

Md. Habeeb Faruk Khan & Farjana Hossain. 2021. “The Role of Bengali and English as the Medium of Instruction (MOI): A Comparative Analysis” *IUBAT Review* 4 (1): 32-47. iubat.net/journal/

The Role of Bengali and English as the Medium of Instruction (MOI): A Comparative Analysis

Md. Habeeb Faruk Khan^{1*}, Farjana Hossain²

¹Department of English and Modern Languages, International University of Business Agriculture and Technology (IUBAT), Dhaka 1230, Bangladesh

²Department of Philosophy, International University of Business Agriculture and Technology (IUBAT), Dhaka 1230, Bangladesh

*Corresponding author: E-mail: habeeb_farukkhan@iubat.edu

ABSTRACT: *In pre-independence and post-independence Bangladesh, the idea of nominating an appropriate language as Medium of Instruction (MOI) has primarily focused on two languages: Bengali (Mother language) and English (Second Language). This study explored the contributions of Bengali and English as MOI in the tertiary level of education in Bangladesh taking viewpoints of the stakeholders into consideration. A qualitative approach was followed to conduct the study where 30 participants from 2 universities, 1 public and 1 private, were selected as sample. Dissecting a wide range of views from the participants regarding the impact of Bengali and English as MOI, the study found that both the languages as MOI had significant arguments in favor of and at the same time against them. While English as MOI has a considerable upper hand in the internalization of education in this globalized era, Bengali, a legitimate contributor to the nationalistic identity, is still holding it high in the local market. Based on the findings, this study argues that giving priority to the needs of specific students and being flexible enough in terms of choosing MOI should be the first consideration rather than fixing a particular language as the MOI for everyone.*

KEYWORDS: *Medium of Instruction (MOI), Mother Language/ Bengali, Second Language/ English, Public and Private Universities, Employability, Internationalization, English Medium Instruction (EMI)*

1. Introduction

Anyone involved in the tertiary level of education in Bangladesh must be familiar with issues that influence the implementation of different medium of instruction (MOI) policies. One will also be intrigued by the choice of particular languages as the MOI in two different sectors of tertiary education: the widespread use of Bengali, the state/mother language, in most public universities and of English, a second language in private universities. Indeed, both the languages have been used in these contexts in three different ways: either as the medium of instruction, or as language courses, or both. There are institutions where English is not used as the sole MOI but they nevertheless offer a number of English language courses. Other institutions that use English as the MOI also offer several language courses. But attitudes to Bengali as the MOI seem to vary to a certain extent.

We initiate our discussion with a focus on the use of a second language as the MOI, as using the state language as MOI is pretty much customary. On the contrary, the use of second language as MOI has a long history in this subcontinent. English was considered as MOI from the colonial period to this post-modern time (Pennycook, 2002). Before the colonial period, education was broadly religion-based here. The Madrasha (a learning center where Muslim children used to go for learning Arabic and other religion-based education) and Tol (a learning center where Hindu children used to go for learning Sanskrit and other religion-based education) were considered as fundamental grounds of institution. In the colonial period, formal or westernized pattern of education was introduced here, where MOI was English. Point should be noted here is that English at that time was treated as a colonial language. During the British invasion of the Indian subcontinent, they felt an urge to use the locals in governing the official activities to reduce the linguistic barrier between the English and the Indians. As a result, English was initiated as the official language in

administration through its inclusion in the sub-continent education in 1837 which ultimately led to the brisk flourish of English based academic institutions with a commanding position of English as the medium of instruction. Gradually English acquired a mandatory position in the secondary level and was considered as a prerequisite for higher education (Rahman, Hamzah, Meerah, & Rahman, 2010). In 1947, the decolonized subcontinent got divided into two independent states namely India and Pakistan who were anticipating a language which would be a true representative of their identity and a worthy carrier of the development activities. To strengthen their policy, both the countries finalized their mother tongues as official language following some other multilingual Asian countries like Indonesia (Bahasa Malay) and Philippines (Tagalog). Consequently, Hindi was selected by India but issues became problematic for Pakistan as she included two parts 1600 km away from each other namely West Pakistan and East Pakistan. Nevertheless, Urdu was announced as the state language of Pakistan regardless of the fact that 98% of the people of East Pakistan spoke Bengali at that time. This proposition was seriously staggering to East Pakistan and that is why Bengali was constitutionally declared as the provincial language with effect from March 23, 1956 (Imam, 2007). However, Bangladesh, where almost 98% of people speak Bengali, chose Bengali as her state language that is supposed to be used in educational, administrative and judicial activities as stated in the post-independence constitution of 1972. (Rahman, 1999). Consequently, Bengali was adopted instead of English in higher education despite the unavailability of course books and content materials in the state language (Choudhury, 2001). But ultimately the big gap came to the notice of the stakeholders when they considered it from a neutral point of view coming out of the nationalistic sentiment and sought to address serious mutilation to English teaching and learning due to the previously adopted approach (Hamid, 2009).

