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An exploratory study of the foreign language learning environment in a
Bangladeshi madrasah

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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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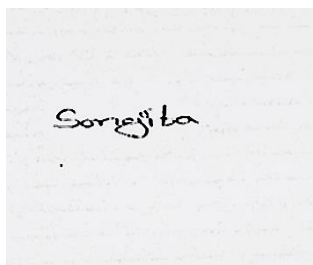
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Declaration

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 acknowledgment of collaborative research and discussions.

A photograph of a handwritten signature in black ink on a light-colored, textured background. The signature is written in a cursive style and reads "Songita Sarkar".

Songita Sarkar

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Foreign language learning scenario among Madrasah students in Bangladesh: an exploratory study

Abstract

The objective of this study is to document the foreign language learning scenario among madrasah students in Bangladesh. While students of Bangla and English medium are struggling to deal with two languages for education, madrasah students deal with three languages simultaneously: Bangla, English and Arabic. Bangla is their mother tongue, through which they converse. In the recent years, the government of Bangladesh has made the English language mandatory for every single stream of education. Arabic is also a compulsory subject for madrasah institutions. However, it is not easy task to deal with three languages at the same time. This study employs an exploratory research design using qualitative research methods such as classroom observation, semi-structured interviews with madrasah teachers and focus group discussion with students and explores how the English and Arabic languages are taught in a Bangladeshi Aliya madrasah. The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify common themes and patterns related to the topic. Findings reveal that, the students are less proficient in English but more in Arabic; although English and Arabic are both foreign languages, but the teaching methods are different; even their class performance in the two foreign language classes was different. Although madrasah students are less proficient in English and more in Arabic languages but they can overcome by the support of the teacher and some necessary opportunities. This study concluded with recommendation for addressing the challenges and obstacles madrasah students face when learning English and Arabic as foreign languages.

Keywords

Exploratory research, Teaching method, Importance of language, Performance and obstacles, Anxiety, Foreign language, Aliya madrasah.

Chapter- 1

Introduction

According to Bartolomé (2021), a foreign language is a language that is not the native or primary language of the speaker and is often associated with a different country or culture. American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (2022) defined, a foreign language as any language that is not commonly spoken in one's own country or region and is typically learned as a second or additional language." Further Gao (2022) elaborated that, a foreign language is a language that is not widely spoken in the region where one resides, and is typically acquired through study or exposure to speakers of the language from a different culture or country. To sum up, a foreign language means a language that is not the first or native language for the native speaker and is often connected with another country or culture. It is usually learned as an another or second or additional language and offers amenities or opportunities for communication to others or cultural exchange and personal growth. According to Ara (2020), English has become the second most important language in Bangladesh. Although it's a foreign language for us but for the study purpose now it has become our second language. Due to its immense implication and importance, every student has to know this English language though it's a foreign language. But as a madrasah student, every student has to learn two foreign languages - English and Arabic simultaneously. In language learning, most of the time we talk about language efficiency and language rules or methods. According to Ruman (2021), language skills include: speaking, listening, reading, and writing and the language systems cover vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar and discourse. In most cases people feel most expedite with speaking in their mother

tongue as it is the language that they have learned naturally. To speak is therefore naturalistic for almost all the people and not something that we bother to think about. When we speak, at the same time we also ask for other's attention, and share our own thoughts and feelings with other people. In other words, it is utterance what makes us visible and is an extensive part of our convivial life. To learn a new language is therefore a massive performance which opens up doors to numerous new opportunities and experiences. According to Ashrafuzzaman et al. (2021), English is deliberated as a lingua franca and a global language or imperative language. Rahman et al. (2021) further added that, over 350 million people envisage English as their primary language and on an average above 430 million people demand it their second language. Ruman (2021) found that, in all streams of education, English is taught as an obligatory subject in Bangladesh. In Bangladesh, it is deliberated either as a second language (Golam & Kusakabe, 2018) or a foreign language (Akteruzzaman & Islam, 2017) since nothing is clearly alluded regarding the state of English in the constitution of Bangladesh (Zaaira, 2020). Again Rahman et al. (2021) added that, English is repeatedly used language after Bangla, the racial language, in the government and non-government offices, education, and jobs. For which the stature of this language in Bangladesh is boundless.

According to Rahman et al. (2021), almost in all the segment of education English language is taught like an obligatory subject. He also added that, realizing this importance also most of the Aliya madrasah in Bangladesh focused on Arabic and Bangla language. They very proudly think that focusing on Arabic and Bangla language is enough for them, because most of their teachers are taught in the same way. Further Rahman et al. (2021) added that, although Aliya madrasah students pursued the English curriculum, syllabus, and materials same as the students of general

and vocational streams, but systematically they are weak in the English language. And both English and Arabic are foreign languages, they treat these two languages differently.

Outline of the dissertation

This dissertation is divided into 5 chapters. In chapter 1, I discussed the contemporary picture of teaching of English and Arabic as foreign language in this continent and then I focused on the madrasah education system as this is the research context of my study. In the background section, the historical background of the English and Arabic languages was discussed along with an overview of the contemporary education system in Bangladesh. Following this, the statement of the problem was presented, which focused on the issue of students in Bangladeshi madrasahs struggling with learning foreign languages, resulting in conflicts. In chapter 2, I reviewed relevant literature on the key issues such as importance of language, teaching methods, teacher-students' engagement, obstacle and performance related to foreign language learning. In chapter 3, I detailed research design, participants, data collection, data analysis and limitations of the methodologies used. Chapter 4 presents, the analysis of findings where I have presented and analyzed various data sources to gain extensive understanding of the research problem. These data sources include observation, cross comparison between two classes, focus group discussions with students, and interview findings. The analysis of these data sources has provided valuable insights into research problem. Chapter 5 includes, the conclusions and recommendations of the study and outlines the further scope of research.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Historical background of English and Arabic languages

In today's globalized world, foreign language learning has become a progressively monumental thing. Bangladesh, as a flourishing country, recognizes the implication of foreign language efficiency in its education system, particularly in Arabic and English. The country's education system plays a vital role in providing education to a large number of students, including those attending madrasahs or Islamic religious schools across the nation. However, little is known about the foreign language learning scenario among madrasah students in Bangladesh.

According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (2018), Arabic is the second most ordinarily spoken language in the world and maintains a special place in the Islamic faith. Therefore, Arabic language learning is strengthened in madrasah education. On the other hand, English is deliberated a global language and is decisive for higher education and service opportunities. According to Hussain & Kabir (2018), the teaching and learning of foreign languages in madrasahs are often plentiful due to the lack of capitals and trained teachers. This study aims to investigate the current foreign language learning scenario among madrasah students in Bangladesh, with a particular focus on Arabic and English languages.

