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Abstract

In recent years, the globalization of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) policy has grown exponentially, driven by socio-economic, political, cultural, and educational desires and forces. Despite having a well-established elite English-medium education in Bangladesh, EMI-based, a new type of education system has emerged recently at primary and secondary levels called English-version (EV) education. This paper investigates parents' desires to choose EV schools for their children and how those desires contribute to marketizing EV schools as a new and popular commodity in the education market of Bangladesh. Data were collected using open-ended questionnaires from 120 parents of primary school children studying at five EV schools. Moreover, further qualitative data was collected by conducting three follow-up focus group discussions (FGDs) with 14 parents and three key informant interviews (KIIs) with three EV school principals. Findings show that parents believe in the material value and promises of English as a linguistic capital that has implanted multiple desires in them for their children. They aspire for their children in EV to benefit from their improved English skills in the future at a reasonable cost while continuing to uphold Bangladeshi culture and values. In other words, the exponential market of EVs lies in its affordable cost and future benefits, in tandem with an informed distance from the culture associated with the English language.

Keywords

English version education, desire, commodity, linguistic capital, marketizing, qualitative research, case study, Bangladesh

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Desire and Marketizing English Version of Education as a Commodity in the Linguistic Market in Bangladesh

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In recent years, the globalization of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) policy has grown exponentially, driven by socio-economic, political, cultural, and educational desires and forces. Despite having a well-established elite English-medium education in Bangladesh, EMI-based, a new type of education system has emerged recently at primary and secondary levels called English-version (EV) education. This paper investigates parents' desires to choose EV schools for their children and how those desires contribute to marketizing EV schools as a new and popular commodity in the education market of Bangladesh. Data were collected using open-ended questionnaires from 120 parents of primary school children studying at five EV schools. Moreover, further qualitative data was collected by conducting three follow-up focus group discussions (FGDs) with 14 parents and three key informant interviews (KIIs) with three EV school principals. Findings show that parents believe in the material value and promises of English as a linguistic capital that has implanted multiple desires in them for their children. They aspire for their children in EV to benefit from their improved English skills in the future at a reasonable cost while continuing to uphold Bangladeshi culture and values. In other words, the exponential market of EVs lies in its affordable cost and future benefits, in tandem with an informed distance from the culture associated with the English language.

Keywords: English version education, desire, commodity, linguistic capital, marketizing, qualitative research, case study, Bangladesh

The material value of English and people's desire for material gain through enhancing English capabilities have potentially promoted various English language-based products or commodities globally (Azam et al., 2013; Erling & Seargeant, 2013; Hamid, 2016; Roshid, 2018). These English language-based products include English medium education, textbooks, courses, and programs, which are some examples of many (Hamid et al., 2013). In non-English-speaking countries, mother-tongue-based education (MTE) and English medium education (EME) are common phenomena at different levels of education. Despite having MTE and EME in Bangladesh, a new type of education system called English-version education (EVE) has emerged recently at primary and secondary levels of education in Bangladesh.

The EME and EVE both use English as a medium of instruction, but they are distinctly different from each other for specific reasons. Firstly, EME follows the British, American, Australian, or Canadian curricula, whereas EVE follows the curricula made by the subject specialists in the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) - the government body that develops the national curricula, syllabuses, textbooks, teachers' guides, and publishes and distributes textbooks for the primary to the secondary level of education in Bangladesh. The textbooks followed in EME are usually developed by native speakers of English located in the

UK, USA, Australia, or Canada, whereas EVE follows the national curriculum and translated national textbooks by local subject specialists, and the central assessment system is managed by the NCTB. This type of new education system (following a national curriculum and English-translated textbooks taught in English to non-native English speakers) is relatively unique and has not been observed in any other countries so far.

EVE has significant implications as a commodity in the linguistic market of Bangladesh. One of the implications is that increasingly more parents tend to send their children to these English-as-a-medium-of-instruction (EMI)-based new schools, which help mushroom these schools and students in urban areas of Bangladesh (Alamgir, 2016;). The increasing popularity of the newly established EV schools amongst parents has also raised questions about its instrumental values, viability, and reliability, as well as about a connection between parents' desire for EVE for their children and the marketization of EV schools in urban areas in the country (Alamgir, 2016; Taz, 2021). However, little empirical research has been conducted into the justification behind the introduction of EMI-based new education. A search on Google Scholar could not identify any reliable research, publications, or critical reflections on the justification or efficacy of EVE in Bangladesh. In addition, the possible role of parents' desires for EVE for their children as well as in the expansion and marketization of EVE has not been done.

