

Linguistic imperialism is it
possible for the Chittagonian
local variety to avoid the worse
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File name: avoid_the_worse_consequences_Afra_Anika_Audity_ID_211055009.docx (839.36K)

Word count: 8982

Character count: 50378

**Linguistic imperialism: is it possible for the Chittagonian local
variety to avoid the worse consequences?**



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Date of Submission (Fall 2021)

January 31, 2022

Linguistic imperialism: is it possible for the Chittagonian local variety to avoid the worse consequences?

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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

MA in English

Afra Anika Audity

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Thesis Supervisor: Mr. Golam Kader Zilany

Date of Submission (Fall 2021)

January 31, 2022

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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

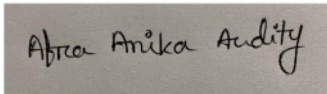
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DECLARATION

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.

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in black ink. The signature is written in a cursive style and reads "Afra Anika Audity".

(Afra Anika Audity)

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Department of English and Humanities

Dedicated to

My beloved parents

And respected teachers

Acknowledgements

My wholehearted gratitude goes to Almighty Allah, with His mercy, I have completed my thesis work. My sincere most thanks go to Mr. Golam Kader Zilany, my respected thesis supervisor ¹ who appreciated the idea of working on linguistic imperialism. He has always been highly kind and patient in making me aware of every possible problem that I might encounter while dealing with this issue. The necessary instructions and materials provided by him literally helped me a lot to understand the situation better and analyze it effectively. Without his keen supervision, it was virtually impossible for me to finish this report successfully in time. Thanks to my friends and fellow thesis mates too, whose helpfulness and encouragement is a real blessing, indeed.

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Abstract

Linguistic imperialism has been a long lasting burning issue in this world since the last few centuries. Whenever a race or a nation dominates over the others, they initiate the linguistic and cultural aggression on the weaker groups, sometimes forcibly and sometimes subtle. During the era of colonization, the advanced nations used force over the countries where they established their colonies and injected the venom of linguistic imperialism, which is why today many countries are still using those languages despite gaining independence. Linguists are leading important research in this regard, which we find in the works of Sultana (2021), Hoque (2011, 2016 & 2018), McCarthy (2013) and Ajepe (2013). They discuss in detail the imperialism of the English language and its eventual evolution of becoming the lingua franca, but also underlines the existence of a subtle shadow of colonization looming over the countries previously colonized by the English. However, Sultana (2021) worked and discussed focusing on the linguistic aggression of Bangla, towards the indigenous ethnic groups of Bangladesh. All these studies are based on Phillipson's theory on linguistic imperialism (1992). This theory argues that linguistic imperialism was driven by economic and political dominance. This is quite true, considering the histories of the nations who suffer from colonialism. Even though Phillipson discussed keeping English in focus as an imperialistic language, the theory can be proved for other non-English languages as well. However, there is still some more to explore in this regard, if we consider the previous works mentioned above. None of them mentions the comparison of the impact of linguistic imperialism on different varieties of a language in a country. That is what our research is going to be, we studied the effect of linguistic imperialism of English on the mainstream Bangla, then the Chittagonian variety of Bangla, afterwards we compared which variety gets more affected by the invasiveness of the foreign language and why. Data were collected primarily through interviews of a few local families and questionnaires, and secondarily from the books and journals and local newspapers. We strived to find a solution whether this imperialism can be stopped, and if not, then whether the phenomenon can be used for benefiting the local languages.

Keywords - linguistic imperialism, lingua franca, colonization, local variety of a language, Bangla language variation

Chapter 1

Introduction

10 Language is one of the most basic components of the culture of a nation or a tribe or a race. Linguists still feel awed when they come across the flow of a language, its origin, and prediction of its eventual evolution in the next few hundreds and thousands of years. Within a region, there might be more than one language for people to speak in. Sometimes, even if the country or the region is monolingual, the language can have different forms and varieties.

It is anyone's right to speak any language or variety, and use it as a medium of education if they want, according to their choice. However, there is always a thousand years old unhealthy and unfortunate practice of imposing a language forcibly on someone or some people. In the past, when a region used to be invaded by outsider forces, the local people had to yield to the conquerors and adopt their language and culture. Eventually, they would forget and lose their own language and culture. Many languages have gone extinct due to this malpractice. Things turned worst perhaps during the colonization era. Imperialistic nations started forcing their languages on the colonized nations to be used as official languages. For example, during the British era, English was forced upon us for almost two centuries. This type of practice is known as linguistic imperialism.

We have become free from British rule for 75 years. Despite that, the shadow of linguistic imperialism is still looming above our society. Our standard Bangla and its varieties are being affected by the linguistic imperialism of English. The young children are having difficulty grasping their native language Bangla and the local varieties. Their vocabulary is lacking the Bangla words, and the existing Bangla words are getting mixed with English, turning their spoken language into a weird Banglish form, which does not help them in any way. Also, this bizarre form of the Banglish version cannot be anywhere near to be counted as a language or a variety. Many researchers and linguists are concerned about this and trying to find a solution for this important issue.