History of Arabic and English languages

Arabic is one of the primitive and most powerful languages in the world, with an affluent cultural and linguistic heritage. It is a part of the Semitic language family and is spoken by more than 420 million people worldwide, primarily in the Middle East and North Africa (Ahmed ,2016; Wahdan et al. 2020). In Bangladesh, Arabic is the second most mostly spoken foreign language after English, and contains a special position in the Islamic faith. According to Miah (2014), the adopt of Arabic in Bangladesh can be marked back to the 7th century when Arab merchants established trade relationship with the Chittagong territory of the country. In the 13th century with the advent of Muslim rulers in Bangla, the Arabic language acquired prominence as

a language of religion, education and administration. Islamic religious schools or madrasahs, were established to shift education in Arabic language, Islamic studies, and other subjects. Today, Arabic language education remains an integral part of the madrasah education system in Bangladesh. The Ministry of Education in Bangladesh has avowed the importance of Arabic language education and has comprised it as an obligatory subject in the madrasah education curriculum. Arabic is furthermore a language of international legation, as it is the official language of the Arab League and is widely used in the Islamic world. Ahmad (2016) further added that, the consideration of Arabic language education in Bangladesh cannot be amplified. It qualifies students to read and comprehend the Holy Quran, the central religious text of Islam. It also provides entrance to a vast repository of Islamic literature, philosophy, and history, which are written in Arabic. Moreover, Arabic language proficiency is unavoidable for those who desire to pursue higher education or employment advantages in the Middle East. The Arabic language has a flourishing and fascinating history, and its value in Bangladesh cannot be disregarded. With its relevance to Islamic studies and international diplomacy, Arabic language education has become an essential part of the education system in Bangladesh. Between Bangladesh and the Arab World, it is crucial to continue investing in the development of Arabic language education to promote intercultural understanding and foster greater cooperation.

English language has become an unavoidable component of modern life, globally. With its roots marked back to the Germanic language family, English has a long and impressive history, spanning several centuries. It is one of the most extensively spoken languages in the world, used as the primary language of communication in business, education, and diplomacy.

According to Karim (2017), English was introduced during the colonial period when the British East India Company gained control of the region in the late 18th century in Bangladesh. English

was used as a language of administration and trade, and its influence continued to grow during the British Raj. English medium education was introduced in Bengal in 1835 with the establishment of the Calcutta University, and the language became a crucial medium of instruction in higher education. According to Ahmed et al. (2017), English continues to play a vital role in Bangladesh, serving as a global language of communication, education, and commerce. According to Sultana (2019), the language has become a symbol of social status and intellectual sophistication, and proficiency in English is considered essential for higher education, employment opportunities, and access to global networks and English language proficiency has become a significant challenge in Bangladesh's education system, with limited resources and trained teachers available to meet the growing demand. She also added that, the government has taken several initiatives to improve English language education, including the introduction of English as a compulsory subject in primary and secondary schools, and the establishment of language centers across the country. The importance of English language proficiency cannot be overstated in today's interconnected world. It provides access to global opportunities and resources and serves as a bridge between cultures and communities. Therefore, it is imperative that Bangladesh continues to invest in English language education to empower its citizens and compete in the global arena.

1.1.2 Contemporary education system in Bangladesh

According to Ruman (2021), by the medium of instruction, pre-tertiary education in Bangladesh can be classified into three streams: Bengali medium, English medium, and Islamic faith-based or madrasa education. Bangla medium education system has three more levels- primary, secondary and higher education. On the other hand, English medium section can be divided into two more section as- English medium and English version. English version schools follow all the

thing from Bangla medium although they convert everything in English whereas - the English medium schools follow the things from British curriculum (Ara, 2020). Lastly, Islamic faith-based or madrasah education. There are two further streams in the madrasah education—Aliya and Qawmi and Qawmi madrasah which was evolved more than 150 years ago in the Indian subcontinent by the protective part of the Muslim society as a rejection of the British education policy (Hussain, 2018). This stream mainly offers religious education such as memorizing the Quran and analysis of the Quran and Hadiths and does not follow government-approved curricula and (Ruman, 2021; Barkat et al., 2011).” In the 18th century and early in the 20th century, the Aliya madrasah system constructs a hybrid curriculum and administration system that was founded by the British colonial government in the Indian subcontinent, the British government publicized the “new scheme madrasahs” to draw Muslim students in large numbers” (Roy et al., 2020). The new design madrasahs were gradually resolved into Aliya madrasah in the 1960s and appeared under the Bangladesh Madrasah Education Board in 1978 after liberty and these madrasahs offered an abbreviation of religious and secular subjects that pledged access to employment to its graduates in the accusing sociopolitical context (Roy et al., 2020).

1.2 Statement of the problem

Foreign language learning has become increasingly important in the modern world due to globalization and the growing need for intercultural communication. And Bangladeshi Madrasah students encounter significant challenges in expressing themselves effectively in spoken and writing English due to limitations in their educational system. Madmud and Uddin (2019) is supported with these findings asserting that, the traditional madrasah curriculum focuses for the most part on religious education, with low emphasis on English language proficiency.

According to Rahman et al. (2021), it is a sub-stream in the madrasah education which is called Aliya madrasah education and it is realized that the students of this sub-stream are little proficient in English than any other students of other section such as general or vocational education. But another big obstacle is fear of English, this fear creates anxiety in them. And later this anxiety took a dire shape and it is almost impossible to get out of it. On the contrary, environment plays another role. If a madrasa student can easily adapt himself to a normal educational environment, then everything becomes easier for him. Then he tries to overcome his weakness and fear. However, the foreign language learning scenario among madrasah students in Bangladesh has not been widely studied. According to Alam et al. (2019), Madrasahs, which are Islamic religious schools, have a unique education system that focuses on religious studies and Arabic language learning. As a result, the teaching and learning of other foreign languages, such as English, are often disregarded in madrasahs. This raises questions as regards on the effectiveness of language learning in madrasahs and the learners' preparedness to take part in a globalized world. Therefore, it is crucial to inquire the foreign language learning scenario among madrasah students in Bangladesh to mark out the challenges and opportunities for improving language education in these institutions.

Research Questions

1. What is the present foreign language learning scenario among madrasah students in Bangladesh?
2. What are the challenges or obstacles and opportunities for improving language education in these institutions?

Chapter- 2

Literature review

Foreign language learning has deserved an efficiency skill for individuals seeking to repel against in the global market. Among the multiplex languages taught in schools globally, English and Arabic are two of the most important languages, given their wide use in universal communication and trade. In the context of Bangladesh, wherein the multiplicity of the people are Muslims, Arabic is an essential language for religious studies and communication with Arabic-speaking countries. However, according to Karim & Hoque (2019), this language also used for employment purposes, primarily in the Gulf Countries, where a large number of Bangladeshis look for employment opportunities and there is a huge demand for Arabic language proficiency in the field of job market, hospitality, oil and gas industries, education, construction etc. Additionally, English is the language of higher education and the medium of instruction in most international universities. The usefulness of teaching methods and teacher-student engagement has been judged as essential factors that affect language learning outcomes. Active engagement in learning actions and interaction with the teacher improves student learning (Siguaw, 2011; Zaghloul, 2017). It is also found that, there are countless obstacles that hinder the learning process, including limited access to resources, lack of interest, and inadequate language proficiency of the teacher (Almizel & Chaichan 2016; Hossain & Hasan 2019). Madrasahs, religious educational institutions in Bangladesh, have an unexampled role in the foreign language learning scenario. Accordin to islam et al. (2020), while some madrasahs provide English language education alongside Islamic studies, Arabic language education is the primary focus in most madrasahs. The performance of students in learning both languages are an

important anxiety for educators and policymakers, conferred the increasing need for these languages in the global arena. Therefore, this literature review aims to investigate the foreign language learning scenario among madrasah students in Bangladesh, with a focus on the importance of Arabic and English language, teaching methods, teacher-student engagement, obstacles and performance of learning.

