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Original Article

Cultural Adaptation among Undergraduates in the Arts and Humanities School at Khulna University

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Abstract: The current study deals with cultural adaptation among undergraduate students at Khulna University, Bangladesh, with particular attention to the influence of English culture on students' academic and social lives. The study explores how exposure to English language learning, texts, films, drama series, music, and other cultural materials shapes students' attitudes, preferences, and everyday practices. Quantitative data were collected through questionnaire surveys from 113 students and 12 teachers across three disciplines of the university's Arts and Humanities School. The participants were selected through a convenience sampling technique. The findings demonstrate that the English culture has a noticeable influence on many students, especially in their media choices, reading habits, dress preferences, language use, food habits, and lifestyle practices. However, the study also shows that students are not detached from Bengali culture; rather, the findings indicate that they continue to value Bengali literature, festivals, and cultural traditions. The paper argues that English cultural influence should be understood as a process of adaptation and negotiation rather than complete cultural replacement.

Keywords: Cultural adaptation, cultural aggression, Bengali culture, identity crisis

Introduction

Language and culture are closely interrelated. A language does not work only as a tool for communication; it also carries the values, habits, beliefs, and ways of life of the people who use it. For this reason, when students learn or use a foreign language, they often come into contact with the culture associated with that language. English, as a global language, has gained a strong position in education, media, technology, employment, and international communication. In Bangladesh, English has long been regarded as a prestigious language, especially among educated and urban groups. It is often associated with social status, modernity, academic success, and professional opportunity. The influence of English, however, is not limited to language use. It also appears in students' cultural choices and everyday practices. Undergraduates may become familiar with English culture through textbooks, films, drama series, music, social media, clothing styles, food habits, greetings, and celebrations. In many cases, these practices gradually shape their attitudes, preferences, and lifestyle. The students of the School of Arts and Humanities at Khulna University are also exposed to English language and culture through academic texts, media, and social interaction. As a result, some changes may be observed in their dress preferences, entertainment choices, language use, food habits, and views about local and foreign cultures.

This study is informed by Phillipson's (1992) theory of linguistic imperialism and Gramsci's (1971) concept of cultural hegemony. Phillipson argues that English often functions as a language

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of power and dominance, particularly when it creates unequal relationships between English and other languages. Gramsci's idea of cultural hegemony also helps explain how people may accept the values and practices of a dominant culture as natural, modern, or desirable. In the Bangladeshi context, English cultural influence may encourage students to view some foreign practices as more attractive than their own cultural traditions. At the same time, this influence should not be understood in a one-sided way. Students may adopt some aspects of English culture while still maintaining attachment to Bengali culture.

The general purpose of this study is to explore cultural adaptation among undergraduates in the School of Arts and Humanities at Khulna University. More specifically, it examines the areas in which English cultural influence is visible, the possible reasons behind students' cultural preferences, and the extent to which such influence affects their attitudes, behaviours, and sense of cultural identity. By focusing on students' everyday experiences, the study seeks to understand whether English cultural influence leads to cultural loss, cultural negotiation, or a mixed form of adaptation. The study also considers the role of teachers in helping students develop awareness of both English and Bengali cultural values.

Literature Review

Language and culture are closely related, and this relationship is important for understanding cultural adaptation among university students. Cakir (2006) explains that language is a social and cultural phenomenon because it reflects the values, beliefs, and practices of a community. Brown (1994) also argues that language and culture are deeply connected, and separating one from the other may reduce the meaning of both. In this sense, English is not only a medium of communication; it also carries cultural meanings, social attitudes, and ways of thinking.

In English language learning, students are often exposed to cultural materials through textbooks, fiction, films, drama series, music, and online media. Kitao (1991) considers culture a motivational factor in language learning because it links language with real-life situations. Peterson and Coltrane (2003) argue that cultural awareness is necessary for effective communication, while Pulverness (2003) notes that learning a foreign language without cultural understanding may make communication incomplete. These views suggest that English learning naturally brings students into contact with English-speaking cultures.

Cultural adaptation is also connected with identity formation. Norton (1997) states that language learners are involved in constructing identity whenever they use a language. This means that learning English may influence not only students' linguistic ability but also their sense of self, social position, and cultural preference. In Bangladesh, English is often associated with education, prestige, modernity, and better opportunities. As a result, undergraduates may show interest in English cultural practices and sometimes adopt them in their daily lives. Dastgoshadeh and Jalilzadeh (2011) explain that adopting a new cultural identity may weaken some original cultural traits, especially when learners imitate foreign culture without critical awareness. However, adaptation does not always mean complete cultural loss; it may also create an intercultural identity.

