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# English as a Medium of Instruction at Bangladesh University of Professionals: An Investigation

*Research Paper*

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**Abstract**

This study aimed to explore the current situation of implementing English as a medium of instruction (EMI) at tertiary level of education in Bangladesh with a view to finding out the barriers faced by its stakeholders (teachers and students) and recommending some possible solutions to those. It followed a mixed method of research by using questionnaires and semi-structured interviews as data collection tools. The data were collected from 21 teachers and 124 students from a public university of Bangladesh named Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP) which has adopted EMI since inception. Moreover, six out of 21 teacher participants were also interviewed. Primary findings revealed the fact that both the teachers and the students accepted EMI at tertiary education as a positive endeavor in this age of internationalization. However, they faced several barriers during its implementation due to students' varying levels of language competency, differences in learning style, some critical issues related to pedagogy and the scarcity of required resources. The study suggested the strategic use of students' mother tongue (L1), training teachers in the concept of code-switching and translanguaging etc. for increasing the success of EMI at tertiary education in Bangladesh.

**Keywords:** EMI, tertiary education, BUP, barriers, students, teachers

## 1. Introduction

In Bangladesh, English enjoys the status of being the most prestigious foreign language. For many years, it has been taught as a compulsory subject to the students of primary to tertiary levels of education. Initially, only the private universities started applying English as a medium of instruction (EMI) extensively, but to measure up to the trends of globalization, presently the public universities are also employing EMI in their education systems. Whereas, most of the universities in Bangladesh are working to employ EMI at some of the specific departments, Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP), the 29th public university of the country, has employed EMI in all departments since its inception. In most public universities of Bangladesh, students come from different parts of the country having different medium of educational,

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linguistic, cultural and economic backgrounds. Ensuring the proper learning environment for all these students in a classroom using only one language brings about a number of problems to be solved and challenges to be mitigated. Both the students and the teachers may face several difficulties and require assistance from the policy makers in this regard.

Recently, there has been an increasing tendency of adopting EMI in the education systems of different countries, even when the bulk of the population do not use English as their mother tongue (L1). However, this rapid pervasiveness of English does not guarantee immediate success. Different researchers in different countries have studied this phenomenon and stated that EMI brings forth a lot of difficulties for its stakeholders. In Bangladesh too, it brings forth plenty of challenges at the level of implementation. As English is not the L1 of Bangladeshi people, it often becomes quite challenging for the students and the teachers to maintain classroom activities and studies exclusively in English. On the other hand, English, being the language of our former colonizers, garners a sense of distrust from the Bengali speakers in this country. Many scholars hold the view that it is a new form of imperialism and we are gradually diverging from promoting our mother tongue, Bengali, which is a hard-earned language.

## 2. Objectives

This present research aimed to explore the situation of EMI implementation at BUP with a view to finding out the challenges faced by its stakeholders (students and teachers) and offering possible recommendations for the further improvement of it. It attempted to achieve its goal through attaining the following specific objectives:

a. To explore the current state of implementing EMI at BUP;
b. To find out the barriers which confront the students in the EMI context of BUP;
c. To know about the challenges faced by the teachers in implementing EMI at BUP;
d. To offer some recommendations that can help improving the implementation of EMI by lessening the obstacles faced by its stakeholders.

## 3. Literature Review

Dearden (2014) states that EMI is "the use of the English language to teach academic subjects in countries or jurisdictions where the first language (L1) of the majority of the population is not English." Even though there are debates regarding the effectiveness of EMI in non-anglophone countries, it has become what Dearden (2014) calls a "global phenomena" although having its fair share of support, revision and even opposition. The history of EMI in Bangladesh and its surrounding regions probably goes back to the period of colonization, when the British colonizers introduced EMI for establishing their control. After gaining independence, many of these countries faced the question of continuing the language of the colonizers (English) or going back to their native languages.

