

# **English Version In Bangladesh: The Awkward Middle Child That Needs Desperate Attention**

**Submitted by**

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## **Declaration**

It is hereby declared that

1. The entire thesis report has been submitted with the dedication of my own time and effort for the sake of completing my undergraduate degree at BRAC University
2. The study does not contain materials that had been published before the submission of this thesis or any writing of third party, unless specified through proper citation as well as referencing
3. No materials that were previously accepted or submitted for any degree or diploma at other universities or institutions – were used in the making of this report
4. All the main sources of help were acknowledged

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## **Abstract**

This study, qualitative in nature, explores learning and teaching in an English version school in Bangladesh. English Version has never been able to live up to its full potential due to countless unattended issues. While the English medium schools offer schooling following British or American curricula, the English version of various schools offer the national curriculum in English. It is often stated that this approach fails for various reasons. One of the reasons is that equivalent Bangla textbooks are available to students and many students find it easy to read those texts than books in English. Data for this study collected through online interviews, recorded and then analyzed thematically. Findings suggested that poorly translated textbooks, little to no practice of English among students and teachers, and lack of interactive classroom environment are some of the many major issues of English Version that need desperate attention.

**Keywords:** English version school, Secondary education in Bangladesh, English teaching in secondary schools.

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## **Introduction**

In the secondary education in Bangladesh there are several streams available for students to choose. Bangla medium, English medium, English version, Madrasha education, and vocational education are some of the options students can choose to study. Different stream offers different options and there are various advantages and disadvantages in each case. The English version offers national curriculum in English. Famous schools, especially in the capital and in majors cities, offer English version schooling along with Bangla version. One of the intentions behind the English version is that students will study in English medium but they will also study under national curriculum. Therefore, they will develop necessary language skills while they are learning various national and international topics. However, the experience and the various published reports suggest that there are various problems associated with the implementation of English version. It is often said that students study textbooks in Bangla, teachers often teach in Bangla for better understanding and only the exams are in English. Another question is whether Bangladeshi secondary schools have necessary competent teachers who are able to teach various subjects in English. This study aims to explore some of these issues.

English has been the international language for the longest time and so, it is essential that people try and gather adequate knowledge as well as skills in this language. This in return is not only going to elevate their stature or presence before peoples' eyes, but also be one of the crucial factors in getting employed or admitted in a good institution. Before English Version ever existed, the only options were Bangla Medium and English Medium. According to Olinda Hassan (2011), since the most easily influenced age is student life, the students are exposed to cultural values in a different way to the ones followed by majority of the Bangladeshi. Hence, the

English Medium institutions fully habituate its students in English and the Western culture becomes an issue in terms of the preservation of the cultural values of this country. Not to mention, English Medium has always been extremely expensive than Bangla Medium.

According to the Independent BD, despite higher tuition fees, some guardians of English medium schools prefer English medium to Bangla medium. However, a lot of people wanted their children to study entirely in English while not having to pay as much. Not only that but cultural values are also a significant reason for Bangladeshi parents to admit their children anywhere else but English Medium so that the children, even when they grow up, stay true to the beliefs, practices and norms of the culture that they grew up with.



### Motivation for the study

The obvious question is why are people still willing to go for this curriculum despite the enormous flaws? First of all, compared to English Medium Version, English Version institutions are a lot cheaper and affordable. This is a great opportunity for medium to low income family to get their children into the world of English and get some of the taste out of it. This is because of it actually being a really good value for money, considering the income of a family. Furthermore, there is a big difference between the English Version students' mentality and the English medium students' mentality. English medium students are overly western minded so they lack values of their own culture. According to Tutul (2017), although there are some drawbacks, this version has been playing a crucial role in building a good student society with the combination of English proficiency as well as professional efficiency when factoring in both Bangladesh and abroad. Therefore, considering the merits and demerits, the clear calculation suggests that although English Version is undoubtedly a broken curriculum; it still holds so much value that it is worth saving. But it is easier said than done because fixing something so broken requires observing everything that is going on with it closely and practically. Therefore, this research must find out the issues that English Version has the necessary areas to fix and finally, evaluate the worth.

### Aim and Scope

The purpose of this research is to explore what happens in an English version schools, what are some of the problems associated with English version and what measures can be taken to solve some of these issues.

## **Background Information**

English Version is already under a lot of pressure because it basically portrays itself as the English Medium of the National Curriculum. Not to mention the immensely huge promises that it made which had the expectations people even higher than what they would have had generally. As such, English Version gained popularity very quickly and the parents of the admitted children had high hopes that they had made the right choice. Even the parents that would have admitted their children in Bangla Medium, changed their minds, spent even more money even if it meant that they had to work twice as hard and opted for English Version instead because they had hoped that it would be a better choice down the line. With all of this in mind, it is of utmost disappointment to say that not only did English Version fail to meet the expectations but it had failed far more miserably than any of its counterparts. For starters, the teachers themselves do not have the capacity to speak accurate and fluent English. This is especially worse in schools than colleges but the problem is there nonetheless. As such, neither do the teachers encourage students to speak in English, nor are they always able to send the right information because of their lack of understanding of the English language itself. This is a massive problem because the student would not only grow up with a weaker base in English, but they would also grow up learning the wrong information. According to Alamgir (2016), guardians have alleged that several teachers impart lessons in Bangla for the lack of required efficiency in the English language. They think that the teachers are not skilled enough to prepare the question papers and deal with the entirety of the examination process efficiently enough. This is yet another major setback for English version students. It is even more frightening to know that this is far from being the only issue. The textbooks itself are translated so poorly that a significant portion of the information are oftentimes incorrect. This is especially true for

Mathematics, Finance, Economics and other subjects that have numerical problems to solve. In fact, some of the pages of the books are entirely missing and this applies for almost every subjects. As a result, the parents have to buy their children the Bangla Medium books of those subjects. The problem gets even worse because a lot of the Bangla terms are so different and difficult to comprehend for the students who have known the English terms the whole time. The students already have so many subjects to deal with, and on top of that they now have issues like these to worry about. This should have never been the case, and yet it has been so, for years and hardly anyone has taken any step about it. There are several other issues to talk about, but in short, these problems are what inspired me to work on this paper because an initiative needs to be taken as soon as possible and this might just be the initiator.

