

The Impact of English: Strengths and Weaknesses as a Medium of Instruction in English Version Schools

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the benefits and challenges of using English as the language of instruction in schools that primarily teach English. Furthermore, it helps to assess the actual situation of pupils in English-language schools and determine whether they are experiencing advantages or encountering difficulties when English is used as the primary medium of teaching. This finding is significant for kids in Bangladesh who attend English-medium schools, as English is not their native language. Three English translations from the Khulna district have been chosen for this research. This study was conducted utilising a quantitative research methodology, employing a questionnaire. I gathered data from a total of 170 students through a questionnaire survey. The questionnaire consisted of 16 items. The theoretical framework employed in this study is Stephen D. Krashen's 'Acquisition-learning theory'. The study of the gathered data indicates that the majority of pupils support the English version of the school, despite the presence of a few obstacles that can be overcome. Upon the completion of the study, a conclusion and recommendations are provided to address the difficulties.

INTRODUCTION

English holds a significant and practical position in Bangladesh, functioning akin to a second language through its extensive application across diverse domains of life (Ara, 2020). The prevalence of English-version schools has led to their rapid establishment, particularly in urban regions, with English serving as the medium of instruction (MOI) to accommodate parental preferences and globalisation (Haque, 2018). Nevertheless, implementing English as the Medium of Instruction in these educational institutions continues to be a subject of contention owing to its merits and obstacles. Even though the population is predominantly Bengali-speaking (98%), the language learned by children outside of school is predominantly Bangla (Farooqui, 2007; Yamin, 2009). Concerns arise regarding the efficacy of English MOI, as one must question whether instructors possess the necessary resources to conduct lectures in English and whether or not students are capable of comprehending these lectures in their entirety. Further noteworthy factors include the financial implications of English version education and the difficulties that students encounter when attempting to adjust to university admissions and employment markets that are Bangla-centric. The objective of this project is to conduct a thorough evaluation of the advantages of English as the primary language of instruction at three English Medium Schools in Khulna. By doing so, this research seeks to shed light on how, by surmounting these obstacles, the complete potential of English in educational environments can be realised.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The medium of instruction (MOI) is a critical educational concern for every nation on earth. The indigenous populace speaks numerous languages of certain nations. Given this situation, which would be MOT? That is a very critical evaluation. Conversely, an international language may be designated as the instructional medium. It is imperative to take into account the perspectives of both students and teachers regarding this language, as well as the obstacles and advantages it presents.

MOI Policy in Education:

The language used for teaching, learning, and assessing is called the medium of instruction. Language policy and planning now focus on the medium of instruction (Hamid et al., 2013). As discursive constructs, medium-of-instruction policies are linked with a range of social issues in which language may play an important symbolic role (Tollefson & Tsui, 2004; Hamid & Erling, 2016). The language of MOI in education should reflect its socio-economic significance and global recognition for further education, research, and career. "In Singapore and Malaysia, medium-of-instruction policy is directly linked to the national goal of full integration into the global economy" (Tollefson & Tsui, 2004). Due to globalisation, education has no boundaries; hence, a common language is suited for MOL. Educational, economic, technological, scientific, media, and communication purposes have earned English this position.

MOI Policy in Bangladesh:

In Bangladesh, according to the National Education Policy (2010), at primary, secondary and higher secondary levels, Bangla is the medium of instruction in education even ethnic students practice Bangla culture, but based on the competence of any educational institution, they can use English as a medium of instruction (EMI). After the independence in 1971, guided by the thought of nationality and love for the mother tongue, the government banned English medium schools, and they were completely removed from Bangladesh in 1972 (Banu & Sussex, 2001). However, English could not be removed from universities because the class lectures needed to be given in English, and the books and journals were all in English (Banu and Sussex, 2001; Dearden, 2014). On the other hand, the elite group of society started to feel the necessity of English, and consequently, English-medium schools began to emerge again (Ainy, 2001). As English was not emphasised in public Bangla medium schools, the English medium schools started to grow day by day, with the growing demand for English in every sector (Rahman et al., 2010, p. 117, Ekushe, English and Ethics, 2010). Since the 1980s English medium schools, which are all privately funded, have been mushrooming in Bangladesh, especially in Dhaka (see Banu and Sussex, 2001).

