

Bilingual Identity and Classroom Engagement: How Foreign-Born Bangladeshi Children Reconnect with Their Native Language in English-Medium Schools



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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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



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DECLARATION

This internship report 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.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this internship report to my parents, my brother, and one of my closest friends, whose unwavering support and encouragement have guided me throughout this journey. Their tireless efforts, patience, and unconditional love gave me the strength and confidence to complete this research. This work would not have been possible without their constant inspiration and belief in me.

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Abstract

This study explores how foreign-born Bangladeshi children reconnect with their native language after returning to Bangladesh, while studying in English-medium schools in Dhaka. As these children have already developed English proficiency, parents prefer enrolling them in English-medium schools, believing that the global value of English will provide them better academic and international opportunities. However, connecting with one's native language is equally important because limited connection to one's own language and culture can lead to identity uncertainty and cultural dislocation. The purpose of this study was to explore this reconnection process and to understand how classroom practices, interactions with teachers and peers and teaching strategies help with this re-learning process. A qualitative study was conducted, including four classroom observations and five semi-structured interviews with the respective teachers who had experience teaching these students. The classroom observation provided data on students' active participation, confidence and cultural awareness in Bangla, teacher guidance and peer support, resources and activities promoting creative and expressive use of the language. In addition, the interviews provided deeper insights into how these strategies and resources work in real classroom settings. The findings show that peer support, visual learning activities, cultural references, gentle teacher guidance, interactive tasks, group work, exposure to real-life language use, encouragement and motivation help the students to re-learn the language faster. Receiving support from peers who speak Bangla naturally proved most effective. The implications suggest that the English medium schools should support more culturally meaningful activities to rebuild the connection between these students and their native language. Besides, the teachers also need more training, along with the schools needing proper resources to support the returnee students' reconnection process.

Keywords: Bilingualism, heritage language, cultural identity, multilingualism, identity formation, language reconnection, foreign-born Bangladeshi.

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Global migration has created a growing group of children who spend their early years abroad and become more fluent in a foreign language than in their mother tongue. When these children return to their home country, they often enter schools that expect them already to have a strong base in their native language. In Bangladesh, many returnee students who study in English-medium schools experience this situation. They are usually confident in English, but their bond with Bangla tends to weaken, leading to both language and identity struggles. Many families see the language English as a gateway to international opportunities, and for that reason, English-medium education in Bangladesh is becoming really popular. English medium schools prioritize only the English language in both academic and natural settings, but protecting and making connections with native language is very important. A child's sense of belongingness, emotional stability, and cultural identity is enhanced by native language uses (Cangelosi et al., 2024). Studies on Multilingual learners proved that language learning and cultural identity are deeply connected with each other. A person's sense of identity is shaped mainly by their home culture and lived experiences, even when the person attended international or bilingual schools (Huang, 2025). This is important for understanding that returnee students' reconnection with Bangla depends on their cultural background and personal experience and not only on classroom language use. In bilingual environments, children who regularly and meaningfully engage in their heritage language are more likely to maintain fluency and remain connected to their linguistic and cultural roots (Højen & Bleses, 2023). Learning Bangla for foreign born students is not only about language acquisition but it also facilitates identity formation and social interaction. Friendly classroom environments make a student comfortable speaking and practicing a language, whereas unsupportive classroom environments make it difficult for students to engage and practice. This study focuses on how foreign born Bangladeshi children reconnect with their native language and how the classroom environment, relationship with peers and support of teachers influence their re-learning.

1.2 Background of the Study

Bilingual children often face challenges in reconnecting with their own native language after returning to their homeland. In Bangladesh, parents believe that English proficiency helps to improve academic and professional outcomes, so they enroll their children in English medium schools. Although these schools deliver strong educational standards, they may unintentionally distance students from their cultural heritage (Chondrogianni & Daskalaki, 2023; Bilgory-Fazakas & Armon-Lotem, 2025). Language is essential to a person's identity and serves as more than just a tool for communication. Children who cannot use the language of their homeland may feel isolated or disconnected, which can affect their emotional well-being and sense of belonging. Teachers however do not always have proper training or experience to help these students to fill the gap between English proficiency and native language learning. Schools mostly focus on academic achievements and neglect cultural integration and heritage language development (Chondrogianni & Daskalaki, 2023). But preserving one's cultural identity and emotional well-being rely heavily on maintaining heritage language. Children who use their native language regularly show a stronger sense of ethnic identity and social belongingness (Chondrogianni and Daskalaki, 2023). Teachers and communities play an important role in supporting the use of native language, which helps the students to stay connected with their cultural roots (Wagley et al., 2022). This study investigates how returnee Bangladeshi students get support in English medium schools on this matter by examining the classroom environment, teachers behaviour and how they help the students to use and reconnect both linguistically and culturally.

1.3 Statement of Problem

Global migration has increased the number of bilingual children worldwide. Many of these children are born abroad and later return to Bangladesh, where they are often enrolled in English-medium schools. Although their English proficiency supports their academic progress, their limited familiarity with Bangla and local culture can create feelings of isolation. They may find it difficult to connect with peers and the community around them. Moreover, when they struggle to engage with their native language and cultural heritage, developing a sense of Bangladeshi identity becomes tough (Shahed, 2022). In English medium school education quality is excellent but the teachers often struggle to help these returnee students connect with their native language and culture. The returnee students may

experience emotional strain and a sense of disconnection without proper language and cultural support, which, in the future, can lead to broader social and emotional difficulties (Cox et al., 2021). Evidence suggests, learners find it harder to internalize and use a language when learners are not engaged with the culture related to the language (Lucido et al., 2024; Rabi et al., 2023). This disconnection can affect academic performance and social relationships since it can create identity confusion, lower motivation and emotional stress. Recent studies show that classroom engagement, teacher guidance, and peer interaction help bilingual students reconnect with their heritage language and culture (Hopp et al., 2025; Li & Li, 2025; Teimouri et al., 2024). Students who receive inclusive and supportive instruction tend to show stronger emotional, cognitive, and behavioral engagement (Rabi et al., 2023). Similarly, culturally inclusive teaching that values students' cultural backgrounds contributes to build a sense of belonging and support heritage language maintenance (Lucido et al., 2024; Singh et al., 2025; Chondrogianni et al., 2023).

However, in Bangladesh, English-medium schools give limited scope to build up students' bilingual identity, as they often focus more on English proficiency than Bangla development (Shahed & Rahman, 2022). Whereas previous scholarly work has examined bilingual identity (Lucido et al., 2024) and classroom engagement in second language learning context (Wang et al., 2024), there is insufficient evidence on how in English-medium schools, returnee children reconnect with their native language. A student's sense of belongingness, identity, and self-esteem can be strengthened by integrating heritage language and culture into classroom practices (Taylor-Leech et al., 2021). Research on translanguaging shows that a students' engagement, participation, and confidence in the classroom improves with allowing the students to use both their native language and the language of instruction (De Guzman, 2023). Multilingual learners' social-emotional well being and cultural identity have been supported by translanguaging (Song et al., 2022). Despite these, little is known about how returnee Bangladeshi children reconnect with their native language in English medium schools. This study aims to investigate this gap by examining the roles of peers, teachers and classroom practices in supporting bilingual identity and cultural reconnection among foreign born Bangladeshi children.

