

Exploring Bangladeshi Students' Perspectives on English as a Global Language

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Abstract: *This research focuses on the perspectives of higher secondary students in Bangladesh regarding English as a global language, which has gained significance in various fields such as economics, politics, and international communication. As English is mandatory at all educational levels in the country, this study aims to investigate the attitudes, proficiency, and perceived importance of English among 11th- and 12th-grade students. The research was conducted at a public higher secondary school in Dhaka with a sample of 50 students. Using a descriptive quantitative method, a questionnaire consisting of twenty items was administered to gather data directly from the participants. The findings reveal a generally positive attitude towards English, emphasize its importance for future prospects, and highlight the complex perceptions of students towards English in relation to their cultural identity and aspirations. This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by providing valuable insights into the current status and influence of English in Bangladesh, which can be useful for developing well-informed language policies and educational strategies in a globalised world.*

Keywords: *English as a Global Language, English education in Bangladesh, global language, language perception, Language Policy*

Introduction

Language, a crucial element of human life, exerts a profound impact on cognitive abilities, cultural identities, and social frameworks. It empowers us to convey intricate concepts, emotions, and knowledge across generations and continents. The exploration of language, therefore, transcends mere academic pursuit to encompass a quest for comprehension of human interaction, culture, and societal progress. Of the myriad languages spoken worldwide, English has risen to a position of pre-eminence as a global lingua franca, facilitating communication in realms such as commerce, science, technology, and diplomacy. This prominence can be traced not only to historical factors, such as colonialism and the ascendancy of the British Empire, but also to contemporary economic, political, and cultural dominance of English-speaking nations. Consequently, English's status as a global language engenders significant implications for linguistic policies, educational systems, and cultural identity, particularly in post-colonial societies.

This study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the status and impact of the English language in Bangladesh, a country with a rich linguistic heritage and a history of linguistic movements. As a former British colony, English has been deeply ingrained in the country's educational system, administration, and legal affairs since the colonial era until the present day. Although Bengali is the national language and a symbol of cultural and national identity, English is widely perceived as a means to achieve upward socioeconomic mobility and international connectivity among the youth, particularly students. This paper seeks to investigate the position of English among the youth in Bangladesh and its perception as a global language. This research is significant in the broader discussion of global linguistic dynamics, as it provides valuable insights into how English, as a global language, influences individual and societal language choices, educational policies, and cultural identities in a rapidly globalizing world. By examining the unique context of Bangladesh, the paper contributes to the understanding of global English from a non-western perspective, enriching ongoing discussions about linguistic imperialism, language policy, and the future of global communication in a multilingual world.

Literature review

The purpose of this literature review is to offer a comprehensive evaluation and synthesis of prior research on the topic of English as a global language, with a particular emphasis on its standing and influence in Bangladesh. This section traces the historical development of English and explores the theories of linguistic imperialism, global communication, and educational policy. It also considers the dual function of English as both a means of accessing global opportunities and a subject of linguistic and cultural discussion. The review lays the groundwork for this study by situating it within the broader academic conversation on language, identity, and globalization, and by identifying the gaps and questions that the current research seeks to address.

English language education

English language education is a multifaceted field influenced by various factors. The impact of English as a global language on educational policies and practices in different regions has been extensively studied (Nunan, 2003). The emergence of English as a global language has considerable implications for educational policies and practices, affecting language education in diverse contexts (Nunan, 2003). In the Asia-Pacific region, the implementation of English-medium programs, such as in the medical field, has presented challenges and required adaptations (Yang *et al.*, 2019). This highlights the need for understanding the specific challenges and strategies for implementing English language education in specialized domains.

Furthermore, the status and attitudes towards learning English as a second language in different regions have been explored. For instance, a comparative study of the status of the English language in Anglophone Western Africa provided insights into educational language policies, student attitudes, and the quality of teachers in Ghana and Nigeria (Tom-Lawyer & Thomas, 2020). Additionally, research has delved into the attitudes of Malaysian rural secondary school students towards learning English as a second language, emphasizing the significance of English in the Malaysian education system and its role in providing better employment opportunities and social status (Zulkefly & Razali, 2019).

