

Bilingualism in Bangladeshi education: The underlying problems and confusions

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Abstract

While English overwhelms a section of the Bangladeshi society by virtue of its 'power and prestige' factors, it has consolidated its position in the academic domains preserving its 'fear and resentment' aspects. Academic authorities demand producing considerable 'English-knowing' graduates every year, but a generic apprehension persists that these graduates can hardly meet the challenges of the white-collar local job markets. This apprehension proves that the stature of English is trapped inside an obscure policymaking. If we underscore the concern, also articulated by Pennycook (2002) for constant reciprocity between globalization and localization to avoid the hegemonic influence of English, we might be interested in critically reassessing the issue of bilingualism in our context based on this simple query: should bilingualism be imposed on all Bangladeshis? At the same time, given the falling standard of Bangla proficiency, the imperialism of English—as defined by Phillipson (1992)—also demands attention. Incorporating critical lenses of language planning and bilingualism and bilingual education, based on the content analysis of secondary sources such as published literature and expert opinions, we attempted to highlight the association of power and prestige with English leading to its imposition on Bangladeshi education system.

Keywords: *Bilingualism, Language policy, Language attitude, Language and development, ELT.*

INTRODUCTION

Admittedly, one witnesses a double-edged scenario regarding the stature of English in Bangladesh. One edge of the scenario contains all the debates on the declining standards of English in virtually every sector (Sarkar, 2018) while the other edge comprises continual controversies about English being a second language (SL) or a foreign language (FL) in our context (Ara, 2020:81). From common experience over the years, these edges appear to be mutually complementary—both surviving by, and for, each other (Shahed, 2001).

Although, English is primarily associated with language education in Bangladesh, it is also perceived widely as a status symbol in the society. On the one hand, English continues to overwhelm the higher-class citizens due to its association with 'power and prestige' factors in the class-ridden social milieu in Bangladesh (Shahed, 2001). And on the other, despite their limited

access to English, a positive outlook has been observed in the perceptions of the rural population in the country (Seargeant, Erling, Solly, Chowdhury, & Rahman, 2017). Erling, Seargeant and Solly (2014) elucidated how some knowledge of English can enhance the social status of educationally disadvantaged population. The current sociolinguistic situation of English in Bangladesh could be conceptualized as a typical postcolonial English that adopts an evolutionary perspective, as indicated in Schneider (2007).

The important aspect of English in Bangladesh is, it is one of the largest populations in non-native English sphere who learn English through formal education (Hamid, 2010). Though Bangladeshi academic authorities take pride in producing adequately proficient English using graduates every year (Islam, 2013), the white-collar local job markets are being dominated by 'English-knowing' foreign workforces. The English-fearing graduates (Hamid & Honan, 2012), regardless of their English proficiency level, continue to find such jobs hard to get, especially in the booming private sectors where English is desirable (Rahman, Singh, Johan & Ahmed, 2019). This mismatch between the intended language-in-education policies of English and poor outcome is widely documented (Rahman & Pandian, 2018; Rahman, Pandian, & Kaur, 2018) and proves a point that the 'space' called English is trapped inside an obscure national policymaking.

One needs to keep in mind Pennycook's (2001) emphasis on maintaining constant reciprocity between globalization and localization to avoid the hegemonic influence of English on local language and culture. This positions a serious question regarding the falling standard of Bangla proficiency among a substantial urban section of population, be it through code mixing (Mostafa & Jamila, 2012), or use of English as a response to globalization (Hamid, Jahan, & Islam, 2013; Rahman, Singh, & Karim, 2018), and could be termed as translanguaging and translinguistic movement, which is an interaction between individuals from different and mixed linguistics backgrounds that emerge new features of languages in society and constructs new features of identities (see Dovchin, Sultana, & Pennycook, 2016; Sultana & Dovchin, 2017; Sultana, Dovchin, & Pennycook, 2015). Thus, this scenario will never subside until one looks at the fundamental issue of bilingualism in Bangladesh and ask oneself why this bilingualism is really required and what forces are instrumental behind such socio-cultural-linguistics adaptation among the language users in the Bangladeshi society. Moreover, this unplanned evolving bilingualism demands critical sociolinguistics reassessment in the Bangladeshi society to address the issue of linguistic imperialism as defined by Phillipson (1991). In this article, after the initial conceptualization of bilingualism and its goals, based on critical analyses of secondary sources, two associated aspects have been discussed: firstly, the imposition of English on the education system is, in effect, a promulgation of the hegemony of English which hardly serves the interests of common people; and secondly, this overwhelming dominance of English has constituted socio-cultural dichotomy between Bangla and English, leading to the association of power and prestige with English—resulting the failure of both Bangla and English as causative forces in the socio-economic progress.

