

L1 Attrition: A Study on Bilingual Students of EMI-Based Private Universities in a Bangladeshi Urban Area



Nafisa Zaman

221013031

Department of English and Humanities

28-08-2025 (Summer 2025)

**L1 Attrition: A Study on Bilingual Students of EMI-Based Private Universities in a
Bangladeshi Urban Area**

A Thesis Submitted to
The Department of English and Humanities
University of Liberal Arts, Bangladesh

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
BA in English

Nafisa Zaman

221013031

Thesis Supervisor: Al Mahmud Rumman

28-08-2025 (Summer 2025)

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

I hereby declare that this thesis is the student's work and effort. All sources of information incorporated here have been duly acknowledged. This thesis has been submitted with my approval.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Al Mahmud Rumman', with a horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

(Al Mahmud Rumman)

Senior Lecturer

Department of English and Humanities

DECLARATION

This thesis is a presentation of my original research work. Wherever contributions of others are involved, every effort is made to indicate this clearly, with due reference to the literature and acknowledgement of collaborative research and discussions.



(Nafisa Zaman)

221013031

Department of English and Humanities

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my family for their endless love, care, and support. Without them, I could never have come this far. To my mom, who has always taken care of me and believed in me even when things were tough, and to my dad, whose encouragement and pride gave me strength every single day, this work is for you. And to my siblings, thank you for your support; hence, I am dedicating this work to you.

I am also dedicating this thesis to the people of Gaza, for their courage and resilience in the face of hardship. May this small effort carry a message of hope, solidarity, and support for you all.

Acknowledgements

Alhamdulillah. All praise is due to Allah, whose mercy and guidance carried me through the challenges and blessings of this journey. Without His will, none of this would have been possible.

My deepest and most heartfelt gratitude goes to my parents. To my Ammu, whose strength amazes me every day. Even while struggling with her own illness, she never let me carry the weight of responsibilities at home, shielding me so I could focus on my work. She took care of me during my own sickness and taught me the true meaning of unconditional love and sacrifice. To my Abbu, who has been my most significant source of steady strength, your faith in me often worked better than coffee; it kept me going through sleepless nights and extended deadlines. You were not only a supporter but also my biggest motivator, reminding me to look beyond stress and believe in my potential. It felt really nice seeing you be proud of me. This thesis, in so many ways, carries his encouragement within its pages. Another source of inspiration is Dr. Fariha Zaman, Apumoni, whose lifestyle has always motivated me to keep studying and striving for better. And to Talha, for being there with his support (though he absolutely refuses to show it on the outside), thank you for reminding me that silent strength also matters.

I would also like to express my sincerest thanks to my supervisor, Al Mahmud Rumman. From the very beginning, his constant support, patience, and mentorship have been invaluable. He never once discouraged me; instead, he created opportunities, listened, guided, and believed in me even at times when I doubted myself. His care and encouragement made every ambition feel possible, and I will always remain indebted to him.

I am grateful to Ms. Nusrat Tajkia Ma'am, who gave me endless support and solutions to the problems I faced, and with whom it was always easy to share everything. Dr. Md Mahadhi Hasan, who helped me learn many new things beyond the course requirements and always took the time to listen, deserves my special thanks. I am also thankful to Golam Kader Zilany Sir and Anika Tahsin Ma'am for their guidance, advice, and support throughout this journey.

This journey would not have been complete without my friends, who stood beside me in every way imaginable. To Afsana, thank you for being my anchor throughout these four years, for standing by me no matter what, and for reminding me of my strength even through our ups and downs. To Lopa, your gentle words and ability to understand me without explanation were a constant comfort. To Aapurba, thank you for always cheering me up, for the patience, kindness, and endless little ways of cheering me on. To Tanzim, thank you for always being "present"... at least in body, if not always in mind (we know where your thoughts were wandering!). And to Raisa, your subtle support never went unnoticed. I am truly blessed to have you all.

I am equally thankful to my colleagues at the DEH office, who made one of the most hectic semesters of my life so much easier to bear. Their kindness and understanding meant the world to me. A special note of gratitude goes to Tokee, who not only helped me with tasks and explained things patiently but also made the office a place where I could breathe and survive during difficult times. I am also truly grateful to Rudaiba Apu, who understood me and my situation so well and helped me accordingly with warmth and kindness.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone, including all the faculty of DEH who encouraged, supported, and believed in me during this journey, the participants who provided me with data, and the scholars whose studies I have included. This work exists because of all of you.

Table of Contents

Abstract	10
Chapter 1: Introduction	11
1.1 Background of the study	12
1.2 Problem Statement of the Study	15
1.3 Research Objectives	17
1.4 Research Questions	17
1.5 Significance of the Study	18
1.6 Limitations of the Study	18
1.7 Definition of Terms	19
Chapter 2: Literature Review	23
2.1 Introduction	23
2.2 Attrition Among Bilingual Students at the Tertiary Level	24
2.3 Factors Triggering Language Attrition	26
2.3.1 Environmental Factors	26
2.3.2 Social Factors	27
2.3.3 Academic Factors	30
2.4 Student Perceptions on L1 Usage and Bangla Proficiency	32
2.5 Research Gap	34
2.6 Conceptual Framework	35
Chapter 3: Methodology	37
3.1 Introduction	37
3.2. Research Approach and Design	37
3.3 Setting and Participants	38
3.4. Instrument and Data Collection Procedures	40
3.4.1 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)	40
3.4.2 Language-Based Tasks	41
3.4.3 Data Documentation and Recording	42
3.4.4 Rationale	42
3.5 Data Analysis	43
3.5.1 Overview of Data Sources and Analysis	44
3.6 Ethical Considerations	45
Chapter 4: Findings & Analysis	46
4.1 RO1: Extent of Bangla (L1) Attrition in Personal and Academic Contexts	46
4.1.1 Personal Language Use	47
4.1.2 Academic Language Use	49

4.1.3 Evidence from the Language-Based Tasks	50
4.1.4 Synthesis	57
4.2 RO2: Factors Influencing Bangla (L1) Attrition	57
4.2.1 Academic and Institutional Factors	58
4.2.2 Family and Social Class Influences	59
4.2.3 Peer Norms and Prestige	60
4.2.4 Media and Entertainment Consumption	61
4.2.5 Combined Effects	61
4.3 RO3: Student Perceptions of Changes in Bangla Proficiency	62
4.3.1 Self-Assessment of Proficiency	62
4.3.2 Emotional Reactions to Attrition	64
4.3.3 Identity Negotiations	64
4.3.4 Perceptions of Necessity and Utility	65
4.3.5 Synthesis	66
Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion	67
5.1 Discussion	67
5.1.1 The Level of Bangla Attrition in Academic and Personal Contexts	67
5.1.2 Factors Influencing the Decline or Maintenance of Bangla Proficiency	68
5.1.3 Students' Self-Perceptions and Attitudes Towards Bangla Proficiency	69
5.2 Recommendations	70
5.3 Conclusion	72
References	75
Appendix	82
FGD Questionnaire	82
Language-Based Task	84

Abstract

The growing dominance of English in Bangladesh's EMI universities has raised concerns about Bangla attrition (L1) among bilingual students. While most studies on Bilingualism often focus on English acquisition or code-switching, less attention has been given to the attrition of Bangla in higher education spaces. This study investigates the extent of Bangla attrition among undergraduate students of the English department of two EMI-based private universities, and how bilingual students experience changes in their academic and personal language use, as well as how these environmental, social, and educational factors influence these shifts, and their self-perception of Bangla proficiency. A qualitative approach was employed, comprising six FGDs and two language-based tasks that included reading, speaking, and writing components. Findings show that while Bangla remains widely used in informal and social interactions, attrition is evident in academic settings, particularly in writing and translation. This shows the need for EMI universities in Bangladesh to design balanced bilingual policies that preserve Bangla's academic functions while maintaining English proficiency.

Keywords: Bangla proficiency, Bilingualism, L1 attrition, Dominant language, English-medium instructions (EMI).

Chapter 1: Introduction

In Bangladesh, English has an undeniable power that is not only a tool for academic success but also a symbol of prestige and social mobility. It is more visible in the EMI (English-Medium Instruction) sector, where most of the time, English fluency is seen as the key to different opportunities, while the national language, Bangla, is seen as an informal language that does not help bring success or opportunities (Hamid et al., 2015; Islam et al., 2024). In Bangladeshi private EMI-based universities, English is used extensively, including in lectures, classroom discussions, exams, textbooks, and institutional policies, which leads many students to gradually reduce their use of Bangla (L1) in both their academic and personal lives (Bolton et al., 2024). This gradual shift brings up a question about language diversity, language identity, and the cognitive consequences of L1 disuse. These bilingual students are culturally embedded in Bangla-speaking communities, while at the same time, they are involved in academic environments where English is the default language and expected medium. This shapes their language use as well as academic confidence and self-perception. Many students encounter difficulties in expressing their complex thoughts in Bangla (L1) and automatically switch to English, particularly in formal contexts such as writing (Islam et al., 2024). Hamid et al. (2015) reported that students also start feeling less emotionally or academically connected with their L1 over time. These suggest that L1 attrition in Bangladesh is not only limited to younger children and migrant communities, as traditionally explored, but also occurs locally within a Bangla-speaking environment.

This study explores the extent to which bilingual undergraduate students at two EMI-based private universities in urban Dhaka are experiencing symptoms of Bangla (L1)

attrition in both academic and personal contexts. They are the same students who regularly rely on English heavily for lectures, assignments, peer discussions, and even social media communication. This raises questions about how this constant exposure affects their Bangla proficiency and fluency. This research examines explicitly the level of Bangla attrition exhibited by students in real-life language use, both in informal and formal settings. It also looks at the factors (environmental, social, and academic) that contribute to its decline. This includes influences such as media consumption, classroom expectations, peer language practices, institutional policies, and students' backgrounds. A central focus of this study is on students' self-perception, specifically how they view changes in their L1, and whether they feel confident in using Bangla in various domains of life. By combining focus group discussion (FGD) and language-based tasks, this study aims to provide a comprehensive view of why and how Bangla is being sidelined in private EMI universities, how over-consumption of English is affecting bilingual adults, and what the long-term implications might be for identity, language equity, and curriculum planning in Bangladesh's higher education sector.

1.1 Background of the study

Without acknowledging English's colonial origins and postcolonial continuities, the status of English in Bangladesh cannot be understood. During British colonial rule, English was institutionalised as a means of control and governance. According to Mousumi & Kusakabe (2021), Macaulay's Minute on Indian Education (1835) proposed creating a class of English-educated natives who would serve as mediators between the local population and colonial rulers. This established the long-standing prestige of English, which became associated with career success, education, modernity, civility, and intelligence. Meanwhile, local languages

like Bangla became marginalised and were dismissed as unsuitable for academic or official use. This helped to create a long-lasting hierarchy that favours English over regional languages. This bias remains to this day. English remains an elite and dominant language in the education and professional sectors, despite the post-independence movement to reinstate Bangla's status, primarily through the Language Movement in 1952 and the Bangla Language Implementation Act of 1987.

In private universities, EMI has been dominating the education system in recent years across urban areas in Bangladesh. This is due to the perception that fluency in English is necessary for success in life and global competitiveness. These institutions have adopted English-only policies in classrooms, study materials, assessments, and communication practices (Hamid et al., 2015; Hasan et al., 2024), which lead to the marginalisation of Bangla, the mother language of most students studying at these institutions. Islam et al. (2024) state that “English is now widely viewed as a necessary skill for academic success, employment, and global relevance” (p. 11). As a result, those who completed their pre-university education in Bangla medium institutions are suddenly required to shift to an ‘English-only’ environment upon entering university. “This transition presents significant linguistic and academic challenges, as students must navigate complex academic content and social interactions in a second language, often with limited prior exposure to academic English” (Islam & Stapa, 2021, p. 21). This growing dominance of English is concerning because it contributes to the gradual erosion of Bangla proficiency, which aligns with global theories of first language (L1) attrition. Schmid (2011) states that attrition occurs when a speaker's L1 is used less frequently and loses functionality in key domains, particularly when it is replaced by a more socially or economically valued L2. This is not just a cognitive shift, but a socially conditioned process shaped by peer

norms, institutional policies, and cultural ideologies (Köpke & Schmid, 2017). Most of the research focuses on L1 attrition among immigrants and children in an L2-dominant country (Van Hell et al., 2017). Still, some evidence found in studies suggests that it can also occur within a ‘home-country context’, specifically in settings where L2 dominates the education system (Akram et al., 2023).

Bangladeshi private universities mostly follow EMI-based education, which hinders the proficiency of L1 (Bangla) in adults (Hasan et al., 2024). The implementation of English led to a campus culture where English serves as both the medium of instruction and the medium of communication, both inside and outside the classroom. Although the purpose of creating this environment is to prepare them for a global workforce and improve their English proficiency, it also leads to a reduced use of L1 and a loss of proficiency in Bangla (L1). It was reported that students often face difficulties in retrieving vocabulary in Bangla while speaking or writing, and they switch to English for clarity or fluency immediately because they feel less confident in using Bangla to express complex ideas in their day-to-day life (Islam et al., 2024). Research indicates that students often struggle to maintain their L1 skills because they experience interference from English, and there are not enough opportunities to use Bangla in academic and social contexts (Sarker et al., 2021). A study by Datta (2012) reveals that Bangla speakers in the U.S. experienced a measurable decline in Bangla vocabulary due to their daily use of English (L2) in every setting, including their homes. So “This suggests that frequency of use, domain of use, and perceived relevance are key predictors of L1 maintenance” (Datta, 2012). In Bangladesh, Bangla is dominant at the societal level, but is ignored in ‘elite’ education, where students face conflicting linguistic signals. Their culture is rooted in Bangla, whereas their institutions and society prioritise English. This contradictory situation creates a unique

environment for “local attrition” to occur, which is the loss of native language proficiency not due to migration, but due to systemic L2 immersion within one’s own country (Schmid & Mehotcheva, 2012).