## **Literature Review**

Despite the fact that I took a different route and was determined to make a point of my own that was most likely never been done before; this research was still influenced by a lot of sources, online or printed.

### Why English Version has not been pushed well enough

According to Hasan (2011), Bangladeshis are aware and fully believe that fluency in English is crucial for succeeding in life and that English as a medium of instruction is unavoidable to fully acquire the language. English medium schools have experienced the biggest leap with this belief and application of what they believe during the last two decades.

Since the most easily influenced age is during student life, the students are exposed to cultural values in a different way to the ones followed by majority of the Bangladeshi. Hasan's (2011) study is important because this solidifies as to why even people with wealth would consider admitting their children at an English Version institution. It is not always about the money because Bangladeshi parents would naturally want their child to grow up with cultural beliefs and values that this country is based of.

### Other reasons why English Version is considered ideal

Researchers such as, Josephat M. Rugemalira (2005), Rethinasamy (2011); De Klerk (2000), Jha (1989), Morrison (2000), Banu & Sussex(2001) and Laitin (1992) have confirmed other reasons as to why they would choose English Version over all else. Some of the reasons as these studies concluded are efforts to provide quality education based on the national curriculum; parents' preference for English medium in terms of instructions as the best tool to outreach mastery of both curriculum content and English language; the majority of the sharing being the people of middle-income in terms of social status although many of them are struggling to make

ends meet on an average salary; through the amount of fees paid, and in terms of the overall exclusivity of the environment, elitism in education is expressed even though these have nothing to do with the use of English in the classroom and whenever possible, outside the classroom.

### What's wrong with English Version?

As we dip our toe into the world of English Version, we are immediately faced many issues with which it is filled with. Hence, Tutul (2017) precisely informs a terrific mixture of both factual and statistical information. The article says that although the quality of education is not ensured up to the mark; GPA-5 is still increasing rapidly every year. This can be reflected in the admission test of Dhaka University and in other renowned public universities of Bangladesh. Statistically speaking, in 2016, the ones that have managed to cross the threshold in Dhaka University's science and engineering faculty in the 'Ka' unit have only been 13% of the admission seekers. And although, about 83,582 students took the test, only 11,330 students were able to clear the test, which is a depressing 13.55%. Ultimately, only 1,745 students had finally been admitted. It is high time that the Ministry of Education take proper initiatives with the intent to uplift the education system. By enriching the text books and enlisting literature for building creative minded students, only then should the quality of education be elevated. In addition, the government should pay enough attention in the National Curriculum in English Medium so that middle class and lower middle class families can enroll their students in this curriculum. In primary sections like the western education methodology; experts, experienced and creative faculties should be deployed.

Hasan (2004) states an overlooked issue of the syllabus and the curriculum of overall Bangladeshi education being examination oriented to the point that young students are prevented from an all-round comprehensive education so that they can face the 21st century challenges.

Another extremely underrated fact that the researchers Yasmin (2009), Roshid (2009) and Rahman (2009) have all confirmed in their individual researches is that teachers of Bangladesh follow a traditional banking concept as defined by Paulo Freire, which contradicts to contemporary communicative views of teaching and learning. Furthermore, Rashid (2017) talks about the issues in English Version schools, such as, the number of students in English version of the national curriculum has increased so much so that in some cases it has even doubled, when there are few trained teachers and the books for the version contain too many mistakes. While Alamgir (2016) states that the teachers incorrectly frame the questions as well; Haque (2017) talks about the terribly translated, unsuitable and flawed version of Bangla Medium books and how a student ultimately lacks the focus to study, due to so many flaws all around and adds that the teachers get to pass a degree without studying English or without securing qualifying marks in it. To further strengthen this statement, Yasmin (2009) states that English Version does not have specially developed books or curriculum, rather just the translated books of Bengali medium have been used that are filled with mistakes and not even the translation is also not up to the mark in many cases. Although the necessary base of this version has been erected on a weak foundation as it lacks a well-thought-out plan; it still draws a huge number of students but with unqualified teachers. Sultana (2010) states that classrooms have very poor facilities and also emphasizes a lot more on rote learning rather than understanding the use of English in real life situations.

From the discussion above, it is clear as to why English Version has so much importance but also why it is such a problematic curriculum to be in. All of the above discussion solidifies the claim that English Version is 'the awkward middle child that needs desperate attention'.

## **Research Methodology**

This section discusses the methodology of this study including research design, data collection, data analysis and the ethical issues taken into account.

### Research Design

This study aims to explore in depth information of English version schooling, therefore a qualitative approach seems to be the more appropriate methodology for this study. Of the qualitative methods, I have adopted a case study method as it allowed me to explore the phenomena in depth. For the sake of confidentiality, it is important to note that the information collected from participants will be used ethically and is not subject to unfair use. Also, the interviewees wanted their identities to remain anonymous. To maintain anonymity, pseudonyms have been used throughout the thesis.

It should also be mentioned that this research has been done under the Thematic analysis, on the basis of case study method. Since I am an inexperienced researcher, this method of analysis is a lot more flexible and allows me to cover more ground. Also, the participants felt a lot more comfortable to express their opinion, especially due to the fact that their information was kept private by using pseudonyms and so forth. As for the interview questions, I constructed them under the Open-ended questionnaire method, where the interviewees could not simply give a “yes” or “no” answer rather they were required to elaborate their answers. Moreover, I have also done a cross-analysis of the survey data with the interview transcripts, where the comments from the interview were added to categories that already existed, and some additional categories were added as well. Hence, with these out of the way, let us talk about the participants.

### Participant information

As for the participants, everything is kept at minimal. Due to Covid-19 and there being a global pandemic, I was able to manage eight participants for this study. I was able to reach out to a female relative that had been an English Version student, a neighbor that lives downstairs, two friends of that neighbor and the other four had been the people from my university. These participants had been interviewed to know about how they have been taught efficiency in English, their own skills in English and some questions to give us an insight about the current state of English Version. For further information, the following is a participant's demographic information which has been provided to give an idea about the kind of participant that we are dealing with. Their personality is important to note in order to know what introverts have to say about how their educational institution handles the method of communication.