Kennedy (2017) stated that Sri Lanka too had been caught up in this trap and the rulers of the then independent Sri Lanka continued the English medium education right from primary to tertiary level. But during the late 1950s, the Sri Lankan education system switched from English to the native languages of the country. In case of Bangladesh, a South Asian country, Bengali became the national language after the Language Movement of 1952 and the independence of the country in 1971 (Banu & Sussex, 2001). Currently, it is used in all the significant domains of the country (Imam, 2005). This system continued till the globalization boom came into existence.

Globalization has brought many changes into the globe, especially in the developing and developed Asian countries such as Sri Lanka, India, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Philippines etc. The effect has made much ways in educational domain, especially the switching of the medium of instruction to English.

However, several challenges are faced by the stakeholders of EMI in different situations where the L1 of the majority is not English. Hellekjær's (2010) research done in the EMI context of Germany and Norway shows that the students struggled to follow the lectures in English without being aided by their L1. Vinke, Snippe and Jochems (1998) stated in their study that EMI not only poses difficulties to the students, but also to the teachers. Whereas the students face linguistic barriers; the teachers are required to put extra effort in the preparation of EMI lectures and their delivery. Additionally, there is the scarcity of textbooks and other resources available in English.

Indian students face "the double burden of mastering their subject" as stated by Graddol (2010). Jusuf Ibrahim (2001) investigated EMI in Indonesian context and found that EMI poses difficulties to the tertiary students because of "its classroom-based nature" and further added that "there is a great possibility that EMI will not improve the four language skills equally for both students and teachers".

Parlindungan and Sitorus (2015) in Taiwan found the implementation of EMI challenging since English is a foreign language and its conventional teaching methods do not give the opportunity of acquiring English properly. Consequently, it becomes difficult for the teachers and students to cope with EMI and they opt to have their study in their L1 despite realizing the importance of English in this era of globalization.

Islam (2013) studied EMI in the context of a private university of Bangladesh and indicated that the sudden change in the medium of instruction of the students, who had formerly been the students of Bengali medium of instruction, not only hampers their learning of the "main" or "core" subjects, but also impacts their language proficiency negatively. Sultana (2014) detailed in her work that English harshly hindered the students' learning process and the development of their identity. In an addition, it generated inequalities in the classroom. The study of Hossain, Shamim, Shahana, Habib and Rahman (2010) revealed that the medical students of Bangladesh face a lot of problems in comprehending their lessons in English.

Meanwhile, Domingo (2015) stated that code-mixing between English and Filipino is well accepted in the EMI classrooms of Philippines because of the associated difficulties brought by EMI to the students and the teachers. This is true for the other Asian countries too. For example, Myong Hee Ko (2008) investigated the potential of EMI at a Korean university's English reading program and disclosed that EMI needed to consider the local contexts of incorporating students' native language. He stated that otherwise, it would create an unnatural classroom atmosphere and limited English proficiency in the teachers and the students. He further suggested that, instead of being rigid about the adoption of English-only policy, a mixed language approach can prove helpful in maximizing the students' learning.

## 4. Methodology

The study followed a mixed-method approach, which included both qualitative and quantitative data. Through survey and interview method, the researchers tried to sightsee the current state of implementing EMI at a public university of Bangladesh named Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP) situated in the capital city of the country.

Primary data were collected from 124 students and 21 teachers from BUP using two sets of questionnaires. The questionnaires included both close-ended and open-ended questions. The researchers also took semi-structured interviews of six out of 21 teachers to get more detailed data for a credible progression of the study.

Additionally, relevant books, journals, and other internet resources were utilized as secondary sources. The researchers used statistical tools for data analysis and presented them using tables, graphs, and descriptive analysis.

