LinguaEducare: Journal of English and Linguistic Studies
ISSN: 3064-0547 (e)
2026, Vol. 3, No. 1, page 1-20
https://journal.ciptapustaka.com/index.php/LEC

OPEN ACCESS

The Role of English in Shaping Linguistic Capital in Bangladesh: A Political Economy Perspective

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ABSTRACT

English in Bangladesh has evolved from colonial roots to come to signify opportunity, privilege, and socio-economic mobility. The role of English in the construction of linguistic capital in Bangladesh is examined in this work from the political economy perspective, theorizing language as commodity, power, and ideology based on a survey of 80 respondents. Findings illustrate almost complete agreement that English proficiency is shaped more by private forces and worldwide pressures than it is by national policy, replicating social stratification. Government efforts are considered by respondents as insufficient to democratize English access, whereas English dominance in elite employment markets still serves to enhance inequality. Yet, these findings also refer to increasing public awareness of English's structural injustices. Future studies can take longitudinal ethnographic approaches in examining students' lived experiences in this linguistic economy. Policymakers, in the meantime, need to envision English education as a public good, with a priority for equitable access, multilingual frameworks, and decolonized pedagogy to make English a bridge of inclusive development in Bangladesh.

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
English education;
language commodification;
language ideology;
linguistic capital;
political economy

Article History:
Received: 9 October 2025
Revised: 16 January 2026
Accepted: 26 February 2026
Published: 7 March 2026

How to Cite in APA Style:
Shaikh, H., & Munmun, F. Z. (2026). The Role of English in Shaping Linguistic Capital in Bangladesh: A Political Economy Perspective. *LinguaEducare: Journal of English and Linguistic Studies, 3*(1), 1-20. https://doi.org/10.63324/lec.3v.1i.114

Introduction

The position of English in Bangladesh has evolved significantly over the decades as a reaction to historical, socio-political, and economic factors. The inheritance of English as a language of administration, higher education, and elite communication resulted from the country's history as a British colony. Following independence in 1971, there was a nationalist movement calling for the dominance of Bengali, and the policies were subsequently biased towards Bengali as the only official language of the country. Nevertheless, amidst the state's effort to promote Bengali, English has also thrived, particularly at the tertiary level of education, in employment, and in international affairs. This paradoxical Bangladeshi linguistic reality highlights the interrelation of language and power with English as a form of linguistic capital that organizes socio-economic opportunities for individuals and groups (Ali & Hamid, 2020). In the recent decades, the spread of globalization and

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neoliberal economic policy further deepened the role of English, which reaffirmed existing inequalities in quality education and in access to economic opportunities.

English is also a gatekeeper of social mobility in Bangladesh, particularly in urban Bangladesh, where English-medium education is seen as a passport to professional success (Hamid, 2016). Despite Bengali being the national language, the prestige of English has created a dual system of language education, where students belonging to upper groups enjoy the advantage of good quality English education, while students from lower socio-economic backgrounds are denied the opportunity to gain language proficiency.

Researchers have found that English language proficiency is directly linked to better career prospects, better salaries, and opportunities for career advancement (Ali & Hamid, 2024). Multinational corporations, international organizations, and even domestic organizations prefer to hire individuals with good English communication skills, which further confirms the economic importance of the language (Roshid & Chowdhury, 2023). This has brought about the commodification of English, with language ability being sold as a skill in the market instead of being used as a means of communication and intellectual growth (Block, 2018). This increased need for English in employment has also facilitated the rise of private English language schools, which further enhances socio-economic disparity because only those who are able to afford such an education are in a position to benefit.

The need-to-know English among the urban elite has further deepened the class structure of society, where English speakers are placed at the top of the hierarchy with perceived superiority and increased educational attainment (Hamid & Jahan, 2015). This hyphenated version of English language disparity is both a social and individual issue since it establishes society's norms that structure individual life chances, and determine political representation, access to justice, and civic life participation. The issue motivating this research is socio-economic and multi-dimensional inequalities developed with unequal opportunities to obtain the English language competency. As Hamid (2016) states, despite the reputation of English being economically advantaged, the gains of English are not evenly accessible to all socio-economic classes.

Accordingly, the increased importance of English defines and limits opportunities for employment based on a perceived skill set, leading to an imbalance where language is a tool of power capable of assisting the low socio-economic areas but only serves to exploit with little aid in overcoming adversity. In settling the account of this disparity, the research aims to chart the structural inequalities of the current language education order and propose policy directions for a more equitable linguistic order. Last but not least, this study hopes to promote a more just and equal linguistic order that recognizes English as an asset but allows equal opportunity for all socio-economic classes to access language learning. Therefore, this study asks the following questions:

1. How does English function as linguistic capital in Bangladesh?
2. What are the socio-economic implications of English language skill in employment and education?

Literature Review

English structures access to education, job prospects, and social status in its political economy. Other than this perspective, Smokotin et al. (2014) place English as a global lingua franca with regard to intercultural communication, also advocating multilingual education promoting inclusiveness alongside cultural diversity. Accordingly, Darvin (2016) shows the transformational potential of virtual spaces in relation to language and identity by illustrating the increase in English language driving greater access to linguistic capital. Ivković and Lotherington (2009) position this dynamic through the lens of multilingualism by focusing on the internet, exposing English's contradictory position both as a dominating hegemonic lingua franca and a facilitator of global communication alongside subdominant languages. In this online linguistic ecology, Yao (2021) analyzes metrolingualism and hybrid language practices on WeChat Moments, showing how users navigate through the identity construction process under context collapse. These works together shift the focus from viewing English as a global means of communication to reframing it as a vehicle for thinking and acting globally while preserving local identities in digital and socio-economic transformations.