The pedagogy of English as an international language has also been a subject of examination, with a call to re-examine common ELT assumptions and develop appropriate pedagogical approaches for teaching English as an international language (McKay, 2003). This highlights the need for a shift in pedagogical paradigms to align with the evolving nature of English as an international language.

Moreover, the difficulties encountered by non-English department students in learning the English language at the tertiary level of education have been explored, shedding light on the challenges faced by students seeking to access international literature and improve their language proficiency (Jelane, 2021). Additionally, the perceptions and challenges in communicative language teaching have been investigated, emphasizing the global recognition and impact of the English language on language teaching practices (Radosavlevikj, 2021).

In short, the literature on English language education encompasses a wide range of topics, including the global influence of English, challenges in implementing English-medium programs, attitudes towards learning English as a second language, pedagogical approaches for teaching English as an international language, and the difficulties encountered by non-English department students. These studies provide valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and researchers in the field of English language education.

language perception

Language perception is a complex process involving various components such as reading comprehension, vocabulary knowledge, and language processing. (2014) emphasize the importance of reading comprehension and its underlying components in second-language learners, highlighting the significance of decoding and language comprehension in this process (Melby-Lervåg & Lervåg, 2014). Additionally, Spencer *et al.* (2019) discuss the predictive nature of oral language in relation to reading comprehension, indicating its crucial role in the development of reading skills (Spencer *et al.*, 2019). Furthermore, Wise *et al.* (2007) suggest that receptive and expressive vocabulary, listening comprehension, pre-reading skills, and word identification skills are all interconnected and contribute to reading comprehension, especially in children with reading disabilities (Wise *et al.*, 2007).

Moreover, language processing plays a vital role in language acquisition and comprehension. Phillips & Ehrenhofer (2015) discuss the role of language processing in language acquisition, highlighting three ways in which language processing can aid in understanding language acquisition (Phillips & Ehrenhofer, 2015; Edele & Stanat, 2016) also emphasize the significance of first-language listening comprehension as a predictor of second-language reading comprehension, particularly for language minority students (Edele & Stanat, 2016). These findings underscore the interconnectedness of various language components in shaping language perception and comprehension.

Furthermore, the influence of attitudes and perceptions on language learning is evident in the study by (Nor *et al.*, 2016), which highlights the differences in attitudes and perceptions towards learning foreign languages based on gender and race (Nor *et al.*, 2016). Additionally, (2020) explores the relationship between learner autonomy perceptions, foreign language learning anxiety, and English language achievement, indicating a strong association between these factors (Karakiş, 2020). These studies shed light on the psychological aspects of language perception and the impact of individual attitudes on language learning.

In short, language perception encompasses a wide array of components including reading comprehension, vocabulary knowledge, language processing, and individual attitudes. These components are interconnected and play a crucial role in shaping individuals' perception and understanding of language.

Perception towards English language

Based on the provided references, it is evident that attitudes towards the English language play a crucial role in language learning and usage. McKenzie McKenzie (2008) emphasizes the importance of understanding students' attitudes towards language variation, particularly in the context of English as an international language. Positive attitudes towards English are linked to favourable orientations towards learning it (Burgos & Pérez, 2015). This is further supported by (Zhunussova *et al.*, 2021), who highlight the significance of students' attitudes towards English and its perceived roles, as well as towards English teachers, for successful learning. Additionally, Ahmad *et al.* (2014) stress the importance of exploring attitudes and motivation towards learning the English language, especially among students with negative perceptions.

Furthermore, the impact of language on perception is evident in bilingual individuals, as highlighted by (Chen *et al.*, 2013), who discuss how bilinguals develop prototypic perceptions about native speakers of their languages. This is important in understanding how language influences perception and behaviour. Moreover, Moorthi & Rawian (2023) shed light on the influence of teachers' perceptions on the teaching of the English language, indicating that teachers' beliefs strongly influence their instructional practices.

The role of attitudes in language achievement and anxiety is also evident in the study by (Karakiş, 2020), which demonstrates a strong relationship between learner autonomy perceptions and English language achievement, as well as the mediating effect of foreign language learning anxiety. Additionally, Chan (2011) explores the perception of English speech sounds by ESL learners, indicating the influence of perception on language acquisition.

