



Research article

Implementing English as Medium of Instruction at the Bangladeshi Universities:—Policies, and Potentials

Mohammad Harun*

Department of English, Cumilla University, Cumilla-3506, Bangladesh

ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on the policies for, and potentials of implementing English as a medium of instruction (EMI) at the universities in Bangladesh. There are 109 private and 53 public universities in Bangladesh as of 17 October, 2022—and the figures are on ever increase for both. While all the private universities opt for EMI at the policy level, some public universities keep the options open for both Bangla and English as the Medium of Instruction (MoI). Ideally, the technical subjects, such as, Science and Technology, Engineering, BBA, English, etc. require teaching employing English as a medium in both contexts. However, the realities are far away from the ideals, and there are gaps between policy directives and practices in the private universities too. Against this backdrop, this paper addresses some critical questions such as: What problems do learners face to get educated in EMI or in mixed Bangla and English instruction? What challenges do the teachers encounter while delivering lectures in English? How do the job markets, socio-economic valuations of English, tertiary education etc. influence such English-in-Education policies in Bangladesh? The agency-structure perspective (as articulated by Liddicoat & Taylor-Leech, 2020) was employed as a theoretical position to explore the above questions. The investigation being exploratory in nature, and following a qualitative approach, we analyzed relevant policy documents (i.e., education policies of Bangladesh) and collected data through interviews. Our findings show that despite some challenges in implementing EMI policies, both teachers and learners feel it is necessary to have an explicit EMI policy for Bangladeshi tertiary educational institutes, especially for the public universities. Moreover, the provision of translanguaging is strongly recommended in line with the spirit of the findings and discussions.

Introduction

The chronicle of language policy evolves around some significant shifts in the national life of any country. This is not a difference in the language policy in Bangladesh (Chowdhury & Kabir, 2014). Of all the important linguistic actors, Bangla and English still play crucial roles in the national spheres. Bangla is the mother tongue and is widely spoken, whereas, English is the language of social prestige, and a gateway to good jobs, and economic well-beings. Ideologically, Bangla unifies the linguistic spirit of the population, and is a bearer of the national culture and identity. Contrarily, English, as a globalized lingua franca, makes room for wider opportunities and international mobility. The nationalistic fervor of Bangla got momentum in different periods of the country's coming into 'being' (e.g., the Language Movement of 1952, the

War of Liberation of 1971 etc.) that jeopardized the cause of English for some certain periods. However, English was again reinvigorated as a response to the processes of globalization and with the advent of the neoliberal policies and privatization of education in Bangladesh.

To illustrate how the different historical factors interplayed crucial roles in making a bilingual phenomenon in Bangladesh, Hamid et al. (2013) elucidate three distinct stages of the development of English language policies in Bangladesh, "early modern, modern and post-modern". Hamid (2009b) mentions, "The colonial MOI can be described as a political imposition upon the natives aimed at facilitating, and lengthening colonial rule." The second period of MOI, as stated in Hamid et al. (2013), "followed the official end of colonial rule and prioritized national languages as an expression of

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*Corresponding author: <m.harun@cou.ac.bd>

national identity and aspirations.” This phase relegated the status of English to the margin and attempted to promote Bangla in all spheres of national life. Similarly, many formerly colonized countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, Pakistan, etc. switched their MOI to their national languages too. And in the third period, English reemerged as MOI marking “the sociolinguistic reality of English in a globalizing world and the discourse of English in the context of human capital development and national participation in a global economy” (Lin & Martin, 2005; Rassool, 2007; Tsui & Tollefson, 2017).

