

Learning English as a Second Language: Bangladeshi English-major Learners within intra-cultural Power Relationship

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Abstract

Deficiencies in English-major learners' academic participation lead to question whether intra-cultural power relationship is responsible for learning English as a second language. Here different kinds of influences within an English L2 society like Bangladesh have been investigated which was previously analysed by researchers from inter-cultural perspective. This paper aims at explaining the possible connection of power relations and influence of society by analysing the position of English language among Bangladeshi English-major learners as a program of higher education and its interrelation with the idea of knowledge. This process will show how an individual is bound to think about English language positively in the process of their growing up within intra-cultural power relationship. As learners are interviewed individually to express and share their views and experiences, classroom practitioners for tertiary level learners will get an internal reinforcement of learners in learning English as second language, and, as a part of reflective practice, they will be able to create situations for increasing learners' academic participation.

Keywords

Intra-cultural power relationship, inter-cultural perspective, social structure, internal reinforcement, reflective practice.

Introduction

It is important to explore the subtle views of individuals in learning English in an L2 community since these views are not only constructed by the intra-cultural structure of a country but also scaffold to construct it. This paper investigates how 'top-down structural view of domination' (Philipson 1992; cited in Basu, 2013) is practiced within an L2 culture and how it underpins English learning creating an emerging desire of holding power in society. Intra-cultural power relationship refers to the relations among different components of a society, and it practices several forms of dominance, which in one way or other, influence learners to learn English in Bangladesh. To uphold their position within the social web, learners need to learn English, no matter what they think personally. Philipson supports that English is an instrument for social upward mobility and power (cited in Basu, 2013). A question may arise from the title, and that is whether English is the second language of Bangladesh. Sarwar (2013) answers it mentioning English as 'an unofficial second language in Bangladesh'. The position of English language can be described from three different

perspectives: English as a program of higher study, English in comparison with the level of knowledge, and the position of English language in social structure. The way we treat English in our society makes us believe that English language can take someone to the higher level of society, and also can help to keep him/her above the 'other' people. When intra-cultural power relationship is the air of a society, it helps uphold English language in society.

Statement of Problem

Students of English department need to prove their level of English proficiency through several rigorous testing systems (i.e. high stake placement tests, achievement tests etc.) of education boards and University Grants Commission (UGC). However, all students do not attain expected results in this department. In addition, from my own experience of observing several peers and other students of DU, many of them are less interested in the course materials provided by the department. So, the problem addressed in this study is what made them choose this program for their higher study and why they continue in the program even after being less interested in the content.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to explore, from learners' perspective, the factors in society that influence them to select this department, and attract them in future to continue with this program. Here the focus is on English as a language in English department, not English as a subject. As most of the students do not feel comfortable sharing their stories with teachers, or in other words it is not possible for teachers to know learners' personal stories and set learning objective according to their needs, the objective of this paper, the researcher being one of the students, is to make teachers more aware of students' social background and future goal, and, as a result, they will be able to motivate learners by connecting the content of study and their expectation from it. Thus, English major students' interest in classroom content can be enhanced, in one hand. On the other, teachers can help them reflect critically on the stereotypical social norms. Sarwar (2013, p.157) supports this idea stating, "as it is clear from the socio-political context in which students study English, it is important to motivate them by making them explicitly aware of the history of manipulation and control to which it has been historically linked". So, this research aims at the attention of both teachers and future researchers of this area. The purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of intra-cultural power on learning English for English major DU students. Three research questions this study addresses are:

1. What are the social influences behind selecting English as a subject of higher study?
2. How does society influence to learn English relating it with gaining power?
3. How is proficiency of English language compared with knowledge or intelligence in society?

Literature Review

The central phenomenon of this research is 'intra-cultural power relationship'. To understand the term, it is important to know how power works within a society. According to Philipson (1992), "Linguistic imperialism refers to a particular theory for analyzing relations between dominant and dominated cultures, and specifically the way English language learning has been promoted" (P. 15). The first thing needed to be considered here is the individual members of society. Foucault (1978) explains that to understand his concept of power, one

must look into how it acts upon the 'sphere', or the immediate social circle around the individual. He also explains that power comes from different sources and relates to each other in many ways. It does not simply work in a hierarchal way, from top to bottom; rather there are relationships between all the forces acting upon an individual. Like a net, Foucault's concept of power works through different channels, which are connected to each other.

