicates that communication barriers arise from language differences, leading to miscommunication between patients and medical professionals, particularly when patients speak a second language (Mohammad & Rajesh, 2023). This negatively affects patient safety, the quality of healthcare delivery, and satisfaction among both parties (Al Shamsi et al., 2020). Though the challenges can be reduced to 92% and, communication can be facilitated using tools such as Google Translate and MediBabble. Another investigation in Thailand indicates that language

barriers exist in multinational corporations, and English proficiency is a significant factor (Worakittikul et al., 2025). Moreover, investigations in the Philippines revealed that a lack of language proficiency limits employees' potential in the workplace and creates communication challenges among colleagues (Glomo-Narzoles & Glomo-Palermo, 2021). Again, in Malaysia, speaking and reading were the two main language abilities that employees felt they needed to work on the most (Azlan et al., 2022). Academic investigations found that, due to a lack of English language proficiency, teachers struggle to overcome language barriers (Hussain et al., 2022), and students report this as a contributing factor to rising unemployment (Ong et al., 2022). However, an Iranian study reveals that the number of English language learners has increased in recent years because they have a deeper understanding of the global significance of language proficiency, which fosters academic career success (Azizi, 2024).

2.3 Part 2: The role of Social Adaptations and its importance.

2.3.1 Concepts of Social Adaptations

The social adaptation process is described in the literature as a complex process by which individuals or groups modify their behaviour, feelings, and thoughts to align with society's norms and expectations. It is a balance between an individual's resources and the needs of an institution or culture, sustaining the relationship between social integration and personal well-being. Scholars in different fields, including psychology, sociology, education, professional areas, and intercultural studies, have defined social adaptation in diverse ways, emphasising its various characteristics.

Conceptually, social adaptation has been a continuous process in which individuals regulate their emotions, cognitions, and behaviours to align with their environment and support their psychosocial well-being (Carriedo et al., 2024). This perspective focuses on thinking flexibility, emotional control, and social ability as key factors in navigating interpersonal

relations and adapting to changing circumstances. Moreover, in sociological terms, adaptation refers to an individual's capacity to adjust and conform to prevailing social norms, cultural values, and institutional structures while participating in communal life and sustaining personal life (Neely-Prado et al., 2021). In this context, adaptation involves a development process which enables both social integration and individual flexibility.

Theoretical definitions have attempted to formalise the process of adaptation based on conceptualisations. Social adaptation theory states that social adaptation is a way in which individuals change their behaviour, thoughts, and emotions due to changes in their social environment (Rachmad, 2022). This definition highlights the active, ongoing adjustment mechanism of adaptation, rather than a rigid conclusion. Holistically, social adaptations include an individual's psychological preparedness to interact with different social groups, social roles, culture, and their assimilation of social norms and rules adopted in a society (Pikulytska, 2022).

Within the educational setting, social adaptation has been conceptualised as students' capacity to manage the demands of new academic and social environments by balancing personal resources with institutional expectations. In the study by Corti et al. (2023), a correlation was found between students' success and their ability to adapt in both academic and social domains, as they were highly motivated and had favourable institutional climates and positive relationships with peers. Likewise, Savka et al. (2023) found that the social adaptation of international students during the COVID-19 pandemic encompassed adapting to new learning conditions, new cultural standards, and reorganised social relations, which proves the situational sensitivity of adaptation in disruptive times. However, it is also important to consider the role of social adaptation in a professional scenario. For instance, social adaptation is usually framed as socio-professional adaptation, in which the employee is expected to learn to conform to organisational norms and ways of doing things. An investigation in the nursing profession has shown that new employees adopt professional expectations, which in turn shape

their motivation and professional growth (Jabłońska et al., 2022). This perspective helps us to understand that adaptation is not just about survival in a new work environment but also a way of professional development and long-term involvement.

Lastly, in intercultural psychology, social adaptation has been categorised into two domains: emotional and functional. Psychological adaptation is based on the outcomes in life satisfaction and emotional well-being, whereas sociocultural adaptation is focused on the practical skills to deal with the daily activities and interactions in a host culture (Cheung et al., 2022). Further developing this framework, Soheili & Lanz (2025). Their studies of international students showed that sociocultural adaptation involves becoming competent in host societies by learning communication skills, cultural practices, and social engagement. These two domains explain why an individual can successfully manage a new situation in terms of behavioural activities while psychologically facing stress or become emotionally satisfied without attaining full practical integration.

2.3.2 The Role of Social Adaptation in the Different Settings

The capacity for social adaptation is a critical determinant of success across various environments. The literature shows that it significantly influences both educational institutions and the contemporary work environment, promoting integration, well-being, and performance.

In the educational environment, social adjustment is a key element in ensuring that students integrate and perform well in school. A study of Indonesian students at Raden Fatah State Islamic University found that students are adopting distinctive social adaptation strategies at their university that enable them to succeed academically (Kurnia Sari et al., 2024). This is also informed by a qualitative multi-case study in the Philippines that found adaptation capabilities, such as building trust, seeking support, and participating in extracurricular activities, to be effective in enhancing social participation (Dajani et al., 2021). Moreover, a study conducted

in Ukraine concludes that social adaptation for international students is a continuous process of adjustment to new educational, cultural, and social conditions (Pikulytska, 2022).

Social adaptation is also very important, as the transition to professional life demonstrates. A study of 195 Gen Z workers in Greece showed that social adaptation aids employees in adjusting to cultural changes in the work environment, which affects their adaptive performance (Katsaros, 2025). Likewise, a deductive approach to studying the methodology revealed that the success of Industry 4.0 requires adaptation in the workplace, and six key factors must be identified: interpersonal skills, crisis management, creative problem-solving, continuous training and education, and collaborative adaptability (Sony & Mekoth, 2022). In line with this observation, an Indian study indicates that adaptation to work is a critical skill towards technological advancement, embracing globalisation, and facilitating creativity, and highly adaptable employees are given priority in securing improved jobs (Bhashanjaly, 2024). In addition to these general demands of the workplace, social adaptation is also important for dealing with problems in different situations. For instance, an Indonesian investigation into the experiences of working mothers adjusting to remote work found that they are highly adaptable when working from home (WFH), allowing them to spend time with family while maintaining positive energy in the workplace (Kirana et al., 2023). In addition, the article by Dajani et al. (2021) on a peer mentoring program for women in STEM in Jordan demonstrates how social adaptation through community development and positive relationships can address problems encountered by women in academia in a non-hierarchical way.

To sum up, the literature consistently emphasises social adaptation as a complex and necessary process across different environments. In teaching, it facilitates integration and inclusion of students in the learning process, whereas in the workplace, it is a requirement for successful professional growth and adaptation to technological and cultural changes. Lastly, social

adaptability is a significant factor influencing the performance of the individual and the organisation.

2.4 Part 3: Madrasah Education System and Language Proficiency and Social Adaptation

2.4.1 Bangladeshi Educational System

The Bangladesh education system is complex, covering general schools, madrasahs, English-medium schools, and vocational schools. These streams have their own curricula and pedagogical approaches, and this is one of the influential factors in students' language proficiency and professional adaptation.

The general school system is divided into two major public exams: the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC), which are aligned with the national curriculum prescribed by the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB). These tests place much emphasis on memorisation, which restricts creativity and critical thinking (Haider & Kabir, 2024). Students are introduced to the latest curriculum, with subjects such as Bengali, English, mathematics, and science, which equip them with the skills to pursue further studies or enter the job market. Nevertheless, such a system is inclined towards exam-based evaluation rather than interactive learning.

Madrasahs in Bangladesh are categorised into Aliyah and Qawmi. Aliyah madrasahs are officially recognised by the government and offer both religious and secular education at the SSC (Dakhil) and HSC (Alim) levels, and thus, students can easily progress to higher education (Akhter et al., 2022). Conversely, Qawmi madrasahs place nearly all their emphasis on religious education and have little exposure to secular education, leaving fewer career options outside religious education (Al-Hasani, 2023).

English-speaking schools in Bangladesh are mainly private and use international curricula such as the British O/A Levels. The focus on interactive, student-centred learning and the development of critical thinking and communication skills are the major characteristics of such schools (Haider & Kabir, 2024). Conversely, Vocational education in Bangladesh is managed by the Bangladesh Technical Education Board (BTEB), which aims to equip students with practical skills in various technical areas. Nevertheless, it has faced challenges, including low enrolment, an age-old curriculum, and a lack of industry integration, which diminish its effectiveness in equipping students to enter the labour market (Newaz et al., 2013). Also, vocational students usually cannot master English, and this restricts their possibilities to enter the international labour markets (Habib et al., 2022).

The instructional approaches of the above educational streams differ markedly. Although schools and Aliyah madrasahs generally emphasise exam-based study, English-medium schools focus on interactive practices that stimulate critical thinking (Haider & Kabir, 2024). On the contrary, Qawmi madrasahs are more focused on memorisation and religious texts, which limit students' overall academic and professional growth (Al-Hasani, 2023).

2.4.2 Madrasah Education System

The Madrasah Education System in Bangladesh is a complex institution that plays a significant role in the country's education system. It incorporates both religious and secular education, emphasising the preservation of Islamic identity while gradually integrating modern teaching methods. The system includes two major categories of schools: Aliyah madrasahs and Qawmi Madrasah. Aliyah Madrasah, which has been formally recognised by the government of Bangladesh as part of the country's formal education system. Islamic studies are in addition to science and math in the curriculum. This belongs to the quest to modernise and achieve national education standards, as stipulated in the Education Policy of 2010 (Al-Hasani & Mahbubul,

2017). On the contrary, Qawmi madrasahs are outdated schools that do not receive government funding but instead rely on community funding. They primarily offer studies of the Islamic religion and have maintained a rather conservative curriculum since their inception (Al Hussain, 2018).

2.4.3 Language Proficiency at Different Levels

The Dakhil, Kamil, and Fazil levels in the Bangladesh madrasah education system play a vital role in determining students' performance in English. These are the required levels of English proficiency that enhance future employment opportunities and academic achievement. Akther (2022) notes that with better English communication skills, socialisation becomes much more well-organised, and employment opportunities increase. It aligns with studies by Ahasan et al. (2024), who identified several physical barriers to effective English-language instruction in madrasahs, including a lack of instructional approaches, teachers, and funding. These issues are particularly prominent at the Dakhil and Kamil levels, where the implementation of fundamental English skills is hindered by a lack of relevant teaching materials. This is also evidenced by Golam and Kusakabe (2020), who point out the flaws in teacher preparation programs and the absence of a systematic approach to teaching the four language skills: speaking, writing, listening, and reading. Since a substantial number of teachers are unqualified or poorly trained to teach English at such stages, Rukanuddin (2019) underlines the example of the lack of a clear and consistent language policy as a factor that led to low levels of English learning in the madrasah. These barriers must be overcome to enhance the acquisition of English proficiency at the lower levels of madrasah education.

Because students need to develop higher-level skills to achieve academic and professional success at the Kamil and Fazil levels, English proficiency becomes even more significant. Ahasan et al. (2024) assume that the absence of trained teachers and technological support

makes it impossible to promote students' development in English. Although the Kamil and Fazil curricula are aimed at building proficiency, Golam and Kusakabe (2018) also claim that a deficient approach to teaching English, based on a communicative approach, leads to an unbalanced development of language competencies. Hossain and Tollefson (2017) claim that English is often sidelined in madrasah education, particularly at the upper levels, because of the dominant position of Bengali as the national language; however, it is extremely important to cultural identity. Consequently, a discrepancy exists between students' potential and actual language proficiency. It is also disclosed by Rukanuddin (2019) that the gap in language proficiency levels is due to Qawmi madrasahs not being formally recognised and to uneven language policies, despite both the workforce and higher education depending heavily on the English language. The issues complicate students' ability to achieve the level of English proficiency needed to compete in the current labour market.

To sum up, systemic issues in curriculum development, teacher training, and policy implementation are directly connected to the challenges faced by madrasah students in developing their English proficiency at different stages of education. There is a lack of qualified teachers and sufficient funding, as well as old-fashioned teaching methods, all of which significantly influence the quality of English instruction at the Dakhil, Kamil, and Fazil levels. Even though certain improvements have occurred, such as the introduction of a competency-based curriculum (Rahman et al., 2021). More remains to be done to eliminate the systemic barriers that prevent madrasah students from reaching their potential. To improve English language proficiency in madrasah education, stronger teacher training, curriculum reform, and clearer language policies are needed.

2.4.4 Challenges of the English Language in Bangladesh

The structural challenges in English language teaching are deeply rooted and prevent the vast majority of learners in Bangladesh from achieving functional communicative competence, despite decades of formal education at the school and college levels (Islam et al., 2021; Rahman et al., 2021). According to national assessments and policy reviews, the learning outcomes in English at the secondary level are low, and there are significant differences by school type, location, and socio-economic background (BANBEIS, 2022; Bhatta & Sharma, 2019). Such weaknesses impact all streams, but they are especially severe among students studying in rural areas, madrasahs, and colleges based on the National University (NU), and they later experience problems in the sphere of higher education and an even more competitive employment market (Ashraf, 2022; World Bank, 2010).