Language and Education during Colonial Times:

The British East India Company imposed English as the administrative and educational language in Bangladesh after the defeat of Nawab Sirajuddaula in 1757, marking the start of British colonial control (Haque, 2018; Mousumi & Kusakabe, 2017). This transition stimulated the expansion of English-language educational institutions and universities that followed the British educational framework. During the early 19th century, the British founded multiple educational institutions, consisting of 12 district schools and three collegiate schools, from 1832 to 1855. These institutions were obligated to strictly conform to British educational norms and regulations. Nurullah and Naik, as critics, have highlighted the British disregard for local education systems and their failure to merge Eastern and Western cultures (Ghosh, 1993; Roy, 1993). This has contributed to the absence of a unified national education system in Bangladesh.

Students' Attitude towards English as a Medium of Instruction:

Individual students' perceptions of English as a medium of instruction vary, as evidenced by an earlier study conducted specifically on university students. The primary advantages of using English include enhancing career prospects, facilitating international travel, and enabling communication with individuals from other countries (Hamid et. al., 2013). "Indeed, I believe that comprehending the subject matter would be significantly facilitated if the course were delivered in Bangla, as it would enable me to effortlessly recognise and comprehend all aspects." Within the realm of engineering, there exist complex terminologies that may be challenging to comprehend without the aid of our native language. Conversely, many individuals believe that Western culture is synonymous with modern culture (Al-Quaden et al., 2010; Sultana, 2010).). As demonstrated in the

mentioned examples, kids at the secondary level can exhibit similar views. The objective of my investigation would be to ascertain their attitudes.

The Benefits and Challenges of Using English as a Medium of Instruction:

The use of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) is becoming more widespread in higher education worldwide (Crystal, 2004). Dearden (2014) identified various challenges in implementing English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) globally. These include the lack of qualified teachers and appropriate teaching materials, ambiguity regarding the subjects to be taught in English, uncertainty about the optimal age to begin EMI, the absence of a standardised English proficiency level for EMI teachers, undefined teacher roles, and the involvement of language centres in professional development. An important issue is the potential for kids in English language schools to encounter cultural imperialism (Al-Quaderi et al., 2010; Nunan, 2015). In Bangladesh, Rukanuddin (2019) highlights that teachers and students at all educational levels have inadequate proficiency in the English language. This is due to unclear regulations on English language instruction and insufficient possibilities for language acquisition. The English language syllabus and policies require substantial improvement. Hence, it is imperative for the government to earnestly tackle these difficulties and implement efficient remedies.

Although the current body of literature addresses medium of instruction (MOI) policies in Bangladesh, there is a significant lack of particular studies on the advantages and difficulties experienced by students in English version schools. This encompasses the influence of English as a Medium of Instruction (MOI) on academic achievement, linguistic aptitude, cultural sense of self, and readiness for international competitiveness. Comprehensive research is required to evaluate the educational results and socio-cultural impacts of English as the medium of instruction (MOI) in these specific educational environments in Bangladesh.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Stephen D. Krashen's theory of "Acquisition-Learning" differentiates between two systems of second language performance: "acquisition," which is an unconscious and instinctive process of language development through meaningful communication, and "learning," a conscious process that emphasises the rules and structures of a language. According to Krashen (1981), fluency is dependent on acquisition, which occurs gradually through exposure to understandable material in low-stress settings. In contrast, learning is a more rapid and conscious process that is necessary for achieving grammatical precision. When applying this theory to the study of English as a medium of instruction, it has been noticed that students in English version schools achieve the "acquired system" when evaluated in Bengali, their primary language. This suggests that they feel more at ease and are more effective in using language. However, when evaluated in English, students prefer to depend on the "acquired system," showing a less innate and less efficient utilisation of language. For effective language acquisition, the learning environment must offer abundant, easily understandable input and promote the use of the language beyond the