Importance of language

Foreign language learning has suited a vital aspect of education, particularly in the Madrasahs of Bangladesh. The importance of English and Arabic languages as foreign languages has been discussed broadly among educators and linguists. Foreign language learning has become an inevitable part of education in many countries. In Bangladesh, these Madrasahs are not also exceptional to this trend, and English and Arabic are two of the most popular foreign languages that are taught in these institutions. This present literature view aims to experiment the significance of learning English and Arabic languages as foreign languages in the context of Madrasah education in Bangladesh.

English is a universal language that is widely employed in different domains, including education, business, science and politics (Crystal, 2003; Rahman et al.,2021). Learning English as a foreign language has become an essentiality in today's world, and its significance in the behalf of Madrasah education cannot be neglected. It has been noticed that the multiplicity of the international academic journals, books, and articles are written in English. Thus, the intellection of the English language naked up a broad horizon of opportunities for Madrasah students to access different sources of knowledge. Golam and Kusakabe (2018) also added that, in this

country English language considered as a foreign or second language as English is the second most widely spoken language after Bangla. Although Zaaaira (2020) found that, there is no constitution mentioned regarding the status of English language yet. But Rahman, A.R.M.M. et al (2021) mentioned that, realizing the importance of English language, National Education Policy (NEP)- 2010 also accepts this language as a compulsory subject from primary to graduate levels in general and Aliya madrasah education. Moreover, learning English qualifies students to communicate with folk from different cultures and countries, thereby broadening their worldview and later it accesses to higher education and also better jobs and business (Wulyani et al. 2019; Morgana et al. 2020). English language skills are crucial for job opportunities in different sectors, including the hospitality, service industry, and IT . Therefore, Madrasah students who are proficient in English language skills have a better chance of success in the job market.

According to Wahdan et al. (2020), Arabic is one of the six primary languages and one of the most widely spoken languages globally, with over 420 million speakers worldwide. It is the language of the Quran, the holy book of Islam, and has significant religious and cultural consideration for Muslims worldwide. It is also the language of many Islamic countries who practice Arabic as their official language and religious rituals. In the context of Madrasah education, learning Arabic is crucial for students to understand the teachings of Islam and Islamic literature. Furthermore, the Arabic language's knowledge is essential for those Muslims who want to perform Hajj, Umrah, and other religious activities. Arabic language efficiency also enables students to communicate with people from Arab countries and also understand their traditions and culture. Madrasah students who are proficient in Arabic language skills have best opportunities to work in religious institutions, NGOs, and other organizations that deal with Arab

countries. On the other hand, Zurqoni et al. (2020) opines that, Quran is called “the mother of all knowledge”. It is believed that the answer to any question and even the solution to all problems can be found in the Quran. Therefore, it is quite impossible to write down the importance of the Quran with a few words.

In Bangladesh, Madrasahs are the place where students join for religious educational institutions and learn Islamic studies along with several subjects and foreign language learning in madrasahs is mainly focused on Arabic and English language. According to a study by Jahan and Rashid (2019), English and Arabic are the two most commonly taught foreign languages in Madrasahs. Jahan and Rasid (2019) also found that, however, the foreign language learning scenario in Madrasahs is not up to the mark compared to other educational institutions. The study reported that the curriculum and teaching methodology used in Madrasahs do not adequately address the challenges of foreign language learning. According to Haq (2016), the demand for learning English is high among Madrasah students as it is a prerequisite for higher education and employment opportunities. However, Haq (2016) also found that, the lack of qualified teachers and teaching resources, along with the traditional teaching methods used in Madrasahs, hindered the effective learning of English.

Learning English and Arabic languages as foreign languages is crucial for Madrasah students in Bangladesh to entrance various opportunities for employment, education and cultural exchange. The present foreign language learning scenario among Madrasah students is not satisfactory, and there is a gap to introduce novelty and interactive teaching methods to raise the foreign language skills of Madrasah students. It is necessary to provide the important resources and training facilities to simplify the learning of English and Arabic languages to confirm the students' prosperity in their future endeavors.

Teaching methods

In Bangladesh, Madrasah education provides an important role in implementation the country's education system. However, foreign language learning in Madrasah has been a less explored area. This literature review aims to inquire the teaching methods used in Madrasahs for foreign language learning and the scenario of foreign language learning among Madrasah students in Bangladesh. Madrasahs in Bangladesh is traditionally followed the Quranic method of memorization and replication for teaching Arabic and Islamic studies (Bari et al., 2015; Hossain et al., 2018). However, this method may not be enough effective for foreign language learning. According to Kausar and Siddique (2019), the traditional teaching methods used in Madrasahs for foreign language learning are teacher-centered, and the focus is on grammar rules and memorizing vocabulary. The researchers found that the use of audio-visual aids, communicative language teaching methods, and interactive activities were limited in Madrasahs. In contrast, Ahmed and Hossain (2018) found that some Madrasahs have started incorporating communicative language teaching methods for foreign language learning. The study also found that Madrasah teachers are increasingly using audio-visual aids, group work, and role-playing activities to make foreign language learning more engaging and effective. Kausar and Siddique (2019) found that the majority of Madrasah students in Bangladesh face difficulties in speaking, writing, and understanding English. The researchers disclosed that Madrasahs need to apply effective teaching methods and provide opportunities for students to exercise speaking and writing English.

On the other hand, teaching methods are essential to achieve effective learning results in foreign language learning scenarios among madrasah students in Bangladesh. Effective teaching methods can be helpful for students to develop better language proficiency, improve their

cognitive abilities, and enhance their overall academic performance. Therefore, this chapter also reviewed the teaching methods used in foreign language learning scenarios among madrasah students in Bangladesh in the following section. Several teaching methods are used in foreign language learning, including grammar-translation method, communicative language teaching, task-based language teaching, content-based language teaching, and blended learning. Each method has its own strengths and weaknesses, and the effectiveness of the method depends on various factors, such as the teacher's expertise, students' learning styles, and the learning environment.

Audio-lingual method: The Audio-lingual Method or The Army Method developed to teach foreign languages to soldiers during 2nd World War. This method emphasizes the oral teaching through repetition, pattern drills and mimicry. According to Richards & Rodgers (2014), this method helps to develop oral language skill through repetition, drilling and memorization. Still now this method is prevalent in madrasah education.

Grammar-Translation Method: According to Richards & Rodgers (2001) and Brown (2007), the grammar-translation method is one of the traditional methods used in foreign language teaching. It focuses on learning the grammatical rules and translating the language from the target language to the native language. This method is still prevalent in madrasah education in Bangladesh. However, this method has received criticism due to its need of focus on communication skills and also the over-emphasis on translation.

Communicative Language Teaching: According to Larsen-Freeman (2000), the communicative language teaching method emphasizes communication as the primary goal of language learning, Richard & Rodgers (2014) also showed the same thing. It focuses on increasing students' speaking and listening skills by meaningful activities with real-life scenarios.