In our research here, we have pointed out the problems faced by local children of Chittagong and the surrounding regions, when they try to get a hold on their learning of Bangla and its Chittagong variation. The problems are more acute among the children who are studying in English medium schools. We are going to conduct a quantitative method for data collection of our research. Some English medium school going children will be interviewed, and their conversation with us will be recorded and analyzed later. After the analysis the actual situation and scenario will be clearer to us.

Chapter 2

Literature review

The uniqueness of Chittagonian and the other varieties spoken by people of Bangladesh have always drawn the attention of notable linguists. Throughout the last few decades, we have witnessed some great researches still being carried on by the notable linguists and anthropologists, i.e., Hoque (2011), Hoque (2016), Uddin and Monjur (2015), Afreen (2020), Rani (2019), Hoque (2012), Sultana (2020) and many others who have been mentioned here.

As we have observed in Hoque (2011), in this subcontinent, English is spoken here with an accent related to the mother tongue of the speakers concerned which pays little attention to sound patterns of English. As the Chittagonian variety is far different from Standard Bangla, the influence of it has worsened the matter. For the data collection, some students were chosen and some of them were asked to deliver a presentation in English, some were asked to read from a passage and the others were engaged in dialogues. The author found that the Chittagonian variety has its own distinct phonetic vowels and consonants, and they have a clear effect on the English pronunciations of the Chittagonian students.

Hoque (2016) questions the actual status of the Chittagonian variety. It is evident, after thorough analysis and research, that the Chittagonian variety is highly different from the other varieties of Bangla. It is quite distinctive, and according to many linguists, it has the potential to be considered as a different language. It has many words in the vocabulary which have no similarity with their Bangla equivalents, even though it does not have its own alphabet. The author raises concern that there are not many people left who speak the original Chittagonian variety. These days, people have started to consider the Chittagonian variety ‘inferior’ to the standard Bangla, and many lexicons from standard Bangla and English are intruding into the Chittagonian variety. If steps are not taken, there is a risk that the original Chittagonian variety may become extinct like Sanskrit.

Official recognition and usage of the Chittagonian variety may help preserve this historical language variety.

Sultana (2014) states that despite the allegation that young generation people are using more English. Bangla and its dialects are getting distorted due to the introduction of English usage in spoken form, that does not have to be meant in a negative way. In fact, after a three month long ethnographic research on 26 students of a university, it turned out that they are using the combination of English and Bangla in a smart, creative and pragmatic way. Each of them were provided with a digital recorder and their conversations and interactions with the people around them had been recorded. Considering the widespread usage of English due to globalization, languages are bound to change, and Bangla is no exception. Sometimes there is not much choice left except letting the English lexicons get into Bangla.

However, according to Hossain and Bar (2015), things should not be viewed lightheartedly. After data collection using interviews and questionnaires from 100 students of Jahangirnagar University, the authors concluded that mixing the languages has its own reasons. They think that the purpose of the young people in this regard is not the best interest for others, which includes showing off, having dominance over others, etc. This may be true for some cases, or some particular ethnographic domain, but that should not hold for all the young people just because they use English more in their spoken language.

According to Basu (2016), English has contributed tremendously to enriching Bangla as language, for example, notable Bengali novelists like Bankim Chandra rose to prominence following the footsteps of Sir Walter Scott, his British counterpart. Also, it is also true that Bangla is at risk of being swept away by English, from the carefree attitude shown by the English speaking people from the urban background. Perhaps that is a bit of an exaggeration, but still the linguists should keep an eye on the directionality of the language and its speakers. .

In another work, Sultana (2012) showed us again the other picture of the popular narrative of encroachment of English upon the local varieties of Bangla. The media sometimes raises hype about complaining about the increasing usage of English in spoken Bangla. They keep bashing the young generation, blaming them for being 'unaware' about colonialism and imperialism of English

during the last three centuries. However, Sultana (2012) says that these propagandists are mixing up globalization with imperialism. Even during the British rule in this subcontinent, mass people had realized the importance of accepting and learning the English language, led by Raja Ram Mohan Ray. Also, nowadays mass people do not seem to have any prejudice against English, unlike the 'pure Bangla champions'. It should be kept in mind that language is like a free flowing river, which makes its own way.

The effect of local varieties of Bangla on spoken English is evident. Hoque (2012) conducted a study of 88 students from different semesters, from English department, having different hometowns. Some random chosen set of words were written before them, and they were asked to pronounce them as correctly as they could. After recording, the phonetic form of their pronunciations were transcribed and compared with the correct forms. It was observed that even in the tertiary level of education in the English department, most of the students are not aware about how far their pronunciation qualities are from the standard one. The pronunciations do not have to be like the British or the American accent, but they should be correct.

McCarthy, Evans and Mahon (2013) conducted a thorough research on the Sylheti-Bangladeshi community living in London, UK. A sample of 37 adults were selected and they were classified into 5 language groups based on their arrival age in the UK and the interaction they have with the British people. It was found that the early arrivals (who migrated to the UK before their age 16) and the second generation of British children had a clear influence of the English vowels on their heritage variety of Sylheti. However, it was also observed that the British children who have interactions with the Sylheti children, had an influence of the Sylheti variety on their vowel pronunciations. This study shows that bilinguals experience an obvious influence on ¹²their first language skills due to the second language they are learning, and it holds true for the other way around.