classroom to strengthen learning and facilitate acquisition (Nicolay & Poncelet, 2013). Krashen highlights that adults can efficiently acquire languages through natural mechanisms that resemble those of infants, although the attainment of native-like proficiency may differ. His observations corroborate the belief that active involvement and firsthand experience are crucial in the process of acquiring a language, underscoring the necessity of a nurturing and immersive setting in language teaching.

This study effectively summarises its primary aim, which is to critically assess the many implications of employing English as the medium of instruction (MOI) in English Version (EV) schools in Bangladesh. The literature review has analysed various viewpoints, including global MOI policies (Tollefson & Tsui, 2004), the particular context of Bangladeshi educational language planning (Hamid & Baldauf, 2008), and the colonial legacy that established English as a language of power and elitism in South Asia (Pennycook, 1998). The study examined students' perceptions of English, uncovering a dichotomy – English is frequently linked to status and opportunity (Erling et al., 2012), but students from non-English-speaking backgrounds have cognitive and emotional obstacles to learning (Coleman, 2010). This study is theoretically based on Stephen Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1981), which posits that optimal learning occurs when learners receive language input marginally above their existing proficiency level ($i+1$). However, in EV schools, numerous students face language input significantly beyond their capabilities, resulting in diminished comprehension and academic underperformance. This corresponds with research indicating that early immersion in English, lacking sufficient scaffolding, might impede conceptual comprehension (Brock-Utne & Holmarsdottir, 2004). Although proponents contend that English medium education improves global competitiveness and equips students for the worldwide market (Kirkpatrick, 2011), our study reveals that these benefits are inequitably allocated and frequently intensify educational disparities (Heugh, 2011). The study notably tackles a critical research gap: despite increasing focus on English as the Medium of Instruction (MOI) in higher education and private institutions, the EV school sector – especially under the government curriculum framework – remains little investigated in empirical research. Current research mostly addresses language policy or fluency results, although it never investigates the pedagogical and psychological impacts on students within the distinct socio-economic and linguistic context of EV schools in Bangladesh. This study provides a balanced critique by contrasting the advantages and disadvantages of English as a medium of instruction, positing that while English may create opportunities for some, it concurrently marginalises others, thus perpetuating systemic inequalities based on language ideologies and access (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). The title is justified by its extensive scope and critical stance, which challenges the excessive dependence on English in education and promotes pedagogical reforms, including bilingual support, inclusive curriculum design, and context-sensitive language policies that acknowledge linguistic diversity as an asset rather than a liability.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To find out the merits and demerits of English as a medium of instruction in English version schools.
- To find out the ability of the students of English version schools in four basic skills.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the main advantages of using English as a medium of instruction as perceived by students in English-version schools?
2. What are the key challenges associated with using English as a medium of instruction in English-version schools?
3. What levels of proficiency do students in English version schools achieve in the basic skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing?
4. Which factors significantly affect the development of these four skills in students attending English-version schools?

METHODOLOGY

This study utilised a descriptive quantitative research technique to examine the benefits and challenges of employing English as the major medium of instruction (MOI) in secondary school. Data were gathered using a structured questionnaire survey distributed to a randomly selected sample of 170 students from two academic classes across three English-medium schools in the Khulna area of Bangladesh. Participants were selected using a simple random sample procedure to guarantee the representation of varied student experiences in the context of English-medium education. The questionnaire was meticulously crafted to obtain comprehensive insights into students' perceptions of both the advantages—such as enhanced exposure to global content and improved language proficiency—and the disadvantages, including comprehension difficulties and academic pressure, related to English as the medium of instruction. The replies, documented numerically, were analysed utilising Microsoft Office programs, namely Excel, to calculate frequencies, means, and standard deviations. This allowed the researcher to provide the data in a structured and comprehensible fashion. Ethical principles were meticulously adhered to during the study procedure, encompassing informed consent and participant confidentiality. The methodology complies with academic rigour and objectivity, with all procedures conforming to the APA 7th edition referencing standards, thereby ensuring the study upholds scholarly integrity through precise utilisation of both primary data and pertinent secondary literature sources.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