The colonial language, English gradually turned into a global language not only in Bangladesh but also all over the world. English, once the language of the colonizers, has gradually been universalized and has ultimately established a strong hold on science, business and many other professional domains. In addition, the evolution of English from being a second language to the language of tertiary level of studies has been noticeable over the years (Wanphet & Tantawy, 2018). There is no denial of the fact that English is creating a huge impact, being an integral part of the curriculum of a number of countries (Marsh, 2006) including Bangladesh where English is promoted as MOI or for presenting course content or both from pre-schooling to the tertiary level of education. The idea of internationalization ultimately induced an educational reformation in Bangladesh in the 1990s through the initiation of a competency-based primary curriculum and this curriculum made English mandatory as a subject from Grade-1 in 1992 (Ahmed, 2005). After the initiation in the primary level, it did not take long to prescribe English mandatory for the first-year undergraduate students all over the country (Hamid, 2000). Interestingly the adopted policy for enlarging the scopes of English did not put any bars to the other policies to accelerate the use of Bengali at the same time. As an example, the “Bengali Introduction Law” can be brought under consideration where it was announced explicitly that “Bengali was to be used in all spheres and at all levels for government purposes” (Banu & Sussex, 2001, p. 126). However, English is treated as ‘appropriate MOI’ especially in the private sector nowadays (Lin & Martin, 2005; Rassool, Heugh, & Mansoor, 2007; Tsui & Tellefson, 2007). Moreover, English has been specifically used as the MOI at the tertiary level of education since the initiation of private universities in Bangladesh during the early 1990s (Islam, 2013) through the adoption of a nationalist approach in the education sector in the post-liberation period allowed Bengali, the state language, to be the

official language in government offices including government-funded universities, popularly known as public universities. In this process, public universities started using Bengali exclusively as MOI though with very few exceptions. Thus, education in the advanced level after HSC got divided in their application of MOI policy. Public universities kept dwelling on the use of the mother language, that is Bengali and private universities on the second language, that is English. This study aimed at addressing the role of mother language (Bengali) as MOI and second language (English) as MOI and their impact on the stakeholders within the context of tertiary level of education in Bangladesh.

2. Literature Review

In higher education, the use of English as MOI has been universalized and the same has happened in Europe as well where the institutions at the tertiary level have accepted English as the language of education by offering a number of courses and degrees instructed in English (Brumfit, 2004). Though English is not the only *lingua franca* in Europe, it has gained considerable prominence in the 21st century and become truly transnational (Cogo, 2016). Besides, higher education in the Asia Pacific region has also experienced a drastic rise in offering a number of English medium based courses and programs in various academic institutions (Kirkpatrick, 2017). Consequently, English Medium Instruction (EMI) has been introduced in many academic institutions in Europe and Asia. The term ‘EMI’ can be defined as “The use of the English language to teach academic subjects (other than English itself) in countries or jurisdictions where the first language of the majority of the population is not English” (Macaro, Curle, Pun, An, & Dearden, 2018, p. 36). At every level of education, EMI has experienced a steep rise worldwide (Dearden, 2014). The grounds behind this growth of EMI are manifold which include the necessity of internationalizing the university, enticing

more foreign students, balancing the government sector and private sector, coping with the status of English as the most preferable and prestigious lingua franca etc. (Macaro et al., 2018). There are also counter arguments available regarding the practicality of implementing EMI in higher education which are yet to be resolved. Among a number of challenges faced in implementing EMI, the lack of adequate language skills among the university students (Doiz, Lasagabaster, & Sierra, 2012), problems in comprehending the content matter (Cankaya, 2017), shortage of training and proper guidelines for the teacher to deliver EMI based education (Dearden, 2014) etc. are very commonly experienced by the teachers and students. Hence, translanguaging is another concept to consider where “the input (reading or listening) tends to be in one language, and the output (speaking or writing) in the other language, and this is systematically varied” (Baker, 2006, p 297). Moreover, it is a pedagogical ideology which promotes bilingualism and multilingualism in terms of teaching and learning both the language and the subject matter (Mazak, 2016). García et al. described (2011, p 389) it as an adoption of bilingual attitude in pedagogical activities including “reading, writing, taking notes, discussing, signing, and so on”. Baker (2001) emphasized the use of translanguaging as it facilitates language development, a better understanding of the content, the relation between home and school life and so on. Besides, this pedagogical practice promotes students’ content learning in a way that facilitates their experience of multilingual attitudes (Celic & Seltzer 2011) and helps them develop a natural ability to reflect on the linguistic features consciously (Mazak & Herbas-Donoso, 2015). In one of her studies, Elisa Caruso (2018) found that translanguaging has been effective to ensure a proper balance in the classroom that stimulates better participation among the students altering the traditional monolingual classroom atmosphere. Consequently, there has been a rise in interest in the adoption of

translanguaging around the world and a good number of research works has been carried out in primary and secondary level in the US and the UK (Mazak, 2016) but that not much research has been done in the Bangladesh contexts.

However, higher education in non-English speaking countries in Asia has flourished to a great extent in the last few years to keep pace with the process of internationalization (Doiz, Lasagabaster, & Sierra, 2013). English is not considered as a mandatory gateway to attain their goals but still, it is true that it works like a lubricant to smoothen the development like the other mediums (Doiz, Lasagabaster, & Sierra, 2011). Moreover, English as a global language allows a great flexibility to a huge number of students across different countries which necessitates its role as MOI and initiates internationalization in education (Knight, 2013). Therefore, a good number of Asian countries highlighted the internationalization of higher education to be a part of the current educational innovation across the globe and ornament their adaptability to the upcoming global trend of higher education (Evans & Morrison, 2018). In this process, they are availing the scopes to prepare their local students for the national and international job market by ensuring higher education (Dearden, Macaro, & Akincioglu, 2016), through the adoption of a global language as MOI that is nothing other than English. Hence, under the shadow of English as MOI, there is a serious concern of improving the efficacy of English among the users in non-English speaking countries in Asia (He & Chiang, 2016) where Bangladesh is surely not an exception. In the context of Bangladesh, English has been considered as a language to contribute to the national and international development policy as a universal language, as a language for economic growth, as a language for education and as a language of technology (Seargeant & Erling, 2011). In this present globalized era, English, the second language in Bangladesh, works as an effective facilitator to cope with the idea of internationalization and symbolizes a sense

