



Research article

Communication Barriers Faced by Foreign Students at the Public Universities in Bangladesh: A Case Study of Khulna University

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ABSTRACT

Foreign students frequently face communication challenges in Bangladesh. Usually, here they enroll for Tertiary- level education where English and Bangla are used simultaneously as the medium of instruction. This study aims to explore their communication barriers in and beyond the classroom and its impact on their academic success and well-being. It proposes some strategies for overcoming those challenges also. To gain that end, quantitative data have been collected from 31 foreign students of various disciplines at Khulna University. A questionnaire of 10 open-ended questions has been used to understand their specific communication difficulties and perceived impact of the communication problems. Analysis indicates significant struggles of foreign learners in language proficiency, understanding lectures, and academic writing. Again, cultural differences contribute to communication issues, impacting social integration. These challenges substantially affect academic performance, social integration, and psychological well-being of learners. The current study emphasizes the need for tailored interventions, including language enhancement, cultural sensitivity training, and psychological support. Addressing these challenges comprehensively can create inclusive and diverse academic environments for foreign students at the universities in Bangladesh.

Introduction

The ongoing globalization tendency inspires a significant proportion of students to transcend their own countries' borders to pursue education in institutions of foreign countries (Li & Gasser, 2005). Bangladesh, as a popular destination for international students, has experienced a steady increase in the enrollment of foreign students in its tertiary education institutions in recent years. According to the University Grants Commission (UGC), there are approximately 2,100 foreign students currently enrolled in the country (Kamruzzaman, 2022).

Students, coming almost from all over the world, especially from South Asia, Africa, and some parts of Europe, neither speak Bangla nor English as their first language. In consequence, communication problems pose a great challenge to the foreign students studying in the universities here. As both English and Bangla are used simultaneously as mediums of instruction at most of the universities in the country, many foreign students face difficulties in communicating properly. Naturally, they are not found to be fluent in either language. It impedes their

participation in classroom discussions, completing assignments, and interacting with their classmates and teachers or instructors. In addition to the language barrier, foreign students may also face cultural differences in communication styles and norms. This can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts because what is normal in some cultures, may be considered rude in other cultures. Furthermore, foreign students may lack a strong social support network in Bangladesh due to their limited scope to communicate with people in both English and Bangla. Consequently, foreign students may feel isolated and lonely, increasing their likelihood of experiencing anxiety and depression.

This study aims to explore the specific communication problems faced by foreign students at the tertiary level in Bangladesh and the impact of these problems on students' academic success, well-being, and social integration. The study will also identify strategies that the institutions and government can take to help foreign students overcome communication problems.

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Researches highlight that International students face numerous difficulties and hardships in communicating with others when studying abroad. These students often feel lonely due to the absence of a strong friendship and social network, the shock of being exposed to a new culture, and the intricate linguistic and cultural nuances of the language/s (McClure, 2007; Sawir, Marginson, Deumert, Nyland, & Ramia, 2008). A substantial number of foreign students encounter difficulties with the English and Bangla languages, which are the primary mediums of instruction in Bangladeshi tertiary level institutions. These language challenges not only hinder academic performance but impede effective communication with staff, faculty, local students, and the broader community also. This emotional distress, coupled with psychological complications, emphasizes the need for comprehensive support systems to address the psychosocial impact of communication challenges on students' well-being. Again, communication problems manifest in various academic aspects, including poor comprehension of lectures, difficulty in participating in classroom discussions, and challenges in academic reading and writing. These difficulties underscore the broader impact of communication issues on students' educational experiences.

In addition to language barriers, foreign students grapple with understanding local culture, including idioms and informal language usage. As a whole, unfamiliarity with cultural norms can lead to miscommunications and misunderstandings, posing a significant challenge to their social integration within the academic environment.

The foreign students studying in universities of the country have the probability to face the aforementioned hurdles up to a great extent. This study makes an attempt to explore the specific communication problems faced by foreign students at the tertiary level in Bangladesh and the impact of these problems on students' academic success, well-being, and social integration. The study will also identify strategies that the institutions and government can take to help foreign students overcome communication problems.

Theoretical Underpinnings of Communication and its Barriers for Foreign Students

Effective communication is a fundamental aspect of educational pursuits and social integration, transcending linguistic and cultural boundaries. But it has to encounter various barriers like attitudinal barriers, behavioral barriers, cultural barriers, language barriers, and environmental barriers (Rani, 2016). Language barriers present a significant challenge for many international students (Church, 1982; Ying, 1996; Park & Son, 2011). As a 'lingua franca', proficiency in the English language is deemed vital for both academic achievement and social integration (Andrade, 2006). Inadequate language skills can lead to reduced participation in classrooms and difficulties in reading, writing, listening, and speaking for international students (Flannery & Wieman, 1989). While studying abroad, insufficient proficiency in the host language significantly diminishes students' satisfaction in academic settings (Campbell & Li, 2018). This deficiency acts as a hindrance to effective communication, impedes social interactions, and disrupts the comprehension of

lectures. The language barrier not only isolates international students but also robs them of valuable social engagement opportunities with professors, peers, and the broader university community (Yeh & Inose, 2003).