The present-day landscapes of language trends in Bangladesh demonstrate the necessity for English to emerge as a major language in the country. Of all, the economic and academic sectors are heavily dependent on and influenced by the extensive use of English. Gradually, the other sectors are switching the focus on English for economic and other development. A great deal of economic contribution depends on the use of English in different sectors in Bangladesh. As an economic and academic hub, Bangladesh needs to opt for such an English-dominant language policy to ventilate its international aura. How do the development agenda, the neoliberal education policies and the market logic subscribe to the English-in-education in Bangladesh? And to what extent can such EMI policies bring up benefits or will this perplex the nationalistic fervor? What are the challenges that both teachers and learners face in disseminating knowledge adopting an EMI? We attempted to address these questions following what is called the structure-agency approach in sociolinguistics in this paper. In Bangladesh, individual stakeholders seem to push towards a more English-exclusive ambience despite the fact that the government has declared no explicit EMI policies to date. But the government has made teaching and learning English compulsory in educational institutes by introducing English as a mandatory subject from class one. Bangladeshi people, especially the young and educated ones, realize the necessity of learning English to compete in the global market. Along with English, other foreign languages such as, French, Arabic, Korean, etc., are taught in Bangladesh, but not as extensively as English is studied. English has become an inescapable reality for the nation, especially, in the academic, business, and economic sectors. On one hand, people tend to adhere to the national language, Bangla, as a means of preserving tradition and culture; on the other hand, a growing number of parents send their children to English medium schools to ensure better jobs and economic prosperity. Although ideologically Bangla is expected to be used in the national sphere, what is observed in tertiary education is a bilingual phenomenon. This illustrates the discrepancy between the macro-level policy and the micro-level implementation of EMI. Therefore, the present investigation is theoretically grounded on the structure-agency approach.

Though a predominantly monolingual country, English is extensively used in the higher education sector in Bangladesh. There are too many books of higher education written in English, many are translated into English from other languages, English newspapers, and other electronic media broadcast news in English regularly. The domains of higher education are now heavily dependent on the English language. Although the

nationalistic fervor of Bangla is deeply ingrained in the mindset of the populace, some private universities in Bangladesh make EMI mandatory in classrooms at the policy level. But for the public universities, no such provision is made. Hence, classroom teaching occurs mainly with code-switching between Bangla and English, subscribing to a sociolinguistic phenomenon known as translanguaging.

Literature Review

Despite some research on the English-in-Education policy in Bangladesh (Ali, 2013b; Cho, 2012; Costa & Coleman, 2013; Doiz, Lasagabaster, & Sierra, 2011, 2012; Hamid, 2009b), gaps remain with regard to the potentials of implementing an EMI at tertiary education. Though we notice that the university curricula are designed in English and students are supposed to write answers in English, there are extensive code-switching and code-mixing between English and Bangla for instructions and interactions in classrooms.

Though the domains of English are widening, Bangla keeps the nationalistic fervor alive. Here English serves as a double-edged sword (Hamid, 2021), entailing both benefits as well as banes. In one sense, English functions as one of the dominant determiners of social prestige, good jobs and a regulator of ‘who is in and who is out’; on the other hand, English appears to be a bane since the neoliberal language policies still continue to perpetuate the English hegemony, encroach on the local culture, and widen the linguistic and socio-economic inequalities in the formerly colonized, and/or the developing nations. Such an oxymoronic scenario of English perplexes the not-so-well-motivated stakeholders of English in the Outer circle of Kachru’s (1985) model. Bangladesh was a former colony of the British Empire, and English was institutionalized for a long time. The fact that English is not constitutionally recognized as an official language further problematizes the issue. English in Bangladesh serves instrumental functions more than the ideological and patriotic ones. English has taken on so many functionalities as an international language in Bangladesh, extending its use in almost all domains.

During the periods of colonial expansion, English was introduced to different parts of the world as a tool “of Enlightenment, of light, and civilization” (Kachru, 1998). But now this very language has extended its functions as a tool of science, commerce, technology, communication, and globalization. Now no nation can do away with English on the grounds of mere nationalistic feelings, nor can anyone throw it away as a language of the colonizers. Now anyone can safely express their disagreement with Bower’s statement that English “is an asset and instrument to the British, as a vehicle of British values and culture, and as a resource for trade and profession.” It is also noteworthy that though English continues to express British values and culture, serving as a tool for trade and profession, it also does so for many other nations. For instance, the translation of a Bangla text into English introduces Bengali values and culture to other peoples. Moreover, many ELT professionals are now using locally-produced ELT materials and many non-native writers are producing their creative pieces in English—the global language! In this sense, English has become a tool for

trades and communications for the other nations too. Kachru (1998) contends that English is no longer a unique possession of the Australian, New Zealand, British or American people. In some of the Asian countries where English has made significant progress both in teaching, and learning and in using the language practically, there seem to be, in the majority of the cases, “culturally, linguistically, and ideologically pluralistic societies” (Kachru, 1998). Cooper (1989, p. 182) states, “A satisfactory theory of language planning, therefore, awaits a satisfactory theory of social change.” This upholds the fact that when the top-down and bottom-up approaches to language planning go hand in hand, the planning processes yield the expected outcome.