One of the major issues is the constant conflict between communicative curriculum intentions and exam-related practices. English for Today is a national textbook series that was launched to help Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), but its approaches in classrooms are often occupied by grammar-translation techniques, memorisation of model questions and answers, and intensive training for exams rather than interactive language use (Islam et al., 2022; Liakat, 2024). Most educators do not have continuous professional growth in contemporary ELT teaching and evaluation literacy, and therefore, much attention is paid to reading and writing tasks that will be included in high-stakes tests, whereas listening and speaking are given very little attention, both in the form of training and evaluation (Islam et al., 2021; Kopparapu & Panda, 2024). Rural school studies also emphasise the lack of qualified English teachers, the abundance of students in the classroom, the lack of teaching material, and the fact that almost no audio-visual or digital resources are available, which essentially inhibits the possibility of meaningful communicative practice (Akter, 2021; Akter et al., 2024; Biswas, 2018).

Such institutional problems have a more direct impact on rural students and former NU students, many of whom attend under-resourced government colleges outside major urban centres. According to surveys conducted by labour markets and newspaper articles, a significant percentage of graduates of NU cannot find employment or have low incomes several years after graduation, and employers constantly list English and ICT skills among serious shortcomings ('28.24% of National University Graduates Remain Unemployed', 2024; Digital literacy training for expats can boost remittance flow, 2022). A recent study of BIDS that was widely reported in the national press concluded that the unemployment rate of National University graduates was about 28.24 per cent, and that the rural graduates had a higher unemployment rate, and English proficiency was at the top of the hiring criteria in the formal sector employment ('28.24% of National University Graduates Remain Unemployed', 2024; '28.24% of National University Graduates Remain Unemployed', 2024). More general studies of graduate unemployment also observe that many Bangladeshi graduates, particularly in general, rural and religious streams, are not able to compete effectively in a labour market in which the English language acts as a de facto job language (Islam et al., 2021; Nath et al., 2025).

These challenges are compounded for madrasah and Bangali-media students. According to the documents of the World Bank and BANBEIS, the level of English success in secondary madrasahs is usually lower than in regular schools, and Ebtedayee and Aliyah students have lower scores in the primary language skills than the national average (BANBEIS, 2022; Bhatta & Sharma, 2019; Rahman et al., 2019). Studies and works of NGOs also indicate that students of madrasah and rural schools tend to have no or little access to libraries, the Internet, and English-rich environments, and this fact inhibits the ability to use English not only in textbook classroom tasks (Ali et al., 2020; Biswas, 2018; Mridula & Bin Ahsan, 2025). Accordingly, once these students move to tertiary education, or even seek jobs in the professional labour

market, they realise that their exam-based understanding of English is not applicable to communicative requirements of job interview, workplace meetings, email communication, and other types of professional interactions in the modern globalised economy (Ahmed et al., 2022; Bhatta & Sharma, 2019; Islam et al., 2021).

2.4.5 Challenges Faced by Madrasah Students in Achieving English

Language Proficiency

English language proficiency has become an issue among Bangladeshi Madrasah students. The concentration in teaching language methods in madrasah is heavily focused on reading and writing, often neglecting speaking and listening skills. Therefore, an imbalance in language skills has made it difficult for the student to achieve comprehensive language proficiency. This situation came to light as students face real-world communication that requires proficiency in English.

A significant number of studies have investigated the present situation of Language proficiency among Bangladeshi Madrasah students. In Qawmi Madrasahs, English is taught merely as a subject, with the focus on religious learning (Ruman, 2022). It can be one of the primary reasons Madrasah students struggle to achieve language proficiency. Again, students struggle with English fluency, particularly when competing in fields that require effective communication (Ruman, 2021). It was found that while reading and writing were prioritised, listening and speaking received insufficient attention. As a result, students are not adequately prepared to communicate effectively in English-speaking environments. Several external factors that influence Madrasah students' language learning, such as a lack of expert teachers, can also lead to poor language instruction. Uddin (2020) highlighted in-service education and training (INSET) of English teachers, which has poor facilities and teacher-teaching modules. The study also found that the capacity of the Bangladesh Madrasah Teachers' Training Institute

(BMTTI) is limited, thereby restricting the number of teachers who can receive proper training. The above inadequacies in teacher preparation are the root causes of poor English teaching in madrasah, which affects students' language proficiency. Another external factor describes the influence of socio-economic status on Madrasah students' language learning. A study reveals that students from higher-income families and those with well-educated parents have positive attitudes toward children's language-learning proficiency; by contrast, students from lower-income backgrounds face obstacles to language learning (Rahman et al., 2021).

Again, the Bangladeshi Madrasah education system has some structural issues that may hinder students' language learning. Ahasan et al. (2024) studied the teachers' and students' perspectives of English instruction in Bangladeshi Madrasah education. They highlighted that the madrasah curriculum is outdated and not aligned with the teaching materials. Due to a lack of technological and professional development, both students and teachers face limited ability to achieve English language proficiency. As a result, teaching methods such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which are essential for enhancing speaking and listening skills, were impossible to implement in Bangladeshi Madrasah education (Ashraf, 2023).

In Qawmi Madrasahs, English is taught merely as a subject, with the focus on religious learning. This leads to a lack of language proficiency, particularly in vocabulary and grammar. The widely used Grammar-Translation method emphasises memorisation over practical communication, as students do not know how to communicate effectively in English (Ruman, 2022). When Bangla-medium and Madrasah students transition to English-language-based higher education systems, there is a demand for improved English instruction. Such issues arise from the exam-based learning process, a lack of pedagogical methods, and limited exposure to spoken English, which are common across the educational system (Mridula & Bin Ahsan, 2025). These problems are further compounded by the Bangladeshi assessment procedures, which are misaligned with curriculum goals and place greater emphasis on high-stakes testing

than on real-life language use. This affects both Madrasah and mainstream students (Islam et al., 2021). The national curriculum for secondary education is intended to develop students' skills related to listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Yet the disconnect between policies and practices hinders successful language learning (Kabir, 2023). Blended learning is an innovative method that may improve retention of writing errors and linguistic proficiency, potentially enhanced through broader implementation of such practices in Madrasah education (Usama, 2023). The benefits of English language competency for Bangladeshi Madrasah students' jobs will be hard to ignore. People sometimes view it as a hierarchy of professional growth, in which a lack of skill poses significant risks to future career advancement (Islam et al., 2022). To secure a successful job in the current job market, which heavily depends on English proficiency, madrasah students must be skilled in English (Rahman, 2022; Ruman, 2022).

However, despite those challenges in achieving English language proficiency among Madrasah students, national teacher development efforts have made a significant contribution in recent years. For instance, the 2nd National Teacher Training Workshop 2023, jointly organized by the State University of Bangladesh (SUB), the TESOL Society of Bangladesh, and the Institute of Modern Languages (IML), with the 10 workshops where 155 English teacher from nationwide participated included madrasah, aimed at enhancing English language pedagogy ('2nd National Teacher Training Workshops 2023 Held', 2023). The workshop was conducted by the trainers from NCTB, NAEM and DSHE. The primary goal of the workshops was to introduce updated methods, techniques, and strategies for communicative and functional language instruction. In 2025, a similar workshop was held in collaboration with the British Council and TesolBD, focusing on themes such as AI integration, human agency, and digital learning environments in English language teaching (Desk, 2025). These initiatives represent important milestones in professional development for language educators in Bangladesh, yet

their practical impact on English instruction within Madrasahs is minimal, further reinforcing the developmental divide between mainstream education and the Madrasah sector.

2.5 Research Gap

Existing literature has fully addressed the theoretical and practical aspects of language proficiency and social adjustment in various global and local settings. In the case of Language Proficiency, there has been extensive research on defining it as a complex interactional competency beyond grammar, encompassing reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills necessary for real-world usefulness (Aslonova, 2020; Dai et al., 2022). Studies have examined these industries, and English has been adopted as the lingua franca of world trade and economic growth (Adawiyah & Gumartifa, 2022). Particular studies have been reported in the business world, where proficiency is associated with a smoother operation and fewer communication obstacles (Agustina et al., 2024); in the engineering field, where proficiency is regarded to be a critical factor in technical cooperation (Shrestha et al., 2020); and in the medical community, where language barriers are researched in connection with patient safety and medical care delivery.

Psychological and sociological changes are important for adjusting individual behaviours to environmental norms, as discussed in the field of Social Adaptation (Carriedo et al., 2024). Several studies have been done in educational settings, including the integration of students into the academic environment (Sari et al., 2024), and in the workplace, including Gen Z workers in Greece (Katsaros, 2025), working mothers adapting to remote work (Kirana et al., 2023), and women in the field of STEM (Dajani et al., 2021). These findings demonstrate that adaptability is a key condition for survival in Industry 4.0.

In the Bangladeshi Context, the structural fragmentation of the education system has been fully mapped, with a distinction between the exam-based strategies of the General and Aliyah

Madrasahs and the interactive ones of the English-medium schools (Haider & Kabir, 2024). The Madrasah Education System has been studied in scholarship, highlighting the curricular gap between the Aliyah madrasahs recognised by the government and the conservative Qawmi stream (Akhter et al., 2022). There is extensive research on the Dakhil, Kamil, and Fazil levels, which reports systematic failures, including a shortage of trained teachers, funding gaps, and the prevalence of the Grammar-Translation Method over Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) (Ahasan et al., 2024; Golam & Kusakabe, 2018). Moreover, the impact of such failures has been extensively examined, with statistical data documenting the disconnect between policy and practice. Studies have measured the high unemployment rates among the graduates of National University and Madrasah, and this is explained by the fact that they are unable to meet the English and ICT requirements of the labour market (28.24% of National University graduates remain unemployed: BIDS study, 2024; Islam et al., 2022). Although recent literature has recognised such attempts at improvement, including national teacher training workshops (Desk, 2025). They have had little practical effect in closing the skill gap.

To date, there is a lack of empirical evidence on the specific challenges faced by Madrasah students as they transition into professional life, highlighting a knowledge gap in the literature. Specifically, there is insufficient empirical evidence regarding the challenges Bangladeshi madrasah students face when transitioning from madrasah to professional life, particularly in language proficiency and social adaptation. This study aims to fill this gap by investigating how these students overcome barriers related to language proficiency and social adaptation to succeed in their careers.

2.6 Theories Related to this Study

For this study, the researcher found no established framework for investigating participants' communicative competence and social adaptation challenges. For this reason, he integrated

communicative competence theory, as developed by Dell Hymes but later polished by Canale and Swain, and Social Adaptation theory, as developed by Yoseoep Edhie Rachmad.

2.6.1 Communicative Competency

Dell Hymes, in the first place, introduced the term ‘communicative competence’ in 1966 and published it in his paper titled ‘On Communicative Competence’ in 1972 and republished in 2001. According to him, Communicative competence encompasses both grammatical and sociolinguistic proficiency (Ahmed & Pawar, 2018). Hymes emphasised that communication is a part of language proficiency, but the whole competence is called communicative competence. After Dell Hymes communicative competence theory in 1972, supporting that in 1980, a refined version of communicative competence theory was published by two Canadian linguists, Michael Canale and Merrill Swain (Eghtesadi, 2017). This model became very influential because of its useful implications for teaching materials, teacher training, instructional methodology, and syllabus design (Taş & Khan, 2020). Canale and Swain operationalised Hyme’s frameworks into four interrelated components. The first one is grammatical competence that includes ones knowledges of ‘lexical items, grammatical rules, syntax, morphology, semantics, and phonology’, secondly the sociolinguistics competence includes ‘the knowledge of what, when, why, when, to whom and how to say something’ in different social situation, thirdly the discourse competence refers to produce the written or oral language maintaining coherence and cohesion, and lastly the strategic competence reference to the verbal and non-verbal communication strategies for dealing with interactional breakdown learning strategies’(Ahmed, 2023; Taş & Khan, 2020).

2.6.2 Social Adaptation

Social adaptation theory was introduced by Yoseoep Edhie Rachmad in 2022 to understand how individuals or groups adapt to different social environments. This need led to the

development of this theory. He defined social adaptation theory as the process through which people modify their behaviour, thoughts, and emotions in response to shifts in their social environment. There are three key functions of this theory, as mentioned by Rachmad. Firstly, the cognitive adaptation encourages interpreting situations from multiple perspectives and adjusting the mindset in a new workplace. Secondly, affective adaptations, which include managing emotional stress during the changes. Finally, behavioural adaptation that assists in altering behaviours and style of interaction to acculturated norms. It is a sociopsychological construct of cognition, emotion, and behaviour alignment in individuals to fit well in new environments. Adaptation is a process that entails cognitive (rethinking self), affective (handling emotional tension), and behavioural (acting differently) changes, all of which are involved in reconstructing identity (Rachmad, 2022).

2.7 Conceptual Framework

This theoretical framework explains the changing process by which students who attended Madrasah in Bangladesh transition into professional life. Rather than a mere cause-and-effect phenomenon, it is a continuous process of interaction between language competence and social adaptation. This process begins with the Madrasah educational background, in which students' linguistic exposure and the socio-religious orientation they encounter shape their early communication patterns. The minimal exposure to English and professional language in their madrasah days tends to limit their initial communicative competence in new professional workplaces.

The first major domain, called Language Proficiency, is based on the idea of communicative competence as introduced by Hymes (1972) and further developed by Canale and Swain (Eghtesadi, 2017). This dimension includes grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic, and strategic competencies that, when combined, enable people to communicate effectively with

one another in various social and professional contexts. For Madrasah students, such proficiency, especially in English, helps them interact, collaborate, and engage effectively in secular or global workplaces.