## 5. Data Analysis and Discussion

### 5.1. Analysis of data collected from the student participants (Questionnaire)

Table-1: Frequency of the use of Bengali in the EMI setting of BUP

| Question | Total students | Very often | Often | Sometimes | Hardly | Not at all |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Do your teachers use Bengali in the classroom during lectures? | 124 | 10.48% | 20.16% | 54.03% | 14.51% | 0.80 % |
| Responses of the Participants | | Positive Response = 84.67% | | | Negative Response = 15.31% | |

Source: Survey, August 2019

This particular question intends to explore the actual state of EMI implementation at BUP. Though students' native language is strictly prohibited in EMI situations, it cannot be completely excluded in most circumstances. BUP is no exception in this regard and 84.67% of the student respondents have agreed that their native language, Bengali, is used in the classroom. To know about their attitudes towards this phenomenon, the following question has been posed:

Table- 2: Students' Attitudes Towards Switching and Mixing of English and Bengali

| Question | Positive Response (Strongly agree, Agree) | Negative Response (Disagree, Strongly disagree) | Neutral |
|---|---|---|---|
| Switching and mixing of English and Bengali make my English knowledge weaker. | 29.03% | 67.74% | 3.22% |

Source: Survey, August 2019

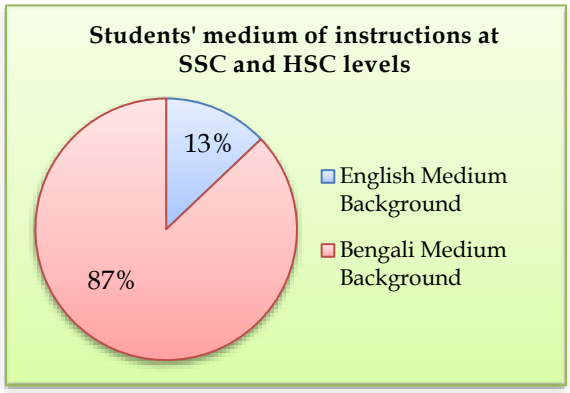



Fig-1: Students' Medium of Education at Secondary (SSC and equivalent) and Higher Secondary (HSC and equivalent) Levels (Source: Survey, August 2019)

67.74% of the total students (Table-2) think that the switching from English to Bengali and mixing between them in classroom instructions do not hamper their English proficiency. The reason behind it is that they better understand the topics discussed in the class while aided by Bengali (L1) and can later develop their English through it. The reason behind their positive attitude towards Bengali and its beneficial impact on their learning process may lie in the fact that most of their previous educational background was Bengali medium (87%) as shown in Figure-1. This in turn, makes them face difficulties in an EMI classroom as they have had less exposure to English in their former levels of education. To investigate the difficulties faced by them in the EMI setting of BUP, the following questions have been designed.

Table-3: Perception and opinions of the students about EMI and challenges faced by them

| SL | Question | Positive Response (Strongly agree, Agree) | Negative Response (Disagree, Strongly disagree) | Neutral |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | I feel nervous/anxious when the instructor uses only English in his/her class lectures. | 37.90% | 41.93% | 20.16% |
| 2 | Lectures delivered only in English (without any use of Bengali) are easy for me to understand. | 20.96% | 66.12% | 12.90% |
| 3 | Lectures delivered in class by mixing Bangla and English are easy for me to understand. | 82.25% | 9.67% | 8.06% |
| 4 | I can easily understand the meaning of critical sentences and words when explained by mixing English and Bangla. | 94.35% | 1.61% | 4.03% |
| 5 | I can understand difficult concepts and materials when the teacher switches from English to Bangla. | 87.09% | 10.48% | 2.41% |
| 6 | Contextualized topics (topics related to Bangladesh) explained only in English are easy for me to understand. | 37.70% | 50.80% | 10.48% |
| 7 | Contextualized topics (topics related to Bangladesh) explained in Bengali are comparatively easier for me to understand and relate. | 66.93% | 24.19% | 8.87% |
| 8 | I feel comfortable when I am asked to express (both speaking and writing) my ideas only in English. | 28.22% | 64.51% | 7.25% |
| 9 | I feel comfortable when I am allowed to express (speaking) my ideas in Bangla. | 76.61% | 16.93% | 6.45% |

Source: Survey, August 2019

The first question in the above table intends to explore the students' attitude towards English and as per 41.93% of them, the use of English in the classroom does not make them nervous, with 37.90% answering the opposite. The reason behind their mixed attitude towards English only lectures lies in their different levels of proficiency in English. While answering the next few questions, designed to explore if the lectures delivered in only English are easy for the students to understand or not, 66.12% of the participants answered in negative and 82.25% of them stated that lectures delivered through the use of both English and Bengali (code-switching, translanguaging etc.) is easier for them to understand. Besides, 87.09% students mentioned that they can understand difficult concepts and materials easily when the teacher switches from English to Bangla.