The age of bilinguals matter a lot for their acquisition and pronunciation of their second language. If they start ¹¹learning their second language at an early age, also ensuring that they are in interaction with the native speakers of that language, then the learners are more prone to pick up the accent of the second language accurately. However, for the late learners, this may not happen, as studied by

Baker and Trofimovich (2005). The authors have conducted two experiments. In the first one, a total of 40 participants (20 monolingual English speakers and 20 monolingual Korean speakers) were selected. Also in the second experiment 40 participants were selected (40 bilingual people speaking both Korean and English). Another highly important point to note is, the influence of the second language on the first language for the bilinguals of the early age.

Popular culture (also dubbed as ‘pop’ culture) beyond the international boundaries can play a significant role in manipulating changes in local languages and their varieties, shown in the work by Sultana and Dovchin (2017). The authors emphasize on the fact that the younger generation of any particular culture is more prone and open to accepting elements from other cultures and languages. Also, in the present era of globalization, the other cultures also exchange the elements, like accents, lexicons, music, etc. In order to conduct this research, two ethnographic groups are selected, youth in Dhaka and Ulaanbaatar. ⁵ Sixty-five students from various social backgrounds ⁵ aged between 17 and 29 were selected. ⁵ These participants kept a digital recorder provided to them and recorded their own conversations in their own terms whenever they spent time with their friends during their class breaks. The inevitable exchange of cultural elements play a significant role for bringing changes in local languages and their varieties.

Hoque, Puteh-Behak and Baharun (2018) demonstrates further influence of English on the Bangla literature and lexicons as well as the dialects of spoken form, as discussed earlier. Sometimes English equivalent words were chosen because there was no Bangla equivalent for that word, or sometimes the Bangla terminology was too hard to remember. Sometimes hybridization of Bangla and English words later led to coinage of new words. A study was conducted by sampling 737 non-overlapping ⁸ lexis from 5 novels and 5 short stories, each of them were written in different times, dating back ⁸ from a long time ago, when ⁸ the presence of English lexis in Bangla literature was negligible. Hoque, Puteh-Behak and Baharun (2021) have added more validation to their work where they had mentioned the borrowing of English lexicons into Bangla literature. They have shown that there are many occasions where the usage of ‘pure’ Bangla words is not possible, sometimes the writers had to import English words directly, sometimes they could make Bangla equivalent versions of those words and sometimes hybridize the words. Perhaps the incoming of lexicons is not something we need to worry about, because this is handled by adults, not children

usually. What we need to be concerned about is, whether the children are losing or ignoring their first language due to linguistic imperialism, and if so, then how to prevent this.

Despite supporting the mingling of English with Bangla and its local varieties, Sultana (2021) has brought our attention to a crucial fact, the encroachment of Bangla upon the languages of the indigenous people of Bangladesh, for example, the Chakma community. This linguistic intrusion is silently and subtly supported by the government and the media. They are deliberately turning a blind eye to the fact that the indigenous people are losing their heritage and culture to the Bangla culture, especially the new generation of indigenous children. They are more interested in learning and practicing Bangla and English and settling in the mainland, resulting in their tribal culture and language being left out and somewhat neglected. The author has expressed concern that there are few members of the Chakma community remaining, who can speak fluent Chakma, or have the knowledge of the written form of their language. If steps are not taken, the Chakma language may be lost forever. The same holds true for other indigenous tribes as well.

Situation in Nigeria is not much better, as we go through the work of Ajepe and Ademowo (2016). There are approximately 400 indigenous languages spoken in Nigeria, many of them are without any written forms. Some of the ⁸languages are spoken by a large number of people, but still the government has not been able to come up with any feasible policy to select one or more local indigenous languages as state language. During the colonization by the British, English intruded upon the Nigerian languages and culture. Socially, politically and economically English took over every sector, successfully. The reason was that English could be used to maintain unity among the indigenous tribes. Many tribes were linguistically mutually unintelligible, and English became popular for maintaining communication and everything. Even the educated people who are not fluent in English, they start making a frantic effort to become so. If there were any public speaker or politician who was bad at English, they were criticized by common people, and labeled as a disgrace. If the Nigerians are able to settle on deciding one or few local languages as their state languages, and start taking measures to decolonize their English, the situation will undoubtedly be better for them.

Some researchers like Mirhosseni (2018) have raised suspicion that English has reached everywhere before through imperialism and colonization, and now it is reaching everywhere through globalization, and English must have a hidden ideology behind it. English is a socially and politically and ideologically laden phenomenon, there is no need to deny the involvement of ideology here. The thing is, to understand whether this ideology is playing a role for enhancing linguistic imperialism. For hundreds of years, English has been being used as a tool for colonization, coercion and oppression. The empires have been exploiting and converting people to their beliefs and spreading their ideologies. During that period, the colonized people had their mentalities changed to an attitude of servitude. This attitude did not change even after they gained independence, which is worse than direct colonization.