When social influence is all around a learner, be it explicit or implicit, and achievement is gauged on the basis of the criterion of social position, it becomes difficult for a learner in Bangladesh to resist learning English as second language. Chowdhury explains the powerful internal mechanism by saying, 'The principle of power operate not so much in an individual as in a certain network of bodies and agencies forming an arrangement whose internal mechanism produce the relation in which individuals are inevitably caught up' (Chowdhury, 2008, p.13). Here the research focuses on three different perspectives: position of English as a subject, position of English within the social structure, and interrelation of English language with knowledge.

English as a Program

This paper investigates social contexts of the English-major participants from the University of Dhaka. Though learners mostly study several genres of English literature here, from my own experience I found that most of them do not learn English to study the literature. Rather they learn literature to get more exposure in English language. While reminiscing the ways of acquiring English language through different literary books in his childhood, Alam (2017) supports the phenomenon by saying,

Not surprisingly, such an education made me quite fluent in English and rather weak in my own mother tongue Bengali. But my middle-class parents must have felt that this was as it should be, since the best jobs would go to people who were most fluent in English, and since I would eventually pick up Bengali from the world I lived in, automatically. (p. 375)

While expressing his parents' probable concern of 'best job' and connection of it with English language, Dr. Alam could not circumvent the state of being in 'middle-class' family. Thus, social position in future profession makes people think English as one of the best and prestigious subject to study. In other word, social power is a component that influences learners to learn English through literature.

English in Social Power Structure

Chowdhury (2008) explained from international perspective that

English is commodified as a product in a market where demand for it is always on the rise, and on the other, consumers, acting as secondary agents, further legitimize and normalize this demand through an unconscious, spontaneous adoption of its discursive maxims. (p. 12)

The picture is same when we look inside an English L2 community like Bangladesh as people set themselves on the global scale. In an independent country like Bangladesh, English language is not influencing officially to bring a change in society. However, English has been operating as an instrument for lifting position in the social structure. Milton (2005, p.115) states that 'an imperial authority or any privileged social class looks toward peacefully establishing indirect control by invoking consent'. People of all aspects of life have a consensus that English can be their powerful sword when they are seeking social identity.

Interrelation of English Language and Knowledge

Not only does knowledge help the attainment of power but also power motivates the acquisition of knowledge. The knowledge of language is playing an integral role in attaining social and economic power. To be more specific, knowledge of English in its L2 community is helping to get economic solvency and fulfilling goals, in other word, to get 'power'. Chowdhury (2008:13) states, "it is through power that voices are silenced but it is also through power that voices manifest most effectively". In that sense, English language serves as a scaffold to acquire a powerful and confident voice through which people can convey their knowledge. As this research focuses on Bangladeshi context, an English L2 community, Sarwar (2013) explains the problem from similar point of view. She states,

Socio-cultural and socio-economic influences are certainly key issues influencing L2 motivation for students in Bangladesh. Unlike those students in the educational mainstream, students from affluent families attend private schools which leave English as a medium of education. It is this small segment of society who will dominate the job market in the future and this in turn will enable them to afford expensive private education for their children. Thus, a vicious circle is created privileging a particular class because of their knowledge of English...under these circumstances, students in the Department of English, the majority of whom have passed through the state education system, are acutely conscious of the need to master English in order to attain social and economic success. (p.155)

Thus the researchers represent the binary of English-knowing and non-English-knowing people. Philipson (1992: 55) also mentions the similar term considering as 'linguistic binary', and Calvet (1987) refers this as 'linguistic racism' which is synonymous to Philipson's 'linguistic imperialism' (cited in Philipson, 1992: 56). English-major learners are aware of learning English in its communicative form as they can use their identity as English-knowing individual to throw their voice and influence the society in any form of power. This study adds to knowledge how linguistic imperialism is practised in Bangladesh and how learners are forced to act within this social dominance.

Methodology

This study aims at intra-cultural power relationship to influence learners as a gradual social process. The methodology employed a qualitative research methodology to gain insight into the learners' personal views about their own position and role of English language within intra-cultural power relationship. For this reason, the analysis of the participants' opinions needs to be seen within this context.