Based on qualitative findings, this paper presents a discursive construction of parents' desires and how their desires contribute to the marketizing of EV schools as a new and popular commodity in education/linguistic market of Bangladesh. Hence, in this paper, we have addressed the following two research questions:

- a) What are parents' desires (e.g., linguistic, cultural, educational) for EMI-based EVE at the primary level of education in Bangladesh?
- b) How do parents' desires play a role in marketizing EVE as a commodity in Bangladesh?

While there exists an increasing number of scholarly works on desire, EMI (Dearden, 2014; Hamid, 2016; Phan & Barnawi, 2015), and language commodification (Heller, 2010; Heller et al., 2014; Petrovic & Yazan, 2021), a combination of all the above concepts is relatively understudied in the global south, particularly in the South Asian context. For example, researchers working on English language education in Bangladesh have researched policies and practices at the tertiary level of education. They have yet to investigate the potential of the concept of desire, EMI, and language commodification in the linguistic market to generate insights into the polity's policy and practice of English medium education. The findings are expected to add to the existing research by teasing out socio-psychological and cultural factors that instrumentalize the desire at the grassroots level and accelerate the commodification of English in the linguistic market.

To address the above research questions, in this paper, we have developed a conceptual understanding in light of the existing literature where desire, commodity, linguistic capital, and linguistic market appear to be promising as epistemological grounds.

Literature Review

Desire and EMI

In classical versions of the theory, desire is considered a psychological term and, by definition, bound up with sexuality (Cameron & Kulick, 2003). When conceptualizing desire, Phan (2018) observed that desires are manifested as aspirations and promises of dreams and fantasies about and associations with a specific future and quality of life. Desires are socially

(co)constructed, institutionally shaped, relational, collective, personal, self-initiated, self-determined, market- and politics-influenced, culture-specific, value-informed, and identification-bound. In other words, desire is discursively context-specific (Piller & Takahashi, 2006).

EMI and desire are becoming increasingly common for scholars in the humanities, social sciences, and applied linguistics. Over the decades, EMI has become a rapidly growing global phenomenon at various levels of education in many non-anglophone countries (Dearden, 2014; Eugenia, 2012). It is driven by the desire to improve student's English language learning skills, ensure their access to cutting-edge knowledge, improve their knowledge of a target culture, provide them opportunities to work and study abroad, and spread the culture of the country throughout the world. EMI has been promoted for political reasons, such as nation-building, aligning a country with English-speaking neighbors, and increasing income (Dearden, 2014; Galloway et al., 2017; Macaro et al., 2018). Hence, the introduction and expansion of EMI have been legitimized and dramatically driven by socio-economic, political, cultural, and educational desires and forces (Coleman, 2006; Hamid et al., 2013; Shohamy, 2013). However, other scholars treated EMI as a cause of cultural politics (Pennycook & Candlin, 2017), linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 2012), and a means of educational inequality and inequity (Borooah & Sabharwal, 2021; Jayadeva, 2019; Murray, 2020; Roshid et al., 2022; Sah & Li, 2018; Sultana, 2014, 2018; forthcoming).

Despite criticisms, EMI in schools is growing in more countries than ever before at an "accelerated rate" (Shohamy, 2013, p. 208) and in an "increasingly aggressive manner" (Hamid et al., 2013, p. 2) for social and economic necessities. Considering the rapid spread of EMI in the English education industry (Shin, 2016), scholars treated EMI as a valuable commercial commodity (Birchley, 2017; Phyak & Sharma, 2020) that has exchange value in the linguistic market (Bourdieu, 1991). In this study, we explore how parents perceive EMI-based EVE as a desired commodity because of its use and exchange value.