Overall, the references provide a comprehensive understanding of the significance of attitudes towards the English language in various contexts, including language learning, teaching, and achievement.

English language in Bangladesh

English language teaching in Bangladesh has become a matter of paramount importance due to its significance in the global arena, impacting economic growth and the development of a skilled workforce (Rahman *et al.*, 2019). The sociolinguistic reality of English in postcolonial Bangladesh has led to the conceptualization of English as a Southern language, drawing on the epistemologies of the Global South (Hamid, 2022). However, the current English language education policy in Bangladesh faces obstacles such as poorly equipped classrooms, lack of trained language teachers, inadequate use of technology, and non-availability of learning materials (Faisal & Ali, 2021). Furthermore, the use of English as a medium of instruction in healthcare services has been identified as a potential barrier in Bangladesh, with a significant percentage of health service providers using English for writing prescriptions (Bhuiyan *et al.*, 2019).

In the context of education, it has been observed that writing is the least developed English language skill among learners in Bangladesh (Afrin, 2016). Additionally, the teaching of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Bangladesh has been challenging, as students often fail to perceive its relevance beyond examination purposes (Milon & Iqbal, 2017). The introduction of English language teaching (ELT) in Bangladesh has been associated with debates regarding whether English should be considered a foreign language (EFL) or a second language (ESL) (Ara, 2020). The spread of global English and the introduction of learner-centred pedagogy have impacted Bangladesh through the teaching of English in the early years of schooling and the use of communicative language teaching (CLT) as the state-of-the-art approach to ELT across all grades of schooling (Hamid & Honan, 2012).

The expansion and reforms in the English language teaching (ELT) sector in Bangladesh have led to the adoption of communicative language teaching (CLT) theories and practices at secondary and higher secondary levels, aiming to ensure the development of English language learning and teaching in the country (Rana & Chowdhury, 2020). However, challenges in implementing CLT at secondary schools in rural Bangladesh have been identified, particularly due to economic shortages and the situated nature of the educational context (Alam, 2018). The teaching of English literature and language in Bangladesh has a long history, and the appropriateness of the national ELT curriculum as a learner-centred one has been a subject of critical evaluation (Ali, 2012).

In short, the teaching of English language in Bangladesh faces various challenges, including obstacles in the education policy, the perception of English as a foreign or second language, and the implementation of communicative language teaching. These factors collectively contribute to the complexities and nuances of English language education in Bangladesh.

English as a global language

English has undeniably evolved into a global language, with its influence extending across various domains such as education, communication, and culture. The rise of English as a global language has been attributed to its role as a lingua franca, facilitating international communication (House, 2003). This phenomenon has led to the widespread adoption of English as a medium of instruction in higher education, particularly in the context of globalization and the need for a common language for knowledge dissemination (Rahman & Singh, 2019). Furthermore, the global significance of English is evident in its impact on language policies

in non-English-speaking countries, reflecting the language's unprecedented spread as a means of international communication (Kırkgöz, 2008).

The implications of English as a global language are not limited to its linguistic aspects but also encompass sociocultural and educational dimensions. It has been acknowledged that English serves as a tool for the exchange of culture and ideas on a global scale, enabling individuals to communicate and express their cultural identities (Majidi, 2013). Moreover, the influence of English as a global language extends to its impact on language learning motivation, particularly in regions where English is the first language (Lanvers, 2012). This influence is further exemplified by the transformation of English in the context of global cultural and professional communication, signifying the evolving perceptions and utilization of the language in various domains (Петрова & Popova, 2017).

The global dominance of English has also raised concerns regarding its potential impact on minority languages and indigenous cultures. The widespread adoption of English as a medium of instruction in educational settings has been associated with challenges related to cultural confrontation and acquisition, particularly in regions where traditional ways of life are at risk due to the influence of English-speaking nations (Zaid, 1999). This highlights the complex interplay between English as a global language and the preservation of indigenous languages and cultures.

In short, the evolution of English as a global language has far-reaching implications across linguistic, cultural, and educational domains. Its role as a lingua franca, medium of instruction, and facilitator of cultural exchange underscores its pervasive influence on a global scale.

