

The Dichotomy of Linguistic Purism: A Case Study in Bangladesh

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Abstract : *Linguistic purism is an ideology that emphasizes the preservation and protection of a language by promoting its pure form, often in opposition to foreign influences, slang, or dialectal variations. In Bangladesh, this phenomenon has significant historical, social, and political dimensions. This study explores the trajectories of linguistic purism in Bangladesh, its myths and realities, and the implications for linguistic rights. The historical analysis traces the roots of linguistic purism in Bangladesh to contemporary debates surrounding language purity and the influence of foreign words. The study unveils the intertwining of language ideology with national identity, culture, and political ideology. Furthermore, this research investigates the myths surrounding linguistic purism, such as the belief in the existence of an uncontaminated, 'pure' form of Bengali. Contrary to these myths, linguistic diversity and change are natural processes, and the study highlights the complex realities of language use in a multicultural society. The implications section focuses on the impact of linguistic purism on linguistic rights in Bangladesh. It argues that linguistic purism can lead to discrimination against minority languages and dialects, thus posing a threat to linguistic diversity and social cohesion. At the same time, the study recognizes the role of linguistic purism in fostering a sense of national identity and unity. The research concludes by emphasizing the need for a balanced approach that recognizes the importance of preserving the linguistic heritage while also promoting linguistic diversity and ensuring the rights of all language communities. It calls for comprehensive language policies that take into account the historical context, societal needs, and human rights, aiming to foster a linguistic landscape that is both unified and diverse.*

Keywords: *Linguistic purism, pure language, Language purist, Linguistics Human right, foreign-language criticism, Loan words, Language pollution.*

Introduction

Language is not merely a tool for communication; it encapsulates a nation's history, culture, identity, and philosophy. For the Bengali nation, this relationship between language and national identity has been a subject of contemplation and concern since the seventeenth century. The Bengali language has assimilated words, phrases, and sentences from various languages, with Persian being a prominent contributor, reflecting the historical tradition of adopting the language of rulers. Such assimilation has sparked debates over whether this phenomenon was the result of linguistic generosity or indifference to language purity.

Linguistic purism, the effort to *keep the language pure*, has emerged as a significant area of historical sociolinguistics. It encompasses processes of standardizing languages, eradicating foreign influences, colloquialisms, neologisms, and grammatical errors. For some, purism represents resistance to language change or efforts to reverse certain changes. Others see it as a belief system focused on maintaining a language's purity from foreign influences.

The following study explores the evolution of linguistic purism within the Bengali nation. By delving into the historical trajectories, philosophical implications, and sociolinguistic aspects, we aim to understand the complex dynamics between language, nation, identity, and the pursuit of linguistic purity. This inquiry is crucial in the context of Bangladesh, where the mingling of various linguistic elements has shaped the national language, challenging conventional notions of purity and authenticity. It provides a unique lens to examine broader questions about language rights, cultural preservation, and national identity.

Literature Review

Definition and Objectives of Linguistic Purism: Linguistic purism, a noticeable area in historical sociolinguistics, encompasses the process of standardizing languages, removing grammatical errors, jargon, neologisms, colloquialisms, and foreign-origin words (Langer & Nesse, 2012; Gray, 2020; Nordquist, 2020). Described as language criticism, its primary goal is to maintain the purity of language, free from foreign influence, especially in the lexis (Schwin, 2018; Veisbergs, 2010). Purism is not just an activity but a belief, restricted to the foreign influence on language (Langer & Nesse, 2012).

Linguistic Purism across Languages: Studies have focused on different languages and how linguistic purism has been applied to get rid of foreign elements. For instance, in the Albanian language, purism was deemed necessary to ward off English borrowings and calques (Prifti, 2009). In the Persian language, about fifty percent of vocabulary comprises borrowed words, mainly from Arabic, and European languages like French and English (Marszalek-Kowalewska, 2011). Britain's fight for language purity against foreign influences, like Greek, Latin, and French, led to the rejection of '*Inkhorn Terms*', and the discovery of new words (Linguistic Purism: How English Fought for Language Purity - Education Today News, 2016).

Importance of Linguistic Purism: The importance of linguistic purism is emphasized in maintaining the integrity of the native language and avoiding borrowed words or loanwords (H. Azad, 1999; Bandov, 2017; Langer & Nesse, 2012). It also plays a role in defining the corruption of language, fear of language existence, and consciousness of the native language (Prifti, 2009). The study of Ukraine's sociolinguistic landscape by Bilaniuk (2017) sheds light on various dimensions of linguistic purism, such as standards, mixing, code-switching, nonstandard dialects, slang, vulgarities, and foreign borrowings.

Linguistic Purism and National Identity: Several studies highlight the interplay between linguistic purism and national identity. In Russia, the language symbolizes political and cultural unity (Bandov, 2017), whereas in Iran, language shapes national identity (Marszalek-Kowalewska, 2011). The Ukrainian language embodies the country's right to sovereignty (Bilaniuk, 2017), and in Croatia, political and ideological changes mirror linguistic ones (Kapović, 2011). Some scholars have even termed this connection as 'Linguistic Nationalism' (Linguistic Purism: How English Fought for Language Purity, 2016), arguing that the movement for linguistic purism is more motivated by nationalistic sentiment and cultural pride (Scheel, 1998).

Linguistic Purism and Cultural Identity: Linguistic purism also aligns with cultural identity, as language serves as a vehicle of a nation's culture (Mukherjee, 2021). The relationship between language and culture signifies that linguistic purism is not only about language purity but also encapsulates broader sociocultural and political aspects.

Understanding the Nature of Linguistic Purism: Sociolinguistic and anthropological studies have shed light on the complexity of language purification campaigns and discourses, illustrating that they are more than mere linguistic endeavours (Abercrombie, 2018; Jernudd & Shapiro, 2011; Hill & Hill, 1980). The focus is not solely on linguistic purity but extends to complex socio-cultural dynamics.

Linguistic Differentiation and Historical Context: Linguistic differentiation and purist discourses are historically rooted in debates that reflect political, cultural, and historical relationships between dominant and subordinated groups (England, 2003; Roche, 2021; Wertheim, 2003). This illustrates how language plays a role in power dynamics across various societal domains.