So, how does this form of L1 attrition play out in real-time among Bangladeshi EMI-based university students, and how does it affect their peer interaction, daily communication, academic performance, and sense of identity, whether they think of this linguistic shift as a limitation, empowerment, a conflict, or a key to success in both academic and professional life, these remain under-researched. “Teachers and students alike have noted that while EMI may offer long-term benefits, it can also undermine students’ academic performance and erode their connection to their linguistic and cultural heritage” (Hasan et al., 2024). While studies were conducted on EMI-based private university students’ language proficiency, language ideology, impacts of English, how English helped in academic and professional achievements, there is a notable gap in research on the L1 attrition among bilingual adults from EMI-based private universities within a native language context, which shows the urgency to focus on an investigation on them, particularly in urban Bangladeshi settings where the dominance of English is most pronounced. Therefore, it is crucial to examine how and to what extent these students experience L1 attrition within their homeland due to the influence of another dominant language (L2), to identify the factors responsible for this phenomenon, and to understand their perceptions of the changes that occur.

1.2 Problem Statement of the Study

Language attrition refers to the gradual loss of linguistic proficiency in a language that was previously acquired, typically the first language, resulting from reduced use and decreased

exposure to the language. It is traditionally investigated in the context of migration. It is thought to occur usually when someone moves to another country or a context where a second language is more dominant than their first language. Nonetheless, recent research on language attrition has shown that L1 attrition can happen in an environment where the native language is present. Still, another language dominates significant domains like education, social media use, professional life, and even personal life (Köpke & Schmid, 2017, p. 639). In such situations, speakers are most likely to favour the language that has higher social status, prestige, value, and global acceptance, which leads to gradual erosion of lexical access, fluency, and structural command in L1 (Schmid & Mehotcheva, 2012). In Bangladesh, private EMI universities primarily rely on English for all aspects, from instruction and class lectures to assessments and communication (Hasan et al., 2024). This is a sudden transition from Bangla to English for those who completed their pre-university education in Bangla-medium institutions. They have to spend most of their time in an environment where English is the sole medium of communication and education. As a result, bilingual students, who could understand and speak both languages, face what Schmid and Yılmaz (2018) define as “domain-specific attrition”, where L1 proficiency declines in formal contexts despite remaining in a Bangla-speaking society. Many students struggle with using Bangla in structured settings, such as academic discussions or writing, and exhibit signs of reduced fluency and lexical gaps (Ma & Vanek, 2024). Yet, mostly local research focuses on English acquisition or code-switching (Sultana, 2012), without exploring the loss of Bangla or its long-term implications.

Identity and emotional connection with the L1 are also affected because of L1 attrition. “Bilinguals may start to see their first language as less useful and unnecessary if peers and institutions support English as the standard language, as a way to academic success” (Schmid &

Karayayla, 2019, pp. 57–58). In Bangladesh’s EMI contexts, English holds a specific value and prestige that often excludes Bangla from academic spaces, creating pressure that may lead to a gradual loss of confidence in Bangla, which in turn affects their emotional connection with their L1 and reshapes their identity. Despite extensive global research on L1 attrition, empirical investigations in EMI universities remain scarce. Very few studies investigated students’ lived experience alongside their actual Bangla use. This study addresses that gap by exploring the extent of Bangla attrition, identifying the contributing factors, and examining students’ perceptions using FGD and language-based tasks.

1.3 Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are,

RO1: To assess the level to which bilingual students at two EMI-based private universities show signs of Bangla attrition in both personal and academic language use.

RO2: To identify and analyse the factors (environmental, social, and academic) contributing to either the decline or maintenance of Bangla proficiency among these students.

RO3: To explore students’ self-perceptions and attitudes towards their Bangla language use and their awareness of any changes in proficiency or fluency.

1.4 Research Questions

RQ1: To what extent do the bilingual students at two EMI-based private universities in urban areas show the symptoms of Bangla attrition in their personal and academic language use?

RQ2: What environmental, social, and academic factors are contributing to nurturing or losing Bangla proficiency among them and why?

RQ3: How do they view the changes in their L1 usage, and what are the perceptions of their own Bangla language proficiency?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This research investigates how bilingual undergraduate students at two EMI-based private universities experience and perceive Bangla (L1) language attrition in an English-medium instruction (EMI) context. By exploring both students' academic and personal language use, the study provides insight into the gradual decline of Bangla proficiency among university students. Alongside documenting the level of L1 attrition, it also examines environmental, social, and academic factors that contribute to or influence students' language behaviour. While EMI is often promoted because of “more benefits” in global competitiveness, very little has been investigated on how it affects L1 use and identity in home-country contexts like Bangladesh. Moreover, incorporating students' perceptions of their Bangla (L1) proficiency in performance-based tasks provides a clearer picture of how language use is transitioning under academic and institutional pressures.

The results can help the university departments better understand the language challenges the bilingual students experience when their L1 is not actively supported in their academic environment. It may also help guide EMI instructors and curriculum planners in designing strategies that contribute to maintaining Bangla use while supporting English proficiency.

1.6 Limitations of the Study

Firstly, this research was conducted at two EMI-based private universities in urban Bangladesh. As a result, results do not fully represent students from any public universities, any other private universities, or rural areas. Secondly, 28 bilingual undergraduate students

participated, resulting in a relatively small sample size, which limits the generalizability of the results. Data were collected through focus group discussions (FGDs) and language-based tasks, providing rich qualitative data. However, to make broader generalisations about L1 attrition trends nationwide, a larger sample is required.

Additionally, this investigation relied on students' self-perception and performance in controlled language tasks, which do not fully reflect their actual language use in diverse real-world settings. Finally, due to time limitations and academic schedules, the study is limited in scope and duration. Together, these limitations point to the need for broader, multi-perspective studies in the future.

1.7 Definition of Terms

- **Language Attrition**

Language attrition refers to the gradual decline of a previously acquired language. This is particularly true when it is not actively used for an extended period. Schmid (2011) states that language attrition is “a non-pathological decrease in a language that an individual had previously acquired” (p. 2). It is essentially the loss of a speaker's linguistic skill in a particular language.

- **First language (L1) Attrition**

L1 attrition is a process in which the native language is affected or lost due to the dominance of another language, typically a second language. According to Köpke and Schmid (2006), L1 attrition “can occur even without geographical displacement, especially when the L2 functionally replaces the L1 in relevant domains” (p. 5). It can happen even when someone stays within their home country.

- **English-Medium Instruction (EMI)**

EMI refers to the use of the English language as a medium of instruction to teach academic subjects in contexts where English is not the native language of the students. In EMI universities, English replaces the native language (such as Bangla) as the medium of instruction for all aspects of education, including lectures, textbooks, assessments, and campus communication. According to Hamid et al. (2015), EMI in Bangladesh is often “driven by neoliberal market demands, positioning English as the key to social mobility and global competitiveness” (p. 144). While EMI aims to strengthen students' global skills, it can also reduce the presence of native languages in academic spaces, potentially leading to L1 attrition.

- **Bilingualism**

Bilingualism is the ability to understand and use two languages, though not always with equal fluency or in the same context. Individuals who possess this ability are referred to as bilinguals. Bilinguals often switch between their L1 and L2 based on their needs, preferences, and the social and academic contexts in which they operate. Bilingualism exists on a spectrum, ranging from balanced bilinguals (who are equally proficient in both languages) to dominant bilinguals (who are stronger in one language and less skilled in the other). Grosjean (1982) emphasises that bilinguals are “not two monolinguals in one person, but individuals who adapt language use based on need and environment” (p. 10). This flexible use can sometimes result in language attrition when one language becomes less frequently used in important life domains.

- **Language Proficiency**

Language proficiency refers to an individual's ability to use a language across listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. According to Schmid and Karayayla (2019), "proficiency can decline in one language when exposure and functional use shift primarily to another" (p. 55). Proficiency can differ across languages depending on use, exposure, and functional needs among bilingual individuals.

- **Linguistic Identity**

Linguistic identity is the way individuals connect their sense of self to the languages they speak. Cultural background, social expectations, personal experience, and language use usually shape it. One's linguistic identity can shift or become conflicted if one switches from one language to another, or if a language has dominance over the other. It mostly happens among bilinguals or multilinguals.

- **Migrant Context**

A migrant context refers to a situation where individuals relocate to a new location or a different country. There, they begin a new life, adapt the language and the culture to fit into the new environment. They often relocate to find better living conditions or employment opportunities. This movement can be permanent or temporary. Migrants and immigrants refer to two different things. Both terms refer to movement, but migrants encompass a broader range of movement and intentions, while immigrants are individuals who intend to settle in a new country permanently.

- **Language Shift**

The process by which an individual or a community slowly shifts from one language to another is called the language shift. This mostly happens when an economically or

socially dominant language replaces the first language of individuals in critical life domains, such as work, education, family gatherings, and social media. Fishman (1991) defines language shift as “the process whereby intergenerational continuity of the heritage language is disrupted and replaced by another language” (p. 1). This shift doesn't happen suddenly or overnight; it begins gradually, first in schools or academic settings, then in professional life, and then in social media, and then finally at home. Over time, the native language is being used less and is being replaced by L2 or the new language in an increasing number of areas of life.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The concept of L1 attrition can be viewed through various disciplines, like applied linguistics, psycholinguistics, and sociolinguistics. According to Schmid (2011), attrition refers to the non-pathological erosion of linguistic competence resulting from prolonged L2 dominance (p. 7). It is the gradual loss of the first language. One can lose one's first language due to the dominance of another language that is not one's native language. L1 attrition can be observed among children, teenagers, and adults as well (Alasgarova, 2025). In Bangladesh, EMI-based private universities are rising rapidly, where English is the dominant language, which raises concerns about the deterioration of Bangla (L1 of most students) (Hamid et al., 2015). This suggests an investigation to determine students' patterns and reasons for losing their L1 (Bangla) within the L1-speaking motherland (Islam et al., 2024; Martin-Vilena, 2024).

Studies suggest that L1 attrition is influenced by factors such as the higher reputation of L2 in social contexts, emotional connection with L1, age of L2 acquisition, and exposure period, according to Akram et al. (2023). Additionally, it has been extensively studied and investigated among migrant communities (Schmid, 2011) and bilingual children; however, L1 attrition remains underexplored and understudied in minority languages, non-migrant communities, and educational contexts, such as those found in Bangladesh. Therefore, there is a lack of research on this topic among Bangladeshi students. Therefore, this is a research gap, particularly among urban private university students, where cultural dependability and linguistic identity are in tension. This study discusses the current situation and perception of L1 loss of students by investigating the role and factors that influence this attrition.

2.2 Attrition Among Bilingual Students at the Tertiary Level

Using English as a second language (L2) heavily in both academic and personal contexts serves as the central driver for losing one's native language among bilingual students at the tertiary level. In educational contexts, English is often the core medium of instruction, assessments, and communication. This drives students to prioritise the use of English for academic success and future opportunities. English language supremacy in formal academic contexts leads to a decline in the use of L1, resulting in a loss of L1 proficiency, particularly in complex discourse and academic registers (Aqila et al., 2024). For example, most studies on bilingual adolescents in different schools show that overuse of L2 in academic settings increases L1 attrition, as students associate English more with social practice, academic achievement, and a successful career. This contributes to the social and cultural identity change of high school students in Azerbaijan, as well as significantly affects their linguistic competence, as they begin to align themselves more closely with the norms and values of English-speaking communities (Alasgarova, 2025).

In both social and personal contexts, the extensive use of English extends beyond the classroom, influencing daily interactions, extracurricular activities, and peer relationships (Van Hell et al., 2017). Often, at the cost of L1 proficiency, English is integrated into students' social lives, which further influences and reinforces the dominance of L2. Schmid & Yılmaz's (2018) study on Germans in the Netherlands and Canada, Turks and Moroccans in the Netherlands, demonstrates that the power of using L2 informally in daily life is an essential predictor of attrition and language dominance, when English (L2) is frequently used in both personal and academic contexts, which leads to losing native-like L1 proficiency. This is not limited to spoken

languages; it also affects literary practices, entertainment, and digital communication, contributing to the gradual loss of L1 skills.

In bilingual minds, persistent interaction between two languages typically occurs, which shapes the process of L1 attrition. According to some theoretical frameworks in bilingual development, cross-linguistic influence is bidirectional, meaning that increasing proficiency in and use of English can modify and even suppress aspects of the native language over time (Köpke & Schmid, 2017). This dynamic is noticeable in tertiary education, particularly, where English creates an environment because of academic and social prestige, that benefits L2's use and accelerates L1 attrition, especially if English is being reinforced as the default language set by the institutional policies and peer networks, for both personal and academic communication (Alasgarova, 2025; Schmid & Yılmaz, 2018).

Another critical aspect in understanding language attrition is how the age of onset contributes to the L1 attrition among bilingual students at the tertiary level. Schmid and Karayayla (2019) researched the attrition of Turkish-English bilinguals. They found that the level of L1 attrition experienced in adulthood is influenced by the age at which bilinguals begin extensive exposure to their L2. They conducted a study on Turkish-English bilingual adults. They found that individuals exposed to English at a very young age were more at risk of L1 attrition, particularly in morphological, syntactic, and lexical domains.

In contrast, those who start later, exposure-related factors matter less. Early and intensive exposure to English may lead to a shift in language dominance, which can impact the long-term maintenance of L1 skills. Additionally, a study on Mexican background high school students reveals that age, exposure, and attitude further complicate the attrition process, as individual

attitudes toward both languages can mitigate the consequences of early exposure on language proficiency (Hakuta & D'Andrea, 1992).

2.3 Factors Triggering Language Attrition

Among bilingual students, factors such as environment, society, and educational settings play a significant and interconnected role in triggering language attrition. These factors also impact linguistic proficiency, as well as cultural identity and social integration.