### Participants' Demographic information

Participant	Gender	Curriculum	Personality
Participant H	Male	English Version	Ambivert
Participant I	Female	English Version	Extrovert
Participant V	Male	English Version	Introvert
Participant E	Female	English Version	Introvert
Participant A	Female	Bangla Medium	Extrovert
Participant N	Female	Bangla Medium	Introvert
Participant S	Female	English Medium	Ambivert
Participant X	Male	English Medium	Extrovert



### Techniques for Data Preparation:

The findings had been thematically organized for a clearer understanding of what the eight participants think as well regarding English Version, regardless of which background they are from. Speaking of participants, 4 of them are from English Version, 2 of them are from Bangla Medium and the other 2 are from English Medium. So even though not everyone is from English Version, the reason that participants with varying backgrounds had been added is to show how much difference English Version makes from Bangla Medium or Bangla Version and English Medium. In addition, the participants themselves have their opinion about English version too, which is very important because they are all speaking from personal experience. Hence for the findings and discussion, we are giving the participants pseudonyms for keeping their privacy intact. The 4 Participants from English Version are H, I, V and E; the 2 participants from Bangla Medium are A and N, and finally, the 2 participants from English Medium are S and X.

### Instruments

The interviews had been conducted online as the participants were interviewed via apps such as Zoom, Google meet or even other informal apps such as WhatsApp, Viber, Telegram or even Messenger based on whatever the participants said would be convenient. Due to the global pandemic which has led all the educational institutions to be shut down; I had no choice but to gather participants in this manner and interview them with no substantial scope for observation. Also, for the data collection method, notes will be taken using the 'Notepad' application on a smartphone or a computer.

## Validity

The various methods with which the information have been collected from participants that had themselves experienced what their institutions had to offer and how they offered it; combining the credible sources with which the situations have been analyzed with and the previously performed cases that have been similar will prove and solidify the credibility of this research.

## Research Questions

1. How effective has English Version been in developing the students' ability to speak fluent English and strengthening the students' overall foundation in English?
2. Why would something with so much potential be allowed to proceed with its damaging flaws for years with no regards for improvement?
3. Why is it necessary to put in so much effort to save something that is so far gone and not work on something new and possibly better?

## Findings

In this section, I am going to report the findings of this study. It is to be kept in mind that this section will only be talking about the opinions of the participants and will not comment or analyze further on it since it is reserved for an entirely different section which is labeled as "Discussion".

### **Expertise and Communicative fluency in English**

When interviewed, H said that he was very comfortable in speaking in English and also believes that he was really skilled at communicating in English as well. He was so confident that he was not even hesitant to say, "I would give myself a 10 because I am entirely confident in my English speaking skills and can also keep up in a conversation with anyone regardless of them being a local or a foreigner." However, T and V said that they were not comfortable or good at English speaking at all. Participant E on the other hand is a bit more confident than I and V as she claimed that she would give herself a "7 out of 10" on being comfortable speaking in English in front of others, but would rate her English speaking skills a "6 out of 10". Furthermore, T said, "My friends do not practice or even bother about practicing English because we all know that we will embarrass ourselves as none of us are good in English"; V said, "My teacher once said that she would faint at my inability to speak proper English. Since then, I chose to never speak English in public again." Even H did not speak in English very much because others criticized him and called him a "pretentious foreigner". He also added, "I wanted to, but most people didn't really understand what I was talking about and would tell me to stop showing off my English speaking skills and talk like everyone else. So while you could say that it was somewhat sufficient but nowhere near satisfactory." He did not care about other people criticizing him though, which is why he was so far ahead than the others that were in his class. This was also

why the other two are not as good as H because they agreed on the fact that they did not speak in English unless they absolutely had to. Participant E adds a very important point when asked if he/she is worried about being judged and he/she replied with, "I face the fear of judgment a lot while speaking English. As I am in English version people have the thought by default that we're supposed to be good in speaking English like students of English medium. But we can't fulfill other's expectation as we don't have the quality materials to study. And so I fear more to open my mouth in front of others because I know my vocabulary skills aren't good enough." Interestingly enough, all 4 of them had the similar idea that even though the idea of the syllabus contents of their school and college had the potential to prove helpful for communicating in English, neither the teachers utilize the teachings properly, nor they themselves communicated in English, let alone encouraging the students to do it. H added a very good point when he said, "Only a handful of people were actually fluent back in my school and college. I have had the privilege of studying in the top ranking institutions and they were still awful, if I am being honest. God knows how the lesser popular institutions are doing."

As for the Bangla Medium students, it is quite the interesting case. A said, "I am not good in English whether it is communicativeness or skills because naturally, Bangla Medium institutions emphasize Bangla in everything." N however said, "As I have come from Bangla Medium, so I feel bit hesitated in front of other people to speak English. Though I have conquered good fluency. So I would give myself 7 out of 10." Furthermore, when asked about how good their English speaking skills are, A said, "I will give myself 4 out of 10 because I did not get enough practice." On the other hand, N replied with, "I would give myself 9. Because I know suitable vocabulary, use the right grammar and sentence patterns, and produce the correct sounds, stress patterns, rhythm and intonation." In addition, both A and N agreed that even though the syllabus

contents of their school and college proved helpful for communicating in English, they were not able to capitalize on it because they emphasize all their other subjects in Bangla as well as the fact that they did not sufficiently practice communicating in English back in school and college. That said, N said that she was really good at English. We will discuss how contradictory this is and why I said at the beginning that the Bangla Medium interviews were very interesting.