of superiority (Erling, Hamid, & Seargeant, 2010). Thus, the significance of using English by the mass people may not depend only on the fact that they have fallen victim to the conventional ideological belief or any kind of cultural dominance. Rather they have considered a number of reasons including the political and economical ones which make them gain their presence available in a vast lingua-franca and at the same time allow them to sustain in a global economy with a lot of cultural disparity (Rassool, 1998). Besides, English disseminates unparallel influence on various aspects of the society, culture, politics and economy in the individual and community level in this supposed 'global age' (Lin, 2020).

The teaching and learning process of English has pulled in a lot of attention in Bangladesh with a view to preparing efficient graduates for the national and international market (Rahman & Pandian, 2018). Yet it is a regret to accept that higher education institutions in Bangladesh do not have any specific MOI policy (Rahman & Singh, 2019). Public universities, being inspired by the language movement of 1952, hold a strong nationalistic point of view and therefore, are more inclined to the use of Bengali as the medium of instruction (Hamid & Baldauf, 2014). It is largely anticipated that public universities appreciate using a combination of both English and Bengali medium instructions (Hamid, Jahan & Islam, 2013). But the inception of private universities brought about a substantial change with the adoption of a new MOI policy and they started using English as the medium of instruction (Rahman & Singh, 2019). The Private University Act 1992 has emphasized a lot on the significance of learning English in higher education though it does not include any explicit instruction regarding MOI policy; even the revised version of the Act 2010 comprises no such injunction (Rahman, 2015). Nevertheless, it is quite astounding that almost all the private universities ensure EMI based learning for their students with an adoption of English as medium of instruction policy (Rahman & Singh, 2019). Hence, as English medium

institutions, private universities usually avoid offering courses in Bengali (Hamid & Baldauf, 2014). However, it is evident that both English and Bengali enjoy the privilege as MOI depending on the type of institution in the present higher education in Bangladesh.

3. Methodology

In this paper, the research interest centrally concentrated on the contribution of mother language (Bengali) and second language (English) as MOI and to what extent they are effective to the students, their learning process and their professional careers. A qualitative approach was adopted to conduct this research. It is a type of approach that demonstrates and discusses the ideological discourses keeping an explicit overview about the similarities and dissimilarities into consideration (Iglesias-Álvarez & Ramallo, 2002). As a comparative analysis, this study required a thorough exploration of the research problem. Therefore, a qualitative research design was deemed suitable as it helps in critical understanding of the subject matter in detail by collecting data directly from the participants in their own setting (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

3.1 Research sites

For conducting this comparative study, two academic institutions were chosen as the research sites. One of the institutions was a renowned public university of the country comprising 36 departments and 6 faculties along with 4 institutes. The focal public university has more than 15000 students with 500 hundred teachers and researchers. This university uses mother language, Bengali as the medium of instruction with very few exceptions based on any specific department or course (Ullah, M., personal communication, April 1, 2021). The other institution considered as the research site for this study was a mid-sized private university with 10 departments under 6 different colleges. The focal private university has more than 6500 students with 321 full-time

academics. English is used as medium of instruction in this university since its inception in 1991 irrespective of departments and programs.

3.2 Methods of data collection

A case study design was followed to conduct the study because it provides a holistic insight with in-depth understanding of the case within its real-life context (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Besides, a case study design allows multiple cases to be investigated intensively to facilitate a comparative study. The data for this case study was collected through semi-structured interviews. This article primarily concentrated on the opinions and beliefs of the teachers and students of focal universities as participants. While choosing the sample, maximum diversification in terms of language beliefs

and practices was maintained to ensure both variety and regularity (Creswell & Poth, 2017). In this process, total 30 participants took part in the study, 15 from each university. From the focal public university, 5 teachers were interviewed individually who had at least 7 to 15 years of teaching experience each and 2 of them were Ph.D. holders who spent a good amount of time in English-speaking countries while pursuing their Ph.D. 10 more participants took part in the study from the same institution who were basically students with a diverse academic background. 3 of the 10 students had science background, 4 had social science background and 3 others were from business studies background. To compare and contrast the data, the other 15 participants were chosen from the focal private university. The teacher-student ratio was the same here. 5 teachers participated in

Table 1: Participants' Information

Type of Universities	Participants	Identification Code	Background of Participants	Number of Participants
Public University	Teacher	PuT	-5 to 15 Years Teaching Experience	05
			-2 of them have PhD degree from English Speaking Country	05
	Student	PuS	Science	03
			Social Science	04
Business Studies			03	
Private University	Teacher	PrT	5 to 8 Years Teaching Experience	05
			-2 of them are graduated from English Speaking Country	
	Student	PrS	Engineering	03
			Social Science	02
			Business Studies	03
Agriculture			02	
Total Participants =				30

individual interviews. All of them experienced between 5 to 8 years and two of them had been graduated from the universities of English-speaking countries. The rest of the participants were students from the various departments of the university. 3 of the 10 students had an engineering background, 2 were from a social science background, 3 were from a business studies background and the other 2 were from agriculture background. To maintain the privacy of the opinions of the teachers and students interviewed, the focal public university teachers and students were identified by PuT and PuS respectively followed by a number whereas the focal private university teachers and students were identified by PrT and PrS respectively followed by a number.