In a survey conducted by Gautam et al. (2016), on international students in Southern university of the US, a participant said that the language was an all-day challenge for him outside the university. Inside the campus people tried to understand him. But outside the campus, it was not there which limited his going out. Another participant from Europe revealed a pedagogical challenge associated with language. She reflected that since her English was not perfect, she came to school with an imperfect English accent. She had to learn a lot of new words and had to translate those words into her native language. She learnt a new word but teacher changed that word for betterment perhaps. She did not know the meaning of that word and was in trouble. It was twice hard for her as she had to study double than everyone else to make the same grades as others.

There are some persistent concerns related to language expressed by both staff and students within educational settings. Students often deal with issues related to self-confidence and English language comprehension, particularly in the context of lectures delivered in English. Additionally, challenges with idiomatic expressions, writing conventions, and nuanced interpretations of meanings compound their difficulties (Sawir, 2005).

While English serves as the primary language of instruction in many universities in Bangladesh, there are institutions where classes are conducted in Bangla. This language difference poses a significant challenge for foreign students, leading to difficulties in comprehending lecture content and subsequently impacting their academic performance (Kamruzzaman, 2022). Parmarth KC (in Kamruzzam, 2022) shared his experience of completing his medical degree at Dhaka Medical College. He stated that his first year was very tough as he did not know Bangla and most of the teachers spoke in their native language. He felt very embarrassed and helpless as there was no pre-condition of learning Bangla before getting admission to Bangladeshi universities. Nevertheless, student's level of language proficiency significantly influences their ability to comprehend lectures, actively participate in class discussions, manage reading assignments, and successfully complete written tasks. Language proficiency emerges as a pivotal determinant of academic performance and overall success. Additionally, these linguistic barriers hinder effective communication with both peers and university staff, making it more challenging for international students to access necessary support and establish meaningful connections with native speakers (Akanwa, 2015).

International students perceive a daunting 'threshold' that obstructs successful interactions with English speakers that persist irrespective of their language proficiency or sociocultural adaptation levels (Wright & Schartner, 2013). A study by Parker (1999) on a group of Taiwanese students studying at Louisiana Tech University revealed that many of these students hesitated to ask repeated questions, even when they had difficulties understanding a concept or technique demonstrated by the

faculty. Kao and Gansneder (1995) conducted a survey involving 355 international students from 45 different countries enrolled in an American university to understand the factors contributing to the low participation of these students in American classroom discussions. The results pointed to cultural factors that made it less likely for Asian students to engage actively in class. Studies conducted indicated that specifically, Asian international students may face heightened difficulties when attempting to interact and build social connections in Western cultures that prioritize individualism, assertiveness, and self-sufficiency over interdependence and relational aspects (Mori, 2000; Yeh & Inose, 2003).

Another significant challenge faced by foreign students in a host country is adaptation and its impact on students. On the arrival in a host country, international students experience a mixed feeling of excitement and anxiety. Moving to a new environment is frequently considered one of the most emotionally challenging life events (Brown & Holloway, 2008; Lillyman & Bennett, 2014). Foreign students may experience anxieties and pressures when they study in a foreign country. When the pressures exceed the normal level, the students may have mental health issues (Jung et al., 2007; Yeh, 2003). Wilczewski et al., (2022) think psychological adjustment is a critical aspect of international students' experiences, and successful adaptation is essential for their well-being the process of adaptation can lead to cultural distance and cross-cultural anxiety, which may result into physical and mental discomfort.

Communication with people of different cultures and backgrounds means becoming aware of the differences in values, beliefs and attitudes that people hold. (Rani 2016). Cultural variations impact communication norms, styles, and expectations. Foreign students from diverse cultural backgrounds may experience difficulties in adapting to the communication patterns prevalent in Bangladeshi classrooms. Findings of a study by Majumder, Rahman, and Luqman (2021) suggest that international students in Bangladesh generally have a moderate level of access to university facilities, comparable to that of local students. However, they may not fully exploit these resources due to communication and other obstacles.

