

Marginalization of Native Language: An Effect of English Language Globalization in Bangladesh

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Introduction

Globalization of the world economy with its increasing multinational companies mostly mouthed by English Language (EL) permeates new territories as well as Native languages and cultures across the globe, particularly in the developing countries- the focal point in this study is Bangladesh. Native Language (NL) and culture in the country remain faded and suppressed in the colourful injection of EL as the vehicle of prospective moneyed life that gestures the development of individual and social treasury. Students in the learning environments eye on the safe and solvent future and woo EL which is not their mother tongue. The endeavour of embracing EL gradually leads them far away from NL and culture in Bangladesh. This creates the feelings and figurations that affect social perceptions of grievance and group conflicts (Alexander, 2012). Thus, self-interest afflicts collective identity and social sufferings in terms of NL and culture where a symptom of marginalization of Bangla language (BL) and Bangalee culture is evident with the gradual intervention of English Language Globalization (ELG) along with much-talked economic globalization. This vacillating superdiversity in language use culminates profound effects on speaker subjectivity in Bangladesh. Sociolinguistic scholarship with the concept of superdiversity in recent years undergoes the linguistic impacts of stimulated globalization in late capitalism (Hall, 2014). This research enquires people's perception of BL and EL during ELG in postcolonial era in Bangladesh.

The significance of EL was recognized by the 1972 Bangladesh constitution for "historical reasons" (Hamid, 2011). Thus, English got a break-through to dominate higher education caused by a strong perception that textbooks were written in English that could not be translated into Bangla within a short period of time (Choudhury, 2001). This English promotion in education demoted the blood-blathed Bangla. In addition, the adoption of English course along with a Bangla course for the first-year-undergraduate students by the most universities balanced the spirit of Bangla during pre-independence and post-independence period. The equilibrated adoption of the two languages opened the pathway for linguistic recolonization by EL. Although English is not required for internal or interethnic communication, the functional and instrumental importance of English is realized by the nation, mostly middle and upper classes whose eyes are on employment, material achievement and social mobility (Hamid, 2011). Whereas, Bangla has been put aside for rhetorical demagogy only by stroking worry in the monolingual character of the nation. But a little research was done on people's marginalizational attitude to Bangla and its culture affected by the comparative supremacy of English.

British Council in Bangladesh has been running a good number of programmes by involving EL learning and teaching agents and corporate business personnel to disseminate the importance of English as the language of business in global economy. They have been using catchy and tonus slogans such as “Why English Matters?” (“British Council,” 2017), “Learn English to Change Life,” a slogan of “Search English” group on Facebook (Ovi, 2018) to convoke native Bangla speaker to submerge them in EL for the financial betterment in life.

Some linguists and researchers criticize the increasing use of EL (Phillipson, 1992), some others deprecate its declining standards because English is used by non-native speakers. Some examples of EL dominance: everyone speaks English because everyone else does; internet connects the world in a single network of which English is the only communicative vehicle; and newspapers reports in 2012 show that nomenclature of new plants replace Latin by English. And as a vehicle of power, prestige, hegemony and global capitalism, EL expansion threatens to obliterate global linguistic diversity (Anam, 2018). In Bangladesh a new trend of using Bangla is observed- Bangla words are pronounced in a western accent; a good number of English words are used in daily Bangla conversation; and Bangla words are composed in English alphabet on almost all activated social media (Mostafa & Jamila, 2012). This mechanical mixture of two languages in oral interaction and on social media is termed as ‘Banglish’ {Ban(gla)+(Eng)lish}, a new linguistic phenomena in which native Bangla is under serious threat.

Methodology

The research had been adopted through the critical review of the published literature and qualitative content analysis. Information had been collected from interviews given by prominent intellectuals, prominent linguists and researchers. Newspaper reports, newspaper interviews, recent researches, and books were also consulted to portray the situation of Bangla language and its culture in the midst of global economic phenomena. Reference to historical background of Bangla language and its role in the formation of a new country, Bangladesh gave an impetus to research. Data and information have been circumstantially scrutinized to pick up the ELG effects on Bangla language and its culture. Threats to the native tongue has also been analyzed while any potential endangerment was analyzed.