The post-colonial period has left many developing countries in a state of 'still existent colonization', as we see in the cases of African countries, like South Sudan, Pakistan, Rwanda, Nigeria etc. In those nations, people still have a special preference for English compared to their standard native language, let alone the local varieties and dialects. As Rasool (2013) pointed out, this 'docile' attitude towards the English culture by the formerly colonized nations is simply worsening their own culture and heritage. And English is playing its role as an imperialistic language even after the independence of those nations. Sometimes the policymakers of those countries are enacting new laws that provide more privilege to a person who is better at English, and this type of attitude often leads to blatant discrimination.

In Nepal, we find that scenario is changing and taking a new turn. As we follow the work of Phyak (2013), we find that the Nepalese government has taken some measures which are quite well-intentioned and helpful for the indigenous communities. In the four years of study, the author adopted a multi-method approach for data collection, having group discussion with parents, school teachers and school management committee members. The children from indigenous minor communities are provided education in schools using their local language. Later on, when they reach the mid school level, they are taught in Nepalese and subsequently, in English. And this practice really helps them ensure their culture and language are not getting lost, rather they are achieving expertise in their local languages as well as in Nepalese and English. Although the mainstream Nepalese parents do not favor this policy very much, and sometimes the teachers insist

students on learning in Nepalese, yet a working policy has undoubtedly made lives better for the minorities. It is understandable that for many children and their families, who do not belong to those minority groups, learning an extra language is a hassle. Perhaps the authorities should leave it optional for the mainstream community to learn the non-Nepalese languages.

Encountering a research work authored by Yamamoto (2002), we come to compare a Japanese family speaking Japanese only, and another, Japanese family that speaks both Japanese and English, the family members are bilingual. The author conducts a survey on them, to determine which language is more dominant at their homes. The survey also contains what people perceive about the families who are bilingual. Japan was never a subject of colonization, however it had invited the Europeans to invest and modernize Japan, and consequently, English started to become popular. The alphabet of English is really short and easy to learn, compared to the Japanese alphabet where it involves learning thousands and thousands of logographic characters.

The opposite scenario is quite common, as Uddin and Monjur (2015) have demonstrated, the varieties of Bangla have their evident effect on the English spoken by the speakers of those varieties. A sample of 48 students were selected from eight regions of Bangladesh, and they were interviewed orally, as well as being provided with questionnaires. Afterwards, the influence of their dialects on their English pronunciations were analyzed. The scenario is similar to what Hoque (2011) had demonstrated, students speaking other local varieties of Bangla have their accent effect on English pronunciation, which are not much better than the Chittagonian students have on their English pronunciation.

Originally English came from the lands of its native speakers, i.e, England. Later during the era of colonization, English was made mandatory forcefully in those countries colonized by English. Later on, Samuell and Smith (2020) showed that other countries like Korea, Japan and Brazil did not have any direct affiliation with the English, still they adopted a policy of making English sort of mandatory, under the pretext of globalization. On the basis of Philipson (1992) and Skutnabb-Kangas (2001), the authors stated that linguistic imperialism by English is still present in a dormant form. The authorities should uphold the local languages, cultures and heritages, and let not them fall victim to the 'imported' imperialism by English. The local people also should be made aware

of the situation and encouraged to pressurize the authorities not to promote the foreign languages unnecessarily.

People become hopeful with the neoliberal ideas of linguistics, but the ³neoliberal system reproduces inequalities for language learners, teachers, and users as well as for multiple languages. However, the perceived superior status of English that often serves as the foundation for linguistic entrepreneurship is considered to be a social imagination, given the complexity of global geopolitics and the multiple directions of global human mobility. Kubota (2020) showed that this so-called 'superior' status of English bestowed by the non-English countries has encouraged it more to continue its linguistic imperialism under the umbrella of neoliberalism. The situation has already been explained by Yamamoto (2002), Rasool (2007) and Mirhosseni (2018).

There are quite a number of articles like Nunan (2003) which state that English is not affecting the non-western languages, ie, Chinese. These claims were termed as biased, and were refuted by Beckett and Mcpharson (2005). They refuted by proving that English is being made obligatory not only for the majority Han Chinese students, but also for the minorities like Uyghurs and Tibetans. The authors voiced their concern that those minority regions are already gripped with poverty and oppression by the autocratic government, but are also being forced to disregard their first languages and adopt Mandarin and English to survive their lives. Linguists have been voicing out their concern for a long time, but the autocratic government does not seem to be interested in paying any heed to their words, apart from carrying out the oppressive policies.

For maintaining effective international communication, non-English countries are putting a great deal of emphasis on English. Thus sometimes English is maintaining its pure form, sometimes being localized, one cannot deny the inevitable encroachment by English culture on the other cultures, ie, Chinese. as shown by Xue and Zuo (2013). However, if the other culture has its own strengths and values, then English will not have much chance of enforcing and encroaching into the local culture. Still, the policy nature of the authorities comes into picture, as explained by Beckett and Mcpharson (2005). The autocratic authorities deliberately demote and disown the local languages and cultures they do not prefer, and enforce policies to oppress people unless they do not adopt the preferred culture of the authorities. Sometimes this type of attitude leads to extremes like ethnic cleansing.

