

# **English in Bangladesh as a Corporate Language: Problems and Solutions**

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# Table of Contents

	Page
Appendix	I
Acknowledgement	
Abstract	
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Problem Statement	1
1.3 Purpose Statement	2
1.4 Research questions	2
1.4 Significance	3
1.6 Limitations	3
Literature Review	5
2.1 Corporate Language	5
2.2 Importance of English in Bangladesh	5
2.3 English in the Economic activity	6
2.4 Prospect of English as Corporate Language	6
2.5 Status of English in Bangladesh: Second language or foreign language	7
2.5.1 Second language	7
2.5.2 Foreign language	8
2.5.3 Official language	9
2.5.4 World English	10
2.5.5 Constitution	11
2.5.6 Proficiency in a second or foreign language	12
2.6 Linguistic Imperialism	13
2.7 Cultural Imperialism	13
2.8 Globalization & English	14
2.9 Acculturation	16

2.10 English in Education sector in Bangladesh:	17
2.11 Social variables in Bangladesh	18
Methodology	20
3.1 Research Design	20
3.2 Setting	20
3.3 Sampling	20
3.4 Research instrument	21
3.5 Data collection procedure	21
3.6 Data analysis procedure	21
3.7 Obstacle	22
Analysis and findings	23
4.1 Introduction	23
4.2 Analysis	23
4.3 Results as Found in Employees' Questionnaire Survey	26
Conclusion & Recommendations	32
Conclusion	32
Pedagogical suggestions	34
References	37
Appendix	38

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## Abstract

In Bangladesh a number of foreign languages like Arabic, French, Japanese, Persian, etc. are used for various purposes. Besides, for a number of reasons only one foreign language i.e., English is taught as a compulsory subject across primary, secondary, higher secondary, and even the tertiary levels. English is used as a lingua franca for global communication. For this reason, to deal with different international bodies and organizations working within and outside the country people need English. English gives us easy access to the ever-expanding knowledge of science and technology, arts and education, innovations and discoveries as all the works - books, journals, reports, research-findings - are available in English. English as the language of information technology has, in fact, made the whole world a global village. English for occupational/ professional purposes can help find jobs in other countries. But unfortunately the standard of English in Bangladesh is deplorable. Students who are applying for jobs could not get a better job in the corporate world because of their inefficiency in English, although it is taught from the very beginning of their education.

In this research the researcher intends to highlight the problems and prospects of corporate English. The research sites were located at different Corporate houses of Dhaka city. Both qualitative and analytical methods have been incorporated in the study in analyzing the data. Based on these, few recommendations have been made to create awareness and to minimize the problem.

## **English in Bangladesh as a Corporate Language: Problems and Solutions**

### **1.1 Introduction:**

In recent times, both oral and written English communication skills are being emphasized because of the growing needs of effective international exchanges in the context of a globalised world (Khan, 2007). In the corporate environment it is now an undeniable issue to have a sound knowledge in Business English. In the current competitive job market, communication skill is an imperative for any good career, both in national and international settings (*ibid*).

According to Hasan (2006), presently English is used in different fields by a considerable number of people for various purposes, and most of the correspondence of the day to day communications are largely depending on it. But unfortunately, despite being a compulsory subject from primary to higher secondary level of education, people are not comfortably using it (Khan, 2007). The present study aims at spotting different kinds of problems of written and spoken correspondence of the employees of the corporate section in Bangladesh with a view to suggesting some possible ways and means to overcome them.

### **1.2 Problem Statement**

In the mainstream institutional contexts of Bangladesh, students do not have much scope to practice English outside their classrooms (Khan, 2007) and most of the lessons being taught are not that much job-oriented. Students are learning the traditional aspects of language learning and typically faces in a great problems in the work place. Rahman (2007) stated that, since Bangladesh is an independent and developing country it is expected that there should have been a clear policy for the use and teaching of English for national and international purposes. However, a close observation of the situation reveals that policy decisions have largely been *ad*

*hoc* and suffered changes with the change of governments and Bangladesh still lacks clear goals with regard to a foreign language teaching policy (*ibid*)

Correspondence in Business English includes: Official letters, memos, meeting minutes, memorandum of understanding, joint venture agreement, article of association, note for approval, concept paper, project proposal etc. (Taylor, 2005) but unfortunately students in the Bangladeshi context do not get such materials in their syllabuses and the lessons they have in the classes are not enough to help them to communicate in English effectively (Khan, 2007). As a result, they are becoming the victims and encounter a great difficulty in the respective job sections.

### **1.3 Purpose Statement**

Khan (2007) mentioned that, the present English learning and teaching situation in the country gives rise to serious concerns that need to be redressed with a better academic and professional outlook, an outlook that is pragmatic and context-sensitive in order to address the problems of communication.

The main purpose of this research is to find out the problems encountered by the employees of the corporate houses in Dhaka city. As this is a small research a few of the employees having various designations will be interviewed. The researcher intends to highlight the problems and prospects of corporate English along with the reasons behind them.

### **1.4 Research questions**

There are some central research questions in this research paper:

First of all, what is Corporate Language?

Secondly, why it is so influential for the business communication?

Thirdly, how English has become the means of communication in most of the private owned companies in Bangladesh?

And, what are the major difficulties employees face when they do the oral communication or write something in English?

### **1.5 Significance:**

The importance of English in our life can never be denied. Knowing English is a must for a third world developing country like Bangladesh. Private sector in Bangladesh is the most influential sector for the economic growth. Having been the inhabitant of the global village, we can not deny the importance of English as an international language. Considering this perspective this research will be very significant for the employees working in the business organizations. In addition, if anyone wants to do any research regarding this issue in Bangladesh, it will be helpful for them. On top of that, it might be helpful for job seekers also who will take it seriously and will be able to get the desired job by improving their English language skill.

### **1.6 Limitations**

Like other researches, this research is also not a perfect one, and containing some limitations. The materials on this issue are not very much available. Many scholars have dealt with the importance of the global language but very few of them specifically dealt with the problems in it. Again, as this is a small scale research the results might not be comprehensive. Only fifty employees and some owners from different private institutions are not sufficient for a research and cannot represent the whole country.