50.80% of the students stated that contextualized topics explained in only English are difficult to understand, whereas Bengali makes these topics much easier to comprehend (as stated by 66.93% of the participants). Most of them (64.51%) feel uncomfortable to use English to express their ideas (both in written and spoken form), whereas 76.61% of them felt more comfortable in expressing themselves by speaking in Bengali.

Analyses of question no. 1, 4, 5, 7 and 9 reveals that the EMI scenario at BUP is sometimes compromised by using students' L1 in the classroom as they favor it for removing their anxiety in understanding English lectures, difficult concepts and materials, contextualized topics etc. They feel highly comfortable to express themselves in Bangla rather than English, especially while speaking (the skill students are mostly weak at), as stated by 62.09% of them in the data presented in Fig-2.

Statement: My weakest point in English lies in: (More than one option can be chosen.)

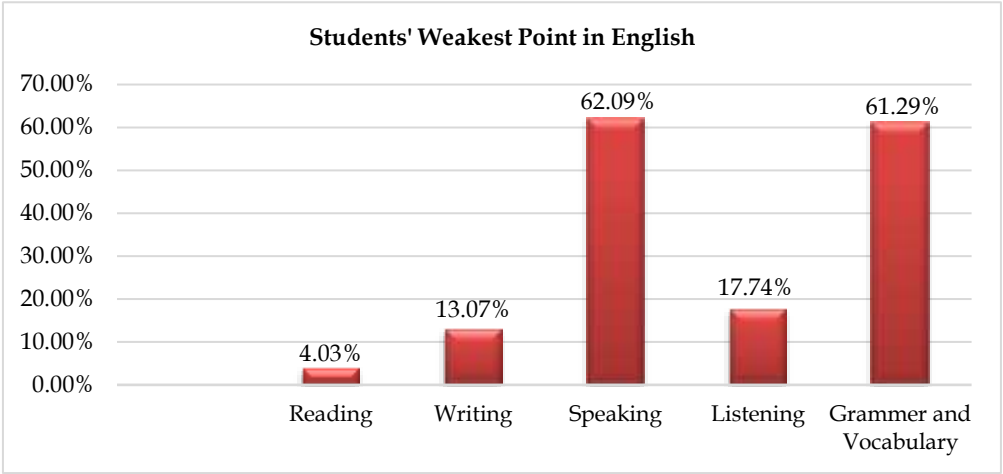



Fig-2: Students' Weakest Point in English Skills (Source: Survey, August 2019)

Table-4: Students' attitudes towards EMI as a whole

| Sl | Question | Positive Response (Strongly agree, Agree) | Negative Response (Disagree, Strongly disagree) | Neutral |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | I would like the instructor to minimize his/her use of English during class lectures. | 31.45% | 55.64% | 12.90% |
| 2 | Facing difficulties and overcoming those while communicating in English (speaking, listening, reading and writing) ultimately helps me to develop my English skills. | 92.74% | 6.45% | 0.80% |
| 3 | My general education (GED) Functional English course is enough to help me remove all my weaknesses in English skills. | 48.38% | 43.54% | 8.06% |

Source: Survey, August 2019

Despite having weakness in grammar, vocabulary and speaking skills and preference of Bengali in the EMI classrooms, the students hold positive attitudes towards their teachers' extent of using English in the classroom. 55.64% of the participants expressed that teachers should not minimize the use of English in classrooms although they face a lot of difficulties in such situations. Rather, they (92.74%) take it as a challenge and believe that facing difficulties and overcoming those while communicating in English (speaking, listening, reading and writing) ultimately helps them to develop their English skills.