Japan has experienced imperialism by English in different forms during its different times in history. Sometimes the English language and culture started to westernize Japanese culture while Japan was not in the greatest situation, like the post World War II period. Sometimes mostly when Japan is already highly advanced in economy, it is able to resist the cultural aggression of the West. Kubota (1998) discussed this situation in detail and also mentioned quite a number of ways the Japanese can follow. For example, in Japan they can consider teaching a variety of English, which will be free from the cultural elements of the USA and the UK.

We witness a somewhat resembling scenario in Thailand, where according to Kosonan (2008), linguistic imperialism is prevalent upon the local languages, due to English and standard Thai. People living in urban areas are more interested in standard Thai and English, since these are 'prestigious' languages. Gaining fluency in these 'elevates' their socioeconomic status, and this trend has started seeping into rural and remote areas as well, encroaching the local languages like Pattani Malay, Chong, Northern Pwo Karen etc. The indigenous people speaking those languages have a long lasting clash with the government. They demand their languages to be officially recognized and to be used as a medium of education, but the authorities do not even recognise varieties of Thai language except the Standard Thai, let alone allowing the other languages to flourish. However the Chong community is getting support from the linguists, who have actively taken steps to revive the Chong culture, enrich it by extensively flourishing Chong literature.

Not all the countries in the world get affected equally by the imperialism of western languages and the education system. The African countries which were colonized directly by the English speaking countries, had many missionary based schools established for a long time. The children were indoctrinated by the western education and culture for a good amount of time, and the situation did not change much even after the independence of these countries, as Grigorenko (2007) stated. However many Arab countries formed their own education system, not abandoning the western education, but not allowing it to take over their culture and language either. When both the mass people and the authorities are conscious and concerned of the situations, things turn out to be good for all, as we observed from the work of Phyak (2013), Nepal has adopted policies to preserve and promote the local cultures and languages apart from the state languages.

According to Sultana (2012, 2014), Sultana and Dovchin (2017), popular culture and globalization are reasons for the English language influencing the local language (standard Bangla and its varieties), and it should be taken normally and positively. However, Ajepe and Ademowo (2016) states that in Nigeria, after colonization is over, the government and the people themselves are forcing each other to prioritize English over their 400 indigenous languages. Similar type of authority enforced linguistic influence is happening in China (Beckett and Mcpharson, 2005), in Thailand (Kosonan, 2008), also in Bangladesh (Sultana, 2021). We observed from the work of Phyak (2013), Nepal has adopted policies to preserve and promote the local cultures and languages apart from the state languages (a possible solution to the situation mentioned by Sultana, 2021). Kubota (2020), Yamamoto (2002), Rasool (2007) and Mirhosseni (2018) think this is due to ‘inferiority complex attitude’ by the countries which were previously under colonization by ‘superior’ countries. Since English is the lingua franca, some non-English countries use English to maintain effective international communication (Xue and Zuo, 2013). However, for the cases mentioned by Basu (2016), Hoque, Puteh-Behak and Baharun (2018 and 2021), McCarthy, Evans and Mahon (2013), Baker and Trofimovich (2005) and Yamamoto (2002), it is a natural process due to the exposure to a different language at an early age.

From literature review, the problem we identify is the threat of extinction for the native language due to linguistic imperialism by English or other superior languages. The literature we found, they do not discuss the influence of English on local varieties of a language. Our research question is whether there is linguistic imperialism of English over the standard Bangla and Chittagonian variety, and whether the Chittagonian variety is more affected.

Chapter 3

Summarizing literature review for problem identification

According to Hoque (2011), Hossain and Bar (2015), Hoque (2012), Uddin and Monjur (2015) has demonstrated the fact that English pronunciations of different regions of Bangladesh are influenced by those local varieties of Bangla. The researchers undertook thorough and detailed quantitative research and qualitative as well wherever necessary. Interviews, questionnaires, reading tests were used for data collection and these were recorded, later to be analyzed. These literature shows that the pronunciation of the spoken English of the tertiary level students in Bangladesh are far from the proper standard.

According to Basu (2016), Hoque, Puteh-Behak and Baharun (2018 and 2021), English lexicons have been influencing the written form of Bangla literature for a long time, as dated back to the time of Bankim chandra. A sample of ¹⁴novels and short stories were selected. Often ¹⁴it is seen that there is no suitable equivalent words in Bangla for some particular English words. In those cases it is best to assimilate that English word in Bangla and use it correctly. This process actually enriches our language in a positive way. Not only literature, they can influence the dialects of spoken Bangla as well, especially by those who like literature.