Todorova and Todorova (2018) argue that English is a global lingua franca due to its use in business, science, and education. They view English as language capital in global power relations. Although it assists individuals to interact, it also subjects communities to the uniformity of languages and negatively affects the native languages, especially in non-native contexts. Translating to a different dimension, Biro (2019) enlightens on the phenomenon of online multilingualism of bilingual students as she demonstrates the dominance of the English even in speakers of minor languages. This study demonstrates how linguistic capital is not distributed evenly, with modernity and global integration being placed on the English language, which increases the sociocultural and economic worth of the English language. Alfarhan (2016) goes to the extent of labeling the globalization of the English language as a negative effect on cultural identity to postcolonial countries. The characteristic features of economic progression in these countries are the degree of English speaking, which presents a threat to the native language identity. This situation throws emphasis on the political economy of language in which English is an opportunity and a threat to the language diversity.

Sociolinguistics has been instigating innovative changes since the start of the global social shift, and in the case of China, it is easier to analyze language and globalization. As it would be argued by Gao (2017), this would represent a transition that sociolinguistics has been undertaking is no longer speaking communities but instead grace when using language in the era of globalization. This alteration is needed to address the interaction of social change in new emergent modern societies with language. When two or more languages share a space, Androutsopoulos (2013) suggests the networked multilingualism in multilingual spaces, where multilingualism is established as an outcome of digital connectivity and universal media. This takes us to the idea of different languages which implies the usage of different languages in the

internet. Moreover, social media development has also driven the status of linguistic practice to high levels providing multimodality to the users in building their identities. As an example, as observed by Biro (2019), social media platforms like Facebook enable multi-lingual citizens to communicate and offer their personal and cultural identities using code-switching and language selection.

Whereas such perspectives provide insight into the tension between online interconnectedness, multilingualism, and globalization, a strongly related correlative strand is laid bare when the lens is pointed towards the subject of education and its social undercurrents. Consistent with this, research by Zumbuehl, Hof, and Wolter (2024) examines the influence of private tutoring on academic student achievement in the Swiss education system. Their discovery is that students already receiving tutoring before attending selective schools performed significantly worse than their peers of the same ability level who did not receive tutoring. This difference indicates some form of deficiency in the criteria selection processes that were employed. Concerning the Bangladeshi context, Alam and Uddin (2023) focus on English teaching in Bangladesh and note the absence of teacher training, teaching materials, and attention to marginalized groups. They propose greater policy support towards local publishing houses as a guiding solution. In the spirit of policy discussion, Rahman et al. (2019) evaluate English language teaching in Bangladesh and cite the uneven application of CLT principles, washback from high-stakes testing, and inadequate preparation of teachers. Such issues restrict the formation of linguistic capital and, in turn, educational and professional opportunities.

Transposing this line of argumentation supporting professional advancement policy, Younus (2023) expands the discussion about professional development for English language teachers in Bangladesh and meticulously details teaching professionals' constraints and possibilities around this topic. Structural constraints in the form of overwhelming workloads, limited financial support, and resistance to innovation in practice are revealed by the study as hindering acquisition of linguistic capital. Younus also calls for institutional infrastructure and technology for raising teaching standards, relating this to national economic goals. Imam and Al-Mahmud (2024) add more detail to this through concentrating on primary-level English education processes. They report pervasive infrastructure issues and pedagogical shortcomings, especially rural schools, which hinder students' linguistic capital acquisition. They highlight the imperatives of large-scale teacher training initiatives and resource allocation at strategic levels as important steps to overcome these shortfalls and strengthen English language competencies among learners. Meanwhile, Hasan's (2022) investigation of secondary-level English teaching decries the continuation of traditional teaching approaches, specifically the grammar-translation method, in addition to the prevalence of congested classroom settings. These together compromise the communication skills of the learners. Hasan suggests content curriculum reform and teacher professional development to reorient English teaching in line with the needs of the globalized economy.

Moving to the global scales, Bilecen's (2024) study examines linguistic capital among Chinese international students in Germany, depicting language proficiency as a

benefit and a limitation, reproducing social inequalities. The study shows that English and German, on one hand, improve employability but, on the other, obstruct academic and social integration, pointing to the double role of linguistic capital in transnational mobility. In the same vein, Guarin and Arias-Cortés (2025) report on linguistic hybridization in Armenia, and Colombia, describing how English is used as symbolic capital in business signage, illustrating the effects of globalization on local identity. Their quantitative studies show that English is used strategically to convey modernity and prestige, especially in zones with heavy traffic from tourists. Taking this story further, Lee (2019) discusses how Chinese and English serve as linguistic capital for international students in China, with English-medium instruction (EMI) plans enabling global cultural capital and language skills in Chinese providing a specialist benefit in the job market.

Similarly, Abrar-ul-Hassan (2021) traces the historical dominance of English in higher education, arguing that its institutionalization as a lingua franca marginalizes non-native speakers, reproducing inequalities in academic and professional domains. Roth (2018) extends this analysis to aid organizations, where English language proficiency is gatekeeping capital, benefiting native speakers and reinforcing North-South power asymmetries. Together, these works all point out how linguistic capital traverses economic and social stratification, particularly in postcolonial contexts. The commodification of English organizes employment opportunities and influences national education policies in favor of English for upward mobility and at the expense of empowering local languages (Gerhards, 2014). Thus, the above literature review unfolds the research gap of English as linguistic capital in Bangladesh and its socio-economic effects on education and employment. Therefore, this study fills full this gap.

Theoretical Framework

The increasing global dominance of English has rendered it not just a language of communication but also a means for the accumulation and legitimation of linguistic capital, a term popularized by Bourdieu (1991) to explain how certain languages provide symbolic and material advantages in a political and social order. In the Bangladeshi situation, English is a means of social mobility and a gatekeeper of power, embedded in neoliberal ideology and institutional policy. The theoretical orientation places the function of English in Bangladesh within the triadic structure of language as commodity, power, and ideology, on the political economy of language (Ricento, 2015; O'Regan, 2021) and neoliberalism critiques (Block et al., 2012).