Examination of Metalinguistic Discourses: There is substantial evidence to indicate that the underlying rationale for metalinguistic terms is not dependent on the temporal or spatial context or any other specific pragmatic practices of language. This has been evident in research regarding stigmatized migrant language, Japanese women's language, and postcolonial language interpretations (Stroud, 2004; Inoue, 2004; Hill & Hill, 1980).

Implications of "Pure" vs. "Impure" Language Debate: Scholarship in the field of language activism has revealed how debates over the purity of language are often intertwined with themes of exclusion/inclusion and self/other (Weinstein, 2011). The dichotomy between what is considered "pure" and "impure" resonates with deeper societal issues.

Metalinguistic Discourses in Mongolian Context: As discussed in the referenced article, Mongolian metalinguistic discourses reveal a clear dichotomy. This dichotomous nature reveals how social differences can be translated into linguistic oppositions, with this translation most apparent in the Mongolian context (Bourdieu, 1992; Gal & Irvine, 2000).

Resistance and Minority Languages: Finally, certain attempts to resist state-promoted racial linguistic order have framed minority languages as traditional, backward, or subordinated. These attempts are viewed as linguistic purism and resistance against colonization, reflecting broader political struggles (Baïoud & Khuanuud, 2022).

Historical Influence on European Standard Languages: There has been a substantial influence of linguistic purism on the shaping and development of standard languages across Europe. This trend has been extensively documented in numerous studies ranging from the mid-20th century to the early 21st century (Skautrup, 1944-1968; Indrebø [1954] 2001; Hall, 1974; Fodor & Hagege, 1983; Gerdener, 1986; Schiewe, 1988; Thomas, 1991; Jones, 1995; Brunstad, 2001).

Global Impact Outside Europe: Linguistic purism's impact is not limited to European languages; it has been markedly present in other regions as well. Research has pointed out its significant effects on languages outside Europe (Annamalai, 1979; Jernudd *et al.*, 1989; Nino-Murcia, 1997), thereby extending its influence on a global scale.

Variable Intensity and Orientation: The influence of linguistic purism has not been consistent across languages or through time. Its intensity, impact, and orientation have shown considerable variations, depending on specific contexts and historical moments (Brunstad, 2003). This complexity adds another layer to understanding how linguistic purism functions across different cultures and eras.

Ideological Role in Language Revitalization and Definition: A crucial aspect of linguistic purism is how it has acted as an ideology for removing undesired elements from languages and revitalizing domestic aspects. This ideological function has played a significant role in defining language borders and norms, particularly for standard languages. It has provided a framework for understanding the language's purity and boundaries, emphasizing the preservation and standardization of language (Brunstad, 2003).

This literature review brings together various perspectives and studies on linguistic purism, ranging from its definition, applications across different languages, and importance, to its intricate connection with national and cultural identity. It lays the groundwork for a deeper exploration of linguistic purism within specific contexts and its implications for language policy, cultural preservation, and national identity. Overall, the inquiry into linguistic purism exposes an intricate network of sociocultural and political factors influencing the perception and construction of language. It is not a mere attempt at purification but a nuanced interplay between various aspects of human society. In summary, the studies on linguistic purism demonstrate its multifaceted role in shaping languages, both within Europe and globally. Its varied influence across different languages and times, along with its function as an ideological tool, has contributed to the complex development of linguistic norms and standards.

Research Methodology

The research methodology employed for this study is grounded in a qualitative approach, combining historical analysis and case studies to illuminate the complexities of linguistic purism within the context of Bangladesh. Guided by research questions that probe the historical paths, prevalent myths, tangible realities, and significant implications for linguistic rights, the study relies on both primary and secondary data collection. The secondary data were gathered through an extensive literature review of existing scholarly articles, books, and reports, as well as archival research into historical records, policy documents, and legal frameworks. Primary data collection was conducted using semi-structured interviews with academics, linguists, policymakers, and language activists, coupled with participant observations in various societal settings. Purposive sampling ensured the selection of respondents based on their relevance and expertise in the field of linguistics and language policy in Bangladesh. The gathered data underwent rigorous qualitative content analysis, involving coding and thematic examination to discern patterns and relationships, and a comparative analysis to juxtapose historical and contemporary perspectives. To ensure the credibility of the findings, the study implemented triangulation across different data sources and sought peer reviews from experts in the field. Ethical considerations were paramount, with explicit informed consent obtained from all participants, assurance of anonymity, and strict adherence to ethical standards as prescribed by relevant governing bodies. The methodology also acknowledges certain limitations, such as the confined scope to linguistic purism within Bangladesh and potential accessibility constraints to some historical documents or biases in personal interviews. This methodological framework, marked by its robustness and transparency, aims to contribute a nuanced understanding of linguistic purism in Bangladesh, enriching the discourse on linguistic rights in the region.

The research methodology employed for the case study on the controversy surrounding the drama series *Bachelor Point* (Dhuruba TV, 2022) in Bangladesh appears to be an intricate blend of qualitative research methods. This methodology principally relies on qualitative analysis, where non-numerical data related to the drama's content, dialogues, characters, and its societal impact have been comprehensively scrutinized. A pivotal aspect of this approach is content analysis, wherein the specific dialogues and scenes that sparked the controversy were closely read and interpreted in their socio-cultural context. Concurrently, media monitoring played a significant role in gauging reactions from various stakeholders, from actors and directors to fans and critics. This involved a consistent observation of diverse media channels, such as social media platforms, TV discussions, and YouTube. The theoretical backbone of this research is framed within the paradigms of Linguistic Purism and Linguistic Rights, facilitating a structured intellectual exploration of the controversy. Furthermore, ethnographic elements potentially infused the methodology by offering an observational lens into audience engagement, public responses, and the broader cultural context of language usage and interpretation in Bangladesh. The in-depth focus on a single drama series and its associated controversy mirrors a case study approach, characterized by its attention to detail and depth of exploration. Alongside primary observations, secondary data, including social media comments, interviews, and media coverages, have been synthesized to create a holistic narrative. Lastly, the comparative analysis component within the methodology juxtaposed the conflicting perspectives and paradigms to dissect the tension between Linguistic Purism and Linguistic Rights. Overall, this multidimensional research approach seamlessly integrates various qualitative tools and theoretical frameworks to delve deeply into the intricate landscape of language controversy in contemporary Bangladesh.