2.3.1 Environmental Factors

In language attrition, environmental exposure at home and in the community plays a fundamental role. In a study conducted by Quirk and Cohen (2025) on 49 French–English bilingual children in a dual language program in France, it was found that age of onset, parental proficiency, and cumulative exposure significantly predicted grammatical development in both languages. Home language factors, such as parental input and language output opportunities, were more impactful and influential than community language use, especially in terms of grammatical accuracy in French, the majority language. Therefore, if family members primarily use L2 at home and children are encouraged to speak L2 more often, L1 may decline. This highlights the importance of an immediate linguistic environment and family practices in shaping language loss or maintenance. Toassi and Lauro (2023) studied some Brazilian-Portuguese-English bilinguals who attended a language-decision task and a multiple-choice English-Portuguese translation task. Findings show that Words in L2 were accessed more smoothly than their L1. Additionally, insufficient daily contact with L1 can lead to attrition. A comparative study by Schmid and Dusseldorp (2010) on 53 German migrants in

Canada and 53 in the Netherlands, with 53 Germans living in Germany, aged around 63 years, found that if L1 is not used for a long term because of the immersion in an L2 environment, there is as an activation threshold of L1 representations on the brain, that leads to attrition. Schmid and Dusseldorp (2010) also state that if the linguistic stimulation is not given for a long time, that is the core cause of attrition: “Attrition is the result of long-term lack of stimulation” (p. 125). This study confirms that lower L1 usage is related to severe attrition.

However, this is not just the amount of L1 use, but also how and where it is used. A study on native German speakers living in Anglophone Canada and the Netherlands who had migrated as adults was conducted by De Leeuw et al. (2009), which shows that when L1 is used in formal domains, that helps in preserving L1, whereas, family-based and informal use is less protective (De Leeuw et al., 2009; Yilmaz & Schmid, 2012). Formal contexts usually have fewer code-switching opportunities that maintain L1 norms firmly. When frequent switching happens between languages, it encourages cross-language interference. According to Green (2011), code-switching facilitates the simultaneous activation of both languages, thereby accelerating attrition. This study also suggests that if a person remains immersed in a L2-dominant setting for an extended period, their L1 gradually weakens over time. This is quite similar to the extensive use of English (L2) in Bangladesh’s EMI universities, where most students’ L1 is Bangla, but they are required to use English (L2) predominantly.

2.3.2 Social Factors

Kim & Starks (2008) studied L1 attrition among adult Korean–English late bilinguals in New Zealand, who had lived in New Zealand for at least five years. The study showed that while speaking English or describing Korean-coined emotions, they often felt emotionally detached

from the Korean language, which is their L1. The study shows that when bilingual individuals are emotionally disconnected from their L1, specific words used to express feelings, such as slang, idioms, or swear words, become more difficult for them to recall and use. The author argues that prolonged exposure to L2-dominant settings is a contributing factor to this phenomenon. On the other hand, Cherciov (2013) conducted a study on migrants who have experienced immigration and are navigating the process of acquiring a second language while gradually losing proficiency in their first language. Those who left their homeland in search of a better future, education, or employment were more likely to lose their L1, particularly in formal tasks such as writing or speaking properly in an L2-dominant setting. She also found that participants began to use L1 less in their everyday lives, often without realising it. This demonstrates that, in terms of language loss, a person's motivation and attitude towards their L1 play a significant role.

Another study, conducted by Chaouch-Orozco & Martín-Villena (2024) on 94 Spanish–English bilinguals in the UK and 80 Spanish-based controls, found that participants who had deep friendships with L2 speakers, even outside work, had weakened L1 semantic networks, characterised by fewer lexical connections and reduced clustering in Spanish. Additionally, using L2 with friends (not just in formal contexts) was significantly correlated with reduced L1 proficiency, suggesting that spending more time with people who primarily speak L2 (among the participants) leads to increased L2 use, even in daily conversations with families and L1 speakers. Over time, it will become increasingly complex for them to recall or find words in their L1. Therefore, actively using L2 due to peer pressure and ignoring L1 use within an L1 setting can lead to attrition over time. Ribes & Llanes (2015) researched adult immigrants from Spain to the UK and found a different scenario. The results show that, despite having access to

their L1 (Spanish) and living in a place where Spanish was well-respected and commonly used, their L2 began to influence their everyday use of L1. Reverse transfer occurred among them, resulting in the mixing of grammar or sentence style from L2 into L1. It happened more often to those who had deeply adjusted to the new culture and did not perceive it as a threat to their L1. They tried to fit into the new culture and society, and they did not fear being exposed to an entirely new language. This led to losing their L1 faster. This confirms that even if someone uses their L1 and lives in an environment where it is valued, their L1 will still weaken if they use their L2 to adapt to the new culture more quickly.

Akram et al. (2023) studied undergraduate ESL learners in Pakistan to investigate the social and cultural factors contributing to their attrition of L1 (Urdu). The findings show that, from academic settings to daily social interactions, English is being prioritised. Students often felt hesitant or embarrassed to communicate in their L1 (Urdu), particularly in settings where English proficiency is associated with modernity, intelligence, and social mobility. This led to reduced opportunities for Urdu use, which helped in the gradual decline in L1 proficiency. This study demonstrates that L1 attrition is not merely about forgetting grammar or vocabulary; rather, it is also profoundly connected to a person's sense of self and their perceived sense of belonging to their own culture. When people try to fit into an environment that prefers L2 more or speaks L2 more frequently, their connection to L1 starts to fade slowly. The authors recommended language policies that prioritise maintaining L1 for personal identity and cultural continuity (Akram et al., 2023). Another study by Cherciov (2011) on Romanian adult migrants in Canada found that those who viewed English as necessary for social integration and professional advancement reduced their use of Romanian, resulting in a loss of their L1. In Canada, English is more preferable, acceptable, and a necessity for maintaining social life, so

they have little to no chance to use their L1. That is why they did not stay connected with the Romanian community or the language. In Bangladesh, Hamid et al. (2015) conducted an investigation on 50 students, teachers, and administrators across three private EMI universities in Bangladesh. The findings show that English holds symbolic value, whereas Bangla is perceived as “low status,” “old-fashioned,” and “rural.” Participants preferred English to succeed in their professional life and viewed it as a means to achieve social success and status. Bangla became ‘less professional and inappropriate’ even in academic or familial contexts. Many students avoided Bangla in group discussions or presentations to appear “well educated” or “modern”. Collectively, these studies demonstrate that English, as a language, is highly valued. Consequently, individuals who speak two languages tend to prioritise English due to its status, prestige, and benefits. This can lead to losing L1 over time.

2.3.3 Academic Factors

In triggering L1 attrition, academic factors play a crucial role, especially for bilingual students studying at institutions that focus more on English or other languages that are not their L1. A study conducted by Alasgarova (2025) on 250 bilingual teenagers from international schools in Azerbaijan reveals that schools often regard English as a “superior” language, making it a more accessible means to achieve future success, academic achievement, and promising opportunities. These students used their L1 less and English more because they believed English was associated with greater success and higher status. In both classes and outside activities, they slowly stopped using their L1. Additionally, pressure from institutions, peers, teachers, and parents often prompted them to stick to English most of the time. This made the shift happen faster, and students began to believe that English is the key to success; when they move abroad,

or even within their homeland, it will only benefit them. This weakened their connection to L1, their culture, and their own identity as well. Similarly, Ma & Vaněk (2024) studied 25 English teachers and 25 non-English subject teachers in China. They found that English teachers showed slower responses to L1 and used minimal to no complex L1 words, compared to their co-workers. Authors stated, "Chinese English-teachers showed longer reaction times and lower lexical diversity in Chinese tasks than their non-English teaching colleagues" (Ma & Vaněk, 2024, p. 3). Whereas the non-English subject teachers performed relatively well, they responded more quickly. It demonstrates that academic engagement, such as teaching English lessons and conducting research in English, actually altered their language processing, causing their native language to weaken, even at home.

Akram et al. (2023) studied undergraduate ESL students from 3 universities in Lahore, Pakistan. They reported that students were constantly engaged with English, such as writing assignments, exams in English, and lectures that were based on English. While staying at the university, they communicated with teachers, as well as peers, in English, which is their L2. This academic L2 domination led to avoiding and hesitating in using L1, even in personal contexts, which is another reason for losing L1 while staying within the homeland. Additionally, the enforced use of English in university courses can weaken students' ability to use their mother tongue, potentially leading to a loss of confidence and motivation.

On the other hand, English-medium instruction (EMI) based universities also play a significant role in first language attrition. In an EMI setting, students are required to read, write, speak, and learn in English only. This creates an environment where they cannot practice their L1 at all, which makes almost no opportunities to use their L1 in academic settings. In a recent

study of Bangladeshi graduates, it was found that too much exposure to English during lectures, exams, classes, assessments, and group tasks made it challenging to produce a single line without using any English words, and their fluency in Bangla was gone, especially in formal discussions (Hamid et al., 2015). Another comparative study by Hasan et al. (2024) found that English major and non-English major students in EMI universities showed lower fluency and reduced confidence in their L1, while their English proficiency had improved significantly. It happened due to the excessive use of English in academic settings. Lin and Lei (2021) found that students across EMI universities in East Asia prioritised English over their L1, even in social interactions, academics, and professional life, which created an environment where L1 use became unnecessary and even discouraged. Another study on a Korean child was conducted by Lee and O'Grady (2024), which provides a crucial lens on how institutional language policies can help disrupt native language maintenance, even in monolingual contexts. Moreover, these studies demonstrate that, over time, English has become a language associated with academic and professional success, opportunities, higher status, and a perceived superiority compared to other languages. As a result, students began to avoid Bangla in both academic and even informal settings. As time passes, this leads to reduced use of Bangla vocabulary, slower retrieval of words from L1, and weakened linguistic literacy.

2.4 Student Perceptions on L1 Usage and Bangla Proficiency

Students' views on their L1 proficiency, especially in Bangla, indicate that many bilinguals experience a noticeable decline in using their L1 in an EMI environment. Hamid et al. (2015) conducted an investigation among teachers and students from an English-medium private university in Bangladesh. They found that institutional policies and societal values highly value

the English language. Students admitted that English is often perceived as a more formal and professional language than Bangla, which is why they use it everywhere, including in assessments, when speaking to teachers, in the classroom, and even in their daily communication with peers. It has become a habit for them. They felt pressured when others used English without any mistakes and spoke it nicely in front of them, often with an accent. This made teachers recognise them more than others, which in turn encouraged them to use English even more to appear more professional, knowledgeable, and modern. This contributed significantly to the loss of their native language, particularly in vocabulary and grammar. Similarly, another study by Islam et al. (2024) on Bangladeshi graduates reveals that during their university life, they were exposed to English most of the time and used it mostly. As a result, they lack confidence when using Bangla. They realised their vocabulary in Bangla had shrunk and their fluency had declined. They admitted to being emotionally distant from Bangla, attributing this to the overuse, over-focus, and institutional encouragement of English, which they perceived as less professional and unnecessary for both academic and professional success. These findings are similar to those of a study by Datta (2012), which researched Bengali-English adult bilingual immigrants in the US. Participants had been living in an English-dominant environment for a considerable time, and they had gradually stopped using Bangla in both academic and everyday life. They were given tasks to recall words from L1 and language-matching, where those participants who shifted to using English earlier had both lost their L1 vocabulary and fluency. They struggled to utter words. These three studies were conducted in both local and international settings among Bangladeshi students, demonstrating how they experience L1 attrition and are aware of it. Reasons often include academic pressure, institutional policies, the status of English, better

opportunities, professional success, and a perceived need to “fit in” with society more effectively.

2.5 Research Gap

Studies in Bilingualism in Bangladesh generally concentrate on exploring English language acquisition, code-switching, or translanguaging, which primarily focus on the increasing role of English in both academic and professional settings (Sultana, 2012; Hamid et al., 2015). These studies offer valuable insights into language use patterns, but they largely overlook the phenomenon of first language attrition among bilingual adult students, particularly in urban EMI-based universities. This research gap involves determining the extent to which L1 is being lost among bilingual students of EMI-based private universities in a Bangladeshi urban area, while they remain within their homeland. Most existing research either examines migrant populations in Western countries (Cherciov, 2012; Schmid, 2013) or focuses on younger children acquiring two languages simultaneously, leaving a noticeable gap in understanding the gradual loss of L1 proficiency in older, non-migrant individuals living in their native country. This raises inquiries about linguistic diversity, identity, and the lasting effect of English dominance in academia.

Additionally, in Bangladeshi contexts, where Bangla is the dominant language, English is institutionally preferred in EMI settings, which may also lead to attrition. This phenomenon is both understudied and overlooked. Recently, EMI-based universities in Bangladesh have experienced rapid growth, and there is a limited understanding of how long-term exposure to English affects Bangladeshi students' proficiency in Bangla over time. Existing EMI research often examines English learning processes and outcomes (Bolton et al., 2024; Lin & Lei, 2021),

rather than what students lose in the process, particularly those from Bangla-medium backgrounds. They undergo a quick shift to English-only settings in higher education. How curriculum design, peer interactions, and classroom policies contribute to this attrition remains almost entirely underexplored in the empirical literature.

This research aims to fill the gap by examining the range and nature of Bangla language attrition among bilingual students at two private English-medium universities in Dhaka, an urban area in Bangladesh. This paper examines both the academic and social factors that contribute to Bangla loss by analysing students' language use across various domains (classrooms, peer interactions, social media) and measures their actual language performance through structured tasks (self-assessment and guided, controlled tasks). This study also suggests some ways that universities can implement more linguistically inclusive and appropriate curricula and policies that promote balanced bilingualism.

2.6 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework (Figure 1) illustrates the complex relationship between English-medium instruction (EMI) policies and Bangla (L1) attrition among bilingual students in Bangladeshi universities. EMI policies, including English-only rules, curricula, and assessment practices, serve as the independent variable, directly shaping the academic environment (university policies, teacher attitudes, classroom practices), social factors (peer communication, prestige of English, code-switching norms), and family and cultural factors (home language use, media exposure, cultural activities). These three domains interact to influence students' language use patterns, specifically the frequency and contexts in which Bangla is used in academic and personal life. Reduced use of Bangla within these domains contributes to the gradual erosion of

Bangla proficiency (grammar, vocabulary, reading, and writing skills). Simultaneously, students' perceptions and linguistic identity, such as self-assessment of proficiency, emotional attachment to Bangla, and linguistic confidence, are shaped by these usage patterns, reflecting both internalized attitudes and external pressures.