1.4 Research Objectives

The objectives of this research are—

1. To explore how foreign-born Bangladeshi children reconnect with their native language and cultural identity while studying in English-medium schools in Dhaka.
2. To examine the role of teachers, peers, and classroom engagement in supporting the development of bilingual identity among returnee children.
3. To identify the strategies and steps that English-medium schools implement to help these students connect with their linguistic and cultural roots.

1.5 Research Questions

1. How do foreign-born Bangladeshi children reconnect with their native language and cultural identity while studying in English-medium schools in Dhaka?
2. What is the role of teachers, peers, and classroom engagement in supporting the development of bilingual identity among returnee children?
3. What steps do English-medium schools implement to help returnee children connect with their linguistic and cultural roots?

1.6 Theoretical Framework

Cummins' Interdependence Hypothesis (1979) and Norton's Investment and Identity Theory (2013) guided this study to analyze how foreign-born Bangladeshi children reconnect with Bangla in English-medium schools. Cummins' theory emphasizes that skill acquired in one language can support the development of another. Here, promoting Bangla literacy can support overall bilingual competence and enhance academic performance in English (Scontras et al., 2015; Grose-Hodge et al., 2025).

Norton's theory shows the social and emotional dimensions of language learning. A learner invests in a language when they see it as socially, culturally, or emotionally valuable. For returnee children, if they see Bangla language as respected, meaningful and connected to cultural identity, they are more likely to use the language (Darvin & Norton, 2021; Hayakawa et al., 2022).

By integrating these two theories, this study considers both cognitive and socio-emotional factors in bilingual identity formation. Cummins' hypothesis explains how first language helps in learning a second language and helps overall academic growth, while Norton's theory helps understand how language learning is close to identity formation and learners learn when they see the language as valuable to their social identity. Together these two perspectives help to understand how classroom practices, peer interaction, and teacher support benefit returnee children's reconnection with Bangla and their cultural identity.

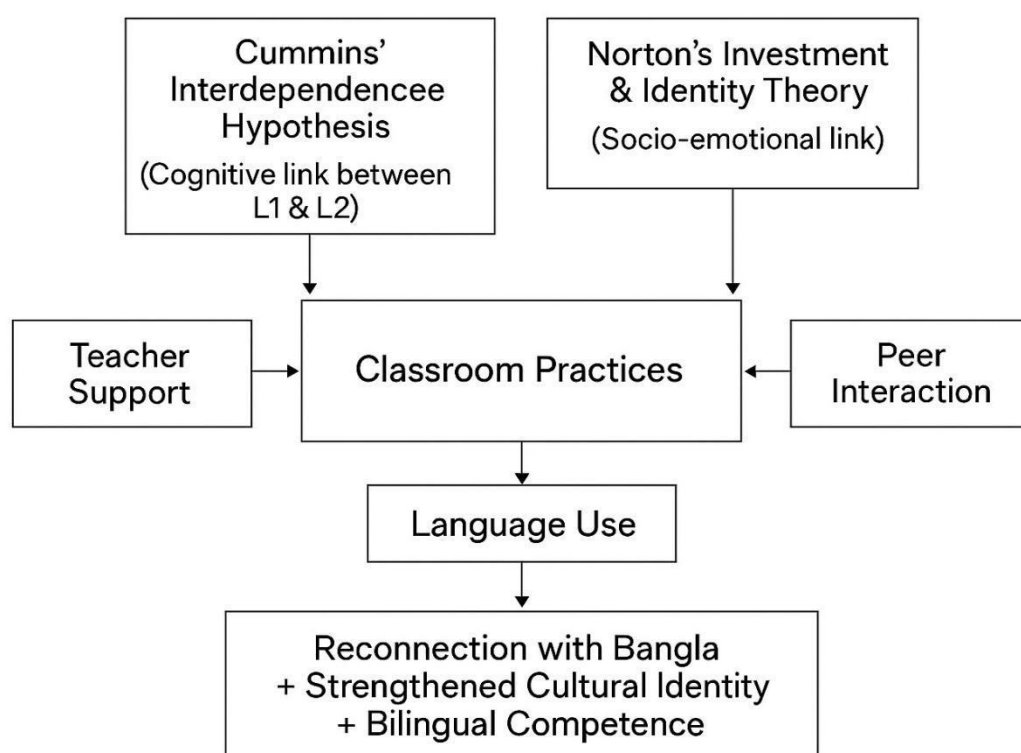


Figure 1. Conceptual framework for Bangla reconnection among returnee children in English-medium schools.

1.7 Scope of the Study

This study examines how foreign-born Bangladeshi children reconnect with their native language while attending an English-medium school in Dhaka. The research has taken place at an English medium school in Dhaka, where the author is currently employed. The focus is on 4 to 12 years old students who were born abroad and have returned to Bangladesh and started their education here. This study considers both in-class and informal school settings in the English medium schools in Dhaka. To gather information about students' language practices, interactions with teachers and peers, and the ways these engagements influence

their Bangla learning and bilingual identity, semi-structured teacher interviews and classroom observations were organized. The focus is on language learning, classroom engagement, peer and teacher influence, and identity formation, rather than formal grammar instruction, long-term academic achievement, or national policy. A qualitative approach is adopted, including classroom observation and interviews conducted over a three-month period during the 2025 academic year.

1.8 Significance of the Study

For bilingual students, especially for the students who spend their early years in one language and culture before returning to their own homeland, language and identity are closely related. Although in Bangladesh, the returnee students' are enrolling in English medium schools at an increasing rate, still in adapting both linguistic and cultural terms many of them face challenges. Despite the fact that there is research on exploring bilingualism and classroom engagement, no study has investigated how foreign born Bangladeshi students reconnect with their mother tongue while studying in English medium schools. This study contributes to bilingual education research by integrating the frameworks of language interdependence, classroom engagement, translanguaging, and identity investment. Under the guidance of Cummins' Interdependence Hypothesis and Norton's Investment and Identity Theory, this study explores how students reconnect with Bangla in an English-dominant environment, combining cognitive and socio-linguistic perspectives. The findings of this study can be followed by teachers and policymakers in creating inclusive and supportive learning environments that acknowledge both global and local identities. The research seeks to help foreign born Bangladeshi students to strengthen their linguistic and cultural identity while helping them build confidence and comfort in using their native language, by emphasizing the role of an emotionally and culturally responsive classroom.

1.9 Definition of Terms

Bilingualism: Bilingualism refers to the ability of an individual to use two languages with some degree of proficiency. It includes both productive (speaking and writing) and receptive (listening and reading) skills in more than one language (Grosjean, 2010).

Bilingual Identity: Bilingual identity refers to how individuals construct their sense of self through the use of two or more languages in diverse social and cultural contexts (Norton, 2013). It involves how speakers perceive themselves and how they are positioned by others within linguistic and cultural environments.