The scope of this research is also limited. It is basically dealing with some specific purposes, and only the writing and the oral communication skills will be in consideration. Again, the researcher intended to focus on the private sector of the country where the entry level executive will be interviewed. This is only about Dhaka city and does not consider all the corporate houses here; only few private organizations have been selected and they again actually do not represent the whole city.

## **Literature Review**

### **2.1 Corporate Language**

According to Pattison (2004), Corporate Language refers to many communication skills used in the workplace, and focuses on the language and skills needed for typical business communication such as multi-media presentations, negotiations, meetings, small talk, socializing all the written correspondence of emails, letters and report writing.

Some people have expanded the phrase 'Business English' Communication which includes a variety of functions: marketing, branding, customer relations, consumer behavior, advertising, public relations, corporate communication, community engagement, research & measurement, reputation management, interpersonal communication, employee engagement, online communication, and event management through the certain English Language (Bygate, 2001).

### **2.2 Importance of English in Bangladesh**

Rahman (2007) noted that, after the emergence of Bangladesh as an independent nation, English suffered a serious setback. One of the reasons of this was strong nationalistic sentiment for the mother tongue Bengali. The Bengali introduction Law, promulgated in 1983 by Bangladesh Government, made it compulsory for employees in government, semi-government, and autonomous institutions to use Bengali in interoffice memos, legal documents and correspondence except in case of communication with foreign governments, countries and organizations. Thus English lost its previous status as a second language and came to be treated as a foreign language (*ibid*).

Though the standard of English nationally in Bangladesh is not high, and English is still an urban, elite language, satellite television, FM radio, etc, Bangladesh is being exposed to English

as never before. The entrance of Bangladesh into the garment industry has created an increasing awareness of the need for English communication skills. The phenomenal growth of the IT industry in Bangladesh has also made people aware of the importance of English as a language of communication. As in the past, English has become essential for economic purposes. (Zaman, 2001)

### **2.3 English in the Economic activity**

Bangladesh is not self sufficient economically, it is largely dependent on foreign aids and export of various items (Hasan, 2006). Trading is more popular than production here which requires constant communication with foreign companies. Many of the companies which are involved in trading have to use English in dealing with foreigners. Therefore, most of the private jobs state that the applicants must have good proficiency in English language. Almost all the public limited companies publish their annual reports in English. So it is clear that English is the dominant language in our economic activities (*ibid*).

### **2.4 Prospect of English as Corporate Language**

Hasan (2006) noted that, corporate language refers to a language that may or may not be a native language to a person but is widely practiced in the day to day activities in the corporate organizations. From this perspective English in the private sectors of Bangladesh could be considered as a corporate language where mostly day to day written correspondence is being done in English. He further noted that the advancement of information technology and more dependence on computer made English an influential part in this regard.

## **2.5 Status of English in Bangladesh: Second language or foreign language?**

From sociolinguistic point of view the status of English is a very interesting one. On the one hand, English language is dominantly present in every side of our national life while on the other hand, in our constitution it is clearly declared that the language of the country is Bangla. In fact, nothing is said about the status of English language in our constitution. On the one hand, economic activities in the corporate houses are carried out in English while there is a government law (Bangla procholon ain1987) that government offices must use Bangla in their official work. So from the government point of view Bangla is the national- official language of Bangladesh and English is the most important foreign language. But in reality English is the second language of the country and in many places English is more important than Bangla in Bangladesh.

### **2.5.1 Second language:**

A second language is any language other than the first, or native, language; it is typically used because of geographical or social reasons. The term is to be distinguished from foreign language; linguist Eric Lenneberg uses second language in his critical period hypothesis to mean a language consciously learned or used by its speakers after puberty. In most cases, people never achieve the same level of fluency and comprehension in their second languages as in their first language.

Historically in Europe, the most widely used second language (or lingua franca) was Latin. It was used by the Church; by the Law (as it still is today); in Medicine (starting much later); Horticulture and biological classification of plants, animals, fruits, nuts, etc.

Latin was used so much across Europe that it was called the vulgar (or common tongue); this is why the Latin version of the Bible is called the Vulgate.

Nowadays, English is considered the world's most widespread second language; it is used in areas as diverse as the internet, television and radio, and international aviation.

The success of English throughout the world stems from two major causes: the far reaching influence of the British Empire, and the 20th century (and continuing) dominance of the United States in the fields of business and entertainment.

French was for a time the lingua franca (the origin of term) in Europe. In history, both England and France were ruled by a single crown - the language used by the royal court was French (English was considered "the peasant's language"). Afterwards, as was the case with English, the French empire spread its language through colonization. French continues to be one of the world's most widely spoken languages. (Wikipedia)

If we look at the definition of second language, then we can easily say that English is the second language of Bangladesh. It is widely used in many parts of our national life. Many people watch English television channels and also use Internet. The students have to study it for twelve years and those who want to join civil service by attending BCS exam also have to sit for English examination. The only thing that is missing from the above definition is the fact that except for formal occasions no one speaks in English in Bangladesh. It is not the language used in home among family members and among friends in informal conversation.

### **2.5.2 Foreign language:**

A foreign language is a language not spoken by the indigenous people of a certain place. Some children learn more than one language from birth or from a very young age: they are bilingual.

These children can be said to have two mother tongues: neither language is foreign to that child, even if one language is a foreign language for the vast majority of people in the child's birth country. For example, a child learning English from her English mother in Japan can speak both English and Japanese, but neither is a foreign language to her. (Wikipedia)

From the above definition, it is seen that foreign language refers to a language that is not native to a person. From this point of view English can be considered as a foreign language in Bangladesh since it is not native in our country. Hardly any Bangladeshi speaks in English although many of them use it in education and business.

### **2.5.3 Official language:**

An official language is something that is given a unique status in the countries, states, and other territories. It is typically the language used in a nation's legislative bodies, though the law in many nations requires that government documents be produced in other languages as well.