BUP offers a general education course titled Functional English as a remedial course to the students who have various linguistics needs. Although this course aims to develop students' English proficiency, almost half of them (43.54%) find it insufficient to help them overcome all their weaknesses in English. Therefore, it is evident that the GED Functional English course is unable to achieve its goals properly and more focused courses can be introduced.

### 5.2. Analysis of data collected from the teachers' questionnaire

Table-5: Teachers' perception about EMI at tertiary level of education

| SL | Question | Positive Response (Strongly agree, Agree) | Negative Response (Disagree, Strongly disagree) | Neutral |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | All of my students have the same/similar levels of proficiency in English. | 6.66% | 93.33% | 0% |
| 2 | My students can understand my lectures to the fullest when I deliver them in English. | 13.33% | 66.66% | 20% |
| 3 | My students show better comprehension of new/difficult concepts and materials when I supplement my English lectures with Bengali. | 93.33% | 6.66% | 0% |
| 4 | Students from both English and Bengali medium equally understand my lectures delivered only in English. | 26.66% | 53.33% | 20% |
| 5 | Students feel comfortable when they are asked to express their ideas and opinions (both spoken and written) only in English. | 20% | 66.66% | 13.33% |
| 6 | Students feel comfortable when they are allowed to express their ideas and opinions (both spoken and written) in Bengali. | 86.66% | 0% | 13.33% |
| 7 | Contextualized topics (related to Bangladesh) explained only in English are easily comprehended by the students. | 20% | 66.66% | 13.33% |
| 8 | Contextualized topics (related to Bangladesh) explained in Bengali are easier for students to understand and relate. | 93.33% | 0% | 6.66% |

Source: Survey, August 2019

For ensuring proper learning of all the students in EMI context, their language proficiency in English should have similitude. However, BUP, being a public university, enrolls students from different economic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds who, despite having good command over the concepts taught up to higher secondary level, have different levels of competency in English. Among 124 randomly selected student participants of this study, 87% have been found to have studied in the Bengali medium education system before enrolling at BUP. 33% of the teacher participants stated that their students do not have the similar levels of proficiency in English. For teachers, it becomes a massive hurdle in ensuring equal comprehension of all the students when EMI is fully implemented in the classroom. Only 13.33% of the teacher participants think that their students can understand their lectures to the fullest when they deliver them in English, whereas 93.33% of them assert that their students show better comprehension of new or difficult concepts and materials when they supplement their English lectures with Bengali. Only 26.66% teachers think that the students from English and Bengali medium can comprehend and equally understand his/her lectures delivered solely in English, whereas 66.66% of them disagreed with the notion that students are comfortable in expressing their ideas and opinions only in English. Moreover, 86.66% of the teacher participants stated that students are comfortable when they are allowed to express their ideas and opinions (both spoken and written) in Bengali. In case of comprehending contextualized topics (topics related to Bangladesh), only 20% of the teacher participants think that using only English is favorable, whereas 93.33% of them stated that contextualized topics explained in Bengali are easier for the students to understand and relate.

### 5.3. Analysis of data collected from interview with the teachers

Six teachers of BUP, having 2-13 years of teaching experience, were interviewed to draw more insights on the topic of this study. The analysis of the data drawn from those interviews has been presented below.

5.3.1. Do you ever switch from Bengali to English during you lecture? To what extent and why?

All the teacher participants asserted that they switch from English to Bengali at different times during the class lectures to make the students understand their lectures properly. They mentioned how their students struggle to comprehend the lectures properly when delivered in English without any aid from Bengali. The frequency of this switching depends on the complexity of the course contents and stays between 10-40% of the total class lecture. They also switch from Bengali to English when the context demands as most of them think that contextual topics are better understood in one's L1 and real-life examples explained in Bengali enhance the students' comprehension of any topic.

5.3.2. Do you ever feel uncomfortable in discussing critical concepts only in English during lectures? To what extent and why?