Returnee or Foreign-Born Bangladeshi Children: This term refers to children of Bangladeshi origin who were born or raised abroad and later returned to Bangladesh. They often experience challenges reconnecting with their native language (Bangla) and adapting to local cultural and educational settings (Grosa & King, 2023).

Translanguaging: Translanguaging is the process by which bilinguals use their full linguistic repertoire to make meaning, communicate, and learn without strict separation between languages (García, 2009).

Language Interdependence: The concept that proficiency in one language supports learning and development in another, meaning strong skills in a first language (L1) can positively influence second language (L2) acquisition (Cummins, 1979).

Classroom Engagement: The degree to which students actively participate in classroom activities, including attention, interaction with peers and teachers, and involvement in learning. It encompasses behavioral, emotional, and cognitive aspects (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004).

Identity Investment: How learners' motivation, social positioning, and perceived value of a language influence their willingness to engage with and use that language (Norton, 2013).

1.10 Chapter Overview

This chapter is arranged into six chapters. Chapter 1: Introduction, describe the research background, purpose, objectives, and theoretical framework, concentrating on how foreign born Bangladeshi children reconnect with their native language in English medium schools. Chapter 2: Literature review investigates the existing literature on bilingualism, identity formation, and classroom engagement. Chapter 3: Methodology explains the research design, sample selection, data collection, data analysis of the data found from classroom observation and teacher interviews. Chapter 4: Findings presents the patterns observed in the collected data about language use and cultural engagement. Chapter 5: Discussion interpret the findings in relation to literature and theoretical frameworks. Finally, chapter 6: Conclusions

summarize the study, point out the main findings and offer recommendations for supporting bilingual identity and engagement in English- medium schools.

1.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter examines how foreign-born Bangladeshi children rebuild their connection with Bangla while studying in English-medium schools. It concentrates on how classroom engagement, peer and teacher support, and school strategies help to build the students' bilingual identity. This study emphasizes on how language learning and identity development are closely connected, led by Cummins' Hypothesis and Norton's Investment and Identity Theory. It explores how students use both Bangla and English to communicate, express themselves, and stay connected to their cultural roots, through interviews and classroom observations. The findings show that in motivating students to use Bangla parental encouragement, peer relationships, teacher guidance and interactive classroom activities play an important role. To sum up, the chapter shows that beside English, when schools value and include native language, the learners develop a greater confidence, engagement, and a sense of cultural belonging.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the research on bilingual identity and classroom engagement, focusing on Bangladeshi children who were born abroad and later started attending English medium schools in Bangladesh. It investigates how these children relearn Bangla in English-dominant learning environments. This chapter explores factors that influence classroom engagement, such as translanguaging practices, identity formation, and the social and cultural elements. Maintaining ones' native language and reintegrating linguistically has become a challenge, as the rate of migration and global education is increasing rapidly. So, understanding how language reconnection affects identity development, cognitive growth, and social belonging is crucial. Classroom engagement, peer interaction, and teacher support play an important role in how they manage their bilingual identities and heritage language use. This study reviews the existing research to show the main themes and debates in this field and also identify the gaps and aims to address them.

2.2 Bilingualism and Identity Formation

Using two or more languages in everyday life is known as bilingualism. It plays an important role in shaping a child's identity. For bilingual learners, how they see themselves largely depends on language use, social interaction, and cultural experiences. The study is based on Interdependence Hypothesis (1979), which suggests that developing strong first language (L1) skill support can support second language (L2) development and it also helps maintain heritage-language connection (Talebi et al., 2023). It also relies on Investment and Identity Theory (2013), which shows how learners get invested in a language when it aligns with their identity and sense of belonging (Darvin & Norton, 2021). Previous studies have indicated that teacher encouragement, peer interaction, and family support can improve bilingual identity and classroom engagement (Chondrogianni & Daskalaki, 2023; Lucido et al., 2024). Studies on translanguaging add that, to increase students' engagement in class, feelings of being recognized and accepted in multilingual settings can be enhanced by flexible use of multiple languages in class (Jegede, 2024; Hurley et al., 2024). Classrooms that value heritage-language use and offer translanguaging opportunities support both cultural identity and academic success.

2.3 Heritage Language Maintenance and Social Support

Heritage language maintenance refers to the continued use and development of an ancestral language across generations. For foreign born children, maintaining their first language (L1) is most important as it not only supports linguistic diversity but also cultural identity and emotional well-being. Migrant families, who use heritage language regularly at home, their children develop a strong sense of heritage-language competence and greater sense of ethnic identity (Alshihry, 2024). Family language policy, such as parents' conscious decisions about when and how to use heritage vs. societal language, plays a key role in heritage-language transmission (Bilgory-Fazakas & Armon-Lotem, 2025). Community support such as heritage-language schools, cultural events may help but appear secondary to family practices (Alshihry, 2024). Maintenance of a heritage language depends on more than just family and community. Social pressures, dominant societal-language contexts, code-switching, and shifting identity across generations can challenge heritage-language use (Inan & Harris, 2025). In contexts similar to returnee Bangladeshi children educated in English-medium schools, the dominance of English in academic and social domains may reduce opportunities and motivation to speak Bangla. Thus, family support, peer interaction, community engagement, and supportive school- or community-level language policies become critical to sustaining Bangla, reconnecting with cultural identity, and promoting bilingual identity development.

2.4 Classroom Engagement and Language Use

Classroom engagement means students' active participation, interaction with peers, and emotional involvement in learning. For bilingual learners engagement is mostly necessary because it facilitates motivation, confidence, and a sense of belonging in the learning environment. Students use both languages to express themselves when they feel supported and included (Skinner & Pitzer, 2012). Teachers and peers play an important role in creating a safe environment for the bilingual students, where they can use their native language without the fear of being judged. Students gain confidence and feel less language anxiety when the teachers encourage the use of the language (L1). Similarly, for authentic and natural communication peer collaboration creates the perfect environment (García, 2009; Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020). Translanguaging or flexible language use, make it possible for

learners to move between Bangla and English during classroom tasks. These steps help returnee students to utilize their full language skills, improving their understanding and sustaining their emotional ties to Bangla (Li, 2018). Bangla is often discouraged in favor of English in many English medium schools in Bangladesh (Hamid et al., 2013). However, maintaining balance between both languages supports academic growth and cultural identity formation. To sustain the students' linguistic and cultural roots while performing successfully in an English medium environment, students should be allowed to use Bangla and English both the languages. Therefore, classroom engagement supports both academic and cultural development. Returnee students can develop linguistic skills and strengthen their cultural identity and participate more in meaningful conversations when teachers and peers actively promote bilingual practices.

2.5 Translanguaging Practices

Translanguaging means the strategic use of linguistic skills of a bilingual learner to understand, communicate and learn. It surpasses simple code-switching, allowing both languages to help each other in meaningful ways (García, 2009). Using both Bangla and English confidently can be difficult for a foreign born Bangladeshi child in an English medium classroom. At the same time, for preserving identity and sense of belonging, maintaining Bangla remains vital. Translanguaging enables students to engage more deeply in learning while reconnecting with their heritage language as it allows them to use all their languages, which boost participation and confidence (Padchonga et al., 2025). To build confidence, teachers may encourage learners to discuss the concepts in Bangla, especially in Bangla classes, which will improve students' understanding of Bangla and build confidence. To use bangla naturally, peer work and group discussions outside the formal classroom can play an additional role. According to Li (2018), use of translanguaging in the classroom allows language learners to express themselves more freely and in greater depth that give them practical benefits. Translanguaging practices increase classroom participation, reduce anxiety and support language learning for bilingual students (Smit et al., 2023). Translanguaging helps foreign born students to practice and succeed in both academic and social life and ensure their cultural ties with Bangla.