Officially recognized minority languages are often mistaken for official languages. However, a language officially recognized by a state, taught in schools, and used in official communication is not necessarily an official language. For example, Ladin and Sardinian in Italy and Mirandese in Portugal are only officially recognized minority languages, not official languages in the strict sense.

Half of the countries in the world have official languages. Some have only one official language, such as Albania, France, or Lithuania, despite the fact that in all these countries there are other native languages spoken as well. Some have more than one official language, such as Afghanistan, Belarus, Belgium, Bolivia, Canada, Eritrea, Finland, India, Paraguay, South Africa, and Switzerland.

In some countries, such as Iraq, Italy, Russia and Spain, there is an official language for the country, but other languages are co-official in some important regions. Some countries, such as Australia, Sweden, Tuvalu, and the United States have no official languages.

The official languages of some former colonies, typically French or English, are not the national languages or the most widely spoken language.

In contrast, as a consequence of nationalism, Irish is the "national language" of the Republic of Ireland and its first official language, although it is spoken by only a small fraction of its people. English, which is spoken by the majority, is described only as the second official language (Constitution of Ireland, Article 8).

In some countries, the issue of which language is to be used in what context is a major political issue. (Wikipedia)

From the above definition, it is seen that the notion of official language is complicated. According to our constitution English can not be termed as the official language of Bangladesh since it has no status in our constitution. The only language that is mentioned in our constitution is Bangla. But English is allowed in our parliament and many government events. For example, when there is a government event in which some foreigners attend then in many cases the speakers use English language. Many important government documents are written both in Bangla and English. The parliament proceedings are kept into these two languages. When a government body organizes a fair then often the souvenir is published in English.

#### **2.5.4 World English**

The global distributions of English are often described in terms of three contexts. These are English as a Native Language (ENL), English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a

Foreign Language (EFL). Thus the diffusion of English throughout the world is seen in territories, viz., ENL territories, ESL territories and EFL territories (Koul N. Omkar (eds.) 1992 Crystal D 1995: 107). In ENL territories English is spoken as the first or often as the only language. Here ENL refers to the mother tongue variety of English. In countries like the UK, the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, English enjoys the status of native language. In ESL territories many people use English for various purposes. English plays a vital role - official, educational, and other. Here (ESL) English is an institutional language. It has an institutional variety as well. English is used as a second language in almost all the former British colonies. Some of the major features of ESL countries are as follows:

- i. English is one of the linguistic codes of the country.
- ii. It has acquired an important status in language policy.
- iii. It is learned at schools to an adequate level for national and/or international use.

English is used as a second language for many purposes in such countries as India, Nigeria and Singapore. A person's chronological second language, however, in many cases becomes the functional first language of adulthood. Under such conditions as migration, an original second language may become the person's only language.

In EFL situations, however, English may be more or less prestigious, and more or less welcomed in particular places. Many people learn it for occupational purposes and/or for education and recreation. English is taught as a foreign language in many countries like China and Japan.

### **2.5.5 Constitution:**

About the language of the country the Bangladeshi constitution clearly states:

The state language of the Republic is Bangla



In the constitution nothing is mentioned about the status of English. English is not mentioned as a second language or official language. So if we take the status of English in our constitution then we cannot claim that English is a Second language or Official Language in Bangladesh.

### **2.5.6 Proficiency in a second or foreign language**

To describe what constitutes the proficiency in a second or foreign language, this section starts from Chomsky's early work especially his distinction between linguistic competence and linguistic performance. This section will discuss the reactions towards it that came from anthropologists, philosophers and other linguists.

Chomsky made a distinction between linguistic competence (i.e., what the speaker knows) and linguistic performance (i.e., what the speaker does i.e., says or writes, at any time). For him, concept of competence and performance is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogeneous speech community. His ideal speaker-listener knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shift of attention and interest, and errors in applying this knowledge of the language in actual performance (Chomsky 1965: 3).

Chomsky's use of the terms 'ideal speaker-listener', 'homogeneous speech community', limits the field of investigation of linguists. Chomsky described as performance a number of factors that should be handled in terms of competence (see Munby 1978, 11th print 1997: 9). Hymes, Habermas, Jacobovits, Campbell and Wales, Cooper and others, all reject Chomsky's restricted view of competence.

Habermas says that in order to participate in normal discourse, the speaker must have in addition to his linguistic competence basic qualification of speech and of symbolic interaction at his disposal, which we may call 'communicative competence' (Habermas 1970, see in Munby 1978, 11th print 1997: 11).

## **2.6 Linguistic Imperialism**

English is now a Lingua franca (Crystal, 1997) and is considered a global property; and it is the most dominant language since British Empire started to spread all over the world. At the very beginning of British colonization English was used as an imperial tool.

According to Phillipson, Linguistic imperialism or language imperialism, is a linguistics concept that "involves the transfer of a dominant language to other people. The transfer is essentially a demonstration of power—traditionally, military power but also, in the modern world, economic power—and aspects of the dominant culture are usually transferred along with the language.

## **2.7 Cultural Imperialism**

Cultural imperialism is the practice of promoting, distinguishing, separating, or artificially injecting of the culture from one society into another. It gained prominence mainly in 1970s. This is usually the case that the former culture belongs to a large, economically or militarily powerful nation and the latter Culture belongs to a smaller, less important one (*ibid*). For Said (1993:9), imperialism means "the practice, the theory and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory; colonialism, which is almost always a consequence of imperialism, is the implanting of settlements on distant territory". Schiller wrote (1976:7-9) that the concept of cultural imperialism can be best described as the sum of the processes by

which a society is brought into the modern world system and how its dominating stratum is attracted, pressured, forced, and sometimes bribed into shaping social institutions to correspond to, or even promote, the values and structures of the dominating centre of the system. Therefore the public media are the foremost example of operating enterprises that are used in the penetrative process (*ibid*).

Salwen says (in White, 1998), that the issue of cultural imperialism emerged largely from communication literature involving development and political economy and these orientations ultimately constructed formulations concerning cultural heritage and behavior based on an analysis of government, corporate policy and practice.