Bilingualism and Goals of Bilingual Education

From a historical point of view, bilingual education system throughout the world has been a norm rather than an exception. Apparently, bilingualism refers to a person's acquisition of, and consequently her/his ability to, use two languages where those 'two languages' may or may not

include her/ his parents' mother tongue. Grosjean (2008) deems the bilingual as an integrated whole which cannot easily be decomposed into two separate parts. A bilingual person uses the two languages, separately or together, for different purposes, in different domains of life with different people. Because the needs and uses of the two languages are usually quite different, the bilingual is rarely equally or completely fluent in the two languages (Wei & Ho, 2018). The co-existence and constant interaction of the two languages in the bilingual should produce a different, but complete language system. However, a generic perception about a 'competent bilingual' in Bangladesh includes any one of the following persons (Shahed, 2001): (a) one who can speak and write English fluently as much as s/he can speak and write fluent Bangla, (b) one who can speak English fluently but has limited writing skills but can write Bangla very well, (c) one who cannot speak fluent English, but can write it appropriately—and can also write Bangla well, (d) one who cannot express oneself properly in verbal or written English but has very well-developed receptive skills in English; she/he can understand everything in English when she/he reads or hears can write/speak good Bangla, (e) one who cannot write either proper Bangla or English, but has the spoken communicative skills in both languages which she/he uses in her/his daily life (e.g. in his job) perfectly, (f) one who has a very solid command of English—be it writing or speaking—but can only speak, and not write, Bangla well.

Added to it is the fact that the status of a person's bilingualism in monolingual and multilingual settings can never be the same. In the latter case, the notion of anyone's 'acquiring a second language (L2)' is as important as that of 'acquiring the first language (L1)'. People with different MTs discover themselves in an identical platform regarding their needs of English as an L2. So, in multilingual settings, bilingualism is less problem-free in the sense that people have the only worry to go for their functional L2 besides their respective MTs. In that situation, they have a clear vision of the 'extent' of their required bilingual proficiency; they know what types of L2 skills would serve what types of purposes for them. However, bilingualism in monolingual countries is related to need-based urgencies where there is a perpetual debate regarding the 'extent' of acquiring bilingual competence.

The implicit goals of bilingual education can be listed as follows (Ashworth, 1985):

1. To assimilate individuals or groups into the mainstream of society
2. To unify a multilingual society
3. To enable people to communicate with the outside world
4. To gain an economic advantage for individuals or groups
5. To preserve ethnic or religious ties
6. To reconcile different political, or socially separate communities
7. To spread and maintain the use of colonial language
8. To embellish or strengthen the educational elites
9. To give equal status to languages of unequal prominence in the society
10. To deepen understanding of language and culture.

However, in the backdrop of ten implicit goals discussed earlier, it can be seen that except 3, 4 and 8 as the most applicable points in Bangladeshi social setting for pragmatic reasons. A brief evaluation of these three 'applicable' points is needed for a clearer overview. As for point 3 ('to enable people to communicate with the outside world'), the aim of introducing a foreign language (English, in this case) in addition to the unifying national language (Bangla), is to enable nationals to interact with foreigners. So, what should be meant by 'interaction with

foreigners' needs to be defined first based on whether all Bangladeshis have that scope, and more importantly, if all Bangladeshis need that scope, and to what extent. For point 4 ('to gain an economic advantage for individuals or groups'), the aim is to provide language skills which are saleable in the job market and can put a person ahead on jobs and status. So, it needs to be fixed what portions of Bangladeshis need those jobs where English skills are crucial to sustain and develop, what these sectors are, and how people should be used in these sectors. For point 8 ('to embellish or strengthen the educational elites'), the aim is to sustain the elitist approach of English education.