2.6 Emotional and Cognitive Aspects of Language Reconnection

Relearning a native language is closely connected to one's self-worth, cultural identity, and community connection. While anxiety or fear obstruct participation, positive emotional experiences such as supportive peers and teachers, encouragement and motivation assist the learning process (Pekrun et al., 2025). In language learning, motivation and emotional engagement play a key role (Mercer & Dörnyei, 2020). English reasoning skill and learning can be enhanced through reconnection with Bangla. Returnee Bangladeshi students gain confidence and participate actively in class when they feel emotionally safe to use Bangla. Children's emotional well-being and language outcomes directly depend on parents' emotional investment in heritage-language practices (Bonifacci et al., 2024). Research shows, emotions are interconnected with identity, motivation and language use (Wang et al., 2023).

2.7 Research Gaps

There are studies on bilingualism, translanguaging, and heritage language maintenance, but no studies focus on Bangladeshi returnees or foreign-born children in English-medium schools. Most existing work, such as Huq (2021), examines English-medium education policies and classroom interactions but gives little attention to the emotional and identity-based dimensions of reconnecting with Bangla. Studies on bilingual identity and emotional expression (Bakić & Škifić, 2017) show that language strongly influences self-perception and communication, but these insights have rarely been applied to Bangladeshi learners who navigate English-dominant environments. Recent international research emphasizes the need for culturally responsive and trauma-informed education for multilingual learners (Boukhari, 2025) and focus on the benefits of using heritage languages to support learning (Huot & Hok, 2024). Yet, there remains no exploration of how

Bangladeshi returnee children emotionally and cognitively reconnect with Bangla after adapting to education systems abroad. This study addresses these gaps by exploring how foreign-born Bangladeshi children rebuild their linguistic and cultural identities in English-medium classrooms through bilingual engagement, emotional connection, and meaningful participation in Bangla language use.

2.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter explores important literature on bilingual identity, heritage language preservation, classroom engagement, translanguaging practices, and the emotional and cognitive aspects of language reconnecting among foreign born Bangladeshi children in English medium schools. Personal and cultural identity are shaped by bilingualism, while heritage language maintenance is strongly influenced by family, peers, and community. Classroom engagement, teacher and peer support, translanguaging provides practical opportunities for students to practice Bangla and build their confidence. Emotional and cognitive support further enhances comprehension, motivation, and identity negotiation. Despite these insights, few studies have examined returnee Bangladeshi children in English-medium classrooms, especially with a combined focus on identity, engagement, and emotional-cognitive aspects. This study intends to fill the gaps with help of Cummins' hypothesis and Norton's investment and identity theory by examining how foreign born Bangladeshi children actively reconnect their linguistic and cultural identity, specifically in school and classroom environments. This study focuses on the connection between bilingual identity, social support, and emotional and educational engagement. It also provides a foundation for understanding the experience of these students.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Research methodology represents the systematic process and the foundational philosophy that guide a study's design, data collection, and analysis (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This chapter presents a general description of how foreign born Bangladeshi children reconnect with Bangla in English medium schools. To get detailed and descriptive data focusing on their experiences, identities and classroom engagement, a qualitative interpretive strategy was chosen (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Classroom observation and in-depth interviews were used as key instruments to have an insightful understanding of children's experience and interactions. This chapter then discusses the research design, target population, sampling strategies, data collection and analysis. Along with the ethical steps taken to keep the study creditable and trustworthy.

3.2 Research Design

A research design is the overall plan that links the different parts of a study in a logical and organized way to address the research problem effectively (Creswell & Poth, 2018). It follows a qualitative approach because it allows an in-depth analysis of participants' perspectives, personal experiences, and identity development. A case study approach was adopted to explore how foreign-born Bangladeshi children reconnect with their native language and balance their bilingual identity in English-medium schools. Through detailed classroom observation and in-depth interviews with teachers, this study intends to find natural interactions and emotional connections of the students with the language. This provides insightful and rich data, helping to understand the complex experiences of language use and identity formation in a real classroom environment (Yin, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). The study captures both the classroom practices and personal experiences that influence children's bilingual identity development, offering a comprehensive understanding of their language and cultural reconnection by combining observations and interviews.

3.3 Target Population

The target population is defined as the entire group of individuals or units that a study aims to examine or gain insights from (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Banerjee and Chaudhury (2010) describe it as the population from which a sample is drawn, emphasizing that the sample must be properly selected to represent this defined group. This study consists of foreign-born Bangladeshi children who have returned to Bangladesh and are enrolled in English-medium schools. It also incorporates the teachers who teach and interact with these children regularly. From a single English medium school in Dhaka participants were selected. Children aged 4 to 12 and their teachers from the same school were observed and interviewed for data collection. This group of children were chosen as they face unique linguistic and cultural challenges after returning to Bangladesh while learning in an English medium school. In understanding their language experiences and classroom engagement, collecting information from both the children and their teachers helps significantly.

3.4 Sampling Technique

Sampling involves choosing a subset of participants from a larger target population to represent it (Etikan et al., 2016). In this study, a purposive sampling method was used, where participants were purposefully chosen based on their ability to give the relevant information about the topic. This sampling technique is suitable because it allows the participants who have direct experience or knowledge about returnee students' reconnection with their native language. This sampling technique is reliable, meaningful and detailed. Here participants are the children who were born and raised abroad in their early childhood and later returned to Bangladesh and started their academic journey in English-medium schools. These students were temporarily disconnected from their native language and are now in the process of relearning it in a new educational and social environment. Teachers who taught them directly were also being interviewed. As they can provide data on these students' linguistic adaptation, classroom engagement and identity development. Participants who were closely aligned with its objectives were selected deliberately to get guaranteed authentic data. The study observed four classes where 25 foreign born Bangladeshi students were present. Furthermore, five teachers from the same English-medium school were interviewed. Since this study followed a qualitative case study approach, this limited yet focused sample was considered appropriate for obtaining rich, detailed insights into bilingual identity and language reconnection.

3.5 Demographic Profile

This section presents the demographic characteristics of the participants involved in this study, including both students and teachers. The demographic information helps contextualize the participants' backgrounds and provides insight into factors that may influence heritage-language learning and teaching practices. The data are presented in two separate tables below.

Table 1- Demographic profile of the students.