Based on the existing literature review, this study aims to explore the specific communication problems faced by foreign students at the tertiary level in Bangladesh, and measure the impact of these problems on students' academic success, well-being and social integration. The study employs a sociocultural approach to the importance of the practice of interculturality for foreign students that may have important implications for tertiary institutions and government in Bangladesh. The study will provide evidence-based recommendations for improving the communication experiences of foreign students that will help creating a more welcoming and inclusive teaching-learning environment for all students. The study delves deep into the issue by addressing the following research questions-

a. What are the specific communication problems faced by foreign students at tertiary level in Bangladesh?

- b. How do communication problems impact foreign students' academic success at tertiary level in Bangladesh?
- c. In what ways do communication problems impact foreign students' well-being at tertiary level in the country?
- d. How do communication problems impact the social integration of tertiary level foreign students in Bangladesh?
- e. What are the strategies that the government of Bangladesh and different tertiary level institutions can use to help foreign students overcome communication problems?

Focusing on the research questions, the present study proceeds with the objectives as to i) identify the specific communication problems faced by foreign students in Bangladeshi universities, ii) investigate the impact of communication problems on foreign students' academic success, well-being, and social integration and iii) to recommend strategies that the government of Bangladesh and its tertiary level institutions can apply to help foreign students overcome communication barriers.

A Reflection on Competence of the Students

Hymes' (1972) notion of communicative competence has been applied as an essential theoretical framework to understand the communication problem faced by foreign students at the tertiary level institutions in Bangladesh. As Hymes (1972) postulates, "Communicative competence is the part of our overall language ability that enables us to convey and interpret messages and negotiate meanings effectively within specific contexts" (275). It involves the production and comprehension of sentences that are suitable for a given situation, utilizing correct grammar. The competence is a fusion of understanding fundamental grammatical principles, knowing how language functions in social settings to accomplish communicative tasks, and understanding how utterances and communicative functions can be combined following the rules of discourse. (Canale & Swain, 1980:32). Competence refers to knowledge, skill, or capability, while 'communicative' emphasizes exchange and interaction. It can be said that communicative competence implies having the capability to communicate effectively that encompasses oral, written, or nonverbal communication. As a whole the concept involves both language knowledge and the ability to use the language in real-life situations to meet communication needs (Ahmed & Pawar, 2018:302).

Hymes' (1972) model breaks down communicative competence into four constituents: Linguistic competence, sociolinguistics competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence.

- **Linguistic Competence:** Linguistic competence refers to the ability to use language correctly, including the knowledge of grammar, syntax, and vocabulary. It helps in assessing language proficiency and its impact on academic communication.
- **Sociolinguistic Competence:** This aspect relates to the ability to navigate sociocultural and communication norms in the host culture. It includes understanding and adapting to local communication styles, politeness conventions, and norms of interaction.

- **Discourse Competence:** This addresses the ability to skillfully structure phrases and sentences in a manner that results in coherent and well-organized conversations or written compositions. Students might have the vocabulary and grammar but lack expertise in stringing together coherent and meaningful discourse, influencing their academic assignments and verbal engagement.
- **Strategic Competence:** Strategic competence involves the mastery of verbal and nonverbal communication strategies to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to performance variables or lack of language resources. As foreign students may not be proficient English speakers, it becomes crucial to navigate around gaps in their language skills subtly.

Communicative Competence

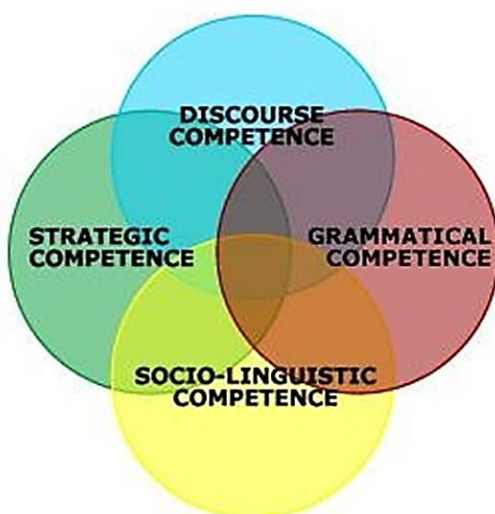


Figure 1. Hymes' Communicative Competence Model

Source:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/357302806_SOCIO-LINGUISTIC_COMMUNICATIVE_COMPETENCE_OF_EFL_STUDENTS_SERIES_OF_FAMILY_INTERACTION_IN_THE_TIME_OF_ONLINE_LEARNING

The study uses Hymes' (1972) framework to evaluate the English language proficiency of foreign students, with a specific focus on grammatical competence. This assessment will help determine the students' ability to use grammatical structures accurately in both academic and social contexts, which is crucial for effective communication.

Sociolinguistic competence within Hymes' (1972) framework is used to analyze how foreign students use academic language appropriately. This involves understanding their ability to adapt to the sociocultural and communication norms within the Bangladeshi academic environment, including politeness conventions and language norms.