To collect data for the study, we used semi-structured interviews in two phases. In the first phase, 15 participants of the focal public university, both teachers (5) and students (10), were interviewed individually in the previously appointed time. In the second phase, the other 15 participants, 5 teachers and 10 students from the focal private university, participated in the interviews. Each interview session lasted for 15 to 25 minutes. Both the authors were present in the interviews whose job was actually to elicit the opinions of the participants by asking a few questions related to the objective of the research. The medium of communication was mixed; both Bengali (the mother tongue) and English were used according to the preference of the participants

3.3 Data analysis procedure

In order to analyze the collected data, a multiple-step data analysis procedure was followed. Firstly, the recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim and parts of the transcription that was in Bengali were translated into English by the authors. To ensure the validity and reliability, the transcriptions were returned to the interviewees for cross-checking. Secondly, the transcriptions including the translated

parts were analyzed rigorously for coding. Later on, the coded segments were grouped under a few recurring categories. Thirdly, all the categories were studied time and again to identify four major themes following an inductive approach. Finally, the unified beliefs and opinions of participants were compared and contrasted under each of the themes to present the findings.

4. Findings

Four major themes were identified in the data collected from the participants regarding the contribution of BMOI and EMOI to the students and these major points are presented and discussed in the following sections.

4.1 National and global market:

Almost all the participants agreed on a particular point that one of the most significant causes of getting educated is to ensure employability. In this process MOI has a vital role to play, they thought.

According to the students of the public university, mother language (Bengali) as MOI (BMOI) is very successful in fulfilling their demand in the local market. Eight out of ten students who joined the group discussion stressed the Govt. jobs where Bengali is the medium to communicate and perform official activities. PuS2 asserted:

As all official activities in the government sector are done in Bengali, we feel more comfortable to work with any department in government sector jobs.

But in terms of Global market, their opinions varied. Four of them still thought BMOI will not be an obstacle in building their career in international market. In this regard, PuS3 commented:

Language is nothing but a commutation tool only. Whatever our MOI is in the undergraduate level, we learn English for long twelve years in our secondary and higher secondary education. So, we are obviously fit for the global job market.

But other six students opined that Bengali as MOI (BMOI) can create a hurdle for the students as they were not accustomed to English medium instruction which might result in inadequate language proficiency in English. PuS8 said:

Though we have learnt English as a subject for twelve years, we are completely out of practice now. Four or five years since now, we might even be more hesitant in using English to deal with the global job market.

While asking this question to the teachers there, they expressed almost the same opinion though they insisted on the content knowledge of the students which are often better served by the mother language. Besides they reflected on the significance of content knowledge in the profession, either national or global market. PuT2 shared his observation as follows:

Learning proficiency using mother tongue is always high. If teachers use Bengali as MOI, they can help the students understand the contents better by applying metaphors and analogies which may ultimately lead them to implement the intelligible outputs of their academic learning in their professional life.

While listening to the private university students in their discussion, a partially different perception was noted. All the participants thought that second language (English) as MOI (EMOI) is of much importance in today's job market. Three of them mentioned the govt. jobs where Bengali is the preferred version. But other local jobs still prefer English, they thought. PrS5 mentioned:

In the public sector, state language is undoubtedly preferred and it creates no hurdle for us, I think, as we are already skilled in communicating in Bengali. If we get instructed in English, it will be even more helpful for us to get used to it.

In addition to PrS5, PrS3 shared:

Many of us don't even wait for govt job; they prefer to prepare themselves for private jobs and having proper interactive skills in English is an important criterion in job interviews.

In terms of the international market, they were unanimous in the opinion that their experience of English medium instruction might give them an edge in their jobs. PrS7 added:

English, being a lingua franca, is the first choice to communicate in international job market. In this sense, students like us whose MOI is English will definitely be more eligible, I think.

The teachers of that private university also presented the same opinion. When asked about the content knowledge, they accepted the point that content knowledge might get hampered to some extent varying on the background level of the students. But still they enforced the idea of implementing English as MOI (EMOI) considering the market demand in today's globalized world. PrT5 expressed his strong belief:

At the beginning, it might be challenging for some students to cope with English medium environment. But eventually our graduates develop great quality for the existing job market.

4.2 Higher education

While discussing the higher education plan with the students, it was very evident that many of them, if not all, had plans for higher studies. Therefore, the relevant question was put forward whether there is any connection between MOI and higher education. As expected, their opinion varied in this regard. All the students of public university (ten out of ten) who were instructed in Bengali as MOI thought that going for further studies requires a good command over the content which is the outcome of better understanding of the contents. They believed that contents are always understood better when they are instructed in mother language. In that sense, Bengali as MOI was doing good for them in terms of their planning for higher studies. PuS1 stated:

I think students of public universities hold a better control of the subject knowledge compared to the private university students, even in the case of their academic results

being the same because these students (public university) are taught using their mother tongue which is easily comprehensible.

In response to the question of higher education, the teachers of public universities (five) agreed partially though three of them added that the language barrier is always something significant to think about for higher education, especially in foreign countries though content knowledge remains the first priority. Besides they believe that language barriers are easily manageable, in need, comparing it to the lack of content knowledge. For example, PuT3 commented:

Content knowledge is very important to acquire higher education. Suppose, while you will be asked to submit a statement of purpose for admission abroad, they first look for the academic depth, and then they might concentrate on the language skill which can be improved within a period of time in case of any lacking. But if you do not have sufficient academic knowledge of your field of study, there is no chance.