All the participants answered affirmatively that they feel uncomfortable when they cannot ensure the proper understanding of the students while discussing critical concepts only in English. Participant B mentioned that while discussing the theoretically deep issues related to practical life, he feels the urge to switch to Bengali for the better understanding of the students and to alleviate his discomfort at their incomprehension. Participant C feels that there is no point in discussing something in English if it is not properly understood and comprehended by the students. Participant D, in an addition, mentioned that the students better understand new subject matters, critical terminologies, theories and jargons in their L1. Participant F revealed that the discomfort of the teachers in an EMI classroom comes from the students' inability to understand topics which are relatively critical and grounded on theories. Thus, they switch to students' L1 to lessen the students' confusion.

5.3.3. According to you, what are the biggest challenges of implementing EMI in the classroom?

According to the participants, the greatest challenge in implementing EMI comes from the proficiency level of the students. BUP accommodates students from different parts of the country having varied levels of proficiency in English. Although the admission test here is designed in a unique manner (including a viva voce) to ensure the enrollment of students with better proficiency in English, it is not infallible. Often, students coming from Bengali medium background struggle with English listening and speaking skills. As a result, in an 'only English' environment, they feel alienated and silenced which, consequently, creates class distinction in the classroom. Students with better proficiency in English hold the superior position while the students with relatively low proficiency feel 'othered'. All these issues create a practical challenge for the teachers. Participant C found that some of her students feel shy to express themselves in English and have the fear of being judged by others with better proficiency. According to participant D, the main challenge in implementing EMI is posed by the thought process of its stakeholders. As most them are Bengali native speakers and their schooling was in Bengali, trying to think only in English hinders the flow of their thought. Participant F mentioned that not all the teachers come from English medium background or with an excellent proficiency in English. They may have excellent command over their subject area, but lack in English speaking skills because of less exposure to it. On the other hand, except for the Department of English, all other departments have a scarcity of contextualized English study materials. Usually, the most recent study materials related to Bangladesh are not readily available in English and it is challenging to always translate them in English in the classroom for the purpose of teaching.

5.3.4. At which skills do you think your students are the weakest? (listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar, vocabulary or other)

Participant A finds her students having different weaknesses in different skills of English language. Students coming from English medium background typically have a good command over English-speaking skill but medium proficiency in writing. Grammatical accuracy in Bengali medium students is found to be better than English medium students. English medium students write instinctively rather than knowing the grammatical rules. Bengali medium students, in contrast to English medium students, have inadequacies in speaking and listening skills because of having less exposure to these skills in their classroom prior to the tertiary level. Participant B finds his students the weakest in listening skill. Participant C finds her students to be mostly weak in speaking, grammar and vocabulary. Essentially, the problems she mentioned are faced by the students coming from Bengali medium background. Participant E mentions that his students are mostly weak in listening and grammar. Inadequacies in speaking and listening skills, as mentioned before, are caused due to their lack of exposure to and practice of these skills during the secondary and higher secondary level. Weakness in vocabulary is noticed in students of both backgrounds. The teachers believe that the students' grammatical knowledge has not developed to a satisfactory level because of the prevailing 'testing' system of secondary and higher secondary education in Bangladesh. They test students' comprehension of a very limited grammatical items while the other contents are ignored. All the participants stated that each student's problem is unique in nature.

5.3.5. Do you think the current syllabus of the GED Functional English course in BUP meets the students' need in improving all of their English skills?

Participant A feels that students should be categorized in different clusters and supplementary courses should be arranged based on the special needs of the students rather than offering a common course like GED Functional English. Participant B thinks that the syllabus of Functional English course should have some flexibility so that the teachers, at the beginning of the course, can do some Needs Analysis based on diagnostic tests and design the contents of the course according to the needs of the students. So, the contents of this course should always have a room for improvisation. Participant C asked for the improvisation of this course based on the specific needs of the discipline of study. Participant E thinks that the four skills of English language along with grammar and vocabulary should be more pragmatically integrated in the course contents through the effective redesigning of the existing syllabus. He suggests conducting a Needs Analysis for each specific department.

