Supremacy of English Language Proficiency: Identity Transmission and Transgression among Bangladeshi Graduates

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ABSTRACT

The study focuses on the language use of Bangladeshi graduates and how they deal with the local Bengali language with English as an international language. The study investigates whether the perception of ELP promotes identity transmission or transgression. The study is conducted with a mixed-method approach using a triangulation research design with a convergence model. Questionnaire data were collected from 370 respondents consisting of three groups of graduates according to educational qualifications, income level, and living places. The findings indicate that ELP may be disadvantageous to the local culture and results in the use of mixed languages. The results suggest that ELP accelerates a form of language and cultural transgression that reshapes personality and erodes the traditional local culture and heritage language identity among Bangladeshi graduates.

Keywords: Bangladeshi graduates; language transmission; cultural transmission; English language supremacy
Introduction

English language proficiency (ELP) is essential for Bangladeshi graduates to participate and accommodate themselves in international business, the global education system, the internet, and social media (Sultana, 2019). Moreover, due to the expectations of the job market that subscribe to a global orientation, ELP becomes a primary requirement. Many graduates ascribe to the popular ELP as expected in education, business, globalization, and job security. Consequently, these graduates face an imbalance between job applicants and job vacancies, thus, the high competition in the job markets becomes a major problem they encounter in the real-world (Zainuddin et al., 2019). At the same time, the number of graduates in Bangladesh increases swiftly because of the government's enormous higher education facilities. According to the 2016 annual report, the University Grant Commission (UGC) of Bangladesh, 41 public and 103 private universities are in operation around the country presently. Most of these institutions of higher education are in Dhaka's capital city (Roy et al., 2019).

Many studies funded by the British Council, and some other investigations, that embraced a post-colonial perception, however, have made claims against the benefits of English for the university graduates (Bedi, 2019). The language setting of post-colonial Bangladesh has been influenced by the colonial language legacy (Alam, 2010). The people of this continent have been accustomed to English language given the colonial history of more than 200 years (Pennycook & Candlin, 2017).

In the post-colonial era, English has become an essential second language (Rahman & Singh, 2020). Due to the demand of globalisation, Bangladesh has become a part of the neoliberal economy (Anwaruddin, 2013). English is used in higher education and international business (Rahman & Lah, 2019; Imam, 2005). As Bangladesh is a developing country, it is effectively engaged in the neoliberal economy in the name of globalisation (Muhammad, 2015). For instance, Sekhar (2012) asserts that English is a colonial language that encourages a neoliberal governmental agenda, and the colonial language would drive economic benefits. Some studies have regarded English as a “killer language”, arguing that the colonial language has the potential to wipe out other less vital languages (Crystal, 2000; Nettle & Romaine, 2000; Simons, 2019). Moreover, the mother tongues are losing their purity due to the overuse of the English, not least morphological blending has severely affected the lexical compositions of local languages.

The Bengali culture is affected due to English language practice at home, especially when pure Bengali culture is blended with western culture (Rahman et al., 2019). The educated and elite social groups do not use their mother tongue at home because they perceive their westernised lifestyle as superior to that of the locals. They use English as a medium of communication at home and send their children to the English-medium institutions (Islam & Shukran, 2018; Rahman & Singh, 2020; Sultana, 2018;). Furthermore, English-medium schools are growing in Bangladesh as the rich guardians presume that proficiency in English brings good career prospects.
With the flourishing of English, the less important native languages are at the risk of disappearing permanently. The speakers of these local languages are dismayed by the persistent acceptance of the colonial language. English is used as the monopolistic language in the international trade (Ahmad et al., 2018). The colonial language upholds its supremacy further at the international level in the areas of technology, internet, computers, medicine, NGOs, international institutes, such as the United Nations (UN), North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), International Olympic Committee (IOC), Federation International Football Association (FIFA), World Health Organisation (WHO), British Council (BC) as well as International Development Program (IDP) of the education industry (Al-Kadi & Ahmed, 2018; Rao, 2019). In Bangladesh, the supremacy of English originating in the colonial era continues through the adoption of English-medium education, judiciary, international business, and the practice of western culture in the local settings (Daw, 2021; Mastoi et al., 2018). As a result, this English supremacy enhances discrimination among families, friends, and colleagues at the workplace (Rahman & Singh, 2019). Against the above background, this study addresses the extent in which English triggers identity transmission and transgression in language and culture among Bangladeshi graduates.