The study explores how foreign students exhibit discourse competence in lectures and group discussions. It assesses their ability to engage in meaningful and effective academic discourse, participate in lectures, and contribute to group

discussions in a way that aligns with academic norms and expectations.

Hymes' (1972) framework is used to investigate the strategies employed by foreign students to negotiate communication breakdowns. This exploration will provide insights into how students address challenges in understanding and making themselves understood, contributing to the development of effective strategies for improving communication.

Taking the concepts of communicative competence into account, the study examines how gaps in these competencies impact academic performance, social integration, and psychological adjustment of foreign students. This analysis will help identify specific areas where improvement is needed to enhance the overall experience of international students studying in universities in Bangladesh.

Methodology

This is an exploratory type of research that employs a questionnaire survey, enabling the researcher to gather, summarize, present, and interpret data to clarify and quantify the communication challenges faced by foreign students in Bangladesh. Data have been collected from 31 foreign students who are studying at present in Khulna University. Purposive random sampling is used to ensure that every foreign student has an equal chance of inclusion.

- A structured questionnaire designed on a Likert scale has been used to collect quantitative data on foreign students' experiences in communication issues. The questionnaire includes questions related to language proficiency, specific communication difficulties, and their perceived impact on academic performance, social integration, and psychological well-being. Both primary and secondary data have been used for this research. Primary data for this study have been collected from responses of the participants to the questionnaire. Before participating, all the individuals were informed about the research objectives. They were assured of the confidentiality of their responses, and explicit consent is obtained to ensure ethical research practices. Secondary data, comprising additional insights and context, was gathered through a comprehensive review of various sources, including newspapers, articles, and research papers. This complementary data aids in enhancing the depth and breadth of the study by providing existing knowledge and perspectives on the subject. Quantitative analysis is applied to the collected data.

- Poll responses are recorded using Google Forms, and response percentages are examined.

Results

The questionnaire survey was conducted to know about the challenges the foreign students face in communicating in and beyond their classroom and to have an idea of their thoughts related to the issues of their anxiety, stress and discomfort due to the communication gaps. The questionnaire consisted of 10 close-ended questions. The researchers themselves collected the responses of the

participants by distributing the printed copies of the questionnaire. The results against the questions are as follows:

Question 1: What is your first language?

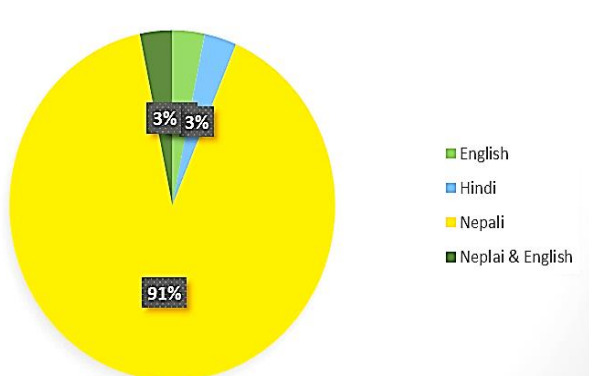


Figure 2. Ratio of Foreign Students Based on Their First Language

90% of the students are from Nepal, and their first language is Nepalese. Very few students are from other countries whose first languages are Hindi and English.

Question 2: How would you rate your English proficiency before coming to Bangladesh?

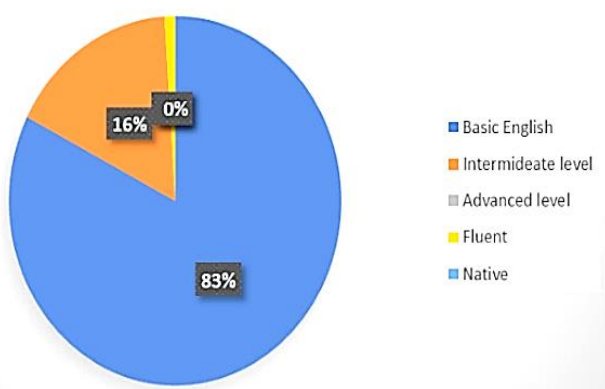


Figure 3. Foreign Students' English Proficiency Level

The students have given their spontaneous response to this survey. 80% of them have a basic English proficiency level while 16% have an intermediate level proficiency. As most of the foreign students are from non-English speaking countries so most of them have a basic proficiency in the English language.

Question 3: How often have you experienced difficulty in understanding lectures in English?