In 1976, Schiller's work "Communication and Cultural Domination" proposed the use of the term "cultural imperialism" to describe and explain the way in which large multinational corporations, including the media, of developed countries dominated developing countries.

## **2.8 Globalization & English**

Globalization refers to the increasing unification of the world's economic order through reduction of such barriers to international trade as tariffs, export fees, and import quotas (Wikipedia). It is the process of increasing the connectivity and interdependence of the world's markets and businesses. The goal is to increase material wealth, goods, and services through an international division of labor by efficiencies catalyzed by international relations, specialization and competition. It describes the process by which regional economies, societies, and cultures have become integrated through communication, transportation, and trade. The term is most closely associated with the term economic globalization: the integration of national economies into the international economy through trade, foreign direct investment, capital flows, migration,

language, spread of technology, and military presence. However, globalization is usually recognized as being driven by a combination of economic, technological, linguistic, sociocultural, political, and biological factors. The term can also refer to the transnational circulation of ideas, languages, or popular culture through acculturation. An aspect of the world which has gone through the process can be said to be globalized.

Globalization has various aspects which affect the world in several different ways and it has a great influence on language: The most spoken first language is Mandarin (845 million speakers) followed by Spanish (329 million speakers) and English (328 million speakers) However the most popular second language is undoubtedly English, the "lingua franca" of globalization:

- About 35% of the world's mail, telexes, and cables are in English.
- Approximately 40% of the world's radio programs are in English.
- English is the dominant language on the Internet.

Newsweek has an excellent feature article in 7 March 2011 of its international edition on how the English language is evolving and changing the way we communicate. The article says “non-native English-speakers” worldwide now outnumber native ones 3 to 1. In Asia alone, Newsweek says, the number of English users has topped 350 million – roughly the combined populations of the United States, the UK and Canada. There are more Chinese children studying English – about 100 million – than there are Britons (that’s nearly twice as many).What’s especially interesting about Newsweek’s article is that it analyses the different ways in which English as a means of communication is evolving, developing into literally separate languages, yet which are still understandable by those who speak any version of English.

All languages are works in progress. But English’s globalization, unprecedented in the history of languages, will revolutionize it in ways we can only begin to imagine. In the future, suggests

[English-language expert David Crystal], there could be a tri-English world, one in which people could speak a local English-based dialect at home, a national variety at work or school, and international Standard English to talk to foreigners.

Technology also plays a huge role in English's global triumph. Eighty percent of the electronically stored information in the world is in English; 66 percent of the world's scientists read in it, according to the British Council. "It's very important to learn English because [computer] books are only in English," New technologies are helping people pick up the language, too: Chinese and Japanese students can get English-usage tips on their mobile phones. English-language teachers point to the rise of Microsoft English, where computer users are drafting letters advised by the Windows spell check and pop-up style guides.

## **2.9 Acculturation**

Acculturation is a process in which members of one cultural group adopt the beliefs and behaviors of another group (Ellis, 1997:251). In addition, it is usually in the direction of a minority group adopting habits and language patterns of the dominant group, or it can be reciprocal--that is, the dominant group also adopts patterns typical of the minority group.

Assimilation of "one cultural group into another may be evidenced by changes in language preference, adoption of common attitudes and values, membership in common social groups and institutions, and loss of separate political or ethnic identification" (ibid).

## **2.10 English in Education sector in Bangladesh:**

Formal and institutionalized education system started in Bangladesh during the British rule. At that time Bangladesh was part of British India. There was a debate about the medium of

education. Raja Rammohan Roy argued that the medium should be English rather than Sanskrit or Persian. During the British period the medium of education was largely in English. Calcutta University took an initiative in 1935 to introduce Bangla as a medium of education along with English. In Bangladesh the use of Bangla in college level started in the 1960s. Now students can answer in the examinations in Bangla or English. In the college level and university level after 1971 the government tried to patronize Bangla and implement it by replacing English in the education sector but this did not come into reality because of some basic problems. The first problem is that there were not enough books of any field in Bangla language. This problem is more acute in science and technology. For example, there are almost no books in Bangla about computer technology that can be used as a reference book in the University level.

Actually there are three kinds of education systems in our country- Bangla medium, English medium, and Madrasa system. Bangla medium schools can be divided into two sections- government schools, and kindergarten schools. In the kindergarten schools more emphasis is given on English language than government schools. Some of the famous kindergarten schools of Dhaka are Vikarounnesa, Holycross, Willes Little Flower, and so on. Although these schools belong to Bangla medium the students have to study 3-4 English books like: Radiant Way, Active English, Desk Work, Fundamental English, Brighter Grammar, and so on. On the other hand in the government schools there is mainly one English book (English for Today) which is published by Bangladesh Text Book Board. The English medium schools do not follow Bangladeshi education system and are under the supervision of British Council. The medium of instruction in these schools is English and many of the students of English medium are even very weak in Bangla language. There are two kinds of Madrassas - Dakhil and Kawmi. The Kawmi Madrassas are not recognized by the government and do not receive any assistance from the

government. In this Madrassas emphasis is given on learning Arabic, Persian, and Urdu while Bangla and English are neglected. On the other hand in Dakhil Madrassas emphasis is mainly given on Arabic and Bangla and English are not so much neglected.

So we can clearly see that the difference in education system in Bangladesh is solely based on the difference in the medium of education. Although Bangla is the National-Official language of Bangladesh it is the English medium education institutes who get more money. The rise of private universities has only increased the status and importance of English language in Bangladesh. There are now more than 50 private Universities in Bangladesh and the medium of education in all of them is English. From the above discussion it is clear that in our general education system English has equal if not more importance than Bangla. In our education system English is really the Second language as all the students have to study it as a compulsory subject for twelve years.

### **2.11 Social variables in Bangladesh**

Proficiency in English varies according to area, location, and city, in which the schools and madrasahs are based. Classroom conditions and teaching methods vary considerably. Therefore, although it is possible to assume that an average student after certain years of study, acquire knowledge of basic structures of English, however, it would be a misconception to assume that an average student across different villages, towns, and cities equally knows the structures of the language.