This method is used in lots of modern language schools and now it is becoming exoteric in madrasah education in Bangladesh. This method has been found to be useful in improving students' communication skills, motivation, and engagement.

Task-Based Language Teaching: According to Willis & Willis (2007), task-based language teaching (TBLT) is another method that focuses on developing students' communication skills through task-oriented activities. This method environs the use of authentic materials and for real-life situations to flourishing language learning. It has been found to be efficient in improving students' motivation, engagement, and language proficiency.

Content-Based Language Teaching: According to Snow, Met & Genesee (1989), content-based language teaching (CBLT) is a method that integrates language learning with subject matter. This method focuses on teaching language through the content of the subject matter. This method has been found to be effective in improving students' language proficiency and academic performance.

Total physical Response: Asher (2000) said that, total physical response (TPR) is a method that helps learners remember and understand new vocabulary and grammar structure through different physical movements. This approach helps those young learners who have less literacy skills or proficiency and it allows them to engage with the language in a concrete and memorable way.

Various teaching methods are engaged in foreign language learning contexts for madrasah students in Bangladesh. These comprehend the grammar-translation method, communicative language teaching, task-based language teaching, content-based language teaching, and blended learning. According to Aziz and Rahman (2018), the effectiveness of these methods depends on

various factors, such as the students' learning styles, teacher's expertise, and the learning environment. Therefore, it is crucial to choose the right teaching method that suits the students' needs and the learning context. The traditional teaching methods that is used in Madrasahs for foreign language learning may not be always effective. According to Hossain and Islam (2018), the use of communicative language teaching methods and task-based language teaching have become most popular in recent years. But audio-visual aids, and interactive activities can make foreign language learning more engaging and effective. According to Hossain and Islam (2018), the need of qualified teachers and teaching resources, along with the need for learning English, is a challenge in Madrasahs. Therefore, Madrasahs in Bangladesh demand to adopt effective teaching methods and provide opportunities for students to practice speaking and writing foreign languages to improve their language proficiency.

Teacher & Students engagement

Foreign language learning is an imperative aspect of education in Bangladesh, particularly in madrasahs, where students learn Arabic and English as foreign languages. The engagement of both the teacher and the students is very important for successful foreign language learning.

Engagement of the teacher is an essential component of successful foreign language learning. Several studies have reported that the teacher's pedagogical practices and instructional methods play an important role in inventing an engaging learning environment. Akter (2020) found that teachers who use interactive teaching methods, such as group work, discussions, and project-based learning, create a more engaging learning environment. Additionally, Rahman et al. (2019) found that teachers who use authentic materials, such as videos and real-life examples, increase

student engagement and motivation. On the other hand, student engagement is another important factor in foreign language learning. Studies suggest that students who are attached in their learning process have a best chance of achieving success. Alam et al. (2021) found that, students who participate in interactive activities, such as games, role-plays, and debates, show higher levels of engagement and interest in learning the foreign language. Furthermore, students who perceive that the teacher is responsive to their needs and interests are more engaged in the learning process (Hassan & Mahmud, 2020).

Several factors may get into the engagement of both teachers and students in the foreign language learning scenario. Uddin and Rahman (2020) identified lack of resources, including teaching aids and materials, as a significant factor that affects teacher engagement. Similarly, Alam et al. (2021) also added that, “a lack of motivation, interest, and previous knowledge of the foreign language has been identified as factors that affect student engagement.” The engagement of both teachers and students is an essential factor in foreign language learning among madrasah students in Bangladesh. Research suggests that those teachers who use interactive teaching methods with authentic materials and who are responsive to their students requires and interests can make a more engaging learning environment. Similarly, those students who participate in the interactive activities and perceive with their teachers are responsive to their needs are more engaged in the learning process. Several factors can affect teacher and student engagement, including lack of resources, motivation, interest, and previous knowledge of the foreign language.

Obstacles and performance

Foreign language learning is a very challenging task, particularly for those students who are unknown with the language. In Bangladesh, where the medium of instruction is primarily

Bangla, learning a foreign language such as English or Arabic can be particularly challenging for madrasah students. Similarly, Ahmed and Hasan (2019) conducted a study on the English language proficiency of Madrasah students in Bangladesh. The study found that most Madrasah students have a poor command of the English language, which affects their academic and career prospects. The study also found that the lack of exposure to English outside of the classroom is a significant barrier to learning the language. According to Islam and Siddique (2021), the primary obstacle faced by madrasah students while learning English and Arabic is the lack of exposure to the language outside the classroom. Most madrasah students in Bangladesh come from low-income families and have limited access to resources such as books, the internet, and English-speaking individuals, which makes it difficult for them to develop their language skills.

Furthermore, Khan (2021) showed that, English and Arabic have different grammar structures and syntax than Bangla, which can cause difficulties in mastering the language.

According to Hasan et al. (2020), the lack of exposure and differences in grammar structure, poor teaching methodology can also hinder students' language learning progress. Sarwar (2019) added that, the traditional rote learning method used in many madrasahs is not suitable for language learning, as it does not encourage students to think critically or practice their language skills. Instead, a communicative approach that emphasizes interaction and practical application of the language is more effective.

Despite the obstacles, some madrasah students have shown impressive performance in learning English and Arabic. According to Akhter (2021), factors such as motivation, self-efficacy, and a supportive learning environment can contribute to language learning success. Students who are motivated to learn and have high self-efficacy beliefs are more likely to engage in language learning activities, seek help when needed, and persist in their efforts to improve their language

skills. Learning a foreign language such as English or Arabic can be challenging for madrasah students in Bangladesh. The lack of exposure to the language, differences in grammar structure, and poor teaching methodology are some of the obstacles they face. However, with proper motivation, self-efficacy, and a communicative approach to teaching, some students have shown impressive performance in learning these languages.

There might be some other issues also to connect with this study. However, without reviewing these themes in these chapter- importance of language, teaching method, teacher-students engagement, and obstacles and performance, it is almost impossible to show the foreign language learning scenario among madrasah students in Bangladesh at present. To conclude, all the findings and information from the literature review will serve as a supportive tool for my current study.

Chapter- 3

Research methodology

Research Design

This is a qualitative study that adopted an exploratory research design. The goal of this exploration is identifying themes and patterns in the data. According to George (2021), “exploratory research is a methodology approach that investigates research questions that have not previously been studied in depth”. It is a type of research design that aims to explore a phenomenon or problem in an open-ended, unstructured manner. The goal of exploratory research is to gain a deeper understanding of a topic, generate new ideas, and identify research questions that can be further investigated using more rigorous research designs. According to Creswell (2014), "exploratory research is used when the researcher does not know much about the problem and seeks to explore and gain insights into it" (p. 52). Exploratory research can take many forms, including literature reviews, case studies, observations, and focus groups. This research is particularly useful when the researcher is dealing with a complex or poorly understood phenomenon, and needs to generate hypotheses and ideas for further investigation. Exploratory research is preferred for this study because it conducted a research problem that has nothing but a small amount of past data and very few study references dealing with English and Arabic language together.