¹³McCarthy, Evans and Mahon (2013) showed that ¹³the first generation ¹³of Sylheti children who arrived early in London before age 16 or second generation of Sylheti children who grew up in London, had a clear influence of English vowels on the Sylheti variety of Bangla they speak. Baker and Trofimovich (2005) also showed that similar scenarios can occur, when they conducted research on native Korean-English bilinguals. These Korean people, who are young in age, had effect of English on their native Korean language. It was close to the same for Japan and the Japanese language, as described by Yamamoto (2002).

In the non-English countries, which were previously under colonization rule of English, are under threat of losing their native culture, heritage and language due to linguistic aggression by English, often aided by the local authorities. These type of scenarios are reported by Ajepe and Ademowo (2016) in Nigeria, Beckett and Mcpharson, 2005 in China, Kosonan, 2008 in Thailand, Sultana 2021 in Bangladesh (Affect by Bangla on indigenous Chakma language).

Dataset details and research design

The research is qualitative in nature. A sample of English medium school going students were selected as research subjects. We had conversations with all of them separately, and recorded the conversations. In each recording, we selected a timeframe which includes the most animated part, spoken by our subject. We counted how many words are spoken, how many English words have been used, the same goes for standard Bangla words and Chittagonian words. We also noted and calculated how many English equivalent words have been used instead of their in vogue counterparts of standard Bangla and Chittagonian. Later we analyzed the data we got and calculated the percentage of English words being spoken instead of Bangla and Chittagonian. Also, we provided them with 12 different pictures and asked them to tell us the names of those picture objects, in Chittagonian variety and standard Bangla too, in another set. We recorded their responses, and calculated the percentage of English equivalent words spoken instead of Bangla and Chittagonian equivalent.

Preferred methodology and analysis technique

We prefer our research to be a mix of qualitative and quantitative. Our data collection will be interview based and qualitative, and our result analysis will be done on a quantitative basis. Some English medium students are chosen and interviewed. The questions are asked both in Chittagonian and standard Bangla. The students are encouraged to answer in Chittagonian or Bangla. Their interviews are recorded. Next, they are shown some pictures and asked to identify those in Chittagonian, standard Bangla and English. This method provides solid evidence to our claim and validates our research, since this type of research could be found in literature.

We selected the time frame from the recorded interview where the interviewee spoke for the longest time. From the 1st stage of the record we count how many English words he or she used instead of Chittagonian and how many Bangla words were used and how many Chittagonian words. We will calculate their individual percentages. Then we will calculate the ratio of the ⁹number of Chittagonian words to the number of English words, and the ratio of the number of standard Bangla words to the number of English words. From the 2nd stage of the record, we count how many pictures he or she could not identify in Chittagonian, and how many could not be identified in standard Bangla, and the percentages. This analysis will provide a clear picture of the condition of the Chittagonian variety among the English medium students.

Data collection and analysis

Analysis of recorded interview (first stage):

In the first stage of the interview, I asked our subject some questions in Chittagonian, and encouraged her to answer in Chittagong. I also assured her that if she wants, she can answer in standard Bangla or English.

Here are some examples of the transcribed interview (first stage):

Interviewer (in Chittagonian: “/TUAR SCHOOL KEN JAR?/” (means “how are you getting along with your school?”))

Subject (in standard Bangla): “/AMAR SCHOOL VALO/” (means “I am getting along fine.”)

Interviewer (in Chittagonian: “/TUAR SCHOOLOT JAI CLASS GOIRTE GOM LA NEKI GOROT BOI GOIRTE GOM LA?/” (means “how do you prefer to attend your classes, by going to school or from home?”))

Subject (in standard Bangla): “/SCHOOL E GIYE KORTE VALO LAGE/” (means “I prefer to attend by going to school”)

Analysis of recorded interview (second stage, identification in Chittagonian, standard Bangla and English. The cross marks indicate that our subject could not identify those items in that particular language):

Pictures	Response in Chittagonian	Response in standard Bangla	Response in English
	/KURA/	/MURGI/	“chicken”
	x	/CHORUI?	“sparrow”
	/DEKSI/	/DEKCHI/	“pot”
	/CHOL/	/CHAGOL/	“goat”

	x	/PEYARA/	“guava”
	x	/KOLOMER DHAKNA/	“cap”
	x	/BATI/	“bowl”
	x	x	“plate”
	x	/NARIKEL/	“coconut”
	x	/DHAKNA/	“lid”

	x	x	“mortar”
	x	/SOMUDRO/	“ocean”
	x	x	“Sea beach”

Chapter 4

Findings and discussions

We observed the response of our subject, recorded it and analyzed it statistically according to the way we planned. After the observation and analysis, we compared the situation with the scenarios mentioned in the literature stated before. Following the comparison, we reached a conclusion about whether the Chittagonian variety is facing linguistic imperialism, how bad the situation is, what factors are behind this, and what can be done as a remedy. As we mentioned, our data collection process took place in two stages.

In the first stage, we interviewed our subject, a student of class 9 in a renowned English medium school in Chittagong. Her parents and ancestors are Chittagonian locals for generations, and she was born and brought up in Chittagong. As we know, the local people of Chittagong really prefer to speak in the Chittagonian variety. Therefore we expected our subject to have (perhaps not one of the best, but still) a good command over Chittagonian variety. However, we could not help being surprised at the response of the child.