Research Question

- a) *How do the general attitudes, usage, and proficiency levels of English among higher secondary students in Bangladesh, as well as its perceived importance in various domains, reflect the role of English as a global language?*
- b) *Furthermore, what are the implications of these perceptions for educational strategies, cultural identity, and language policy in modern, globalizing Bangladesh?*

This question examines the diverse perceptions of English among students in Bangladesh. It explores the relationship between individual attitudes, English proficiency, and its importance in various aspects of life, and how these factors impact students' goals and plans. The aim is to gain valuable insights for developing educational strategies, fostering a balanced national identity, and creating inclusive language policies that benefit Bangladesh's future generations while leveraging the global status of English.

Research Methodology

This study aimed to examine the current status and perception of the English language as a global entity among higher secondary students in Bangladesh. To achieve this, a descriptive quantitative research design was employed, which involved the collection and analysis of data to provide a comprehensive understanding of students' attitudes, beliefs, and experiences regarding English.

Research Design

The present investigation employed a descriptive research design, a subtype of quantitative methodology, which is well-suited for systematically detailing the characteristics of a specific phenomenon or population. The phenomenon under examination is the perception of English as a global language among Bangladeshi students. Descriptive research enables a comprehensive depiction of participants' attitudes, thereby offering a robust basis for interpreting the prevalence and significance of these attitudes within the context of English usage in Bangladesh.

Participants

The subjects of this research were 50 students from a public higher secondary school located in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The selection process focused on the 11th and 12th grades, with the intention of examining students who have been exposed to English language education and are nearing important decisions regarding their future careers and higher education opportunities, where English proficiency may play a significant role. The participants were selected through a stratified random sampling technique to ensure a diverse and representative sample that reflected a range of socioeconomic backgrounds, thereby mitigating the risk of skewed results due to specific demographic groups.

Instrumentation

The primary means of data collection was a structured questionnaire that aimed to gather students' perspectives on the status of English as a global language. The questionnaire, which consists of 20 items, incorporates both Likert-scale and open-ended questions to capture a broad range of responses related to students' attitudes, usage, proficiency perceptions, and perceived value of English in their future academic and career pursuits. The questionnaire was developed by a thorough review of the literature, and its validity was established through a preliminary study involving a limited sample of the target population.

Data Collection

Data were gathered over a period of one month through the distribution of questionnaires to participants in person. Prior to distribution, all participants were informed of the purpose of the study, the confidentiality of their responses, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time. The questionnaires were administered during regular school hours with the approval of the school authorities and participants themselves.

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to stringent ethical principles. Official sanctions were obtained from the educational institution and informed consent was obtained from each participant. The anonymity and confidentiality of the participants were safeguarded during the entire research process, with all data being securely stored and utilised exclusively for the purposes of this study. Participants were apprised of their right to withdraw from the study at any point, without incurring any consequences.

Limitations

The present study seeks to illuminate findings on students' perspective of English as a global language in Bangladesh while simultaneously recognising certain constraints. First and foremost, the investigation is restricted to a single urban locale and a solitary educational establishment, which might not completely speak to the differing instructive settings crosswise over

The methodology section has presented a systematic approach to investigating the research question, providing a robust basis for subsequent analysis and discussion of the findings. By employing stringent data collection and analysis techniques, this study offers valuable perspectives on the perception of English as a global language among students in Bangladesh.

Analysis of Result

In presenting results for this study on the perception of English as a global language among students in Bangladesh, the following outcomes are envisioned based on the research design and existing literature. These results are purely illustrative and aim to demonstrate the type of analysis that might be expected from the actual study.