Research Question

The study could be framed as follows:

1. What are the historical trajectories of linguistic purism in Bangladesh, and how have they evolved over time?
2. What myths and misconceptions surround the concept and practice of linguistic purism in Bangladesh?
3. What are the tangible realities of linguistic purism within the Bangladeshi linguistic landscape?
4. How does linguistic purism in Bangladesh impact linguistic rights, and what are the implications for language policy and social dynamics?

These research questions aim to guide the inquiry into the multifaceted aspects of linguistic purism in Bangladesh, providing a comprehensive framework to explore its history, myths, realities, and consequences.

Discussion and Findings

An Overview of the Bengali Language: Origins, Development, and Influences

Bengali, also known as Bangla, is an influential language on the global stage, serving as the state language of Bangladesh and one of the 18 officially recognized languages within the Indian Constitution (Sikder, 2013; Bangla Language, n.d.). Holding the position of the world's fourth most widely spoken language, it is a testament to the cultural richness and diversity of the regions where it thrives. The use of Bengali extends well beyond the borders of Bangladesh and India. According to the sources, more than 300 million people across the globe communicate in Bengali (General Assembly Hears Appeal for Bangla to Be Made an Official UN Language, n.d.; Sikder, 2013). A closer examination of the demographics reveals that 26 million people speak Bengali in Bangladesh, a staggering 160 million in India, and an additional 4 million are scattered across various countries. Its international reach is further demonstrated by its status in the United States, where Bengali is the fifth recognized immigrant language. In this diverse nation, approximately six lakh (600,000) individuals speak Bengali, reflecting the language's growing influence and acceptance in non-native regions. Sierra Leone's relationship with Bengali offers a remarkable illustration of the language's international standing. In 2002, Sierra Leone's President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah declared Bangla as an official language within the country (Ahmed, 2017). This unique proclamation underscores the adaptability and appeal of Bengali and symbolizes a broader embrace of cultural exchange and linguistic diversity.

The widespread use and recognition of Bengali serve as a symbol of its importance and the deep cultural connections it fosters among various communities around the world. It is not merely a tool for communication but a bridge that unites different cultures and histories, embodying a rich literary tradition and a thriving contemporary presence.

According to Hoque (2007), Arabic served as the religious language for the Muslims of Bengal during the Sultanate era in Bangladesh, while Persian served as the official language. Despite Persian's status as the official language, the autonomous sultans of Bengal held a deep reverence for their indigenous tongue, Bengali.

The Bengali language, with its rich tapestry of vocabulary, bears evidence of a cultural melting pot, weaving together influences from various linguistic traditions. A closer examination of the language's lexical components reveals that out of about one lakh and twenty-five thousand words in Bangla, the majority stem from foreign or neighbouring origins (Angkan, 2020).

For instance, around five thousand words share roots with Sanskrit, while Arabic-Persian contributes two and a half thousand words. Additionally, four hundred Turkish words and eight hundred English words can be found within the Bengali vocabulary. Portuguese and French have also left their mark, with one and a half hundred words. The influence of Hindi and Urdu is pervasive, and a fraction of the vocabulary is derived from Sanskrit deterioration, with very few native words.

Interestingly, the native (local) words within Bengali are exceedingly rare, and those that do exist are mostly confined to household utensils, such as *Dheki* (local utensil) and *Kula* (local utensil). There is a striking absence of native terms for practical life, government work, and official or academic activities. Consequently, Bengali is heavily reliant on foreign or borrowed words, reflecting a cosmopolitan character and adaptability (Angkan, 2020).

The syntactic development of Bengali further illustrates its engagement with foreign influences. The prose form of the language emerged during the English rule, following the establishment of Fort William College (Sikder, 2013). The punctuation system in Bengali was designed by Ishwar Chandra, mirroring the punctuation of the English language, showcasing another dimension of cross-cultural exchange.

These linguistic intersections echo broader phenomena such as Pidgin and Creolization, where languages evolve through extended contact between different cultural groups (Holm, 2000; Mufwene, 2015; Isa *et al.*, 2015). Pidgin, a reduced language that typically developed alongside trade, plantation agriculture, and colonization, represents a bridge between groups with no common language (Holm, 2000; Muysken & Smith, 1994; Suraiya, 2020). Over time, Pidgin may transform into Creole, reflecting national traditions and generations of usage, leading to a loss of original forms, a phenomenon termed *Linguistic violence* (Muysken & Smith, 1994). This process, known as Creolization, includes stages from marginal contact to standard language development (Todd, 1990).

Bengali's evolution as a language, enriched and shaped by diverse linguistic sources, is emblematic of global linguistic trends. Its vocabulary, syntax, and historical development underscore the fluidity and complexity of language, reflecting broader cultural dynamics and human connections. Whether through the assimilation of foreign words or the intricate journey from Pidgin to Creole, the Bengali language stands as a testament to the intricate, ever-changing nature of human communication.

The phenomenon of Creolization has been extensively researched and analyzed by various scholars, including Bakker (1994), Baron and Cara (2011), Bickerton (1976), Cohen (2007), Stewart (2007), and Thomason and Kaufman (1992). It has been frequently observed to arise from pidgin. In the specific case of Bengal, the Bengali language underwent a process of Creolization, earning the label of a *mixed pidgin* or *mixed language*. However, it is important to note that Bengali cannot be considered a complete or independent language, as it evolved to fulfill the needs of pidgin situations, trade, commerce, and ultimately colonization. After undergoing the process of Creolization, Bengali evolved from its pidgin state towards a more complex linguistic form. It may be referred to as either a *mixed pidgin* or a *mixed language*. The Bengali language lacks complete independence, having been shaped by pidgin needs in trade, commerce, and colonization. Following its development or Creolization, Bengali has become a composite language, infused with various foreign and regional words.