Participants and Site

In order to gain a better understanding of English-major learners' perception in Bangladesh, this study employed an grounded theory based methodology, interviewing a representative group of English-major students in order to offer a picture of their perceptions on English language and it's relation to society. Department of English at University of Dhaka was the site of the research. In total, 12 people were interviewed One-on-One, 6 male and 6 female participants with an age range of 19 to 28. All participants were undergraduate students. These participants were chosen in order to represent a broad cross-section of people in terms of the following variables: social class, gender and religion.

Instruments

The researcher conducted semi-structured face-to-face interviews for five days being present in the site. Their insights on several other cultural issues that learners face in society were also recorded, a few of which the researcher could not previously assume to include in the structured questionnaire. The researcher had a list of possible questions for participants, which she used as a guide. These guides were flexible enough to accommodate situations where participants wanted to elaborate on a certain topic or illustrate with their personal experiences. They were encouraged to continue the interview in an informal setting like a regular conversation. In addition, participants were allowed to speak in both Bangla and English. An android cellular phone was used to record the interview with the participants' permission.

Data Collection

The researcher followed homogeneous sampling since all of the participants were selected as being English major learners at University of Dhaka. All the questions were kept open-ended so that the participants' views did not get restricted. While interviewing the learners, the researcher initiated each interview in Bangla with the intention that language barrier could not hamper the flow of information. As all learners were from Bangla medium background, most of them preferred to speak in Bangla. Their opinions were recorded with their permission. Besides, some notes were taken without interrupting the flow of conversations. They were appreciated with a chocolate at the end of each interview.

Data Analysis

This research followed "bottom-up" approach to data analysis. The recorded data were transcribed and translated. Then it was analyzed, as mentioned by Creswell (2015), through qualitative hand coding and computer based analysis using Microsoft Word Document 2007. The theme emerged from the interviews had been layered under three sections. The statements provided by the participants were kept unchanged, and participant numbers have been used instead of using their names to protect participants' anonymity. After completing the research, two of the participants were asked for authenticating the interpretation of the findings. This form of member-checking (Creswell, 2015) occurred once the data were interpreted.

This research has few limitations in terms of the number of participants and the site of interview. A further research can be done to get learners' views from more than one university which will include more variations of participants' social position and experiences.

Findings

The study has explored how English is a prestigious program in higher education, how it works in social structure and how knowledge or intelligence is measured through the competency of English.

Position of English in a Higher Education Program

Most of the academic programs are chosen purposefully. Either learners or their families determine which way is the best option for the future. Milton (2005:116) stated, "Gradually it [English department] acquired a semi-divine status- a way of spiritual salvation as well as a means of climbing the social ladder". While taking interviews, participants were asked about their subject choice priority and reason behind choosing English as a subject of their higher study. If the position of English is calculated among all other subjects, most of the participants put it among first three subjects of their compatibility. As this participant said,

I didn't like law, and couldn't have mathematical skills to study Economics. So, I had only choice to study English. (Participant 8)

To some extent, it was not always the participant's own choice to study in English. When social outlook influences their parents, their parents influence them in the most convincing way. One of the participants mentioned,

Though both of my parents are from DU, they told me "you know how people will react when they will hear you study English in DU? It's a prestigious subject. They will look at you twice before believing this truth"... My parents feel proud to say that I study in English. (Participant 4)

However, a few of them are not aware of the prestige of English language itself, for learning this language was a quiet natural process gradually among the educated members of their family. Still they have a belief that they are learning something through English language that will be helpful for their future. In their view,

Knowledge of English will help...it is not a language for me...as I want to work for United Nations (UN), if I be bold to say, I need to learn more languages other than English...but what we learn here in English that will help me to get a different outlook.(Participant 2)

Besides, the best students of the entire country apply for getting admission in University of Dhaka. Until 2014-2015 sessions, the minimum requirement for English department was 20 marks out of 30 in the admission test. Unfortunately, only two students could obtain the required mark for English department in 2014-2015 sessions' examination. Since then many students who are enrolling in this program are considered more prestigious than before. One participant shared the same view,

In 2014-2015 sessions, only two students got chance to study in English at DU. That is why I thought it prestigious to come and study in English here. (Participant 6)