Participants

In this study on the foreign language learning scenario among Madrasah students in Bangladesh, the sample was selected based on certain criteria. Firstly, the participants must be Madrasah

students who are currently studying in Bangladesh. Secondly, they must be enrolled in foreign language course. Finally, the participants must be willing to participate in the study. The sample for this study was done through a combination of purposive and convenience sampling techniques and it included both learners who are currently studying foreign language and teachers as participants based on their experience and knowledge of the foreign language at Aliya Madrasa. For the purposes of this study, a total of 34 individuals were selected as participants. Specifically, the individuals selected were comprised of both students and teachers of English and Arabic in the 10th grade, and were sourced from a well-respected madrasah located in Mirpur, Dhaka. Participants were chosen on the basis of their expressed willingness to participate in the study as well as their level of experience within the foreign language learning context. Recruitment was done by contacting the headmaster to seek permission to conduct the study and through direct communication with the participants. This study followed ethical guidelines and obtain ethical clearance from the relevant authorities. Participants were already informed about the purpose of the study, their rights, and the confidentiality of their information. Informed consent obtained from all participants before data collection begins. The audio recording and transcripts will be stored securely.

Data collection

Data collection in this study involved semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. The interviews and focus group discussions were conducted in Bangla as the native language of the participants to ensure that they are comfortable and can express themselves freely. The initial phase of data collection for this study involved the observation of a total of two Arabic classes

and three English classes, each with a duration of 40 minutes. According to Kabir (2018), a class observation is an important tool for evaluating the performance of both teachers and students in a classroom. This observation can be either formal or informal, and it involves closely watching the interactions and activities that occur during the class. Following this, first I observed several classes and then a total of six students were selected based on their level of experiences, with two female and four male students being chosen. These students' proficiency levels ranged from low to high. As I wanted to gather each student's experience, I selected 2 students each with low, medium and high levels of proficiency, respectively. Subsequently, information was gathered from the six selected students through both focus group discussion and interviews with their respected teacher. All interviews and discussions were conducted with the participants' consent and were audio-recorded for transcription and subsequent analysis. During the observations, field notes were taken to record observations and impressions of the setting and activities as this observation tool can describe "what goes on in L2 classrooms between teachers and learners and the nature of the linguistic interactions that take place between them" (Spada, 2019). However, a checklist was not used during the observation process to ensure that data collection was not limited to predetermined factors. The absence of a checklist allowed for the collection of random data points and captured a wide range of information without being restricted to specific questions. The data collection process took place over a period of 2 weeks.

Data analysis

Data analysis in this study was done by using thematic analysis through various methods such as surveys, interviews, and observations. The data analysis for this study followed the six steps of thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). These steps include familiarizing oneself with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining

and naming themes and producing a report. The data analysis was iterative and emergent, meaning that new themes that emerge during data collection and analysis phase will be explored further. The transcripts of the interviews and focus group discussions were read multiple times to identify themes and patterns in the data. After collecting the data, it was needed to organize and code the data to make it manageable and easily interpretable. This would involve the use of qualitative data analysis techniques such as thematic analysis. The coded data was analyzed then to identify patterns and relationships between the themes. The field notes also be analyzed that were taken during observation. This will provide additional insights into the foreign language learning scenario among Aliya Madrasah students in Bangladesh. These conclusions would then be used to make recommendations for improving the foreign language learning scenario in Madrasahs in Bangladesh.

Limitations

One of the limitations of this study is the potential for bias in the sample selection process. As the data was collected through self-reporting, which may result in social desirability bias. The purposive sampling strategy may not capture the experiences of all Aliya Madrasah students. Additionally, the research findings may not be generalizable to other religious schools in Bangladesh or other contexts. However, efforts were made to ensure that the sample is diverse and representative of the population under investigation. Another limitation is the limited sample size, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. However, I took steps to ensure that the sample was representative and diverse to mitigate this limitation.

To conclude, the exploratory research methodology engaged in this study aims to pursue the foreign language learning scenario among Aliya Madrasa students in Bangladesh. The research

design, sampling strategy, data collection, and analysis methods have been designed to provide an in-depth understanding of the experiences, challenges, and opportunities for foreign language learning in Aliya Madrasa. Ethical considerations were followed, and potential limitations of the study were discussed.

Chapter-4

Findings and Discussion Observation findings

Classroom observation findings

As part of the research design, I observed two Arabic classes and three English classes in a madrasah in Mirpur, Dhaka. First of all, I observed Arabic classes and the classes were named “Arabic 1” and “Arabic 2”, and they were for Class 10 students. The class duration was 35 minutes, and there were 12 students present on the first day and 15 on the second day, out of a total of 34 students. As a combined madrasah, boys and girls attend classes together, albeit following certain rules. For attending classes in this madrasah, female students are required to adhere to specific rules, such as wearing niqab and burqa, and sitting on a separate side of the classroom. Furthermore, it is expected that all students, regardless of gender, follow permissible and just practices during class. It was observed that only three of the 34 students were girls, which is attributed to the fact that many parents do not prefer combined madrasah for their daughters. The students’ proficiency level was intermediate, and they were comfortable understanding and speaking Arabic in their classes. When the teacher called for attendance, the students responded by saying “labbayk” (لبيك :present, Sir) The teacher greeted the students in Arabic, saying “sabah alkhayr”(صباح الخير :good morning) and also asked them “Kaifa Haluka?” (كيف حالك : how are you?). The students responded kindly by saying “Alhamdulillah” (لله الحمد : All the praises to the Almighty). This communication set a friendly and soft tone for the teacher-student relationship. Most of the time, the teacher communicated with the students in Arabic, and almost all of the students responded to his questions. The classroom was sufficiently large and

had adequate materials. The observation from the back of the class revealed that the board was not big enough for all the students, and its visibility was limited to the first two benches only. Nonetheless, all the teachers were kind, and the Arabic teacher stood out as kinder and gentler. His teaching style was different from other teachers, as he started with a dialogue in the first class and an application in the second day's class. He did not teach the application from the book; rather, he wrote it on the board in the Arabic language and asked the students to take it down in their notebooks.