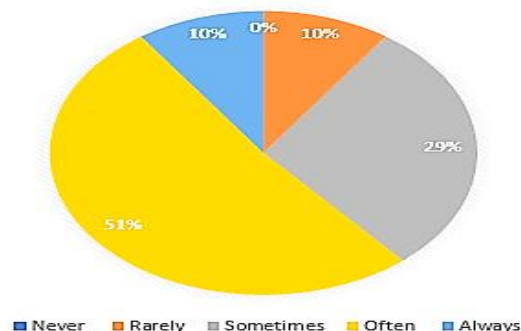


Figure 4. Foreign Student's Difficulty in Understanding Lectures in English

The question asked whether they face any difficulty in understanding lectures in English. 51.6% of students respond that they often face difficulty in understanding lectures in English. 29% students sometimes face difficulty in understanding lectures in English and 9.7% always face difficulty in understanding lectures in English.

Question 4: Would you report issues in participation in classroom discussion in English?

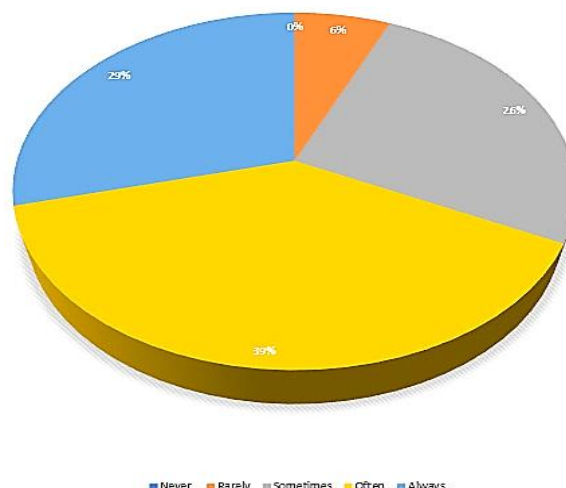


Figure 5. Issues of Participating Classroom Discussions in English

38.7% students respond that they face problems in understanding classroom discussion in English while 29% students respond that they always face difficulty in understanding classroom discussion in English. 25.8% say they sometimes face difficulty and 6.5% says they rarely face issues in understanding classroom discussions in English.

Question 5: Have you experienced any difficulties in academic writing in English?

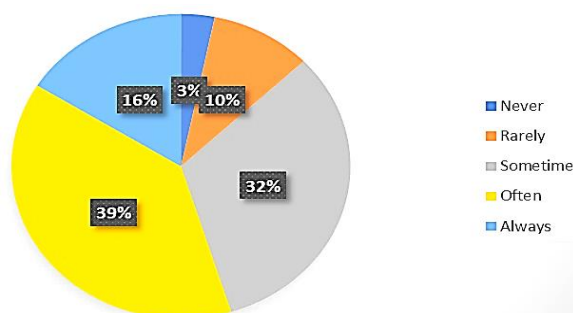


Figure 6. Difficulties in Academic Writing in English

The question asked whether they experienced any difficulties in academic writing in English and 38.7% students responded that they often face difficulties in academic writing. 32.3% says they sometimes face difficulties in academic writing in English. 16.1% says they rarely face difficulties and finally 3.2% said they never face difficulties in academic writing in English.

Question 6: Have you ever faced difficulties in conversation due to cultural and slang differences?

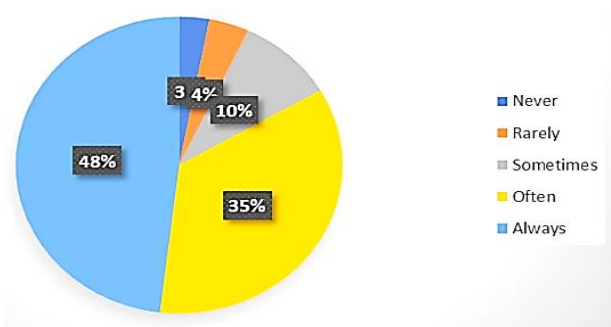


Figure 7. Difficulties in Conversation Due to Cultural and Slang Differences.

48.4% students always face difficulties in conversation due to cultural and slang differences. 35.5% students often face difficulties due to cultural and slang differences. 9.7% students sometimes, 4% rarely and 3% never face difficulties due to cultural and slang differences.

Question no 7: Have you ever found yourself misunderstood by others due to the cultural differences?

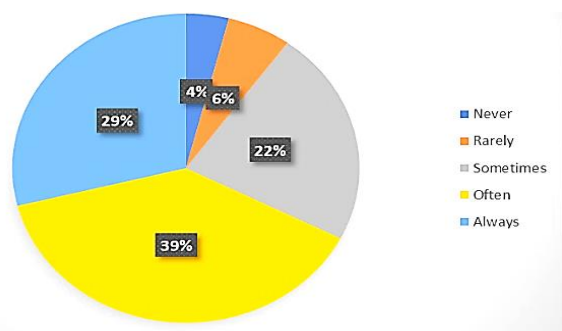


Figure 8. Misunderstanding Due to the Cultural Differences

Here 38% of students often found misunderstood by others

due to the cultural differences. 29% students always found themselves misunderstood by others due to cultural differences. 22.6% students sometimes found themselves misunderstood by others due to cultural differences. 6% rarely and 4% never found themselves misunderstood by others due to cultural differences.