Chowdhury and Erling (2020) report how English is framed as a requirement for economic progress, yet there are inequalities at the local level in accessing quality English education. Language schools and centers are sites of linguistic markets in which English is commodified to be traded for profit. This commodification is not neutral, it indexes wider neoliberal agendas that reimagine language education as a private instead of a public good (Block et al., 2012). Following this, Ali and Hamid (2024) point out the paradoxes of such commodification of ELT textbooks in Bangladesh selling English as a gateway to employability with no regard for structural

inequalities barring working-class learners from accessing English learning. English, in this case, is a symbolic commodity serving the interests of the already advantaged.

The ideology surrounding English in Bangladesh constructs it as a neutral, modern, and empowering language, a myth perpetuated through policy discourse, media, and educational narratives. This aligns with Ricento's (2015) neoliberal language ideology that views language proficiency as personal investments and not as socially conditioned practice. This ideological formulation excludes structural inequalities like class, rural-urban discrepancies, and gender (Chowdhury & Erling, 2020). It also perpetuates deficit ideologies: non-English speakers are framed as lazy or unmotivated instead of being structurally disadvantaged.

Block et al. (2012) argue that free market logic has entered linguistic rationality, with languages being treated as skills to be acquired, enhanced, and evaluated based on their "ROI" (Return on Investment). This logic is highly embedded in the political economy of English in Bangladesh, with policymakers and families imagining English not just as a language of communication but a gateway to modernity. This ideology, replicated by state and corporate forces, legitimizes unequal access to linguistic capital in the name of meritocracy. Briefly, this model interprets English in Bangladesh not as a linguistic system but as socially controlled form of capital, shaped by political, economic, and historical processes. Therefore, its commodification, power, and ideological basis are mutually constitutive.

Method

Political economy perspectives prioritize structural considerations, like class, education policy, and resource allocation. These are best interrogated by way of generalizable data. Surveys enable the collection of quantitative information across diverse social groups, making it possible to identify systemic patterns and inequalities in the distribution and valuation of English proficiency. Therefore, this study adopted a quantitative research design to collect primary data, using a structured survey questionnaire consisting of 20 closed-ended items, and it was disseminated digitally through Google Forms, utilizing convenient sampling technique. A total of 80 respondents completed the survey, forming the empirical basis for this investigation.

Data were statistically analyzed using SPSS to uncover descriptive patterns, and findings were visually represented using Microsoft Excel. Interpretations were then critically framed within the broader political-economic constructs of linguistic commodification, symbolic power, and ideological reproduction, shedding light on the sociopolitical implications of English language capital in contemporary Bangladesh. The demographic composition of the respondents is given bellow in a table format.

Table 1. Demographic information

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	18-24	43	53.8
	25-34	35	43.8
	35-44	2	2.5
Gender	Male	50	62.5
	Female	30	37.5
Household income (Monthly, in BDT)	Below 10,000	35	43.8

	10,000-30,000	24	30
	30,000-50,000	10	12.5
	50,000-100,000	4	5
	Above 100,000	7	8.8
Employment sector	Unemployed	11	13.8
	Government	5	6.3
	Private Sector	19	23.8
	Self-employed	6	7.5
	Student	39	48.8
Highest level of education completed	Secondary (SSC/HSC)	21	26.3
	Bachelor's	40	50
	Master's or Higher	19	23.8
Type of school attended (for majority of education)	Bengali Medium	57	71.3
	English Medium	11	13.8
	Madrassa	11	13.8
	International School	1	1.2
Level of English proficiency (Self-assessed)	Beginner	10	12.5
	Intermediate	37	46.3
	Advanced	18	22.5
	Fluent	15	18.8
I have studied or worked abroad	Yes	13	16.3
	No	67	83.8

Results and Discussion

The findings of this study foreground English proficiency in Bangladesh as a significant arbiter of symbolic power, underscoring its centrality in the nation's linguistic economy.

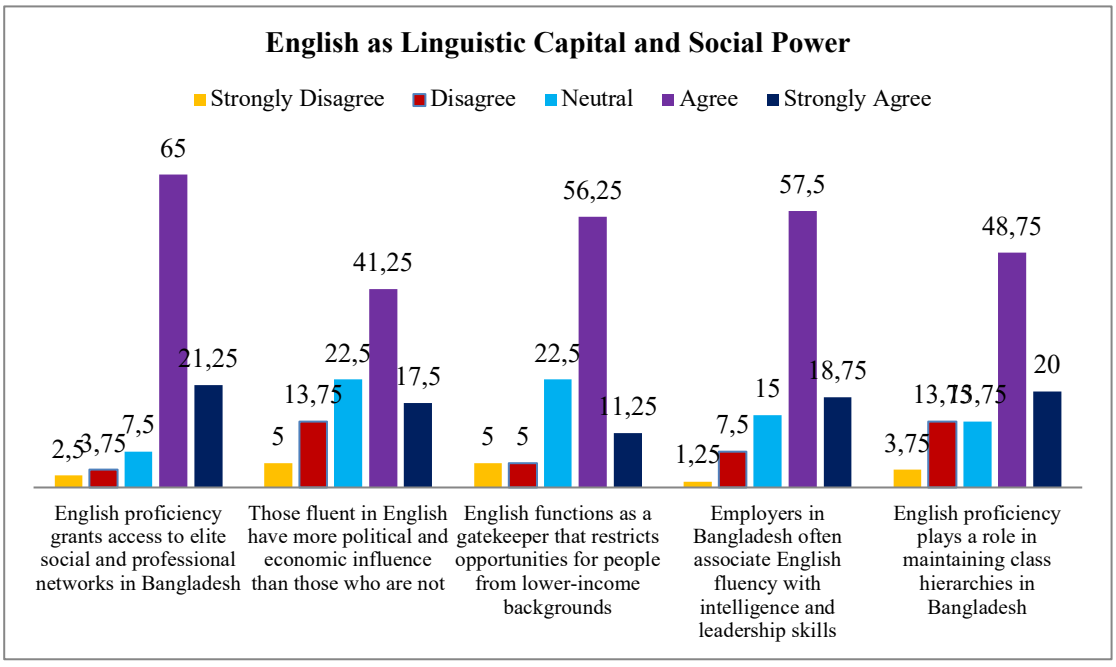

Figure 1. English as linguistic capital and social power

Starting with the claim that "English proficiency grants access to elite social and professional networks in Bangladesh", the data reveal overwhelming consensus. A cumulative 86.25% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed, while only

6.25% disagreed to any extent. The mean response value, calculated on a Likert scale (where Strongly Disagree = 1 to Strongly Agree = 5), is 4.0. The median value also rests at 4 (Agree), and the mode, most frequently occurring response, is likewise "Agree". These figures point to a striking perception of English as a primary currency in navigating elite spaces. The commodification of English, as theorized by Heller (2003), becomes visible here. Language functions not simply as communication but as a resource convertible to economic and symbolic capital. Respondents implicitly articulate that access to the "right" English which is accented, fluent, and coded with elite social behaviors. This facilitates entry into powerful networks that remain largely impermeable to those lacking such linguistic tools.