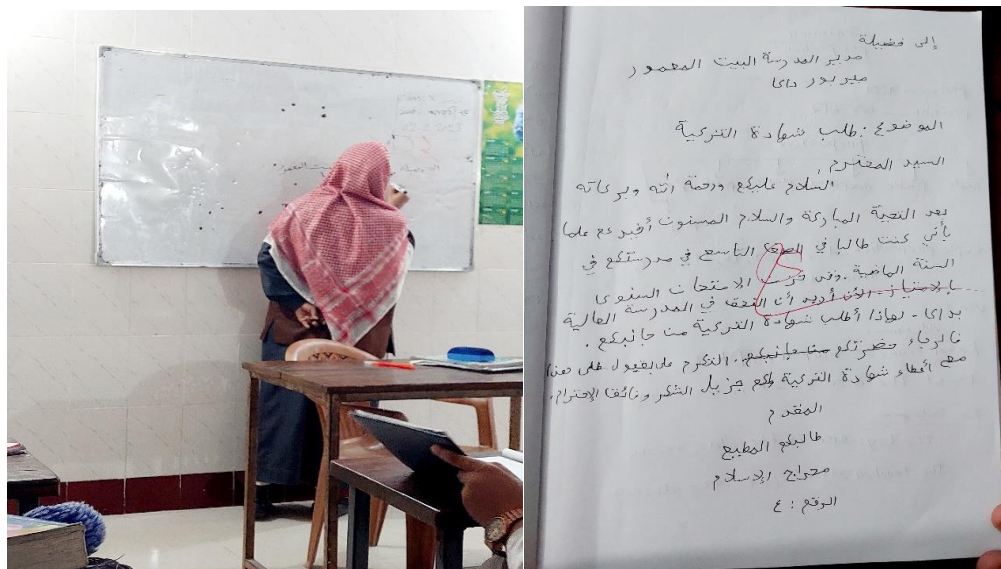


Figure 1. teacher writing on the board and students are taking notes

The teacher was strict about checking the homework copy, and those who did not bring it were asked to sit on the last bench at the back of the classroom and show him the completed homework. When teaching the dialogue, the teacher spoke an Arabic line and the students repeat it three times, which helped them to memorize it quickly. He concluded both classes by asking them to write from home, after thanking them for their performance and cooperation. This observation of Arabic classes in a madrasah in Bangladesh revealed that the students were

comfortable with the Arabic language and responded well to the teacher's instruction. The teacher's use of Arabic language and his gentle demeanor created a positive learning environment. Although the classroom lacked a sufficiently visible whiteboard, the teacher's approach to teaching and emphasis on homework checking was commendable. This observation reinforces the importance of effective communication and positive teacher-student relationships in creating an effective learning environment.

During my observation, I attended three English classes as well in the same grade of a Madrasah after observing the Arabic classes. Among them, one of the classes was English 1st paper and the other two were English 2nd paper, all of which took place in the same classroom. Each class had a duration of 35 minutes, but the students were only able to receive an average of 20 to 25 minutes due to time constraints. The total number of students was 34, with 12 students present on the first day and 15 students present on the second day. Out of the total number of students, only three were girls, while the rest were boys. The attendance of girls was relatively low as their parents were unable to carry the costs of their education. Most of the parents believed that the Madrasah should compromise on fees, but according to the administration, all necessary expenses such as materials, teacher salaries and other cost are covered by the fees. As a result, some girls had to stop their studies. Interestingly, despite their low attendance rate, girls appeared to be more attentive and serious than boys, completing their homework more regularly and performing better academically. According to Daif-Allah and Aljuma (2020), females have more motivation to learn than males although Daud, Wong, Ghani, and Ramli (2020) showed totally different thing. Daud-Allah and Aljuma (2020) showed that, males are more interested in learning than the females. The students' proficiency level was primary and below primary, despite being in class ten as they were not able to understand simple English sentences and their

vocabulary limitations were also very low. The English teacher used both Bangla and English to communicate, translating each sentence from English to Bangla to ensure that the students understood the meaning of the English language. It appeared to me that, the English teacher employed the Grammar Translation Method (GTM), which was found to be effective for Madrasah students. Since Arabic was their first priority, the students learned English only for communication purposes. The GTM methodology's primary purpose is to prepare students to be confident communicators in different real-life contexts by providing repetitive oral practices and encouraging student-student cooperation although Ruman (2022) found that, communicative purpose in a class is depreciated because of the GTM.

The teacher began each class by greeting the students in English and taking attendance. The teacher taught adverbs and their classification in English first and later translate it in Bangla from text books during the first day's class, then concluded by asking the students to read from the book. On the second day, the teacher revisited the previous class's topic and reviewed the definition of adverbs before drawing a preposition diagram on the board. After discussing the diagram, the teacher went on to teach the definition and classification of prepositions. During the class, the principal visited the classroom and expressed displeasure at the number of students. The principal spoke entirely in Bangla while speaking and later said that, necessary action would be taken if the number of students' participation did not increase. However, the teacher continued the class as usual and concluded by asking the students to study at home. During the third day's class, the teacher taught a passage on the poet Jasimuddin for English 1st paper. The teacher emphasized English and Bangla pronunciation from the guide book. However, the students appeared to memorize the pronunciations from the guidebook during class, which did not seem to be an effective approach. Although memorizing English or Arabic pronunciation can

be beneficial for Bangla speakers when learning foreign languages like English or Arabic, it is not deemed appropriate for students in the tenth grade. This is because English education begins at the early stages of primary education, providing students with ample time and opportunity to become proficient in English usage within a ten-year span. Therefore, at this level of education, solely relying on memorization or practice of pronunciation is deemed insufficient for achieving the necessary level of English proficiency. The students will soon face the Dakhila exam, and they require special care. Unfortunately, I did not observe anything of the sort during my time observing these classes. Furthermore, the students' proficiency level in English was considerably low, and I think they should be more serious about learning the language. Basic topics that students in a normal Bangla medium school learn in class 5/6 had not been adequately covered by the time these students reached class ten although in their exam they have to find out every single grammar item like- right form of verb, transformation of sentences, voice, preposition, narration etc. Instead of memorizing definitions and classifications, the students should focus on properly understanding the rules for using adverbs or prepositions or the other grammatical terms, preferably under the guidance of their teacher.

Cross comparison between English and Arabic classes

Upon observing classes from a particular madrasah, I noticed some notable differences between two classes of the same grade.

Importance of language

Despite both Arabic and English being foreign languages for the students, they were not given equal importance in the madrasah. In fact, according to Rahman et al. (2021) English is widely considered a second language in most countries worldwide, including Arab nations. Despite this,

there appeared to be a lack of awareness regarding the importance of English in the madrasah. It became apparent to me that students felt a sense of anxiety towards foreign languages, particularly English. This is likely due to the emphasis placed on Arabic studies in the madrasah, leaving little room for English language learning. Unfortunately, this lack of focus on English may lead students to disregard its importance in the future for higher studies, better job opportunities, and international communication.

Teacher-student engagements

During my observations, it appeared that both the teacher and the students in the Arabic class took their studies seriously. The Arabic teacher was highly focused on teaching the subject matter, assigning homework, and even communicating with the students in Arabic. However, in the English class, the teacher did not seem as dedicated. For instance, while teaching adverbs and prepositions, the teacher did not provide any examples outside of the textbook or engagement with the students. And none of the way the Arabic teacher encouraged the students to speak and learn Arabic was seen in the English class. Moreover, during the English class, students seemed to memorize pronunciations by simply looking at the guide, whereas the Arabic teacher offered more opportunities like preparing their note by their own and made environment for the students to communicate and practice speaking Arabic into the classroom. As a result, the performance of the Arabic class teacher and students was balanced at 50/50 as both teacher and students participate equally, while the performance of the English class teacher and students was 90/10 because most of the time the teacher was only speaker and the students were quite enough. This discrepancy suggests that there were fewer opportunities for students to improve their English language skills.

Teaching Methods

Another noticeable difference between the two classes was the teaching method used by the teachers. It can be argued that, the English teacher relied heavily on the Grammar Translation Method (GTM), which involved speaking English first and then translating it into Bangla. In contrast, the Arabic teacher apparently used the Audiolingual method, which involved memorizing lines by repeating them with the teacher. In conclusion, my observations revealed a significant difference in the teaching of Arabic and English in the madrasah. Although both languages were foreign to the students, they were not given equal importance, with Arabic taking precedence over English. It is vital to understand the importance of English language learning for students to excel in higher studies, job opportunities, and international communication. Therefore, it is essential to create more opportunities for students to practice and improve their English skills.