Bangladesh does not have such cultural, linguistic, and ideological pluralism. Except for some regional dialects, Bangla is used across the country. Even the tribal people, who speak mutually unintelligible dialects, receive education in Bangla. Additionally, the entire country is governed by a constitution that declares, “The state language of the Republic is Bangla” (The Constitution of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, Act: 3); whereas, English has not been mentioned even as an official language despite the fact that the constitution itself is translated into English. The 2010 National Education Commission advocates for extensive use of English for higher education. However, not of all the recommendations of the commission are implemented, nor are the suggestions for increased use of English documented at the policy level. Therefore, such constitutional negligence towards English as well as the policy level apathy further problematizes the situations as to whether to go for complete abandonment or complete adoption of EMI or adopting a mix-method EMI or translanguaging for the tertiary education.

Despite all such contentions, one has to understand that English has a good deal of functions in Bangladesh. Bangladesh is now in such a transitional period when multiculturalism is becoming an inevitability in the urban life. Bangladesh sends a large number of students to different regions of the world for education and other purposes which also accelerates the expansion of English. So, it is not the least surprising that English must emerge as a crucial language for economy and education in any context. Anticipating the stay of English and focusing on the development aspects of English in Bangladesh, Erling and Sergeant et al. (2012) claimed,

A reason for the promotion of English language education in development contexts is in part a response to a growing conviction that English language education can play an important role in helping people gain the resources to lift themselves out of poverty and increase their ability to participate in the world economic systems from which they have previously been excluded (p. 07).

Adoption of EMI offers not one-sided opportunities to better English skills, it also entails considerable hindrances for many Bangladeshi graduates to master content knowledge due to linguistic barriers. For most learners, a good deal of time is spent to overcome the linguistic hurdles, the time that could be utilized to deepen their subjective knowledge. A large number of students drops out of education or cannot promote themselves to higher classes due to their failure(s) in English. This poses

challenges for them to get good familiarity with world knowledge exclusively found into English. But the paradox is that not many books of higher education are translated in English. This also contradicts the national language policy and the Bangla language preservation acts. Though the private universities adopt EMI policies and the stakeholders practice EMI, the reported results are not satisfactory. As hinted by Hamid et al. (2013) that only institutional EMI policies may end up with students’ ‘cosmetic’ learning of English and incurring double loss—the language as well as the content—if such policies are not made following other issues such as curriculum, resources, staff, materials, and methods assessment and community engagement. In this case, students’, guardians’, and employers’ attitudes, beliefs and practices need to be considered. To cite such an example, in Hong Kong, despite macro-level MOI policies favoring the local language, EMI policies dominated the academia from the micro-level contexts and now they have started reaping the economic and cultural benefits. Bangladeshi guardians, employers, learners, and other stakeholders may prefer EMI in this era of globalization provided they get it implemented in consonance with the other Language Policy and Planning (LPP) / Language in Education Policy (LiEP) actors.

Therefore, what we notice here are incongruences between the national aspirations to preserve the purity of Bangla and local demands/needs to cope with global markets. Further contradictory situations are observed in different government job examinations in which around one fourth of the total marks are allocated for English skills, though English is not an official language, nor is it always required to run official activities. Good proficiency in English fares much better in getting better jobs both in government and non-government organizations.