At the same time, protective factors such as cultural attachment, engagement with Bangla media, and participation in community activities act as counterbalances, slowing or mitigating the process of L1 attrition. Thus, the framework emphasizes that attrition is not caused by EMI policies alone but results from the interplay of institutional, social, and cultural influences, moderated by protective elements.

This framework contributes to a critical understanding of how institutionalized EMI practices drive language shift, while also highlighting the role of mediating factors in sustaining or weakening Bangla proficiency. It reflects the view that L1 attrition emerges from the interaction of multiple academic, social, and cultural variables rather than being a straightforward outcome of reduced exposure (Schmid, 2011; Köpke & Schmid, 2017).

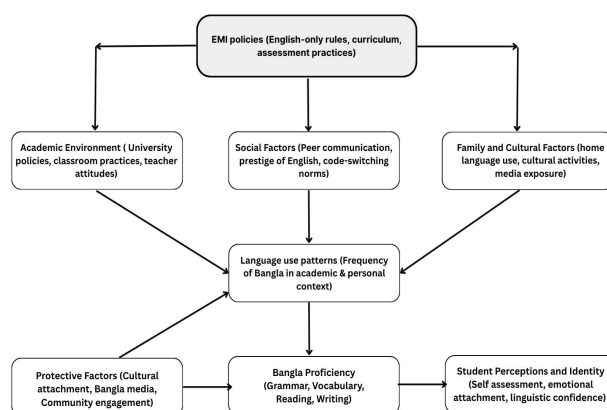


Figure 1: Conceptual framework showing the influence of EMI policies on Bangla attrition among bilingual university students.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter meticulously details the methodology employed in conducting this study. It comprehensively covers the research design and approach, the setting and participants, the method of data collection and analysis, and, finally, the ethical considerations, ensuring a robust and valid study.

3.2. Research Approach and Design

This study employs a qualitative, interpretive research approach to investigate the extent to which Bangla (L1) attrition occurs among bilingual undergraduate students in two private English-medium instruction (EMI) universities in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The social constructivist paradigm directs it, which acknowledges that knowledge and meaning are shaped by the lived experiences of participants, their cultural context, and the social environment in which they interact (Creswell, 2009). This framework views language use as both a communicative act and a reflection of identity, power, and ideology (Kumaravadivelu, 1999). It facilitates in-depth, contextualised investigation into the symptoms of L1 attrition, its causes, the factors that contribute to it, and students' perceptions within EMI academic settings. This investigation was conducted at two EMI-based private universities, namely Sunflower English University (SEU) and Shonar Bangla University (SBU), which are pseudonyms for actual private universities. Both universities have an English-dominant academic environment, especially in their English departments.

Six focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted to collect data, with two language-based tasks:

- **Reading a Bangla text task:** They were given a short Bangla text to read aloud. It was used to check fluency, pronunciation, hesitation patterns, and comfort level in accessing Bangla (L1) in an academic register. Moreover, some questions were asked, and they needed to respond in Bangla.
- **A writing task:** A translation (from English to Bangla) task was given, which required students to translate a passage from English to Bangla. Also, they were asked to write four sentences in Bangla on a topic which is about their “University Life”. It helped in evaluating their grammar, syntax, vocabulary retrieval, and overall written proficiency in Bangla.

Each FGD focused on students’ language use at home, social and academic contexts, their emotional attachment to Bangla, and their evolving linguistic identity. This qualitative approach facilitates an in-depth exploration of participants’ feelings and language use, supporting the aim to understand their experiences in a meaningful and detailed manner. By integrating both discussion-based reflection and performance-based assessments, this research design provides a comprehensive understanding of the nature and scope of L1 attrition among EMI university students in Bangladesh, assuring the readers of the thoroughness of the study.

3.3 Setting and Participants

This study took place at two urban EMI private universities in Dhaka, Bangladesh: Sunflower English University (SEU) and Shonar Bangla University (SBU), which are pseudonyms for actual universities. Both universities operate under EMI, and in their English departments, EMI is strictly followed, known for enforcing and encouraging English as the dominant academic and communicative language. Both SEU and SBU, in the English department, use English as the medium of instruction; the medium of communication inside the

classroom is also English. Additionally, all official documents and paperwork are conducted in English. However, students have permission to speak in Bangla (L1) outside the classroom informally, such as in the cafeteria, library, and other places.

A total of 28 undergraduate English major students participated in the investigation, comprising 20 from SEU and eight from SBU. They were selected by using purposive sampling to ensure diversity in terms of their pre-university medium of instruction (Bangla or English) and academic year. Participants were divided into four groups:

- **Group A:** First-year (1st–2nd semester) students from Bangla-medium backgrounds
- **Group B:** First-year (1st–2nd semester) students from English-medium backgrounds
- **Group C:** Final-year (11th–12th semester) students from Bangla-medium backgrounds
- **Group D:** Final-year (11th–12th semester) students from English-medium backgrounds

This grouping enabled the study to track possible patterns and factors of L1 attrition over time and observe whether academic progression in an EMI context has any significant influence on L1 proficiency and self-perception. All participants were bilingual, with Bangla as their first language and English as their primary academic language. Their age range is approximately 20 to 25 years. Moreover, among them, 17 were male and 11 were female participants. Before collecting data, participants were informed about the topic, the purpose of the research, the reasons for collecting their data, where and how it would be used, and how their data would contribute to the study. Verbal consent was taken from each of them. They were informed about

their right to withdraw at any point in the investigation. Instead of using their real name, pseudonyms are used to ensure confidentiality. The range of participants in terms of university, previous medium, and academic year provides a rich and comparative context to explore the nature and extent of Bangla attrition in EMI settings.

3.4. Instrument and Data Collection Procedures

This study adopts a qualitative approach to investigate first language attrition among undergraduate English-major students at two private English-medium universities in Dhaka, Bangladesh: Sunflower English University (SEU) and Shonar Bangla University (SBU). Two primary instruments were used to collect rich data on students' perceived proficiency, Bangla usage, and factors contributing to L1 loss: Focused group discussions (FGDs) and Language-based tasks. Both of these instruments helped to explore the subjective experiences and observable language performance of the participants in controlled settings.

3.4.1 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

FGDs were used as the primary tool to understand their language use patterns, perception, and their sense of Bangla proficiency. In total, six FGDs were conducted, four at SEU and two at SBU. Participants were grouped based on their educational background and their academic year. Four FGDs were conducted at SEU, with each of the four sessions having five students. Each FGD lasted for 100 minutes to 120 minutes. Four FGDs contained four different types of students: the first FGD was conducted with students from Bangla medium background, currently in their 11-12th semester, the second FGD was with students from English medium background, currently in their 11-12th semester, third FGD was with students in their 1st-2nd semester from Bangla medium background, and the fourth one was with 1st-2nd semester students from English medium background. The other two FGDs were conducted at SBU, each

with four students, and lasted between 80 minutes and 100 minutes. Here, the first FGD consisted of two students in their 11th-12th semester and two students in their 1st-2nd semester, with four of them from a Bangla medium background. The other FGD also had four students, two from the 11th-12th semester and two from the 1st-2nd semester, and they are from an English-medium background. A set of semi-structured, open-ended questions was followed, which contained 20 questions, delivered in both Bangla and English, which encouraged the participants to reflect on their language use at home, in academic settings, and in peer groups. These FGDs allowed participants to express how their proficiency and linguistic identity have changed over time in their own words.

3.4.2 Language-Based Tasks

To validate the data collected from FGDs, two types of tasks were designed to assess participants' current Bangla proficiency in reading and writing. These tasks were designed to evaluate their grammar, pronunciation, syntax, vocabulary, spelling, and comprehension skills in context, which is relevant to their regular life and academic use.

The first task was a Bangla reading comprehension exercise. A short passage titled “প্রযুক্তির ব্যবহার ও আমাদের দৈনন্দিন জীবন” (The Use of Technology and Our Daily Lives) was given to them in Bangla, which discussed the role of technology in daily life, and they were asked to answer four comprehension questions verbally. These questions helped in evaluating their ability to identify the main idea, interpret implied meanings, extract factual details, and produce opinions using appropriate Bangla vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structure. The second task contained two written components. In the first, participants had to translate a short passage from English to Bangla. This individual task mainly focused on maintaining accurate meaning while using proper grammar, vocabulary, and natural Bangla sentence order. In the

second part, they were given a topic, which was “আমার বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় জীবন” (My University Life), and were instructed to write four sentences in Bangla. Code switching was not allowed. This task helped in assessing grammatical accuracy, logical flow, sentence construction, and vocabulary richness. In both written tasks, attention was given to participants’ hesitation.

An evaluation checklist was used for both tasks to note down the indicators of L1 attrition, such as grammatical errors, vocabulary gaps, reliance on English syntax, borrowed words from English, and hesitation or avoidance of certain words. The outcomes of these tasks were triangulated with data collected from FGDs, which provided a holistic understanding of participants’ Bangla proficiency and patterns of L1 attrition in both academic and personal contexts.

3.4.3 Data Documentation and Recording

All FGDs were audio recorded through a mobile phone with participants' consent and later transcribed for analysis. Task-based written outputs were collected for analysis. A checklist was used to document recurring indicators of Bangla attrition during the tasks and discussions (e.g., use of English loan words and incorrect Bangla syntax). All data was stored securely with anonymous participants’ pseudonyms.

3.4.4 Rationale

Using both methods (FGD and Language-based task) helped in providing subjective and performance-based insight into L1 attrition. FGD provided information on how participants feel about their language use and identity, and tasks helped to show what they can do in Bangla, allowing the study to draw links between perception and performance.

3.5 Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006), which helped in the identification and interpretation of patterns across qualitative datasets. The reason behind choosing this approach is that it is flexible, well-suited, and systematic for exploring participants' perceptions and lived experiences of language use and proficiency in Bangla. Both Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and language-based tasks were separately analyzed at first and then integrated to address the three research questions.

At first, the four FGDs conducted at SEU were audio-recorded and later transcribed verbatim to preserve all linguistic nuances. Two FGDs at SBU were not recorded as the permission was not granted; however, detailed notes were taken during the sessions. The two language-based tasks, a short translation task and guided Bangla writing tasks, were collected from all participants. Each written response was stored securely for analysis after being scanned. Secondly, all transcripts, field notes, and task responses were reviewed multiple times manually without using specialized software. This manual process facilitated in-depth engagement with the data, allowing initial observations to emerge naturally. Notes were taken on recurring phrases, vocabulary gaps, grammatical patterns, spelling mistakes, hesitation while writing, and self-expressed perceptions of Bangla proficiency. Thirdly, each transcript and written response was coded separately for language use in academic settings (Bangla vs. English), language use in personal and social contexts, self-perceptions of Bangla proficiency, and environmental, social, and educational influences on language use. Once the initial codes were assigned, they were grouped into broader themes aligned with the research questions. For example, codes like “difficulty forming complex sentences,” “lack of vocabulary,” “hesitation”, “errors in spelling”, and “switching to English mid-sentence” were grouped under the theme indicators of L1

Attrition. Fourthly, findings from six FGDs and language-based tasks were compared to identify contradictions or consistencies. For instance, a participant's self-perception of being "fluent in Bangla" in the FGD was compared with their writing and translation accuracy in the tasks. This cross-verification enhanced the reliability of the analysis. Finally, four themes were found, ensuring they directly addressed the research questions: the extent of Bangla attrition in the academic context, the extent of Bangla attrition in personal contexts, factors influencing language use and proficiency, and students' perceptions of their Bangla proficiency and identity.

These themes were supported with direct quotations from FGD transcripts or notes (for SEU and SBU, respectively) and supplemented with linguistic evidence from the task responses.

3.5.1 Overview of Data Sources and Analysis

Source of data	Institution/(s)	No. of Sessions / Tasks	Mode of data collection	Analysis Method
Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)	SEU	4 sessions (5 students each)	Audio-recorded, transcribed	Manual coding, thematic analysis
Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)	SBU	2 sessions (4 students each)	Field notes	Manual coding, thematic analysis
Translation Task	SEU and SBU	28 responses	Written responses	Linguistic error analysis,

				pronunciation, hesitation, coding
Guided Bangla Writing Task	SEU and SBU	28 responses	Written responses	Vocabulary, syntax, spelling, and grammar evaluation

3.6 Ethical Considerations

All participants were informed of a clear explanation of the study's title, purpose, objectives, and procedures before participation, and verbal consent was obtained. They were told that their involvement was entirely voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any stage without any consequences. For FGDs at Sunflower English University (SEU), audio recording was carried out through a mobile phone only after participants granted explicit permission. At Shonar Bangla University (SBU), audio recording was not permitted. However, detailed notes were taken during the session. Confidentiality and anonymity were strictly maintained. Pseudonyms were used instead of participants' real names and any identifying details in all transcripts, notes, and written task data. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the relevant institutional authorities at both universities.

All data collected will be used solely for academic and publication purposes related to this study. The research design ensured that the process posed minimal to no harm to participants, respecting their comfort and cultural sensitivities throughout the study.

Chapter 4: Findings & Analysis

This chapter presents an analysis of the data collected through focus group discussions (FGDs) and language-based tasks, aiming to explore the extent of Bangla (L1) attrition among bilingual students at EMI-based private universities in urban Bangladesh. The analysis also examines the factors influencing L1 attrition and the perceptions of students regarding their evolving linguistic competence. Thematic analysis was employed to systematically identify patterns, trends, and emergent themes from the FGDs. At the same time, the language-based tasks provided complementary evidence of participants' Bangla proficiency in academic and personal contexts. By integrating qualitative insights from the FGDs with performance-based observations from the functions, this chapter uncovers the nuanced ways in which prolonged English (L2) exposure affects students' use, emotional connection, and competence in Bangla.