The influence of English culture can also be discussed through linguistic imperialism and cultural hegemony. Phillipson (1992) argues that English may function as a form of linguistic imperialism when it creates unequal relations between English and other languages and cultures. In this situation, learners may begin to consider English culture more modern or superior. Gramsci's idea of cultural hegemony is relevant here because it explains how the values of a dominant culture may become accepted as normal or desirable. In the Bangladeshi university context, students' attraction to English books, media, dress, music, and lifestyle may reflect this broader cultural influence. At the same time, English cultural influence should not be understood only as cultural domination. Tomalin and Stempleski (1993) argue that teaching culture can help students develop intercultural awareness and cross-cultural understanding. Farooq et al. (2018) also suggest that teachers should create a balanced learning environment by connecting foreign culture with local

culture. This balance is important so that students can learn English without undervaluing Bengali cultural identity.

Cultural hybridization is another useful idea for this study. Tomlinson (1991) suggests that cultures often mix through unequal cultural contact. Thus, students may adopt some English cultural practices while still maintaining Bengali traditions. Although many studies discuss language, culture, and identity, limited empirical work has explored cultural adaptation among undergraduates at Bangladeshi public universities. This study addresses that gap by examining cultural adaptation among undergraduates in the School of Arts and Humanities at Khulna University.

Methodology

The current study primarily adopts a descriptive approach to explore cultural adaptation among EFL learners with two quantitative questionnaire surveys. A quantitative approach was suitable for this study because it helped the researcher collect clear, standardized responses and present the results using numbers, frequencies, and percentages (Saunders et al., 2019). The researchers selected only Arts and Humanities School as the study area for the shortage of time. All the three disciplines as English, Bangla, and History and Civilization comprise of the area. The researchers surveyed on the final year students of those disciplines. All the participants were selected using convenience sampling based on their availability and willingness to participate (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The sample size consists of 113 undergraduate students and 12 teachers. 41 students and three teachers from the Bangla Discipline. 26 students and eight teachers from English Discipline and 46 students and one teacher from History and Civilization Discipline participated in the survey.

This research was based on both primary and secondary data. The data collection process followed ethical considerations, including voluntary participation, informed consent, and confidentiality of the participants. Primary data were collected through questionnaire surveys. All questions were close-ended. There were 12 questions for the students and five questions for the teacher participants. Secondary data were collected from different articles, books, and research works to support the literature review and to compare the findings with existing studies. The survey data have been analyzed and edited several times to ensure the inclusion of all necessary data and to eliminate possible errors. All the collected data have been organized, interpreted, and analyzed using Microsoft Word and Excel. Finally, the analyzed data have been presented in various tables.

Findings and Analyses

The findings are presented in two parts. Firstly, the responses of the students are summarized, because they are the main participants of the study. The student questionnaire contained 12 items; however, the seven items most closely related to cultural adaptation are reported in table 1. Other five results are presented as figures with more direct patterns. Secondly, the five questionnaire items for the teacher are summarized in table 2 to see whether the teachers' views support or qualify the students' responses.

Table 1. Selected student responses on cultural adaptation (n = 113)

SL	Question focus	Results
1	Most-watched English TV channel	BBC: 42.48%; CNN: 32.74%; HBO: 24.78%
2	Frequently listened music	Hindi: 46.02%; English: 37.17%; Bangla: 16.81%
3	Fiction read in leisure time	Bengali fiction: 51.33%; English fiction: 34.51%; Other fiction: 14.16%
4	Occasion celebrated with excitement	Pahela Baishakh: 45.13%; 31st Night: 29.20%; Valentine's Day: 25.67%
5	Frequency of watching Bangla movies	Hardly: 49.56%; Sometimes: 39.82%; Never: 10.62%
6	Use of English in daily life	Sometimes: 67.16%; Often: 29.20%; Hardly: 9.73%
7	Cultural correlation while reading English texts	Yes: 92.03%; No: 7.97%

Table 1 shows that students are exposed to foreign cultural materials in different ways. In the case of English TV channels, BBC was the most watched channel, selected by 42.48% of the

students. CNN was selected by 32.74%, and HBO by 24.78%. This result indicates that English-language media is a regular source of cultural exposure for many respondents. The table also shows that music preference is not limited to English culture only. The highest percentage, 46.02%, went to Hindi music, while 37.17% selected English music and 16.81% selected Bangla music. This suggests that the students are influenced by a wider foreign media culture, although English music still has a strong place among them. In leisure reading, Bengali fiction received the highest response at 51.33%. English fiction was selected by 34.51%, and other fiction by 14.16%. Therefore, the students have not moved away completely from Bengali literary culture. Still, more than one-third of the respondents reading English fiction shows a meaningful level of engagement with English cultural materials.