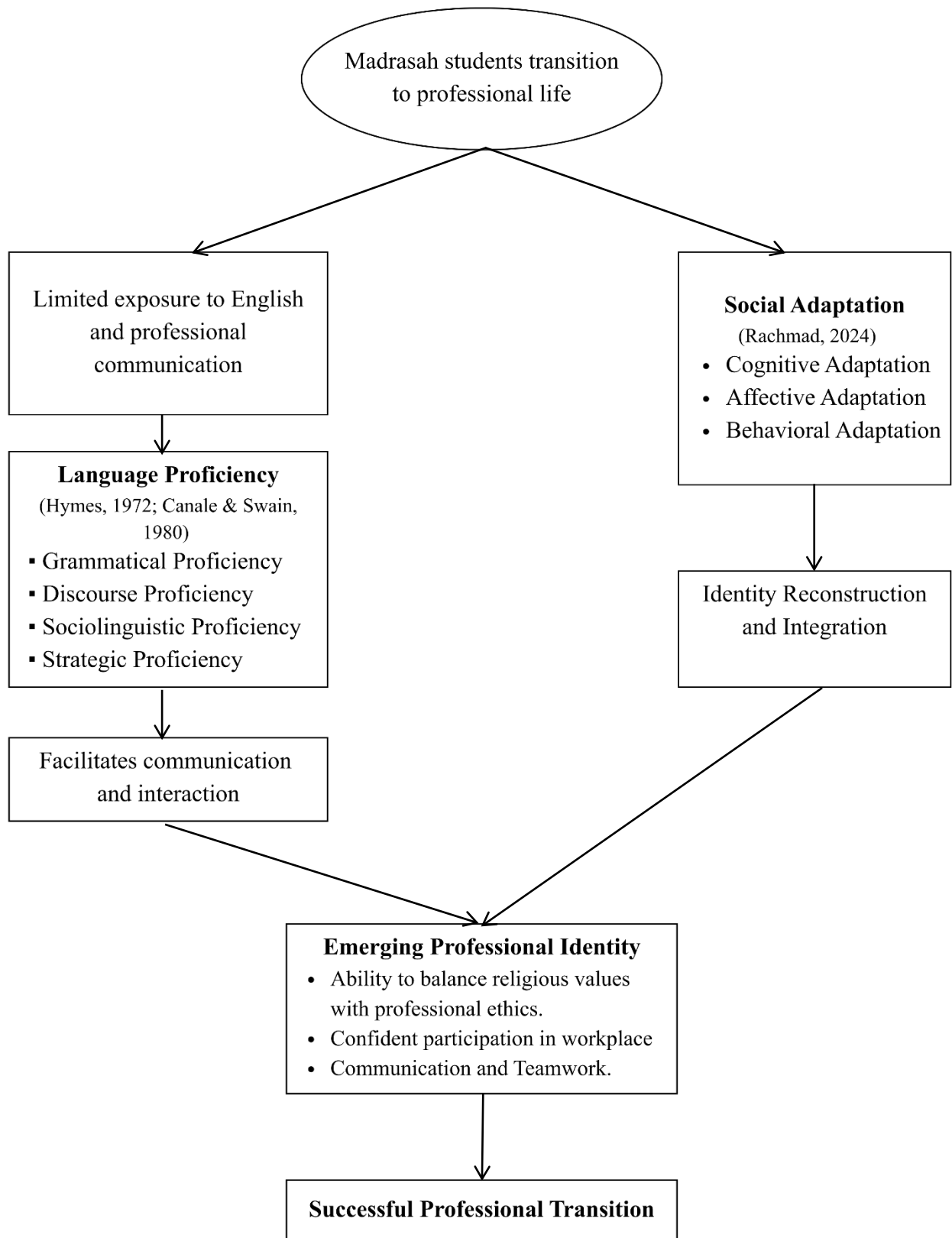


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Students are exposed to a Social Adaptation requirement when they join these new professional environments, which is based on the Social Adaptation Theory developed by (Rachmad, 2022). This has three forms of adjustment that are interrelated: cognitive (interpreting the situation from multiple perspectives and adjusting the mindset in the new workplace), affective (managing emotional stress during the changes), and behavioural (changing behaviours and style of interaction to acculturated norms such as communication style, dressing, and tone). These adaptive processes help individuals to gradually experience Identity Reconstruction and Integration as they seek to strike a balance between their religious background and their new work-related demands.

The ongoing interaction between language proficiency and social adaptation leads to the development of the Emerging Professional Identity, which entails the ability to integrate religious values with professional ethics, to trust in communication, and to work in teams in a multicultural environment. To conclude, this recreated identity facilitates a successful transition into a profession, demonstrating that communicative competence and social adaptation are interdependent, dynamic, and indispensable to professional integration among Bangladeshi Madrasah graduates.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This section outlines the research methodology for conducting this study. Several methods currently exist for investigating the challenges related to language proficiency and social adaptation among Bangladeshi Madrasah students. Each has its advantages and drawbacks. However, the current study utilises a qualitative methodology to critically evaluate how Bangladeshi Madrasah students face and overcome the challenges of transitioning from student life to professional life. This study also examines how they adapt to the norms and cultures of their current professional workplaces. This section presents a detailed account of the participants' selection process, data collection procedures, data analysis framework and the measures taken to ensure the trustworthiness of the study.

3.2 Philosophical Assumptions and the Qualitative Paradigm

According to Creswell et al. (2007), understanding the philosophical assumptions guiding qualitative research begins with determining where it fits within the overall research process, identifying its significance as an element of research, and exploring how to actively incorporate it into a study. They highlight the importance of being aware of these assumptions, as they shape the study's direction. Among the research paradigms, the researcher chose interpretivism, seeking to understand how Bangladeshi Madrasah students face challenges related to language proficiency and social adaptation when transitioning from Madrasah to professional life. The assumption behind interpretivism is that reality is subjective, multiple, and socially made. That is, we can understand someone's reality by their experience of it, which may differ from another person's according to the person's historical or social viewpoints (Hasni et al., 2023). Different people in a society perceive and comprehend the same

“objective” reality in different ways, and different factors influence their actions (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020; Bhattacharjee, 2012, as cited in Nickerson, 2022). The philosophical assumptions underlying the study are drawn from Creswell et al. (2007) table of "Philosophical Assumptions with Implications for Practice” (p.17).

Research Paradigm	Philosophical Assumptions			
	Ontology	Epistemology	Axiology	Methodology
Interpretivism	There can be various perceptions of the communicative challenges and social adaptation experiences of Bangladeshi Madrasah students in professional life.	Understanding communicative challenges, adaptation strategies, and the use of Bengali and English in professional life is subjective and varies from person to person.	The researchers' values and preconceptions, as well as the participants' interpretations, will be discussed.	Qualitative Phenomenological Case Study Approach

Table 1: Philosophical Assumptions and Research Paradigm

According to Creswell et al., (2007) The ontological assumption refers to how individual participants in a study perceive reality. Interpretivism acknowledges multiple social realities. It suggests that reality is not fixed but is constructed by individuals and is context-dependent (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this study, the researchers analysed interviews with Madrasah students and/or graduates currently in the workplace to identify the communicative challenges they face when transitioning from student life to professional life (RQ1). The analyses from participants' interviews show how they overcome the challenges of adapting to professional life (RQ2). An observation (where applicable) found how they utilise their existing communicative competence in Bengali and English in their professional life (RQ3).

The second assumption is epistemology that believes human interpretation and social interactions construct knowledge (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Interpretivism holds that knowledge is subjective and constructed by individuals within specific contexts. In this research, this perspective holds that understanding of communicative challenges, professional adaptation, and workplace language use is subjective and varies from person to person. So, researchers may physically get involved to observe how participants construct their knowledge of professional communication and adaptation through their experiences. The third assumption is axiology that values play an important role in research and should be recognised and accounted for (Denzin, 2008). Interpretivism acknowledges the presence of values and ethics in research (please see section 3.6, “the researcher’s role”). It recognises that researchers and participants bring their values and perspectives to the study. In this research, the researcher is transparent about his values and acknowledges their potential influence on data interpretation. As a researcher has no writing sessions, he omits the rhetorical-philosophical assumption. The final assumption is the methodology; for this research, the researcher adopts a qualitative approach. According to Denzin & Lincoln, (2011) A qualitative approach is useful for understanding subjective experiences and social meanings. In this study, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews. This method helped him to gather rich, context-dependent data that aligns with the interpretive nature of the research paradigm.

3.3 Research Design

This method is particularly useful in conducting in-depth analysis and understanding the core themes. Concentrating on the participant’s point of view offers a detailed understanding (Creswell & Guetterman, 2024). Moreover, the present research is based on a phenomenological research design, as it seeks to investigate the lived communicative experience of Bangladeshi Madrasah students/graduates during their transition from student life to professional life, and how they adapt to these challenges using their own strategies. Thus,

this study aims to answer the following research questions: (i) the communication challenges they face, (ii) the strategies to adapt to communication challenges in professional settings, and (iii) their current social adaptation in professional settings.

3.4 Setting

The current study is set across multiple Bangladeshi environments where Madrasah students are transitioning from academic to professional life. Bangladeshi professional workplaces, such as corporate offices, public-sector institutions, educational institutions, industries requiring English proficiency, and language-learning centres. The main criteria for selecting such institutions are not to investigate the different scenarios of Bangladeshi madrasah students' challenges in Language proficiency and social adaptation while transitioning from Madrasah to Professional environments.

3.5 Selecting the Participants

A qualitative sampling technique involves selecting the number of observations, interviews, focus group discussions, or case studies to facilitate the collection of detailed, insightful data that contribute to the research findings. Thus, to obtain rich information for this study, the researcher has adopted purposive sampling. This technique involved 'the identification of one participant who is relevant to the study, and that participant should lead the researcher to another participant who has the same characteristics until the planned sample is achieved' (Nyimbili & Nyimbili, 2024 p7). The researcher has applied the criteria for selecting the participants for this study.

1. The participants in this study were students from Bangladeshi Madrasah education, more specifically, Aliyah and Qawmi Madrasah.
2. Participants who had completed Dakhil (SSC) and Alim (HSC) from madrasah education were eligible for this study.

3. They had to have employment history in professional settings such as corporate offices, educational institutions, public sectors and industries where the English language is required.
4. The participants were willing to complete the steps; they must complete all the parts of the study.

3.5.1 Participants' Profile

The researcher selected five Madrasah students for the interview. The participants' profiles are given below:

Sl	Name	Education	Age	Profession
1	Bilal	Aliyah Madrasah	28	Researchers
2	Nazmul	Qawmi Madrasah	29	Secondary School Teacher and Editor in a publishing organisation
3	Sabir	Aliyah Madrasah	42	Businessman
4	Nasiruddin	Aliyah Madrasah	44	Lecturer
5	Sagor	Qawmi Madrasah	29	An officer at a private commercial bank in Bangladesh

Table 2: Participants' Profile

3.6 The Researcher's Role

This qualitative research focuses on the language proficiency and social adaptation challenges faced by Bangladeshi Madrasah students during their transition from madrasah to professional settings. The researcher is interested in the topic because he is from a Madrasah background, which has led him to consider how Madrasah graduates are affected by the demands of workplace communication, identity negotiations, and the pressures of workplace adaptation. Thus, according to the interpretivist paradigm, the researcher acknowledges that the study is value-involved and that his own positioning may affect the formulation of research questions, the interpretation of participants' narratives, and the presentation of results.

In this study, the term “researcher” has been used throughout to demonstrate narrative coherence, explain, and present findings. Though interpretivism does not assert absolute detachment of the researcher, the researcher upheld the principles of reflexivity and ethical accountability by constantly considering how his background, assumptions, and expectations could influence his interactions with the participants and his interpretation of their stories. In this regard, the researcher’s role was primarily to interpret the participants' lived experiences, without marginalising them or substituting the researcher’s personal beliefs and experiences for theirs.

Relating axiology to the role of the researcher, he was clear that values and ethics are significant in qualitative inquiry; therefore, he did not ignore his positionality but made it transparent. To minimise methodological bias and enhance the validity of the analysis, inter-rater reliability, member checking, an audit trail, and thick description were employed during the thematic analysis, and one expert examiner revised the themes to ensure the reliability of the interpretations. Through these steps, the researcher sought to ensure that the study presents a valid and reliable examination of the language proficiency and social adjustment issues faced by Bangladeshi Madrasah students in professional life, while also recognising the interpretive nature of qualitative research.

3.7 Data Collection Procedure

3.7.1 Deciding Interview Protocol

To conduct this study, the researcher has adapted Castillo-Montoya’s (2016) Interview Protocol Refinement (IPR) framework (as cited in Shoozan & Mohamad, 2024) to design the semi-structured interview. In the 2nd phase of the IPR framework, researchers have combined the funnel approach (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). The researcher has divided the framework into 7 phases as follows:

Phase 1: Ensuring interview questions align with research questions.

Phase 2: Introducing the study.

Phase 3: Rapport building

Phase 4: Start the interview with open-ended questions.

Phase 5: Narrowing the questions and asking for suggestions.