It is very clear that English is a leading subject among learners and their parents in comparison to other subjects. If I sum up the interviews, the learners have a concept that they will not remain unemployed in this competitive world as they have a tag of English around their neck. Philipson believes that English as a language is dominating other languages creating 'anglocentricity and professionalism as the central ELT mechanism operating within a structure in which unequal power, and resource allocation is effected and legitimated' (Philipson, 1992: 54)

As society has high demand of English as a language, English department is considered powerful. The more society accepts the language as a prestigious component, the more individuals grab it to get hold of powerful positions. Foucault supports that power is employed in a 'net-like organization' and that individuals 'circulate between its threads' (Foucault, *The History*, 95,102; cited in anonymous, Foucault-Said comparison).

English Language and Influence of Society

Learners learn English language as society influences them in different forms. As they are influenced by others, they try to get such position to flip the situation and get hold of powerful positions. Milton (2005:117) asserts that

Everything is determined by society's power structure that inevitably stands upon its economic structure. In "The Rise of English," Terry Eagleton, a Marxist critic, charts the emergence of English as an academic discipline, illustrating its connection with politics and class relationships. In order to prove that the English department is more an offspring of the need felt by the ruling class than of an apparently voluntary enlightenment programme, Eagleton points out the key factors leading to the rise of English studies: the growth of capitalism, the rise of the middle and working classes, and the decline of religion. (Milton, 2005:117)

This section will reveal how external pressure influences an individual's psyche to accept English language learning positively in the process of their growing up within intra-cultural power relationship, since it is a social necessity, a way of eradicating personal crisis, survival tool in competitive world, stair to uphold position and weapon to behold power.

English Learning as a Social Necessity

When a learner is in the second language community like Bangladesh, society provides him/her with external pressure no matter how much interest the individual has to learn that language. This external power works as the pushback from the earliest period of their life and present is as a necessity. Most of the participants said that they started learning English language because it was a part of their academic curriculum. Besides, family members pushed them forward to learn English and be aware of its use. The first participant said:

I used to see in my childhood, when any guest came to visit us with their child who can speak well in English, my parents used to say, "You have to learn speaking in English like her". (Participant 1)

Two male participants were from lower economic background whose parents were not aware of their education. They shared their experiences saying,

I used to work in a small cigarette-selling shop, in hotels and as salesman. I have learned how people treat others. You will get value till you can work for them. Self identity is the most important thing on earth. (Participant 6)

He was influenced by the negative attitude of his employers. The people who tortured him, made him realize his powerless and helpless position in society. Later on, he said how he felt the power of English, particularly speaking skill, helped him to dominate his peers and friends who were academically senior to him. The other participant was initially encouraged to learn English by his father, but after their economic downfall, his father stood against education and he had to study hiding from his family. More surprisingly, his parents do not let him go home now as he is studying, though he has outshined other members of his area. He said,

When my father had his driving job, he was inspired by his car-owner and got me admitted into an English medium school. (Participant 10)

As he had initial exposure to English language, he used to practice English language by himself sitting alone in his poultry farm. As the elementary education was a pushback for him, he continued learning with his own will power. On the other hand, a female participant

from a financially affluent family tried to deny the particular role or need of English language in society. However, her explanation demonstrates how she is also influenced by social need to learn English. She stated,

It's common that people know more or less English now-a-days...it shouldn't be parallel to what you know in English. If you just know English, you shouldn't be called a respectable person, and in this age of internet, everything is in English; Facebook is in English, Google app and everything is in English. To be a part of global village, English comes quite naturally. So, no, it does not uphold your status. (Participant 2)

Her statement may be right in her context as she learnt English language in her family quiet naturally without being conscious of it. Ansre (1979) states that "linguistic imperialism has a subtle way of warping the minds, attitudes, and aspirations of even the most noble in a society" (cited in Philipson, 1992: 57). Though she was never conscious of emphasizing English as a language, her parents used a subtle way to make her learn English. In contrast, her view of English contradicts with other participants. As my fifth participant said,

I didn't want to study Bangla because everyone knows it. I wanted to be exceptional. (Participant 5)

Some parents, who are conscious of their children's education and future career, used to make them watch English cartoons and read English story books; two of them mentioned the name of Harry Potter. They tried to learn English for they felt the need to understand what their favourite characters were saying in English. It is quite clear how social pushback made them step towards learning English language, and how it makes them conscious of taking their own responsibility and feeling the urge of social need.