4.1 RO1: Extent of Bangla (L1) Attrition in Personal and Academic Contexts

The first research objective explores the extent to which bilingual students at SEU and SBU display symptoms of Bangla attrition in both personal and academic settings. Data from six focus group discussions (FGDs) and the language-based tasks indicated a consistent pattern of reduced Bangla use, hesitation, and avoidance. The severity of attrition differed by group, with English-medium (EM) students, particularly in higher semesters, demonstrating more advanced erosion of Bangla competence. In contrast, Bangla-medium (BM) students, especially those in early semesters, retained relatively stronger skills but still showed vulnerability to attrition due to the prestige attached to English.

4.1.1 Personal Language Use

Across the FGDs, students described a marked preference for English in their everyday conversations. English appeared as the *unmarked* choice in peer and family interactions, especially among EM groups. These students not only used English extensively with friends and classmates but also admitted to inserting English words when speaking Bangla at home. One participant from EM 11–12 semesters stated, *“With cousins and friends, I use English totally. I switch to Bangla only when talking to rickshaw-pullers or shopkeepers, otherwise English feels more professional”* (Farhan, SEU). Such testimonies illustrate that Bangla was relegated to interactions considered “lower prestige,” while English was seen as the legitimate code in academic and middle-class social domains.

Even students in EM 1–2 semesters echoed similar attitudes. As Nabila (SBU) noted, *“Even at home, I drop English words. It is easier. My family prefers English, too; it sounds smarter.”* The tendency to valorize English within the family was frequently repeated, with several students reporting that their relatives actively praised their “weakness” in Bangla as proof of their elite schooling. One participant described how his parents felt proud that he could not spell simple Bangla words correctly, taking it as evidence that his education was genuinely “English-medium.”

The BM groups provided a contrast. BM 1–2 students, while also acknowledging English as a “premium” and “posh” language, expressed an emotional attachment to Bangla and even a desire for more Bangla instruction. However, their testimonies were marked by insecurity: they worried about their weak English proficiency. They feared that this deficiency might prevent them from gaining access to the same social and academic capital that their EM peers seemed to

enjoy. Raihan (BM 1–2, SEU) admitted, *“We want more Bangla in classes... but everyone keeps saying English is premium, so we feel we must practice English or we will fall behind.”* In this way, even students who valued Bangla were drawn toward English by its symbolic power and economic utility.

In the BM 11–12 group, English was already becoming the dominant language for peer communication and entertainment. One participant confessed, *“My hands get shaky when I try to write Bangla. I stammer while reading and sometimes skip words.”* This sentiment captures the embodied anxiety tied to formal Bangla use, even among students who had started their schooling in Bangla. Entertainment habits are reinforcing Bangla attrition, too. All groups reported watching English TV shows and YouTube channels, with many noting that they rarely consumed Bangla media. One EM 11–12 student explained: *“I don’t remember the last time I read a Bangla novel or newspaper. Everything is in English: Netflix, YouTube, even memes. So I just don’t practice Bangla much anymore.”*

Altogether, the personal domain revealed a layered picture: EM groups showed the most substantial evidence of Bangla attrition, BM 11–12 showed significant erosion, while BM 1–2 maintained comparatively more Bangla use but under the shadow of insecurity and prestige-driven pressure to adopt English. The FGD data point to a steady erosion of Bangla as the everyday communicative code within higher education cohorts, reinforcing the perception of English as both more “professional” and socially valuable.

4.1.2 Academic Language Use

When considering academic contexts, the dominance of English was even more apparent. Students reported that most lectures, assignments, and presentations were conducted in English, leaving little to no institutional space for Bangla. One EM 11–12 student remarked, *“Most lectures and coursework are in English, so I forget simple Bangla words. I use less Bangla now, very little. In private universities, especially in the English department, it looks odd if you use Bangla more”* (Faiza, SEU). Such narratives highlight the internalization of English-only norms, even in the absence of an explicit policy.

This avoidance was also evident when students were asked about writing tasks in Bangla. A BM 11–12 student was asked if she would feel confident writing a paragraph in Bangla and admitted, *“Not that much. I am pretty sure I would stop after 3–4 lines”* (Fariha, SBU), while an EM 11–12 student described physical discomfort: *“My hands get shaky when I try to write Bangla.”* These admissions reflect not only a loss of fluency but also the psychological weight of disuse, where Bangla writing is associated with anxiety, hesitation, and self-doubt.

Moreover, participants consistently stated that even if they are given the option to submit their assignments in Bangla, they would deliberately choose English. English was seen as the safer and more prestigious choice, while Bangla was viewed as “unprofessional” and potentially harmful to grades. One EM 1–2 student openly said to the question if they would choose Bangla over English in such cases, *“Honestly, no. I would choose English. Safer.”* Another confessed to relying on *“Google Translate or copy-pasting”* Bangla captions for social media posts, because generating original Bangla sentences felt too complicated and time-consuming.

These accounts demonstrate that academic Bangla use is not simply declining; it is actively avoided. The avoidance itself accelerates attrition: by not writing in Bangla, students weaken their ability, which in turn reinforces their lack of confidence. This cycle illustrates attrition as both a linguistic and affective phenomenon.

4.1.3 Evidence from the Language-Based Tasks

The language-based tasks provided concrete evidence of Bangla attrition symptoms across the four groups. In the reading comprehension task, most EM students struggled with basic decoding and pronunciation of common Bangla academic vocabulary. Words such as অবিচ্ছেদ্য, যোগাযোগের, একাক্ষর, and সচেতনভাবে frequently caused hesitation or were skipped entirely. Instead of প্রযুক্তি, several students pronounced it as প্রজোক্তি. Even when some students read fluently, comprehension often lagged decoding. One EM 11–12 student read the entire passage smoothly but then admitted, “*Main idea... technology is everywhere? The inference question, sorry, I don’t know*” (Tarin, SEU). This demonstrated a key finding: accurate reading aloud did not always translate into actual understanding.

Many participants also showed a tendency to switch into English mid-response, even when beginning their answers in Bangla. After two or three lines, students often lapsed into English, revealing both limited confidence and a lack of sustained practice in producing extended Bangla responses. Several students asked for the meanings of relatively common Bangla words during the exercise, further illustrating their attrition in vocabulary recognition. Notably, multiple EM 1–2 students requested to skip the passage entirely and “go straight to the questions,” a clear indication of task avoidance and low confidence in Bangla literacy. Even BM 11–12 participants,

who were more able to decode the text, admitted to stammering and under-articulating words like একাকি and সচেতনভাবে, signaling a loss of oral fluency in reading aloud.

The writing tasks revealed additional layers of attrition. In the translation exercise, students frequently carried English syntactic patterns directly into Bangla, creating hybrid constructions that reflected the dominance of English structures in their minds. Examples included sentences such as আমার দৈনিক রুটিন শুরু হয় *early in the morning* instead of the natural ভোরে আমি ঘুম থেকে উঠি, or আমি *lecture attend* করি এবং *library* তে সময় কাটাই instead of আমি লেকচারে যোগ দিই এবং গ্রন্থাগারে সময় কাটাই. Code-switching was pervasive, especially among EM groups, with English verbs and nouns often left untranslated. One participant was unable to write four sentences in Bangla and instead wrote them entirely in English (figure 2), despite being instructed to write in Bangla. Another participant of the BM (11-12) student initially started writing in Bangla, but later on, from the second sentence, began writing in English (figure 3) because she was unable to produce Bangla words and said, “*It is much easier to get a European visa than writing Bangla at this stage*”.

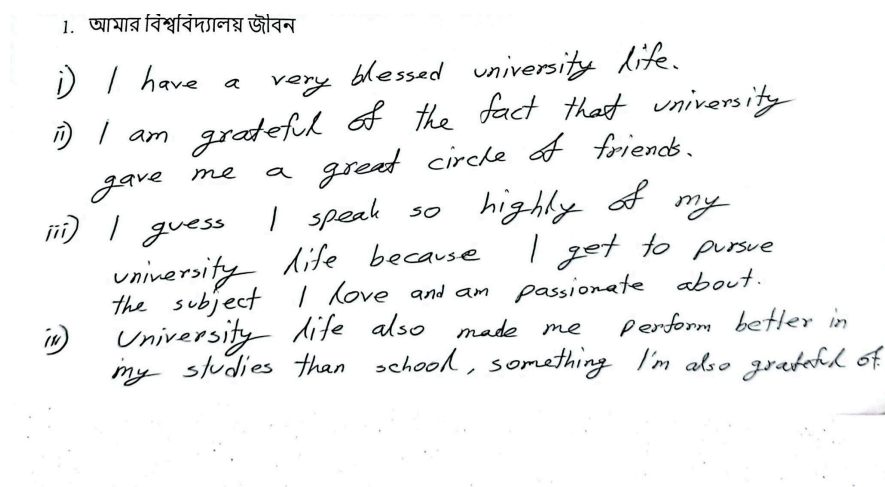


Figure 2: Writing language task of an EM (11-12) semester student

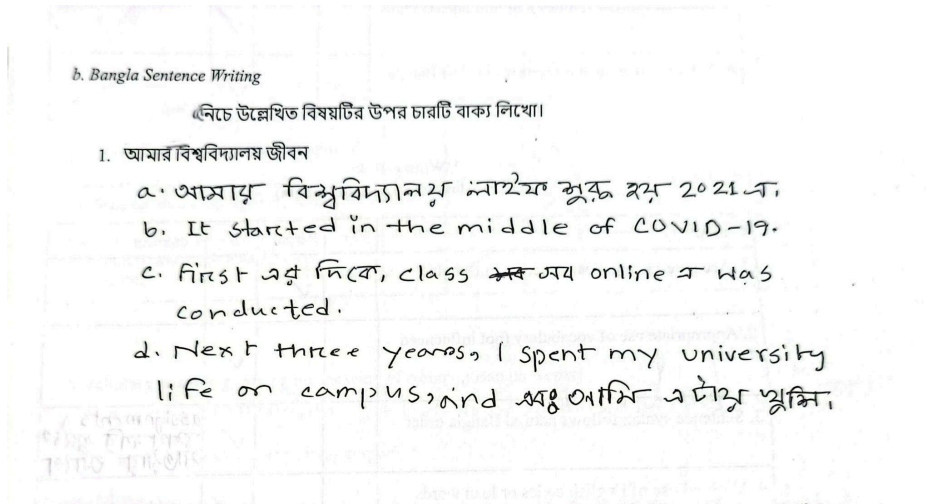


Figure 3: Writing language task of a BM (11-12) semester student

Spelling mistakes were widespread and not limited to advanced vocabulary. Words as basic as শিক্ষা were written as শিখা, প্রযুক্তি as প্রজুক্তি, and বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় with omitted half-letters. Even simple everyday terms were written incorrectly: পড়ালেখা → পরালেখা and পরালিখা (figure 5), যাই → যাহি and জাই, এবং → এবং (figure 3) and এবৎ, ক্যাম্পাস → ক্যেমপাস, শিক্ষার্থী → শিক্ষাত্রি, শুরু → সুরু, তৈরী → তইরি, অন্যান্য → অন্যান, সন্ধ্যায় → সন্ধ্যাই, সকাল → শকাল, ক্লাস → ক্লাশ, খুবই → খুবি, সহজ → সাহাজ (figure 5), সুযোগ → সুজগ (figure 5), লাইব্রেরি → লা ্যব্রেরি (figure 4), ঘুমানোর → গুমানর (figure 4), সাথে → সাতে (figure 4), বন্ধুদের → বন্দুদের and ব্যবহার → বেবহার. Such errors reflected a striking erosion of orthographic competence even at the level of high-frequency words. Case markers were also often omitted, producing ungrammatical constructions such as আমি বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় যাই প্রতিদিন instead of আমি প্রতিদিন বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে যাই.

Instructions (for Participants):

Translate the following passage into Bangla. Try to keep the meaning accurate and use proper Bangla grammar and vocabulary.

My daily routine starts early in the morning. I wake up, freshen up, and prepare for my classes. After attending lectures, I spend time in the library or with friends. In the evening, I review my lessons and complete assignments before going to bed.

উর) সকালে পুরু হয় আমার প্রতি দিনের (সকালে) সকালে
উঠি, স্নান পুষ্টি পুষ্টি আমি আমার ক্লাসের প্রস্তুতি নি,
ক্লাস শেষে, বইয়ের সাথে লাইব্রেরি বা বন্ধুদের সাথে পাব
হয় আমার সময়, সন্ধ্যায় আমি রিভিশন করি এবং
আমার প্রজেক্ট পুর্ন শেষ করে গুজর ত্যাগে।

Figure 4: Writing language task of an EM (1-2) semester student

b. Bangla Sentence Writing

নির্দেশনা: *Once* নিচে উল্লিখিত বিষয়টির উপর চারটি বাক্য লিখো।

1. আমার বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় জীবন

আমি বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের ইংরেজি ডিপার্ট-
মেন্টের ছাত্রী, বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের লাইব্রেরিতে যাই
আমার সময়, এই বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের শিক্ষার অনেক ভালো
এবং অনেক আমার অনেক গাফিলতি করেন পরানিধা
মিয়ে, আমি এই অনেক এই বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে
একটি নিজের [লিখার] ঘান ভালো করতে পারার অনেক
সুযোগ পাইছি এবং এর ফলে আমি অনেক আগ্রহ
সহ শিক্ষা গন্ধ লিখা শুরু করেছি।

Figure 5: Writing language task of an EM (1-2) semester student

In the sentence-writing task, many students failed to produce the required four sentences, with several explicitly admitting they could only manage two or three lines (figure 3). The sentences that were made were often overly simplified, list-like, or borrowed directly from the translation exercise. Heavy reliance on English nouns and verbs was evident, and sentence structures frequently deviated from natural Bangla syntax. For instance, one EM 11–12 student wrote: “আমি সকাল ওঠা, তারপর ক্লাসে যাই। আমি library যাই। রাত assignment করা।” This demonstrates verb form errors (আমি সকাল ওঠা instead of আমি সকালে উঠি), omission of case markers (library তে instead of গ্রন্থাগারে), and fragmented sentence structure.