Student code	Age	Country of origin	Language of the previous country	Years in school	Target language
S1	4	UAE	English	1	Bangla
S2	6	UAE	English	2	Bangla
S3	10	Canada	English	3	Bangla
S4	12	UK	English	3	Bangla
S5	5	UK	English	2	Bangla
S6	5	UAE	English	1	Bangla
S7	6	Qatar	English	2	Bangla
S8	4	Qatar	English	1	Bangla
S9	8	Canada	English	2	Bangla
S10	8	Singapore	English	3	Bangla
S11	8	Malaysia	English	3	Bangla
S12	9	UK	English	3	Bangla
S13	10	UAE	English	3	Bangla

S14	10	Saudi Arabia	English	4	Bangla
S15	11	USA	English	2	Bangla
S16	7	USA	English	1	Bangla
S17	7	Malaysia	English	2	Bangla
S18	6	Canada	English	1	Bangla
S19	5	Qatar	English	2	Bangla
S20	6	Qatar	English	1	Bangla
S21	5	Canada	English	1	Bangla
S22	4	Canada	English	1	Bangla
S23	8	Saudi Arabia	English	2	Bangla
S24	7	UAE	English	3	Bangla
S25	9	UK	English	3	Bangla

As shown in Table 1, the student participants ranged in age from 4 to 12 years. They came from a variety of countries where Bangladeshi families commonly live, including UAE, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UK, Canada, Singapore, Malaysia, and the USA. All students were previously exposed to English in their country of origin and were learning Bangla as their heritage language, with years in the current school ranging from 1 to 4.

Table 2- Demographic profile of the teachers.

Teacher code	Gender	Years of experience	Previous Training on Bilingual Student Reconnection Pedagogy
T1	M	7	No
T2	F	5	No
T3	F	10	No
T4	M	7	Yes
T5	F	14	Yes

As shown in Table 2, the five teachers had between 5 and 14 years of teaching experience. Three teachers were female and two were male. Only two of the five teachers had prior training in bilingual student reconnection pedagogy, which may influence their strategies for teaching native language in English-medium classrooms.

3.6 Research Instrument

A research instrument is a tool or method used to collect data in a study. It helps the researcher gather meaningful and detailed information from participants (Patton, 2015). In this study, two instruments were used. They are classroom observation and semi-structured teacher interviews. These instruments were chosen to provide both naturalistic and reflective insights into how foreign-born Bangladeshi children reconnect with their native language and engage in classroom activities.

3.6.1 Validity of Research Instruments

The validity of the research instruments refers to the extent to which they accurately measure what they are intended to measure. To get authentic and detailed data, this study conducted classroom observation and semi-structured teacher interviews. The supervisor of this research reviewed and gave feedback which ensured the validity of the research instruments. Ensuring ecological validity, classroom observation provides direct data of how returnee students engage and participate in natural classroom activities. Semi-structured interviews were taken to gain elaborate insights of the teachers strategies, challenges and perceptions, which gave content validity through in-depth and relevant information. Using both instruments together also helps with methodological triangulation, enhancing the overall credibility and trustworthiness of the data collected (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015; Patton, 2015)

3.6.2 Classroom Observation

Observation is a method of collecting data by watching participants in their natural setting to understand behavior and interactions (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). In this study, the researcher did not participate in classroom activities and has done a non-participant and systematic observation, which allows to capture students' natural behavior. A pre-set checklist was used. This systematic observation checklist included students' use of Bangla and English, engagement in classroom tasks, interaction with peers and teachers, their cultural awareness, etc. A total of four classes were observed, with the purpose of exploring how students interacted with teachers and peers and how they engaged in classroom learning while reconnecting with their native language.

3.6.3 Teacher Interviews

In-depth interviews are qualitative tools used to explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and opinions (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Five teachers who directly teach these students were selected for conducting semi-structured interviews. Semi-structure interviews provide an opportunity for researchers to follow a guiding set of questions while giving flexibility to the participants to present detailed responses. The interviews were focused on how teachers observe the students' language adaptation and acquisition and its use in

classrooms. Along with their classroom engagement, participation and interaction with peers, overall identity development and adaptation to the learning environment. The interviews were recorded with the participants' permission and were transcribed for analysis. It took place in a relaxed environment. The interviews provide a holistic understanding of bilingual identity formation and classroom engagement, combined with classroom observations.

3.7 Data Collection

In order to ensure an authentic understanding of the classroom environment and participants' experiences the data collection for this study was carried out entirely in person. Permission from school administration was taken before beginning the class observation and teacher interviews. All the were collected from a selected English medium school in Dhaka that included foreign born Bangladeshi students. Classroom observation and semi-structure teacher interviews were used to collect data. During each classroom observation, which lasted about 40 minutes, the observer checked how foreign-born children used Bangla and English in class, how teachers and peers' interaction with them, and how cultural elements appeared in lessons or activities. Not to disrupt the classroom dynamics, a non-participatory observation was followed. After classroom observation, semi-structured interviews were conducted which lasted approximately 15 to 20 minutes. However, additional time was allowed when teachers wished to share more information. The interviews were focused on teachers' opinions, classroom activities and the initiatives taken by schools to help the returnee student reconnect with their linguistic and cultural roots. To facilitate open communication all discussions were held in a quiet and comfortable environment. Informed consent from the school authorities and participants before each observation and interview were taken to maintain strict ethical standards throughout the data collection process. Participation was voluntary and all participants were assured that their names and institutional identities would remain anonymous. The collected notes and information from observations and interviews were organized according to research objectives to secure systematic analysis in the next stage.

3.8 Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using a thematic approach to identify recurring patterns related to language use, cultural identity, and classroom interaction. A prepared checklist

helped in reviewing observation notes. Based on repeated ideas that emerged across different classroom sessions key moments were grouped into themes such as language switching, teacher support, and cultural integration. Following Creswell's (2015) approach to qualitative research, which involves coding and identifying themes to interpret participant experiences, interview responses were analyzed manually. For ensuring consistency and to provide a more complete understanding of the research questions themes from the interviews were compared with those from observations. This process allowed for a structured and meaningful interpretation of how foreign-born Bangladeshi students engaged with language and culture in the classroom.

3.9 Research Ethics

Careful attention to ethical responsibility was given to carry out the study. Formal permission from school authorities, and participants were taken before starting any observations or interviews. The teachers were informed about the purpose of the research and they joined voluntarily. They had the freedom to withdraw at any time if they felt uncomfortable. To make the interview process safe and respectful a quiet and comfortable space was chosen where the teachers could speak freely. No names or school information are included in the final report and participants' identities were kept confidential. During classroom observation, the researcher observed quietly and unobtrusively, so that the teaching can proceed without any interruption. Students' real names were omitted from the final report to maintain their privacy. Throughout the study, every step was guided by commitment to respect, transparency and ethical care for all individuals involved.

3.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter explained the methodology used to understand how foreign-born Bangladeshi students experience language and culture in an English-medium school. It describes the qualitative research design, the target population, and the sampling method. To capture both the classroom environment and teachers' point of view, the study used two main tools, which are classroom observation and semi-structured teacher interviews. Permission was taken from school and participants participated voluntarily. The interview took place in a comfortable place to ensure honest and open conversation and the observations were non-

intrusive. Participants' identities were classified. A thematic approach was used to analyze data, identify patterns and recurring ideas from both observations notes and interview responses. These themes were then linked to the research objectives to gain a deeper understanding of how returnee students navigate bilingual classrooms and their cultural identities. A thoughtful and ethical way is provided in the methodology to explore the real experiences of students and teachers, focusing on classroom patterns and personal understandings in a meaningful way.