As for the English Medium institutions, it goes as expected because they are comfortable in speaking English and are actually skilled at it. This should not come as a surprise to anyone because they teach all of their subjects in English at all times and English is constantly practiced in the premises and the students are also encouraged to speak in English outside of the premises. When S was asked about having enough communication in English in school and college he said, "I grew up talking to my friends in English all the time in school and as such, this became a habit. So even outside of our school premises, we would speak plentifully in English. By college, it felt like I was not even in Bangladesh when I stepped in. So I would definitely say that there was adequate practice of English speaking throughout my school and college life." Hence, neither did they not fear their English speaking skills to be judged by others, nor did they shy away from conversing in English. This is because everyone is constantly speaking in English. X added, "Since we were trained a certain way since our childhood and the practice of speaking in English was maintained by both the teachers and the students, speaking in English became natural to me and I am sure, to my classmates at the time as well. It never felt like I spoke in another language, rather a language that I grew up with, alongside Bangla."

### **Did the school/college do a good job?**

All the English Version and the Bangla Medium participants were quick to say that there were not enough people having fluent conversations in English back in their school/college. H added, "Sure, they taught me the basics, but that was it. When I grew up and did my research as well as practiced it all by myself, I realized how important it was to have a two way conversation in English as well as getting the motivation to speak in English. None of which I had gotten in neither my school nor college days because the teachers never really spoke in English and even the questions that they made in English were poorly structured with a lot of mistakes." In fact, all of them also agreed that neither did their school/college teachers encourage them to speak in English nor were they taught the syllabus contents or even instructed things in English. 'A' summed it perfectly when she responded with, "It would be very helpful if my school/college have done a better job at making me communicate more efficiently because, in University levels, it is mandatory to talk and communicate in English, and it is also a must to get a good job." Participant E gave more insights as to what happens in their college as he/she said in the interview, "our teachers were kind of helpful for communicating in English but not that much, as our teachers themselves prefer to speak in Bangla since a lot of students weren't efficient in English or face trouble in understanding in English" In addition, apart from N who did not understand the question properly, the rest of the English Version and the Bangla Medium participants agreed that they felt like their school/college could have done a better job at making them communicate more efficiently in English. V was unhesitant to say, "The teachers do not give efforts in speaking skill." Even 'I' added, "I am anxious of public speaking ability. Moreover, anxiety and lack of motivation made me feel uncomfortable to speak in English. I do not blame everything on my school and college because we as students did not give enough

efforts too. But they could do a much better job but they always spoke Bangla and never encouraged us to practice English." Furthermore, all 6 of these participants agreed that their school and college did not train them to be accurate in English for reading, writing, speaking and/or listening. Interestingly enough, the English Medium students had the completely opposite reaction to questions related to this topic. In fact, when asked if the books that they had studied back in school and college include proper contents with minimum to no mistakes, both of them replied with "Strongly agree", which clearly suggests that not only was there nothing wrong with their syllabus contents, but it was so unheard of for them that they did not even bother to explain if it was ever any issue. In addition, when asked about the teachers explaining things in English or even just conversing in English, both the participants once again replied with the precise, simple and effective reply of "Strongly agree", and yet again not explaining their answers any further. This is because this is very much normal to them that they do not know exactly what to say other than a straight forward answer. If we were asked if we sleep at night then we would also reply with a straight forward answer and not explain any further. This is because, as humans, this is one of our regular habits and one that we must do in order to maintain our health and sanity. Similarly, it is a habit of everyone within the vicinity of an English Medium institution to speak in English. Much like, English Version promised and was supposed to be since the beginning. Unfortunately, they had not only failed to keep their words but also failed English to be practiced entirely. Lastly, when asked if their school/college could have done a better job at making them communicate more efficiently in English, 'S' responded with, "I can confidently say that they could not have done a better job at communicating efficiently in English. Since childhood, our teachers were they bent up on us to practice English at all times and only speak in English as long as we were in the school premises. Luckily, my teachers

succeeded in making communication in English a habit and at this point in life, I cannot thank them enough. It surprised me when something that was so easy and natural to me was such a crucial requirement during the recruitment of most if not every single job." Furthermore, when asked if their school and college had trained them to be accurate in English for reading, writing, speaking and listening, X replied, "I was genuinely surprised to see how many people struggle with basic English in reading, writing, speaking and listening. This is where it was clear to me that my school and college had done a fine job in making their students as efficient as possible in this department. Hence, I would rank them the highest in terms of properly training us in English for reading, writing, speaking and listening."

### **Cultural Habits**

Both the English Version students and the Bangla Medium students share the same traits here as well. However, this is one of the things that the English Version does best. Although, the youth that are from English Version and Bangla Medium are more drawn towards the Indian culture, it is still really close to the Bangladeshi culture. H said, "This is one of the things that was actually really good about English Version. I adore the Bengali culture. Sure, there was toxicity to quite the degree, but then again, everywhere else has some level of toxicity." N also provided a simple yet effective response as he/she said, "Taught me moralities and values." As for English Medium students and the mindset that they have as well as their cultural perspective or expectations, it is almost the polar opposite of what the Asiatic culture is. The difference between the mindset of the English Version and Bangla Medium students became a lot more apparent when they were interviewed and they were asked of their cultural habits and perspectives. S said, "I wish that we were given more of the country-like flavor in our schools and colleges. In the midst of always focusing on the Western culture as well as their habits, most



of my classmates failed to maintain their origin as Bengalis and somehow brought other cultural habits into the mix. It is so much more complicated but this is the best that I can describe it." On the other hand, X said, "I personally think that us being so closely familiar with the Western culture has really opened my third eye and has made me realize that we are quite backdated in a lot of things. We still believe and maintain a lot of things that should have been history long ago. I understand that a lot of history and the habit itself restrict people from getting out of that zone. But I, for one, definitely admire the culture that I was shown and do not agree with most if not all the cultural aspects in my country. This is just my personal preference, and I am not shaming anyone for preferring otherwise."