During the interview, the student was reluctant to speak in the Chittagonian variety. Until we assured her that she does not have to speak in Chittagonian, she barely spoke at all. However, she understands the Chittagonian variety. For example, when I asked her in Chittagonian, “/TUIN JETTE AJUIR THAKO ETTE KI GORO?/” (means “what do you do when you are free?”), she replied in standard Bangla (a bit stutteringly, with some English words), “/‘TEACHER’ AMADERKE BAIRE KHELTE DEY. AMI ‘FRIENDS’ DER SATHE KHELI/” (means “The teacher lets us play outside. I play with my friends.”).

The situation has similarities to the Kosenan (2008) and Sultana (2021), where the natives are unable and almost forget to use their native local languages. The underlying reasons are different. In those cases, authorities enforced the linguistic aggression, directly and indirectly. Here in our

case, globalization, the previous colonization era and ‘self-inferior’ attitude play the role. That attitude has similarities with the situation in Nigeria mentioned by Ajepe and Ademowo (2016), but not exactly the case. In Nigeria, their situation is more authority-enforced. Rather, our situation is more similar to the case mentioned by Sultana and Dovchin (2017), where the change in languages is due to globalization and cultural exchange. However, it looks like the people in Chittagong fail to maintain balance among English, standard Bangla and the local Chittagonian variety, which is why the situation is messed up like this. McCarthy, Evans and Mahon (2013) reported a somewhat similar situation among the Sylheti community in London, where the Bangladeshis speak the Sylheti variety of Bangla, having influence of English in its vowels. There the reason was the surroundings and interaction of the Sylheti children with the local English children. But the children mentioned there could at least speak Sylheti, unlike our case in Chittagong, even though they were influenced by English.

We observed that our subject can speak in standard Bangla, however less fluently. The situation has similarity to the Kosonan (2008) and Sultana (2021), where the natives can speak the state language of their country. Kosona (2008) reports a situation where the indigenous communities in Thailand are forced to learn and use the standard Thai language. According to Sultana (2021), the indigenous tribes in Bangladesh are ‘subtly coerced into’ learning and using standard Bangla. However, in our case, none is openly coercing our subject or the other Chittagonian children for using standard Bangla. The standard Bangla is the state language of our country, used for all academic and official purposes. Probably this is the reason our subject feels ‘motivated’ to use standard Bangla.

Our subject has more usage of English equivalent words than a Bangla medium student. For example, at one point she was saying, /‘SCHOOL’ E AMI ‘CRAFTING’ KORI, ‘TEACHER’ AMADERKE ‘ASK QUESTION’ KORE, AMRA ‘ANSWER’ KORI/” (means “I learn crafting in school, the teacher asks us questions, we answer them...”). However, she uses English with her friends and others as long as she is in school, and is not so used to Bangla literature. Also she is not familiar with the usual common Bangla words and terms used among the teenagers in Bangla medium schools. That is why our subject has to use English equivalent words whenever she is unable to find the appropriate Bangla word while speaking.

The situation has similarities with reports by Basu (2016), Hoque (2018), Hoque, Puteh-Behak and Baharun (2021), English lexicons have been influencing the written form of Bangla literature. Analyzing some notable samples of Bangla literature of different times, they observe that there are not appropriate Bangla equivalent words available for some particular English words, such as “pencil” or “table”. In those cases, the English lexicons are assimilated into Bangla language and are used commonly. Also this situation has similarities to McCarthy, Evans and Mahon (2013), Baker and Trofimovich (2005) and Yamamoto (2002). According to their studies, they observed that young children in bilingual communities have an effect of their second language over their first language. Bangladeshi children growing up in London have a tendency to use English words while they speak in the Sylheti variety of Bangla. The same situation is observed within the Korean-English and Japanese-English bilingual communities.

In the second stage of the interview, our subject identified the picture items shown to her. She managed to say the Chittagonian names of only a few items, like /KURA/ (means /MURGI/ or “chicken”), and /CHOL/ (means /CHAGOL/ or “goat”). For most of the other items, she had to identify them in both standard Bangla and English, such as /PEYARA/ (“guava”). However, there were a few items for which she could not remember the Bangla equivalent words, and used the English terms for those. For example, she identified an item as “mortar”, but she did not know its Bangla equivalent term /HAMANDISTA/.

We also observed that being enrolled into a good quality English medium school, our subject can fluently speak English, with correct grammar and pronunciation. Seeing her uneasiness while she was trying to speak in Chittagonian and standard Bangla, I encouraged her to speak in English about her hobby. Then she happily and fluently described playing table tennis with her little brother, “...it’s just I throw the ball at him and he can’t catch it...”

We had studied some reports by Hoque (2011), Hossain and Bar (2015), Hoque (2012), Uddin and Monjur (2015), where they mentioned the abysmal standard of the spoken English of the college students in Chittagong and other regions in Bangladesh. The quality of pronunciation and grammar

were far from standard among those test subjects. On the contrary, our subject has an excellent command over English, the speaking and the listening skills, at the very least.