Chapter Four: Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter exhibits the findings from the five teacher interviews and four classroom observations to understand how foreign-born Bangladeshi students reconnect with their native language and culture in English medium schools. The analysis is structured around three research questions. They are: (1) How do foreign-born Bangladeshi children reconnect with their native language and cultural identity while studying in English-medium schools in Dhaka? (2) What is the role of teachers, peers, and classroom engagement in supporting the development of bilingual identity among returnee children? and (3) What strategies and steps do English-medium schools implement to help returnee children connect with their linguistic and cultural roots? The findings are based on five semi-structured interviews with teachers, conducted between November 23 and November 27, and four classroom observations from KG to Class 5 at an English medium school in Dhaka. The findings of interviews and classroom observations were cross-checked to identify the key themes. All participants gave informed consent, and pseudonyms such as “Teacher 1” are used to maintain privacy. The chapter is organised according to the three research questions in Sections 4.2 to 4.4, followed by a brief chapter summary in Section 4.5.

4.2 Reconnection of Foreign-Born Bangladeshi Children with Bangla Language and Cultural Identity

This section explores how returnee students reconnect with Bangla and their cultural identity through classroom practices. Classroom observation of four classes showed that peer interaction, gentle teacher guidance, visual aids, and group activities played a major role in helping returnee children reconnect with their native language and cultural identity. Younger learners learn gradually by participating in rhymes and repeated letters. Often their friends help them pronounce unfamiliar words. In Bangla class teachers constantly encourage them to use proper Bangla sentences, give them positive feedback, and use flashcards and videos to make them understand the language and its uses properly. To create cultural awareness, the school arranges several cultural programs and competitions, and celebrates national days. The library resources also help students to read Bangla stories and histories. It supports their vocabulary development and cultural learning. However, younger students had less cultural awareness while older students showed lower visible excitement in everything despite high

participation. The classroom observations showed returnee students gradually become familiar with Bangla through everyday activities. It was shown that they followed their classmates' gesture, tone and movement to respond to Bangla instructions. This silent participation helps the students to understand meaning before they speak. In group tasks, during Bangla class, foreign born students often relied on their peers to explain things to them informally. Rhyming, role-playing, peer help and friendly environment help the learners to learn in a relaxed environment.

Interviews with five teachers reinforced the findings of classroom observations. Teachers emphasized cultural activities, peer support, and visual learning to encourage Bangla use. Teacher 1 noted, "They get to know about our culture and get connected". Teacher 2 emphasized on emotional motivation by saying, "We tell them about our history, the importance of Bangla as a language." Teacher 4 explained, "They understand but cannot express themselves fully." Teachers also mentioned the use of scaffolding and how peers help each other with vocabulary and pronunciation (T3). They provide supportive guidance and correct the mistakes gently (T1). Teachers talked about methods such as roleplay, storytelling, showing flashcards and online videos, giving them group tasks and guiding them gently when they make mistakes (T4, T5). Also some challenges were noted such as limited Bangla resources, number of Bangla teachers and different proficiency levels among foreign born students. Bilingual identity theories and the social interaction model, shows the critical role of teachers and peers in maintaining heritage language. The study adds to the existing literature by specifically focusing on foreign born Bangladeshi students in English medium schools.

4.3 Role of Teachers, Peers, and Classroom Engagement in Supporting Bilingual Identity

In four classroom observations it is shown that teachers' behaviour, gentle guidance, and peer support helps foreign born students to participate in the Bangla class. Visual aid such as flashcards and videos, storytelling, confirming every student understands what the topic is, guiding them gently, letting friends help each other ensure rapid learning. Drilling is another method that almost every teacher uses in their class. These Bangla classes were more focused on communication rather than correctness of sentence structure. In KG1 and class 2 classmates often whisper the correct pronunciation to each other. In class 4, 5 group tasks help the students to create bonds and also learn the language. Moreover, poster making

activity about Bangla folk tale arranged in class 5 helps the students to negotiate meanings in both languages. Teachers promote Bangla in class by saying “Banglay bolo”, which makes the language a normal part of communication. Supportive teachers, helpful classmates, and active participation create the environment for learning the language naturally.

Interview data also shows that familiarity, drilling and emotional support help foreign born Bangladeshi students to reconnect with Bangla. Teachers emphasize cultural events. T1 said, “We arrange many cultural activities, such as Pohela Boishakh, Pitha Utshob, and Ekushey February programs. Through these events, students learn about our culture and feel connected.” Peer help was also mentioned by many teachers. T2 said in the interview about when a student helped a foreign born student to pronounce the word “স্নিগ্ধ” (Snighdho). On this matter T5 said, “Friends influence strongly. When they hear Bangla naturally in class, they copy.” T2 explained that, “They feel more comfortable speaking Bangla with friends,” meaning that informal peer interactions also play a vital role. Visual learning, group tasks, flashcards for visual recognition, etc. were mentioned by teachers. T5 mentioned ways of making Bangla use more enjoyable and meaningful by “picture descriptions and Bangla word challenges.” T2 stated, “Even if they pronounce wrongly, we motivate them positively.” They use role-play, competition and use gentle guidance to encourage students to participate. There are some drawbacks in vocabulary and resources that were mentioned by teachers. When students feel emotionally safe and socially supported, their bilingual identity grows naturally.

4.4 Strategies and Steps Implemented by the School to Support Reconnection with Bangla and Culture

The school implemented several strategies to support reconnection with Bangla and culture. In classroom observation it was seen that pictures, visuals and audios are being used in Bangla class to make the learning fun. The school allows students to use Bangla in their free periods. The library provides some books in Bangla from where students can learn about Bangladeshi culture and history. The teachers talked about Bangladeshi motivational stories in the classroom to make the student more interested about the language and its history. To build early familiarity with Bangla, younger classes used picture cards, alphabet posters, and rhyme based learning. Upper grades participated more in structured activities such as creative writing, poster making, and preparation for cultural programs, etc. Several competitions,

cultural programs, and national days related to Bangla and Bangladesh are being arranged in the school every year, such as, Bangla Spelling Bee competition, drama, Pohela Boishakh celebration, Pitha Utshab, Mother Language Day, etc. By doing these activities this school promotes reconnection with the native language and its culture.

Teachers also confirmed the effectiveness of the strategies and steps implemented by the school. All teachers emphasize cultural programs. T1 said, “We arrange many cultural activities, such as Pohela Boishakh, Pitha Utshob, and Ekushey February programs.” The school also provides learning materials in Bangla. The school also organized many study tours to visit important places of Bangladesh. As T2 mentioned, “We arrange study tours to museums and the Shaheed Minar so students can connect with history and culture”. Language focused initiatives are also pointed out. T2 mentioned competitions like “Bangla Olympiad” and many other written and oral competitions to strengthen students’ bilingual skills. Also teachers mentioned, in program days there are many posters made mostly by the students being displayed in the school walls, which works as a great source of motivation for the students. Teachers talked about peer support in the classroom, friendly environment, and gentle guidance as one of the most effective strategies. The combination of cultural celebrations, scaffolding, structured guidance, peer support and friendly environment help returnee students to achieve reconnection with their native language and culture.