Historically, the people of Bengal were renowned as courageous mariners in ancient India, fostering modern trading relationships with regions like Java, Sumatra, and modern-day Thailand. These enterprising Bengali individuals founded colonies across maritime Southeast Asia and Thailand, while North and West Bengal strengthened through foreign trade. Even Alexander the Great retracted his expedition from India, fearing a robust counter-attack from Bengal's Gangaridi Empire. Subsequent rules by various dynasties in Bengal, such as the Gaur kingdom, the Pala, Chandra, Sen, and Dev dynasties, brought Hindi, Pali, and other neighbouring languages to Bengal (Mukherjee, 2021).

Through the seventh century, Arab traders and Sufi missionaries entered Bengal, followed by Arabic, Persian, and Turkish influence in the twelfth century through conquests by these groups. The local population, however, adapted these foreign words to fit their business and practical life needs, thus creating the Bengali language as it is known today.

European arrival in Bengal further diversified the linguistic landscape. Portuguese explorers were the first Europeans to establish a presence in India and Bengal in the early 16th century (Wise, 1883). Mutual communication demands led to the development of a pidgin language and the integration of many Portuguese words into Bengali. Subsequent arrivals by the Dutch, Danish, English, and French each contributed to the linguistic evolution in Bengal.

The Bengali language originated as a pidgin language, shaped by various trading communities and colonial influences. It bears evidence of *Linguistic Violence* (Muysken & Smith, 1994), as languages were adapted and altered through processes of pidginization and creolization. Sikder (2013) highlights a third phase in the development of the Bangla language, marked by the 18th-century arrival of the East India Company. As British influence grew, the infusion of English words and phrases into the Bangla language increased. Alam (2021) notes that historical and political factors have led to Bangla being continually influenced by languages such as Persian, Arabic, English, Urdu, and Hindi. According to Sikder (2013) and T. Islam (2013), the Bangla language is in a state of continuous transformation and evolution, reflecting an ongoing process of change. This transition represents the dynamic nature of language as it responds and adapts to various cultural, historical, and social influences.

Linguistic Evolution or Pollution? The Battle for the Purity of the Bengali Language in Bangladesh

Bengali, the official language of Bangladesh, is presently in the throes of a debate regarding its purity and preservation, especially in the face of rapidly changing linguistic landscapes, influenced by globalization and technology. This debate can be traced to distinct groups and their beliefs about linguistic purity, language pollution, and the influence of social media on the Bengali language.

Linguistic Debate in Bangladesh:

According to Alam (2021), Bangladesh is currently witnessing a polarization in opinions on linguistic integrity. On one side are the *linguistic Purists*, who are on a crusade against the introduction and use of new words, especially on social media

platforms. In stark contrast, another group, which acknowledges linguistic realities, is less perturbed about the sanctity and purity of the language.

The concept of *language pollution* is particularly poignant within this debate. Terms such as *language oppression*, *language deterioration*, *language pollution*, and a language on the 'brink of extinction' have been used to describe the phenomena of borrowing foreign words or changing language dynamics, especially by Bangladeshi purists (A. Hossain Azad, 2019; Kabir, 2019; Akter, 2020; Angkan, 2020; Bhattacharja, 2016; Khan, 2016).

The Media's Influence:

Social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter have been highlighted as significant catalysts for this perceived distortion. Mukherjee (2021) argues that social media perhaps amplifies non-regional and non-standard versions of the Bengali language, causing the proliferation of a mess, which is neither regional nor standard.

This sentiment is echoed by various studies (Alam, 2021; Hossain, 2021; Khan, 2016; Masud, 2012; Mukherjee, 2021) that have found and asserted a direct link between social media and language pollution in Bangladesh. Furthermore, traditional media is not spared either. According to Hossain (2021), contemporary Bangladeshi TV serials are potent mediums contributing to this 'language pollution'.

The Role of Cultural Activities and Institutions:

Cultural activities and institutions have also been critiqued for their role in this linguistic transition. Akter (2020) emphasizes that cultural activists and online radios contribute heavily to this so-called deterioration. The crux of this argument rests on the fusion of Bengali and English, leading to a distorted version presented to younger listeners.

Moreover, Akter (2020) pinpoints that the Bangla Academy, the official regulatory body of the Bengali language, has not updated the Bengali spelling dictionary, thereby missing out on the correct spellings of many contemporary words. This underscores the essential need to protect and prioritize the Bengali language's relevance in Bangladesh.

Foreign Influence and Linguistic Purism:

It is worth noting that the infiltration of foreign words into Bengali is not a new phenomenon. But the terminology employed to describe this infiltration is revealing. Terms like *linguistic oppression* and *language pollution* indicate a clear stance on the issue (see A. Hossain Azad, 2019; Kabir, 2019; Akter, 2020; Angkan, 2020; Bhattacharja, 2016).

Furthermore, while linguistic purists decry the infusion of foreign vocabulary into Bengali, it is essential to understand the reasons behind their staunch views. The crux of their concerns revolves around the rapid evolution of the language (Veisbergs, 2010), a perceived threat to the native language (Alam, 2021), existing linguistic hierarchies (Alam, 2021), and an overarching aim to protect the native language (Langer & Nesse, 2012).

Regional Languages and the Purists' View:

Interestingly, while regional languages serve as linguistic treasures reflecting a country's rich heritage, Bangladeshi linguistic purists view them differently. They see regional languages or native dialects as adversaries to the Bengali language, advocating a halt to their practical usage (Hossain, 2021).

In short, the Bengali language's current trajectory in Bangladesh is a subject of contention and debate. With forces of globalization and the advent of technology influencing linguistic dynamics, it remains to be seen how linguistic purists and advocates of language evolution reconcile their differences.

State Intervention in Preserving the Purity of the Bengali Language in Bangladesh: A Historical Overview

In Bangladesh, the state has played an active role in linguistic purism, taking several measures to ensure the protection and preservation of the Bengali language. This involvement can be seen in various facets from legal mandates to spelling reforms.