But the teaching of English in Bangladesh could not develop pragmatically due to the lack of a proper English language education policy. In this regard, Chowdhury and Kabir (2014) opined, “The ongoing friction between Bengali and English, both in policy and practice and in the quintessential cultural temperament in the nation has left deep scars in the formation of acceptable language policy to date.” So, what is noticeable here is a kind of assumption among the stakeholders that a strong English language policy would depreciate the cause of Bangla in the national spheres. Contrarily, the effect(s) could be of mutual enrichment too, with one language enriching its properties by borrowing from the other and vice-versa. Chowdhury and Kabir (2014) opined, “In Bangladesh English is used as an international link language and unlike in neighboring India, it is hardly a tool for interpersonal communication.” But the functional domains of English in Bangladesh are increasing day by day. Notwithstanding with the nationalistic fervor, it would be unwise to “bypass the ontological, epistemological and methodological dimensions” of English language policy in Bangladesh. Even if we look into the suggestions provided by the educational commissions formed at different times (e.g., the 2003 National Education Commission, the 2010 National Education Policy etc.), we notice that the significance of English education in Bangladesh is duly recognized. So, it is evident that there are contradictions between the national language policy and the suggestions

provided by different education commissions as well as public sentiment with regard to English education in Bangladesh. However, Bangla is always expected to be preserved in its purest form. But its preservation or contamination with English does not depend on making English a co-official language together with Bangla, since it was/is observed that even the country's high court order had hardly any impact on the public's use of Banglish, e.g., code-mixing and code-switching between Bangla and English. Though such mass proclivity towards English cannot be deterred by making laws to preserve the purity of Bangla, it could bring a huge contribution to the cause of English by making it statutorily official. Therefore, it would be wise to welcome English from the national perspectives. Such movements to switching from French to English as the official language in South Sudan and Rwanda are well circulated; also, Taiwan adopted English as a second language, though Vietnam and Thailand did not entertain such moves.

However, to investigate the present scenario of EMI at Bangladeshi universities from the theoretical point of view, we focused on the agency-structure perspective (see Liddicoat and Taylor-Leech, 2020 for a comprehensive understanding of the agency-structure relation). By agency, we mean the LLP actors that have influence on others' actions, and their involvement in the process. Ahearn (2001) holds that LLP actors with agentive roles have "socio-culturally mediated capacity to act." To talk about the structure, Liddicoat and Taylor-Leech (2020) state, "Agency is also mediated by structure, or the recurring patterned arrangements that influence or limit the choices and opportunities available to individuals in society." So, it would be interesting to investigate how the structure orients the actors and researchers to respond to and implement policies and how the agentive "actors make decisions about languages and their use in context" (Liddicoat & Taylor-Leech, 2020) at the tertiary education in Bangladesh.

Research Methods

This research is conducted as an exploratory and a qualitative study. Hence, qualitative approaches are employed for data collection, and representation. Descriptive survey methodology and qualitative approaches to investigate the perceptions, challenges, and policy implications related to the adoption of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) at the tertiary level in Bangladesh are utilized which can elaborately capture the depth and complexity of stakeholder experiences and opinions.

Participants and Data Collection Tools

For the present study, a total of 20 university teachers, and 50 tertiary level learners from public universities are the sample size. All the teachers and learners are selected from two public universities operating in Comilla and Dhaka. Both primary and secondary data are used. Secondary data are collected from various published materials such as university acts, the Ministry of Education, the University Grants Commission, Bangladesh, research articles, monographs, and so on. Primary data from above mentioned 20 teachers and 50 learners are collected through open ended questionnaire surveys.

Data Analysis:

Following a thematic content analysis, the data were analyzed often using verbatim quotes from the surveys to support the salient themes, ensure authenticity and align with the participants' voices. Responses collected from the questionnaire surveys were read over and again to identify recurring themes and patterns which ultimately led to categorizing three broad areas of discussion: i) Career Prospects of Adopting EMI, ii) Preferences and Challenges for EMI, and iii) Policy Suggestions for EMI Implementation.

Ethical Considerations:

Based on voluntary participation, informed consent was obtained for data collection. Confidentiality and anonymity of the participants were ensured. Other ethical guidelines regarding human subjects were considered strictly.

Limitations:

Despite the topic is a comprehensive and insightful one, the sample size was relatively small and participants are confined to two public universities in Bangladesh which may represent only a partial coverage of the total picture of the higher education institutes (HEIs) of Bangladesh.