Other students produced hybrid forms such as “ভার্সিটিতে সবাই অনেক নাইস আছে” and “টিচার রা মাঝে মধ্যে ভালো কিন্তু একজন টিচার অনেক রুড, তার জল্যে আমার এই জীবন টা এখন হরিবল লাগে” (figure 6). These sentences reveal multiple issues: reliance on English loanwords (নাইস, রুড, হরিবল), awkward spacing in Bangla morphology (টিচার রা instead of টিচাররা), and direct translation of English expressions into unnatural Bangla syntax. The sentence “তার জল্যে আমার এই জীবন টা এখন হরিবল লাগে” also shows redundancy and poor cohesion, resembling English word order more than Bangla.

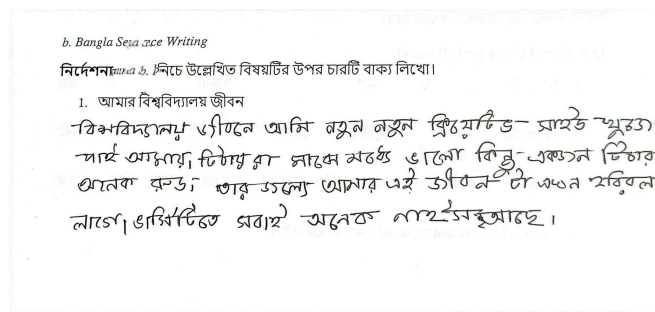


Figure 6: *Writing language task of a BM (1-2) semester student*

Similarly, sentences like “আমি সময় *spend* করি *library* তে, আমার *friend* দের সাথে” illustrate excessive code-switching and structural imbalance. The main verb (*spend* করি) is directly borrowed from English, producing a hybrid form that is neither standard Bangla nor fully English. Even spelling errors appeared in basic outputs, such as “*aassignments* শেষ করি শুইতে যাওয়ার আগে”, where the English word “assignment” was misspelled with double vowels and inserted awkwardly into an otherwise Bangla sentence. In the translation exercise, code-switching was particularly pervasive, with students mixing English directly into their Bangla sentences rather than searching for appropriate Bangla equivalents. One illustrative example was a student’s attempt to translate: “*My daily routine starts early in the morning. I wake up, freshen up, and prepare for my classes. After attending lectures, I spend time in the*”

library or with friends. In the evening, I review my lessons and complete assignments before going to bed.” The submitted translation read (figure 7):

“আমার *Daily routine* শুরু হয় সকালে ভোরবেলা। আমি ঘুম থেকে উঠি, তারপর *fresh* হয়ে, ক্লাসের জন্য *ready* হই। *lecture attend* করার পর *friends* দের সাথে আমি লাইব্রেরীতে সময় কাটাই, বিকাল বেলা আমি *lesson review* করি এবং ঘুমানোর আগে *assignment complete* করি।”

This example reveals multiple dimensions of attrition. First, it shows lexical dependence on English, with direct borrowings such as *Daily routine*, *fresh*, *ready*, *lecture attend*, *friends*, *lesson review*, *assignment complete*. Second, the sentence order reflects English syntactic transfer, as in *assignment complete* করি instead of the more natural Bangla অ্যাসাইনমেন্ট শেষ করি. Third, the text demonstrates orthographic inconsistency, with Roman-script English embedded within Bangla sentences, producing a hybrid that is neither fully Bangla nor fully English. Finally, the overall tone shows avoidance of equivalent Bangla vocabulary (e.g., পাঠ পরিকল্পনা, পড়াশোনা, শ্রেণীকক্ষে যোগদান, সহপাঠী, গ্রন্থাগার, পর্যালোচনা, সমাপ্ত করা), suggesting that students are no longer comfortable accessing higher-register Bangla lexicon.

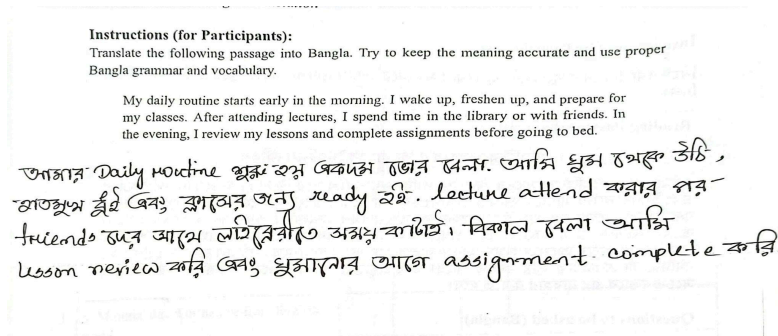


Figure 7: Writing language task of a BM (11-12) semester student

Together, these examples reflect attrition across multiple levels: morphological errors (incorrect suffixation, spacing), syntactic transfer (English word order imposed on Bangla), lexical dependence on English (loanwords inserted unnecessarily), and orthographic instability (misspellings in both Bangla and English forms). These patterns suggest not only reduced Bangla practice but also the reorientation of students' mental grammar toward English structures, with Bangla functioning as a secondary support system rather than a fully independent code.

BM 1–2 students performed relatively better, producing complete but simple sentences with fewer errors. An example was: “আমার বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে বন্ধুদের সাথে সময় কাটাই। কখনও কখনও ইংরেজি বলি। পড়া শেষ করে বাড়ি যাই।” While accurate, these sentences were marked by a limited vocabulary range and avoidance of complex structures. In contrast, BM 11–12 students managed somewhat longer sentences but displayed frequent code-switching and a lack of control over formal Bangla registers. One student admitted that even when trying to write in Bangla, *“I end up putting English words because I forget the Bangla ones.”*

Overall, the tasks revealed attrition at multiple levels: phonological (mispronunciation, stammering, skipping words), lexical (forgetting or misusing common Bangla words), orthographic (spelling errors in high-frequency items), syntactic (calqued sentence structure from English), and discourse-level (inability to sustain extended Bangla writing). The findings corroborated FGD testimonies about reduced confidence, avoidance of Bangla in academic work, and the growing dominance of English as the default language of expression.

4.1.4 Synthesis

Taken together, the findings suggest that Bangla attrition among students is gradual at the medium and semester levels. EM 11–12 students exhibited the highest degree of attrition, characterized by heavy code-switching, frequent avoidance of Bangla tasks, mispronunciations, spelling errors, and a strong preference for English in both academic and personal domains. EM 1–2 students displayed similar patterns but at a slightly lower intensity, often marked by hesitation and requests for clarification rather than outright avoidance. BM 11–12 students showed moderate attrition, evident in their stammering, overreliance on English borrowings, and reluctance to write formally in Bangla. BM 1–2 students retained the strongest attachment to Bangla. Still, their insecurity about English proficiency and the prestige attached to English suggested they, too, are on a path toward attrition if institutional support remains absent.

What emerges most sharply is that attrition is not only a matter of linguistic erosion but also of sociolinguistic choice. Students do not simply “forget” Bangla; they actively choose English because it is safer, more prestigious, and institutionally rewarded. Their mistakes, mispronunciations, spelling slips, and syntax calques are therefore both symptoms of reduced practice and reflections of larger ideological forces that position English as the legitimate language of education and social advancement.

4.2 RO2: Factors Influencing Bangla (L1) Attrition

The second research objective is to identify the environmental, social, and academic factors that contribute to the development or decline of Bangla proficiency among bilingual students, as well as the underlying reasons. The findings from six FGDs revealed that Bangla attrition is not solely a product of disuse, but the outcome of powerful social, institutional, and

ideological pressures that elevate English as the legitimate code in academic and middle-class domains. Students consistently pointed to institutional language practices, family expectations, peer group norms, success, and wider media consumption as factors driving their shift away from Bangla. These influences often worked in combination, creating a linguistic environment in which the use of English was encouraged, while Bangla was implicitly devalued.

4.2.1 Academic and Institutional Factors

Participants repeatedly emphasized that their universities are English-dominant spaces, where lectures, readings, assignments, and exams are conducted exclusively in English. While no participant recalled an official “English-only” policy, they described a strong expectation from faculty and peers that academic work should be produced in English.

Researcher: “Does your university have an English-only policy?”

Faiza, EM 11–12 (SEU): *I am not sure if it's written anywhere, but practically yes. All lectures are in English. If you suddenly ask a question in Bangla, people look at you differently. Even if I want to use Bangla, it doesn't feel right here.*

Assignments and presentations, in particular, were seen as requiring English, which discouraged students from practicing academic Bangla. Several participants admitted that even when they wanted to use Bangla to express ideas, they lacked the vocabulary to do so.

Sanjida, BM 11–12 (SEU): *In exams and assignments, we don't get a chance to write Bangla. Even if I try, I don't know the right words anymore. I can explain in English, but Bangla feels risky, as teachers might not take it seriously.*

The English-medium environment created a feedback loop: students avoided Bangla in academic work, which led to declining competence, which then reinforced their avoidance. This cycle was described by one EM student who confessed, *I haven't written a proper Bangla essay since class 10. Now, even if I want to, I stop after two or three lines. It's not just about forgetting words, it's about confidence.*"

4.2.2 Family and Social Class Influences

A striking theme across both universities was the role of family expectations and social class ideologies. Students explained that their parents, relatives, and broader middle-class networks valued English proficiency above Bangla. In some cases, families explicitly encouraged weak Bangla skills as markers of elite schooling.

Misha, EM 11–12 (SEU): *My family sometimes says, 'Of course you can't read Bangla properly, you are an English-medium student.' They say it proudly, as if it proves I received a good education.*

Arif, EM 1–2 (SBU): *At home, English is everywhere. My parents say if you want to succeed, you must speak English. So we watch English movies, read English books, and text in English. Bangla is there, but it's almost like background noise.*

Even BM students felt this pressure. While BM 1–2 students retained stronger Bangla use, they admitted that their families also pushed them toward English. Raihan, BM 1–2 (SEU) shared: *My parents keep saying, if you want a good job, you must have good English. They don't praise my Bangla. So, even though I wish there were more Bangla in classes, I feel I have to shift to English. It will also help me when I will go to abroad.* In BM 11–12 groups, some participants

noted that their relatives even ridiculed proper Bangla or praised mistakes, framing them as “proof” of higher-class English education. This shows how social prestige is tied to English, while Bangla competence is sometimes trivialized.

4.2.3 Peer Norms and Prestige

Peers were another crucial factor. Students described an atmosphere in which speaking too much Bangla in private universities, especially in the English department, was seen as unusual or low-status.

Nabila, EM 1–2 (SBU): *In class, if someone speaks in Bangla, people think she is weak. Everyone expects you to use English.*

Tarin, EM 11–12 (SEU): *With friends, I use English extensively. If I suddenly speak Bangla, it sounds odd. People tease you, like you are not cool enough.*

The association between English and prestige came up in nearly every FGD. Students equated English with confidence, success, and professionalism, while Bangla was coded as informal, unpolished, or “lower class.” One EM 11–12 student admitted openly: *“I only use Bangla with rickshaw pullers and shopkeepers. With classmates, it would feel wrong.”*

BM 1–2 students again stood out as an exception. They valued Bangla more and wanted to see it incorporated into classroom discussions, but even they admitted that English had greater symbolic power. As one participant said, *“Bangla is who we are, but English is what gets respect. If you cannot speak English, you feel small.”*

4.2.4 Media and Entertainment Consumption

All groups described their media consumption as heavily English-oriented. Students reported spending hours on Netflix, YouTube, Instagram, and English news platforms, while Bangla books, TV, or newspapers were rarely mentioned. This daily immersion in English media reinforced English vocabulary, idioms, and cultural references, while weakening familiarity with Bangla expressions.

Omar, EM 11–12 (SEU): *I watch Netflix every night, all in English. Even memes are in English. I don't remember the last time I read a Bangla newspaper or a magazine.*

Farzana, BM 11–12 (SBU): *I used to read Bangla storybooks in school. Now, honestly, I don't. YouTube, Facebook, and Insta are all in English. So my Bangla reading speed is getting worse.*

Students explicitly connected their Bangla attrition to this consumption pattern. Several noted that they stumble over Bangla vocabulary in the reading task because they rarely encounter those words in their daily lives. The fact that even BM students admitted declining exposure to Bangla media underscores how globalized entertainment choices are accelerating L1 attrition.

4.2.5 Combined Effects

These environmental, social, and academic factors did not act in isolation. Instead, they worked together to reinforce Bangla attrition at multiple levels. In classrooms, students avoided Bangla due to institutional norms; at home, they were encouraged to prioritize English; among peers, they faced teasing for using Bangla; and in their entertainment, English dominated. In such an ecosystem, Bangla was systematically marginalized. The students themselves recognized this cumulative effect. One EM 11–12 student summarized, *“Everywhere it's English, home,*

class, friends, even online. So Bangla feels like it is shrinking. I can still speak it, but I don't practice enough, so I lose confidence."

In this way, attrition emerged as both a linguistic process (loss of fluency, vocabulary, and confidence) and a sociocultural process (systematic devaluation of Bangla in academic and middle-class environments). The findings show that without institutional or community interventions, Bangla attrition will likely deepen as students progress through their university years.

4.3 RO3: Student Perceptions of Changes in Bangla Proficiency

The third research objective is to look at how students perceived the changes in their Bangla proficiency and what meanings they attached to these changes in terms of self-identity. The FGDs revealed that students' awareness of their attrition was acute and often tinged with anxiety, embarrassment, or ambivalence. For some, particularly in the EM streams, diminished Bangla proficiency was normalized and even celebrated as a marker of elite identity. Others, mainly BM (1–2) semester students, expressed insecurity and discomfort, feeling “lesser” for not mastering English while also noticing erosion in their native language. Together, these perceptions highlight how language attrition is not merely a cognitive or linguistic process but also an affective and identity-laden experience.

4.3.1 Self-Assessment of Proficiency

When asked whether their Bangla had changed since entering university, nearly all students agreed that it had declined. The way they framed this decline, however, varied by group.