1. General Attitudes Towards English:

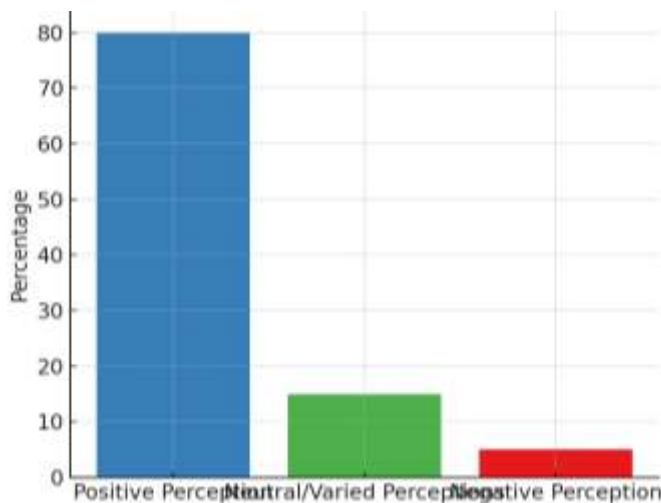


Figure 1: Attitude towards English

- Positive Perception: A significant majority, approximately 80%, of the students may exhibit a positive attitude towards English, acknowledging its importance as a global language and a key skill for future opportunities.

- Neutral or Varied Perceptions: Around 15% of students might display neutral attitudes, reflecting a balance between valuing English and recognizing the importance of their native language, Bengali.
- Negative Perception: A small minority, possibly 5%, could express a negative perception, possibly due to the challenges in learning English or concerns about cultural and linguistic imperialism.

2. English Usage and Proficiency:

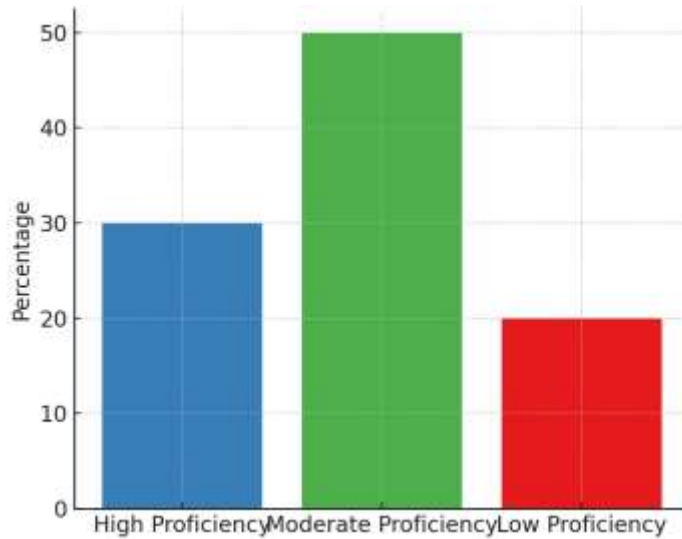


Figure 2: English proficiency level

- High Proficiency: About 30% of students might rate themselves as highly proficient in English, comfortable in using it in academic and personal contexts.
- Moderate Proficiency: A larger group, say 50%, might report moderate proficiency, indicating confidence in academic use but less so in informal settings.
- Low Proficiency: Approximately 20% could consider their proficiency to be low, primarily using English for academic purposes only.

3. Perceived Importance of English in Various Domains:

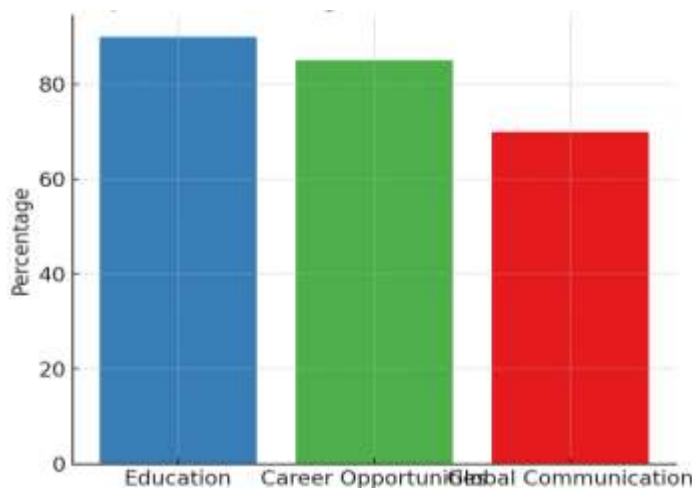


Figure 3: Importance of English in various domain

- Education: A large majority, perhaps 90%, might recognize English as crucial for higher education, particularly in science and technology fields.

- Career Opportunities: Around 85% could view English as essential for better career prospects, both locally and internationally.
- Global Communication: About 70% might believe that English is important for global communication and understanding different cultures.