Findings:

It is difficult to side with the EMI issues in Bangladesh as responses obtained through the questionnaire survey tend to recognize the necessity of adopting English as a medium of instruction at the universities, as well as keeping the patriotic feeling associated with Bangla alive. In Bangladesh, English is generally required to secure good jobs. Such paradox arises out of absolute discrepancies in the English language education policy and planning. The most conspicuous feature of the findings is that English is of the highest priority for university education in Bangladesh. But Bangla also needs to be used for better understanding. Both languages will help understand the content well and make the stakeholders well-equipped with the required knowledge and skills. English is welcome mostly due to its instrumental functions, which serves as a gatekeeper to the wider opportunities. At the same time, people want to uphold the patriotic passion associated with their mother tongue. These conflicting situations perplex English language policies in Bangladesh. However, for the convenience of representing the key findings, we identified the following major issues concerning the EMI policy in Bangladesh: a) Career Prospects of Adopting EMI, b) Challenges for and Preference to Adopting EMI, and c) Policies for Adopting EMI.

Career prospects of Adopting EMI:

The participants acknowledge that the adoption of EMI policies at universities would make them more deserving. If implemented pragmatically, EMI policy is expected to create a conducive environment for the stakeholders to attain overall working proficiency in English. One teacher opines that he would prefer EMI because English increases the proficiency of both students and teachers which is helpful for them to make better careers. Though the majority of the teachers acknowledge that adoption of

English does not hamper their lecture delivery, but giving examples in Bangla renders their lectures more understandable and facilitates students' intake. One respondent-teacher states, "English medium instruction or studies at the university level help(s) students to prepare themselves for the vast worldwide job sectors. As English is nowadays an inevitable language for communication, so by going through English medium study, they can become more confident."

Other prospects of using English as a medium of instruction include that students get exposure to it and become gradually accustomed to understanding lectures in English. Being skilled in the language may ensure both monetary profits and social prestige not only inside the country but also in the global market since English is the gateway to global citizenship. One student writes, "When our teachers use English in the classroom and we try to speak English, we become confident to speak English in other contexts too." Another student-respondent acknowledges the significance of EMI as the present job market looks for people who speak good English. It is commonly believed that studying in English is helpful and effective to be prepared for the job market. Realizing the significance of English (nationally and internationally), majority of students expressed their preference to listen to lectures in mixed languages. Teachers find it difficult to explain the scientific, technical and terminological terms in English as well as most of the books are written in English and it is too difficult for many learners to follow the books in English. Though such situations force teachers to adopt bilingual lecture delivery, one teacher prefers using Bangla the least for classroom instruction. He particularly identifies the following career prospects of EMI:

1. It helps them (both teachers and learners) get rid of English phobia.
2. It familiarizes them with different contexts, which in turn, makes them better communicators.

One student-respondent provided a thought-provoking statement that despite English not being required for running all types of official activities, allocating marks for English in government and non-government job examinations creates an artificial necessity for learning English for all. He also opines that there should be domain specifications as to where English is highly required and where not at all. Chowdhury and Kabir (2014) rather focus on the realistic aspect of English in the following statement,

...many countries in Asia, for example. The South East Asian countries, where English has been used as a foreign language over decades, have adopted the teaching and learning of English in their education policies in response to the realities of a more globally connected world (p. 02).

Therefore, it is evident that English has better prospects both inside the country and across the globe. And for some reasons, English has become an inevitability for the educated and elite citizens of the country. The teaching and learning of English is also thriving in the academia. English is expected to play a vital role in equipping learners with the 21 century set of skills to

compete with the demands of globalization and its subsequent development.