**Literature Review**

Proficient speakers of English are accorded respect. English language skills are essential to secure better jobs in the present Bangladeshi society (Erling et al., 2012). Furthermore, ELP may attain career development, and a better life comparatively. ELP is perceived by many as a necessary tool to remove hunger, poverty, indignity, and illiteracy for Bangladesh (Hamid & Baldauf, 2011). ELP among the citizens of Bangladesh may pave the way to the nation’s ambitious goal towards a global economy (Hamid & Baldauf, 2011).

In Bangladesh, English education has developed from the status of a foreign language to that of a second language (Mahbub-ul-Alam & Khan, 2014). Multilingual and multicultural-intelligent people, especially the youths would be empowered in many ways. For example, the young Nigerian generation has taken the ELP opportunity that helped them to secure jobs of which English communication is important, thus, overcoming poverty and domination.

While English offers international communicability, it retains its roots in British imperialism. Endorsement of English is akin to modern British and American imperialism in a different dimension. Currently, English is defined as a universal language although the language is considered as an imperialistic modern language of the contemporary world (Sekhar, 2012). As Phillipson (1992) puts it, “The dominance of English (is) asserted and maintained by the establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages” (p. 47). Consequently, the dominance of English is a strong indication of linguistic colonialism.

In turn, linguistic colonialism becomes the issue of economic, political, and cultural domination. English is a dominating language in business, diplomacy,
computerisation, the internet, and many more. In this regard, about 18% of the world's total population currently speak English (Bailey et al., 1986) with the American variety of English language becoming ever popular in Southeast Asia. Moreover, English-dominated globalisation increases pride, egotism, and zealoussness in non-western countries (Rahman, 2014). Honisz (2005) uses different metaphors to explain language loss, for example, death as the biological metaphor, and criminal metaphor for explaining that the murder of Irish languages. According to Crystal (2000), some words in the world cannot be inherited by the next generation and have the risk of disappearing permanently. On the other hand, the pessimistic yet realistic researchers estimate that we may lose five to 10% of the world languages around 2100. Correspondingly, Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) cautions against the linguistic genocide as a form of language change that occurs within the context of mandatory mixing. Nevertheless, this happens due to the nations’ desire of establishing the economic competitiveness by repositioning the dominance of their languages in schools, administration, and the media at the expense of local languages (Block & Moncada, 2019).

According to the sociolinguistic views in Bangladesh, people of various social classes would attempt to secure jobs according to their various societal achievements, especially the knowledge empowerment from commanding English. Similarly, according to Bourdieu's theory in the 1970s, people use English as cultural capital that serves as a powerful tool for personal development and advancement. English fluency constitutes a great step forward in many individuals’ struggles for self-sufficiency, and success as human capital development (Ali & Hamid, 2020). In these circumstances, the English language is considered as a commodity because English language teaching and learning is a huge business worldwide (Maria et al., 2018). The British council, IDP, and many local English coaching centers continue to fulfill the demand of English medium education (Pearson, 2020).

Language skills are valuable technical skills, not least because many Bangladeshis with better jobs and higher incomes predominantly speak English. ELP has become a valuable commodity (Khan & Sultana, 2020), because of its utilitarian value as an essential skill of modern life, hence a form of cultural capital. The results of many studies provide empirical support for Bourdieu's cultural reproduction model, which shows that students may benefit from a wide range of cultural capital. The differentiated market outcomes reported that English language policies are underpinning the linguistic communism (Bourdieu, 1991) double as the principles that inform on social justice and equality. English is a language of hope probably for those with the right amount of the necessary capital. Bourdieu's (1991) concept of linguistic capital suggests that linguistic resources are differentially distributed amongst the members of society, and that the possession of these resources gives access to improved social opportunities, which is ultimately transferred into economic capital.
Methodology

The study is conducted with a mixed-method approach using a triangulation research design. The purpose of the triangulation designed with a convergence model ensures that the quantitative and qualitative data receive equal emphasis. The design converges the results during the interpretation, thus, drawing valid, and well-substantiated conclusions for the research problem (Creswell et al., 2003). The Bangladeshi graduates are the samples in the study, with their demographic profiles outlined in Table 1. The research locations include the village, semi-urban, urban, sophisticated urban surrounding the capital city of Bangladesh. These selected locales provide a good sample of graduates from different social contexts based on education qualification, income, and living place along with easy accessibility of the graduates as respondents. The snowball sampling technique is the organizing operator for the interview, while the random sampling technique is used to conduct the study. Table 1 contains the demographic profile of 370 respondents consisting of three groups of graduates according to educational qualifications, income level, and living places.