4.5 Data Display

The following table summarizes and displays the data from the findings, including both teacher interviews and classroom observations. Each category shows how teachers, peers and school activities help foreign born children reconnect with Bangla and its culture.

Category	Interview (Teachers)	Observation (Classes KG-5)
1. Language use	T1: “Students speak Bangla during breaks and in Bangla classes. We encourage them to try even if they make mistakes.” T5: “I ask easy questions in Bangla so they feel comfortable answering.”	KG: Students repeated Bangla letters and rhymes. Class 2–5: Read poems, write short paragraphs, use Bangla in discussions, gradually become more confident.
2. Cultural Awareness & Identity	T2: “Study tours and cultural events help students connect with history and traditions.” T1: “Pohela Boishakh, Pitha Utshob, and 21 February programs help students feel connected.”	Observed cultural events, storytelling sessions, poster-making.
3. Peer Support	T3: “We mix foreign-born students with Bangla-background students. Peers help with vocabulary and pronunciation.” T4: “Friends correct each other during group activities.”	Observed students naturally assisting each other with pronunciation, helping foreign-born peers participate in songs, rhymes, and group discussions.
4. Teacher Guidance & Encouragement	T2: “Even if they pronounce wrongly, we motivate them positively.” T1: “We correct gently and guide them on proper terms.”	Teachers prompted Bangla responses, used visual aids, vocabulary charts, and group tasks. Encouraged active participation without pressure.

5. Classroom Strategies & Engagement	T5: “Group discussions, picture description, matching games, role-play, and competitions maintain engagement.” T3: “Acting out shopkeeper-customer dialogues helps	Observed role-play activities, TBLT-based tasks, drama, group work, poetry recitation. High energy and participation recorded across classes.
	students learn naturally.”	
6. School Resources & Programs	T1: “Library has Bangla storybooks, posters, flashcards, multimedia.” T5: “Cultural functions, Bangla competitions help students connect.”	Observed Bangla books in library, posters, flashcards, classroom labels, and participation in Pohela Boishakh, 21 February, and Ekushey programs.

4.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter used classroom observation and teacher interviews to discuss how foreign Bangladeshi children restore their bond with the language and culture of the motherland. Results indicated an instant reconnection, taking place gradually with support from teachers who make lessons understandable through visuals, stories, songs, and other forms of gentle guidance that would make learning fun. Making the environment friendly and motivating for these students, peers help with pronunciation, give new words and join activities. The school contributes to this process by arranging cultural competitions, interactive Bangla lessons, and allowing the students to use Bangla language outside the classroom. All these teacher practices, peer support, and school activities simultaneously help children rebuild their Bangla skills while finding a way toward cultural identity.

Chapter Five: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

The aim of this study is to explore how foreign born Bangladeshi returnee children reconnect with their native language in English medium school. The discussion sessions interpret the findings of the three research questions. The findings are explained by connecting classroom observations, teacher interviews and related literature.

5.2 Reconnection with Native Language and Cultural Identity

Based on 5 teacher interviews and 4 classroom observations, it is concluded that foreign born Bangladeshi children reconnect with Bangla and their cultural identity through cultural activities, peer support, visual learning, emotional motivation and teacher correction. Teachers help these students to connect with the history and cultural background of the country. For instance, on this matter teacher 2 states that they try to visit places that “actually culturally belong to our own society”, such as museums, Shahid Minar. Hayakawa et al. (2022) explain that learning a heritage language helps children feel closer to their culture. This supports the result that cultural stories and events made returnee children feel connected to Bangladesh. This research helps to understand that, at first foreign-born Bangladeshi children struggle to connect with their native language and culture. But they improve when teachers help them with pictures, visuals, storytelling and friendly activities. Classmates also play an important role as they correct their pronunciation and sentence making, and opportunities to practice Bangla in a friendly environment.

This result means that children reconnect with their language and culture when they get proper support (Montrul, 2023) and a comfortable environment of learning. The findings align with heritage language and bilingual identity theories (Montrul, 2023; García, 2017). It is important as it shows how foreign-born children reconnect with their native language and culture even in an English medium school. Reconnecting with one's own native language and culture makes them feel emotionally connected to their roots (Zhou & Liu, 2024). It strengthens cultural awareness and identity and helps to enhance academic and social skills through bilingualism. Despite all the insightful findings, this study has some limitations. In this study the sample size is limited, as only 5 teachers were being interviewed and 4 classes were observed in a single English medium school. So it may not represent all English

medium schools in Dhaka. The school has few Bangla teachers and limited learning material. This study also observed only younger students, so for older students the result may vary.

Where previous studies have largely focused on immigrant bilingual children in heritage-language maintenance, community support, and peer/ school bilingual education contexts (Alafifi, 2025), English-medium education policies (Huq, 2021) and bilingual identity and emotional expression (Bakić & Škifić, 2017), but none has specifically focused on how foreign born Bangladeshi children reconnect with their native language in an English medium school. This makes the present study important because it provides new insight in this area.

As returnee students actively negotiate their Bangladeshi identity in the classroom through engagement and cultural participation, it aligns with Norton's (2013) investment and identity theory, since they are constructing a sense of belonging and personal identity in the classroom. Their willingness to speak Bangla with peers and participate in cultural activities shows that learning a language is linked to feeling included and valued. Moreover, since children use what they already know in English to help them learn Bangla, displaying how knowing one language helps to learn another, fits Cummins' (2000) interdependence hypothesis perfectly. This study shows how visual support, peer and teacher interaction, and cultural activities help returnee students reconnect with their native language, and these steps can be adopted by schools to support similar learners. This study proves that with the right environment heritage language re-learning is possible even in an English-dominant setting. Therefore, the study not only fills the research gap but also offers meaningful implications for teachers and schools.

5.3 Role of Teachers, Peers, and Classroom Engagement in Bilingual Identity Development

In this study teachers emphasized the importance of peer support. Classroom engagement, and teacher guidance in developing bilingual identity of foreign born students. To explore the importance of these factors, 5 teacher interviews and 4 classroom observations were conducted. Teacher 2 explained, "Peer support works really well", because students who were already in Bangladesh and know Bangla well, help the new students with Bangla. Teacher 1 noted the use of group tasks and role play, she states, "through drama and role-play, students actively participate and practice Bangla in context." Teachers use gentle correction, and positive words to encourage and motivate students to use Bangla.

This result suggests that an interactive environment helps students learn their native language more effectively than traditional methods of teaching . When students don't feel threatened or judged while using a language, and they see the value of the language, they feel more encouraged to use it. Limitations include limited studying materials, only one Bangla class since it is an English medium school, and different levels of Bangla proficiency among students.