Certain constraints bind every attempt, and no one is exempt from them. I encountered numerous constraints during my research. One major constraint I face is a lack of time. If I had sufficient time, it would be advantageous for me to enhance my job by incorporating additional facts and information. Furthermore, the inadequacy of materials and resources poses a constraint for me. Occasionally, I have encountered a lack of dependable information. These constraints have been a significant challenge for me in finishing my project. Since this is the initial endeavour to encompass the Khulna region, this study might be expanded to a wider geographical area.

ANALYSIS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

In this section, we discuss the results of the questionnaires that were obtained from English-version students' responses, which were intended to determine their condition of using English as a medium of instruction in their schools and their benefits and challenges regarding it. Besides, it consisted of 16 sentences and was organised into three sections.

Table 1: Students' opinions about the benefits of MOI in English version schools.

Questions	Strongly Agree (SA)	Agree (A)	Neutral (N)	Disagree (D)	Strongly Disagree (SD)
My institution has available resources as an English version school	17.1%	31.4%	32.9%	14.3%	4.3%
All the textbooks are well-decorated.	12.9%	34.3%	38.6%	10%	4.3%
I can use English effectively in any situation	12.9%	57.1%	18.6%	10%	1.4%
I get proper support (e. g. free textbooks and scholarships) from the government.	12.9%	37.1%	32.9%	8.6%	8.6%
I can use foreign resources that are written in English	21.4%	52.9%	20%	4.3%	1.4%

Table 2: Students' opinions about the challenges of MOI in English version schools.

Questions	Strongly Agree (SA)	Agree (A)	Neutral (N)	Disagree (D)	Strongly Disagree (SD)
I am losing command over my mother tongue or culture.	8.6%	18.6%	14.3%	37.1%	21.4%
My parents can not help me understand my lesson in English.	12.9%	31.4%	30%	20%	5.7%
Tuition fees are not flexible for my guardian.	14.3%	28.6%	31.4%	17.1%	8.6%
Private tutors are not available for learning all subjects (except Bengali) in English.	8.6%	34.3%	21.4%	21.4%	14.3%

Table 3: Students' opinions about the ability of four basic skills in English version schools.

Questions	Strongly Agree (SA)	Agree (A)	Neutral (N)	Disagree (D)	Strongly Disagree (SD)
I can understand all the topics in English lectures given by my teachers.	22.9%	57.1%	15.7%	2.9%	1.4%
All of my teachers provide the class lectures in English, except the Bangla teacher.	10%	24.3%	20%	31.4%	14.3%
All of my teachers have a strong command of the four basic skills of English.	05%	12.9%	35.7%	32.9%	13.6%
I enjoy the English version of school, though my mother tongue is Bengali	35.7%	38.6%	15.7%	8.6%	1.4%

I can read and understand English newspapers as I am a student of the English version school	37.1%	47.1%	8.6%	7.2%	0%
My listening skills are strong enough to understand English news presented by a journalist whose native language is English.	28.6%	41.4%	24.3%	5.7%	0%
I can understand the question papers in English and need no explanation in Bangla	28.6%	51.4%	12.9%	5.7%	1.4%

OBSERVATION

From my observations, the educational environment exhibits several strengths and areas that might be enhanced. The classrooms are densely populated, with approximately 20 pupils each, which restricts space yet effectively uses projectors to augment instruction. Teachers are highly skilled and punctual, creating a welcoming environment through their promptness and courteous greetings.