### **Should English Version institutions exist?**

By the end of the interview when the participants were asked as to whether or not English Version should exist, the results were quite surprising. 4 of the participants (3 from English Version and Z from English Medium) felt that since there is such little difference between English Version and Bangla Medium and students are about as bad as Bangla Medium students are by the time they set foot in their university life; there is no need for English Version should exist. Specifically, T and V believed that English Version no longer needs to exist. T said, "I deeply regret going to an English Version institution because the other Bangla Medium students have no difference with me. If this was bound to be then why I studied all those years in their school and college when I could pay less and go to Bangla Medium institutions?" V added a similar kind of opinion when he/she said, "My teachers and the overall practices in and outside of my class were the same as the Bangla Medium students. It is really a shame that I had to study books with incomplete and inaccurate contents and still be in the same position as my Bangla Medium mates. People also have a false expectation on me when they hear that I am from

English Version and this makes me really uncomfortable because if anyone starts to have an English conversation with me, then I cannot keep up. So I definitely do not want anyone else to suffer like me and I wish that by some day, English Version will be replaced by something better. At least, it should not exist." E from English Version had a very detailed explanation and analysis as she said, "English version should exist but with government and institutions uniting should look after the lacking and focus on improving. Also with the help of students wanting to improve themselves. That are like: Improving the quality of our books by inserting more necessary information that can actually help us gain more knowledge instead of repeating the same topic over and over in a chapter and focus on increasing the number of pages in a book. Then, our books should have lesser mistakes than now. There are tons of mistakes like in English, the grammar part in other subjects the proper solution. Again teachers of English version are not that caring towards us like that much of other version or medium of our education system. If we face problem or struggle on some topic they should take care of it more efficiently. Again translations of our books are very poor. And there are many more things for improvements to do in English version. Either this step should take place or I think English version shouldn't exist. Because students of English version can't learn the proper English like students of English medium nor they can learn good Bangla like students of Bangla version." Surprisingly however, H had a different perspective on this as he explained, "I would have said that English Version should not exist but I do realize its potential. It's just handled extremely poorly and by the wrong people as well as the wrong people being hired, who have little to no expertise in English, to teach the youth. If English Version exists and is handled the way it is now, then of course it shouldn't exist. Not to mention, the textbooks that are poorly translated from Bengali and the sudden missing pages. It causes a lot of trouble and students should not have to deal with this

alongside the already bloated syllabus that they have to cover within such a short period of time." The Bangla Medium participants had varying ideas. N said, "They have potential but they are terrible currently. If they do not improve then they should perish." On the other hand, A said, "It should exist because English Version gives out the idea that the students are smarter and more skilled in English than what Bangla Medium students are. So even if things are not as good on the inside, the name still has great value and it is going to make a great first impression." This is a very good point but before we talk about that, let us talk about what the remaining participants had to say. The idea of the English Medium students are also quite different because while A said, "English Version still has a lot to offer before we really jump to the conclusion that it should or should not exist"; X said, "I have a friend from English Version and I could not even tell that he was not from Bangla Medium. It spoke loads about the kind of background that he is from and we both talk about how pointless it is to study in English Version if the students come out as the same as the Bangla Medium students, upon whom, people have little to no expectation in English. So I will confidently say that English Version does not need to exist. Especially because it is just a more expensive version of Bangla Medium." The question at hand is who makes the most sense out of all the participants? Should we listen to what the majority of the participants are saying and take action to shut English Version institutions down for good? Or should we let it proceed? Should we even do anything about how the institutions have been mishandling things so far? And even so, what should we even do? All of these questions will be answered down in the Discussion section as well as a lot of other answers that has been addressed in the 'Research Questions' section.

## **Discussion and Summary of the results**

This section of the interview will discuss the issues that were found in the findings and also summarize the results. But along with those, let us address the research questions and then answer them along with the analysis from the findings.

The first question was, "How effective has English Version been in developing the students' ability to speak fluent English and strengthening their overall foundation in English?"

The simple answer would be that English Version curriculum has failed to develop the students' ability to speak fluent English and have left their students with a weak foundation in English with no regards to their future, except for profiting off of the hopeful parents that work day and night to pay the fees within the due date. There is a complete lack of sincerity which is very much apparent when we look at the type of people that they are hiring with little to no expertise in English. In most cases, these teachers are not even from an English curriculum background and again, these teachers are not hired based on their fluency in English. Instead, the idea is to pass the students' time by focusing on the bloated syllabus so that important attention to details like focusing on the communicativeness in English is overlooked. The participants are the biggest proof in this regard because during the interview, it was found out that H is really good at English while the other two are lagged behind despite the fact that they are from the same background, which is English Version. This was because H sufficiently practiced English back when he was in school and college. He was not afraid of being judged because he knew who he was and if he kept working on it, he would be far ahead of those who stayed the same and criticized someone for trying. On the other hand, I and V did not speak in English unless they absolutely had to and this has a lot to do with the toxic environment of judgment. E, on the other hand was more confident in her English speaking skills as well as speaking in public, compared

to I and V. That said, she still added that people have a default expectation of English version students being as good in speaking English as the students of English medium. However, they fail to fulfill that expectation due to not having the quality materials to study with. As such, the participant feared to even open his/her mouth in front of others knowing that his/her vocabulary skills is not quite up to the mark yet. This is actually really insightful because a lot of students must be in constant fear in speaking English in public because of how high English version had set the expectation level but at the same time, how poorly they had under-delivered. Another thing that needs to be addressed is that the criticizing of other people's expertise in English has gotten so bad that not only are the students in fear of other people judging them, but V revealed a terrifying truth when he said that his/her teacher mocked his/her English speaking skills in front of the entire class. V also added that the teacher was not particularly special in speaking English either. This is why there is a saying, "A little learning is a dangerous thing". Majority of the people in this country are nothing special, when it comes to English. Yet, so many people act like they are so much better than the others that they position themselves as the judge and criticize people unnecessarily. Sadly, we have an abundance of such people around us and this needs to stop. Moreover, the teachers did not even utilize the teaching resources or the syllabus contents properly and even the students themselves were not enthusiastic or eager to learn much from the syllabus contents. This is such a common trend among English Version institutions and surely both the students and the teachers do not understand how damaging it is. Not everyone is going to be motivated or understand how important English will be for the rest of their career and so, it is the duty and responsibility of the teachers to make the students understand about the urgency. At the same time, the golden period of student life will never come back once it is gone. Hence,

students should learn as much as they can and ask for their teachers to come forward and help them understand what they are academically passionate about.