Social stratification shows that people acquire varying status in the society; they belong to many social groups; and they perform a large variety of social roles. People's social identity can be

defined in terms of various factors such as social class, caste, colour, and family lineage, rank, occupation, genders, age groups, material possession, education etc. Linguistic correlates of all these factors can be found at all levels.

One of the chief forms of sociolinguistic identity derives from the way in which people are organised into higherarchically ordered social groups or classes. Classes are aggregates of people with similar social or economic characteristics. In Bangladesh the main variables in social stratification can be described in terms of urban versus rural; rich versus poor (economically advantaged versus disadvantaged groups); male versus female etc. Proficiency levels in English vary across these variables. Besides, different types of schools (for accommodating different classes of people), different types of teaching materials, teachers proficiency levels have impact upon the students' proficiency in English.



## **Methodology**

### **3.1 Research Design**

As this is a small-scale research, the researcher intends to make the study qualitative and analytical instead of quantitative. The data has been collected from various private organizations of Dhaka City through questionnaires and some the officials have been interviewed to collect their opinions concerning the problems faced by them while using English as for the specific purposes. All the activities of this research have been conducted in a formal setting, after that the collected data has been critically analyzed specially focusing on the problems of using English as a corporate language.

### **3.2 Setting**

The data has been collected from the formal setting; ten different corporate organizations in Dhaka city have been selected. Mainly the entry level executives of the respective organizations have been interviewed through the questioner. The employees have been encouraged to answer according to their opinions. Every question is in English as it is helpful to judge their language skill also. The researcher has collected the data through questionnaire at the office hours as well as is interested to have the face to face interviews of the top management who are the responsible officials in the recruitment procedure.

### **3.3 Sampling**

Data has been collected from various corporate houses of Dhaka city. The questioner contains several open ended and close ended questions to find out the opinions of the employees. As there have been ten institutions selected by lottery so ten people from each organization have been selected having various designations. A sample question has been attached to appendix for the

readers of this proposal. The researcher is also interested to take the interview from some experts or the top management staff.

### **3.4 Research instrument**

The data has been collected through questioner and through interviews from three different groups; these are 1) Entry level executives 2) Owners or the top management staff and the senior officials from the Human Resource Management Department 3) Experts or Linguists.

### **3.5 Data collection procedure**

As data has been collected in a formal setting during the office hours, so the researcher has not got enough time there. All the employees were given the questionnaire in the comparatively flexible hours to give the answers and the questions were analyzed in office. The researcher is also interested to collect some written official correspondence from the employees; as it is helpful to understand the language skill of the employees.

### **3.6 Data analysis procedure**

Mainly the data is analyzed critically focusing on the problems and the prospects of English as a corporate language. Policy and methodological implications are a special concern. Both the open ended and close ended questions are evaluated and the results are projected in the research paper accordingly. Though on a mini scale research it is not possible to represent the total scenario but the researcher intended to give an overview of the real facts.

### **3.7 Obstacle**

Some obstacles were encountered by the researcher such as getting permission from the authorities of the institution regarding interview. It was also difficult to fix appointments with the employees because they had some preoccupations. Moreover the employees in the private sections sometimes feel offended to discuss any confidential issues.

## **ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the findings and the discussion on those findings of the present research. It deals with general findings and also the data obtained from interview questionnaire survey which is tabulated and analyzed in terms of frequency counts and means. The results are presented in this section.

### **4.2 ANALYSIS**

For the last 50 years language has been treated as a very sensitive issue in Bangladesh. During the last few decades it has been observed that English is becoming the most dominant language in the realm of every profession. All the Corporate houses are looking for the efficient English users. Although English is dominantly present in every side of our national life but unfortunately according to our Constitution (Bangla Procholon Ain 1987) Bangla is clearly declared as the first language of the country as well as a mandatory language for all official (govt.) correspondence; although most of the communications in the corporate houses are vastly carried out in English.

Bangladesh is the only country in the world whose people sacrificed their lives for the language. Now the historical language movement of 1952 is acknowledged internationally as International Mother Language Day. It is true that our people are emotional about their language, Bangla. However, it is equally true that now our people have become desperate about getting skilled in English language. As a result, there are more than fifty private universities now in Bangladesh where the medium of instruction is English. Bangla is our mother-tongue; we have to acquire

good command in Bangla. Since English is an international language, we have to excel in English language too. If we do not know English, we will remain ignorant of the results of research activities of the developed corporate world. Besides, if the proper foundation of English language is not formed at the secondary and higher secondary levels students will have to face an adverse situation while studying higher education and will be victimized in this competitive job market.

A constructive society needs knowledgeable and skilled citizens. They are expected to ensure the development of the society through standard management and diligence. They will lead the country towards prosperity. The education system has to be rearranged to make such type of citizens. To face the challenges of 21st century it is an imperative to have a sound knowledge in English. Reformation of the principle of education i.e. curriculum is the foremost necessity to fulfill this objective.

In this age of globalization we cannot ignore English especially at a time when we are embracing free market economy. English has to be learnt to know the development activities of human beings. But the reality is that English was and still is the language of higher education and the majority of the students are weak in English. In Bangladesh, the degrees on SSC and HSC are conferred after teaching these levels mainly in Bangla medium. The students, who learn through this system of education, can acquire knowledge on the contents based on the subjects. It may be said that in respect of subject based knowledge, our students are much closer to the international standard; but the students, who study in Bangla medium schools, remain very weak in English language.

In the SSC and HSC level adequate importance is not given to English in the curriculum. As a result most of the students remain weak in this language. They find a lot of difficulties in higher education. It is known to us all that there is an acute shortage of quality textbooks or reference books in Bangladesh in the graduate level. University graduates are considered to be the most important part of human resources of any country. In Hons. Or Masters level the students have to read a lot of textbooks and reference materials. If a student cannot read English books fast enough and understand properly then he may pass the exam but would surely lack a lot of skills and information that we get from institutional education. Thus when they enter into the job market they lack productivity. Spoken English is another area where most of us suffer terribly. Therefore it is difficult for most of our students to achieve international standard in their respective fields after they finish their studies.