In learning context, learners start feeling the urge to learn English besides their academic study, even giving more emphasis on it. Few examples are given while illustrating pushback stage. In addition to those, learners get a feeling to survive in the competitive world. They feel like learning English to hold a prestigious position among peers and family members. The third participant shared his experience from early childhood memories,

When I was in class one, I could say a word that starts with the letter T. I said 'Top', but our headmaster didn't know the meaning. I told him the meaning and that day I felt very proud of myself. (Participant 3)

Though the learner was very young, he could feel the prestige of English language. Now he is in tertiary level, and still he remembers the incident. It seems English has some sort of power which provides a sense of accomplishment and distinction from 'others'. Another participant said,

When one can speak in English, others think, "WOW! The girl can speak nicely, she knows so many things." (Participant 1)

One of the participants mentions Charles Darwin's theory and shows how he is aware of the social circumstances. In another segment of his same interview he mentioned that he believes English language will help him to get a better position in society.

I have to compete with the world, and if I mention the theory of Charles Darwin-'survival of the fittest', I would mention my goal to adjust with the world according to our social circumstances. (Participant 11)

When participant 10 used to live in his village, among several others the participant could communicate with foreigners and at that time he realized his own worth to have an exceptional identity in the society.

Once two foreigners, along with a Bangladeshi researcher came to our village. They were looking for someone to talk with. Then I talked to them, and that inspired me more to learn English. (Participant 10)

After this stage, learners feel the urge to actualize their dream. When English language gets necessary motion while running on the runway of social context, it is ready to start flying. They, therefore, step towards the initial step of actualization with a former concept of social view and their internal urge to learn English language.

Learning English to Eradicate Personal Crisis

We can get the class division of society that pressures learners to learn English as L2. Lower pressure should be powerful enough to lift the position of the language. The lower pressure includes influences that come from the people around the learner, and who give the feeling of inferiority or a sense of identity crisis. Three examples below show how social crisis leads to personal crisis. The first example portrays how peer pressure created an identity crisis for the participant. She radically changed the situation over time by working hard and learning English. She said,

I am from rural background. When I go back to home, students who are weak in English come to me for suggestions. It gives me a feeling that I can help others as well. But when I was in school, I was not good at English. My peers with good grade in English used to avoid me. That day I promised to myself that one day they will come to me because of English. (Participant 7)

Even gender issue plays an inevitable role in a patriarchal society like Bangladesh. English as a powerful component of society provides confidence to those who are caught up in a social web of politics, gender discrimination, financially backward position, etc.

My father does not know English. He wants me to learn English and become someone influential in society. As I don't have any brother, there is no one to stand beside my father when he faces problem with village politics. He thinks if I can be an administrative cadre, no one will be able to disturb us. (Participant 8)

Even the educated and English-knowing people, i.e. teachers, influence learners to feel their inferior position in society only because of their deficiency in English.

Our English teacher in college used to scold Humanities students saying we were not good students as students from science group could obtain A+ in English. That pushed me to do my best and get a good grade in English. When in 2014-2015 only two students got chance in English at University of Dhaka, I felt like studying in English here and uphold my prestige. (Participant 9)

Though these contexts are different, learners felt inferior because of social pressure. Their positions in society were not congenial. They chose English to lift their position.

Learning English to Survive in Society

In this stage, learners work hard to overcome their crisis and become conscious of their own individual identity. They grow the mentality of surpassing others, and this pressure is created in one way or other in the society, and can be overcome with the opposite powerful force of

English language. As they believe that their knowledge of English can help them to achieve social attainment, they start relying on it and surpass others. Participants opined what they think about the role of English in their life. Communication plays a great role in achieving success, and English is the first priority as the participant said,

This is our reality. When you know English, you will be treated differently. It doesn't matter how it sounds, we don't have any other choice. Even if you have enough knowledge, you have to be able to communicate in English. (Participant 3)

When society gives priority to English and people treat someone according to this scale of calibration, it is obvious that learners will prioritize English even if it does not help them directly. One participant shared her future vision on this matter by saying,