This notion is further reinforced by responses to the proposition that "Those fluent in English have more political and economic influence than those who are not". With 58.75% agreeing and 17.5% strongly agreeing, the total agreement reaches 76.25%, while only 18.75% expressed any form of disagreement. The mean score is 3.9, the median remains 4, and the mode is "Agree", mirroring the prior pattern. Here, English operates as a proxy for authority and influence, a point echoed in the works of Bourdieu (1991), who notes that linguistic capital converts into social and economic capital within certain fields. In the Bangladeshi context, this field is both institutional and ideological. Politicians, bureaucrats, and business elites frequently use English in professional and even ceremonial spaces, reinforcing the perception that linguistic fluency signals competence and legitimacy.

Crucially, this pattern of privilege acquisition is not without consequences for inclusivity. The proposition that "English acts as a gatekeeper that limits opportunities for individuals from lower-income backgrounds" received strong agreement from 56.25% and agreement from 22.5% of the participants, totaling a whopping 78.75%. In contrast, a mere 10% disagreed and 11.25% were neutral. The mean is 3.9, median 4, and mode is "Agree". This is supportive of linguistic injustice theories, particularly by writers such as Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) and Phillipson (1992), wherein they argue that language hierarchies replicate structural inequalities. In Bangladesh, where a good English education has traditionally been the monopoly of urban private schools, English speech comes to reflect socio-economic standing more than natural aptitude. The implication is unsettling. Linguistic ability as opposed to merit dictates entry to professional and educational opportunities.

Further evidence of this stratifying effect is observed in the responses to "Employers in Bangladesh often associate English fluency with intelligence and leadership skills". A significant 76.25% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, with a mean score of 3.9, a median of 4, and again a mode of "Agree". These results corroborate the performative ideology of English: the language itself becomes a performance of intelligence, competence, and leadership. This ideological function, as Pennycook (1994) suggests, positions English as more than a linguistic tool, it becomes an index of modernity and professionalism. In Bangladesh, job interviews, CVs, and office communication frequently require or prefer English, even when the actual tasks could be executed in Bengali. Thus, English serves not as a neutral medium but as a litmus test for acceptable professional identity.

Respondents' alignment with English signals leadership and intelligence points to an internalization of colonial ideologies. Macaulay's infamous *Minute on Indian Education* (1835) reverberates here, where English was deemed necessary to create a class of intermediaries who were "Indian in blood and color, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect". Though two centuries passed away, the affective attachment to English as a symbol of modern identity persists. In classrooms, students are reprimanded for speaking Bengali. In workplaces, fluency in English often determines respect. These practices suggest a hierarchy not only of language but of the speaker's very being.

Interestingly, the final statement "English proficiency plays a role in maintaining class hierarchies in Bangladesh" was also affirmed by 68.75% of respondents, with a mean of 3.7, a median of 4, and a mode once again of "Agree". This is a somewhat lower consensus (than other items) could have some reluctance to directly associate language with stratification of classes, perhaps because ideological investment is being made in the meritocracy narrative. However, the findings are in line with the concept of linguistic capital as a force of reproduction. Individuals who already have the right language practices can intergenerational fall over with the capital. The children of elites study in English-speaking schools, privilege them to individual coaching, and raise in linguistically diverse areas thus play on their language abilities to hold on to their status.

This entire pattern supports a political economy perspective of language. English in Bangladesh is not merely a skill but a commodity shaped by and shaping systems of power. It is accumulated, traded, and valorized in ways that mimic capitalistic exchange. In this sense, the data resonate with the works of Block (2014) and Park and Wee (2012), who stress the importance of understanding language within broader neoliberal frameworks. The idea that English fluency translates to economic opportunity is not accidental, it is a direct result of policy choices, educational inequities, and global labor market demands. However, this commodification also devalues other linguistic resources, particularly Bengali, the national and mother tongue, which historically served as a symbol of anti-colonial resistance and cultural identity. However, the contradiction is especially poignant in Bangladesh, where the Language Movement of 1952 forms the cornerstone of national identity. Such valorization of English, promoted as pragmatic, is nevertheless contrary to this linguistic nationalism. The ideological hegemony of English is also seen not just in recruitment but in the media, advertisements, and university spaces. The predominance of private English-medium schools, unaffordable to many, creates a linguistic elite whose worldview is framed in Western epistemologies.