5.3.6. Do you suggest developing specialized courses focusing on these skills?

All the participants think that some specialized courses focusing on different segregated skills can be introduced for ensuring the proper development of English skills in the students. They suggest a collaborative approach among different departments and Centre for Modern Languages (CML) of BUP in this regard. They think that the different departments, with the help of experts, can devise the contents for these specialized courses and CML can provide necessary teaching support. Teachers can do the primary task of identifying the students who need these specialized remedial courses and send them to CML. Participant E, in an addition, suggested that these specialized courses can be arranged in a holistic manner for all the students of all departments of BUP under a common platform.

## 6. Results and Findings

### 6.1. Current state of implementing EMI at BUP

The EMI context at BUP is compromised frequently by the use of students' L1. Students favour Bengali in the classroom for removing their anxiety in understanding English lectures,

difficult concepts and materials, contextualized topics etc. They feel highly comfortable in expressing themselves in Bangla rather than English, especially while speaking (the skill students are mostly weak at), as stated by a good number of students and affirmed by the teachers. Although the students' L1 is strictly prohibited in EMI, it cannot be completely excluded in most cases because of the students' low proficiency in English. All the teacher participants in the interview session asserted that they switch from English to Bengali while delivering their class lectures and the frequency depends on the complexity of the course contents. They think that contextual topics are better understood in students' L1. The teachers mentioned of using Bengali on an average of 25-30% of the total time and gradually decreasing it as the students are promoted to higher levels of undergraduate study.

### 6.2. Barriers confronting the students in the EMI context of BUP

For ensuring proper learning of all the students at the same time in EMI, students' English language proficiency level needs to be quite high and similar. However, public universities enroll students from different economic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds, who have good command over the concepts but varying levels of proficiency in English. Most of them are from Bengali medium background (87%) and having had less exposure to English before, face barriers in an EMI classroom if lectures are delivered only in English. Lectures delivered by mixing English and Bengali together (code-switching, translanguaging etc.) especially, difficult concepts and materials, as well as, contextualized topics are relatively easier for them to understand. These same topics become difficult when they are explained only in English.

According to the teachers, primarily the students who had studied in Bengali medium instruction before, struggle in English listening and speaking skills. As a result, in an 'only English' environment they feel alienated and silenced which, consequently, creates class division in the classroom.

### 6.3. Challenges faced by the teachers in implementing EMI at BUP

The teacher participants of this study stated that their students' varied levels of proficiency in English appears as a great challenge for them when they wish to ensure the equal learning of all the students in an EMI context. Often, talented students from Bengali medium background, coming from remote areas of Bangladesh and having excellent prospect in their subject area, have poor listening and speaking skills in English. Therefore, they cannot understand the lectures properly when delivered only in English but show better comprehension of new/difficult concepts and materials when supplemented with Bengali. They feel frustrated when they cannot comprehend the English lectures properly and fall victim to the invisible grouping system of their class.

Many feel shy to express themselves in English and have the fear of being judged by others with better proficiency. It becomes hard for the teachers to break the prevailing fearful notion among students, that English is a hard nut to crack. The teachers thus find Bengali more effective for discussing contextualized topics.

Discussing critical concepts, theoretically deep issues, critical terminologies and jargons in English without any aid from students' L1, leaves the students struggling to comprehend and teachers grappling to explain the content. Scarcity of contextualized (contents related to Bangladesh) course materials in English also poses challenge to the teachers. Another big challenge faced by both the teachers and the students lies in their thought process. Trying to think only in English hinders the flow of their thought and consequently they fall behind. In such cases, students ask for explanation in their L1 for the proper understanding of any concept and the teachers are compelled to compromise with EMI policy.

### 6.4. Lessening the obstacles for the better implementation of EMI

Despite facing barriers in EMI classrooms, more than half of the student participants think that their teachers should not minimize the use of English in the class. Rather, they take it as a challenge and think that facing difficulties and overcoming those difficulties while communicating in English ultimately helps them to develop their English skills. The teachers also assert that their students gradually develop as they are promoted to higher levels of their undergraduate study.