From the above-mentioned goals, bilingual education serves at least two groups of students: one, those who wish to learn an SL by choice; two, those who must learn it if they are to prosper within the education system and later in the outside world (Ashworth, 1985). For example, in Canada, children of immigrants or indigenous minorities have a deep sense of urgency in mastering both French and English in order to grasp the opportunities in the broader Canadian society. These are the 'first' group of students. On the other hand, the Anglophone Canadian parents are more and more enrolling their children in French-English bilingual programs because they feel that it would give their children greater economic, educational, social and political advantage. These children belong to the 'second' group. Thus Ferguson et al. (1977) rightfully stated how the implicit goals of bilingual education vary from society to society and that these goals—often overlapping within a given society—may or may not reflect the aims of the society as a whole. The Bangladeshi context of bilingual education should be judged from this perspective by raising this simple query: who are the students learning English across the country? Obviously, they do not represent any homogeneous economic or social strata (Sultana, 2014).

English and Bilingualism in Bangladesh: An Agenda of Elites?

Let us now corroborate whether there exists an imposition of English on the education system of Bangladesh and whether English serves the interests of any vested lobbies rather than that of common people. In the context of Bangladesh, the purposes, and hence motivational orientation of 'receiving' English education, are never the same (Rahman, 2015; Rahman & Singh, 2019). It has been seen that 'resentment motivation' (learning English in compulsion—having no way to avoid it since it is a part of school curriculum) followed by 'instrumental motivation' (learning English in order to get good jobs and also grab further opportunities in life) play the key role behind Bangladeshi school children's learning English (Shahed, 1998). Therefore, it is hard to say how far the aims of a greater Bangladeshi society really match the implicit goals of the existing bilingual education.

It is popularly believed by the linguists that much of the world's bilingual education is primarily for elites—and much of that which is available to all actually began as education for elites. So, the key issue is to define who these 'elites' in Bangladeshi society are and how English has embellished their status. In addition, one needs to investigate whether or not they require any distinctive proficiency that must be somewhat different from the non-elites' English skills.

These questions are pertinent, but at the same time not quite easy to answer. Joseph (2006) mentioned about the difficulty of language choice which becomes political when institutional choices have to be made regarding the language of education, language of business and trade,

language of public communication etc. The best way to judge the whole issue will be to take into account the Bangladeshi public attitudes toward the existing bilingual education system. Thereby, questions should be raised with reference to the four categories of ‘bilingual education programs’ (Fishman, 1976) where these were propounded regarding the issue of MT and official language:

Type 1: Transitional bilingualism: Students’ first language is used in the early classes to the extent that allows them to adjust in school or master the subject matter till the second language is learnt properly for using that as the medium of instruction, after that the first language is dropped.

Type 2: Monoliterate bilingualism: Aural-oral skills are developed in both languages. However, literacy skills are developed only in the official language, not in the MT.

Type 3: Biliterate bilingualism (partial): Fluency and literacy are desired in both languages, but literacy in MT is restricted to certain subject matter—normally that are related to the ethnic group and its cultural heritage.

Type 4: Biliterate bilingualism (full): Students must develop all kinds of skills in both languages in all domains.

From the above categories, one finds that the current Bangladeshi educational approach (see Rahman, Singh & Karim, 2018) matches ‘type 3’ for example, public universities continuing with Bangla as medium of instruction, but at the same time keeping a compulsory non-credit English language course in all subjects and many English language-based programs in science and technology (Hamid & Baldauf, 2014; Rahman, Singh, & Karim, 2019). However, the question remains as to whether or not all Bangladeshis need to become ‘full biliterate bilinguals.’ Hamid and Erling (2016) thus mentioned why socio-economic differences among the Bangladeshi population must be considered in any kind of policy formulation regarding languages.