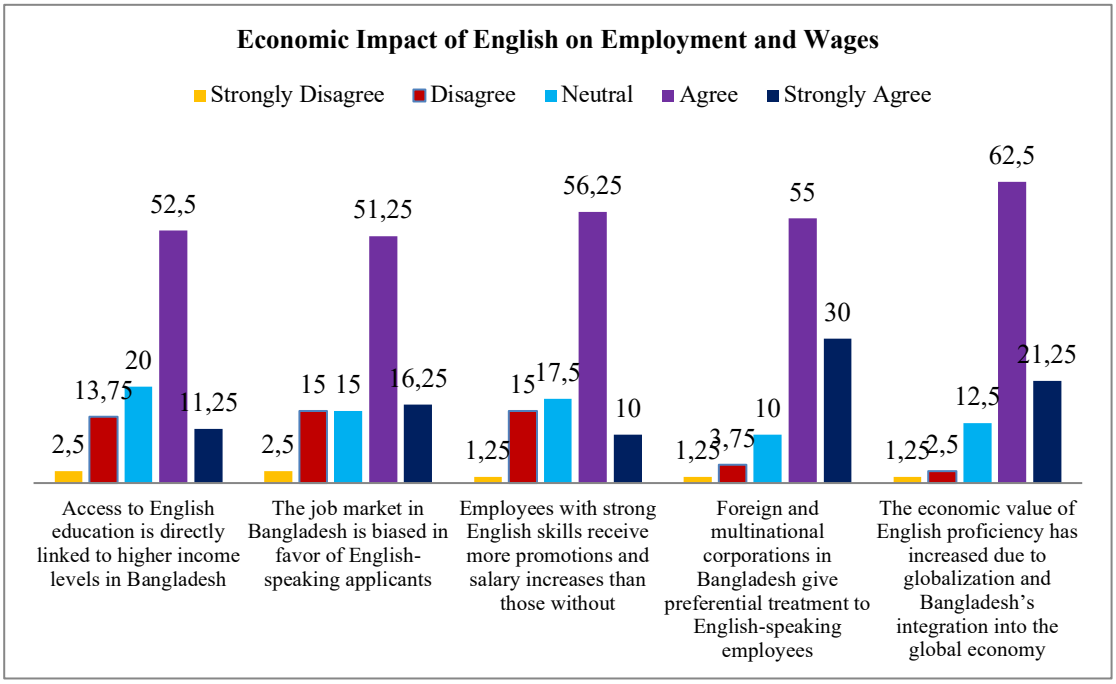

Figure 2. Economic impact of English on employment and wages

Beginning with the statement "Access to English education is directly linked to higher income levels in Bangladesh", responses happen to indicate a mean agreement score of 3.56. The mode, which reflects the most frequently selected response, is "Agree" (52.5%), while the median is also "Agree". These statistical indicators suggest that the belief in English education as a gateway to financial betterment is not just prevalent but normalized. English functions as a resource convertible into economic capital, disproportionately accessible to those already positioned within advantageous socio-economic strata. The relatively low disagreement rates (Strongly Disagree at 2.5% and Disagree at 13.75%) further validate this convergence highlighting that resistance to this narrative is marginal.

Moreover, access to quality English education remains uneven, concentrated in urban areas and elite institutions, while rural and under-resourced schools often lack qualified English teachers or adequate pedagogical infrastructure. Language policies supporting dominant languages in the name of development or globalization have the tendency to conceal structural inequalities they advocate (Tollefson, 1991). Thus, this unequal division of linguistic capital serves to reconfirm class lines and resists egalitarian ideologies of education.

In the same way, the identical trend is shown in reactions to the second statement, "The job market in Bangladesh is biased towards English-speaking candidates", which has an average rating of 3.68. Mode, again, is "Agree" (51.25%), and the median aligns with it, a collective acknowledgment that identifies English fluency as a job-readiness metric. This sentiment echoes Hamel's (2007) framing of English as a lingua franca of neoliberal globalization, a phenomenon in which language proficiency is commodified in tandem with the global spread of market ideologies. The 15% who disagreed and 2.5% who strongly disagreed likely represent outlier experiences or ideological stances rather than systemic truths. The ideological

underpinning here is critical. English does not only serve as a tool rather it becomes a marker of modernity, ambition, and even civility thus feeding into an enduring linguistic hegemony.

The third statement "Employees with strong English skills receive more promotions and salary increases than those without" yields the highest degree of agreement among the first three propositions, with a mean score of 3.63. Notably, 56.25% agreed, while the median again reinforces this stance that English accelerates career advancement. English proficiency acts as a career escalator for middle-class youth. This is not a passive outcome but the result of deliberate policy choices and corporate cultures that reward linguistic capital in English while marginalizing other languages, including Bangla and indigenous tongues. This functions ideologically to valorize English while naturalizing socio-linguistic inequality.

Interestingly, the fourth statement "Foreign and multinational corporations in Bangladesh give preferential treatment to English-speaking employees" presents a sharper gradient of consensus, with a mean score of 3.96, the highest in the dataset. The mode is distinctly "Agree" (55%), but a significant 30% "Strongly Agree", suggesting a polarization in perception, likely corresponding to first-hand professional experiences within such corporate environments. The median, again, is "Agree". This data point underscores the globalizing influence of neoliberal market ideologies, which cast English not as an optional skill but as an implicit prerequisite for inclusion in high-value corporate spaces. Here, English becomes the default code of prestige, relegating native languages to the periphery within one's own nation.

The fifth statement, "The economic value of English proficiency has increased due to globalization and Bangladesh's integration into the global economy", records the highest mean score of all (4.01), with "Agree" selected by 62.5% and "Strongly Agree" by 21.25%. The mode and median both confirm "Agree". This response is the most ideologically charged of all, speaking directly to the perception of English not just as beneficial, but as essential in a rapidly integrating global economy. The minimal rates of disagreement (Strongly Disagree at 1.25% and Disagree at 2.5%) signal the dominance of a neoliberal linguistic ideology where English is no longer viewed as an external or colonial imposition but an internalized necessity.

These collectively chart a transformation in the linguistic economy of Bangladesh where English is increasingly decoupled from its colonial past and reconstituted as a form of neoliberal capital. This mirrors the findings of Park and Wee (2012), who argue that language commodification is shaped not only by market forces but by nation-state policies that mediate access to linguistic resources. In Bangladesh, education reforms led by the state and pressures from the private sector have combined to establish an English-based meritocracy that benefits the linguistically elite and reconsolidates class-based inequalities. Whilst the elite-serving function of English remains unbroken. What has changed is the perception of the public towards it as not an unwelcome imposition but as an investment worth making. This is an ideological turn, whereby English is no longer opposed as foreign but embraced as the language of opportunity, mobility, and global belonging. The

assumed neutrality of the language, its independence from coloniality, is one of the most pernicious features of its current ideological hegemony.