Results

This study examined the attitudinal perception of marginalizing native Bangla language with the ELG stings. The study also explored the use of EL at tertiary level education where constitutional legacy had been quibbled. People are learning EL for power, prestige, employability and solvency in Bangladesh. Hybridization of BL associated with an increasingly influential globalized middle class in developing Bangladesh; valorization of EL by increasing solvency-seeking local people and globalization-injectors; and tendency to prioritize EL over historical Bangla language engender a linguistic shift rooted in neoliberalism. From the comparison between public perception of English and its global phenomena and public perception of Bangla, the research study showed that the spread of EL in the name of globalization with its sugar-coated commodification is marginalizing Bangla and its culture and threatens to gradually erase the beauty of native tongue as well as global linguistic diversity in general.

Discussion

During the decolonization, Asian countries like Indonesia (Bahasa Malay), Philippines (Tagalog), Malaysia (Bahasa Malay) suffered from language conflicts in determining their national/state language (Imam, 2005). The practice of Bangla language in the native context is now panicked and affected by code-mixing where English, and other foreign languages are used with NL (Alam, 2012). In the USA, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) language policy set minority languages and its speakers aside while emphasizing EL in educational institutions (Menken, 2008). Any mixture in language is a threat for the standardization of a language and the extravagant global spread of EL causes serious issues on native BL in Bangladesh, as Tollefson (2000) justified alarming condition, “at a time when English is widely seen as a key to the economic success of nations and the economic well-being of individuals, the spread of English also contributes to significant social, political, and economic inequalities.” The decay is so gradual that instant symptoms are hardly recognizable. But these gradual changes ultimately go for the obliteration of a language. In this case, the marketability of the influential language survives it causing a derailment of the less influential one. In a linguistic assessment after the World War II, on 6 September 1943, former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill (www.winstonchurchill.org/learn/speeches-of-winston-churchill/118-the-price-of-greatness) said, the empires of the future are the empires of the mind. The British Cabinet reported in 1956, “English could be a world language,” “a universal language in those countries in which it is not already the native or primary tongue” (Phillipson, 1992). On the other hand, whenever the question of language comes to the front, a series of other problems also come to the fore. Ives (2004) further adds that the economic development process and products during 20th century threats the world of ideas, words and language; and political and technological changes also cause “linguistic turns.” Earlier researchers have highlighted the use of code-mixing, code-switching between Bangla and English, and the use of foreign languages with native Bangla. They have not focused the marginalization of native Bangla language and culture. This paper has concentrated on marginalization of Bangla, the giving-up tendency of Bangla by the native users.

The congruity of English cannot be evasive in the third world country like Bangladesh where economic development is the foremost priority. Public perception for English proficiency is soaring high, and parents are willing to spend for the improvement of their children’s English. The nation follows the direction to reach English-proficiency destination by ignoring native tongue, Bangla. Although, Hindi language (HL) with sky-culture (SC) caused by satellite facility and neighbouring influence (NI) over BL is increasingly mouthed by the native Bangla speakers (NBS), it is EL patronized by the Bangalee community including the government in Bangladesh. In the circumstance, sociolinguistic phenomena such as code-switching, code-mixing, diglossia, bilinguality, and language shift, language threat are evident. Learners, oftentimes, failed to master any of the languages during this transitional period. And a fight between EL and NL gets focused. Our study investigated the downgrading of Bangla language under gigantic EL commodification. This linguistic globalization promotes congeniality and marketability of English for a prospective future with job-hope that has moulded public perception for learning English. Earlier literature has been minutely searched finding the answer of why people are learning EL. People from around 175 million in Bangladesh have been competing for better survival, and they invest, whatever they have, to hunt a job where EL is the most powerful hub. The government also creates a comfortable space for English learning to address competitive job-market. They introduced Communicative English Teaching (CLT) approach conflicting Bangla use. Students also thrive for more marketable EL.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has given a brief glimpse into the processes that English is currently undergoing in the hands of ambitious new speakers in Bangladesh. On the one hand, they can hardly learn the standard EL, and what they learn is a nativized English variety, on the other hand, they are moving beyond the use Bangla that blurs their future. Parents whatever they have are willing to sacrifice for their children's English proficiency. The new generation is kept away from the effortful Bangla learning in institutions. Thus, Bangla has gradually been marginalized. This study encourages further research on eventual cultural impact and identity crisis in Bangladesh.

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