There is no guarantee that I will be a BCS cadre if I know English, but it will keep me exceptional in comparison to others. If I can't show my English language skill, my status will fall. I need priority. (Participant 5)

Siblings and their position also create pressure in family. Proficiency in English can help to surpass others and attain priority among relatives. My fourth participant expressed her feeling in this way:

My aunt (maternal uncle's wife) has come from abroad. My other relatives called my mother and asked to bring me there so that I can speak to my aunt, and they get someone reliable for smoother communication with her. It gives me a better feeling. (Participant 4)

While social pressure is making a turbulent air around, learners are relying on the opposite powerful motion of English language in their society and getting the required lift.

Learning English to Uphold Position

When learner can cope with English learning journey, willingly or not, they proceed towards the social achievement with their knowledge (both competence and ability to perform) of English language. Holding a powerful position becomes their cruising altitude. It makes them more confident to face the reality outside academic life. Again, they feel that they will be able to change their position and hold power in society. The fifth participant shares her thought in the following way:

I always wanted to be a teacher as most of my family members are teachers. But, when I came to know about BCS (Bangladesh Civil Service), I can feel the power in doing such job. While I was tutoring, once I met an uncle who was a lieutenant colonel and his power of just one phone call attracted me more to go for an administrative and powerful job. (Participant 5)

Even one participant, who claimed herself as the most introvert girl and wanted to live peacefully being isolated from this society, said,

I am too much possessive. I can never think of my father's house as mine. I need to have my own identity. I feel better to stay at hall. At least I am staying here as I have achieved this qualification myself...I want to lead a peaceful life though I know my family and society will not allow me to do so. I need to appear at BCS exam and be an administrative cadre. (Participant 8)

In contrast to most of the participants, one of them dreams to lead a peaceful life in reality coming out of utopian fantasy. He wants to hold a position that may not give him power

directly, but it will help him to produce many powerful people in future. He wants to enlighten people so that evil power cannot influence the social harmony. Though he is not conscious how powerful the position is that he dreams to achieve, he thinks his knowledge of English will help him to obtain that position in society.

I want to be a teacher as I will be able to prepare more people to work for society. It will help me to dominate the evil practitioners and change the society through my students on whom I will be able to reflect my conscience and thinking power. Most of the students of our country lag behind for their deficiency in English. That's what inspires me to be an English teacher at University [tertiary] level. More importantly, I will get respect in society. (Participant 9)

These examples prove how learners progress with the aim of social achievement of power and to change their present situation in the social structure.

Learning English to Behold Power

All of the participants have a certain level of expectation regarding social achievement. They think in any way their knowledge of English language and ability to use the language will help them fulfill their dream. At that stage of life, they want to get stalled with financial solvency and dominant position in society. In this busy world, people need money and power to enjoy happy leisure time. When English language is leading them towards higher level job opportunity, it is attracting them to get stalled at a certain level as well. Likewise, fourth participant stated,

When you want high level salary, you need high level job, and high level job highly requires English. (Participant 4)

Following her opinion, another perception can be added here:

I want leisure time to enjoy. If I get powerful job along with money, only then it will be possible to get enough leisure time for me. (Participant 3)

Moreover, the concept of dominance is always their concern, be it conscious or subconscious. They are struggling to get freedom and get a peaceful life. As it is impossible to live outside this society, they need to get hold of the power. Even if they do not dominate other, they at least are reluctant to be dominated. As the participant who fought to breathe in the society said,

I want a peaceful life, being a teacher, as no one can dominate me. I don't want to be dominated any longer. (Participant 6)

Another perspective of dominance over 'others' occurs when the participant is subconsciously trying to dominate others in future by outperforming and getting every possible attention of the superior ranked official. She foresaw her future and said,

When I will go for any kind of job in future, whoever my boss will be, he/she will definitely notice my exceptional use of English language, and it will influence my position and social achievement (Participant 1)

It is known that men are born free but everywhere he is chained. Since it is impossible to break this chain, everyone tries to change the position in society by being the anchor and leaving others to follow. As everyone is conscious of it, the attainment of power is now an apple of discord.