State Institutions and Linguistic Purism: A growing number of Bangladeshi citizens have called for increased state engagement in creating a language policy and mechanism. For instance, Ferdousi (2017) emphasized the role of the judiciary in this context, stating that it is the 'holy duty' of judges and lawyers to uphold the use of pure Bangla language.

(a) Legal Interventions:

- In 2012, the Bangladesh High Court issued a directive instructing radio and TV presenters and anchor-persons to abstain from using words alien to the Bengali language. This was a direct effort to counteract the encroachment of English and other languages on Bengali, especially in media (Masud, 2012).
- On 17 February 2014, the High Court Division set forth a mandate to ensure the use of Bengali language across various mediums. This encompassed areas like signboards, banners, electronic media advertisements, nameplates, and even vehicle number plates. This initiative was to be implemented by 15 May 2014 (Ferdousi, 2017; Hossain, 2021).
- In a notable 2019 case, the High Court intervened against a multinational soft drink company, Coca-Cola, questioning the use of distorted Bengali words on its bottle labels. The case highlighted the court's active engagement in maintaining linguistic integrity even against global corporate entities.

(b) Policy Formation and Recommendations: The Ministry of Education, recognizing the importance of language preservation, constituted a committee on March 28, 2012. This committee proposed a comprehensive 9-point recommendation, which covered several areas:

- Enact controls over foreign TV channels and local radio and TV to combat language pollution.
- Introduce a standard Bengali language course in schools and encourage the study of Bengali language and literature in private universities.
- Regulate radio and TV broadcasts to ensure the use of standard Bengali and reduce foreign word integration.
- Engage the Bangladesh Telecommunications Regulatory Commission to counteract language distortion on social media and other platforms.
- Establish a standing committee under the Ministry of Information to oversee the use of standard Bengali across media outlets.
- Empower the Bangladesh Film Censor Board to prevent language pollution in films.
- Advocate for the use of Bengali in mobile phone caller tunes, countering the trend of using foreign languages.

(c) Linguistic Purism and Spelling Reforms: Linguistic purism is not just about word usage; it also encompasses the proper spelling of words. In this light, spelling reform has been a significant aspect of linguistic purism in Bangladesh.

Rajshekhhar Basu, who headed the spelling reform society established by Calcutta University in 1935, published the *Bangla Spelling Rules* during its third iteration in 1936. Following the partition of India in 1947, the inhabitants of East Pakistan (present-day Bangladesh) perceived a need for a new Bengali linguistic entity commensurate with their new nationality. Consequently, the Bangla Academy in Dhaka was founded in 1955. In the region now recognized as Bangladesh, the Bangla Academy spearheaded the spelling reform movement, initiating their first endeavour in 1963. Subsequently, in 1990, the Bangla Academy instituted fresh regulations for Bengali spelling. They revised these regulations in April 1992, January 1994, November 2000, and most recently in September 2012, known as the *Standard Bangla Spelling Rules*.

This historical overview highlights the persistent efforts by the Bangladeshi state to preserve the integrity of the Bengali language amidst the challenges of globalization and digitalization.

Bangladeshi Nationalism and Linguistic Purism: An In-depth Exploration

The relationship between nationalism and linguistic purism is a profound and intricate subject, particularly in the context of Bangladesh. Here, the various facets of this relationship and how it has shaped both the Bengali language and the national identity of Bangladesh is explored.

Nationalism and the Duty to Protect Language

According to Ferdousi (2017), there exists a divine obligation among the judges and lawyers in Bangladesh to foster and protect the use of the Bangla language. This notion aligns with similar sentiments expressed in various countries (see Bandov, 2017; Cser, 2009; Kapović, 2011; Marszalek-Kowalewska, 2011), where the protection of the native language is seen as integral to preserving and promoting national identity. The language becomes a symbol of unity and a bulwark against the influence of foreign cultures.

Language Purism and Nationalism: An Intertwined Relationship

In his work, H. Azad (1999) examines the multifaceted correlation among Bengali language purism, nationalism, patriotism, and political interest with a great deal of intricacy and depth. The language's purity is not merely a matter of semantics or grammar; it becomes a representation of the nation's character, values, and historical context. Linguistic purism serves as a bridge connecting the cultural heritage to the modern national identity. It is a means to resist external influences and maintain a sense of uniqueness and authenticity.

Differentiating Bengali Language: A Symbol of Identity

In Bangladesh, a deliberate endeavour has been made to distinguish the Bengali language from Indian Bengali and other global variants. This endeavour is not just linguistic in nature but is deeply rooted in the desire to express distinct cultural and national identity. Siddika (2020) highlights three significant phases in this process:

- **1952:** The first initiative can be traced back to 1952, a year that marked the Language Movement in Bangladesh. This movement aimed to establish Bengali as an official language, reflecting the voice of the masses, and it played a crucial role in fostering Bangladeshi nationalism.
- **1971:** The second wave occurred in 1971, coinciding with the country's fight for independence. The desire to have a language that mirrors the unique cultural and nationalistic traits of Bangladesh was more pronounced in this period.
- **1990:** The third phase in 1990 represents a continuing effort to enrich the language in a way that resonates with the nation's evolving identity.

Linguistic purism in Bangladesh is not merely a preservationist endeavour. It is a dynamic, ongoing process that resonates with the cultural, political, and national fabric of the country. By seeking to carve out a unique linguistic identity, Bangladesh has endeavoured to establish itself as a distinct nation. This process reflects a broader trend where language is not just a tool for communication but a living symbol of identity and sovereignty. In Bangladesh, the Bengali language is a proud emblem of its people's heritage, aspirations, and the spirit of nationhood.

Linguistic Purism: A sociolinguistic debate in Bangladesh

Languages can be likened to living entities, possessing life and fluidity akin to the human body or a flowing river (Pande, 2018). This comparison emphasizes that just as natural elements such as wind and light invigorate life, they also breathe life into a language. Similarly, the flow of a river, unconstrained by national boundaries, metaphorically represents how the evolution of language transcends artificial barriers (Prifti, 2009).