Festival preference gives a mixed picture. Pahela Baishakh was selected by 45.13%, which shows continuing attachment to Bengali culture. At the same time, 29.20% selected 31st Night and 25.67% selected Valentine's Day. These two foreign occasions together show that foreign celebrations have become familiar and attractive to many students. The result on Bangla movies is more concerning. Almost half of the students, 49.56%, said that they hardly watch Bangla movies, while 39.82% watch them sometimes and 10.62% never watch them. Since movies are an important carrier of language and culture, this weak engagement with Bangla films may reduce students' regular contact with local cultural representations. In daily communication, 67.16% of the students reported that they use English sometimes, while 29.20% use it often and 9.73% hardly use it. This means that English has entered students' day-to-day communication to some extent, but for most students it is still occasional rather than constant. Finally, the table demostrates that 92.03% students correlate Bengali cultural ideas with English cultural ideas while reading English texts, and only 7.97% do not. This is a positive finding because it suggests that most students do not receive English texts passively. They compare, relate, and interpret those texts through their own cultural understanding.

The following five figures present the items that most directly reflect cultural influence, preference, media practice, lifestyle, and everyday language use.

Influence of English Culture on the Students' Academic and Social Life

It was important to know what the respondents think about the influence of English culture on their academic and social lives. Their observed response is shown below in the chart.

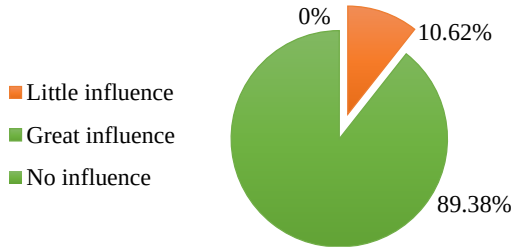


Figure 1. English culture on the student's academic and social life

Figure 1 shows that 89.38% of the students stated that English culture has a great influence on their academic and social life. Only 10.62% reported little influence, and no student selected the option of no influence. This is the strongest indication that English culture is present in both academic and social spaces of the learners.

Students Most-liked Culture

Figure 2 indicates that 67.26% of the students liked English culture most, while 32.74% preferred Bangladeshi culture. None of the students selected other culture. The result shows a clear preference for English culture among the respondents, although a considerable group wants to remain attached to Bangladeshi culture.

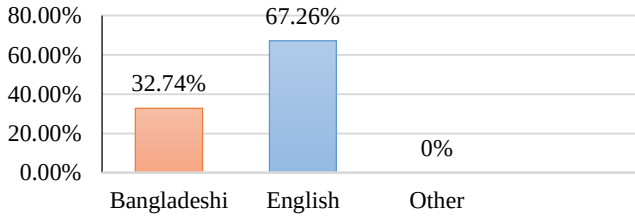


Figure 2. Student's most liked culture

The chart shows that 67.26% students, which means more than half of the students like English culture, though some of them like Bangla culture, but none of them chose other culture. It is clear from here that English culture is successfully influencing the EFL learners.

Students' Preferred Drama Series

Watching drama series is also one of the ways of gathering knowledge and learning the language and culture of a particular society, especially a foreign one. The EFL learners were asked about their most preferred drama series, and their responses are shown below in the graph.

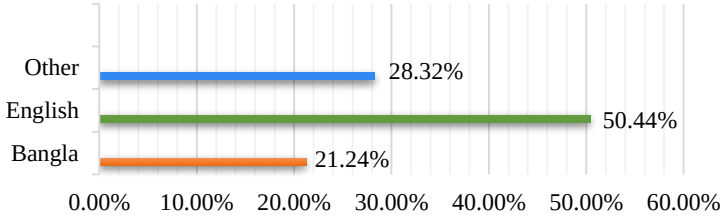


Figure 3. Students' most preferred drama series

Figure 3 demonstrates that English drama series were preferred by 50.44% of the students, and Bangla drama series by 21.24%. However, 28.32% students preferred other drama series. This finding suggests that entertainment media is one of the major areas through which students come into contact with foreign cultural practices.

Students' Outfit Preferences

Figure 4 presents a comparatively mixed pattern about the students' preferred outfits.