Safwan, EM 11–12 (SBU): *“I haven’t written a full Bangla sentence in years. When I had to write a Facebook post in Bangla last week, I typed in English and pasted the Bangla from ChatGPT. I don’t trust myself to write without mistakes.”*

Tarin, EM 11–12 (SEU): *“Sometimes my hands literally shake when I try to write Bangla. Reading is not so bad, but writing? I forget words, and I lose confidence immediately.”*

Such admissions indicate that EM students are not only conscious of their attrition but also emotionally burdened by it. Writing in Bangla, in particular, was described as a site of vulnerability, where their lack of practice was most exposed.

BM 11–12 students echoed these concerns, albeit with slightly less intensity.

Farzana, BM 11–12 (SEU): *“I still speak Bangla at home, but when it comes to formal writing, I stop after a few lines. I know I will make mistakes. It’s not just the big words, even simple spellings confuse me now.”*

By contrast, BM 1–2 students still felt confident in their Bangla but described growing linguistic insecurity due to their weaker English.

Raihan, BM 1–2 (SBU): *“Bangla is still my strength, but it doesn’t count here. In class, everything is in English, so my Bangla feels useless. And when I hear others speaking fluent English, I feel small, like my Bangla is not enough.”*

This tension reveals how attrition is accompanied by shifting value judgments: even those who retain strong Bangla begin to perceive it as insufficient capital in English-dominated spaces.

4.3.2 Emotional Reactions to Attrition

Students' emotions toward their weakening Bangla were complex. For some, especially EM groups, the erosion was normalized, even legitimized by family pride.

Misha, EM 11–12 (SBU): *“My parents sometimes say, ‘Of course you mispronounce Bangla, you studied in English.’ They actually brag about it, like it proves I had good schooling. So I don’t feel that guilty about it.”*

Here, loss of Bangla is reframed as an achievement rather than a deficit. Weak Bangla becomes a symbolic badge of “elite” English-medium status, reinforcing class distinctions. Others, however, described feelings of shame or embarrassment.

Sanjida, BM 11–12 (SEU): *“When I stammer in Bangla, my younger brother laughs at me. He says, Apu, you can’t even pronounce Bangla properly now. It hurts, because I grew up reading Bangla storybooks. Now I can’t.”*

The emotional spectrum ranged from pride in English-dominance to shame at Bangla decline, depending on whether students saw themselves as gaining symbolic capital or losing cultural grounding.

4.3.3 Identity Negotiations

Language attrition also shaped students' sense of identity. For many EM students, preference for English was closely tied to self-image as “modern,” “professional,” and part of a global elite. Bangla, in contrast, was framed as provincial, outdated, or associated with “lower” social status.

Nabila, EM 1–2 (SBU): *“If I speak Bangla too much in class, people think I’m weak. English makes me feel confident, more like I belong here.”*

Zayan, EM 11–12 (SEU): *“English is the international language. Bangla sounds unprofessional. I avoid it unless I’m with rickshaw pullers or in my village. With peers, it is always English.”*

These statements demonstrate how students construct their identities through linguistic distinction, positioning English as aspirational and Bangla as marginal. BM 1–2 students articulated a different struggle: they identified strongly as Bangla speakers yet felt marginalized by their weaker English.

Raihan, BM 1–2 (SEU): *“Bangla is who I am, but to me, it doesn’t give me respect here. If I can’t speak English well, people see me as less. So sometimes I actually feel trapped between the two.”*

This tension reveals the double bind faced by BM students: their Bangla proficiency, once a strength, now feels like a liability in English-dominant academic spaces.

4.3.4 Perceptions of Necessity and Utility

When asked whether maintaining Bangla proficiency was important, most EM students downplayed its utility.

Faiza, EM 11–12 (SEU): *“A certain amount of Bangla is necessary, sure, but for jobs, education, even abroad, it doesn’t help. So what’s the use of keeping it strong?”*

One student even argued that universities should not try to support Bangla at all:

Farhan, EM 11–12 (SEU): *“If you’re signing up for an English degree, you should let go of Bangla. Preserving it might harm our English. If someone wants to practice Bangla, they can do it on their own. But don’t slow us down.”*

Such views show how Bangla is not only marginalized but sometimes perceived as an active obstacle to English proficiency. BM students, while valuing Bangla more, also acknowledged its limited utility in higher education and the job market.

Farzana, BM 11–12 (SEU): *“I know Bangla is part of my identity, but for career, English is everything. So even though I love Bangla, I use it less and less.”*

4.3.5 Synthesis

Students’ perceptions of their own Bangla proficiency reveal a complex interplay of awareness, emotion, and identity. Most participants recognized their declining ability, especially in formal writing, and expressed feelings ranging from anxiety to resignation. For EM students, attrition was often normalized or even celebrated, tied to a sense of prestige and global belonging. For BM students, it produced ambivalence, pride in Bangla, coupled with insecurity about English. What stands out is that attrition was never described as purely unintentional. Instead, students made deliberate choices that reflected wider ideologies: English as the language of confidence, professionalism, and upward mobility; Bangla as a language of limited value, relegated to family, informal spaces, or stigmatized as “lower class.” In this way, perceptions of Bangla proficiency cannot be separated from broader questions of class, identity, and cultural capital in the Bangladeshi EMI university context.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Discussion

5.1.1 The Level of Bangla Attrition in Academic and Personal Contexts

Findings of this study reveal that bilingual students at SEU and SBU experience varying degrees of Bangla attrition across both academic and personal contexts. The decline was most prominently observed in academic use, where students often struggled with formal Bangla vocabulary, grammar structures, and academic writing conventions. During the language-based tasks, students frequently reported difficulties in composing structured essays in Bangla. They often relied on literal translations from English, which reduced the fluency and authenticity of their written output. This supports Schmid's (2011) assertion that attrition is highly domain-specific, with academic and high-functioning registers of L1 being the most vulnerable when exposure is reduced.

In academic settings such as lectures, presentations, and written assignments, students demonstrated heavy reliance on English, with some even describing Bangla as “awkward” or “unnecessary” for academic use. The gradual loss of academic Bangla competence reflects what Köpke and Schmid (2017) term as “functional attrition,” where a speaker retains conversational fluency but begins to lose the ability to perform cognitively demanding tasks in the L1. Interestingly, students from English-medium pre-university backgrounds showed greater attrition than those from Bangla-medium schools, highlighting how prior language education strongly shapes the resilience of L1 in bilingual university contexts (Islam et al., 2024).

In personal and social interactions, however, Bangla showed more resilience. Students consistently mentioned that they continued to use Bangla with family members, close friends, and in informal peer conversations. Nevertheless, even in these settings, many admitted to frequent code-switching and simplification of Bangla expressions, particularly when discussing academic or technical topics. This demonstrates that while Bangla still functions as a primary language of intimacy and everyday communication, its role in higher-order, academic domains is steadily eroding. Thus, the findings confirm that Bangla attrition in EMI contexts is not total but partial, with academic Bangla showing significant decline while personal and emotional domains offer relative stability.

5.1.2 Factors Influencing the Decline or Maintenance of Bangla Proficiency

The analysis identified three interrelated sets of factors: academic, social, and cultural, that either accelerate Bangla attrition or contribute to its maintenance. First, institutional policies at SEU and SBU were found to be central to shaping language use. SBU has an “English-only” policy strictly both inside and outside the classroom. SEU implements strict English-only rules in classrooms, assessments, and official communications. These policies severely restrict opportunities for Bangla use in academic contexts. Students expressed that even if they wished to use Bangla for explanation or discussion, they felt discouraged due to institutional norms and teacher expectations. This is consistent with Hamid et al.'s (2015) observation that medium of instruction (MOI) policies in Bangladeshi higher education strongly privilege English, creating structural disincentives for L1 use.

Second, social and peer-related factors also played a crucial role. Many participants noted that the prestige attached to English influenced their choices in peer interactions, as speaking

English was often associated with academic excellence and social capital. Peer group dynamics, therefore, reinforced English dominance and normalized code-switching behaviors. However, students who reported active involvement in cultural activities, such as reading Bangla literature, watching Bangla films, or participating in community events, displayed greater resilience in maintaining their Bangla proficiency. This confirms Schmid and Köpke's (2017) argument that attrition is not solely a result of reduced exposure but is mediated by emotional and cultural investments in the language.

Finally, family and home language environments significantly affected outcomes. Students who reported using Bangla regularly at home felt more confident in their L1 abilities, even when their academic Bangla had weakened. Conversely, students from more English-oriented households or families that prioritized English-medium education experienced a sharper decline in Bangla use. The family domain thus functions as a protective factor against attrition, echoing findings that early exposure and sustained home use are key determinants in long-term L1 maintenance (Schmid, 2011).

Altogether, these findings suggest that attrition results from an interplay of institutional pressure, peer norms, and cultural/familial contexts. The interaction of these factors ultimately determines whether students maintain a balanced bilingual identity or drift toward English dominance.

5.1.3 Students' Self-Perceptions and Attitudes Towards Bangla Proficiency

One of the most striking elements of this research is how students perceive their own Bangla abilities and the changes they experience. Across both universities, participants showed

strong awareness of their declining Bangla proficiency, particularly in writing and academic expression. Many admitted that they would struggle to produce a formal essay or academic report in Bangla, even though they felt reasonably fluent in conversational use. This self-reported lack of confidence resonates with Schmid and Karayayla's (2019) findings, which highlight how self-perception and emotional attitudes often mirror actual patterns of attrition.

At the same time, participants expressed a deep emotional attachment to Bangla as a marker of cultural and national identity. Most BM students emphasized that while their academic use had declined, they still felt proud of Bangla as their mother tongue and viewed it as central to who they are. This paradox, acknowledging linguistic decline while affirming emotional and cultural attachment, demonstrates the complex ways in which language attrition intersects with identity. As Alasgarova (2025) notes, bilinguals often maintain symbolic or cultural ties to their L1 even as functional competence diminishes.

Students' perceptions, therefore, reveal a dual process: on one hand, declining academic functionality undermines their confidence and creates anxiety about using Bangla in professional or intellectual contexts; on the other, their sense of cultural belonging sustains Bangla as a vital identity resource. This tension between functional decline and symbolic preservation illustrates the nuanced nature of L1 attrition in EMI settings.

5.2 Recommendations

The findings of this study suggest that English-medium instruction (EMI) policies in Bangladeshi universities, while effective in promoting English proficiency, have unintended consequences for Bangla maintenance. A key recommendation is for universities such as SEU and SBU to adopt a more balanced bilingual approach, where English continues to serve as the

primary medium of instruction. Still, Bangla is incorporated strategically into academic and extracurricular activities. For example, departments could encourage bilingual research projects, reading materials in both Bangla and English, or debates and seminars where students practice academic discourse in Bangla. This would help retain Bangla in academic registers while still equipping students with the English skills necessary for global engagement.

Another recommendation concerns the role of curriculum design and policy planning. EMI universities could revise their language policies to acknowledge Bangla's importance not only as a cultural heritage but also as a tool of intellectual expression. Policies that strictly enforce English-only practices may accelerate attrition by pushing Bangla out of academic spaces altogether. Instead, allowing a limited but meaningful role for Bangla, particularly in courses related to literature, history, or cultural studies, would prevent the erosion of Bangla proficiency while legitimizing bilingual competence as an academic asset. This approach would also align with broader sociolinguistic research that emphasizes the benefits of additive bilingualism, where acquisition of a second language does not come at the cost of the first.

At the student level, awareness-building initiatives are essential. Many participants in this study reported declining confidence in their Bangla writing and formal expression, despite valuing the language symbolically. Universities could organize language clubs, peer workshops, and writing clinics dedicated to Bangla, which would provide safe spaces for students to practice without the fear of being judged against English-only standards. Such initiatives would strengthen not only their linguistic competence but also their sense of pride and identity connected to Bangla.

Finally, policymakers and educational authorities in Bangladesh should recognize the broader implications of L1 attrition for cultural and linguistic diversity. Suppose higher education continues to prioritize English at the expense of Bangla. In that case, future generations may lose proficiency in academic Bangla altogether, narrowing the language's scope of use to informal or symbolic contexts. This risks creating a situation where Bangla is celebrated culturally but weakened academically. To counter this, higher education boards should encourage EMI universities to frame bilingualism as a strength rather than a hindrance, integrating Bangla into policy discussions and institutional frameworks.

These recommendations emphasize the urgent need for EMI universities to rethink their current practices and adopt strategies that safeguard Bangla while continuing to promote English. Such measures would not only support students' linguistic competence in both languages but also preserve their cultural identity, ensuring that graduates emerge as confident bilinguals capable of navigating both local and global contexts.

5.3 Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that Bangla attrition among bilingual students in EMI-based private universities in Dhaka is neither uniform nor total, but rather partial, domain-specific, and influenced by a web of interrelated factors. The most unmistakable evidence of attrition emerged in the academic register of Bangla: students reported significant challenges in writing formal essays, retrieving specialized vocabulary, and constructing grammatically complex sentences. This shows that academic Bangla is most vulnerable, while conversational Bangla used in family and social contexts remains more resilient. In other words, Bangla is not disappearing entirely

from the linguistic repertoire of these students, but its functional range is narrowing, with English increasingly monopolizing the academic and professional spheres.

This research also established that EMI policies and institutional rules function as powerful drivers of attrition, discouraging students from using Bangla in classrooms, assignments, or official communication. However, the extent of attrition varied depending on students' educational background, family practices, and cultural engagement. Those with Bangla-medium schooling and strong home use of Bangla were better able to retain their L1 competence compared to those from English-medium schooling. This highlights that attrition is not merely a mechanical outcome of English exposure, but also mediated by social, environmental, and cultural domains that can either protect or weaken the L1. Another important finding relates to students' self-perceptions and attitudes. Despite acknowledging their declining proficiency, most participants expressed strong symbolic attachment to Bangla as their mother tongue and marker of cultural identity. This demonstrates the paradoxical nature of attrition: students may lose confidence in their ability to use Bangla academically, but they continue to value it as a crucial identity resource. This reflects a broader sociolinguistic reality where language is more than a communication tool; it is also a carrier of belonging, heritage, and cultural pride.