The Discursive Construction of the English Language as a Commodity

Over the last two decades, global political-economic development and capitalism have increased the importance of language in the globalized new economy and several terms and phrases have been introduced to draw attention to the economic value of languages, such as *the commodification of language* (Heller, 2010; Rahman, 2009; Petrovic, 2019), *language as a commodity* (Fitzgerald, & Paulston, 2011; Rubdy & Tan, 2008), *language itself a commodity* (Park & Wee 2012), *language being or having become a commodity*, and *the language commodity* (Simpson & O' Regan, 2018). These terms and phrases have unanimously identified the economic exchange values of languages. Though some scholars have considered these terms different from each other, others have used these terms interchangeably (Simpson & O' Regan, 2018). Before discussing language as a commodity, it is necessary to understand the concept of a commodity.

From the classical political economy perspective, Karl Marx (1970 [1859]) identified that "Every commodity ... has a twofold aspect — use-value and exchange-value" (p. 27). The *use-value* is the utility or usefulness of a thing or commodity in satisfying needs and wants as afforded by its material properties (Southerton, 2011), while the *exchange-value* of a thing is defined as "the proportion in which [the] use-values of one kind exchange" for the *use-values* of another kind (Marx 1990 [1867], p. 126). The exchange-value of a commodity, in other words, is the exchange equivalent by which it is compared to other items on the market (Marx 1990 [1867]). Both are derived from the expenditure of labor-power: use-value comes from the qualitative side of work, such as the transformation of useless substances into valuable items, and exchange-value comes from the merely quantitative aspect of labor (Southerton,

2011). According to Marx (1990 [1867]), the market is about more than just the use-value and exchange-value. He claims that all commodities have a typical quality that allows them to be compared in price and exchanged with another commodity, from labor time to money. However, due to various circumstances, the price may differ from the exchange-value, such as conditions of availability and scarcity (Ripstein, 1987).

The political economy approaches language as a commodity - a produced item to be sold or exchanged in the market rather than a produced by labor (e.g., production of value through labor). Much of the work on the commodification of language uses this notion (Simpson & O' Regan, 2018). Park and Wee (2012), for example, stated, "A commodity is a thing that is produced to be sold in the market, of being offered for exchange" (p. 125). Considering this definition of a commodity, Simpson and O' Regan (2018) argued that this concept appeared to be consistent with the Marxist and classical political economy positions.

Simpson and O'Regan (2018) argued that language and languages should be considered commodities in their own right (see also Duchêne & Heller, 2012; Rubdy & Tan, 2008). Language commodification results from political-economic conditions in recent decades (Heller, 2010). It is a product of the present era of capitalism and is specific to the "new economy" in which language has become a commodity itself (Simpson & O'Regan, 2018). The uses of language in tourism, marketing, advertisement, language teaching, translation (Heller, 2010), development (Beauregard, 2018), and language testing (Kim et al., 2018) are some examples of the commodification of language tied to capitalism. In this paper, we have presented the discursive construction of EV education as a commodity in the way parents and school principals and tried to understand whether parents and school management played a role in promoting this commodity in the linguistic market as linguistic capital.

The Linguistic Market and Linguistic Capital

In more recent linguistic anthropological studies, the language commodity appears to have a dual existence, functioning as both a metaphor and a marketable commodity (Holborow, 2015). The terms *commodity* and *market* are explicitly mentioned as metaphors for Bourdieu's (1991) notion of markets in which one might trade various forms of symbolic capital (i.e., accumulated prestige or honor, and so on). Referring to Bourdieu's (1986) concept of "field" or space occupied by various social actors with varying amounts of capital, Hamid (2016) interpreted the linguistic market as a field of linguistic exchange in which people trade their linguistic varieties and abilities, which serve as linguistic capital and generate linguistic profit. The above interpretation of the market suggests that Bourdieu (1991) perceived language as a linguistic capital in its linguistic market because language skill has exchange value and is convertible into money: through the exchange of language, people can earn money. The effectiveness of linguistic capital is dependent on extra-linguistic resources that assign individuals to various social spaces. These factors are intangible but durable as they determine who tells in what situations.

Linking with Bourdieu's theory of the linguistic market, Park and Wee (2012) argued that "English has become deeply commodified. This much is undeniable" (p. 186). It is like a commodity that can be exchanged for some other form of material or symbolic goods (Park & Wee, 2012). They contended that "language varieties, linguistic utterances, accents, and their embodiments are all like commodities on a market – the linguistic market" (p. 27). Keeping alignment with Bourdieu, Silver (2005) viewed English as capital from its gatekeeping role that "allows, or prevents, continued education and, thus, future job opportunities (for the individual) and fulfilment of labour market needs (for the society)" (p. 59). Likewise, it was demonstrated how English is used as a linguistic capital in the Australian labor market (Roshid & Chowdhury, 2013), and the Ready-made garments business in Bangladesh (Roshid, 2018).