Table 1
Demographic Profile of the Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Number (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education Level</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>239 (64.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master</td>
<td>123 (33.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>8 (2.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Income</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below BDT 10000</td>
<td>144 (38.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BDT 10001-20000</td>
<td>106 (28.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BDT20001-50000</td>
<td>89 (24.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BDT 50001-100000</td>
<td>18 (4.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BDT Above 100000</td>
<td>13 (3.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Living place</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village area</td>
<td>76 (20.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-urban city</td>
<td>64 (17.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban city</td>
<td>204 (55.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban sophisticated city</td>
<td>26 (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>370 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* BDT is the acronym for the Bangladeshi currency; *N* = 370

The study uses two instruments. Firstly, the questionnaires are in four sections: demography (12 items), local language threat (5 items), local language pollution (5 items), and cultural erosion (5 items). Secondly, the open-ended individual interview questions are in three areas, namely, regional language threat, pollution, and cultural
decline. Furthermore, the data are collected in face-to-face seating with the researcher asking the questions and inputting the answer into the google form in real-time to ensure the respondents’ full concentration, while the qualitative interview data have been recorded over the phone due to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. For the questionnaire data, mean scores were calculated. For interview data, thematic analysis was conducted.

Result and Discussion

Our results focus on two significant linguistic and cultural identity transmission issues through ELP among Bangladeshi graduates.

Linguistic Identity Transmission through ELP
The linguistic identity transmission through ELP findings is divided into two sections, namely, the local language threat, and language pollution. Mean scores of 1-2 indicates a low level threat, 2-3 equates to a moderate level threat while 3-4 represents a high level threat.

Table 2
Mean and Standard Deviation Scores for the Five Elements of Threat to the Local Language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Language Threat Measures</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English as family language</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>.926</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Losing standard form of Bangla</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>.867</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rapid growth of English students</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>.862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private sectors emphasize English</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>.842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English language-based technology</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>.863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>.654</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 illustrates the five individual scores of the elements, which are English as family language (M=2.90; SD=.926); losing standard form of Bangla (M=2.92; SD=.867), rapid increase of English medium students (M=2.83; SD=.862); private sector emphasis on English (M=3.10; SD=.842), and English-based technology (M=3.05; SD=.863). The result indicates that the highest mean score is in the private sectors emphasising the English language while the second highest is English-based technology, and these are serious local language threats. The other three elements present moderately high threats.

Figure 1 presents the overall mean and standard deviation scores of local language threat elements compared with the individual elements.
**Figure 1**
*Mean and Standard Deviation Scores on the Overall Elements' Threat to the Local Language*

![Histogram showing mean and standard deviation scores for the threat to the local language.](image)

Figure 1 illustrates moderately high mean score (M=2.96) and standard deviation (SD=.654) for the threat to the local language. This leads to the formation of a new linguistic identity. Interestingly, the qualitative results also indicate the local language of Bangladesh is under threat by the supremacy of ELP in family, friends, educational institutes, workplaces, and real-life contexts. As per the respondent (O), many families are not interested in using Bangla in their regular conversations.

They always speak English at home to children to become skilled and can speak English well, but they can’t speak and write Bengali properly. They don’t understand when I speak Bengali to the children. When I teach them mathematics, I ask what is *Trivuj* (triangles)? They don’t understand, but they understand if I say *triangle* in English. (Respondent O, Interview, 20 July 2021)

Furthermore, the role of Bengali language in fostering education attainment has deteriorated, especially as an instructional language in teaching and learning of Mathematics and Science. As a result, ELP accelerates the transmission of their linguistic identity. Respondent O claims that the children do not understand, read, nor write Bangla language but are excellent in ELP. Once the respondent tried to explain something in Bengali; yet the children asked him to give the explanation in English, similar to the family practice. Although the parents’ mother tongue is Bengali, they converse in English at home. In this way, the Bengali language is no longer the heritage language of the next generation in the strict sense. The younger generation going through English medium instruction in elementary schools are inevitably changed and reshaped into a new identity of English as their native-like language.
Similarly, Respondent C expressed a passion for Bangla as his native language. He is worried about a critical language loss because his students are not interested in Bengali writing and speaking, as they feel rather ashamed to use Bengali.