English Language and Knowledge

Apart from the proficiency in English language, learners need to showcase their knowledge and other skills to keep pace with the highly competitive job market. Naturally, the next question comes for the researcher how proficiency of English language is compared with the level of knowledge in society. Though it was not a part of the predetermined questionnaire, this question was found relevant to ask after talking to one or more students. I asked them to give their opinion about the relation between English language and knowledge since power has relation with knowledge. Power directly influences the truth of 'ideas'. Foucault (1980) said, "It is not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge; it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power" (P. 52). According to the context of Bangladesh, most of the students answered in the same way. They agreed that even in a setting where everyone else knows Bangla, they observed priority of English language more than any other language. If someone cannot express himself/herself in English, he/she becomes isolated from the crowd. Capability of using English language determines the level of knowledge the person has. According to the participant, we need to speak out what we know, and English is one of the most eye-catching medium in this regard.

It is a concept of our society that the people who know English language are talented. If one can communicate properly in English, that message is more easily accepted. Speaking is more important. (Participant 7)

In many contexts, speaking (English) is often the skill upon which a person is judged 'at face value' (McDonough and Shaw, 2013). Another participant clarifies the statement saying,

People will assess your other skills gradually over time, but they will judge at first meeting whether you can communicate in English. (Participant 4)

One of the participants tried to distinguish between the positions of knowledge and English language. Though she affirmed with others, she said, "Knowledge is a matter of willingness, and English is a matter of prestige" (Participant-5). According to what the participants said, I find it clear to say that willingness in acquiring knowledge becomes easier when someone in this context knows English language. People prefer to express this knowledge in English as well. Even renowned intellectual people, most often, represent their status and level of knowledge through their use of English language. Dhaka Lit-fest is, for example, such an auspicious program where men of letters in different literary genres come together to share their experience and knowledge. One of my participants used to volunteer in that program. She said,

In our Lit-fest, we get elite class people as our guests. They speak to us always in English though we are habituated to see them speaking in Bangla on television screen. When they are off-screen, they speak in English, even with Bangladeshi

Discussion

According to the findings, it can be stated that social influential power relationship is everywhere in a society like Bangladesh. Power is everywhere not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere (Foucault, 1978, P. 93). This concept of power is ruling from the highest level of society to within the learners' mind itself. In family, learners are trying to get prestige more than other members; in academic context, they are conscious of surpassing their peers; in professional context, they dream of getting priority; and in broader context, they are trying to be powerful in society not being dominated by anyone else. They are utilizing the power of English language to lift their position in society.

From the beginning of their social experience, they are dominated, no doubt, in any way by other people who are more powerful in relation to them. Those dominances helped to start the engine of their conscious mind. As engines are working themselves, they are relying on the intra-cultural air around to lift the plane and belong to the respected layer of troposphere. When English is considered as a subject, learners are not allowed to choose any other subject of their interest circumventing the market value of English. Learners are 'inevitably caught up' in the social web as mentioned by Chowdhury (2008). It can be assumed that the tag of English department gives the guarantee to live happily in the society. It is more a subject of prestige and instrumental attainment than something to study with interest. In addition, though other programs are offered in English, department of English provides certificate of being more polished with accuracy and fluency of English.

Nevertheless, when learners are out of academic arena without the tag of English department, use of English is still making them different with an identity in terms of class, gender, economic position and any kind of discriminative binaries. From their childhood, learners come to know how important it is to know English. When they start utilizing this language, they understand how they are rushing towards their goal. At the end, they demand respect in society. Even when they want to live peacefully, they need to be powerful in their social circumstances. A future goal is 'peacefully establishing indirect control by invoking consent' (Milton, 2005) of general people and raising the position of English as a language. Lastly, English language is helping an individual to gain knowledge as well as to spread individual's gained knowledge. As English is a powerful component in our society, the first knowledge that is assessed is the proficiency in English. If someone is proficient in English, the door of all other kinds of knowledge is considered to be automatically opened for that person. The same person will impose this influence in the same way in future to continue the 'vicious circle' (Sarwar, 2013).

Therefore, if a person has a tag of English department, he/she is considered to be an English-knowing person. He/she is already treated as privileged in the social binary. The same person is again considered as knowledgeable. As a result, he/she will obtain a powerful position in society from where it is possible to influence the intra-cultural structure. This is what attracts learners to learn English language in our society. For the participants of this study, the journey in society starts through the influence of power, and it ends at dreaming to influence in future. Foucault (1978) depicted power "as the process which, through ceaseless struggle and confrontations, transforms, strengthens, or even reverses them" (P. 92). This quotation depicts power as something that is dynamic and ever changing. It pushes and pulls within itself.