Altogether, the findings suggest that Bangla attrition in EMI universities should not be seen as a passive erosion but as an active reshaping of linguistic practices under institutional, social, and personal pressures. The results underline the urgent need for EMI universities in Bangladesh to adopt a more balanced bilingual model, one that equips students with global English skills without undermining their native language. In doing so, higher education can

promote graduates who are not only competitive internationally but also rooted in their linguistic and cultural heritage.

References

- Akram, A., Khan, A., & Mufti, K. (2023). A Study on Social and Cultural Factors Involved in L1 Attrition among Undergraduate ESL Learners in Pakistan. *Human Nature Journal of Social Sciences*, 4(3), 46–55. <https://doi.org/10.71016/hnjss/qvr35y87>
- Alasgarova, R. (2025). Language Retention and Identity Dynamics: Assessing First Language Attrition in Bilingual Adolescents. *BCE Official Conference Proceedings*. <https://doi.org/10.22492/issn.2435-9467.2024.13>.
- Aqila, R., Laba, I., & Dewi, N. (2024). The Role of Applied Linguistics in Language Attrition at a Bilingual School. *IJOLTL (Indonesian Journal of Language Teaching and Linguistics)*. <https://doi.org/10.30957/ijoltl.v9i1.776>.
- Bolton, K., Botha, W., & Lin, B. (2024). The Routledge Handbook of English-Medium Instruction in Higher Education. In *Routledge eBooks*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003011644>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Chaouch-Orozco, A., & Martín-Villena, F. (2024). Network science reveals the early signs of L1 lexical attrition: Introducing the Lexical Attrition Foundation (LeAF) framework. *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*, 28(1), 43–53. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1366728924000063>
- Cherciov, M. (2011, August 30). *Between Attrition and Acquisition: the Dynamics between Two Languages in Adult Migrants*. <http://hdl.handle.net/1807/29683>

- Cherciov, M. (2013). Investigating the impact of attitude on first language attrition and second language acquisition from a Dynamic Systems Theory perspective. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 17(6), 716–733. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367006912454622>
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. (3rd ed.). SAGE.
- Datta, H. (2012). First-Language attrition in Bengali-English–Speaking individuals. *Perspectives on Communication Disorders and Sciences in Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Populations*, 19(1), 21–28. <https://doi.org/10.1044/cds19.1.21>
- De Leeuw, E., Schmid, M. S., & Mennen, I. (2009). The effects of contact on native language pronunciation in an L2 migrant setting. *Bilingualism Language and Cognition*, 13(1), 33–40. <https://doi.org/10.1017/s1366728909990289>
- Fishman, J. A. (1991). *Reversing language shift: Theoretical and empirical foundations of assistance to threatened languages*. Multilingual Matters. <https://books.google.com.bd/books?id=ah1QwYzi3c4C>
- Green, D. W. (1986). Control, activation, and resource: A framework and a model for the control of speech in bilinguals. *Brain and language*, 27(2), 210–223. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0093-934X\(86\)90016-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/0093-934X(86)90016-7)
- Green, D. W. (2011). Language control in different contexts: The Behavioral ecology of bilingual speakers. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 2. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2011.00103>
- Grosjean, F. (1982). *Life with two languages: An introduction to bilingualism*. Harvard University Press.

- Hakuta, K., & D'Andrea, D. (1992). Some Properties of Bilingual Maintenance and Loss in Mexican Background High-School Students. *Applied Linguistics*, 13, 72-99. <https://doi.org/10.1093/APPLIN/13.1.72>.
- Hamid, M. O., Jahan, I., & Islam, M. M. (2015). Medium of instruction policies and language practices, ideologies and institutional divides: Voices of teachers and students in a private university in Bangladesh. In *Language planning for medium of instruction in Asia* (pp. 144-163). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315779560>
- Hamid, M. O., Nguyen, H. T. M., & Baldauf, R. B. (2015). Language planning for medium of instruction in Asia. In *Routledge eBooks*. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315779560>
- Hasan, M., Yesmin, M., & Hossain, M. (2024). Effects of English Medium Instruction (EMI) on students' academic and speaking performance: comparison between English major and non-English departments. *Ilha do Desterro: A Journal of English Language, Literatures in English and Cultural Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.5007/2175-8026.2024.e100248>.
- Islam, M. S., & Stapa, M. (2021). Students' low proficiency in spoken English in private universities in Bangladesh: reasons and remedies. *Language Testing in Asia*, 11, 1-31. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40468-021-00139-0>.
- Islam, M. T., Hasan, M. K., Ramalingam, S., & Hoque, K. E. (2024). Impact of English language proficiency on local language use among Bangladeshi graduates. *Languages*, 9(4), 134. <https://doi.org/10.3390/languages9040134>
- Jaspaert, K., & Kroon, S. (1989). Social determinants of language loss. *ITL-Review of Applied Linguistic*, (83-84), 75-98.

- Kim, N. S. H. O., & Starks, D. (2008). The role of emotions in L1 attrition: The case of Korean-English late bilinguals in New Zealand. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 12(4), 303–319. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367006908098573>
- Köpke, B., & Schmid, M. S. (2006). Language attrition: The next phase. In *First language attrition* (pp. 1-43). John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Köpke, B., & Schmid, M. S. (2017). The relevance of first language attrition to theories of bilingual development. *Linguistic Approaches to Bilingualism*, 7(6), 637–667. <https://doi.org/10.1075/lab.17058.sch>
- Kumaravadivelu, B. (1999). Critical classroom discourse analysis. *TESOL Quarterly*, 33(3), 453-484. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3587674>
- Lauro, J., Core, C., & Hoff, E. (2020). Explaining individual differences in trajectories of simultaneous bilingual development: contributions of child and environmental factors. *Child Development*, 91(6), 2063–2082. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.13409>
- Lee, S., & O'Grady, W. (2024). Lost and found: Investigating a bilingual child's L1 lexical attrition and recovery. *International Journal of Bilingualism*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13670069241292450>
- Lin, T., & Lei, J. (2021). English-Medium instruction and Content learning in Higher Education: Effects of medium of instruction, English proficiency, and academic ability. *SAGE Open*, 11(4). <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440211061533>

- Ma, Y., & Vanek, N. (2024). First Language Lexical Attrition in a First Language Setting: A Multi-Measure Approach Testing Teachers of English. *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research*, 53(2). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10936-024-10068-7>
- Macaulay, T. B. (1835). *Minute on Indian education*. Government of India. https://www.columbia.edu/itc/meaac/pritchett/00generallinks/macaulay/txt_minute_education_1835.html
- Martín-Villena, F. (2024). First language changes in second language learning. Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7233690>
- Mousumi, M.A., Kusakabe, T. (2021). School education system in Bangladesh. In P. M. Sarangapani & R. Pappu (Eds.), *Handbook of Education Systems in South Asia*, Global Education Systems, Springer Nature. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-3309-5_11-1
- Quirk, E., & Cohen, C. (2025). The Role of Environmental Factors on Grammatical Development in French–English Bilinguals Attending a Dual Language Programme in France. *Languages*. <https://doi.org/10.3390/languages10010006>.
- Ribes, Y., & Llanes, A. (2015). First language attrition: the effects of acculturation to the host culture. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 173, 181–185. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.02.050>
- Sarkar, J. P. S., Karim, A., Kabilan, M. K., & Sultana, S. (2021). A Phenomenological Study of the Language Ideology, Language Management, and Language Practice in English-Medium Universities in Bangladesh: Lecturers' and Students' Voices. *Qualitative Report*, 26(4). 1249-1274. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2021.4448>.

- Schmid, M. S. (2011). *Language attrition*. Cambridge University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511852046>
- Schmid, M. S. (2013). First language attrition. *Linguistic Approaches to Bilingualism*, 3(1), 94–115. <https://doi.org/10.1075/lab.3.1.05sch>
- Schmid, M. S., & Dusseldorp, E. (2010). Quantitative analyses in a multivariate study of language attrition: the impact of extralinguistic factors. *Second Language Research*, 26(1), 125–160. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0267658309337641>
- Schmid, M. S., & Karayayla, T. (2019). The roles of age, attitude, and use in first language development and attrition of Turkish–English bilinguals. *Language Learning*, 70(S1), 54–84. <https://doi.org/10.1111/lang.12361>
- Schmid, M. S., & Köpke, B. (2017). The relevance of first language attrition to theories of bilingual development. *Linguistic Approaches to Bilingualism*, 7(6), 637–667.
<https://doi.org/10.1075/lab.17058.sch>
- Schmid, M. S., & Mehotcheva, T. (2012). Foreign language attrition. *Dutch Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 1(1), 102–124. <https://doi.org/10.1075/dujal.1.1.08sch>
- Schmid, M. S., & Yılmaz, G. (2018). Predictors of Language Dominance: An Integrated Analysis of First Language Attrition and Second Language Acquisition in Late Bilinguals. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 9. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01306>.
- Sultana, S. (2012). Young adults' linguistic manipulation of English in Bangla in Bangladesh. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 17(1), 74–89.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2012.738644>

Toassi, P. F. P., & Lauro, J. (2023). Experimental Studies On Bilingualism and Language Learning. www.scielo.br.

<https://www.scielo.br/j/ides/a/TmL5VjKwJqscSPrNvxvDrSQ/?lang=en>

Van Hell, J., Fikkert, P., Stoehr, A., & Benders, T. (2017). Second language attainment and first language attrition: The case of VOT in immersed Dutch–German late bilinguals. *Second Language Research*, 33, 483 - 518. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0267658317704261>.

Yilmaz, G., & Schmid, M. S. (2012). L1 accessibility among Turkish-Dutch bilinguals. *The Mental Lexicon*, 7(3), 249–274. <https://doi.org/10.1075/ml.7.3.01yil>

Appendix

FGD Questionnaire

Section A: Background and Language History

1. What was the medium of instruction in your school (before university)?
2. How often did you use Bangla and English in your everyday conversations before coming to university?
3. Did your school or family environment encourage speaking in Bangla, English, or both?

Section B: Current Use of Bangla (Academic + Personal)

4. In your daily university life, how often do you use Bangla?
5. In academic settings (classroom, assignments, presentations), do you get any opportunity to use Bangla? Why or why not?
6. Outside the classroom (with friends, clubs, cafeteria, etc.), what language do you mostly use?

Have you ever faced difficulty reading or writing Bangla since entering university? Can you share an example?

7. If you're asked to write a formal paragraph or an essay in Bangla today, how confident would you feel?

Section C: Language Environment and Influencing Factors

9. Does your university have an English-only policy? Does it affect your Bangla use? If so, how does that affect your Bangla use?

10. In your home or community, do people speak more in Bangla or English?
11. How much Bangla content do you engage with (TV shows, books, YouTube, newspapers, social media)?
12. Do you ever avoid using Bangla in academic or any formal or even informal situations? Why?
13. Are there any people (parents, friends, teachers, peers) who influence your choice of language?

Section D: Self-Perception and Language Identity

14. Do you feel your Bangla has changed since you started studying in an English-medium university? How?
15. Which language do you feel more confident or natural using now—Bangla or English? Why?
16. Do you ever feel anxious or hesitant about speaking/writing in Bangla? Can you give an example?
17. Has your sense of identity (as a Bangla speaker) changed during your university life?
18. Do you think it is essential to maintain Bangla proficiency, even in an English-dominant academic environment? Why?

Wrap-Up Questions

1. If your university offered more Bangla-based academic activities or electives, would you participate? Why or why not?

2. Do you have suggestions for how your university can help students maintain both Bangla and English equally?

Language-Based Task

1. Reading Comprehension (Bangla):

Instructions (for Participants):

নির্দেশনা: নিচের অনুচ্ছেদটি মনোযোগ সহকারে পড়ুন। তারপর এর ভিত্তিতে প্রশ্নগুলোর উত্তর দিন।

Reading Passage (Bangla):

প্রযুক্তির ব্যবহার ও আমাদের দৈনন্দিন জীবন

বর্তমান যুগে প্রযুক্তি আমাদের জীবনের অবিচ্ছেদ্য অংশ হয়ে উঠেছে। স্মার্টফোন, কম্পিউটার এবং ইন্টারনেটের মাধ্যমে আমরা তথ্য সংগ্রহ, যোগাযোগ এবং বিনোদনের সব সুযোগ উপভোগ করছি। শিক্ষাক্ষেত্রেও প্রযুক্তির ব্যবহার বাড়ছে, যেমন অনলাইন ক্লাস, ডিজিটাল লাইব্রেরি ও অ্যাসাইনমেন্ট জমা দেওয়া। তবে প্রযুক্তির অতিরিক্ত ব্যবহার আমাদের সামাজিক সম্পর্কে প্রভাবিত করছে। অনেক সময় মানুষ বাস্তব যোগাযোগের চেয়ে ভার্চুয়াল জগতে বেশি সময় কাটায়, যা একাকিত্ব সৃষ্টি করতে পারে। তাই প্রযুক্তির সুফল উপভোগ করতে হলে আমাদের সচেতনভাবে এর ব্যবহার করতে হবে।

Questions to be asked (in Bangla):

1. লেখাটির মূল বক্তব্য কী?
2. লেখকের মতে প্রযুক্তির কোন কোন দিক উপকারী?
3. প্রযুক্তির অতিরিক্ত ব্যবহারে কী ধরনের সমস্যা দেখা দিতে পারে?

4. আপনি কি লেখকের সাথে একমত? ব্যাখ্যা করুন।

2. Bangla Writing Task:

a. English to Bangla Translation

Instructions (for Participants):

Translate the following passage into Bangla. Try to keep the meaning accurate and use proper Bangla grammar and vocabulary.

My daily routine starts early in the morning. I wake up, freshen up, and prepare for my classes. After attending lectures, I spend time in the library or with friends. In the evening, I review my lessons and complete assignments before going to bed.

b. Bangla Sentence Writing

নির্দেশনা: নিচের উল্লেখিত বিষয়টির উপর চারটি বাক্য লিখো।

1. আমার বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় জীবন