The Bangla Medium interview was rather interesting. Both A and N agreed that they were not able to capitalize on practicing English because they emphasized all their other subjects in Bangla despite the syllabus of their school and college having helpful contents for communicating in English. Additionally, they did not sufficiently practice communicating in English back in school and college. That said, N said that she was really good at English. However, when she proceeded to answer questions that required elaboration, it can only be described as 'broken English'. This is not to disrespect the participant by any means but to talk about an issue that is not often talked about. Many people like the participant N often think to themselves that they are really good and others around them who are equally as bad, if not worse, tell them the same. Their idea is that as long as they can make people understand what they are saying in English, it is good English, while the people say that it is good English as long as they understand what the person is saying in English. This idea should have been discarded so long ago, but sadly it is still prevalent to this day. Even N said that when she speaks in front of people that are actually fluent, she is anxious and nervous the entire time. This totally contradicts when she claimed that she is a 9/10 when it comes to English speaking skills. In fact, she could not answer some of the questions correctly in the interview. For example, when asked if she felt like her school/college could have done a better job at making her communicate more efficiently in English, she said, "Yes they worked really hard." Even A, who said that she is not good at English and gave herself a 4/10, was able to understand the question and answer it correctly. This is not just an issue with Bangla Medium students but also one of the major issues in English Version institutions. Even the fact that they are from English Version makes them think that they

are automatically good at English but when sat in front of someone that actually knows and speaks English, their confidence instantly drops. The institutions should focus a lot more on issues like this so that even the students are not good at English, at the very least they are told the truth so that they do not remain in a false sense of security and actually try hard to do and speak well in English.

In the English Medium scene, everyone is constantly speaking in English, unsurprisingly. As such, they actually become the people that speak proper English, whom the people that do not speak as well are afraid to speak in front of. More specifically, I am talking about Bangla Medium and English Version. Although it can be excused somewhat for Bangla Medium, there is no excuse English Version because everything is supposed to be taught in English. And yet, the gap between English Version is so huge that even English Version students fear or are at the very least paranoid when speaking in English in front of English Medium students. The worst part is that English Version students have very little differences from Bangla Medium students when it comes to English speaking skills and communicativeness, whereas it should be the completely opposite. The only similarities that English Version and Bangla Medium should have are the syllabus, the contents and the cultural aspects. Everything else should have been exactly or at least close to English Medium. But they are not because the teachers that are hired are from Bangla Medium backgrounds and so, they themselves are not skilled enough. So it should not be a surprise to anybody that these teachers are not able to constantly speak in proper English. Another terrifying revelation from English Version institutions is that not even their teachers effectively conversed in English. What is the point of even hiring teachers like these especially for English Version institutions other than getting the job done for cheap and at the same time, making more money out of the parents after creating a false narrative and assurance that their

children have been admitted to a place where English is constantly practiced. On the other hand, the English Medium students had enough people having fluent conversations in English; their teachers encouraged them to speak in English, taught the contents and instructed things effectively in English; trained them to be accurate in English for reading, writing, speaking and listening and most of all, both the participants agreed that their teachers could not do a better job at making them communicate more efficiently English. This goes completely against what we have heard from both English Version and Bangla Medium thus far.

Once again, it proves my point as to how close English Version and Bangla Medium are, whereas it should be the closest option to English Medium. All the complaints and issues that Bangla Medium has, English Version has the same or at least very close. However, the one issue that only the English Version has and neither Bangla nor English Medium faces is the inaccurate contents in the textbooks. Quite literally, all that the English Version had to do was print textbooks by directly translating the Bangla Medium textbooks appropriately. However, not only was there a massive issue with the poor translation, but even the examples and the exercises included in the books that the students had to work on or understand from, were severely flawed. The worst cases were when the quantitative syllabus contents or even subjects like Mathematics, Finance, Economics and so on had wrong data. Sometimes, the provided answers were wrong, while other times, the questions were wrong. Hence, the students had to borrow the Bangla Medium books in order to find out the correct context. No students should ever go through this and yet, this has been the case for the last decade if not more. There have been no significant attempts taken by anyone to even address this issue, let alone fix it. The only thing that seems to matter at this point is money. Otherwise, if English Version institutions were actually keen on strengthening the English base of its students to the point that they could compete and possibly



do better against English Medium, they would at the very least hire teachers that can speak proper English and not teachers that speak broken English or even no English at all. The intent is to pay these teachers as less as possible, while making the most money by claiming that it is an English Version institution, when in reality, it is just another Bangla Medium institution with English textbooks, which are not even translated properly. This is where the existence of English Version becomes a questionable and rather debatable issue because the biggest difference that English and Bangla Medium has when compared to English version is that both English Medium and Bangla Medium do what they had promised to do and that is to teach the students thoroughly in English and Bangla respectively so that the teachings that they receive are absolutely solidified. Whereas in English version, the students are neither the best at English nor at Bengali. If anything, they are the worse version of both worlds. What more is there to even expect from a curriculum where the textbooks are not even provided with the proper contents or information? Participant E confirms this during the interview that is insufficient amount of books with necessary information. Moreover the books are filled with grammatical mistakes and errors that are not even rectified which further causes in the students to face the same problem, year after year. The teachers themselves oftentimes find it difficult to teach the students in proper English as the books do not consist of proper information, unlike the other curriculums. Due to this, the teachers tell the students to translate from a Bangla Medium book of the same subject, which results in lengthening the already bloated study time and results in further confusion and loss of valuable effort and time, because naturally, an English Version students would not be instantly familiar with a lot of the terms that have different names in Bengali and uses its own complex terminologies to explain a problem. Even if this was not enough, it is undeniable that English Version is doing a terrible job when 3 out of the 4 participants from English Version regretted

that they are from that background and the majority of the participants agreed that it is better if English Version no longer exists. While H and E have both said that English Version could exist if they were to improve, by the look of how things are now, it seems like all of the English version participants technically agree that English version should no longer exist because there will be no changes anytime soon.