Obstacles and performances

Both Arabic and English present significant obstacles for learners, with complex grammar rules, a large vocabulary, and unique phonetic features. However, the specific challenges faced by learners vary depending on the language. For Arabic, it is the complex morphology and unique phonetic features, while for English, it is the vast vocabulary and complex grammar rules. According to Mahfoudhi et al. (2018), the Arabic language has a unique phonetic system with consonant and vowel sound that may not exist in other languages. And Alqurashi (2015) found that, English has a complex grammar system with complex grammar rules and vast vocabulary,

irregular verbs, numerous tenses etc. These obstacles can impact the performance of learners, leading to slower progress and lower levels of proficiency.

Focus group discussion findings

The purpose of this focus group discussion was to explore the foreign language learning scenario among Madrasah students in Bangladesh, with a particular focus on English and Arabic language learning. The participants of this discussion were students from Madrasahs who have been learning English and Arabic as foreign language. The aim was to gather their experiences, challenges, and suggestions for improving English learning in Madrasahs.

Contrast between English and Arabic classes group discussion

After the completion of my classroom observations, I selected six students pseudonymized as Fatema, Khadiza, Hussain, Zakir, Mehedi and Nawshad as participants, comprising two female and four male students. Their proficiency levels varied, ranging from high to medium to low. A focus group discussion was conducted to explore their experience in relation to the foreign language learning scenario among madrasah students in Bangladesh. The participants included Zakir, who had only joined the madrasah two years ago in grade 8. Prior to his enrollment in the madrasah, Zakir had attended a Bangla medium school, which may have contributed to his struggles with the Arabic language. Consequently, Zakir experiences anxiety when it comes to reading and writing in Arabic, which poses a significant challenge for him, and Mehedi, who joined madrasa at class six after completing Hafeez and he experiences anxiety when it comes to reading and writing something in English. Except these two students, other participants were

reading in this Madrasah from their childhood. The discussion revolved around their interest in learning English, their experiences, the challenges they faced, and their satisfaction with the resources and materials provided in the class. On the other hand, I asked same questions focusing on Arabic language learning and the discussion will be centered around the importance of language, teaching methods, teacher- student's engagements and obstacles and performances. Now I am showing the contrast result that I got from the focus group discussion.

Importance of language

In the English focus group discussion, all participants expressed a keen interest in learning English, with Zakir saying that he wants to learn it to communicate with people from other countries and Mehedi stating that he wants to improve his job prospects. Fatema said that, "I want to be a fashion designer and that's why I want to speak smart English".

On the contrary, both participants expressed interest in learning Arabic, with other participants citing its importance in Islamic studies and Mehedi stating that it enhances his job prospects, he also mentioned that Arabic is the pathway to learning the Quran and Islam and it will help him to reach heaven. In this regard, it can be quoted from Editorial of a Bangladeshi daily 'The Independent' on 30th November 2015 that: "Most Madrasah students believe that by learning Islam, they will go to heaven" (Ruman,2021). Other participants also shared their experiences of learning Arabic, with Zakir finding it challenging due to the lack of opportunities for practice and Mehedi finding it easier.

Teaching methods

The participants shared their experiences of learning English and highlighted the importance of effective teaching methods. They stated that the use of multimedia resources, interactive

activities, and real-life scenarios would make learning English more interesting and engaging. However, all participants faced difficulties in learning the language, with Zakir citing the lack of practice; and Mehedi and Khadiza pointing out the lack of emphasis on spoken English in his madrasah. The most common reason why the participants are interested in learning English is that they want to have better job opportunities in the future.

Regarding learning Arabic, Hussain and Zakir found the grammar rules and pronunciation difficult, while others struggled with memorizing new vocabulary. But all participants were satisfied with the way Arabic was taught in the Madrasah.

Obstacles and performances

Then, the participants discussed the challenges of learning a new language, including the difficulty of remembering new vocabulary and grammar rules and they found listening and speaking to be the most challenging part. They suggested that repetition and regular practice could help overcome these challenges. Overall, the focus group discussion provided valuable insights into the foreign language learning scenario among madrasah students in Bangladesh, highlighting the need for more interactive and practical lessons to help students learn English more effectively.

They also felt that madrasahs did not give equal importance to Arabic and English, with Zakir and Khadiza stating that English was prioritized for future job prospects and Mehedi believing that Arabic was not only important for religious studies. Challenges and barriers to learning a new language were identified as the lack of exposure and opportunities for practice. Both participants recommended incorporating more interactive activities and modern resources, such as online platforms and mobile applications, into the Arabic language learning curriculum.

Although the participants expressed their satisfaction with their Arabic language learning performance. Except Zakir, they stated that, they are confident in reading and writing in Arabic but they need to improve their speaking and listening skills.

Teacher-student engagement

All of them suggested that more interactive and practical lessons could be helpful in learning the language. They stated that a friendly and supportive teacher could motivate students to learn English. When asked about the importance given to Arabic and English in their madrasah, both agreed that Arabic was given more importance, but they didn't feel that it was unfair. Khadiza and Nawshad mentioned in this regard, “as we study in Madrasah, it is natural that Arabic is preferred over other languages. For example, Bangla is preferred in Bangla medium and English is preferred in English medium schools.”

These findings align with the research on the foreign language learning scenario among madrasah students in Bangladesh, which highlights the need for a more communicative and interactive approach to language teaching (Alam, 2019).

In conclusion, the focus group discussion revealed that madrasah students in Bangladesh face several challenges in learning a new language, particularly Arabic and English. The lack of interactive teaching, outdated materials, and strict teachers were identified as significant obstacles to learning. The participants suggested that modern teaching methods and more resources could improve the language learning scenario in madrasahs. These findings are consistent with the literature on foreign language learning (Wang, 2019) and highlight the need for a student-centered approach to teaching foreign languages in madrasahs.

Interview findings

In this interview section, I collected the responses of two language teachers pseudonymized as Mr. Johirul and Maulana Khademul, regarding their teaching experiences and challenges in teaching English and Arabic respectively.

When asked about the difficult parts of teaching English, Mr. Johirul stated that the most challenging aspect is the pronunciation, as students often have difficulty mastering the correct intonation and stress patterns. In contrast, Maulana Khademul noted that the most difficult part of teaching Arabic is the grammar and sentence structure.

Teaching methods

Start the discussion with what did they say about the teaching methods they use in their regular classrooms, instead of what they suggested.

Regarding increasing their students' confidence, both teachers agree that encouraging active participation in class and giving positive feedback are essential. Mr. Johirul also emphasized the importance of providing opportunities for students to practice speaking and listening outside of the classroom, such as through language exchange programs. In terms of reducing anxiety for better learning, Maulana Khademul suggested that creating a friendly and supportive learning environment is crucial. Meanwhile, Mr. Johirul recommended using fun and interactive teaching techniques to make learning English more enjoyable and less daunting. When asked about their satisfaction with the way English and Arabic are taught in the class, Maulana Khademul expressed his satisfaction with the current teaching methods for Arabic, while Mr. Johirul felt that there is room for improvement in the English teaching methodology. Maulana Khademul said that, in the way he was teaching Arabic to the students, the students were learning their

lessons easily and securing good marks. So, he did not feel the need to make any changes. But Mr. Johirul said that, although he was trying hard and teaching the English texts in Bangla first for the benefit of the students, he was not seeing any improvement in the students. According to him, such a short time is not enough to master a difficult language like English.