We died in 1952 for the Bengali language. Today, our beloved mother tongue is under threat because many people ashamed to speak Bengali today do not practice Bengali, even though they are not interested in identifying as Bengali. My students can’t talk in Bengali, write Bengali correctly, even cannot speak Bengali properly. However, I am happy that our mother tongue is internationally recognized; according to the declaration of UNESCO, 21 Feb is celebrated as International Mother Language Day. (Respondent C, Interview, 8 July 2021)

The respondent is worried about language loss because he loves his mother tongue, and even mentioning the sacrifice of lives for the Bengali language in 1952. His students cannot communicate in Bengali properly, and they feel embarrassed to speak Bengali. Another respondent (J) claimed that the students keep listening to English songs, watching English movies, and improving the ability for English listening in and outside of the classroom, and continue to use of English a real-life context.

We are habituated with the current trend of social media, so I can easily access to watch and listen to English songs and movies to improve my ELP, even I am having the English-speaking environment in and out of classrooms. (Respondent J, Interview, 15 July 2021)

In this way, the route of local identity as Bengali trangresses in time as English enhances an emerging identity transmission among the Bangladeshi graduates. The graduates hold English as a prestigious language, resulting in the local language facing the challenges of a language shift.

Table 3 shows a moderate level the individual elements of local language pollution: polluting natural beauty (M=2.98, SD=.879); polluting standard form (M=3.10, SD=.932); FM Radio Jockey-accelerated pollution (M=2.99, SD=.900); cannot produce real meaning to the listener (M=2.91, SD=.961); and English medium students-accelerated pollution (M=2.93, SD=.956).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Language Pollution Measures</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Polluting natural beauty</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>.879</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polluting standard form</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>.932</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FM Radio Jockey-accelerated pollution</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.99</td>
<td>.900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It cannot make meaning to listener</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>.961</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Currently, there are 22 private FM radio stations operating in Bangladesh servicing a significant number of young and adult listeners. The FM Radio jockeys accelerate the trend of mixing and polluting Bengali, resulting in the local language losing its standard form significantly (Akter, 2019). The other three elements are moderately high, suggesting that the language pollution happens among Bangladeshi graduates. Figure 2 presents slightly high mean on the overall polluting elements impacting the local language (M= 2.98, SD=.684). The mixture of other languages with mother tongue in speech is a serious problem in many countries around the world. In this study on Bengali, too much mixture is considered as pollution of the native language. The finding indicates that Bangladeshi graduates are blending, hence polluting the local language. The measure on pollution of the local language indicates that a new linguistic identity is being formed through pollution, and variation in accent.

**Figure 2**
*Mean and Standard Deviation Scores for the Overall Elements of the Local Language Pollution*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English students - accelerated pollution</th>
<th>370</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>2.93</th>
<th>.956</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>370</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>.684</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The qualitative results indicate that the local language of Bangladesh is polluted by the supremacy of ELP in different contexts.

I get annoyed listening to some people; they speak neither Bengali nor English, and sometimes they express the accent that is neither Bengali nor English. The sounds are very strange. Occasionally, I see presenters on television using language in a distorted way that seems very strange. Especially the presenters of FM radio stations speak in a hard way to understand in Bengali or English,
and ordinary people do not understand. Using many English words while speaking Bengali is most in the elite class, and English medium instructed graduates. (Respondent L, Interview, 18 July 2021)

The level of practice and use of Bengali has obviously appalled Respondent F. The new identity favouring high ELP has resulted in linguistic pollution developing in tandem with the accelerated increase of English medium institutions, English use at workplaces, and among friends as well as families in real-life contexts. The FM Radio jockeys, television presenters, celebrities, the elite class, and students educated in English medium contribute to the acceleration of language pollution by mixing the Bengali vocabulary with the English counterparts. They have mixed the languages to the extent that ordinary speakers of Bengali cannot comprehend the real meaning of the mixed speech. In the Bangladesh context, too much mixture is considered a pollution to the native language. Respondent F informs that English use among the Bangladeshi has resulted in an expansive formation of a new linguistic identity, and the local language being polluted.