Nevertheless, the utilisation of English in teaching is erratic. While several educators possess the ability to deliver lectures proficiently in English, others often transition to Bengali or commit grammatical mistakes, which may potentially perplex pupils striving to enhance their English language skills. Teachers employ interactive teaching methods such as questioning and group activities to actively involve students. They promote the use of English among classmates and successfully integrate multimedia resources.

A significant deficiency lies in the lack of guardian engagement, which has the potential to significantly enhance student learning beyond the confines of the school environment. Tackling this issue, in addition to enhancing language instruction and extending classroom capacity, has the potential to greatly improve the whole educational experience.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

According to (Podder, 2021 & Peng, 2024), urban schools typically have better access to teaching materials, technology, and teacher training, whereas rural schools frequently face significant shortages in these areas. Table 1 demonstrates that the majority of students exhibit a positive response to the questions regarding the availability of resources, well-organised textbooks, and their proficiency in using English correctly. In a similar vein, Alejo and Pique (2016) state that urban kids are more likely to get official help outside of school, such as private English classes, and begin studying English earlier than their peers who live in rural areas. In addition, students in Bangladesh have the opportunity to enhance their English language skills by utilising resources from other countries. According to Milon and Iqbal (2017), computer software, social networking

websites, online videos, MP3 podcasts, and apps for smartphones and tablets are examples of technological tools that have the potential to positively influence and enhance students' English language skills.

The question of whether or not pupils who are exposed to English as a medium of instruction do not lose command of their mother tongue is a complicated and multi-faceted one. According to research, the majority of students speak their mother tongue in the classroom, which hurts both their self-confidence and their ability to communicate fluently in English. Because of their reliance on their original language, their skill in English may suffer, which leads to the possibility that they will lose command of their mother tongue (Vacalares, 2023). On the other hand, some people believe that having a good command of English is the cause of having a good command of English. According to Khan et al. (2017), this tendency is most noticeable in situations when English is given precedence over the mother tongue. As a consequence, there are various degrees of linguistic interference and problems with competency. Furthermore, the majority of students are in agreement that their parents are unable to assist their children in learning English in the majority of situations, which is consistent with the findings of other research. Research indicates that many parents struggle to assist their children with English lessons owing to a variety of problems, such as low English proficiency, a lack of technological abilities, and inadequate educational resources. This is explained by the fact that many parents have difficulties supporting their children with English lessons. These challenges were brought to light by the transition to online learning that occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic. During this time, parents frequently had difficulty assisting their children in navigating new digital platforms for English language learning (Ahmed & Tajwar, 2023). In addition, the traditional educational system places a greater focus on rote memorisation than it does on the actual application of language, which leaves parents unable to assist their children in developing successful communication skills (Brown, 2008). Furthermore, about tuition fees, the majority of students believe that their tuition fees are relatively higher and, in some instances, beyond the capability of their parents. This is because research indicates that high tuition fees and costs for quality education in Bangladesh, which include private schools and supplementary tutoring, place a significant financial burden on many families (Nath, 2008). Many parents place a great value on receiving a good education for their children, and they are prepared to make financial investments in their children's education if they believe that it will be advantageous to them. When making their selections, they take into account aspects such as the facilities, the curriculum, and the quality of the service (Murni, 2024).

The data shown in Table 3 demonstrates that even if the majority of students can communicate in English, instructors are unable to do so because they are not proficient enough in the four fundamental abilities. For example, Sultana (2019) asserts that English teachers in Bangladesh have insufficient academic and professional testing backgrounds, which hinders their effectiveness in assessment-related activities and restricts their use of tests to improve