On the topic of whether Madrasah gives equal importance to Arabic and English, Maulana Khademul emphasized the importance of Arabic as the language of the Quran and the need to prioritize its teaching. Mr. Johirul, on the other hand, felt that both languages should be given equal importance.

Challenges to learning new language

Regarding the challenges of teaching a new language, both teachers stated that overcoming the language barrier and cultural differences is a significant challenge. Mr. Johirul also mentioned the challenge of adapting to the different learning styles of students. When asked about their suggestions for teaching English and Arabic, Maulana Khademul emphasized the need for using authentic materials and practical applications to make learning more meaningful. Mr. Johirul suggested the use of technology, such as language learning apps and online resources.

Finally, when asked if they would like to change their syllabus design, Maulana Khademul expressed his satisfaction with the current syllabus. while Mr. Johirul suggested the inclusion of more communicative activities in the English curriculum and shortened the syllabus saying that, “students do not get time to read the entire syllabus properly, for which revision is not possible. On the other hand, they do not get support from anyone other than the school to complete their studies properly. So, it would have been better if the syllabus items were shortened a bit more”.

In conclusion, both teachers stated that teaching a foreign language is a challenging task, and it requires a positive and supportive learning environment. However, their views differ regarding the most challenging aspects of teaching and the importance of Arabic and English. Their insights and suggestions can provide valuable insights into the foreign language learning scenario among Madrasah students in Bangladesh.

Chapter- 5

Conclusion & Recommendations

To conclude, the foreign language learning scenario among Madrasah students in Bangladesh is a complex issue that requires attention from educators, policymakers, and researchers and it presents both challenges and opportunities (Rahman et al., 2020). By addressing the imbalance between Arabic and English education and providing greater support to language teachers, it is possible to improve language learning outcomes and promote a more inclusive and diverse education system. The interviews conducted with Mr. Johirul and Maulana Khademul shed light on the opportunities for teaching English and Arabic in Madrasahs and highlighted the challenges of teaching English and Arabic, increasing student confidence, decreasing anxiety, and the importance of teacher-student engagement in the learning process. According to Haq (2019), it is evident that language teachers face significant challenges, including the need to overcome cultural differences and the difficulty of teaching new grammar and sentence structures and teachers must adapt their techniques to cater to students' diverse learning styles. Additionally, the study indicates that teacher-student engagement plays a crucial role in language learning, as active participation and feedback provide students with the facilitation that they need to develop their language skills. Moreover, the research indicates that Madrasahs may not give equal importance to both Arabic and English, which can hinder students' language learning outcomes. This highlights the need for greater attention to be paid to language education in Madrasahs, particularly the need to address the imbalance between the two languages. However, the study has also identified several opportunities for improving language education, such as the use of technology and practical applications, and the creation of supportive and friendly learning

environments. Further research is required to investigate the most effective teaching methods and materials for foreign language education in Madrasahs. For this current issue, translanguaging pedagogies can be an efficient solution as it enable teachers to teach multiple languages strategically in the same classroom paying equal attention to students' mother language and cultures (Rafi & Morgan, 2022a). According to Garcia and Wei (2014), translanguaging pedagogy "involves the deployment of a speaker's full linguistic repertoire without regard for arbitrary and rigid language boundaries that restrict language use in academic learning." Students will be beneficial through this approach as it allows students to develop their language skills and it can be helpful to increase their confidence in using their languages and language proficiency (Rafi & Morgan, 2021). Through this approach students can be able to share different cultures and languages with one another. So, it will be suitable for them as they come from different backgrounds and it can be helpful to bridge the gap between students' home languages and the language of instruction (Rafi & Morgan, 2022c; Rafi, 2023). However, there is a research gap in the foreign language learning scenario among Madrasah students in Bangladesh, specifically in the areas of language assessment, the effectiveness of language teaching methods, and the role of culture and religion in language learning (Rahman et al., 2018; Rafi, 2023). Therefore, future research is necessary to identify best practices in language assessment, teaching methods, and teacher-student engagement to improve the foreign language learning scenario among Madrasah students in Bangladesh. To address this issue, a translanguaging pedagogy approach can be implemented in madrasahs, which acknowledges students' multilingual backgrounds and encourages the use of multiple languages in the classroom.

In light of the findings, several recommendations can be made to improve the foreign language learning scenario among Madrasah students in Bangladesh. Firstly, there is a need to prioritize

language education and provide resources and training for English and Arabic language teachers; secondly, the curriculum should be designed to promote equal importance to both Arabic and English, and teaching methods should be adapted to cater to different learning styles; and finally, there is a need for further research to identify the most effective teaching methods and materials for foreign language education in Madrasahs(Haq et al., 2019), . Based on the findings and analysis, it is recommended that Madrasahs provide more opportunities for language exchange programs, incorporate technology into language teaching, and design syllabus that includes more communicative activities. Moreover, teachers should focus on creating a supportive learning environment that encourages active participation, provides positive feedback, and reduces student anxiety (UNESCO, 2016).

In conclusion, the foreign language learning scenario among Madrasah students in Bangladesh is a complex issue that requires attention and further research to identify the best practices in language assessment, teaching methods, and teacher-student engagement. By improving the foreign language learning scenario will not only benefit the students' language proficiency but also enhance their cultural awareness and understanding.

Appendices 1: Focus group questionnaire

English	Arabic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are you interested in learning English? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are you interested in learning Arabic?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why are you interested in learning English? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why are you interested in learning Arabic?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How are your experiences of learning English? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How are your experiences of learning Arabic?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the things you find easy/difficult in learning English? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the things you find easy/difficult in learning Arabic?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are you satisfied the way English taught in the class? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are you satisfied the way Arabic taught in the class?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you think Madrasah gives equal importance to Arabic and English? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you think Madrasah gives equal importance to Arabic and English?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the challenges/barriers to learning a new language? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the challenges/barriers to learning a new language?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are you happy/satisfied with the materials and resources of the class? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the challenges/barriers to learning a new language?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are your suggestions for English language learning? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are your suggestions for Arabic language learning?

Appendices 2: Interview questionnaire

English	Arabic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How are your experiences of teaching English? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How are your experiences of teaching Arabic?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the things you find easy/difficult in teaching English? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the things you find easy/difficult in teaching Arabic?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do you increase your students' confidence? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do you increase your students' confidence?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do you decrease your students' anxiety for better learning? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do you decrease your students' anxiety for better learning?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think madrasah gives equal importance to Arabic and English? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think madrasah gives equal importance to Arabic and English?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the challenges to teaching a new language? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the challenges to teaching a new language?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the suggestions for English teaching? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the suggestions for Arabic teaching?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would you like to change your syllabus design? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would you like to change your syllabus design?

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