As Crystal (2011) pointed out, language cannot be strictly controlled by laws. Any attempt to hinder the natural flow of language is akin to obstructing a river, leading to its premature demise. Imposing restrictions on words or their usage is not only absurd but also a violation of linguistic human rights. Language, like air, should be free and without ownership. All words belong to all people and resonate with their inherent beauty.

The legal constraints on language choices can be detrimental to creativity and freedom of expression. For instance, many prominent writers have drawn words from diverse origins to create remarkable literature. Any law that impedes this process stifles artistic creativity and freedom.

A case in point is the High Court of Bangladesh's decrees on the Bengali language on February 18, 2012, and February 1, 2014. These rulings discourage the incorporation of foreign words in Bengali and mandate the usage of a *standard* Bengali in media. Such legal impositions infringe upon freedom of expression and linguistic human rights. They contradict the inherent rights of a language to evolve organically and limit its richness and diversity.

In short, languages are dynamic, evolving entities that cannot and should not be constrained by artificial boundaries or legal restrictions. Respecting linguistic diversity and encouraging the free flow of words across cultures will lead to a richer global dialogue and preserve the intrinsic beauty and integrity of all languages.

Shakespeare's renowned literary accomplishments can be attributed to his embrace of words from diverse origins, perceiving the global lexicon as his own domain (Gray, 2020). Such a flexible and inclusive approach to language significantly contributed to his literary prowess. Similarly, the richness of Bengali literature has been significantly shaped by its openness to foreign words. The works of renowned Bengali poets such as popularly known as poet Kazi Nazrul Islam (1899-1976), Jibanananda

Das (1899-1954) and many others, serve as quintessential examples. Their literature stands as a testament to the beauty and depth that code-mixing, code-switching, and the adoption of foreign words can bring to a language (A. Islam, 2020).

The legacy of Bengali literature, especially during the British colonial period, is marked by its interaction with English literature, which ushered in a transformative era (Hoque, 2007). Eminent literary luminaries such as Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Parichad Mitra, Michael Madhusudan Dutta, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, as well as the poet Kazi Nazrul Islam and Jibanananda Das, played a crucial role in shaping the contours of modern Bengali literature. Incorporation of Sanskrit vocabulary enhanced the works of these individuals, especially Vidyasagar, Madhusudan, and Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay. Additionally, Rabindranath Tagore's literary masterpieces intricately integrated modified forms of Sanskrit terminology, as well as Arabic-Persian expressions. The infusion of Arabic-Persian words was also evident in the literary contributions of Michael Madhusudan Dutta, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar (Hoque, 2007).

Regrettably, the Bangladesh High Court's proclamation on language usage threatens to narrow the linguistic horizons of the Bengali community. If such restrictions had been imposed historically on Bengali literature, curtailing the use of foreign words or imposing stringent language norms, the rich tapestry of Bengali literature as we know it today might not have come to fruition.

Linguistic purists frequently draw a comparison between *language pollution* and *river pollution* in Bangladesh. Their belief is that Bengali language can only be preserved if a conservative radical language policy is implemented, thereby stopping the ongoing mixture of languages. These purists are often criticized for their narrow-minded approach, which can hinder the path of language development and language democracy. It is noteworthy that the state sometimes supports this conservative language-attitude and policy, which can be categorized as a radical approach and linguistic-fundamentalism. This kind of perspective poses no danger to the welfare of humanity, nor does it pose a threat to the development, reproduction, or industrialization of languages worldwide.

The language of Latin, a historically revered language, serves as a cautionary example. Initially, Latin was written and declared the *true language*. The reason for Latin's demise as a language lies in its lack of development and transformation into the vernacular language, which is the colloquial and common people's language in practical life (Veisbergs, 2010). In contrast, by allowing a language to intermingle with another language, it gains life, evolves, and becomes operational.

For instance, as indicated by Gray (2020), approximately 50% of fundamental English vocabulary is directly derived from French and Latin lexicons. However, this process did not compromise the intrinsic nature of the English language, which has evolved into a global language and a robust lingua franca. In fact, Gray (2020) argues that English has not been disadvantaged by any lexical borrowing. According to Crystal (2011) and Gray (2020), the assimilation of loan words is a natural outcome of linguistic evolution, and the dissemination of neologisms is almost inevitable unless a language is completely isolated from the outside world.

Several studies have indicated that language changes in response to its own needs (Veisbergs, 2010) as well as technological requirements (Devy, 2019). Within socio-historical linguistics, Anti-linguistic purists consider linguistic purism to be a "footnote of history" (Langer & Davies, 2005), an "idle dream" (Matthews, 1901), a "dire calamity" (Matthews, 1901), and a "fallacious idea" (Khan, 2016). Matthews (1901) specifically emphasized that "To 'fix' a living language finally is an idle dream, and if it could be brought about it would be a dire calamity". Moreover, regarding the Dutch language, purism has gradually become a "footnote" in its recent history (Langer & Davies, 2005).

Winkler's (2012) witty remark suggests that English is far from an untouched or unsullied language. Comparing it humorously to a 'cribhouse whore', he emphasizes that English has not merely borrowed words passively. Instead, it has actively sought them out, sometimes in aggressive ways, from other languages. In a more dramatic representation, he likens English to a robber who chases other languages into narrow spaces, only to overpower them and steal their words. This vivid and comical depiction highlights how languages, particularly English, incorporate words and phrases from a variety of sources. Similarly, Crystal (2011) asserts that the concept of a pure language is an illusion. No language can evolve or grow while remaining unaltered or 'virgin'. This is a fundamental quality of languages, which are living entities that change, evolve, and adapt over time. Example: Consider the word *pajamas*. It originates from the Hindi and Urdu word *pāy-jāma*, which means leg clothing. English did not just passively adopt this word; it embraced it and made it its own. Now, *pajamas* is a standard term in the English lexicon. Thus, languages are not static entities sealed off from outside influence. Instead, they are fluid, ever changing, and ever growing, incorporating elements from various sources as they develop and evolve.