But then why would I suggest that English Version needs desperate attention? This is where the second question comes into play where it was asked, "Why would something with so much potential be allowed to proceed with its damaging flaws for years with no regards for improvement?" Evidently, what we have seen thus far is to make profit out of the parents that think that they have admitted their children in an institution that can build a solid foundation in English. If the intent is to actually make improvements, then the English Version institutions would have to make efforts, spend money and fire the employees that agree to work for them for lesser salary and hire those with actual expertise in English but would charge higher due to their heightened skills in English. And since these institutions are too lazy to make sacrifices and actually work hard, they allow running things with no regards for making changes and therefore improvement. However, it cannot be denied that English Version has tremendous potential and would even overthrow the English Medium curriculum as the go-to for children to study in English while retaining their Bengali selves, culture, beliefs and practices.

Thus far, we have only talked about what the participants had to say. But what about the experts' take on this matter that we had discussed in the Literature Review section and where does it leave English Version? Well, let us discuss and dissect their take on the matter.

According to 'Education in transition: English based learning in Bangladesh today' by Hassan, (2011): Bangladeshis are aware and fully believe that fluency in English is crucial for

succeeding in life and that English as a medium of instruction is unavoidable to fully acquire the language. English medium schools have experienced the biggest leap with this belief and application of what they believe during the last two decades. This emphasis had been completely missing from the entirety of the English Version curriculum. It seems like the guardians are surely hopeful that they had done the right thing by admitting their children in English Version institutions but even they know that after a certain point, English Version cannot measure up to English Medium. So even they are creating this narrative that English Medium is the best option, much like their children know that English Version is beneath English Medium. As such, nobody expects or even pushes English Version to get any better. Hence, they do not bother about stressing the English Version curriculum to do better and instead, take whatever is served. This should never be the case because they are paying quite a lot of money for their children to study under an English based environment. Henceforth, they should definitely expect to get what they pay for and not receive anything lesser. So the more we look into this, we see that it is not really English Version that is completely at fault, although it mostly is. Since nobody is saying anything, the ones that are in charge of the English Version curriculum and institutions have been getting away by providing lesser and getting paid significantly more than what they offer. Let us once again talk about what Tutul (2017) had stated regarding the government needing to pay enough attention in the National Curriculum in English Medium so that middle class and lower middle class families can enroll their students in this curriculum. But why should the government pay attention to making the English Medium curriculum affordable when there is already an affordable version of English Medium, which is English Version? This again is because English Medium gets a lot of attention and the narrative of it being 'the ultimate option for teaching people's children in a proper English environment' has been strongly created.

Instead, the government should pay attention to making the already existing affordable version of English Medium, that is, English Version, a much better and overall a proper place for people to educate their children entirely in English, in. This includes, addressing all the issues that my participants have mentioned and even the experts themselves. Speaking of which, let us have a look at more of what the experts had to say regarding this curriculum.

Another reason that parents admit their children in English Version institutions is because of keeping the Bangladeshi culture alive and as intact as possible within their children. Hassan (2011) further states that since the most easily influenced age is during student life, the students (of English Medium) are exposed to cultural values in a different way to the ones followed by majority of the Bangladeshi. This is absolutely true and after observing this, the parents do not want their children to forget their roots, like so many of the English Medium students do. And therefore, it is to be said that English Version has been successfully able to retain the cultural values, beliefs and practices and this is one of the main reasons that so many people comfortably admit their children in English Version institutions because even in the slightest, the students are still somewhat regularly practicing things in English, at least from the texts in the textbooks. Despite this, they are able to keep the cultural beliefs and values in regular practice and are therefore staying true to their Bengali selves and not forego their roots.

This alone is one of the main reasons that English Version is still thriving. However, it seems like it is doing so a bit too much because Alamgir (2016) states that the number of students in English version of the national curriculum has increased so much that in some cases it has even doubled, when there are few trained teachers and the books for the version contain too many mistakes. The English Version participants during their interview session stressed that the teachers themselves do not practice English in class and do not motivate the students to practice

it either. While some teachers are not even good in English at all, some teachers are indeed good but they do not practice English in class because neither do the students feel as comfortable in English nor do they understand the syllabus contents when it is explained in English. And so, these teachers do not opt for delivering the lectures in English for the sake of their students understanding the lessons, which should never be the case. As a teacher of an English Version institution, they are obligated to deliver their lectures in English as the texts in the textbooks are written in English. The environment is supposed to be English based and yet these teachers are letting the students practice in Bengali within the classroom. The reason that these teachers are not good at English or are even unable to make the students practice English in class is because these teachers are untrained. The worst thing is that the authorities at the English Version institutions do not even care about this because as long as they can pay less and earn more, they will allow anything to happen. Hence, an entire change is needed, starting from the authorities to the teachers being completely replaced by those that actually value English Version for what it is, how things are supposed to be in an English Version institutions and actually earn their income instead of arbitrarily getting by.

Furthermore, The Daily Sun confirms the claims of the participants H and E, which is regarding the terribly translated, unsuitable and flawed version of Bangla Medium books and how a student ultimately lacks the focus to study, due to so many flaws all around and adds that the teachers get to pass a degree without studying English or without securing qualifying marks in it. Hence, when a reputable source, such as The Daily Sun has addressed and confirmed such a major issue which is almost unbelievable that this issue would still exist decades after the English Version curriculum was formed; it is without a doubt that something needs to be done about this issue. The students already have such a hard time studying so many subjects, that too

with bloated syllabus. Having the stress of correcting the textbook, which should be the actual guide for students is extremely frustrating to even hear. No wonder the students are frustrated. Lastly, let us talk about Sultana (2010) stating that accuracy is prioritized over confidence building, fluency and general communicative competencies. Yet another issue with English Version is that the participants doubt themselves on a constant basis and rightfully so. Participant V said that her teacher once said that the teacher would faint at the inability of the student to speak properly English. Since then, the participant chose to never speak English in public again, which is a heartbreaking revelation. This just proves how complex the issues are in English Version. Alongside those that do not encourage themselves or their students to speak in English, there are also teachers that focus so much on accuracy that they do not bother to building the students' confidence, fluency and general communicative competencies. If anything, it turns into talking down to the students and demoralize them in the process as well.