Limitations and Scopes of the Study

This study has few limitations that need to be taken care of when further research will be conducted. The small number of participants from undergraduate level of one university might make it difficult, indeed, to generalize the results obtained in this investigation. Besides, teachers' and parents' views and suggestions are not recorded to get a holistic insight. Yet, it is still possible to conclude that the results are consistent with the widespread idea that the subjects of this study feel the pressure of intra-cultural power relationship on English language learning. Likewise, from the answers, it can be seen that the subjects, though aware of the role of English as a language, are mostly conscious of getting a good position in the society. In terms of instruments, no other perspective is taken into account other than interviewing the students.

Therefore, further research is needed on more than one university, and, if possible, with more elaborate instruments. Though member checking has been conducted, to avoid researcher's subjectivity, some questionnaire can be given to participants to elicit their direct opinion on this matter. Further research can also be done in this department by including master's students. Moreover, some teachers can be interviewed to get their point of view regarding this problem. In that way, a more reliable result can be found and a more real picture of the scenario will be brought into light.

Based on this research, another niche can be focused in further research. This research investigated intra-cultural power working before and after learning English language. As influence of power is a continuous process, while-learning influence can also be focused in later research.

Conclusion and Recommendation

According to Said (1978), people of the East are influenced in various ways by the West, and he referred to what Gramsci called 'cultural hegemony'. That influence is again found within the structure of post-colonial English L2 community. In this case, individuals play the role of being influenced. Power relations are convincing them gradually to decide which language is to be preferred. Though Bangladesh has a rich historical background for her own language, English has been widely used and practised in official, semi-official and educational institutions which mark the dominance over Bangla language. If an individual is not aware of this fact, he/she is, implicitly and/or explicitly, forced to take the position of English for granted. At the same time, he/she is to keep pace with the social circuit. English as a means of higher education enhances the opportunities for further growth and knowledge persuasion. Similarly, English as a language is being considered a skill. For English-major learners, the combination of both knowledge and skill is giving them another dimension in society, which is again like getting opportunity to step on the next stair of social structure, and becoming English-knowing people to practise power and continue the vicious cycle.

I would like to mention one quotation from Pennycook (1998) who said,

Unless we can work alongside each other to dislodge the discourse of colonialism from English and to generate counterdiscourses through English, colonialism will continue to respect itself...in many contexts around the world. (p. 218)

Therefore, we need to consider English as a medium of communication at international level. It should not get priority as much as to redeem the significance of our own language. Young learners can bring the torch of awareness to the society as part of their ethics to motherland. Since it is not their ethical duty just to assimilate and accommodate in the society, but to adapt and modify the emerging predominance.

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Appendix

Research Questionnaire

1. Social Background

- What do you do besides your study?
- How many earning members are there in your family?
- What do they do?
- How many members are there in your family?
- Can you tell me an approximate range of monthly expenditure of your family and your own?
- Do you have any financial contribution to your family?

2. Opinions about the English Language

- What do you think about English language learning? Is it necessary? Why or why not?
- To what extent is it beneficial?
- How English as a second language is helpful in your life?

3. English Learning Journey

- How was the English learning environment in your school and college?
- How did your teacher motivate or demotivate you in learning English?
- Who else influenced you learning English? Why?

4. Goal Setting

- What was your goal before starting higher study?
- Did it change over time?
- What is the reason behind changing the goal?
- What is your future goal now?
- To what extent can English as second language help you to achieve that goal?

5. Lifestyle and Perception

- What do you think of your present lifestyle? Are you satisfied or not?
- What is your expectation of future life? How do you want to change your lifestyle?
- What steps can help you to attain that type of lifestyle?
- Do you think you can do it? Why or why not?
- Do you think English a second language can help you to materialize your dream?

6. Do you think English as a second language is a powerful component in educated society?

7. Do you think English will help you to uphold your prestige and status in society? Why or why not?

8. Do you think people value your knowledge more when you speak in English rather than Bangla?