Phase 6: Receiving feedback on interview protocols and

Phase 7: Piloting interview protocol.

In the first step, interview questions (IQs) were developed to address all aspects of the central research question (see Appendix B: Interview Questions). In the second step, the researcher will enhance participation through a funnel approach: beginning with an introduction explaining the study's need and research questions; in the third step, building rapport to make the interviewer comfortable; and, fourthly, starting with open-ended questions with particular objectives. In the fifth step, the researcher narrows the questions to meet the study's specific needs and seeks suggestions for improvement (Roller & Lavrakas, 2015). This will help the researchers to have an authentic conversation during the interview. In the sixth step, the researcher will review the interview questions with an expert in the field to determine whether the interview protocol is helping progress towards answering the research questions. In the final step, the researcher will pilot the interview protocol to identify flaws in the interview design and modify it accordingly (Shoozan & Mohamad, 2024)

3.8 Data Analysis Procedure

3.8.1 Data Analysis Framework

Thematic analysis is widely recognised as a significant qualitative data analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2019). To carry out this research, the researcher adapted the thematic analysis suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) as cited (Ismail et al., 2022; Labra et al., 2020; Sendze, 2019). This framework demonstrates a practical approach to analysing qualitative data thematically in line with the research questions. It involves initially reading and becoming familiar with the narratives collected through interviews, and later presenting the findings of the study (Ismail et al., 2022). There are six steps of thematic analysis followed by:

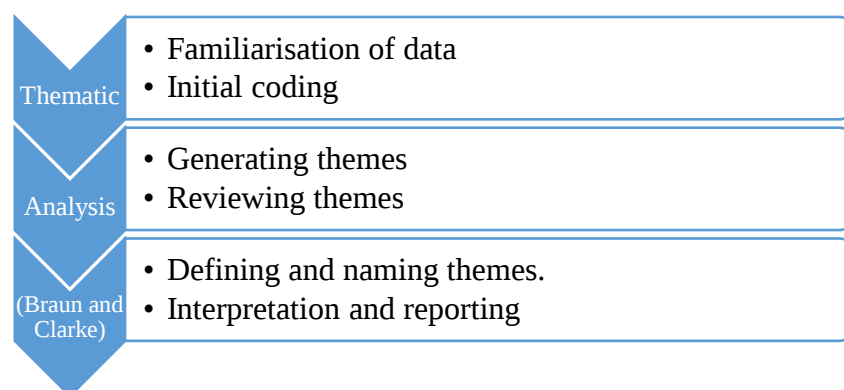


Figure 2: Thematic Data Analysis Framework

The initial stage involves familiarising himself with the data by reviewing the interview transcripts, making observations, and engaging in focus group discussions. The second step covers the process of conducting initial coding (Ismail et al., 2022). To accomplish this stage, the researcher employed a systematic method to organise the data, facilitating the condensation of information into smaller units of meaning. The third phase of the data analysis procedure involves generating themes by examining how codes are used to create broad themes within the data collection. During the fourth phase, the researcher analysed the found themes and proceeded to further develop and improve the preliminary themes that were initially identified

in the third phase (Sendze, 2019). The final stage primarily aimed to establish the integration of the themes and assess their alignment with each research topic.

3.9 Analysing Interviews

To analyse madrasah students' interviews, the researcher transcribes the recordings. The transcriptions went through a coding process using a coding template developed by Ahmad (2017). The coding process included coding, in vivo coding conducted in two cycles, following the methodology described by Saldana (2021, as cited in Kapfudzaruwa, 2025). In the coding cycle, I, the researcher, systematically coded each participant's transcribed interview. Then, in the coding cycle II, the researcher selected significant codes from the transcripts and organised them into separate categories (please refer to Appendix E, Sample Coding, for a list of these categories). These categories were then analysed to identify emerging themes within each case. For a representation of how the themes were generated, please see Appendix F, which includes a sample theme generation template.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Before data collection for this study, the researcher considered the ethical issues. The researcher assured all participants that consent would be obtained. Addressed any concerns they had about audio recording sessions. To assure participants that their privacy would be protected and to honour this commitment, the researcher used pseudonyms for all participants.

3.11 Establishing Trustworthiness and Credibility

In qualitative research, testing the validity of data includes credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Nasir & Sukmawati, 2023). Credibility, which refers to how a study's findings reflect reality, was given importance. To achieve this, the researcher sent the interviews to the participants for feedback, allowing them to express their thoughts on the

accuracy of the data. To incorporate analyst triangulation, the researcher used inter-rater reliability assessments. The agreement among raters regarding the identified themes in the transcriptions was measured as a percentage, as outlined in Appendix D. This approach aligns with the principles of analyst triangulation. According to Pandey & Patnaik (2014), audit trails are used to maintain a track of what was done throughout an investigation. In Appendix H, the researcher carefully maintained an audit trail to provide evidence and ensure the study's thoroughness.

To strengthen the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the study, the researcher implemented measures. An inter-rater reliability agreement, member checking (see Appendix H), an audit trail (See Appendix I), and thick description were employed in the thematic analysis, and one expert examiner revised the themes to ensure the reliability of the interpretations. By doing researcher aimed to establish trustworthiness in this study.

Chapter 4

Results and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of semi-structured interviews conducted with five Bangladeshi Madrasah graduates currently working in professional environments in Dhaka, which were analysed thematically. The three research questions addressed in the analysis are: the challenges of communicative competence participants encountered in their transition to professional life; the strategies they used to address these challenges; and how they applied their current communicative competence in both English and Bengali to professional workplaces. Based on the participants' lived experiences, the chapter presents findings in thematic groups, including background details and the research questions, integrating participants' voices with relevant scholarly literature to create a coherent picture of language proficiency and social adaptation during the professional transitions of Madrasah graduates. In Section 1, the researcher briefly discussed his participants' backgrounds and language-learning experiences. The second section will discuss the communicative challenges participants face when transitioning to the professional workplace. Section three began with their overcoming challenges of communicative adaptation; section four, Bangladeshi madrasah students' social adaptation challenges in professional life; and, lastly, section five, where the researcher will discuss the madrasah students' identity reconstruction after moving from a religious background to a professional secular workplace.

4.2 Section 1: Brief Introduction to the Participants' Background

In this section, the researcher will introduce the five participants of the study in terms of their educational background, current professional status, workplace experiences, and their English learning experiences in madrasah education. The main reason for providing participants with

background details is that this information affects how they transition from madrasah education to the professional workplace.

4.2.1 Participant 1: Bilal

The first participant is Bilal. He is working as a researcher in an international organisation. He has completed his secondary education at Aliyah Madrasah, which is Dakhil-equivalent to the Bangladeshi public examination, HSC. He is currently pursuing a BA Honours in Islamic History and Culture at a National University in Bangladesh. The organisation where Bilal is working is fully English-language-mediated. He cannot use Bengali there because all his colleagues and clients communicate in English.

4.2.2 Participant 2: Nazmul

To introduce the second participant, Nazmul, he is currently pursuing his MA in TESOL at a reputable public university and is also an English teacher at a secondary school in Bangladesh. He also works as an editor in a Bangladeshi publishing organisation. Nazmul studies at Aliyah Madrasah and completed his Alim from there. He found learning the English language in the madrasah challenging. And due to this gap, he suffered in his university-level education and in teaching. But gradually he has developed his knowledge after coming to the university.

4.2.3 Participant 3: Sabbir

The third participant is Sabbir, a young businessman who runs multiple businesses in Bangladesh. As a managing director, his job includes importing surgical and medical devices and cosmetics from other countries into Bangladesh, retail sales of cosmetic products, and related activities. Sabbir completed his primary education from a Qawmi madrasah, and then he moved to Aliyah madrasah. From here, he completed Dakhil. Then moved to general education and was admitted to college for intermediate. Later, he started his bachelor's degree

at a Bangladeshi national university. After completing a bachelor's degree, he moved to England for a master's degree. Throughout his educational journey in madrasah and college, he did not receive sufficient exposure to English. Even though Sabbir did not realise the importance of English in the job sector before leaving Bangladesh.

4.2.4 Participant 4: Nasiruddin

The fourth participant's name is Nasiruddin. He is a lecturer at a Bangladeshi private university. Nasiruddin completed his Dakhil education at Aliyah Madrasah, then moved on to general education. He never had any language exposure in madrasah education. But he mentioned that he received informal English-language instruction from his mentor, who lived in his area. But studying in a Madrasah had a negative impact on the job sector. Due to his madrasah background, he faced discrimination in recruitment in his professional life. Later, he completed his MA from a foreign university, which helped him get a job in Bangladesh.

4.2.5 Participant 5: Sagor

Lastly, the researcher conducted an interview with Sagor, a bank officer at a private commercial bank who completed his secondary education at a Bangladeshi Qawmi Madrasah. His responsibilities at the bank include documentation, internal communication with colleagues, his boss, and clients, and cross-departmental coordination. He shared that he is very good at Quran recitations, and he is trying to maintain basic religious instruction. While the researcher asked him about exposure to English-language learning, he added that he never had the opportunity to learn English for communicative purposes. He only studied to pass the examination. And the madrasah culture also supported that. But when the researcher asked him about the first impression of the workplace, he replied, The first impression of his workplace was 'structured, and communication-driven, especially in English.'

4.2.6 English Language Learning Experiences in Madrasah

When participants were asked about their language learning experience in madrasah education. All participants in this study asserted that madrasah English-language learning was not for communicative purposes. They learned English to pass the exam. They found it not as a language to learn, but as a set of grammar rules, translation, memorisation, and more. Even in madrasah education, they valued passing more than communicative competence. Billal, who completed his education from a madrasah, is now working as a researcher in an international organisation, shared that,

“I used to study only for passing, not beyond that. Grammar was taught in primary level, then it was not really taught much after that... They only taught exam-related topics.” (DU BIL, 18)

Nazmul pointed out that in the madrasah, the grammar-translation method was used to teach English. Where they had to memorise the rules, following some specific suggestions for the examination. As he stated,

English was memorising the rules, following suggestions, taking exams... we still have not been able to move out of grammar-translation”, and there was no real CLT. (DU NAZ 28–30)

Sabbir shared his disappointment that English was not given enough importance in madrasah education. He stated,

In local madrasah was not given much importance... we were completely weak”; in Dhaka, Aliyah Madrasa, English was not given that kind of importance” (DU SAB 16)

Where Nasiruddin shared institutionally, he never received enough exposure from his madrasah. But he used to learn English on his own. He also shared that the madrasah curriculum was behind compared to Bangladeshi general education (DU NAS 8). Supporting this statement, Sagor said learning English in madrasah “was almost non-existent.” He started learning English through mainstream education.

Evidence from participants indicates that in the Bangladeshi madrasah education stream, English is treated as a second language, taught through textbook translation with no communicative use of the language (Golam, 2020; Ahasan et al., 2024). Even though it was taught only to pass exams (Ruman, 2021), English language teaching focuses only on reading and writing and pays less attention to speaking and listening (Ruman, 2022), resulting in limited language proficiency. Consequently, after learning English for a long time, graduates face challenges in real-life communication.

4.3 Section 2: Communicative Challenges while Transitioning from Madrasah to Professional Life.

The transitions from madrasah education to professional environments revealed several complexities in communication. The complexities include linguistic, institutional, sociocultural, and psychological aspects. Participants’ interviews indicated that English learning experiences in madrasah were exam-oriented and less communicatively focused. There was no real-life exposure to language learning. Moreover, joining the professional workplace, they faced significant challenges regarding the English language. In this section, researchers analysed the key themes of language-related challenges faced by students with a madrasah education background as they transitioned to a professional environment.

4.3.1 English Proficiency as a Barrier to Professional Transition

The transition from madrasah education to the professional workplace involves several challenges. These challenges are related to limited English language proficiency. When the participants were asked about their impression of the professional workplace, they reported that in the very beginning, they faced a high demand for English. The professional workplace is more communication-driven, where professionals face difficulties with accents, speech tempo, and formal English when interacting with colleagues, handling client calls, and engaging in international communication.

Bilal stated that he has a serious problem with his accent when speaking with his colleagues. As he stated,

Yes, it was difficult. Because their language, pronunciation, and accent are different. It was a bit more difficult to understand the British accent compared to the American one. (DU BIL, 19–20)

Sharing the first impression of the workplace, Sagor stated that English is very demanding in the workplace. As he noted,

My first impression... was that it was structured, fast-paced, and communication-driven, especially in English.” (DU SAG 12)

Nazmul shared that it was difficult to transition from madrasah education to the workplace because he had to maintain professional language, as he had less exposure to English in the madrasah environment. He said,

When shifting from Madrasa to a secular workplace, he had to maintain a lot of formalities,” and bring a bit of flexibility so as not to go beyond that boundary of madrasah education. (DU NAZ 32)

Nowadays, English has become the gatekeeper to the job market. Sabbir shared that he missed job opportunities due to a lack of proficiency in English. He stated in the interview,

I did not get the airline job because of English... it did not happen because I did not know the language.” (DU SAB 26, 30)

Studies of Bangladesh and other contexts show that employers are gradually becoming more demanding of high English proficiency, and that language is frequently becoming a gatekeeping resource in recruitment and promotion (Islam et al., 2022; Grenier & Zhang, 2021; Rossel & Schroedter, 2021). Again, accent variation and speech tempo can be barriers for graduates who focus on reading and writing rather than listening and speaking (Glomo-Narzoles & Glomo-Palermo, 2021; Shrestha et al., 2020).