Preference to and Challenges for Adopting EMI:

When asked whether they would prefer EMI for the Bangladeshi universities, both teachers and students reply positively. One teacher states that he would adopt English as a medium of instruction because "It will help them [learners] to build a better career and it also helps me [him] improve my [his] proficiency." English having better career prospects, teachers and students prefer EMI policies at the university level in Bangladesh. As university graduates, they aspire to enrich themselves through English medium instruction. Many teachers prefer EMI for their lectures, and they come up with befitting reasons for adopting EMI. Almost all respondents opine that the present world seeks proficiency in a global language, especially in English. So, students should have English medium instructions at the university level. One can acquire English by using it in every possible occasion. EMI creates such opportunities for both learners and teachers to improve the required skills in English. One teacher also comments that EMI does not hamper lecture delivery. But sometimes he prefers to give examples in Bangla, as this would enhance better understanding of the content. Another teacher prefers EMI, "because, most of the books, literatures, etc. are in English. If I try to deliver my lectures in English, my language skills are improved. However, I have to deliver lecture through mixed languages considering the students' needs."

The students who write answers in English are usually well ahead of others and they do well in finding jobs, and can cope up with job challenges. They can excel in other domains too. So, instructors try to implement EMI policy from the bottom-up level. Another university faculty member writes that he uses English around 95% and Bangla 5% for lecture delivery which, he thinks, helps students achieve the best output. But he tries to switch to Bangla for a couple of minutes soon he realizes the students feel bored with continuous lectures in English. He is all for adopting EMI as it is very useful for him, "I can smoothly convey my messages to students in English. There are some contexts and circumstances which cannot be described otherwise, e.g. using the native language, Bangla". Chowdhury and Kabir (2014) also recognized the intangible benefits of English, because, English "...is also important as a symbol of socio-intellectual elitism and prestige." Therefore, the concerned stakeholders tend to prefer English as a medium of instruction at the universities in Bangladesh for its ever-widening domains of international functionalities.

That the adoption of EMI is expected to have better career prospects for the stakeholders is not denied; at the same time respondents identify some challenges concerning the successful implementation of EMI in Bangladeshi universities. The most glaring challenge is that while teachers think students' low level of proficiency in English is one of the biggest challenges for EMI, students opine that teachers' faltering in English makes lectures delivery difficult, and ambiguous in many cases. When teachers deliver lectures in English, students seem to pay less attention, feel sleepy, and teachers feel much of their talk just did not mean anything to learners. Also

students are very weak at listening and speaking activities, and they have pronunciation problems too. Concerning the challenges that teachers face in delivering lectures in English, some responses are illuminating. Students' lower level of proficiency in English to understand instructions and the content, sometimes feeling of wasting their valuable time making efforts to learn English, difficulties in finding appropriate expressions, maintaining grammar in spoken English, pronunciation inhibition, and so on are some challenges that both students and teachers face while delivering lectures in English. The other side of the coin becomes evident by the statement of one student-respondent pointing to the challenges of EMI, "In most cases, when our teachers try to give lectures in English, they have difficulty in finding appropriate words." Though many students appreciate that their teachers speak English in classrooms, for many students it is very difficult to understand the lectures wholly delivered in English. Given this context, the idea of translanguaging for educational purposes is expected to yield better outcome in Bangladesh.

Whether EMI hampers lecture delivery or not is a big issue at hand. One teacher opines that it is easier for him to prepare lectures in English. But responses fall into two categories e.g., a) EMI having some negative influences on lecture delivery, and b) EMI having formative influence on lecture delivery. A group of respondents find it difficult to follow EMI completely. Their responses suggest that the problems arise from two major sources—a) teachers' difficulty in delivering lectures in English, and b) students' low proficiency in the language that leads to difficulty in understanding the content. Interestingly, while many teachers identified students' low proficiency in the language as the severest problem of EMI, many students stated that teachers' difficulty in delivering lectures in English was the biggest hurdle. One teacher acknowledges that he feels more comfortable and natural using Bangla in the classroom, probably, it is due to our environment and students' feeling of ease with Bangla. When asked whether they feel more comfortable and understand better when their teachers use Bangla to explain difficult lessons, the majority of the students respond positively. One ESL/EFL teacher working at a university mentions that there does not exist a congenial ambience for speaking English in the academia, let alone in other domains, and English is not an everyday matter outside the classrooms. Only very few opt to use English outside classroom and yet it is considered luxurious. This implies that English does not have a second language status in Bangladesh, nor is it easy to consider it a foreign language, because unlike the other foreign languages i.e. French, German, Chinese, Korean, Arabic and so forth, English is used in the educational and other multinational domains. Though it is not statistically measured as to how many people learn these foreign languages other than English, it can be mentioned that people learn these in some coaching centers, some private universities (notably, Brac Institute of Languages) and in the Institute of Modern Languages of Dhaka University and that of Jangannath University, Rajshahi University, Jahangirnagar University etc. But in most cases the uses of these foreign languages do not go beyond the classroom settings. Though the domains of English are far more encompassing than the foreign languages, English seems