Nonetheless, this valorization of the English is antagonistic. The English hegemony as the new language capital of the labor markets silently deprives the other capitals, especially the ones founded on the vernacular language and local knowledge structure. The proportion of large minority in the range of 10 to 20 percent were neutral towards all five statements could have been possibly attributed to this type of ambivalence. Such respondents can have English instrumental value, although disturbed by cultural loss, linguistic homogenization or unequal access. It is in their non-indifference that ideological dissonance takes one of its forms, the opposition to adopting a linguistic economy in which language commodifies itself to the detriment of equity.

In this case, English poses a hindrance and a challenge. It is both gatekeeper and ladder. The ladder metaphor is appropriate to respondents who perceive a way to mobility through the English language. On the other hand, the metaphor of the gatekeeper summarizes the processes of exclusion of the individuals lacking access to the language or unable to master it. This twin role emphasizes the necessity of thinking critically on those ideologies that create the image of English as the only way to development, the ideologies that are going to disenfranchise not only other-language speakers but also other concepts of development based on linguistic and cultural diversity.

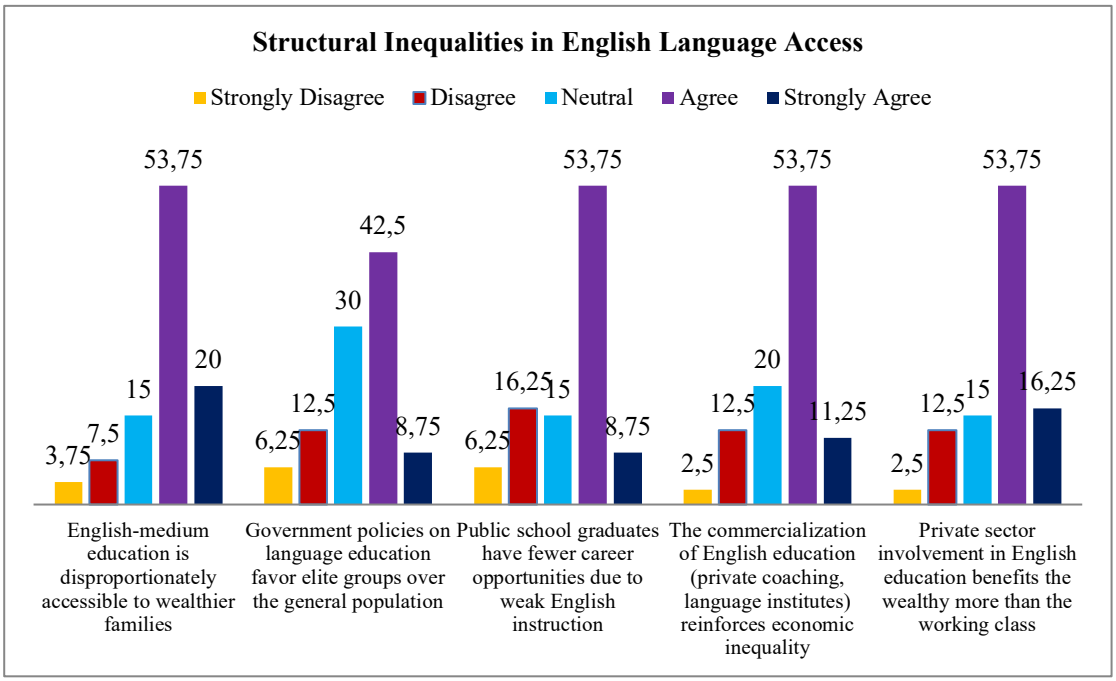

Figure 3. Structural inequalities in English language access

Take the first proposition: "English-medium education is disproportionately accessible to wealthier families". A commanding 53.75% of respondents agreed, while 20% strongly agreed. With only 3.75% strongly disagreeing and a modest 7.5% disagreeing, the mean score leans heavily toward agreement. The median response

falls within the "Agree" category, and so does the mode demonstrating a robust consensus. This alignment suggests more than just correlation. It signals structural exclusion. Access to English-medium institutions is not decided by meritocratic logic but by economic gatekeeping. Language, in this instance, has become an elite investment. Its dividends measured in global mobility, employment, and prestige. This exclusivity aligns with colonial hierarchies under neoliberalism. The commercialization of English-medium schooling transforms language into a purchasable commodity. Much like access to clean water or safe housing, fluency in English is no longer a cultural skill but a market good. Pennycook's (2007) concept of language as a local practice is challenged by this finding. In Bangladesh, English is not locally negotiated but globally enforced through economic structures.

The second proposition, "Government policies on language education favor elite groups over the general population", presents similarly skewed findings. 42.5% agreed, and 8.75% strongly agreed. While this agreement is slightly more tempered than the first item, it is still statistically significant. The mode remains "Agree", with a median also leaning in the same direction. The relatively higher neutral response (30%) may indicate either uncertainty or resignation perhaps reflective of a normalized acceptance of such policies. English, under the guise of development, is strategically embedded in curricula that under-resource public schools while promoting private ventures. In discussing language as power, one cannot overlook Foucault's (1977) assertion that power is both productive and repressive. The state's language policies produce a class of English-fluent elites while repressing the majority through structural neglect. The emphasis on English in elite institutions is not accidental. It is ideological. English symbolizes modernity, progress, and competence, while Bengali, though constitutionally revered, is treated as vernacular, secondary, and culturally bounded. This binary, deeply ideological, is internalized by both educators and learners.

"Public school graduates have fewer career opportunities due to weak English instruction" garnered the same agreement percentage as the first: 53.75%, with an additional 8.75% strongly agreeing. The mode is again "Agree", and the mean is tilted in the direction of affirmative responses. This consistency of the responses to questions leads to an idea of a pattern, which means that the access to the English is directly associated with the access to the economic capital. Practically, the graduates of Bengali-medium public schools are effectively locked out of quality jobs particularly in the corporate and development sector where English is the lingua franca. In this regard, the deficit in state sector is not curricular but ideological. It imparts students that they have less linguistic capital.