4.3.2 Contrast between Madrasah and Workplace Communication

The researcher asked participants about their everyday communication gap between the madrasah and the workplace. They reported experiencing a notable shift from informal, religion-oriented communication norms to more formal, efficacy-oriented norms in the professional workplace. They found several changes in greetings, conversation, gender interactions, and code-switching between English and Bangla. As Sagor said,

Communication in Madrasah was informal and religiously oriented, while workplace communication is professional, goal-oriented, and often bilingual (English and Bengali). (DU SAG 14)

He also highlighted how everyday workplace greetings, such as “Good morning” and “Thank you for your time,” differed from the religious expressions he had used in his earlier life (DU SAG 40).

Sabbir shared that the professional workplace supports more formal English and accent, too, whereas madrasah communication is not like that. He added that,

Madrasa communication was religious-centred with completely weak English, while later work required handling international accents and formal English
(DU SAB 42)

Bilal, who is employed as a researcher, said that he was not given any choice but to use Bengali; instead, he had to speak direct English, for which he does not have enough exposure in madrasah education (DU BIL 26).

These findings highlighted that workplaces required more context-specific norms for communication. In terms of professional language proficiency, madrasah students are not so strong (Al Noor, 2017). Also, they face challenges in adapting to English-mediated environments (Putra & Siregar, 2023). Such a process of professional adaptation creates not only a language barrier but also socio-cultural identity challenges.

4.3.3 Lack of Grammar Competency in Advanced Writing

All respondents said they have sufficient exposure to grammatical competence in madrasah education, but in professional settings, when they need to communicate, they face difficulties. They perceive grammatical knowledge as limited in terms of advanced writing, but during speaking, grammar accuracy is not so important; they face obstacles with vocabulary.

Among them, Nazmul shared “I have faced grammar issues many times... agreement issues... negation... complex compound... double complex sentences.” (DU NAZ 44)” while writing advance English. Nasiruddin stated the similar statement that he also faced weakness in “written English as well” and he suggested” ... we need to implement grammar at a more practical level.” (DU NAS 18). In professional communication such as office meeting, emails,

documentation, Sagor had to struggle with “tense usage or sentence structure in longer emails” (DU SAG 20).

When participants were asked about the grammatical accuracy during speaking, four participants shared that “In speaking... there is flexibility in grammar. I think communication can be done” (DU NAZ 42), while during the office work Sabbir didn’t face any issues and “not to conscious accuracy checks (DU SAB 28–30)”, and Bilal said he “didn’t think about grammar separately” while speaking to his international colleagues (DU BIL 32). A different thought was found from Nasiruddin, since he is learning grammar from early education through a local mentor, he stated that,

We have grammar from a very early stage; we are taught grammar in great quantity. But... our English speaking is not developing well. So, I think in this case... vocabulary or the actual use of English in our daily lives, which is practised less... that is a bigger barrier than grammar... I did not suffer much with grammar. The grammar base was quite good from the beginning. The deficiency I felt was in vocabulary. (Nasiruddin, DU 16–20)

These trends are consistent with findings that grammar-translation and exam-oriented instruction in Bangladesh tend to prepare students only with the rules of grammar, but they are unable to apply English in real-life scenarios (Rahman & Pandian, 2018; Islam et al., 2021). Investigations into Madrasah English specifically show that grammar and reading are the most prominent parts of the curriculum, with little focus on interactive skills, vocabulary, and communicative tasks (Golam, 2020; Ruman, 2021, 2022; Ahasan et al., 2024). In communication, a lack of vocabulary creates a bigger barrier than grammatical issues in everyday situations.

4.3.4 Mistakes Create Barriers in Communication

During interactions, when mistakes cause communication breakdowns or embarrassment, participants feel less confident about starting the conversation again. Bilal shared that, at the very beginning of his job, while interacting with his colleagues, Bengali words sometimes slipped into his English. As he stated,

Yes, at the beginning, when I got nervous, Bengali words would sometimes accidentally come out. But since they did not understand Bengali, I would stop, I would not speak in Bengali. (DU BIL 35–36)

Supporting this statement, Nazmul also shared a story of his early job career. He felt shame and an inferiority complex. He said society helped him reinterpret code-switching and imperfection in a more positive way:

That this thing used to happen before... When I was talking to my colleagues, I suddenly started speaking in Bengali. I used to feel shy or... an inferiority complex. (DU NAZ 60)

The same things experienced by Nasiruddin in London, while he was talking to his friends and colleagues, suddenly he stopped, as he noted,

Yes, it happens. Because outside the class... You mostly mix in the Bangladeshi circle... sometimes I feel that, yes, I am not finding the right word, or I am thinking in Bengali; I cannot understand how to render it correctly in English. (DU NAS 30)

This evidence proves that language anxiety may lead to communicative insecurity. However, confidence will grow as learners have positive interactions and receive social support (Carriedo et al., 2024; Soheili & Lanz, 2025). Favourable colleagues or mentors at the workplace may

also serve as valuable resources that can assist linguistically less proficient employees in gradually developing a sense of competence.

4.3.5 Accent and Linguistic Standardness Create Inequality

When all the participants were asked about their office communication style, especially with colleagues, they reported a gap among them in accents, language style, and Polishness. They were very conscious about their own English compared to their colleagues. These differences create inequality in professional workplace communication.

While he was studying in Malaysia, he heard a variety of accents, including Australian and Middle Eastern ones. It was not easy for him to understand initially. He stated that,

In Malaysia, the pronunciation is a bit different from ours... I became familiar with Australian pronunciation first... many students from the Middle East study there... I became familiar with those changes or variations... Initially, there were problems understanding some of those, but after interacting, I understood them roughly within a few months. (DU NAS 28)

While Sagor observed his colleagues' English and found it more sophisticated, as he said

Yes, colleagues often use more polished and concise expressions, which I gradually adopted. (DU SAG 31–32)

A language user who has insufficient exposure to English in speaking and listening may have difficulty understanding accents. On the one hand, users with higher proficiency can focus more on relevant speech cues (Gruter et al., 2023; Lizarazu et al., 2021). In an international workplace, if a language user has greater exposure to the language and sufficient practice, they can fit in with native-speaking colleagues. This situation is a disadvantage for those with less

exposure to English. Eventually, it led them to an abstract professional and social hierarchy (Rossel & Schroedter, 2021; Vajirakachorn et al., 2023).

4.4 Section 3: Overcoming the Adapting Challenges in Professional Settings

4.4.1 Self-Directed Learning Strategies

One of the prevailing trends was autonomous, technology-mediated learning, which usually offsets poor institutional support. Bilal used Google, online dictionaries, and translation sites to get the meaning of complex passages, and Nazmul used peer and teacher assistance with Grammarly and ChatGPT when most of his writing went online. Nasiruddin noted the importance of mentors and diverse settings in developing his English, and Sagor noted learning mostly through observation and practical life experience.

Bilal explained his independent problem-solving approach:

I learned this on my own. If I did not understand a passage, I would research it myself, use Google Translate, or consult a dictionary... I used a dictionary, Google, Wikipedia, or translation sites. (Bilal, DU BIL 22, 43–44)

Nazmul supplemented peer and teacher help with advanced tools as he progressed:

At that time, I used to solve these issues by sometimes seeking help from peers and showing my friends. Or it happened that I had to take help from teachers too... now, since our... ninety per cent of my writing is fully computer-based... Grammarly... ChatGPT. (DU NAZ 46)

Nasiruddin benefited from mentor-assisted learning and international exposure:

There were people in the area, especially my mentors, who always inspired and helped me to move forward with my own efforts in English... I have mastered it

by working in various environments and observing the situation. (DU NAS 8, 22)

Sagor employed observation and practice:

Mostly through observation and real-life practice. (DU SAG 35–36)

These tactics are connected with more general results that adult language users are inclined to use digital tools and self-directed methods to acquire English, although they are not explicitly offered institutional training (Mohd Fisal et al., 2025). Research on Madrasah and vocational environments in South and Southeast Asia also demonstrates that motivated students tend to go beyond the curriculum, using online sources and informal support networks to fulfil the world's communication requirements (Akter, 2021; Ahasan et al., 2024).

4.4.2 Formulaic Writing to Advanced Writing

Participants believed that their resources were limited and their expectations were higher in written professional communication, particularly in emails and reports. They were very dependent on memorised chunks, templates, and imitated patterns, yet complex sentence structure and a formal tone remained challenging.

According to Nazmul, issues of subject-verb agreement, negation and complex sentence constructions were observed when attempting to compose an advanced writing:

Yes, yes. I have faced grammar issues many times. For example, agreement issues will arise, negation will arise, complex sentences, complex-compound sentences, double-complex sentences—you will try to use these kinds of multiple-folded sentences. (DU NAZ 44)

Sagor remembered that it was difficult at first to grasp the formal emails; later, the situation changed into getting better with experience and practice:

Initially, I struggled to fully understand formal email language, but this improved with experience. (DU SAG 21–22)

These challenges indicate that writing in the workplace demands more than just grammatical accuracy; it also requires genre knowledge, sensitivity to the audience, and a suitable register. A study of English as a professional and academic language has shown that most graduates can write exam essays but are less proficient in writing concise, polite, and purpose-driven emails, reports, and applications (Javanmiri & Bdaiwi, 2021; Ong et al., 2022). This is especially challenging for Madrasah graduates who's training often did not involve such activities.

4.4.3 Error Correction Through Digital Tool

According to the participants, explicit correction by colleagues was low; they were able to correct errors using digital tools and informal assistance. Workplaces were also more inclined to value clarity and hard work than perfect English, which alleviated some of the anxiety about errors.

Nazmul described in detail the use of peer feedback, teacher support, and such tools as Grammarly and ChatGPT to refine his writing:

To be frank, now that I am a postgraduate student... at that time, I used to solve these issues by sometimes seeking help from peers and showing them to my friends. Or it happened that I had to take help from teachers too... now, since our... ninety per cent of my writing is fully computer-based... There are lots of tools here... Grammarly... ChatGPT's word extension ultimately makes our grammar error-free. (NAZ DU 46)

Sagor mentioned that colleagues were supportive and focused on whether his message was clear rather than on every grammatical error:

Colleagues are supportive and focus on clarity rather than mistakes.” (DU SAG 23–24)

These results are consistent with research on technology-mediated language learning, which indicates that AI-based writing aids and online dictionaries are increasingly popular among non-native professionals who use these tools to check grammar, vocabulary, and style (Chen et al., 2024; Ibrahim & Sani, 2023). Although these tools do not necessarily develop profound proficiency, they may assist users in achieving superficial accuracy and gaining confidence, particularly when used in combination with real-life practice and human feedback.

4.4.4 Audience-Sensitive Style Adjustment

Participants demonstrated sociolinguistic awareness by adapting their style to the audience, hierarchy, and context. Nasiruddin stated that his communication shifted depending on “whom I am communicating with,” and linked this mastery to experience in “various environments.” Sagor explained that he adjusted tone, vocabulary and structure when addressing clients, seniors, or peers, and consciously assessed the required level of formality.

Nasiruddin explained his contextual awareness:

Yes, definitely. Depending on whom I am communicating with... I have mastered it by working in various environments and observing the situation.
(DU NAS 22)

Sagor provided concrete examples:

I adjust tone, vocabulary, and structure depending on whether I am speaking to clients, seniors, or peers... I assess formality and audience. (DU SAG 29–30, 63–64)

Such style-shifting is a manifestation of the social aspect of communication abilities. It refers to speakers' use of appropriate words and tones across different cases and conversations with different people (Taş & Khan, 2020; Vance, 2021). South Asian multilingual workplaces have been studied, revealing that workers tend to adapt their formality, language, and style depending on what is expected by bosses, coworkers, or clients. They can also alternate between English and the local language as needed (Ismail & Pek, 2023; Rahman, 2022).

4.4.5 Clarification and Repair Strategies in Workplace Communication

In cases of misunderstanding, the participants used clarification strategies rather than stopping communication. Sagor gave an intentional order, rephrasing at first in English and code-switching to the Bengali language if needed. He also added that using professional language in the workplace makes him more confident when communicating.

Sagor explained his repair strategy:

I rephrase first, then switch to Bengali if needed. I feel confident doing this now... Yes, mixing languages helps during quick clarifications. (DU SAG 53–54, 65–66)

These habits demonstrate strategic ability. It implies that people are aware of how to correct communication issues. They may request assistance or resort to other means to convey their thoughts due to a lack of knowledge of appropriate words (Aslonova, 2020; Nigmatovna, 2021). Studies have shown that effective professionals are likely to repeat or alter their words to ensure understanding. In mixed-language work environments, they also use multiple languages to facilitate others' understanding (Glomo-Narzoles & Glomo-Palermo, 2021; Dai et al., 2022).

4.4.6 Confidence Growth through Exposure and Social Support

The exposure allowed the participants to gain confidence over time through relational support and a new meaning of language. Bilal credited his improvement, at least in part, to an elder brother in the UAE who urged him to learn English. Nazmul said that studying sociolinguistics had altered his attitude towards language and led to a lessening of shame; Sagor attributed his increased confidence to positive feedback and accrued experience.