Agnihotri and Khanna (1998) and Shahed (2001) in their studies related to Indian and Bangladeshi contexts exposed the overwhelming attitudes of common masses in support of the notion that English would help their children to build up their careers and thus, the knowledge of English was related to the better economic life of individuals. This socio-economic benefit of English has resulted in the expansion of English medium schools in Bangladesh keeping pace with a public emphasis on English education for their children. In the same line, parents of Bangla medium school children also invest additional money after their children’s English language coaching (Moyukh, 2016). Azam (2019) puts forward a pertinent factor as regards this otherness of Bangla under the dominance of English. According to him, the middle-class guardians no longer see any economic future for their children in this country, and hence their fascination for imparting English education on their children has been on the rise. Given that the English medium education had been predominantly under the grip of upper class, the urban middle-class has faced a sort of psycho-social crisis—as a remedy to which the English version schools came into being. ‘Socially and culturally, the English versus Bangla dichotomy had been operative for long; now the English version schooling has given it institutional recognition’ (Azam, 2019, p. 110).

In urban areas, the English medium schools’ range across moderate, elitist, and extremely exclusive categories depending on the areas they are located in and the fees structure. The Bangla medium schools are of no exception either, following identical categories. Thus the

‘English ambience’ in all these categories of both English and Bangla medium streams differs in quality and approach in terms of teaching, learning and usage. If the Bangla medium schools and Madrassas in semi-urban and rural areas are taken into account, the stratifications expose further complexities. So Bangladeshi students’ access to English—more precisely, to bilingualism—is visibly overwhelmed by a complicated matrix. Eventually, diverse layers of Bangla-using generations are being created who cannot identify themselves with the MT they inherit, leave alone being knowledgeable about the historical significance of Bangla in the formation of independent Bangladesh (Das, 2021). The divisive education system could only generate class divisions. Given this scenario, it is no wonder that an inconsistent language policy and planning resulted in a lack of clear, well-planned language policy (Hamid, 2010). Rahman and Pandian (2018) also discussed how Bangladesh had no clear-cut plan regarding the status of English till the creation of National Education Policy 2010. And the advantage of this vacuum was immaculately taken by the politics of bilingualism—an offshoot of linguistic and cultural imperialism.

Galtung (1980) propagated six categories of imperialism—economic, political, military, communicative, cultural, and social—where he refers to imperialism as a domination of one society on the other. This domination keeps perpetuating through exploitation, penetration, fragmentation and marginalization. It is Galtung’s category of ‘cultural imperialism’ that had allowed Phillipson to formulate his theory of ‘linguistic imperialism’ which succinctly distinguishes between the dominant centre (i.e., native English-speaking countries—primarily the UK and the USA) and dominated peripheries or the subaltern (Spivak, 1988), i.e., non-native EFL/ESL countries, like Bangladesh.

Reconciling the tension between retaining the culture and values associated with MT and the adoption of a national policy symbolized by a foreign language is not easy (Tollefson & Tsui, 2003). Thus, the ‘domains’ in the intra-national arenas where bilingualism would find its exact spaces could not be identified in Bangladesh. And subsequently, the education system hardly incorporates the opportunities to create the ‘groups’ of competent bilingual people to serve those ‘domains’. As Phillipson (1992) argued that since Centre always maintains its domination over Periphery by conducting research and constructing knowledge, it had monopolized research in the field of English language pedagogy. Kumaravadivelu (2014) vividly explained why and how the ‘dominating agency of Centre-based publishing industry’ has been ‘too powerful to overcome’ by the Periphery countries. So, Bangladesh—like all other subalterns—had allowed the Centre to establish its worth as the ‘ultimate decider’ as regards the nature and functionality of bilingualism. Consequently, Bangladesh has been entrapped by a chain of linguistic and cultural imperialism: recognizing Centre countries as the sole authorities for her own ELT issues, accepting whatever training, education, skills and knowledge they impart on her, permitting them to problematize, solve, reform our situations, and eventually believing in their innovation and propagation of success stories. The question is hardly asked why Bangladeshi educational authorities, getting rid of donor-funded ELT projects, cannot rely on local Applied Linguists to innovate and run projects. The pertinent query that now would appear is, what type of bilingualism do Bangladeshis need then? The answer will be evident from the following table (Shahed, 2001):