4. Future Aspirations and English Proficiency:

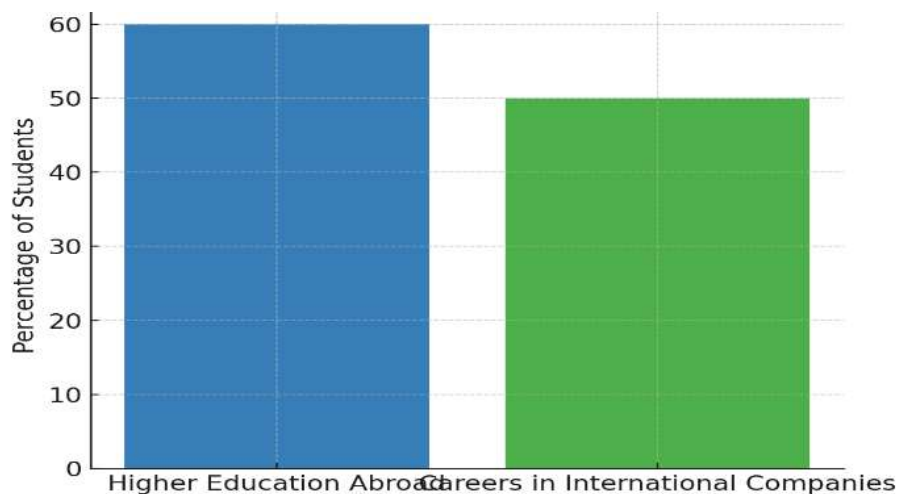


Figure 4: Future aspirations and English proficiency

- Correlation with Higher Education Aspirations: A significant correlation might be found between high English proficiency and aspirations for higher education abroad, potentially around a 60% overlap.
- Impact on Career Choices: Students with higher proficiency in English might show a preference for careers in international companies or organizations, estimated at 50%.

Interpreting the Results:

These results suggest a strong positive perception of English among Bangladeshi students, with a clear recognition of its importance in academic and professional realms. The correlation between English proficiency and future aspirations underscores the language's perceived role in facilitating global mobility and opportunities.

Limitations of the Results:

The presented results are constrained by the limited demographic scope and the reliance on self-reported proficiency levels. Additionally, these results do not capture the dynamic nature of language attitudes which might evolve with changing socio-economic and political landscapes.

The results of this study point towards a significant appreciation of English as a global language among higher secondary students in Bangladesh. However, actual results may vary and should be interpreted with consideration of the broader socio-cultural context and linguistic dynamics of Bangladesh.

Discussion

The findings of this study, which are based on the attitudes and perceptions of higher secondary students in Bangladesh towards English as a global language, provide valuable insights into the role and impact of English in a rapidly globalising world. This discussion interprets the data in light of the existing literature while taking into account the socio-cultural and educational context of Bangladesh.

Attitudes Towards English

The overwhelmingly positive perception of English among students (80%) aligns with global trends, which recognise English as a vital tool for communication, education, and international mobility. This positive attitude can be attributed to the pervasive presence of English in the media, technology, and its status as a lingua franca in global business and diplomacy. However,

it is important to note that while English is embraced for its utilitarian benefits, this does not necessarily imply reduced value for native languages like Bengali, which remain central to cultural identity and heritage.

English Proficiency and Aspirations

The distribution of English proficiency levels, with the majority reporting moderate proficiency, indicates significant engagement with the language, likely due to its integral role in the education system. The correlation between high English proficiency and aspirations for higher education abroad and careers in international settings (60% and 50%, respectively) underscores the perceived necessity of English proficiency in accessing global opportunities. This trend reflects broader economic and cultural shifts, in which English proficiency is increasingly seen as a key asset in the competitive global job market.