After observing and analyzing the data we collected from our interview with our subject, we can say that the Chittagonian variety is not in good condition, especially among the English medium students. It is not like that the Chittagonian variety is difficult to learn or something like that. On the contrary, among the locals, the Chittagonian variety is more like their first language. And they are learning and practicing English and standard Bangla quite easily. If they have good intentions, there should not be any reason for them to be unable to practice and conserve the Chittagonian variety.

Major argument

Linguistic imperialism can occur in different ways and forms. It can vary by regions and times. In ancient times, linguistic imperialism used to be a part of the invasion of stronger nations upon the weaker nations. After winning a battle or a war, the stronger side would force its culture and language upon the defeated side. Afterwards the defeated side and other weaker nations would adopt the language and culture of the stronger side. This oppression and aggression continued throughout the colonization era. After the end of colonization, linguistic imperialism started occurring in a form of globalization. Chittagonian people have stepped into this trap of linguistic imperialism. They are failing to realize the importance of learning and conserving the local Chittagonian variety. This situation is causing them to be unable to maintain balance between foreign and local culture. Therefore, the Chittagonian local children are reluctant to learn the Chittagonian variety. Consequently, the Chittagonian variety of Bangla is on the verge of dysfunction.

Recommendations

The local people, as well as the authorities can take measures to conserve and reanimate the Chittagonian variety among the children who are losing interest in it. Especially, the Chittagonian local people must realize the importance of conservation of their native variety of language. They have a 'self-inferior' attitude, and a tendency to look down upon and neglect their own asset of this language variety and culture. They should change this attitude of theirs.

According to Phyak (2013), the Nepalese government is taking some steps to conserve their local languages and varieties. The children from indigenous minor communities are provided education in schools using their local language. Later on, when they reach the mid school level, they are taught in Nepalese and subsequently, in English. And this practice really helps them ensure their culture and language are not getting lost, rather they are achieving expertise in their local languages as well as in Nepalese and English.

Our government can also adopt similar, even better policies to save the historical Chittagonian variety of Bangla. At least the Chittagonian people are not from the minority communities like indigenous tribes. On the contrary, the Chittagonian people are a very important part of the mainstream. They have centuries old heritage and culture. The Chittagonian people are holding highly important places among the authorities themselves. They do not need policies from the authorities to conserve their Chittagonian variety. All they need is a sense of consciousness and common sense. It is important for them to understand the necessity of preservation of the Chittagonian variety. They need to let go of their colonized inferior attitude and feel proud of their own culture and heritage. It is not like they need to stop excelling in English. Rather, they should have a good command over both English and the Chittagonian variety, as well as the standard Bangla. This sense should be instilled into the minds of young children.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

A language can be influenced by some other language due to various types of factors. We have observed these factors and causes, such as linguistic imperialism. Later we assumed that these factors might hold true for the local varieties of a language as well, for example, the Chittagonian variety of Bangla. We conducted a thorough research on the Chittagonian variety and attempted to identify the factors which are affecting the variety, especially the role of linguistic imperialism by English. Also, we have noted that there are multiple ways of linguistic imperialism to affect a language or its variety. For example, sometimes it can happen by direct colonization, like during the British rule over this subcontinent a couple of centuries ago. Sometimes, in the countries which used to be colonized once upon a time, the language and culture of the colonizing nation is still dominant there. The local people being unable to revive and reestablish their own culture, the linguistic imperialism continues to prevail there, like Nigeria. In some cases, the local authorities start linguistic oppression which makes them no better than the colonizers. They continue to enforce the previously colonizing culture upon people, similar to what is happening in Nigeria and Hong Kong. If there are multiple languages and cultures in the country, the authority adopts policy to enforce their preferred language forcibly upon mass people, as we see in Thailand. A somewhat similar scenario is observed here in Bangladesh as well, where the indigenous tribes are the victims of linguistic imperialism here. The authorities do not ‘force’ the indigenous people to learn Bangla and abandon their native languages, rather adopt some shrewd policies. They include the artificially caused lack of opportunities for those indigenous people who do not want to learn Bangla, and making no attempt to create any opportunity, turning a blind eye to their sufferings. Sometimes, due to globalization, people are exposed to foreign culture, and cultural exchange can occur bilaterally, like Sylheti community having an effect of English on the Sylheti variety of Bangla (and vice versa) or unilaterally. Analyzing all the reports, and collecting and analyzing data by ourselves, we have identified the reason behind Chittagonian children being reluctant to speak in Chittagonian and preferring English. Due to our country being under colonization once upon a

time, there is a 'self-inferior' attitude in our mentality. The wave of globalization has caused the Chittagonian people to look down upon their native language variety, making them unwilling to practice it. Our data collection method and analysis is efficient, which provides a clear picture of the situation of standard Bangla and the Chittagonian variety being affected by English. It also raises concern how the children are losing their culture and language elements. All of these situations can be attributed to the blatant linguistic imperialism going unchecked on our culture and language.

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