Table 1. Types of Language Choice

Features	Type A	Type B	Type C
	<i>a-modal nations</i> (e.g., Cameroon)	<i>uni-modal nations</i> (e.g., Bangladesh)	<i>multi-modal nations</i> (e.g., India)
Is there is a Great Tradition ¹ ?	No	Yes	Many
Reasons for selecting of a national language	For political integration	For nationalism	For compromise
Reason LWC ² is used	As a national symbol	For the transition	As a unifying force
Language planning activity to be done	Standardization	Diglossia	Modernization
Is bilingualism a goal?	No	No	Yes
Is biculturalism a goal?	No	No	Yes

From the table, it is evident that bilingualism, and consequently biculturalism, cannot be imposed by a stroke of a pen. Bangladesh needs bilingualism not only for effective connection with the outside world in all spheres, but also to translate her local culture into English and other languages. Keeping in mind what India, China or African states have done over the years, it is time Bangladesh did the same, i.e., translate the numerous facets of her culture into other through English—and thus transmit her culture into other cultures.

However, the strikingly thwarting problem that arises is, there exist no reliable answers to questions like: how many Bangladeshis know ‘somewhat English’ as well as ‘somewhat Bangla’? How many of these are rural and urban people? What percentage of people knows English fluently? How many of them use it in their daily affairs on a regular basis? What is then the approximate percentage of bilinguals, who are equally adept in both English and Bangla? And very importantly, what percentage of these capable bilinguals has engaged themselves in activities which contribute to socio-economic enhancement of the nation? Chowdhury (1992) maintains that everyone in Bangladesh does not need to be bilingual, and to impose bilingualism on all cannot be an ideal situation. Apart from the impracticability of the task, there is the primary question of its desirability. Ideally, bilingualism should be voluntary rather than obligatory (Chowdhury, 1992). Similar sentiments were echoed by Musa as well: ‘We need to ask ourselves whether our rural farmers, labourers, fishermen, blacksmith and others need to be bilinguals. And do they themselves want to be bilinguals? It is more important to become educated rather than to become bilinguals. It would be extremely regrettable if bilingualism

¹ The term ‘Great Tradition’ refers to a literary tradition of long-standing thought to be great by the people who have it, and considered a part of their cultural heritage.

² An acronym for language of wider communication

adversely affects one's possibility to become educated...bilingualism is necessary for Bangladesh. But not drag the entire population into this necessity (1995, p. 65).'

In the context of Bangladesh, few sociolinguistic surveys have been conducted to portray a positive outlook towards English in country, especially in rural Bangladesh (e.g., Erling et al., 2012). These studies are funded by British council, under the project named English in Action (EIA). Similar projects are also operated in India (Philipson, 2018). According to Philipson (2018), there are no differences between the British Empire's vision of embedding English in this subcontinent and the aim of these funded projects. Moreover, most of the studies that EIA produced have been questioned by other researchers (e.g., Anwaruddin, 2016; Karim, Mohamed, Ismail & Rahman, 2018). Therefore, in order to claim the relevance of English in the life of all class and professions' citizen of the country, one needs substantial proof that highlights how English is being used in common citizens' lives, instead of surveying their perception of English. These observations deserve serious attention from all quarters concerned. However, for a better realization, the issue of bilingualism from one's childhood demands retrospection. Bilingual education is not an issue of just learning two languages; it is an issue of encountering two cultures. Bilingualism necessarily implies biculturalism (Richard, 1976) indicating the individual's cultural awareness of two social systems—as language carries with it its own history, sociology and cultural norms. In this connection, when a child is faced with bilingualism, and hence biculturalism, in his/her infant years when he/she is in the process of developing his L1 skills and norms, he/she is bound to become a victim of a dilemma of handling the two distinct worlds associated with the two languages. He/she will not be able to differentiate the norms, functions and styles of the two cultures. Clarke (1976) showed how students' difficulties in learning an SL originate from their lack of understanding of the social context of the language. For Bangladeshi children, since there is a scarcity of competent English teachers (Alam, 2018), as well as supporting resources (Rahman and Singh, 2019), it has been a setback for the average Bangladeshi children to put them into the situation of two diverse worlds of MT and English.