Answering the same question, the students of private universities did not underestimate the importance of content knowledge but they thought that content knowledge does not depend on the instruction much; rather it is much more connected to the background knowledge of the students and their intensity of learning. Besides they believed that a second language, English in their case, can be proved of immense significance while pursuing higher education in any foreign university. PrS8 further added:

First language as MOI and content knowledge are not necessarily to be connected. If I want it intensively, I can surely get a good hold of the subject knowledge, even in English. You just need to concentrate and work hard. For me, EMOI facilitates the higher education process.

The teacher reiterated the same point and two of them added that it is not only about the language but also the environment. Coping with an English-speaking environment easily requires regular practice which they ensure to their students, they

thought. PrT5 set his present working station as an example and deliberated:

Learning environment has always been a significant contribution to the students. In our university, the environment is designed for learning. Inside the class, even outside, students are encouraged to use English always. So, anyone used to this environment will expectedly find it easy to cope with any English-speaking environment.

4.3 Necessary infrastructural support

While commenting on necessary supports to implement MOI policy, the students and teachers of public universities raised a significant point that is very relevant to the academic background of a good number of students. According to them, most of the students enrolled in universities in Bangladesh are from Bengali medium which means that they have been instructed in their school and college in their mother language, Bengali. Therefore, this may create a serious impediment in their way of learning when they are instructed in a second language, English. Four of the ten student participants said that they had a number of friends studying in private universities and getting instructed in English who had faced the same problem and had struggled a lot trying to understand the content. PuS9 shared his own point of view:

As most of the students are from the Bengali medium background, it is quite habitual for us to follow necessary instructions in Bengali which leads to an easy grasp of the concepts. In EMOI-based education, the terminologies seem new to us.

Three out of five interviewed teachers also mentioned the lack of knowledge of basic English in all four skills including listening, speaking, reading and writing among most of the students. They opined that it became very difficult for those students to get instructed in English especially in the science-related courses. But one point they highlighted seriously was about the availability of books at the tertiary level of education. They accepted the unavailability

of books in Bengali at this level which to some extent showed English as the preferred version. But they urged the necessity of books for higher education in Bengali by the writers and researchers which could highly be promoted by the use of Bengali as MOI in academic institutions. PuT1 stated his observation as follows:

It is true that available Bengali books are not sufficient for tertiary level of education, or I should say, in many cases, there are not enough reference books in Bengali. Still, MOI should be the state language. Only then the researchers or writers will be interested to give effort to writing books in Bengali; new academic and technical terms will be introduced in Bengali as well.

The students of the private university did not accept 'the background concept' completely. They shared their own experience that not all Bengali medium students are weak in English. Still, if they face difficulty, it does not take very long to overcome and get used to the environment. Two of them also prioritized the use of EMOI to deal with the presence of multi-cultural and multi-lingual students in the same class. For example, PrS5 thought:

Having a Bengali medium background doesn't mean that all of us are weak in English. And not everything is new to us; many courses are related to our previous studies. For some of us, it might be a bit difficult to adjust with the new environment at the beginning, but later on we are completely okay with EMOI.

In addition to PrS5, PrS1 echoed:

Even, we have foreign classmates, indigenous classmates. So, we should ensure one language through which all can communicate, and that common language should be English.

The teachers of that institution added further that facing difficulty does not mean to stop. They must go ahead to get used to English. One of the teachers mentioned that it is not even impossible to adopt a new language as a medium of instruction if needed. Besides the books at the tertiary level are more

available in English, which they will find difficult to read unless they are used to it. So, they claimed that practicing English within MOI policy is a better option for the students. PrT3 shared his observation and experience:

Facing difficulties in a second language never defines that the first language should be the medium of instruction. We need to think about the efficiency of the process. Moreover, it is very possible for them to cope with a completely new language; in my undergraduate level, I experienced it. One of my roommates did his graduation where the medium of instruction was German whereas his first language was Bengali and second language was obviously English. So, EMOI should never be considered a threat.

4.4. Social hegemony

Speaking about the dominance created by the use of language, almost all the participants of both public and private universities agreed on a certain point with very few exceptions. The point that they agreed on was the possibility of creating a hegemonic environment sometimes considering the better use of English. Those who are good in English think of themselves as superior to others, according to them. Moreover, the teachers interviewed mentioned that sometimes the difference in MOI can create institutional hegemony as well where a group of students feel superior to others as they are instructed in English that they are good in. Three teachers, two from a public and one from a private university, also thought that this dominant attitude may influence even the social class where the so-called high class, the rich are better performers of English than the low class, the poor. PuT1 asserted:

From the context of Bangladesh, English proficiency represents social status. But it may not be related to MOI, rather it is mostly related to social and economical factors. Still, this sense of class division may lead to individual or institutional supremacy.

But some students specifically five in number out of a total twenty gave a slightly different view. Though they could not reject the above-mentioned belief, they wanted to point out that not all the division among the students made by the use of language is deliberate. They sometimes took them as light-hearted fun to some extent. For example, PrS5 opined:

Proficiency in English is not a big deal in terms of mutual relationships and judgement of an individual. Sometimes, we just make fun when any friend underdoes or overdoes it.

5. Discussion

The analysis of the findings brought a number of straight and unambiguous points forward in terms of the implication of MOI policy in the higher education of Bangladesh. Though there was surely a tendency to glorify the MOI that they were accustomed to, the participants still didn't forget to unveil the truth by sharing their opinions.