to be used with some reservation outside the classrooms. If the language were used extensively outside the classroom, it would foster a congenial environment for EMI policies at the universities too. Therefore, to recap the challenges of adopting EMI at the Bangladeshi universities, students' poor performance in English in general, teachers' facing difficulty in delivering lectures in English, teachers' inclination to use L1 in classrooms etc. appear to be major issues. In the next section we turn to policies, or policy directives for EMI at the Bangladeshi universities.

Policies for Implementing EMI in Bangladesh:

For implementing an EMI policy in Bangladesh, both top-down and bottom-up approaches might be adopted. At least the present research findings suggest so. Among the top-down push factors, government bodies, educational ministry, NGOs and policymakers should come forward. As suggested by one teacher, "The government should provide the English teachers of all levels with adequate logistic supports and training so that they can properly teach their students and contribute to the cause of English language policy." That policy implementation would have huge impact(s) on the development of English education is evidenced by the Chinese Government's introducing "English as a compulsory subject in class 3 in all elementary schools and instructing all public universities to use English as the main teaching language for technology and business related subjects" (Nunan, 2003, cited in Chowdhury & Kabir, 2014). Training English teachers appeared to be the most emphasized suggestion. "Government should arrange as many training programs, workshops, and seminars as are required for both teachers and students to develop proficiency in English." Another respondent teacher opined,

As a part of policymaking, the government or any commission like the education commissions, may identify different domains of English, prepare educational curricula in such ways that students aspiring to further their career in those sectors need to learn English mandatorily, for other learners English could be an optional subject.

We appreciate this proposal very much for several reasons. Firstly, the students for whom English is a mandatory subject they will have better preparation and adequate motivation as well as dedication to acquire the language. Secondly, the learners who choose English optionally may learn it better, as they will approach the language out of interest, not being forced. So, a better learning outcome is expected. Thirdly, such domain specification will create awareness among the students, teachers, guardians, and other stakeholders. Finally, this will lead to more informed pedagogical practices among the ELT professionals in Bangladesh. Research should be undertaken to find pragmatic approaches to achieve the objectives of EMI at the Bangladeshi universities. Practicing limited EMI at the primary, secondary and higher secondary levels of education is also suggested so that students will not be afraid of English at the tertiary level. This suggestion opens up another dimension of EMI policy i.e. implementing a kind of pseudo-EMI from the lower level. This could be either from the primary or

secondary level. In fact, both teachers and students should have adequate skills in English and preparation to embark on the EMI phase at the tertiary level.

Respondents suggest that government can take policy actions to adopt EMI for university education. Moreover, the government should establish English teaching institutes to prepare skilled ELT practitioners to deliver lectures and instructions in English as well. Also, the curriculum should match national values. As we cannot ignore the significance of English, both teachers and students should accept English as the medium of teaching and learning spontaneously. The government should pay attention to providing structural, financial and policy protections for the relevant stakeholders. One teacher suggests improving classroom infrastructures, and installing multimedia projectors including sound systems so that the teacher can reach all students. However, he advocates keeping the use of the mother tongue (L1) to a bare minimum in the EMI classroom. Although English is very important in the national and international spheres for Bangladeshi people as a *de facto* norm, there has been no strong *de jure* provision at the policymaking level. As we cannot help but teach and learn English in educational institutions, we need to be more focused and policy-oriented with regard to the EMI issues in Bangladesh. The policymakers and other stakeholders must pay attention to the following issues:

- a. Launching some English skills-oriented programs for all English teachers.
- b. Developing classroom infrastructures so that teachers and learners feel at ease while imparting education.
- c. Making provisions for state-level incentives so that learners feel encouraged to use English as much as possible in their everyday contexts.
- d. Broadcasting English language-related programs in radio-TV channels more frequently so that learners can take in input both consciously and subconsciously.
- e. Promoting multitudinous research projects pertinent to English, etc.