In a more scientific model, J. Cummins (Baker, 2006) advocated these arguments as BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills) and CALP (Cognitive and Academic Linguistic Proficiency). He described BICS as the 'language of playground' which takes 2 to 3 years to acquire, and CALP as the 'language of classroom' which takes 5-7 years to acquire. Hence, BICS are those language skills which are 'cognitively undemanding' and they include known ideas, vocabulary and syntax. On the other hand, CALP, being cognitively demanding, are those that are necessary for literacy attainment and academic success (Baker, 2006). For a successful attainment of proficiency in one's MT, one has to first acquire high level BICS, which will lead to a sound acquisition of CALP. After one has mastered BICS and CALP in one's first language (L1), it becomes easier for one to acquire BICS and CALP in a second language (L2). Cummins terms this idea as 'interdependence'. That is, if students can comprehend a concept in L1, they will typically understand it in an L2, even if they cannot express themselves in the correct grammar of the L2. The cognitive aspects of L1 and L2 are interdependent. It is in this regard that we can highlight the importance of attaining BICS and CALP in Bangla at the early stages. This will not only increase pupils' cognitive and intellectual maturity and make them capable of thinking, deciding or planning, but will also intensify their acquisition of BICS and CALP in English at the later stages. Some may identify this with Late-Exit or Developmental

Bilingual Education where the goal is to develop literacy in the child's native language first and transfer these skills to the second language.

Cummin's model has a clear explanation of the Bangladeshi problem where students have to undergo substantial stress dealing with both Bangla and English since the start of their academic career. Taking 'time out' from learning L1 (Bangla) in order to learn an L2 (English) has a negative impact for any level of learner. For the children who have to learn English before CALP in Bangla is developed, the negative effect operates even more. This impact can only be minimized if his CALP continues to grow in Bangla before English is introduced. If English could be abolished from the initial stages, and consequently if BICS and CALP in Bangla would be allowed to develop, then the introduction of 'General English' from a later stage can be made accessible. Along with this, options from taking English for Specific Purpose (ESP) courses can be made open where learners can go for ESP according to their aspirations and needs in future lives.

The Inherent Problems to Ponder

However, critics may question: given the unavoidably prominent role of English in today's global arena, when the 'dominant masses' or a section of them, would justifiably come forward for attaining English proficiency in terms of their 'needs', should it be logical to term that attempt as something like 'falling prey to the hegemonistic influence of English', and thereby 'legitimizing it further'? This question is quite pertinent because there is a fixed 'line of control' between the English hegemony and need-based utilization of English. As Dua elaborates:

The legitimating of the hegemony of the elites is further supported by the social strict and sociocultural changes in the developing nations. With the rapid expansion of education after the colonial rule there has been a tremendous growth of the middle class. While this has widened the elite base, it has provided a crucial support to the elite structure as the growing middle class aspires to acquire the elite status or to remain as a 'periphery' attached to the elites (1994, p.107).