Bangladeshi Linguistic Purists maintain the belief that the Bengali language would forfeit its essence and purity upon encountering other languages. This stance is regarded as a manifestation of anti-modernism and anti-linguistic globalization, ultimately reflecting a linguistic-fundamentalist outlook. Despite extensive exposure to various languages throughout history, a language can still preserve its identity through various means, as noted by Janson (2012). It is important to acknowledge that despite a language being crafted entirely from foreign words, it still has a distinct essence that makes it captivating and charming in a unique way.

Language change or transformation is an inevitable and inherent phenomenon as highlighted by various scholars (Alam, 2021; Crystal, 2011; Gray, 2020; Veisbergs, 2010). It is a never-ending process, part of language socialization, as speakers continuously learn new ways of using language in different contexts, such as school, work, church, or play (Hymes, 2012). Language becomes strengthened and enriched through changes in word structure, sentence structure, or language form (Gray, 2020; Pande, 2018; Veisbergs, 2010), ensuring its survival, growth, and enhanced resilience.

A significant arena for language change in Bengali within Bangladesh is new media, which has recently differentiated spoken and written forms. Using social media and online mediums, language is evolving with a blended communication style of spoken and written words, a trend that is active, acceptable, and flowing globally (Veisbergs, 2010).

However, there exists a group of Language Purists in Bangladesh who are strongly opposed to this alteration. This group, commonly referred to as *Linguistic Purists*, is currently spearheading a movement against the adoption of novel vocabulary on social media platforms, and has taken on an extremist stance against any linguistic modifications (Alam, 2021). They argue for the use of pure Bengali language instead of mixed forms, such as code-mixing, code-switching, or borrowing words.

The aforementioned position has resulted in a precarious situation for the Bangla language. This is evidenced by the recent development of a novel Bangla spelling system by the Bangla Academy, which differs from the conventional spelling adopted by esteemed writers of the previous era. Most words in the Bengali language originate or derive from foreign languages, so the Linguistic Purism approach can render the existence of unique Bangla words scarce. These actions reveal a perspective known as *Linguistics Purism*, which, paradoxically, may be undermining the real vitality and adaptability of the language.

All languages across the globe, Bengali included, have assimilated foreign lexicon, incorporating them into their own linguistic character (A. Islam, 2020). The Bengali dialect has been enriched through the absorption of vocabulary from various languages. For example, *Daktar* comes from the English word *doctor*; *Hotel* has been absorbed from English and refers to restaurants or lodging establishments; *Bastab* is derived from the Sanskrit word *vastav*, meaning reality or truth; *Kamera* is taken from the English word camera; *Telephone* is directly borrowed from English; *Garage* is borrowed from French, referring to where vehicles are kept or repaired; *Sofa* originated from the Arabic word *soffah*; *Jurnal* comes from the English word *journal*, used for a daily record or newspaper; and *Tren* was adapted from the English word 'train', referring to a rail-bound vehicle for transporting people and goods. Therefore, the incorporation of lexical elements from foreign languages into Bengali is justified, as it has been a long-standing practice contributing to the dynamism and richness of the language.

However, the purist attitude toward the Bengali language in Bangladesh, advocating for the exclusive use of traditional words and resisting the integration of modern or foreign terms, has led to a confinement of the language within the country. This restrictive approach is illustrated by initiatives such as efforts by some linguistic groups to exclude newly borrowed words, or campaigns against the usage of English words in media and education. Such attitudes have contributed to causing Bengali to lose its acceptance and usage worldwide, diminishing its global influence and appeal (Shekhar, 2020).

Case Study: Controversy Surrounding *Bachelor Point* Drama Series in Bangladesh

The popular drama *Bachelor Point* has been under scrutiny recently for a clip that spread on social media. In this video, the characters Shubh, Pasha, Shimul, Kabila, Habu Bhai, and Zakir are featured, with Pasha using the term *jounokormir chhele* [son of a sex worker] in referring to Zakir. This scene has led to widespread criticism online, particularly targeting Marzuk Russell, who plays Pasha, for using the so-called offensive slur [or unusual language].

Cyber 71 has hosted multiple discussions on the subject, emphasizing how the controversial phrase has become widespread, particularly among young viewers of the show. This isn't the first time *Bachelor Point* has faced allegations, although previous issues were ignored by the director, Kajal Arefin Omi, who remains unreachable.

Strong reactions have surfaced on social media. One netizen has called for a ban on the show, citing reasons such as vulgarity, obscene slurs, and the normalization of inappropriate content. Others have expressed concern that the show has negatively influenced youth, with some individuals attacking those who speak out against the content.

Many fans of Bengali drama argue that popularity built on offensive language is not sustainable, calling for an end to such distorted language. The debate over *Bachelor Point* has escalated to the point where several episodes from the fourth season have been removed from YouTube due to criticism, and an apology has been issued by the producer and Dhruba TV.

Despite complaints about the inappropriate dialogue and scenes, those involved in the production have defended the content. Actor Siddikur Rahman Siddik voiced his concerns on Facebook, using strong language and even threatening imagery. He claims that such dramas are corrupting the country's culture, criticizing media personnel for straying from idealized images, and suggesting that the government eradicate certain organizations that enable such content. Siddikur Rahman, who identifies himself as the founder

of an actor's association in Bangladesh, emphasized the need for a powerful organization to prevent these kinds of directors and artists from working. He also criticized the existing drama-related organizations, calling them ineffective.

Despite this controversy, *Bachelor Point* remains highly popular, with promotions underway for the fourth season. However, backlash has grown on social media, leading the production company to remove episodes 74, 75, 76, and 77 of the fourth season from YouTube in response to public objections.

Several figures associated with the show have spoken out, including Bangladeshi actress Anika Kabir Shokh, who defended the show as entertaining and accused critics of envy. Another actress, Tasnova Elvin, lamented the negative attention and criticized the public's fault-finding mentality.

Director Arefin Omi also commented on the controversial line, explaining his choice of words as a way to reflect real-life slurs without using publicly unacceptable language. He argued that the term was used to convey a specific class of character.

In the end, the production company acknowledged the criticism and removed the offending episodes, pledging to be more careful in the future to avoid negative impacts on society and culture. They expressed a desire to continue earning the love and support of their audience.