BUP offers a general education course titled Functional English, which is basically a remedial course for the students who have varied level of language needs to be addressed. However, both the teachers and the students find this course inadequate in helping the students overcome their weaknesses in English. They demand for more focused courses on different skills introduced by CML of BUP. The data collected from both the teachers and the students reveal that different students have different language needs. Therefore, the teacher participants proposed categorizing students in different clusters and offering supplementary courses to them based on their specific needs rather than offering a common course like GED Functional English. Some of the teachers suggested the revision of the current syllabus of Functional English course by offering some flexibility to the teachers. However, due to constraints in time and logistics, teachers are unable to assimilate all the skills of English equally in the Functional English course. They drew the example of different private universities of Bangladesh which have remedial courses, or zero credit courses catered to the students' specific needs in specific skills. The teacher participants suggested that CML of BUP can introduce similar specialized remedial courses and teachers can do the primary task of diagnosing and categorizing the students according to their needs before recommending them to CML. Different departments, with the help of experts, can devise the contents of these specialized courses based on their needs and CML can provide necessary teaching support. These specialized courses could assist the proper implementation of EMI in BUP. Most students think that code-switching and code-mixing between English and Bengali in class do not make their English skills weaker as they can better understand the topics while aided by Bengali and can later develop their English through it. On the other hand, teachers also think that supplementing the English lectures with students' L1 ensures better comprehension and equality in the classroom. So, allowing students' L1 to a certain extent can help the students gain confidence and ensure their participation in the class activities which consequently can help them gain better competency in English.

## 7. Conclusion and Recommendations

The implementation of EMI at BUP is compromised by the students' weakness in understanding critical concepts, contextualized topics and issues grounded on critical theories etc. in English. This happens due to their minimal exposure to English before reaching tertiary level. To some of them, education becomes more restricted through English. The students, mostly coming from Bengali medium background, get frustrated being unable to properly express their views in English. These students feel alienated in class for their inability to understand English lectures and express themselves in English. EMI brings difficulty not only to the students, but also the teachers. While the students face linguistic difficulties, the teachers are forced to put additional effort for preparing lectures in EMI, which, in turn, demand more energy in their lecture delivery. Moreover, they are forced to compromise the EMI policy by mixing English and Bengali as students need the English lectures to be supplemented by Bengali.

To mitigate these challenges faced by the students and the teachers and ensure the success of EMI, this study offers the following recommendations:

a) EMI policy should not be rigid regarding the use of 'only English' in the classroom, rather the students' native language can be incorporated to a certain extent. It should consider the local contexts for L1 incorporation as the use of only English makes the classroom atmosphere unnatural.
b) Strategic and controlled use of code-switching and translanguaging in the classroom can prove helpful in localizing English language policy and make EMI more successful in the context of Bangladesh. For this, proper study on code-switching and translanguaging should be done by the teachers and the researchers. Trainings on these linguistic phenomena can be arranged to help the teachers in this regard.
c) Ensuring the development of all students' equal proficiency in all the language skills can enhance the immediate success of EMI. For this, the syllabus of GED Functional English course offered at every department of BUP can be revised and redesigned through specific Needs Analysis conducted on the students of each discipline separately. Incorporation of contents that develop all the four skills of English language along with grammar and vocabulary should be ensured in the syllabus and their proper implementation in the classroom is also sought.
d) As it appears almost impossible to meet the specific linguistic needs of each student separately through a single course, specialized courses designed to develop specific language skills can be offered by CML of BUP. Different departments, with the help of experts, can help CML by placing their requirements of these courses. They can also help CML in preparing the syllabus of these courses based on their discipline-specific needs. Teachers may play an important role in diagnosing the skills in which a specific student is weak and recommend him/her to take a specialized course at CML, BUP. These courses may work as basic remedial courses holding no credit in the overall undergraduate result of the specific student.
e) To meet the individual linguistic needs of weaker students to some extent, BUP may start programs in which comparatively high achieving students can assist low achievers in developing specific areas of the language. The Department of English has already started a similar pilot project titled "Student Teaching Student (STS)" which may serve the purpose partially. Moreover, BUP may arrange specific facilities called the "Writing Zone/Centre" which can further alleviate individual student's problems in language proficiency.

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