Clearly, this 'growing middle class' emerges from the previously mentioned 'dominant masses'. On the one hand, having the right to go for English knowledge/education, the middle class (which was earlier deprived) achieves self-reliance by dint of better opportunities. On the other hand, it crosses the border line toward elitism which is constituted by power, prestige and status. In this connection, separating English from the hegemonistic flavour and making it a tool for socio-economic prosperity appears to a vital issue. Chowdhury (1998) provided a clearer scenario by saying that the acquisition of English happens to be an instrument for gaining both power and prestige, and to limit its knowledge to a section of society would be to deprive others of a right. The basic fact here, as in many areas, is that the state must address itself to the question whether it wants to have a mere egalitarian society or to wider the social gulf further, with the knowledge of English acting as a decisive factor. Politics is not as wide apart from education as we sometimes think, or like, it to be. In fact, the gradually emphatic emergence of

‘Banglish’³ in Bangladeshi media⁴ and daily lives can be seen as a derivative of ‘status and prestige’ value of English.

Therefore, the actual concern is to counter the near exclusive association of English with status and power in Bangladeshi society. Undoubtedly, the materials of higher education and upward social mobility are available largely through English. But creating a fairer and unbiased social order can be a major challenge. One probable solution could be to make provisions for taking English to the masses or delink the association of English with power in society. However, the comfortable position of the privileged sections in the society appears too strong to allow anyone, even any government, to try to delink the connection of English with power, and also the infrastructure and system to manoeuvre mass-based English education are absent. Hence it would be better idea to draw only those sections of the ‘dominant masses’ or ‘expanding middle class’ toward English who would genuinely require it, and would use it, to enhance personal and national objectives. In such case, the hegemonistic power of English can be checked to some extent.

Pennycook (2017) observed that English, becoming the language of power and prestige in many countries, has been acting as a crucial gatekeeper to social and economic progress. The Bangladeshi society is a quite perfect example. Pennycook (2017) added that the use of English in several domains may worsen power relationships and may render the domains further inaccessible to many people, since English’s position in the world gives the language a role as an international gatekeeper. Joseph (2006) succinctly argued how in ‘post-colonial contexts the choice between the former colonial or imperial language and an indigenous language’ has always been ‘politically charged’ and thus ‘English functions as a social-class marker’ in non-native societies.

CONCLUSION

Given the ‘domains’ of English in today’s world, Gradoll (2000) provided a comprehensive scenario as to how world economies and cultures are becoming politically, socially and technologically increasingly interconnected due to globalization where a new, global English-speaking market in the knowledge-intensive industries is being developed. And because of this, the role and function of English in the contemporary global agencies have effectively implanted its value in the Bangladeshi public psyche. In relation to all these, we should have no hesitation to follow Musa’s decisive proposition. He stressed on admitting the importance of holistic language learning in our education system and thereby creating the opportunity for all to learn any foreign language—enabling them to earn their living through that language (Shahed, 2001).

As English has got detached from its original context (particularly the UK and the USA) and become a neutral and transparent medium of wider communication (Pennycook, 2017), it is high time Bangladeshi educational authorities rethought the aims of, and approach toward, bilingualism. And for this, a properly planned ESP curriculum has to be done in accordance with

³ A popular term in Bangladeshi society characterizing a hybrid verbal form of speech that contains an intra- and inter-sentential code switching (mostly unnecessary) from Bangla to English. ‘Banglish’ is criticized for displaying pseudo-smartness and elitism.

⁴ Phillipson viewed it as ‘media imperialism’ which inevitably leads to educational imperialism.

the relationship of both Bangla and English encompassing the social behaviour, aspirations and goals of majority. Bangla and English have to be allocated officially in terms of the functions they will serve in the country where they can be used positively. The best approach would be to re-plan the language priorities and teach and learn English in a way which would not lead to a denigration of the MT Bangla or a negation of its validity and power and potential. Planning the pedagogy as well as the language use should be done in accordance with the equitable need for English in internal and international affairs; that can justifiably promote a healthy indigenous-based bilingualism in English (Gupta, 1999; Rahman & Singh, 2021) and permanently efface from society the manipulation of the imperialism of bilingualism.

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