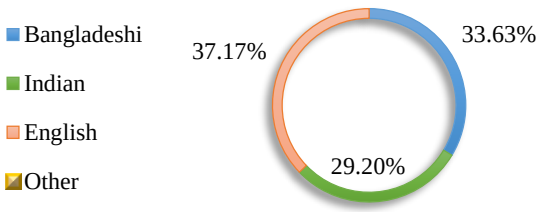


Figure 4. Student's Preferred Outfits

English outfits were preferred by 37.17% of the students, Bangladeshi outfits by 33.63%, and Indian outfits by 29.20%. The difference is not very wide, but English outfits still received the highest percentage. This indicates a visible influence of English style in dress preference.

Students' Use of English in Daily Life

Practicing English in day-to-day life develops one's proficiency in that language. The EFL learners were asked how much they speak in their day-to-day life to investigate how they are becoming proficient in it. Being proficient in a language makes the speaker aware of the norms and practices of the culture of the native speakers of that language.

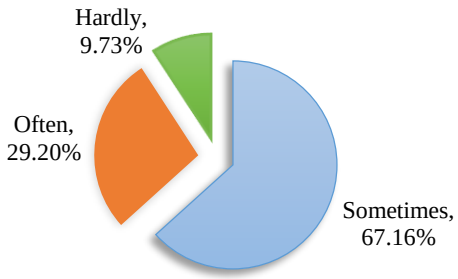


Figure 5. Students' English language speaking in their day-to-day life

Figure 5 shows that 67.16% of the students use English sometimes in daily life, and 29.20% use it often. Only 9.73% reported that they hardly use English. Therefore, English is not limited to the classroom; it also appears in students' everyday communication, though for most of them it is used occasionally rather than constantly.

Results of Teacher-questionnaire

The information that has been accumulated through a questionnaire from the teachers of three disciplines of the Arts and Humanities School of Khulna University are closed-ended session. and the total number of respondents is 12.

Table 2. Teacher questionnaire results (n = 12)

SL	Question focus	Results
1	Meaning of cultural adaptation	Integrating into a new culture: 83.33%; Learning a new culture: 16.67%; Forgetting own culture: 0.00%
2	Whether syllabus texts influence learners to adapt English culture	Sometimes: 58.33%; Yes: 25.00%; No: 16.67%
3	Whether cultural adaptation affects native cultural purity	Somehow: 66.67%; Yes: 16.67%; No: 16.67%
4	Whether teachers correlate Bengali cultural ideas with English texts	Yes: 91.67%; No: 8.33%
5	Whether teachers motivate students to practise Bengali cultural norms	Yes: 75.00%; No: 25.00%

Table 2 presents the teacher-questionnaire results. First, 83.33% of the teachers defined cultural adaptation as integrating into a new culture, while 16.67% saw it as learning a new culture. No teacher selected forgetting one's own culture. Below figure 6 illustrates that most teachers consider adaptation as a process of adjustment, not as total cultural loss.

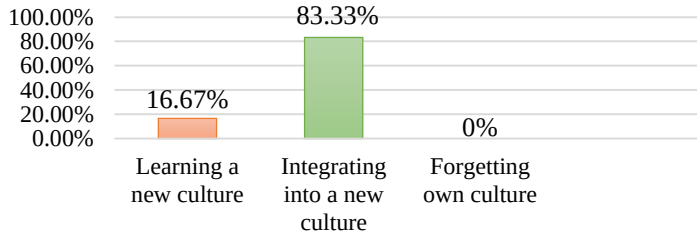


Figure 6. Cultural Adaptation of the Students

Regarding the role of syllabus texts, 58.33% of the teachers said that students sometimes adapt English culture because of the texts included in their syllabus. Another 25.00% answered yes, and 16.67% answered no. So, the syllabus appears to have some influence, but it is not the only source of cultural adaptation.

On cultural purity, 66.67% of the teachers believed that cultural adaptation somehow affects native culture. In comparison, 16.67% answered yes, and 16.67% answered no. This shows that most teachers take a moderate position: they see an effect, but they do not necessarily present adaptation as complete cultural damage.

The classroom role of teachers is also clear from the table. A large majority, 91.67%, said that they correlate Bengali cultural ideas with English cultural ideas while teaching English texts, while only 8.33% said they do not. Similarly, 75.00% of the teachers said that they motivate students to practise Bengali cultural norms in daily life, whereas 25.00% said they do not.

Overall, the teacher data supports the student findings. The teachers recognize the influence of English culture, but they also try to create cultural comparison and awareness in the classroom. Their responses suggest that cultural adaptation among EFL learners should be handled carefully, not by rejecting English culture, but by helping students understand it without losing respect for Bengali culture.