instruction. These findings imply that comparable research has been conducted. In a similar vein, Rouf and Mohamed (2022) reported that English language teachers in secondary schools in Bangladesh exhibited inadequate classroom language skills. This highlights the need for increased training and support to facilitate successful teaching and learning in environments where English is not the native language. In addition, the findings of this study indicate that kids choose schools that offer English-language instruction the most, regardless of their native language or socioeconomic standing. According to Holligan and Shah (2023), the desire of pupils from elite classes for English-language schools is impacted by some variables, including the perceived educational quality, social standing, and economic opportunity. This is one of the reasons why this preference exists. It has been shown via research that prestigious educational institutions frequently market themselves as providers of exceptional English training. This marketing strategy is appealing to parents who are looking for a way to distinguish their children from other youngsters. In addition, the findings indicate that pupils who attend schools that use the English language are adept enough to read, listen to, and comprehend text written in English. According to studies such as Jamila and Rahman (2024), the proficiency of reading and listening skills among English version school students in Bangladesh is notably inadequate. This is a reflection of systemic issues in educational practices and curriculum design. However, this idea is in direct opposition to the overall situation in Bangladesh. Unfortunately, although listening and speaking skills are included in the National Curriculum, there is still a significant lack of implementation and evaluation in the classroom, which results in poor outcomes in terms of language competency. A study conducted in Pakistan found that students from English medium schools generally performed better in English than their Urdu medium counterparts, suggesting that there is a clear advantage in language proficiency due to the medium of instruction (Gillani et al., 2010). However, researches prove that students who are learning English are better at English than students who are learning Bangla. In a similar vein, comparative research found that kids attending private schools, which frequently use English as the major language of teaching, demonstrated a better level of English proficiency in comparison to students attending public schools (Cadiz-Gabejan, 2022). Although there are some limitations, the findings of this study suggest that children who attend schools that teach in English have a favourable attitude toward the language that they are taught in. This is even though numerous studies conducted in a variety of countries and age groups have reported that students have very favourable attitudes toward learning English (Morganna et al., 2020). This involves having a favourable attitude toward people who speak English, having a great interest in communicating in English, and having a favourable opinion of their English professors and classmates. The ratio of questions in the poll indicates that around 85 per cent of the pupils are benefiting from English being used as the primary language of teaching. The inadequacies that have been found include a scarcity of teachers with a high level of expertise and a lack of mentors who are easily accessible. There is also a big challenge that students must contend with, and that is the continuous decline in their

competence in their mother tongue. A considerable number of students face a big obstacle in the form of the costs associated with their education. In addition to these difficulties, students are delighted to be learning in English as the major medium of instruction, and they have been making concerted efforts to improve their command of the English language. As a consequence, the conclusive findings of this survey show that there are more benefits than challenges associated with the use of English as the major language of teaching in schools that are mostly English-speaking.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The researcher has proposed the following ideas to enhance the quality and address the issues of the English version of the school:

- All the teachers should conduct the class using English only
- Teachers who have a good command of English, along with their specific subjects, should be appointed
- The students should be more attentive to their classes and try to understand the text in class rather than from the tutors.
- The students should practice Bengali culture in their studies.
- The government should create opportunities in English version schools for the students who are poor but brilliant.
- The students should be more concerned about their skills so that they can cope up with the modern world.

CONCLUSION

In the era of globalisation, the widespread use of the English language has permeated every corner of the globe. Consequently, acquiring proficiency in English is imperative to stay abreast of the advancements in the modern world. Therefore, acquiring proficiency in the English language is no longer merely an academic discipline but rather a necessity in the contemporary global society for effective interpersonal interaction. Furthermore, a lack of proficiency in English hinders our ability to explore a wide range of knowledge and limits our chances of obtaining a desirable job. Therefore, English as a medium of teaching can greatly benefit students in our country. The primary goals of the project are to demonstrate the advantages and difficulties of using English as a medium of instruction, as well as to assess its current state. In this study, I employed a questionnaire survey that consisted of five Likert scales, namely: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. I selected pupils from three schools in Khulna as the participants for my research. There are apprehensions regarding the efficacy, importance, and indispensability of EMI, as well as the favourable and unfavourable impacts of EMI on students of school age. Nevertheless, I believe that this project would be beneficial for both the students and the guardians, as it would enable them to select the medium of instruction together and get insight into how they may effectively address the associated difficulties.

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