The commercialization of the English language (privately coaching, language schools) strengthens the economic inequality rejoined a much similar profile: 53.75% agreed and 11.25% highly agreed, with only 2.5% being strongly opposed to that. The central tendency is used to measure all the confirmations which points in agreement significantly. The question is related to one of the most neoliberal forms of linguistic capital like the growth of the industry of language coaching and the appearance of language schools with profit motives. These schools lure fluency, in most cases

accompanied with Western accents and soft skills training, to those who are willing to pay the high prices. It is this commodification of language that Heller (2010) talks of when she writes her linguistic markets of late modernity. The English language is not only taught, it is sold and marketed the same way that real estate is or the same way designer products are. The implication is clear. It is no longer a democratic fluency. It is exclusive. It becomes part of what Park (2011) calls linguistic entrepreneurship where individuals are expected to invest in language training to improve their human capital. However, this form of self-investment is only possible for those already cushioned by economic privilege. The working class, constrained by time, resources, and mobility, cannot participate in these linguistic economies.

"Private sector involvement in English education benefits the wealthy more than the working class" consolidates the narrative. Again, 53.75% agreed and 16.25% strongly agreed. The responses across this item yield the highest mean among all propositions and show the least disagreement (only 2.5% strongly disagreed). Thus, the private sectors including international schools, private universities, and for-profit training centers, position themselves as a solution to state inefficiency. However, it merely replicates and intensifies existing inequalities by catering to a clientele that can afford to pay. This finding can be juxtaposed with Block's (2014) critique of neoliberal language policy. The private sector's dominance is not just about efficiency but about ideology. It reinforces the belief that English is not a public good but a private asset. So, this ideological shift from language as a right to language as a product reconfigures the role of the state. Instead of guaranteeing equitable access to English, the state increasingly outsources it to the market, absolving itself of responsibility.

Moreover, the consistency of "Agree" as the mode across all items, and the clustering of responses around agreement, confirm a collective awareness of linguistic injustice. English, in this framework, is not neutral. It is weighted with ideology, shaped by power, and traded like currency, entrenched in a political economy which favors the rich at the expense of the others. What now arises is a two-sided trap. One of the keys to upward mobility is English. Conversely, it is only accessible to a few. Non-elite circuits must either pay an expensive price in coaching fees to keep pace, or it takes them an eternity to do so through studying on their own, or never. The rules in this race are determined by capital and not ability.

Therefore, it is not that the linguistic marketplace in Bangladesh is meritocratic, rather it is monopolistic, as this study reveals it to be. It accommodates economic capital holders and only provides linguistic capital on high bidder basis. Hence, according to the political economics, it is evident how English is not primarily a medium of communications in Bangladesh, but a device of power. This is a rather uncomfortable present and to imagine a more constructive linguistic future we must first grapple with it and begin to construct Wall.

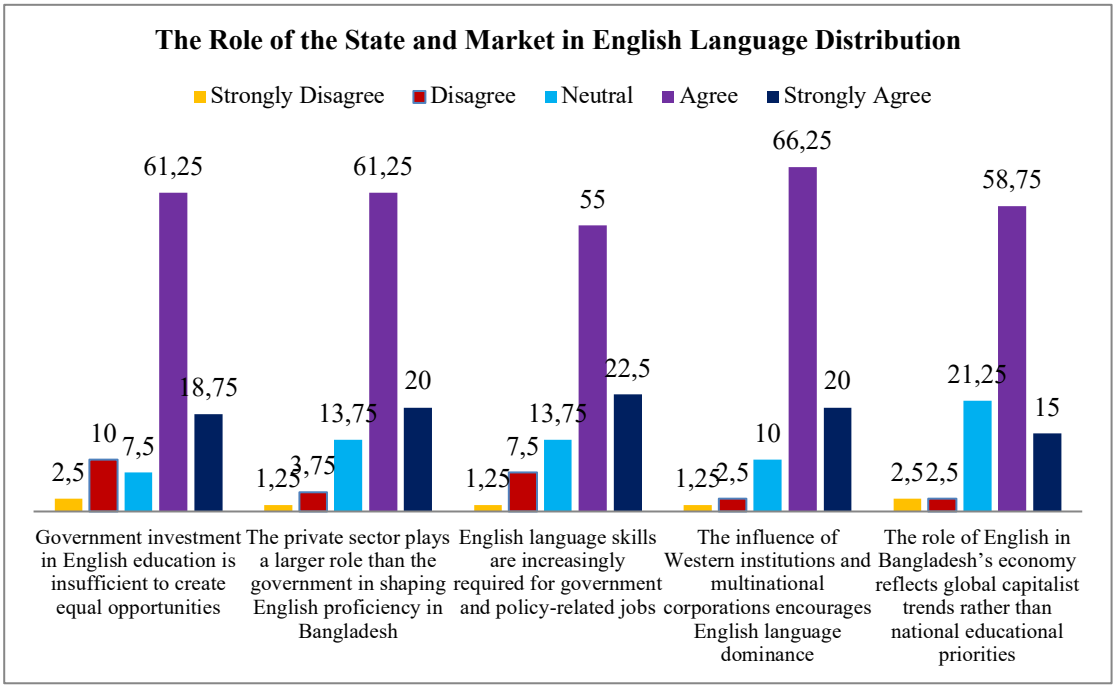

Figure 4. The role of the state and market in English language distribution

When respondents were asked whether government investment in English education is insufficient to create equal opportunities, the response was unequivocal. With a mean score of 3.83, a median of 4 (Agree), and a mode of 4, the consensus tilted heavily towards agreement. Over 80% of participants selected "Agree" or "Strongly Agree", while only 2.5% strongly disagreed. The weight of these responses reveals a collective perception of state neglect. Thus, English education in Bangladesh is stratified, where government schools, serving the vast majority, lack adequate infrastructure, trained teachers, and curriculum innovation to foster meaningful English proficiency. The notion of equal opportunity is rendered hollow when proficiency becomes a luxury commodity accessible primarily through elite institutions or costly coaching centers. Here, language is both a mirror and a gatekeeper reflecting systemic imbalance and simultaneously policing entry into higher echelons of socio-economic mobility.