Question 8: In your view, do language and communication problems impact your academic performance and grades?

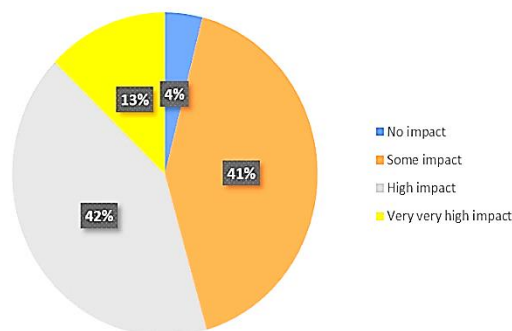


Figure 9. Impact on Academic Performance Due to Language and Communication Problem

The question asked whether language and communication problems impact their academic performance and grades. 12% students respond that language and communication difficulties have very high impact on their academic performance and grades. 41% students respond that language and communication difficulties have a high impact on their academic performance and grades. 41% respond with some impact and rest of 4% respond with no impact on their academic performances and grades due to language and communication difficulties.

Question 9: Have you had problems integrating socially because of communication difficulties?

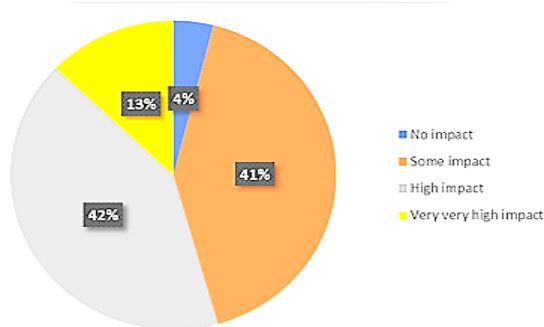


Figure 10. Social Integration Because of Communication Difficulties

The question asked if they have had problems integrating socially because of communication difficulties and 38.7% students responded with some impact. 32.3% students responded with high impact, 22.6% responded very high impact and 7% responded with no impact.

Question 10: Have you experienced psychological problems (e.g., stress, anxiety, and depression) due to communication challenges?

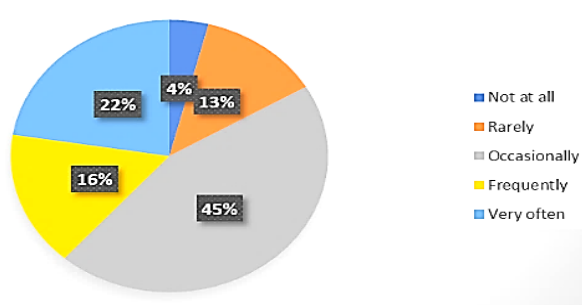


Figure 11. Psychological Problems Due to Communication Challenges.

45.2% of students responded that they occasionally faced psychological problems due to communication difficulties. 22.6% of students responded that they very often faced psychological problems due to communication challenges. 16% responded that they frequently faced psychological problems due to communication challenges and 4% responded that they did not at all face psychological problems due to communication challenges.

Discussion

Analysis of the first and second questions reveals that 85% of students are from non-English speaking countries, with basic proficiency in English. In Bangladesh, where many universities use both English and Bangla as the medium of instruction, and Bangla is commonly used for communication outside of university settings, these students face a significant challenge, as neither language is their native tongue.

The data offers important insights into the language backgrounds of the students, shedding light on how their communication challenges and experiences in a new academic and cultural setting may be influenced by these language differences.

In question number 3 of the survey, the majority of foreign students (60.3%) experience difficulties in understanding lectures in English. Of these students, 51.6% often face difficulties, while 29% sometimes face difficulties.

This data highlights a significant issue faced by a considerable portion of the surveyed foreign students. The majority of them often struggle to comprehend lectures conducted in English, indicating a substantial language barrier that may affect their academic performance and overall learning experience.

It is noteworthy that even those who don't always face difficulties (29%) still encounter occasional challenges, emphasizing the need for effective strategies to enhance their English language proficiency and their ability to engage with academic content delivered in English. This finding underscores the importance of addressing language-related barriers for foreign students to ensure their academic success and overall well-being.

In question 4 of the survey, students were asked about their experiences regarding participation in classroom discussions conducted in English. The responses indicate that 38.7% of the students reported facing difficulties in

understanding classroom discussions in English. Moreover, 29% of the students indicated that they always encounter such challenges, while 25.8% reported that they sometimes face difficulties in this context. A smaller proportion, 6.5%, mentioned that they rarely have issues understanding classroom discussions in English.