Bilal attributed growth to familial support:

My elder brother used to live in the UAE. I learned a lot from him. He used to inspire me to learn English. (DU BIL 39–40)

Nazmul reported ideological reframing:

“Now, since I understand how language deals, why it deals... since I have studied language and society, how language works in society, I understand sociolinguistics, so these things don’t work.” (Nazmul, DU 60)

Sagor emphasised positive colleague feedback:

Positive feedback from colleagues... My confidence has significantly improved.
(DU SAG 83–84, 103–104)

This increase in confidence is consistent with research findings. A considerable number of successful communications, favourable responses, and experience in real-life situations develop self-confidence in communication (Carriedo et al., 2024; Soheili & Lanz, 2025). Research on language anxiety has shown that when people learning languages recognise errors as part of the learning process rather than as a failure, they experience reduced anxiety (Al-Hasani, 2023; Momen, 2025; Roy et al., 2020). This mode of thinking is significant for

Madrasah graduates, as some citizens continue to believe that they have low English proficiency (Ali & Anwar, 2021; Mridula & Bin Ahsan, 2025).

4.4.7 Section 4: Social Adaptation in Professional Life

In this section, the researcher will discuss the participants' challenges in adapting to the professional workplace during their transition from a religious environment. There are several social adaptations the participants have faced, such as cognitive adaptation, affective adaptation and behavioural adaptation (see the section 2.6.2 Social Adaptation) (Rachmad, 2022). The researcher has presented the participants' data using a key theme.

4.4.8 Challenges of Navigating Professional Norms

The researcher asked participants about their biggest worries upon entering the professional workplace regarding norms. Because the madrasah religion background is different, students are socialised to interact according to the religion-oriented norms, which makes them uncomfortable when they interact in a secular corporate place (Al-Hasani, 2023; Momen, 2025; Roy et al., 2020).

Nazmul shared that “we are a product of the system, we have to deal in such a way that okay, since everyone wants it this way, I don’t need to be so creative” (DU Naz 68). Sabbir added that he faced linguistic and cultural challenges; for example, when he went to Europe for higher studies in 2013, he took a job at a drive-thru and did not understand some of their norms. Because at that time, he did not have enough cultural exposure. He shared that someone asked him the location. He clearly showed him the location, then the person told him, “See you”. Sabbir thought maybe that person wanted him to see or come with him. He was “walking behind him” for a long time. And suddenly that person saw him and asked why he was there. Later, Sabbir understood “see you means goodbye” (DU SAB 53).

Further, the researcher asked the participants about the difference between their religious and professional communication norms. Among them, Nazmul shared that, between his madrasah and secular workplace, he tried to be flexible in accepting both. He further said that,

We who study in Madrasas are told everywhere to follow religious customs. But in Madrasas, it is dealt with very strictly, because a Madrasa is specified for religious studies. When I transition from Madrasa to a secular or general workplace, some common issues arise. Besides, collaborating with them and maintaining the many formalities necessary in work. (DU NAS 32)

Where Sagor noted that,

Religious communication is value-based; professional communication is efficiency-based... (DU SAG 78)

Later, the participants were asked, while they were attending the madrasah culture, whether they had received any training to manage these workplace challenges. Nasiruddin said he received good guidance from his teacher on the job market and the secular workplace. He said, “Madrasa environment and mentors gave practice and motivation for the job market (DU NAS 8).” Supporting this, Sagor added that, “Madrasah discipline helped with patience and focus for the secular places (DU SAG 80).”

This evidence indicates that madrasah norms are much stricter regarding the religious, spiritual, and moral values transmitted within the system. Where the secular workplaces are open-minded and more professional norms are there (Rubtcova et al., 2017).

4.4.9 Interaction with the Opposite Gender and Perceived Discrimination in the Workplace

This theme explores the participants' adaptation problem with the opposite gender while they are transitioning from a religious gender-segregated background to a professional secular workplace. It also shows their experiences of discrimination by colleagues and job recruiters due to their madrasah-based religious background. While some of the participants reported that they never faced any direct discrimination, they had problems with their madrasah background and mixed-gender issues in the secular workplace. As Nasiruddin shared, because he had a madrasah certificate, he was not hired for a better job. But when he completed the foreign degree, it polished his other certificates and created opportunities to get a job. As he stated,

“If I only had my Madrasa background and only local education, they didn't recruit me, quite frankly.” (DU NAS 38)

Sabbir added one of his close friends, who experienced discrimination in the Bangladeshi Job sector and is currently working as a judge at the Bangladesh Supreme Court. He shared that,

In our circle, those who applied for government jobs, they were given a tag 'Jamaat'... Because of their studies in the Madrasa, many did not receive job offers. One of my friends is in the Supreme Court now. After completing madrasah education, he applied for more than 100 jobs in Bangladesh. When job recruiters see his certificate is from a madrasah, they never call him for an interview (DU SAB 66).

After joining the job, many have to adapt to the mixed-gender norms in the workplace. Nazmul found he had problems with women's dress-up and their interactions with him. He stated,

Sometimes there are problems with female dress-up, too... self-adaptation can become a problem. Besides, their conversation, their style... we sometimes face.” (DU NAZ 70)

He also added that sometimes he has to face challenges while talking to the student’s female guardian, too, he said,

I have to face female students and female guardians as well... (DU Naz 74)

Nasiruddin said he has no problem with female colleagues, as he studied at a foreign university where the environment was more inclusive than the Bangladeshi one. He elaborates that,

If there is any atheist colleague or... My experience abroad, not that problematic. Because, especially if I talk about Canada, there, nobody really minds the other; everyone does their own thing. But, in that inclusiveness, I will not say anything to anyone, nor will anyone say anything to me. That, abroad, I think, is practised more. (DU NAS 48)

Compared to Bangladesh and abroad, he shared his experience with dressing and his appearance in the workplace. He said,

In our country ... that when they see beard-tupi-punjabi, they wrinkle their nose a bit or look down... There is a tendency to poke our nose into others’ work. So, I see that in some cases.

Linked to Sagor’s statement, he had to maintain “proper formal dress up” in an office setting and a “clean shave,” which was not easy for him after coming from a madrasah background. But he adjusted to the situation (DU SAG 96).

From the above findings, it is proven that madrasah students feel shy when talking to the opposite gender. As they have come to the religious gender segregated background where

women observe modesty with hijab, niqab or covered them wholly, it is difficult for them to work with female colleagues who are using standard workplace formal attire (Rubtcova et al., 2017). Again, the madrasah student has to suffer discrimination in the job market because of having religious attire, such as a Tupi, a Panjabi, and sporting a beard (No faith in the labour market, 2023).

4.4.10 Behavioural and Linguistic Adaptation

To address these gaps, the participants explained that they engaged in intentional self-adjustment to fit into the work environment and minimise stigma associated with their Madrasah background. Their strategies covered both how they spoke and how they presented themselves in terms of dress, behaviour, and disclosure of educational history.

Bilal clarified that he could control his speech by slowing down and pausing, which not only helped him process his speech, but also made it easier to understand by others:

Yes, I try to speak a bit slowly, pausing in between. This way, I can speak in an organised manner, and it is also easier to listen to. (DU BIL 38)

Nazmul explained the flexibility and religious boundaries when operating in secular spaces, as he said that he attempted to avoid boundaries prescribed by his religion but still adapted to the surroundings:

When I shift from Madrasa to a secular or general workplace... religion has given some restrictions. So, this thing actually has to be mixed up or done more or less... bringing a bit of flexibility to it... so that, with the religious boundary that exists, I do not go beyond that boundary. (DU NAZ 32)

Nasiruddin himself acknowledged that he occasionally actively hid his Madrasah background during job applications because he feared that his previous education would be questioned, despite having acquired foreign degrees:

I can also say because I tried for jobs at two or three other universities before BRAC... if I had not been educated abroad... if I only had my Madrasa background and I had studied only in the country, then I would not have been recruited, that is my assumption... Yes, I actively do that [conceal Madrasah background]. Because... in our country, when applying for a job anywhere, you have to provide certificates from SSC onwards... There is an obstacle... even if someone has studied abroad, there is an opportunity to question their earlier academic background... So, to that end, I have somewhat actively censored it.

(DU NAS 36–40)

Nasiruddin also added that while he is staying in Canada, sometimes he “wears Punjabi occasionally.” Sagor added that his reserved style was initially observed by colleagues; however, with time, he started to wear more formal clothes and use more professional greetings:

Initially, colleagues noticed my reserved style, but I adapted quickly... Yes—formal dress, professional greetings. (DU SAG 45–46, 89–90)

These strategies mirror research on social and professional adaptation, which shows that individuals from minority or non-mainstream educational backgrounds often manage stigma by selectively hiding aspects of their identity, adjusting their visible behaviour, and learning “how things are done” in the new environment (Gajda, 2015; Jabłońska et al., 2022; Terziev, 2019). Empirical studies on Madrasah graduates and Islamic education suggest that they may feel pressure to prove they are “modern” or “professional” enough, leading to subtle forms of

self-monitoring and identity negotiation in the workplace (Ali & Anwar, 2021; Ehsan & Khanom, 2025).

4.5 Section 5: Identity Reconstruction

4.5.1 Negotiated Madrasah Identity with Secular Places

This theme explores the extent to which Bangladeshi madrasah students can balance their religious identity in a professional, secular setting. How do they identify themselves in workplace situations, and do they prefer to use their madrasah identity on social media? And what do they feel about their new cultural and linguistic identity in secular places? Nazmul shared religious identity balancing in the workplace. He shared that I have balanced keeping religion as a top priority with “flexibility” in secular workplaces, so he can collaborate and maintain formalities without crossing religious boundaries (DU Naz 32, 68–70).

Nasiruddin shared that he can practice freely abroad, where inclusivity is explicitly promoted; he said,

In Bangladesh, progressive circles may demote conservative identity, so he adopts techniques to protect himself (DU Nas 36, 48)

Sagor shared that he gradually adapted to the situation after entering the job sector. He added that,

shifting from informal, religiously oriented Madrasah talk to professional, goal-oriented and bilingual communication, plus adapting dress and greetings to workplace culture (DU Sag 13–14, 89–90).

The researcher then asked participants about their sharing of madrasah identity on social media. Nazmul shared that he has no “hesitation about Madrasa identity in professional profiles” (DU Naz 76). While Nasiruddin hides his Madrasah background on his CV and online profile, and his identity is pressured by systemic Islamophobia and credential gatekeeping in the professional job market, he actively censors his Madrasah identity online and sees this as

necessary identity management (DU Nas 42, 47). Later, foreign degrees help as a mask to cover up a madrasah background (DU Nas 58). Sabbir and Sagor became comfortable using bilingual professionalism who uses clear English and Bengali strategically depending on context, while maintaining professional norms (DU SAG 13–14; DU SAB 30).

From the above findings, participants' foreign degrees can serve as a mask, concealing their madrasah academic certificates and providing them with the opportunity to enter the job market. Illustrating English is a linguistic capital which can be used as a strategic display to get value in professional work (Grenier & Zhang, 2021; Rossel & Schroedter, 2021). On the other hand, adaptation is the process by which people adjust their behaviours and competencies to the professional environment. This adaptation process helps navigate dress and appearance in professional settings, protecting religious identity while aligning with professional norms. (Gajda, 2015; Katsaros, 2025; Terziev, 2019).

4.5.2 Confidence grows through reflection and Experience.

Participants' confidence in communication changed from student life to the professional workplace. Bilal said that while speaking English with international colleagues, his Bangla words suddenly came out. Later, he has improved using the slow, organised technique, and he is now confident enough to speak English (DU BIL 36–38). Similarly, Nazmul shared,

Earlier, he felt shyness and inferiority when code-switching and encountering gaps in grammar; after studying language and sociolinguistics and gaining experience, he is “more conscious than before,” and those feelings no longer work (DU Naz 60, 68).

Nasiruddin has a vocabulary problem while talking to colleagues and peers. He has improved the situation, he stated,

...early lexical gaps and code switching were more problematic, but through interaction in Malaysia/Canada and success in IELTS and teaching, the confidence has grown now (DU Nas 28–30, 44).

Sabbir shared that his confidence has grown more now than it did during madrasah education. He elaborated that his confidence improved after going to London and working in a drive-thru; he described an “English journey” that started there and, in interviews, gained control through clarification (DU Sab 26, 48, 62). A similar answer was given by Sagor. He added,

At first, mistakes undermined my confidence, but over time, with experience and observation, my confidence in professional English improved (DU SAG 26, 82).

Shyness, inferiority, and communication breakdown can cause psychological stress and social isolation. But it can be reduced through higher proficiency support and institutional integration (Soheili et al., 2025; Savka et al., 2023; Pikulytska, 2022). These stories of growing confidence in English language proficiency can increase job opportunities, as English is viewed as linguistic capital.

Chapter 5

Conclusions

5.1 Major Findings

This study investigates the challenges faced by Bangladeshi madrasah students when transitioning from madrasah education to the workplace. The first research question addresses the communicative competency challenges they face when entering the job market; the second addresses their strategies for overcoming these challenges; and the third addresses the adaptation challenges they face in transitioning from their religious background to the secular workplace.