To tackle this situation, courses of English have been introduced in Hons. Level with the aim of increasing the skill of the students in this regard. However, this move has not proved to be that much effective. The problem still continues. In the private universities the students have to study 3-5 courses on English Language no matter which subject they study. For the weak students they have arrangements for intensive course. Still this problem exists. Actually it is very difficult to make a difference in English Language skills in higher education if adequate steps are not taken in Primary, Secondary and Higher Secondary levels.

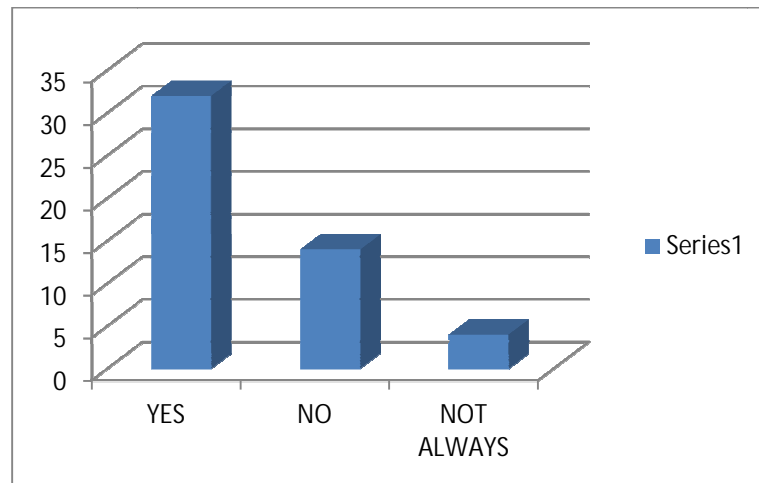
It is easy to say that substantial improvements have to be made in English Language teaching and learning in the lower early stages of the educational system. However, it is extremely difficult to implement any plan for several reasons. First of all, any change would need a lot of

money. Secondly, an acute shortage of experts on Applied Linguistics exists in Bangladesh. Most of the students who complete their Masters in English every year come from Literature background. Only few students come from Applied Linguistics and ELT background or popularly known as English language stream. National University is yet to introduce this stream. There is no doubt or controversy that we need more teachers from Applied Linguistics and ELT (English Language Teaching) background in the school and college level. Implementing universal use of audio- visual materials is another problem as only 20% of the population have access to electricity (NGO- Statistics). Thus problems like scarcity of resources, shortage of skilled teachers and weak infrastructure are to blame for this national crisis. It's almost impossible to solve this problem in the near future but we do not have any choice but to increase the skills of English Language of our students at to a substantial level without any delay. Or else we would continue to pay a heavy price. A good portion of the university graduates is considered not skilled enough in the job market especially in the private sector only for being weak in English Language.

#### **4.3 Results as Found in Employees' Questionnaire Survey**

The objectives of the questionnaire employed in this study were to obtain data. In the questionnaire, only 6 questions aimed to discover both qualitative and analytical data. Therefore, the questionnaire is a blend of both, open ended and close ended questions. In this research, 50 employees of different organizations of Dhaka City participated; and most of them willingly answered the questions. Besides some of the top management officials of different corporate houses have commented regarding this issue.

### Do you prefer English as a corporate language?



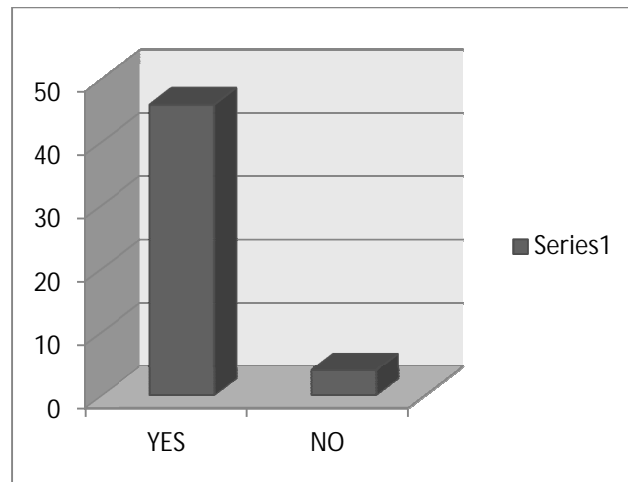
The first question is of a close-ended type. It is a pretty straight forward question. The question was whether the employees of the private organization prefer English as a Corporate Language. According to the bar chart above, 64% employees said “Yes” while 28% said “No” and the rest 8% said ‘Not always’”. The chart above shows that most of the employees prefer to use English rather than the other languages even their own native language. Here we can see that the theory of Acculturation by Ellis (1997) is appropriate as according to this theory people (employees) of one cultural group adopt the beliefs and behaviors of another group of people. Due to the impact of globalization and considering English as an international language people are accepting English as a corporate language.

Globalization refers to the expanding connectivity, integration, and interdependence of economic, social, technological, cultural, political, and ecological spheres across local activities. In an increasingly globalized society, empowered individuals communicate across cultural and



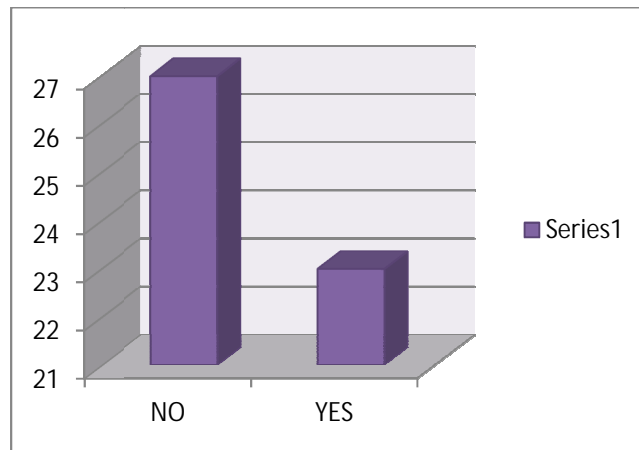
national boundaries as citizens of the world. Therefore, most of the employees preferred English as a Corporate Language.