These findings shed light on the communication challenges faced by foreign students when it comes to engaging in classroom discussions conducted in English. A significant percentage of students either often or sometimes experience difficulties, which can impact their active participation in academic discourse and, subsequently, their learning experience.

The data emphasizes the need for strategies and support mechanisms to enhance students' ability to engage in classroom discussions effectively, particularly in an English-speaking academic environment. Addressing these issues can contribute to their academic integration and overall success.

The results of question 5 in the survey show majority of foreign students (71%) experience difficulties in academic writing in English. Of these students, 38.7% often face difficulties, while 32.3% sometimes face difficulties. Only a small minority of students (19.3%) rarely or never face difficulties in academic writing in English.

These findings shed light on the academic writing challenges faced by foreign students in an English-speaking environment. The data indicates that a considerable number of students regularly or periodically struggle with academic writing in English, which can impact their ability to excel in their coursework.

These results underscore the importance of providing support and resources to help students improve their academic writing skills in English. Addressing these challenges can contribute to their academic success and overall educational experience.

Question 6 in the survey which inquired about difficulties in conversation due to cultural and slang differences, the responses shed light on student's experiences. Notably, a substantial portion of the respondents, 48.4%, reported that they always encounter challenges in conversations due to these differences. Furthermore, 35.5% of the students indicated that they often face such difficulties. A smaller percentage, 9.7%, mentioned that they sometimes experience these challenges, while 4% rarely face them, and 3% reported never encountering difficulties in conversations related to cultural and slang differences.

These findings highlight the significant impact of cultural and slang differences on communication experiences for foreign students. The data indicates that a considerable number of students consistently or frequently face challenges in conversational contexts influenced by these differences.

This data underscores the importance of addressing these issues by providing cultural sensitivity training and resources to enhance intercultural communication. Such support can greatly contribute to improving the overall communication experiences of international students.

Analyzing the responses to question 7 in the survey, which explored experiences of being misunderstood by others due to cultural differences, they are found to offer

valuable insights into students' encounters. A significant percentage of respondents, 29%, consistently find themselves misunderstood by others due to cultural disparities. Moreover, 38% of students frequently face this issue, while 22.6% sometimes experience misunderstandings in such contexts. A smaller proportion, 6%, reported rare encounters with such misunderstandings, and 4% stated that they never experience being misunderstood by others due to cultural differences.

These findings shed light on the considerable impact of cultural differences on the likelihood of misunderstandings in intercultural interactions. The data indicates that a noteworthy number of students often or consistently grapple with being misunderstood in situations influenced by these differences.

These results emphasize the importance of implementing cultural sensitivity training and communication support to enhance understanding and effective communication among individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. Addressing these challenges has the potential to significantly improve the overall intercultural communication experiences of international students.

When examining Question 8 in the survey, which investigated the impact of language and communication issues on academic performance and grades, the responses yield insightful perspectives. A notable 12% of participants noted a very high impact of language and communication difficulties on their academic performance and grades. Additionally, 41% of students acknowledged a high impact, while another 41% experienced some level of impact. A small percentage, 4%, asserted that they do not face any impact on their academic performance and grades due to language and communication challenges.

These findings ensure a substantial influence of language and communication challenges on students' academic outcomes. The data suggest that a significant proportion of students admit, at minimum, a high or moderate impact on their academic performance to these difficulties. These results emphasize the necessity for targeted support and interventions to address language and communication challenges, aiming to ultimately improve students' academic performance.

Question 9 of the survey focused on social integration in the context of communication challenges. The responses reveal that a considerable number of students (38.7%) faced some degree of impact on their social integration due to communication difficulties. Specifically, 32.3% of respondents felt a significant impact, emphasizing the high influence of communication challenges on their social integration. Additionally, 22.6% expressed a very high impact, indicating substantial difficulties in socially integrating due to communication issues.

These findings specify the importance of implementing support measures and strategies to improve the overall well-being and experiences of students navigating a foreign academic environment.

Question 10 reveals that a significant portion of international students, approximately 64%, have encountered psychological issues due to communication barriers. This underscores the need for thoughtful approaches to mental health support for foreign students, emphasizing effectiveness of psychological counseling and programs aimed at enhancing resilience to assist them

in addressing these difficulties.

An analysis of the primary and secondary data reveals that,

1. The majority of foreign students had only a basic level of English proficiency on their arrival in Bangladesh. This suggests that their preparation for academic coursework conducted predominantly in English may be insufficient, leading to difficulties in understanding lectures and participating in academic discussions.