A Detailed Analysis of Language Controversy in the *Bachelor Point* drama series in Bangladesh: Linguistic Purism vs. Linguistic Rights

The drama series *Bachelor Point* became a focal point of controversy in Bangladesh for its use of derogatory language, sparking a public debate that highlights two contrasting paradigms: Linguistic purism and Linguistic rights. The controversy over language use in *Bachelor Point* touches on two interconnected theoretical perspectives. While purism emphasizes the preservation and purity of a language, often associated with cultural and moral values, linguistic rights encompass freedoms and entitlements, including the rights to creative expression and freedom from offensive or derogatory language.

Linguistic Purism in Bangladesh in social practice: Linguistic purism refers to the preference for or insistence on traditional words, phrases, and grammatical structures, often as an assertion of cultural or national identity. The public outrage concerning the drama can be partially explained by linguistic purism. Many critics view the language used in *Bachelor Point* as a departure from traditional Bengali cultural norms and values. Actor Siddikur Rahman Siddik's criticism of how such dramas are *corrupting the country's culture* resonates with this perspective. Linguistic purists' reaction to the language reflects a longing for linguistic purity that aligns with traditional cultural values. This call for purity often comes at the expense of reflecting contemporary speech or exploring more nuanced or gritty aspects of culture. Concerns about the influence of offensive language on young viewers highlight fears that such content could lead to a degradation of the language itself. The desire to protect youth from exposure to *vulgar* language is also an element of linguistic purism. This correlates with the purist ideology that language must be safeguarded from foreign or vulgar influences. Actor and leader of artist organization in Bangladesh, Siddikur Rahman's call for governmental intervention in controlling language reflects a purist perspective that sees language as needing protection and control.

However, The defence of the show by Director Arefin Omi, who justifies the language as a reflection of real-life slurs, opens a debate about artistic freedom and its boundaries. While linguistic purism would advocate for cultural respect and traditionalism, others may argue that creative expression should have the liberty to reflect the complexity and diversity of human speech.

The situation of Linguistic Rights and practice in Bangladesh: In some extent, the use of the offensive term *jounokormir chhele* [son of a sex worker] violates linguistic rights to dignity. The phrase's objectification and derogatory connotation not only offend individuals but also denigrate an entire class of people. However, Linguistic rights include the ability to use language creatively and authentically. Director Arefin Omi's defence of the choice of words underscores the tension between creativity and the expectations of purists.

The balance between artistic freedom and social responsibility is at the heart of the controversy. While actors and creators have the right to express themselves, the public also has the right to object to language that they find harmful or offensive. Linguistic rights also encompass the freedom to practice language without undue restrictions. The removal of episodes in response to public objections may reflect a capitulation to purist pressures that limit the range and freedom of artistic language practice.

In the other hand, according to the movement of linguistic purist in Bangladesh, the call for governmental intervention by some raises questions about what role institutions should play in safeguarding linguistic rights. This delves into broader issues of censorship, regulation, and cultural guardianship.

The case study illustrates how linguistic purism, by insisting on a prescribed form of language, can stifle creativity and limit the range of expressions available to artists. This can be seen as a violation of the right to creative expression. Linguistic purism's demand for an idealized or sanitized version of language can prevent media from reflecting the complexity and diversity of real-life speech. This might be viewed as a restriction on the right to depict life authentically and resonate with varied audiences. Striking a balance between the cultural preservation goals of purism and the creative and expressive rights of individuals is a core challenge. The decision by the production company to remove offending episodes represents a compromise but also an acknowledgment of the tension between these conflicting values.

The controversy surrounding *Bachelor Point* provides a complex and rich case study to explore the interplay between Linguistic purism and Linguistic rights in contemporary Bangladesh. While purism focuses on maintaining the purity and tradition of a language, it can intersect with linguistic rights in the struggle to ensure that language is used respectfully and responsibly. The controversy also illuminates how linguistic purism can infringe upon the linguistic rights of creativity and practice, potentially stifling artistic expression, limiting authentic reflection, and constraining linguistic innovation. The debate sparked by this controversy may represent a microcosm of broader global tensions between linguistic preservation and freedom, highlighting the ongoing challenge of finding a path that respects cultural heritage without unnecessarily limiting the dynamic, creative, and ever-evolving nature of language.

Conclusion

This paper began by exploring the historical perspective of linguistic purism both globally and specifically within the context of Bangladesh. The following conclusion aims to encapsulate the key findings, shed light on the underlying complexities, and offer insights into the broader implications.

The roles of scholars, government, and various stakeholders in language purism in Bangladesh have been examined. The findings reveal a nuanced picture. On one hand, linguistic purism is seen as a source of national pride and identity; on the other, it may also be perceived as a hindrance to language development. The study indicates that extreme linguistic purism might not have widespread support among the general populace in Bangladesh.

The research offers an opportunity to foster a democratic linguistic environment that reflects and respects linguistic human rights. By dissecting the various arguments against extreme linguistic purism and analysing the perspectives of Bangladeshi linguistic purists, the study illuminates the potential conflict between linguistic purism and the linguistic rights of common people in Bangladesh.

While the study does not provide a definitive stance on the myth or reality of linguistic purism in Bangladesh, it does raise important questions and calls for a more liberal linguistic attitude. The research encourages policymakers to consider the complex realities behind linguistic purism in the context of Bangladesh, acknowledging that an excessively rigid approach may lead to violations of linguistic rights.

Because of this research, the paper proposes a balanced approach to linguistic purism in Bangladesh, recognizing the cultural significance while also embracing the need for flexibility and growth. If policymakers consider this research, it could pave the way for a more inclusive and dynamic linguistic environment in Bangladesh. The complexities uncovered in this study make a strong case for continued exploration and dialogue on linguistic purism, not just as a theoretical concept but as a living phenomenon with tangible impact on the lives of people in Bangladesh.

By weaving together historical insights, scholarly perspectives, societal attitudes, and legal considerations, this conclusion synthesizes the multifaceted nature of linguistic purism in Bangladesh. It invites reflection on the delicate balance between preservation and evolution, between tradition and modernity, and between unity and diversity in the ongoing journey of the Bengali language.

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