Regarding the communication challenges, the findings show that madrasah students face linguistic, social, and identity challenges while entering the professional workplace. Eventually, they develop the strategies to adapt to the situation. Most participants agreed that English proficiency was the most challenging aspect during transitions, including formal English, accents, and the use of a professional tone and language when managing international clients and meetings. As madrasah students come from a more exam-oriented, GTM-based English-learning background, this creates a barrier to their entry into the job market. Participants also notice a gap between madrasah and the professional workplace: madrasah is more religious and gender-segregated, whereas the workplace is secular and requires bilingual communication, mixed-gender interactions, and professional greetings. Moreover, madrasah religious background norms are modesty, female gender separation; students who come from this place face discrimination when entering the job market. Again, given the initial madrasah norms, they faced communication issues with women in the workplace. Due to a madrasah-issued certificate, they missed out on job opportunities in Bangladesh. However, over time, students have developed their own strategies through self-learning, mentors, and online tools

such as ChatGPT, Grammarly, and dictionaries, enabling them to function professionally. In terms of adaptation, participants become flexible to maintain their religious identity in the professional workplace.

5.2 Contribution of the study

5.2.1 Implications for Knowledge

The existing literature has extensively addressed English proficiency as a form of linguistic capital and social adaptation as a psychological and sociocultural process in education and workplaces, but there are still few empirical descriptions that link both processes to the lived experiences of Bangladeshi Madrasah graduates in professional life. This paper fills that gap by documenting how graduates encounter communicative challenges (e.g., speaking in the workplace, interactional norms, and professional writing), their coping mechanisms, and their strategic use of both Bangla and English to operate in the workplace.

Notably, the research contributes to the body of knowledge by demonstrating that the concept of language proficiency at transition cannot be understood simply as grammar or vocabulary; it is communicative competence that encompasses discourse, sociolinguistic, and strategic elements evident in graduates' real-world workplace communication. Simultaneously, the findings suggest that social adaptation is not an independent phenomenon that occurs after language learning; rather, adaptation (cognitive, affective, and behavioural adjustment) is built alongside communicative competence as graduates negotiate expectations, confidence, identity, and belonging in mainstream institutions. Thus, the study contributes to the current body of knowledge on professional transition among Madrasah graduates by conceptualising the process as an interactive phenomenon in which language resources and adaptation strategies mutually influence the emergence of professional identity.

5.2.2 Implications for Theories

This study is based on the theories of communicative competence (Canale & Swain, 1980; Hymes, 1972) and Social Adaptation and applies these approaches to interpret the transition of Madrasah graduates as more than a linear deficit-to-skill process. The current study explores why communicative challenges persist in the Bangladeshi madrasah context despite years of formal English-language learning. It also examines the coping mechanisms that madrasah students use to adapt to the professional workplace, with respect to communicative language competence and social adaptation. These investigations analyse participants' experiences in terms of the four competencies (grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, strategic) and the three functions of adaptation (cognitive, affective, behavioural).

Besides that, the research theorises that the central concept in this transition is identity reconstruction: graduates do not merely learn workplace English but also learn how to establish themselves as legitimate members of professional communities whilst balancing religious values and professional demands. This theoretical framing helps bridge a gap in which Madrasah-related studies tend to treat English proficiency, employability, and marginalisation as distinct areas, rather than as interrelated aspects of professional integration. Thus, the researcher has created a framework for this study, taking the major domain, which is called Language Proficiency and is based on the idea of communicative competence as introduced by Hymes (1972) and further developed by Canale, and the social adaptations theory developed by Rachmad (2022).

5.2.3 Implications for Pedagogy

The investigation suggests that to enhance English performance in Madrasah settings, there is a need to increase teachers' awareness that English communication in the workplace does not affect performance in exams, memorised writing, or individual grammar drills. As the

transition challenges of participants are directly related to the communicative skills of confidence, interactional norms, and the use of specific language in particular situations, the English teaching in Madrasahs should be more focused on communicative activities that approximate real professional tasks (e.g., speaking in a meeting, explaining oneself in an appropriate manner, negotiating a misunderstanding, writing a short professional text).

Moreover, teacher development programs can be more efficient if they are explicitly linked to the elements of communicative competence (primarily, sociolinguistic and strategic competence) to help teachers realise what type of English students will require outside exams. In this regard, the study will also urge the stakeholders of Madrasah ELT to view English as a complementary subject rather than a competing topic to religious education, but as an enabling tool that can increase students' involvement in higher education and career life without compromising identity.

5.2.4 Implications for Society

At the societal level, the findings suggest that the entry of Madrasah graduates into mainstream academic and professional settings is a valuable form of social mobility that should be acknowledged and supported. Since English is used as a gatekeeping tool in most workplaces, the lack of equal access to communicative competence can recreate inequality even when graduates possess similar levels of motivation, religious literacy, or overall education. Consequently, the language development and social integration of Madrasah graduates are not only educational issues but also issues of inclusion and equity, since they enhance the potential of a significant educational community to engage in national building and professional networks. Promoting such mobility also entails appreciating the bilingual resources of graduates (Bangla + English). Besides establishing the workplace and institutional environments in which they can adjust without being stigmatised.

5.2.4 Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, the researcher has proposed several recommendations for policymakers, curriculum designers, teachers, educators, and future researchers.

- This study urges policymakers to implement communicative language teaching (CLT) and the professional formal linguistics norms, such as emails and meeting presentations, focusing on listening and speaking in madrasah education.
- Teachers training centres and BMTTI are requested to provide CLT training, digital tools-related education, and task-based learning to the teacher and educator.
- Institutions can establish different types of workshops and seminars for madrasah graduates, such as CV writing, interview skills, professional communication norms, etc.
- During job recruitment, the employer should review the job requirements and make a fair evaluation process for the madrasah student.
- This study involved a small number of Bangladeshi Aliyah and Qawmi students in Dhaka. Future researchers can focus on diverse sectors across regions and genders.

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Appendix A. Letter of Consent for Participants

Dear participant,

My name is Sahadat Hossain, I am currently pursuing MA in Applied Linguistics & ELT at the Department of English and Humanities at Brac University, Dhaka.

My research title is “From Madrasah to Professional Life: Communicative Competency and Social Adaptation Challenges faced by Bangladeshi Madrasah Students”. The main aim of this study is to explore how Bangladeshi Madrasah students navigate communicative competence and social adaptation challenges as they transition from Madrasah into professional environments. For being the part of study, you must complete 45 minutes of interview.

The interview session will be recorded and only be used for the purpose of the study and will not be disclosed to anyone. Moreover, in this study, to make your identity confidential I will be using a pseudonym.

If you would like to be a part of this study, please read the details given in the consent form on the next page and sign it. Your cooperation in conducting this study will be highly appreciated.

Thank you.

Sahadat Hossain

MA in Applied Linguistics & ELT

Department of English and Humanities, Brac University

Phone No. +8801752843416. Email: sahadat.hossain2@g.bracu.ac.bd

CONSENT

I have read and I understand the information provided and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and without cost. I agree to be video, and audio taped for my voice and face. I am allowing the researchers to contact me using the following phone number or email address for further clarification after the data collection. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

Participant's Name _____

Signature_____

Date _____

Phone No. _____

Email address. _____

Appendix B. Interview Question

IQ No.	Interview Question	RQ1	RQ2	RQ3
Section 1: Background & Demographics				
1.	Could you please tell me a bit about yourself, your current job, where you work, and what your role involves?			
2.	What is your age?			
3.	What type of Madrasah did you attend (Aliya/Qawmi)? How long did you study there?			
4.	What subjects or languages were you most exposed to during your Madrasah education?			
5.	How would you describe your English learning experience in Madrasah?	✓		
Section 2: Transition & First Impressions				
6.	What was your first impression of the professional environment when you joined your job?	✓		
7.	Can you describe how your daily communication in Madrasah differed from your daily communication at work?	✓		
Section 3: Grammatical Competence				
8.	Can you give examples of phrases, greetings, or ways of showing respect that felt different?	✓		
9.	How did colleagues react when your communication style was different? How did you adjust?	✓		
10.	How do you decide when to use English and when to use Bengali in the workplace?			✓
11.	Are there times when mixing languages (code-switching) helps communication?			✓
12.	What do you think about your own English grammar knowledge?	✓		
13.	Do you consciously focus on grammatical accuracy when speaking?	✓		
14.	Did you find any grammatical issues while attending emails, meetings, or calls?	✓		
15.	How do colleagues respond when you make grammatical errors?	✓		
16.	Have those mistakes ever affected your confidence in communication?	✓		
17.	Did you notice differences in sentence structure or word use compared to colleagues?	✓		
18.	Did any of them make you feel most insecure or cause difficulties at work?	✓		
19.	How did you try to overcome these issues?		✓	
50.	How was your English grammar in Madrasah compared to now? Can you give an example of a grammatical mistake you made at work that still bothers you?	✓		
Section 4: Discourse Competence				

21.	Have you developed personal strategies over time? How do you organize your ideas when writing professional emails or giving presentations in English?		✓	✓
22.	Do you follow any particular format or tone, such as linking phrases or summaries to stay clear?		✓	
23.	Have you learned this style by observing others or through experience?		✓	
24.	How do you handle confusion or misunderstanding in written or spoken communication?		✓	
25.	When you couldn't express something clearly or were misunderstood, do you rephrase, switch to Bengali, use gestures, or ask for clarification?		✓	
26.	How confident do you feel when doing this?		✓	
27.	Can you share a situation where you successfully handled such a challenge?		✓	
28.	Have you developed your own strategies over time to avoid repeated issues?		✓	
29.	Did your organization, supervisor, or colleagues provide any training or mentoring that helped your communication or adaptation?		✓	
30.	How do you adjust your English communication based on different workplace situations (for example, formal meetings, casual chats, emails)?		✓	
Section 5: Sociolinguistic Competence				
21	In your Madrasah, how did you show respect when speaking to teachers or elders in English (or about English)? Did you use different words, tones, or phrases?	✓		
52.	When you started working, how different was showing respect to your boss or senior colleagues? What changed in your language or behaviour?	✓		
31.	What differences did you notice between religious and professional communication norms?	✓		
32.	Did you take any specific steps to adjust to your professional world?		✓	
33.	Have you ever faced any discrimination from your colleagues on the basis of your schooling?	✓		
34.	Did you ever have any problem to mix with female colleagues?	✓		
41.	How do you communicate with people from different cultural or linguistic backgrounds at work?	✓		
53.	Do you feel it is more effective to use Bengali sometimes? Why or why not? Does your organisation have any rules about which language to use?			✓
Section 6: Strategic Competence				
20.	How have your colleagues influenced the way you communicate or adapt at work?		✓	
35.	How did you manage feelings like nervousness, hesitation, or stress when speaking English in front of others?		✓	
36.	What made you feel more comfortable or confident in these situations?		✓	

37.	Did any colleague or mentor help you emotionally adjust?		✓	
54.	What do you read in English at work or in your free time (emails, reports, novels, social media)? How often?		✓	
55.	How do you currently develop your English skills?		✓	
Section 7: Cognitive Adaptation				
56.	When you first started working, what were your biggest concerns or worries?		✓	
57.	Did your Madrasah training or experiences help you think differently about challenges at work? In what way?		✓	
Section 8: Affective Adaptation				
42.	When you tried to adapt your behaviours (greeting, dress, interaction), did you ever feel angry, frustrated, or stressed? How did you handle it?		✓	
Section 9: Behavioural Adaptation				
38.	Did you change how you dress, greet, or behave to fit better into your workplace culture? Can you describe a specific example?		✓	
39.	Was it easy or difficult to make these changes?		✓	
40.	Did these changes affect how others treated you?		✓	
49.	Is there anything else you'd like to share about your experience transitioning from Madrasah to professional life?		✓	
Section 10: Identity Reconstruction & Communicative Growth				
43.	How do you balance your religious or cultural identity from Madrasah with your professional identity today?		✓	
44.	How has your confidence in communication changed from student life to your current career stage?			✓
45.	How do you evaluate your own communication growth?		✓	
46.	What remains challenging?	✓		
47.	How do you feel about your linguistic and cultural identity now?		✓	
48.	How would you like to further improve your communication or adaptability in the future?		✓	
58.	On your CV, LinkedIn, or professional social media, do you mention that you studied in a Madrasah? Why or why not?		✓	
59.	Madrasah students are sometimes known for strong memorization skills. Do you think memorization helped or hindered your English learning and professional communication?	✓		

Appendix C. Notational Convention

1. I: Researcher
2. R: Respondent
3. ... pause or stop talking for a short time
4. DU Discourse Unit
5. DU NAZ 18 DU <space> student name's first three
alphabets <space> DU number

DU NAZ 18 refers to Nazmul's DU number 18.