Discussion and Recommendation

The findings show that cultural adaptation among the surveyed EFL undergraduate students is clearly present; however, it appears to reflect a process of cultural negotiation rather than a rejection of their own cultural identity. Students are exposed to English culture through academic texts, drama series, music, dress, and social practices. At the same time, their responses on Bengali fiction and Pahela Baishakh show that local cultural attachment is still dominant. Therefore, the results should be read as a pattern of selective adaptation rather than complete cultural replacement.

This pattern agrees with Cakir's (2006) view that language is closely connected with social and cultural values. In the present study, English appears not only as a classroom subject, but also as a carrier of lifestyle and social meaning. Students' preference for English culture and English drama series suggests that they meet English culture through both formal learning and informal media exposure. In Bangladesh, this is quite understandable because English is often associated with education, confidence, and modern life.

The findings also connect with Norton's (1997) argument that language learning is related to identity construction. The students are not only learning another language; they are also negotiating how they want to present themselves socially and culturally. Their attraction to English outfits or English media may reflect this negotiation. Still, their continued interest in Bengali fiction and national festivals indicates that their Bengali identity has not disappeared. Rather, they seem to move between two cultural spaces.

Phillipson's (1992) idea of linguistic imperialism is useful for understanding why English receives such strong preference. English has symbolic power in Bangladesh because it is linked with higher education, employment, and global communication. For this reason, some students may see English culture as more prestigious or more modern. However, the data should not be overstated. The findings show influence, attraction, and partial adaptation, but they do not prove that Bengali culture is being destroyed.

The teachers' responses make this point clearer. Most teachers reported that they compare Bengali and English cultural ideas while teaching, and many motivate students to practise native cultural norms. This is consistent with Tomalin and Stempleski's (1993) view that cultural teaching can develop awareness and cross-cultural understanding. In this sense, teachers can help students understand English cultural references without accepting the idea that local culture is inferior.

For EFL teaching in Bangladesh, the implication is practical. English culture should not be excluded from the classroom, because language often becomes meaningful through culture. But it

should be taught comparatively and critically. Students should be encouraged to understand English cultural materials while also valuing Bengali literature, festivals, dress, food habits, and social norms. Such an approach can protect students from blind imitation and also make them more confident intercultural learners.

Overall, the study shows a mixed but meaningful cultural position. English has a strong influence on students, especially through media and academic exposure. Yet Bengali culture remains present in their regular reading habits and festival practices. A balanced EFL classroom can turn this situation into an opportunity: students can learn English with cultural awareness while preserving respect for their own identity.

Some recommendations are given below to make the students conscious of adapting the English culture so that they can preserve the uniqueness of Bangladeshi culture.

a. Some Bangla texts that contain the picture of our Bangla culture. It may help the EFL learners not to forget our own identity, or it may inspire them to practice our cultural behaviors.
b. The teachers can play an important role in getting learners motivated to maintain our cultural norms and values because these show our identity as Bangladeshis. The teachers may also inspire them to read Bangla fiction along with English and to watch more Bangla drama series and movies.
c. The parents of the learners should have a role in making their children aware of our Bangla culture and its importance in our lives.
d. Finally, the learners must be aware of preserving our own culture because it bears our distinct identity in the world. It is not the thing that they will hate or avoid the English culture, rather they will adapt the culture to the extent that our own culture will not be affected or endangered.

The authors eventually recommend that teachers and learners develop a balanced approach to English language and culture so that students can gain intercultural awareness while preserving their own Bengali cultural identity.

Conclusion

Cultural adaptation is a gradual process through which individuals come into contact with a new culture and begin to adopt some of its practices, values, and behavioural patterns. This study surveyed cultural adaptation among undergraduates of the Arts and Humanities School at Khulna University, focusing particularly on the influence of English culture on their academic, social, and personal lives. The findings demonstrate that English cultural influence is visible in students' media choices, reading habits, outfit preferences, language use, food habits, and celebration of some foreign cultural occasions.

However, the study also suggests that students are not detached from their own Bengali culture. The participants value their own Bengali literature, festivals, and social practices. Their exposure to English texts, films, drama series, music, and global media has created a tendency toward cultural adaptation, but this does not necessarily mean a total rejection of native culture. Rather, it reflects a process of cultural negotiation, where students move between local identity and foreign cultural influence. Teachers also have an important role in guiding students to understand English culture critically while maintaining respect for Bengali cultural values. English may be learned for academic and global purposes, but it should not lead learners to undervalue their own culture. Therefore, students need to develop intercultural awareness while remaining rooted in their own cultural identity. Since this study was limited to a particular school of a university, further studies may include students from other disciplines and universities for broader findings. Future researchers may also use interviews or focus group discussions to understand students' cultural experiences more profoundly.

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