2. A significant majority of foreign students face difficulties understanding lectures and classroom discussions in English and participating in them. This observation highlights a substantial obstacle undermining their academic performance and integration.

3. A vast majority of foreign students encounter problems with academic writing in English. This issue potentially affects these students' capability to optimally perform in their coursework, hinting at the need for targeted academic writing support.

4. Foreign students frequently encounter challenges in everyday conversations as a result of differences in cultural references and slang, which can be unfamiliar to them. These factors can create barriers to effective communication and increase the likelihood of cultural misunderstandings.

5. A considerable number of students report being misunderstood due to cultural differences, underscoring the importance of cultural sensitivity and awareness in improving their communication experiences.

6. Communication problems have a high to very high impact on academic performance and grades for a significant portion of foreign students. These findings emphasize the necessity for interventions to address these challenges and improve the academic success of foreign students.

7. Many foreign students indicate challenges in social integration due to prevailing communication difficulties. It emphasizes that addressing these communication barriers is critical not only for academic success but also for fostering a sense of belonging and community among the foreign students.

8. A significant majority of students face psychological problems associated with communication difficulties. This finding underscores the broad consequences of these problems on students' well-being, urging proactive measures to mitigate potential mental health issues.

Conclusion

The research aims to examine and identify communication problems faced by foreign students in Bangladeshi tertiary-level institutions and investigate their impact on academic success, well-being, and social integration. After extensive study and data analysis, it finds that the students, most of whom come from non-English speaking backgrounds, indeed face significant communication challenges in both academic and social settings. The students reported challenges in understanding and participating in lectures and classroom discussions due to limited proficiency in the English language. Academic writing in English was found to be a significant hurdle that could potentially impact their

grades and overall academic performance. The study also reveals that language barriers extend beyond the academic context, affecting students' everyday conversations and ability to integrate socially.

Significantly, this research also highlighted the impact of cultural differences on the foreign students' experiences. Many respondents reported being consistently misunderstood due to these cultural barriers, and felt the lack of familiarity with local cultural nuances and slangs that pose notable challenges in their daily interactions. These cultural and language gaps have implications on the students' academic success as well as in their psychological well-being.

The findings of the study emphasize the crucial need for targeted strategies and interventions in Bangladeshi universities to address these communication barriers and assist foreign students in overcoming those. Recommendations include the introduction of language support in the form of English courses, cultural sensitivity training, academic support, peer-to-peer language exchange programs, psychological support, social integration activities, and continuous improvements based on regular student feedback.

In conclusion, this research steps in understanding and addressing the communication challenges faced by foreign students in Bangladesh. It brings to light the pressing need for support and resources, both at the linguistic and cultural level. Such strategic interventions can facilitate not only their academic success but their holistic development and well-being, too. The insights gained from this study will help build a foundation for efforts to enhance the quality of experiences of foreign students in Bangladesh and other similar contexts worldwide.

Based on the analysis of the data results from the overall survey, the following measures can be taken to improve the experiences of the foreign students in the tertiary level institutions in Bangladesh:

- Institutes should offer dedicated English language classes aimed at enhancing foreign students' language proficiency. These could include spoken English courses, writing workshops, and comprehension classes to aid their success in an English-medium academic environment.
- Incorporate cultural sensitivity training into university programs. Familiarizing foreign students with local customs, idioms, slang, and social cues could help reduce misunderstandings and facilitate smoother interactions.
- Provide classes or materials to support academic writing and comprehension skills.

Since these areas are identified as

significant challenges, focused support can help improve students' performances.

- Establish programs where local and foreign students can learn from each other. It can provide foreign students with conversational practice and insights into local culture and language nuances.
- Evaluate and address the psychological strain associated with communication difficulties. Offering counseling services and creating a supportive and welcoming environment can mitigate the negative impact on foreign student's mental well-being.
- Organize activities and events that encourage interactions between local and foreign students, fostering an environment where foreign students can practice language skills and feel socially integrated.
- Universities should regularly gather feedback from foreign students to understand their evolving challenges and adapt existing initiatives.
- Recognizing the prevalence of Bangla as the primary medium of communication in Bangladesh universities should offer Bangla language courses, specially tailored for foreign students. These courses can be designed to accommodate varying proficiency levels and may include basic conversational skills, reading comprehension and cultural nuances. By learning Bangla, foreign students can enhance their ability to communicate effectively with local community members, including peers, faculty, staff and individuals outside the university setting. Proficiency in Bangla not only facilitates day-to-day interactions but fosters a deeper understanding and appreciation of Bangladeshi culture, history and societal norms also. These steps are supposed to create a more welcoming and accepting academic environment for foreign students in Bangladeshi universities promoting their overall success and well-being.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors confirm that there is no conflict of interest with the publication of this article.

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