The commodification of English is further underscored by the data regarding the private sector's role in shaping English proficiency. This statement received a striking mean of 3.98, with both the median and mode again at 4. The dominance of the "Agree" and "Strongly Agree" responses (a cumulative 81.25%) confirms the widely held belief that English education has been outsourced, informally and perhaps intentionally, to private enterprises. Language here becomes a purchasable product wrapped in promises of global mobility, employability, and prestige. Drawing from Heller's (2010) concept of language as a late capitalist resource, this data corroborates the idea that English is not merely taught but sold, often aggressively with profit motives overtaking pedagogical ones.

This private sector dominance dovetails with another emerging trend, English as an implicit requirement for government and policy-related employment. With a mean of 3.95, a median of 4, and a mode of 4, the data for this item reveals a slightly more

nuanced but still assertive agreement among participants. Over three-quarters of the respondents acknowledged that English language skills are increasingly mandatory in these domains. Such findings reveal that even within local governance structures, English proficiency serves as a tacit criterion for recruitment and advancement, particularly in ministries tied to international relations, foreign aid, and development. The ideological implication happens to be stark here. Proficiency in English emerges as a symbolic capital that legitimates power and ability, not on technical grounds but on the basis of linguistic compliance with global standards. The state, in its withdrawal from egalitarian language education, paradoxically requires fluency from its prospective bureaucrats and policymakers while condemning as well as attesting the state's embeddedness in neoliberal rationalities.

Accordingly, the fourth argument only makes this paradox even more intricate. That is Western institutions and multinational corporations are more likely to promote the dominance of English language. The highest mean of the five statements of 4.05, median and mode of 4 are all in agreement or strongly agree side by side with 86.25 percent. In this respect, English ceases to be a means of study or communication, but a ticket to world capitalism. Foreign aid in form of multinational firms, INGOs, development projects, etc. cannot be stressed enough in helping naturalize English as a language of legitimacy. This can be referred to as a cultural politics of English where language is applied in an ideological tool. It is a duplication of Western hegemony without any issue but it is introduced as a value-neutral capability. In Bangladesh, the emergence of corporate English manifests itself in job advertisements, business letters and professional grooming, where linguistic conformity to Western standards is valued more than local intelligibility or cultural contextualization. This makes the market the new classroom and the curriculum is not determined by national educational objectives but by the corporate demands.

Furthermore, this ideological capture reaches its zenith in the final statement: the role of English in Bangladesh's economy reflects global capitalist trends rather than national educational priorities. Although this item showed slightly more variance with a mean of 3.63, a median of 4, and a mode of 3 (Neutral), the broader trend still points to agreement, with 73.75% choosing "Agree" or "Strongly Agree". The indication of this ambivalence in this neutral response (21.25%), which can be discussed as a necessary condition of such uncertainty, can be attributed to the discomfort of recognizing that the national education policy is not always nationally established. Bangladeshi state is in a two-way traffic such as development of English to target competitiveness in the global enterprise, and the concepts of depending on the maintenance of academic supremacy and linguistic inclusivity. Canagararajah (1999) shares a remark that even postcolonial spread of English commencement is seldom a free will, though still it is refracted through a biased past, economic interests, and ideological fascination.

These results reinforce Phillipson (1992) who had posited that English is propagated in uneven terms and unequal access to languages. Another kind of richness is added to this argument by the experience of Bangladesh. The rapid economic growth and internet economy of the country have led to the demand of the English

language. The silence of the state, marketplace noise, and globalization aspiration are the factors that produce an unequal linguistic marketplace. Each percentage is a person and each statistic is an account of struggle, structural violence and the power of forces without the classroom.

Conclusion

English in Bangladesh has many roles namely economic, ideological in nature and power struggle. The results assert that English is not publicly available and English study is not just a gift of national educational policies. Instead, it operates to such an extent through the mediation of private actors, global market processes and ideologies abandoned by colonial and neoliberal projects. The first notable conclusion based on survey data is that opinion was quite general that there is no adequate state investment in English education to the point where even an equal opportunity is not created. Bangladesh has a high system of state schools which are poorly staffed and insufficient to provide a good quality of English education. City schools, high-priced home coaching schools, etc., in their turn, produce students who are much more competent in areas dominated by English. English language skills are thus, not only a luxury of education, a symbol of class privilege.

What makes this even more confusing in this contradiction is even the role of the Western institutions and multinational corporations in propagating hegemony of the English language. Perhaps, the most definitive finding of the research is the last remark concerning the imitation of the global pattern of capitalism in Bangladesh in the linguistic market. These are the awareness of English as an economic survival necessity and the feeling of unease because the survival necessity marginalizes the national agendas, indigenous languages, and education equality. The ideological conflict at the center of the English language policy in Bangladesh is grieved and clad in paradox: at first there is hope and then disillusionment.

Nonetheless, this research is not without limitations. The survey data only presented us with the quantitative snapshot of perceptions in a broad sense but does not reflect the richness of the lived experience of the English speakers. The stance to the language and linguistic capital is contextualized and personal so much, and it is produced conditionally depending on the social-economic background, geographical location, gender, and ethnicity. To make these dynamics practical, the future studies need to focus on these issues.

At policy level, implications of this research are that there is a dire need to conceptualize language education as a social good and not a market good. This involves a re-investment in socially accessible changes of things which are fair and contextual, English education funded by the state. The education programs ought to be augmented and diversified to access the marginalized areas. And curriculum will have to be developed, which will pose no threat national identity of English and instead be inclusive national developmental tool. Most important of all, the language policy should be affected by the democratic discourse and cultural sensitivity and not the market demand. Thus, in a nutshell, it can be affirmed that this research substantiates the idea that English in Bangladesh is not only a language, it is also a place of conflict,

a medium of exchange, and a means of material possession.

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