Norton's (2013) investment and identity theory is seen as a way to strengthen their bilingual identity students participate in Bangla tasks, role plays and group activities. Their language learning is tied to how they see themselves and how they want others to see them. Skills practiced in English, such as reading and speaking, help children to gain confidence in Bangla, supporting Cummins' (2000) interdependence hypothesis. These findings also align with García's (2017) bilingual identity theories and the social interaction model of language acquisition (Vygotsky, 1978). It shows how peer support and teacher scaffolding help in language learning. While previous research focused on bilingual identity broadly (Bakić & Škifić, 2017), there is no study specifically focused on this area. The study shows teachers and peers create the environments where these foreign-born Bangladeshi students reconnect with their native language.

5.4 School Initiatives for Strengthening Linguistic and Cultural Roots

This section explores the specific steps and strategies that English medium schools implement to help foreign-born students reconnect with their native language. In five teacher interviews several strategies were mentioned, such as cultural events like Pohela Boishakh, 21st February, 16th December (T1, T2), providing Bangla story books, using multimedia classroom and visual aids like flashcards (T1, T3), using activity based learning like group work, role playing, competitions. These activities help students to engage with the language and its culture. School implements formal programs such as competitions, structured classes and informal practices such as peer support, interactive activities, etc. However, there are limitations in resources, the number of Bangla teachers and the time available for activities.

Reflecting Norton's (2013) idea that learners invest in language to build their identity and social connections, the school arranges cultural events, story sessions and peer activities. And as their proficiency in English literacy and communication skill, helping them perform in Bangla, shows the reflection of Cummins' (2000) theory. Heritage language maintenance and

bilingual education theories (García, 2017; Montrul, 2023), shows that culturally rich, interactive and supportive school environments benefit students' language learning and cultural identity development. While bilingual identity and peer/teacher support have been researched before in other contexts (Bakić & Škifić, 2017; García, 2017), the specific steps used by English medium schools to support returnee Bangladeshi students reconnect with native language has not been addressed. This study addresses the gap and helps to fill it.

The outcomes of this study provide practical steps that schools can adopt to support these students. Implementing strategies such as organizing cultural events, providing proper learning resources and opportunities, promoting peer interaction, using visual aids and activity based learning techniques can enhance students language proficiency, cultural awareness and emotional connection supporting both academic and personal development.

5.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter discusses the findings of the study related to research questions and relevant literature. Five teacher interviews and four class observations provided the insights into how foreign born Bangladeshi students reconnect with their native language in English medium schools in Dhaka. This chapter shows the importance of supportive teachers, peers, interactive classroom environment, cultural events, and visual learning techniques. Where limitations such as limited resources, limited Bangla teachers were noted, the findings still help to fill the research gap by focusing on returnee students in English medium school. The results show that schools should create a supportive environment where students can know and learn their own language and culture and develop their bilingual identity. These findings can guide the schools in implementing effective ways for returnee students to reconnect with their roots.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This study explores how foreign-born Bangladeshi children reconnect with their native language in English medium school after returning to Bangladesh. Findings from classroom observation and teacher interview suggest that combination of visual learning, peer support and continuous teacher guidance shape the language connection in a child. Visual aids and interactive classroom environments help a student understand and remember new vocabulary and peer support help in reducing anxiety. Gentle guidance from teachers, drilling, group tasks, encouragement and motivation to use Bangla support the process. Language reconnection, in other words identity reconnection is driven by gradual, social, and emotional development.

This result emphasizes the impact of culturally responsive teaching practice in early childhood education settings. To support identity development teachers need to acknowledge students' diverse linguistic backgrounds to create an inclusive environment for every student. To make the students confident and motivated with their native language, the school should integrate more visual materials, group and peer activities, cultural programs, and natural interaction opportunities among students.

However, this has several limitations. Firstly, the sample size was small, and all data were gathered from a single English medium school in Dhaka, which limits the extent to which the findings can be generalized. A long term language development pattern can not be captured as the time frame for classroom observations were also limited. Moreover, to gain deeper information about students' emotional experiences, their first-hand perspectives were not considered.

More larger and diverse groups of participants across different schools should be included in future research. Student interviews can be taken to understand their personal experiences, emotion, and motivation for language learning. In addition, to support native language and cultural reconnection through interactive activities, peer work, and teacher professional development, schools and policymakers should design targeted programs.

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Appendix

Appendix A

Classroom observation checklist

The checklist is used for observing the students' participation in Bangla and engagement in classroom activities.

Observation Checklist

Observer Name: _____

Date: _____ Time: _____ Class/Group: _____

Location: _____

Purpose: To systematically observe how foreign-born Bangladeshi children reconnect with Bangla, develop bilingual identity, and how schools support this process.

Objective 1: Reconnection with native language & cultural identity

#	Item	Yes	No	Notes/ Examples
1	Students participate actively in Bangla language tasks			
2	Students use Bangla spontaneously in classroom / peer interactions			
3	Students show confidence when speaking, reading, or writing in Bangla			
4	Students express emotions like pride, joy, or interest while using Bangla			
5	Students show awareness of their cultural identity during classroom activities			
6	Students use Bangla in creative or expressive ways (stories, songs, presentations)			

Objective 2: Role of teachers, peers, and classroom engagement

#	Item	Yes	No	Notes/ Examples
1	Teachers encourage students to use Bangla in lessons and activities			
2	Teachers provide guidance or strategies to help students engage with Bangla			
3	Peers support each other in using Bangla during group tasks or discussions			
4	Classroom activities involve collaborative tasks that promote Bangla use			
5	Students are actively engaged and motivated in Bangla-related activities			
6	Translanguaging occurs naturally (students mix Bangla and English appropriately)			

Objective 3: School strategies and steps for linguistic & cultural support

#	Item	Yes	No	Notes/ Examples
1	Classroom environment includes resources supporting Bangla (books, charts, posters)			
2	School implements structured activities or programs to promote Bangla and cultural identity			
3	Teachers follow school guidelines/policies for supporting Bangla and culture			
4	Cultural elements are incorporated into lessons (festivals, history, songs, stories)			
5	School provides tools, support, or encouragement for students to practice Bangla outside lessons			
6	Any additional observations on school-level strategies or initiatives			

Appendix B

Teacher interview protocol

Semi-structured interviews are conducted to gain deeper insight into teachers' perspectives.

The questions are provided below.

Interviewer Name: _____

Date: _____

Participant (Teacher Code/Name): _____

Location: _____

Purpose: To explore how teachers help foreign-born Bangladeshi children reconnect with their native language and cultural identity in English-medium schools.

Questions:

1. How do you encourage students to use Bangla in class activities?
2. Can you share examples of activities that help students connect with their cultural identity?
3. How do students respond emotionally or motivationally when using Bangla in the classroom?
4. What challenges do you notice students face while reconnecting with Bangla or their culture?
5. How do you, as a teacher, support students in developing their bilingual identity?
6. How do classroom interactions with peers influence students' use of Bangla?
7. How do you design activities to encourage student participation in Bangla while maintaining engagement?
8. How do you monitor or assess students' engagement and progress in reconnecting with their native language?
9. Are there specific strategies or programs implemented in your school to help students connect with Bangla and culture?
10. What resources or tools does your school provide to support students' bilingual development?
11. How does the school environment (posters, events, curriculum) promote reconnection with Bangla and cultural identity?
12. If you could suggest improvements in school policies or strategies, what would help students reconnect better with their language and culture?