Firstly, in this era of globalization, English is considered as a lingua-franca which necessitates learning English and English if used as a medium of instruction can be learnt better (Rassool, 1998). In the opinion of Kirkpatrick (2011), English Medium Instruction (EMI) certainly promotes internationalization process which ultimately results in Englishization. Findings indicate if the students get instructed in English, they feel the urge to concentrate more in English and gradually get used to it. Moreover, a number of the participants reported that higher education requires a good command over English as most of the books are written in English there and the environment also demands a good working knowledge of English if one is going abroad for higher education. Therefore, English as MOI is appreciated.

Secondly, in terms of employability, the role of language as MOI is diversified depending on which language one is using and where this practice is being implemented. In some particular jobs, employers look for proficient

users of English whereas for some other jobs, Bengali is serving the purpose pretty well (Hamid & Hasan 2020). In the local job market in Bangladesh, Bengali is a commonly used version and government job sector has accelerated the widespread use of Bengali in almost every government activity including oral and paper work. According to Hamid (2009), there are available reports on the government employees' lack of proficiency in English which might have been one of their reasons to get accustomed to using Bengali in official activities. However, Bengali medium instruction poses no threat to government jobs. On the contrary in the international job market, especially in multinational companies, English is more commonly needed as the official works are primarily controlled by the use of English. This is an effect of globalization and to get internationalized (Erling et al., 2010), English definitely plays a vital role. Moreover, working environment there suits the employees having good command over English. Therefore, English as MOI serves this need and is also well appreciated. Usually, the practice of English in private organizations is more extensive than in public organizations (Hamid & Hasan 2020). In addition, education based on English Medium Instruction (EMI) can create a level playing field for both the public sector and the private sector (Macaro, E. et al., 2018).

Thirdly, the concern that has come out of the opinion of the participants is whether MOI policy promotes language barrier or not. There is no denial of the fact that a bulk number of students in the higher education in Bangladesh have their previous educational background in Bengali medium which creates impediments to cope with a second language that is English here, at least to some extent. Consequently, understanding the content delivered in a second language may result in the lack of proper understanding and if it is the case then the purpose of attending higher education will face a serious setback. Thus, English Medium Instruction (EMI) can create obstacles to understand the core

subject matter in an effective way as usually expected (Cankaya, P., 2017). Besides this linguistic drawback regarding the content knowledge, regular instructions inside the class and outside the class may also get affected. Therefore, students may fail to comprehend important guidelines from the teachers, in both academic and non-academic spheres. It is very true that English as a medium of instruction is well-adorned but its academic result won't be satisfactory unless the lacking in primary and secondary levels of study cannot be addressed properly (Tang, 2020). But there is also a very strong counter-argument that shows the significance of a second language as MOI. The most pressing argument can build on the universalization of English in the field of higher education. Besides, socio-economic advantages of English language cannot be ignored either (Rahman & Singh, 2019). According to these beliefs, the probable difficulties students may go through for adopting a second language as MOI is not a long-term issue. Some of the students are believed to have a better proficiency in English language and therefore, they can cope with the second language easily. In the case of the others, it takes a little time to zeal with the situation but they do it surely as they are well-concerned about the implication of English in this globalized era.

The fourth one and one of most serious concerns is the emergence of a hegemonic mentality among the users of the languages, both Bengali and English, especially among the students. English as a widely accepted and multi-dimensional language is surely a triumphant language in this globalized world which is always considered superior to many other languages including Bengali in terms of its varied application and acceptability. Hence, a sense of prestigious position of English all over the world remains inherent in the English Medium Instruction (EMI) based education (Macaro, E. et al., 2018). Now, the problem will surely arise if English speaking students carry this sense of superiority while comparing with others on a personal ground as it may cause social hegemony and a sense of othering. The

findings of the study revealed that a good number of EMI students develop a sense of superiority thinking that they are more proficient in using English. A few participants also expressed their concern that this personal sense of supremacy can gradually lead to institutional and social hegemony. Even as a second language, the teaching and learning of English is well-connected to socio-cultural and socio-historical biasness to some extent which can ultimately replicate to social hierarchies (Tamim, 2021). According to some other findings, though most of the students who were used to the mother language, Bengali as MOI glorified their cause, they still felt the heat from the posture and gesture of the students who availed the opportunity to use English as MOI. This sense of othering may cause a group to feel depressed and at one point it may also increase the chance of psychological conflict among the students. The situation is more dreadful when we think that this 'othering' actually starts from the school and college level, much earlier than the tertiary level for the same cause. However, this 'othering' ideology always demeans the self-esteem of the students.

6. Conclusion

Choosing a right MOI from the alternatives available, that is Bengali (mother language) as MOI and English (second language) as MOI, is a serious bone of contention as both have their own explanations with distinct advantages and disadvantages. Stakeholders involved in this use, especially the teachers and the students who are practically facing the situation, have come out with a variety of perceptions which have surely made it questionable to prioritize one language over the other as MOI. On the one hand, using Bengali as medium of instruction is thought to be a sort of assistance to comprehend the subject matter clearly with a good grip on the local job market specially government jobs keeping the nationalistic zeal intact. On the other hand, English as medium of instructions can prepare our students to get internationalized as a language for education

and economic development (Seargeant & Erling, 2011). Now, whatever the MOI is, the ultimate goal here is to ensure proper education which will guide the students to a better learning environment with finer subject knowledge and other skills which will consequently promote them to contribute to the society. However, further studies are always appreciated to dig deep into the issue and find an answer.