**Do you usually write any English correspondence at your office? If yes then which kind?**



The second question is both open and close ended. The question was whether the employees usually write any correspondence in English at their work station. According to the bar chart above, about 92% of the employees said yes and another 8% said no. They were also asked which kind of correspondence they wrote. According to their feedback it has been found that the correspondence they wrote includes: Official letters, memos, Meeting minutes, memorandum of understanding, article of association, note for approval, concept paper, project proposal, etc.

### **Do you feel comfortable while writing in English at your office?**



In replying this question about 54% of the employees answered NO and another 46% said YES.

Due to various limitations employees of Bangladesh do not feel comfortable with English language. After the independence of Bangladesh English as a language was always in a confusing state, whether it is a foreign language or an official language; As well as for the confusing education policy people can not develop their expertise in English. That is why students acquiring the highest degree from universities can not comfortably use English and most importantly they do not find enough job oriented language courses in their syllabuses.

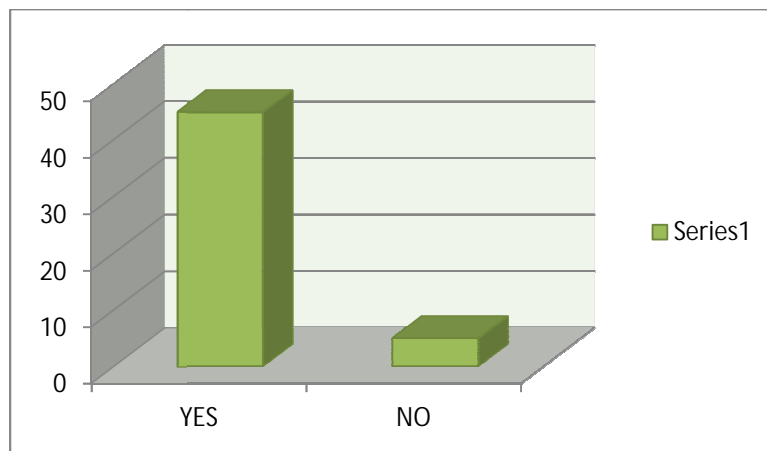
Considering this matter educational curriculum has to be restructured in such a way that learners may equally excel in mother-tongue Bangla, International language English and in different subject-based knowledge.

### **What are the major difficulties you found in writing the Business correspondence?**

This question was an open ended question and was a bit straightforward. The question was clearly focused on the writing skill of the employees. In replying to this question the employees of the corporate houses gave multiple opinions which include: vocabulary, grammatical, spelling,

structural problems, etc. and most importantly many of the employees do not know the format of writing the business correspondence. As a result, it is creating a huge problem in international communication and trading.

**Do you feel for any special training program to develop your writing ability?**



To investigate more, the last question was both open and close ended as well as was set to find out the preference of the employees for special training programs. The response is shown in a bar chart. The question was about the opinion of the employees whether they want special training programs for the development of their language skill. According to the survey the researcher found that about 90% said ‘Yes’ that they want to develop their language skill through the special training courses. Now in many of the countries of the world the concept, English for specific or special purposes (ESP) and English for occupational purposes (EOP) have become very popular, even in Bangladesh to develop the English language skill British Council and some other institutions are providing job-oriented business language courses.

## **Conclusion & Recommendation**

### **Conclusion**

English is now a Lingua Franca, it is getting closer to being a universal language, about 270 million people all over the world speak in English. We use language to communicate effectively among people. It is what helps us get work done and progress towards the future. Knowing English is a must for a third world developing country like ours. English is used more or less every occupation in Bangladesh. It is true that English language skills have an important role to play in a person's success in material world. Communication skills in English are becoming more and more important with such concepts as open market economy and globalization. But unfortunately the standard of English in Bangladesh is deplorable. Even many English teachers of Bangladesh can not speak in English fluently. Students who are applying for job could not get better job in the corporate world because of their inefficiency in English although it is taught from the very beginning of their education. English used in our classes but most of the time is not taught and understood in a perfect way.

English is bestowed with the richest literature of the world. The works of Chaucer, Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Milton, Shelley, Keats, Charles Dickens, and T.S. Eliot can be enjoyed by learning English. The works of these poets have crossed all barriers of nationalities, countries and languages. Learning English through literature is great indeed. Therefore to develop our English proficiency and enlighten our intellectual ability English Literature should be vastly used in the secondary and higher secondary level of education.

English in academic and professional settings has received great attention over the last 50 years, as its use has become a key asset for anyone interested in improving his/her chances of communicating internationally. The importance of English should be clearly explained to the general people of our country to feel interest to learn and use English properly. Authentic materials should be used; teachers and people who are involved in different occupation should be trained to use their effort to make them able to communicate in English effectively.

From the discussion so far there is no doubt that English is the second language of Bangladesh but this reality is not reflected in our constitution. Officially Bangladesh is not known as an ESL country to the outside world. So Bangladesh should be declared as an ESL country by the government without any delay. We learn English not because we like Shakespeare or Dickens. We learn English from out of every day necessity. If Bangladesh is declared as an ESL country and English language is given a clear status in the constitution then it will not only reflect the reality but also it will help us internationally. Now Bangladesh is desperately trying to attract foreign investors. Before any company comes to Bangladesh for exploring the investment opportunities one of the key areas they would look for is the availability of pool of English graduates and they also expect that the normal workers will have basic understanding of English language. If we become an ESL country then these foreign companies while searching about Bangladesh will get assured about the strong presence of English language in this country.

The same picture is there about educational sector. Many Bangladeshi students want to go to developed countries like USA, UK , Canada, and Australia for higher education. If Bangladesh is declared as an ESL country then these students will be benefited because then the Universities of those countries will get the idea that English has special significance in Bangladesh.