Appendix D. Sample Transcription of a Participant

No	Part.	Questions and Answers (Translated from Bengali)
1	I	First, could you please introduce yourself a bit?
2	R	I am Mohammad Bulal Hosen. I am a third-year student in the Department of Islamic History and Culture at Government Brajanagar College. My home is in Mathbaria, Pirojpur district. I studied in a Madrasa until class eight. After that, I shifted to a school.
3	I	Do you understand me?
4	R	Yes, I understand.
5	I	So, should I move directly to the questions, or would you like to know something else from me first?
6	R	No. You may ask your questions.
7	I	Alright, brother, what are you currently doing? Are you involved in any job alongside your studies?
8	R	No, I am not in a job alongside my studies. However, I used to do field surveys for an international organization, but that is not there now.
9	I	I see. What is your current age?
10	R	25.
11	I	Did you study in a Qawmi Madrasa or an Aliyah Madrasa? For how many years?
12	R	I studied in an Aliyah Madrasa from class six to ten, for 5 years.
13	I	Was the curriculum in your Aliyah Madrasa similar to that of a school, or was it different?
14	R	No, it was the general curriculum.
15	I	In the Madrasa, which subject did you find most interesting?
16	R	I used to like Mathematics the most. The weakest was English. Because there, for passing exams, only basic teaching was given, nothing more than that.
17	I	What was your English learning experience like?
18	R	I used to study only for passing, not beyond that. Grammar was taught in primary level, then it wasn't really taught much after that. Whatever I learned beyond that was of my own will. They only taught exam-related topics.
19	I	What was your first impression when working for the international organization? Did you face any problems communicating in English?
20	R	Yes, it was difficult. Because their language, pronunciation, and accent are different. It was a bit more difficult to understand the British accent compared to the American one.
21	I	How did you learn or master this communication skill?
22	R	I learned this on my own. If I didn't understand the meaning of a passage, I would research myself, use Google Translate or a dictionary.
23	I	Have you noticed any phrases or conversational differences in English that are different from ours?

24	R	I haven't had much real-life communication with a larger circle yet, so I haven't come across anything like that so far.
25	I	Did you contact them directly in English? Was there an option to use Bengali?
26	R	There was no option to use Bengali. I had to contact directly in English. If there was any problem, I would use Google Translate to understand.
27	I	How important do you think knowing English grammar is?
28	R	If I want to do research or if there is a need to read books, then I must learn grammar. But if it's just for speaking or basic communication, then grammar is not that effective; knowing the language itself is primary.
29	I	For communication, is grammar necessary, or is just knowing the language enough, or is being able to communicate the key? Which is more important to you?
30	R	When I think about the current time and situation, I feel grammar is not very important. Knowing the language is more important to become acquainted with the world; grammar is not that important.
31	I	Did you focus on grammar when you spoke?
32	R	No. I tried to understand the full meaning of a sentence and memorize it. I didn't think about grammar separately.
33	I	When you wrote or submitted reports, did you feel the need to check grammar?
34	R	No, not really. I was able to use the sentences I had learned as needed.
35	I	While speaking, has it ever happened that you couldn't find an English word and said a Bengali one instead?
36	R	Yes, in the beginning when I got nervous, sometimes Bengali words would accidentally come out. But since they didn't understand Bengali, I would stop, I wouldn't speak in Bengali.
37	I	Do you have any strategy when speaking English?
38	R	Yes, I try to speak a bit slowly, pausing in between. This way I can speak in an organized manner, and it's also easier to listen to.
39	I	How did you develop this proficiency in English? Especially since exposure was less in the Madrasa.
40	R	My elder brother used to live in the UAE, I learned a lot from him. He used to inspire me to learn English.
41	I	When you spoke English at the office and with friends, was there any difference?
42	R	No, I tried to speak in the same style in both places. I thought that if I speak casually, my friends wouldn't learn anything positive.
43	I	What would you do if you were confused about a word or phrase?
44	R	I used a dictionary, Google, Wikipedia, or translation sites.
45	I	Did you notice any major cultural differences between Madrasa culture and the international workplace culture?
46	R	No, no major differences come to mind right now.

47	I	Has anyone ever said anything about you being from a Madrasa background? Did you face mockery or anything like that?
48	R	No, nothing like that happened. Once a teacher asked if I was weak in English because of my Madrasa background, I said I was a bit weak in English.
49	I	After studying with boys in the Madrasa, did you face any issues mixing or talking with girls in college or university?
50	R	No, I didn't have such problems. I see everyone like family, so I never thought about that matter.
51	I	Final question, what was your biggest challenge or regret in learning English?
52	R	My biggest regret is that I couldn't get admitted to a better institution. My guardians were perhaps not aware. If I could have gone to a better institution, where there are more competition and more enthusiasm to learn, I could have done much better. In Madrasa, I studied only to pass; I didn't understand the necessity of learning English for communication back then. After coming to the city for study and work, I realized that if I had better scope in English, I could have done much better.
53	I	Thank you. It was really nice talking to you. You are very open-minded. Inshallah, I will meet you if I go to Barisal.
54	R	Inshallah. Assalamu alaikum.
55	I	Walaikum assalam.

Appendix E. Sample Coding

(1) Interview Questions	(2) Subordinate keyword of the question	(3) Subordinate the main point from the conversation	(4) Elaborated examples from verbal evidence	(5) Occurrence of main idea as keyword (s)	(6) Frequency	(7) DU
RQ1: What communicative challenges do the Bangladeshi Madrasah students face while transitioning from student life to professional life?						
IQ5. How would you describe your English learning experience in Madrasah?	*English learning experience	*studied English only to pass exams *Grammar taught only at the primary level *learning was self-initiated	“I used to study only for passing, not beyond that. Grammar was taught in the primary level, then it wasn’t really taught much after that. Whatever I learned beyond that was of my own will. They only taught exam-related topics.”	*exam-oriented English learning *limited grammar instruction *self-initiated extension of learning	1 1 1	Bil 18
IQ6. What was your first impression of the professional environment when you joined your job? Did you face any problems communicating in English?	First impression of a professional environment problems communicating in English	*English communication was difficult *struggled with pronunciation and accent *British accent is more difficult than the American	“Yes, it was difficult. Because their language, pronunciation, and accent are different. It was a bit more difficult to understand the British accent compared to the American one.”	*Difficulty in English communication difficulty *Understanding pronunciation and accent *British accent harder than American accent	1 1 1	Bil 20

Appendix F. Sample Theme Generation

Research question						
Interview question	Q5. How would you describe your English learning experience in Madrasah?					
Bilal (DU)	Nazmul (DU)	Sabbir (DU)	Nasiruddin (DU)	Sagor (DU)	Sub-themes	Themes
Studied English mainly to pass exams, with little grammar after the primary level; learning was GTM-based and exam-oriented ((DU Bil 17–18)	a large gap in English proficiency weak Madrasah English foundation (DU Naz 28)	Madrasah English inadequate for later global job demands, limited institutional English support (DU Sab 28–30)	Limited institutional English. strong self-effort and mentoring (DU Nas 8)	Almost no English instruction in Madrasah (DU Sag 9–10)		*English learning was exam-driven with weak *not communicative focus, *limited grammar teaching *someone else mentored *self study
	Q7. Can you describe how your daily communication in Madrasah differed from your daily communication at work?					
very low English exposure in Madrasah communication became mostly English-only (DU 39–40; 26)	Fewer restrictions at work, but more consideration in mixed-gender teaching contexts (DU Naz 38)	The gap between Madrasah communication and professional interview demands (DU Sab 28–30)	Curriculum behind general medium. supportive environment enabled later success (DU Nas 14)	Shift from informal religious talk to professional, goal-oriented bilingual communication (DU Sag 13–14)		*Less English use in Madrasah *Predominantly Bangla and religious discourse *Workplace demands English or fluent bilingual communication *Significant adjustment gap

Appendix G. Inter-Rater Reliability Table and Scores

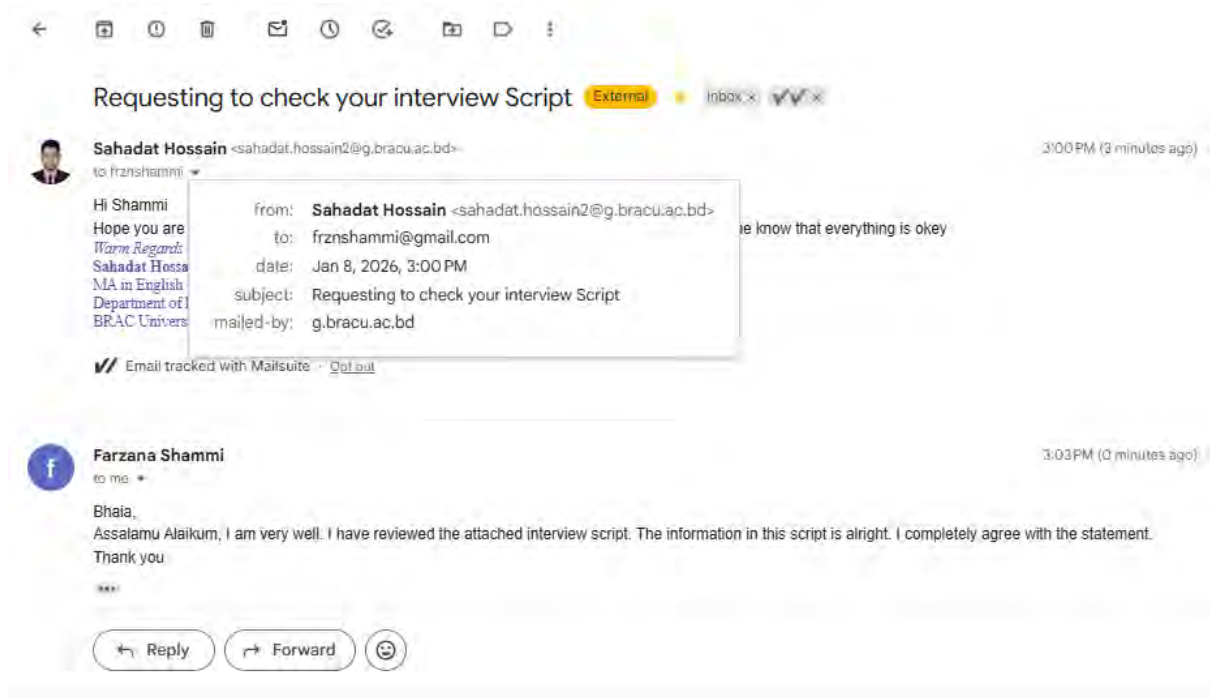
Theme / Interview question (RQ1)	Main ideas	Discourse unit (DU) references	Verbal support (illustrative evidence)	Inter-rater: Agree	Inter-rater: Disagree	Comments / Suggestions
1. What communicative challenges do the Bangladeshi Madrasah students face while transitioning from student life to professional life?						
Q5. How would you describe your English learning experience in Madrasah?	*English learning was exam-driven with weak *not communicative focus, *limited grammar teaching *someone else mentored *self-study	BIL DU17–18; NAZ DU28; NAS DU8; SAG DU9–10; SAB DU28–30	“Madrasah English was mainly to pass exams, with almost no real English instruction. There was little grammar after primary, a large gap in English, And later, they had to depend on self-study and mentoring to cope with global job demands.”	/ / / /	/	The communication focus is missing in the verbal support.
Q7. Can you describe how your daily communication in Madrasah differed from that at work?	Less English Talk in Madrasah, mostly use Bangla Only English communication in the workplace	NAZ DU38; NAS DU14; SAG DU13–14;	“In Madrasah, they mostly used Bangla and religious talk with very little English, But at work, communication is often English-only, office requiring fluent bilingual interaction and creating a big adjustment gap.”	/ / /		

	The office requires fluent bilingual interaction					
	Adjustment gap between madrasah and workplace					
Q32. Did you take any specific steps to adjust to your professional world?	Adjustment required proactive Behavioral and linguistic changes, including digital language tools, self-initiative, peer practice, immersion, and altering dress and greetings to fit workplace culture.	NAS DU46; SAG DU89–90; SAB DU48	joined peer practice circles, learned through real-life workplace interaction, and changed dress and greetings to appear more professional and acceptable.	/	/	/

Inter-rater reliability calculation for students' interviews

	Percentage of agreement (Total number of agreements/Total number of responses) x100
Inter-rater 1:	(9/10) x100 =90%

Appendix H. Email for Member Checking



Appendix I. Audit Trial of the Study

Date	Activities	Records / Evidence
2 May 2025	Finalisation of thesis topic and preliminary research focus on Madrasah graduates' language proficiency and social adaptation.	Supervisor consultation notes
10–20 May 2025	Refinement of research objectives, research questions, and conceptual framework.	Draft versions of Chapter 1
25 May–10 June 2025	An extensive literature review on language proficiency, communicative competence, social adaptation, and Madrasah education.	Annotated articles, reference manager library
15–30 June 2025	Development of methodological framework and philosophical positioning (interpretivist, qualitative, phenomenological).	Draft Chapter 3
1–10 July 2025	Design of semi-structured interview protocol aligned with research questions.	Interview guide (soft copy)
15–25 July 2025	Identification and purposive selection of Madrasah-educated participants in professional settings.	Participants contact list
1–20 August 2025	Conducting in-depth semi-structured interviews with participants.	Audio recordings
25 August–15 September 2025	Transcription of interview data and initial familiarisation with transcripts.	Transcribed interview files
20 September–10 October 2025	Thematic coding and qualitative data analysis using communicative competence and social adaptation frameworks.	Coding sheets, analytic memos
1–10 November 2025	Inter-rater checking of selected excerpts to enhance trustworthiness.	Rater feedback notes
15 November–20 December 2025	Writing Findings, Discussion, and Conclusion chapters.	Draft manuscripts
21 December 2025–5 January 2026	Final revisions, language editing, formatting, and supervisor feedback incorporation.	Final thesis draft
8 January 2026	Final submission of the completed thesis.	Submission confirmation