I would like to conclude this section by addressing the final research question, which was "Why is it necessary to put in so much effort to save something that is so far gone and not work on something new and possibly better?" From the above discussion of what the participants and the experts had to say regarding English Version, it is no secret that the English Version curriculum has left their students and the parents of said students with broken promises. The ideas that they have had since the beginning are indeed revolutionary, where creating an environment where the students and the teachers would allow for constant communication in English inside and preferably even outside the school or college premises. At the same time, this would allow to preserve the habits, beliefs and perspectives of the Bangladeshi or at least the Asiatic culture and finally offer all of these with fees lesser than what English Medium offers was genuinely groundbreaking. It had the potential to jeopardize the reason for Bangla Medium

or even English Medium to not exist because the English Version would have the best of both worlds. Hence, even though the efforts and sacrifices are nowhere near of where they should be, the potential is undeniable and this is why it is best to work on getting English Version to do what they promised to do at the beginning, instead of starting with a different idea and vision from scratch and shut down so many institutions that have already built quite the impression.

## **Conclusion**

This study aimed to determine how effective English Version has been for the students and does it even make sense for English version to remain at this point. We have gone through a lot of opinion and looked at a lot of different researches – all of which indicate that English Version is not in the most ideal position as of 2021. This is one of the main argument S of this study. Just because it is not in a good position now, does not mean that it will never be soon. If things are done right then I do believe that English Version will undoubtedly become the most ideal choice for students to study under. Considering all these, I strongly believe that the curriculum has a lot of things holding it back from becoming even an ideal curriculum as of right now. And let us never forget how good English Version can be, if things are handled the right way and by the right people. There possibilities are endless and this curriculum has so much potential to grow so large that it will actually become the ideal curriculum to study under one day. Especially if the hindrances, such as untrained teachers, improper resources being facilitated, flawed or incorrect translation of the board book and so on are removed from the scenario, English Version will far outclass the original board curriculum and rival English Medium in terms of English alone. This is because at the end of the day, the demand of English Version is only rising, despite its issues. This is why this paper is so important for the entirety of English Version. Although I highly doubt it, if this paper was to get enough attention and it would somehow reach the ones in control, and they work on the flaws and fix most or possibly all of the issues, English Version institutes will inevitably be at the top of the priority list for the people to admit their children in. Parents are the most selfless beings on planet Earth and it is amazing as to how far they are willing to go to make sure that their children are at a comfortable spot in life. Even if they cannot make things comfortable, they would be preparing their children to be comfortable in the future and for the rest of their lives. So if anyone had to make the right



move, it would be the ones that run these institutions. To recommend a few things, the very first thing that should be done in my opinion, is to start anew. Everyone in charge should be gotten rid of and people who are actually trained and have enough knowledge in not only the subjects that they are assigned to teach, but also have great fluency and skills in English. Especially the ones who are translating should be replaced by those who actually know proper English. Not to mention, our perspectives should change as well. The parents should never accept compromises from the English Version just because it was the best that they could afford for their children. The promise that English Version had had from the very beginning was that it is the best of both the worlds of English Medium and Bangla Medium. Based on that promise alone, their children should be studying in an environment that is entirely English based. They should get to know about compromises being made from the lack of expertise and communicativeness in English within their children. As soon as they observe this, they should immediately contact with the other students' parents to see if this is a common problem among the other students as well. If it is the case, then the parents should all confront the institution together. There should absolutely no shame in this because parents should always be fighting for the betterment of their children. Not only that, they must get their money's worth as well. Tuition fees are by no means cheap and so the parents should make sure that they are getting their money's worth. Besides, English Version should not be a mere translation of the books provided by the board. It should at least inherit most of the things in terms of English speaking habits that are maintained in English Medium or have its own things to study that neither the books by the board or English Medium teaches. The English Version students and teachers should have their own identity. These procedures might not be quick or easy or even financially friendly, but considering how amazing English Version can be and how far it can potentially go, it is definitely worth a try. The

government should definitely be aware of all these things that have been going on. This is because if anyone can bring this revolutionary change, it is them. Besides, the youngsters should make their voices be heard as well, considering how huge of an impact they can create on what they intend to revolutionize. Everybody needs a starting point, and this research is the starting point of the youth. Most of all, one of the most important things to keep in mind is to always uplift the others. The English Version institution should never feel like or must never be felt like their institution could never equate to that of the English Medium institutions. They must never feel like their English would never be good enough. And nobody should ever make fun of other people trying to speak in English. People should always inspire those that are trying to improve themselves, instead of making them feel embarrassed, which is sadly a very common habit in our country. Hence, these habits should be taken care of. At the end of the day, the students and teachers that are in this curriculum definitely know what has been going wrong, but they never made their voices be heard. Hence, this study could be considered to be the voice of the voiceless. Because ultimately, it is all of our responsibility to ensure as bright a future as possible for the youth, so that they become better than we had ever been, at their age.

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**Appendix**  
Interview Questions

1. Which background are you from?
2. On a scale of 1-10, how comfortable are you in speaking English in front of others?
3. On a scale of 1-10, how good is your English speaking skills?
4. Did you sufficiently practice communicating in English back in school and college?
5. Did the teachings of your school and college prove helpful for communicating in English?
6. Were there enough people having fluent conversations in English in your school/college?
7. Did your school/college teachers encourage you to speak in English?
8. Did the books that you studied back in school and college include proper contents with minimum to no mistakes?
9. Did your school/college teachers teach the course contents and instruct things in English?
10. Do you feel like your school/college could have done a better job at making you communicate more efficiently English?
11. Did you fear your English speaking skills to be judged by others, so you didn't have the courage to converse in English?
12. Did the teachers effectively converse in English back in your school/college?
13. Did your school and college train you to be accurate in English for reading, writing, speaking & listening?
14. Were you happy with the cultural habits in my school/college you grew up with?
15. From the above context, do you think that English Version institutions should still exist?