Discussion and Analysis:

The trends of the EMI issues in Bangladesh, especially at the tertiary education show that the local contexts emphasize more on adopting explicit EMI policies. Since Bangla is used as the L1 and sole official language, complete implementation of EMI policies at the universities may not be viable. Therefore, translanguaging is an ideal candidate. For any kind of language planning, the socio-political contexts play significant roles. From the sociological perspectives, though people tend to lean towards an English inclusive education at the tertiary level, yet no political parties seem to risk declaring English as another official language lest the public sentiment should go against them. Then there remains another body (e.g. the educational institutes) to endorse the widespread use of English across the country. Though language planning affects all spheres of social life, it is the educational sectors that take on the lead role in selecting and implementing the medium of instruction. Some privately run universities seem to have more English inclusive language policy to cater to the global market. But the other tertiary

educational institutes, (especially the publicly funded universities,) mostly adhere to government policies, rather than take any innovative steps. Despite this small backlash from the administration of public universities, individual agentive actors see EMI policies to be more rewarding. Such policies should be informed by sociolinguistic investigations. Tollefson (2015) opined that there should be a set of regulations and/or guidelines to determine the linguistic behavior. Badwan (2019) reports how a Tunisian school made an internal decision to adopt English as the medium of instruction being influenced by external domains “such as the educational market, access to foreign aid, and graduates’ employability.” The tertiary education of Bangladesh seems to be following similar footsteps in near the future, because as a global language, English is not in a position to be neglected.

The EMI situations in Bangladesh are mainly driven by the agency operating at the local, micro-level processes to serve the educational purposes. The agency of teachers tends to favor EMI for lecture delivery. The practical needs of university graduates are more English skills-oriented alongside content knowledge. Of the four different possible actors (e.g., *people with power, people with expertise, people with influence, and people with interest*) (as identified by Shouhui and Baldauf, 2012), the last one seems to be more concerned with the EMI issues at the grassroots level in Bangladesh. The EMI issues in Bangladesh rather seem to subscribe to the constructionist theory of structure and agency. Giddens (1984) considered it to be mutually constitutive, characterizing a dynamic relationship in which structure affects the exercise of agency, which again affects the form of structure, as agentive action can reform structure in new ways (cited in Liddicoat & Taylor-Leech, 2020). Here the agentive choices to favor the EMI issues exert some influence on the structural patterns of agentive actions. These *de facto* ideas and unofficial assumptions about EMI are very significant in Bangladesh since they can influence the policy-making outcomes, the official, top-down decisions about language. As there is an absence of official educational language policies in Bangladesh, on one hand, local teachers, students and other “social agents tend to align their actions with dominant discourses, which means that they try to gain power and legitimacy through normalizing and embracing dominant ideologies and the structures that support them” (Ball, 2006). But a growing number of educated elites realize that English is the inevitability for them. Therefore, they tend to favor the neoliberal ideologies to recognize the status of English in Bangladesh even though it is not resolving the ongoing ideological, and socio-cultural conflicts between Bangla and English.

Conclusion:

Generally, it is very difficult to predict the relationships between EMI related factors and learners’ development of proficiency, job placement, and so on, yet anyone can expect that when there are some clearly stated policy guidelines, learners tend to be more focused on achieving the learning objectives. It is also difficult to say when or whether there could be any declared English education policy in Bangladesh, but it is taken for granted that English will continue getting momentum in Bangladesh.

This paper helps us understand the influence of various factors related to EMI issues in Bangladesh. It is also observed that individuals (people with interest) with agentive roles favor the EMI for tertiary education in Bangladesh. However, finally, we claim that language policies, especially English in education policies are always in flux, and further research would shed new insights. Future researchers are highly encouraged to delve deeper into the global market dynamics of English, the English language needs of the learners, socio-economic issues impeding or accelerating the attainment of English proficiency, the cost-benefit variables of learning English and so forth in the context of Bangladesh.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declares no conflict of interest.

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