Considering the findings of this study, one possible step can be keeping the MOI policy open for the users regardless of any institution or any person. In this open MOI policy, the language as MOI will not be fixed, rather the users will be facilitated with the opportunity to pick their preferred language as MOI. An open MOI policy beholds a few vital arguments as well in support of its preference. Firstly, in today's globalized era, the multilingual approach is one of the most celebrated approaches where more than one language is given preference. Our society has also broken the shackle of a mono-lingual attitude to be internalized in this global village. Therefore, an open MOI policy, being multilingual insense, can be effective to know multi-cultural and multi-dimensional use of languages according to the needs of its users. Secondly, keeping the MOI open that means using Bengali and English both as MOI as per the requirements of the users can also promote the availability of more books and resources in Bengali. It is a proven fact that most of the study materials for higher education are available in English rather than Bengali which is true to many other languages as well if compared to English. Now the native authors/specialists will be more motivated to write in Bengali provided the MOI policy prioritize both the language. Besides, the users who prefer Bengali as MOI will get benefitted from the resources in their preferred language. Thirdly, avoiding a fixed MOI may assist to remove the language barrier, at least for those who find English as MOI problematic for them and not anything of immense importance. This removal of language barrier may eventually pilot them to an efficacious comprehension of the content

knowledge with unambiguous instructions to follow inside and outside the classroom. Another possible initiative is to come out of the current monolingual environment of education and translanguaging can be an interesting option here to promote bilingual or multilingual education. Though the scopes of this pedagogical approach are yet to be implemented in tertiary level of education, it is believed to develop both languages successfully and also result in effective content learning' (Baker, 2006, p 297). It is more than code-switching which includes a set of practices depending on the user's linguistic and semiotic repository (Mazak, C. M., 2016). The implementation of the translanguaging approach can establish the use of more than one language in the classroom which would ease the effort of the teachers and students both in understanding the content better with less linguistic obstruction. Besides, this pedagogical ideology can result in greater objectivity with stronger involvement of the participants, both local and foreign students, unlike prioritizing a certain group of students in a monolingual classroom (Caruso, 2018). The prospects of translanguaging at the tertiary education looks promising; yet it needs to go through proper scrutiny to unmask the challenges it may face on its way to get implemented as an effective pedagogy.

Reference

- Ahmed, M. (2005). Teaching English in the primary school: Challenges and options. *Bangladesh Education Journal*, 4(1), 17-23.
- Baker, C. (2006). *Foundations of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* (4th edn). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Banu, R., & Sussex, R. (2001). English in Bangladesh after independence: Dynamics of policy and practice.
- Brumfit, C. (2004). Language and higher education: Two current challenges. *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education*, 3(2), 163-173.

- Cankaya, P. (2017). Challenges in English Medium of Instruction from the Teachers and Students' Eyes. *International Journal of Languages Education*, 5(4), 830-839.
- Caruso, E. (2018). Translanguaging in higher education: Using several languages for the analysis of academic content in the teaching and learning process. *Language Learning in Higher Education*, 8(1), 65-90.
- Celic, C., & Seltzer, K. (2011). *Translanguaging: A CUNY-NYSIEB guide for educators*. New York, NY: CUNY-NYSIEB.
- Choudhury, S. I. (2001). Rethinking the two Englishes. In F. Alam, N. Zaman & T. Ahmed (Eds.), *Revisioning English in Bangladesh* (pp. 15-27). University Press.
- Cogo, A. (2016). English as a Lingua Franca in Europe. In Andrew Linn (Ed.), *Investigating English in Europe: Contexts and Agendas* (pp. 79- 89). De Gruyter Mouton.
- Dearden, J. (2014). English as a medium of instruction – a growing global phenomenon: Phase 1. Interim Report April 2014. British Council.
- Dearden, J., Macaro, E., & Akincioglu, M. (2016). English medium instruction in universities: A collaborative experiment in Turkey. *Studies in English Language Teaching*, 4(1).
- Doiz, A., Lasagabaster, D., & Sierra, J. M. (2011). Internationalisation, multilingualism and English-medium instruction. *World Englishes*, 30(3), 345-359.
- Doiz, A., Lasagabaster, D., & Sierra, J. M. (2012). 11 Future Challenges for English-Medium Instruction at the Tertiary Level. *English-medium instruction at universities: Global challenges*, 213.
- Doiz, A., Lasagabaster, D., & Sierra, J. (2013). Globalisation, internationalisation, multilingualism and linguistic strains in higher education. *Studies in higher education*, 38(9), 1407-1421.
- Erling, E., Hamid, M. O., & Seargeant, P. (2010). Grassroots attitudes to the positioning of English as a language for international development.
- Evans, S., & Morrison, B. (2018). Adjusting to higher education in Hong Kong: the influence of school medium of instruction. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 21(8), 1016-1029.
- García, O., & Sylvan, C. E. (2011). Pedagogies and practices in multilingual classrooms: Singularities in pluralities. *The Modern Language Journal*, 95(3), 385-400.
- Hamid, M. O. (2000). A proposed content-based academic purposes syllabus for the Foundation Course-2 at the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh. Unpublished MA dissertation, Deakin University, Melbourne.
- Hamid, M. O. (2009). *Sociology of language learning: Social biographies and school English achievement in rural Bangladesh*. University of Queensland.
- Hamid, M. O., Jahan, I. & Islam, M. M. (2013). 'Language, identity, and social divides: Medium of instruction debates in Bangladeshi print media.' *Comparative Education Review*, 59(1), 75–101.
- Hamid, M. O., & Baldauf, R. B. (2014). 'Public-private domain distinction as an aspect of LPP frameworks: A case study of Bangladesh.' *Language Problems and Language Planning*, 38(2), 192–210.
- Hamid, M. O., & Hasan, M. M. (2020). Bangladeshi English. *The Handbook of Asian Englishes*, 297-315.
- He, J. J., & Chiang, S. Y. (2016). Challenges to English-medium instruction (EMI) for international students in China: A learners' perspective: English-medium education aims to accommodate international students into Chinese universities, but how well is it working? *English Today*, 32(4), 63-67.
- Iglesias-Álvarez, A., & Ramallo, F. (2002). Language as a diacritical in terms of cultural and resistance identities in Galicia. *Estudios de Sociolingüística*, 3(2), 255-287.
- Islam, M. (2013). English medium instruction in the private universities in Bangladesh. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 3(1), 126-137.
- Kirkpatrick, A. (2017). The Languages of Higher Education in East and Southeast Asia:

- Will EMI Lead to Englishisation?. In *English medium instruction in higher education in Asia-Pacific* (pp. 21-36). Springer, Cham.
- Kirkpatrick, A. (2011). English as a medium of instruction in Asian education (from primary to tertiary): Implications for local languages and local scholarship. *Applied Linguistics Review* (2), 99–119.
- Knight, J. (2013). The changing landscape of higher education internationalisation—for better or worse?. *Perspectives: Policy and practice in higher education*, 17(3), 84-90.
- Lin, A. M., & Martin, P. (2005). From a critical deconstruction paradigm to a critical construction paradigm: An introduction to decolonisation, globalisation and language-in-education policy and practice. *Decolonisation, globalisation: Language-in-education policy and practice*, 1-19.
- Lin, Y. H. (2020). The Impact of global English: Perception of English Promotion. *The Asian EFL Journal*, 24(1), 102-140.
- Macaro, E., Curle, S., Pun, J., An, J., & Dearden, J. (2018). A systematic review of English medium instruction in higher education. *Language Teaching*, 51(1), 36-76.
- Marsh, D. (2006). English as medium of instruction in the new global linguistic order: Global characteristics, local consequences. In *Proceedings of the Second Annual Conference for Middle East Teachers of Science, Mathematics and Computing*. Abu Dhabi: METSMaC (pp. 29-38).
- Mazak, C. M. (2016). Introduction: Theorizing Translanguaging Practices in Higher Education. In C. M. Mazak & K.S. Carroll (Eds.), *Translanguaging in higher education: Beyond Monolingual Ideologies* (pp. 1-10). Multilingual Matters.
- Mazak, C. M., & Herbas-Donoso, C. (2015). Translanguaging practices at a bilingual university: A case study of a science classroom. *International journal of bilingual education and bilingualism*, 18(6), 698-714.
- Pennycook, A. (2002). *English and the discourses of colonialism*. Routledge.
- Rahman, A. M. M. H. (1999, January). English language teaching in Bangladesh: Didactics on the pragmatics of a language teaching policy. In *Collected papers of the international conference on national and regional issues in English language teaching: International perspectives* (pp. 5-32).
- Rahman, M., Hamzah, M. I. M., Meerah, T., & Rahman, M. (2010). Historical Development of Secondary Education in Bangladesh: Colonial Period to 21st Century. *International education studies*, 3(1), 114-125.
- Rahman, M. M. & Pandian, A. (2018). ‘A critical investigation of English language teaching in Bangladesh: Unfulfilled expectations after two decades of communicative language teaching.’ *English Today*, 34(3), 43–49.
- Rahman, M. M., & Singh, M. K. M. (2019). Language ideology of English-medium instruction in higher education: A case study from Bangladesh. *English Today*, 36(4), 40-46.
- Rahman, S. (2015). ‘English language policy initiatives and implementation in Bangladesh: Micro political issues.’ *Asian EFL Journal*, 88, 59–96.
- Rassool, N. (1998). Postmodernity, cultural pluralism and the nation-state: problems of language rights, human rights, identity and power. *Language Sciences*, 20(1), 89-99.
- Rassool, N., Heugh, K., & Mansoor, S. (2007). *Global issues in language, education and development: Perspectives from postcolonial countries* (Vol. 4). Multilingual matters.
- Rumnaz Imam, S. (2005). English as a global language and the question of nation-building education in Bangladesh. *Comparative education*, 41(4), 471-486.
- Sergeant, P., & Erling, E. J. (2011). The discourse of ‘English as a language for international development’: Policy assumptions and practical challenges. In H. Coleman (Eds.), *Dreams and Realities: Developing countries and the English Language* (pp. 248- 268). British Council.
- Tamim, T. (2021). Monolingual Policies and Plurilingual Practices in English Language

Classrooms: Addressing Shared Guilt and Threats. *The Asian EFL Journal*, 25(2), 2-28.

Tang, K. N. (2020). Challenges and Importance of Teaching English as a Medium of Instruction in Thailand International College. *Journal of English as an International Language*, 15(2), 97-118.

Tsui, A. B., & Tollefson, J. W. (2007). Language policy and the construction of

national cultural identity. *Language policy, culture, and identity in Asian contexts*, 1-21.

Wanphet, P., & Tantawy, N. (2018). Effectiveness of English as a medium of instruction in the UAE: Perspectives and outcomes from the instructors and students of University Science Courses. *Educational Research for Policy and Practice*, 17(2), 145-172.