As I am giving own example, I use lots of English words in Bengali speaking at home among other family members. I have two nephews, they are the student of English medium schools so they always speak English at home and holds new linguistic identity, sometimes they try to speak Bengali but cannot consequences they mix the English and Bengali which is harsh to listen. Not only the nephews but several friends of them do the same mixture of the languages in speaking. (Respondent F, Interview, 11 July 2021)

The research literature indicates that there is a growing supremacy for English-speaking identity around the globe. In Bangladesh, people from the affluent classes try to identify themselves as different from others due to the community demand (Imam, 2005). Their speech is a mix of English and Bengali, which is the preferred speech style. The affluent classes have created an adulterated language environment to enhance the emerging lifestyle that results in speech pollution. The modern era of Bengali as a heritage language is facing a grave challenge as many families are giving way to the dominant language that is fast becoming a necessary aspect of real-life (Ong, 2021). The parents and graduates of Bangladesh gravitate to a modern lifestyle that reflects western attitudes in everyday living. In aligning with the trend of globalisation, and a passion for English medium education often considered as the tool of success, English is a treasured commodity in education, and business. Indeed, the accompanying consequences of globalisation, and westernisation include local language loss, pollution, shift, and maintenance (Imam, 2005).
Cultural Identity Transmission by ELP

The analysis of cultural identity transmission comes in three categories of ELP.

Table 4
Mean and Standard Deviation Scores for the Five Elements of Cultural Erosion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Erosion Measures</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ELP influence English culture</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>.914</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English songs-, movies-influenced lifestyle</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>.907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication attitudes influenced by ELP</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>.854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Losing the purity of the local culture.</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>.906</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebrate 31st night aggressively</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>1.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>370</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>.621</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among the five cultural erosion elements, losing the purity of the local culture (M=2.98, SD=.906) has the highest mean score. This is followed by English songs and movies influencing lifestyle (M=2.91, SD=.907). The other three cultural erosion elements have moderate influence: ELP influencing English culture (M=2.87, SD=.914); communication attitudes influenced by ELP (M=2.87, SD=.854); and celebrating 31st night aggressively (M=2.53, SD=1.012). SD=1.012 is the distribution with a coefficient of high variance, meaning that the item is not significant. Based on the overall mean and standard deviation scores of cultural elements (M=2.83; SD=0.621) shown in Figure 3, there is a slightly higher negative impact on the general cultural issues due to a zealous passion for ELP among the Bangladeshi graduates.

Figure 3
Mean and Standard Deviation Bar Graph on the Overall Cultural Erosion
The interview results indicate that ELP and some other issues accelerate cultural imbalance among the Bangladeshi graduates, as explained by Respondent B.

ELP has a devastating effect on our culture. Two of my cousin brothers were admitted into English medium schools, while I was admitted to a Bengali medium. I noticed that they began to change their movements and behavior; the way they ate, talked, and dressed; everything became different from me. This change does not happen overnight; change spreads slowly over time. Now they are settled down in Australia and America. They are different from us. I mean, it is a kind of cancer. Cancer starts inside the body but then spreads slowly throughout the body. In the same way, British and American culture is spreading in our culture, which is a threat to our culture. (Respondent B, Interview, 4 July 2021)

Respondent B has used a strong analogy, “I mean, it is cancer which propagated into the whole body slowly”, which indicates the effect of ELP on our culture gradually. The English medium teaching and learning environment encouraged his cousins to embrace the English language and culture among themselves intensely, resulting in changes of behaviour, eating habits, dress code, overall lifestyle, and entertainment. Respondent B felt that English medium instruction, and its practice in real-life context transfer the English cultural identity and replaces the Bengali persona. For example, they embrace English songs and movies, and disregard the local songs and movies.