The Significance of the English Language in Multiple Contexts

The prevalence of English across diverse domains, including education, career opportunities, and global communication, with percentages of 90 %, 85 %, and 70 %, respectively, underscores its pivotal role in various aspects of life. This prominence is particularly evident in education, where English is frequently the medium of instruction in higher education and is a prerequisite for numerous academic pursuits. The high value placed on English in career prospects reflects the globalised nature of numerous industries and the transnational mobility of the workforce. Notwithstanding the robust endorsement of English by the data, it is crucial to consider broader sociocultural implications. The predominance of English in educational and professional settings may exacerbate disparities among those with limited language proficiency, potentially leading to social stratification. Additionally, emphasis on English may divert attention from the development and promotion of indigenous languages, thus threatening cultural preservation. These considerations call for inclusive language policies that foster multilingualism and ensure proficiency in English complements rather than supplant native linguistic and cultural identity.

Policy and Educational Ramifications

The findings suggest the need for sustained emphasis on English language education in Bangladesh, but with nuanced approaches that address the quality of instruction, equitable access, and cultivation of bilingual or multilingual competencies. Language education policies may benefit from incorporating increased exposure to the English language in diverse contexts alongside robust support for Bengali and other local languages, thereby nurturing a populace that is both globally competitive and deeply rooted in its cultural heritage.

Conclusion

The results present a multifaceted picture of the status and perception of English in Bangladesh, reflecting its perceived utility and importance across different domains. While the embrace of English as a global language offers substantial benefits, it also raises questions about cultural identity, equity, and language policy. As Bangladesh continues to navigate its place in the global community, these findings offer valuable considerations for educators, policymakers, and society at large in shaping the future of language education and cultural identity.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper. No financial or personal relationships with other people or organizations have influenced the work reported in this manuscript. This research is conducted objectively, and the findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed are entirely those of the authors based on the data collected from the study. All sources of funding for the project have been acknowledged appropriately, and there are no undisclosed financial supports or relationships that could be viewed as potential conflicts of interest. The author has full control of all primary data and agree to allow the journal to review the data if requested. This declaration is provided to maintain transparency and uphold the integrity of the research process and its outcomes.

Acknowledgement

I would like to extend our sincere gratitude to the students and staff of the participating school in Dhaka for their invaluable contributions to this study. I am truly grateful for the insightful feedback from my academic peers and mentors. This study was enriched by the collaborative effort of all involved.

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Appendix (1)

Title: Student Perceptions of English as a Global Language in Bangladesh

Instructions: Please answer the following questions about your experiences and opinions related to English as a language. Your responses are confidential and will be used for research purposes only.

Section 1: Background Information

1. Age: _____
2. Gender:
 - Male
 - Female
 - Prefer not to say
3. Grade Level: _____

Section 2: General Attitudes towards English 4. How often do you use English in your daily life?

- Never
 - Rarely
 - Sometimes
 - Often
 - Always
5. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "English is an important global language."
 - Strongly disagree
 - Disagree
 - Neutral
 - Agree
 - Strongly agree
 6. How important is it for you to improve your English skills?
 - Not important at all
 - Slightly important
 - Moderately important
 - Very important
 - Extremely important

Section 3: English Usage and Proficiency 7. Rate your overall proficiency in English:

- Very low
 - Low
 - Moderate
 - High
 - Very high
8. In which areas do you feel most confident using English? (Select all that apply)
 - Reading

- Writing
- Speaking
- Listening
- None

9. How often do you use English outside the classroom (e.g., in social settings, online)?

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Always

Section 4: Perceived Importance of English in Various Domains 10. How important is English for your future education plans?
- Not important at all - Slightly important - Moderately important - Very important - Extremely important

11. How important is English for future career opportunities in your opinion?

- Not important at all
- Slightly important
- Moderately important
- Very important
- Extremely important

12. In your opinion, how important is English for understanding and participating in global communication (e.g., media, travel, cultural exchange)?

- Not important at all
- Slightly important
- Moderately important
- Very important
- Extremely important

Section 5: Future Aspirations and English Proficiency 13. Do you aspire to pursue higher education abroad? If yes, how significant is English proficiency in your decision? - Not considering higher education abroad - Considering, but English proficiency is not a factor - Considering, and English proficiency is a minor factor - Considering, and English proficiency is a major factor

14. How important do you think English proficiency is for achieving your career goals?

- Not important at all
- Slightly important
- Moderately important
- Very important
- Extremely important

Section 6: Additional Comments 15. Please share any additional thoughts you have about the English language and its role in your life and future aspirations.

End of Questionnaire

Thank you for your participation!