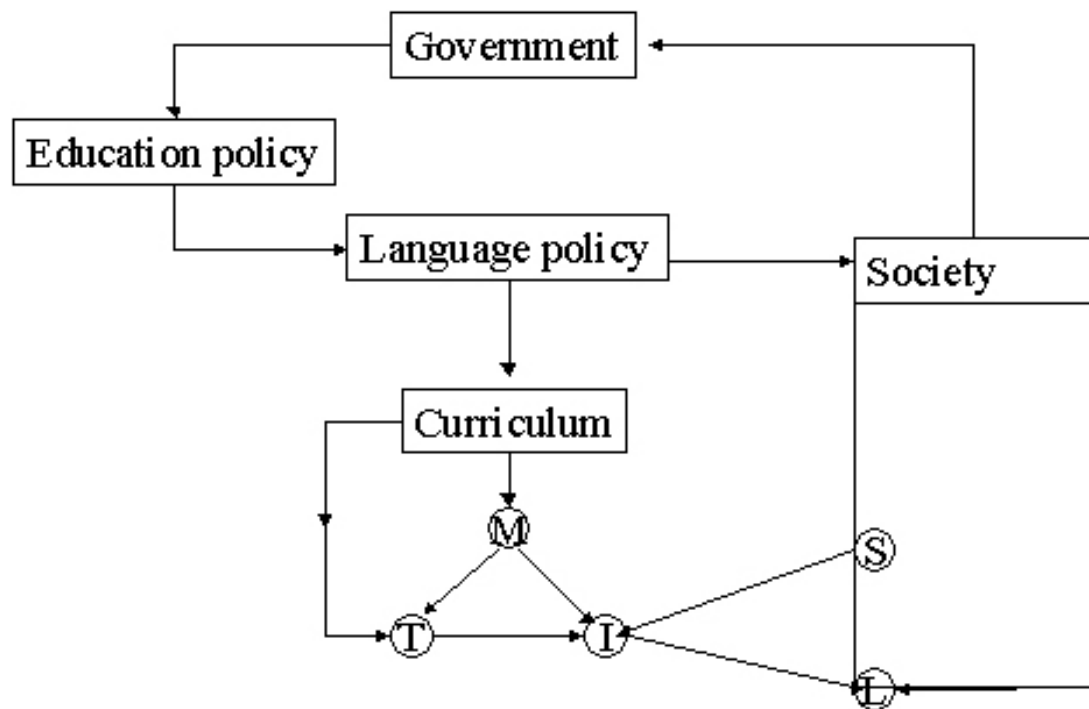
So in Bangladesh that English should be declared as the second language of the country by amending the constitution.

**Pedagogical suggestions:**

To meet the English language needs of the country, to fulfill the expectation of the nation — expectation of different parties — the government, the students, the guardians, the employers, a language policy of acute rationale, that will direct towards a thorough needs analysis, and designing a syllabus incorporating the findings of investigations and modern development in the field of language teaching is needed. To cater these needs, appropriate textbooks and teaching materials are a must. Again, these materials should be used as they are intended to be used. That is, teachers and students should know how to use them. For this to happen, both teachers and students should be trained.

Teachers and other parties should remember that the students need English to use it in real communication. To ensure that students are learning English with the aim that they will use it, the teaching methodology and the evaluation and examination format must be changed.

Finally, at each level of development appropriate measures should be taken on how far it is being effective. That is, evaluation should be an integral part of each of the levels. The integration of different levels of curriculum process can be visualised with Jacobovit's diagram as follows:



Integration of different levels of curriculum development (From Jacobovit 1970: xii, quoted in Pathak 1999: 201)

What Jacobovit says is summarised here: On the first hand, the government, who determine the national policy, and in consequence, determine the language policy, should address the social demand, sociolinguistic environment and student's psychological make-up (S). Curriculum, which is the direct offshoot of government policy, will be implemented if an appropriate methodology (M) is adopted by teachers (T) for their instruction (I). Teachers and all other parties must take feedback from what learners (L) do and say in reaction to all that happen.

This final part of this concluding section suggests certain measures for all those who work at different levels of curriculum development.

## **Recommendations for the policy makers:**

The policy maker should address the actual needs of the students. These may be realised as follows:

1. The main stream students are always expected to go through tertiary and higher education. So, their ELT needs are to be spelt out in terms of general academic purpose.
2. Many students do not complete their secondary education let alone proceed through tertiary and higher education. A large number of students who leave school early — before or just after completing SSC or HSC— find little in the present curriculum that meets their ultimate English Language needs. After leaving school these students take a technical (in most cases non-institutional) hand experience and start working in home or abroad. Specially those who go abroad need English and they could do well if they were exposed to some varieties of English, as they need to work with people coming from different countries.
3. Needs analysis should be done in an ethnographic manner. A needs analysis of this kind will include not only students' English language needs but also the existing ELT condition, infrastructure of institutions, longstanding ELT tradition of the country, teachers' and learners' attitudes towards English and the attitudes of some other parties as well. In favour of its language policy, the government should first develop the infrastructure of the institutions and convince the people working at different levels of the curriculum development. Because for the proper implementation of what is done in the planning level, people who are working in implementation levels need to think in the line of planners and policy makers. Development programmes like training, workshop and seminar, publishing journals and bulletins can put teachers, textbook writers and even the students within the line.



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## Appendix

Dear Sir/Madam:

I am carrying a small-scale research entitled 'English as a corporate language: Problems and prospect in Bangladesh'. May I request you to write few sentences in the given space about the following questions? Data obtained from you will be kept confidential and used only for this research purpose. Thank you for your cooperation.

### Sample questionnaire

01. Do you prefer English as a corporate language?

- a. Yes                      b. No

And why?

.....  
.....

02. Do you usually write any English correspondence at your office?

- a. Yes                      b. No

If yes then which kind?

.....  
.....  
.....

03. Do you feel comfortable while writing in English at your office?

- a. Yes                      b. No

And why?

.....

.....  
.....

04. What are the major difficulties you usually find in writing the Business correspondence?

Please explain.

.....  
.....  
.....

05. Do you feel for any special training program to develop your writing ability?

- a. Yes
- b. No

If yes then which kind?

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