I have completed graduation from a reputed private university, my O-Level and A-Level also in renowned English medium school. From my childhood, I used to apply Western culture in my personal life, honestly speaking, I am turning away from the culture in our country. Firstly, I will say that I don’t watch our Bangladeshi movies or songs even though I don't watch Indian movies. I listen to English songs from the West, watch English movies, and hold them in; I am used to understanding the language very well. (Respondent N, Interview, 18 July 2021)

Furthermore, foreign festivals like countdown, Valentine’s Day are celebrated by the young generation with much excitement. Conversely, the local festivals have been ignored. Respondent J enjoyed the celebrations.

I enjoy celebrating Countdown, Night, Valentine’s Day, which feels like a traditional culture to me. On this night, I try to organize and attend various events, including different DJ parties like going out late at night, going to other clubs, having drinks, which I feel is my culture. (Respondent J, Interview 15 July 2021)
The westernisation of Respondent N is not limited to native customs. The ordinary Bengali boys’ and girls’ dressing styles reflect the Bengali tradition. On the contrary, the boys and girls studying in English medium wear Western costumes. Consequently, aspects of Bengali culture such as manners, customs, eating habits, and lifestyle are at risk of displacement from the English counterparts.

I am used to wearing a foreign brand dress like western singers and pop stars, but sometimes I must wear a formal local dress. I have some friends; we are focus on stylish clothing. I am habituated because most often I must visit abroad to meet my relatives. I prefer to adjust with my cousins overseas. (Respondent N, Interview, 18 July 2021)

Respondent N has adapted to the culture abroad. The current Bengali world sees cultural identity transmission as a buzz word due to globalisation, and technological advancement, especially the swift cultural mixing that occurs in the communities (Islam et al., 2019). This is especially the case for the third world countries that may be easily influenced by the western, or English culture (Mackinnon et al., 2017). It has been observed that the economically poor and developing countries are fond of mimicking the (speech) cultures of the developed countries (Houda, 2019). Learning the dominating language, thus, enhances the process of cultural transgression. Learning English and imitating the western language culture are the cases in point (Gao, 2021).

The supremacy of English learning enhances cultural transmission around the world (Mpofu & Salawu, 2018). This scenario is not different in the Bangladeshi context. Due to the advancement of the ELP, globalization, technology, people are transgressing faster towards western culture via education, daily life attitude, styles of communication, appreciation of songs, movies, and cultural behavior (Shahen et al., 2019). ELP enhances personal development especially in seeking jobs and meeting the demands of the 21st century towards globalisation (Erling, 2017). In the process of meeting the demands of the present world, many people are at risk of losing their mother languages and local cultures (Shahen et al., 2019). Bangladeshi people are progressing rapidly with the advancement in education, technology, and social media. The elite class Bengali seems to change their daily life attitude, communication style, and enjoyment in songs and movies (Imam, 2005; Sultana, 2018). This privileged group pays less attention to their original cultural tradition in daily life as they transgress towards a rootless culture (Nahar, 2021).

Nowadays, many young graduates celebrate the countdown instead of the Bangla New Year, although the Bangla New Year celebration is prevalent among the middle and lower classes. Due to the thriving English language education in Bangladesh, the younger generation emphasises English pop cultures. Consequently, the classic Bangla songs, and cinemas are under the threat of debasement. The cultural transgression is endangering the local culture due to an overuse of the English in daily life. Several nations have almost lost their identity and traditional culture due to the supremacy of English use; Singapore, the Philippines, and India are among some of them
(Teng & Lixun, 2020). In racing to learn English and practice it in everyday communication, the speakers’ collective cultural identity are transgressing into a foreign-like identity.

Conclusion

From the viewpoint of sociolinguistics, ELP accelerates a form of language and cultural transgression that reshapes personality, and erodes the traditional local culture, and heritage language identity among the Bangladeshi graduates. Whilst the nation embracing ELP might survive and succeed economically with the current trend of globalisation their local languages and cultures, on the other hand, are undergoing debasing pressure from ELP. This study contributes by creating awareness among the graduates, academicians, and concerned authorities regarding the threat on the local languages and cultures generated by the supremacy of ELP, and the preference for other dominating languages as the medium of interaction. The limitations of the study are the exclusion of intergenerational language change, and Islamic English-based graduates, and these areas should be investigated.

References