Grounded on the above discussions where language has been manifested as a commodity in the linguistic market that underscores three entangled features (use value, exchange value, and symbolic/metaphoric value), it may be stated that linguistic commodity sustains in the linguistic market because of the neoliberal vision of the world being nurtured by the education system. Students are subjects who need to be trained in English for economic benefits. The economic rationality of promoting English as a commodity, fixing the value of students and their skills based on linguistic skills in English, and considering English language education as a business and enterprise indicates the presence of a free knowledge-based economy promoted by neoliberalism.

The Context of the Study

The global development of EMI education has influenced the educational system in postcolonial Bangladesh - a South Asian country where most of the people speak Bangla, the national and official language of Bangladesh and the mother tongue of the majority of Bangladeshis. Teaching English started in Bangladesh during the British colonial era. Then it continued in the Pakistan period and after the independence of Bangladesh. English is taught in Bangladesh as a compulsory subject from primary to higher education levels but not as a medium of instruction, notably in primary schools (Sultana & Roshid, 2021).

Over the last three decades, Bangladesh has made notable progress in expanding access to primary education. According to the Annual Primary School Census (APSC) 2019 (Directorate of Primary Education, 2019), a total of 16.3 million students study in 25 types of schools in Bangladesh, including Government Primary Schools (GPS), Newly Nationalized Primary Schools (NNPS), Registered Non-government Primary Schools (RNGPS), Non-Registered Non-government Primary School (NRNGPS), PTI Experimental, Community, Shishu Kollyan and Anandya School managed by the Reaching out of School Children (ROSC), kindergartens, BRAC schools, Ebtedayee Madrashes, community schools, and so on. The schools are considered the mainstream Bangla medium (BM) schools because Bangla is used as a medium of instruction. In addition, a good number of students study in English medium schools, historically considered elite schools, because usually, affluent parents send their children to these schools. It has a long and elite history in the Indian subcontinent, including Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan. The EM schools follow the British curriculum and assessment system. English textbooks are written mainly by native speakers. EM usually follows the curriculum of the Edexcel or Cambridge International Examination. In addition, there is madrasa education (the stream of Islamic education) where bilingualism (Arabic and Bangla) is used as a medium of education (Sultana & Roshid, 2021).

Despite having various types of schools, including BM and EM schools, in recent years, EV schools have emerged in Bangladesh as a new stream of education in government and nongovernment primary schools. The increased demand has encouraged education entrepreneurs to invest in it and introduce more EV schools in Bangladesh. Accordingly, it is seen that these days, the number of EV schools is growing in urban areas across the country. Their propagation is so quick that it is challenging to count their total number. Considering its demand and popularity in Bangladeshi society, the Government of Bangladesh recently expressed its desire in the media to introduce more EV schools throughout the region to develop the student's English language proficiency (Staff Correspondent, 2021; Tribune Desk, 2021). The concern is this kind of linguistic ideology of the Government expects to further promote EMI practices and EV schools. Simultaneously, it may work as a threat to long-established BM schools in the country as well as EM elite schools. However, no in-depth research has been conducted hitherto to explore the reasons for the popularity of this new education paradigm; that is, EV in Bangladesh. What factors motivate the parents and entrepreneurs to send their

children to these schools and introduce more EV schools, respectively, despite having several other types of schools? This qualitative research can be considered the first empirical research in this untouched area of knowledge.

Methodology

This study is part of a larger project exploring the expectations, challenges, and prospects of the English version in Bangladesh and was conducted following mixed-methods research with qualitative and quantitative approaches (Creswell & Plano Clarke, 2018; Johnson & Christensen, 2008). However, this article has been developed based on qualitative data collected from parents with questionnaires followed by FGD and KII with principals to understand the perceptions of parents and principals - the two key stakeholders of English versions schools - about the above social phenomenon (Yin, 2008). It followed a case study research design, which was used to gain an extensive and in-depth understanding of a social phenomenon in context (Yin, 2008). A case study research design usually involves the study of a case within a real-life, contemporary context or setting (Yin, 2008), within a contemporary-bounded system (a case), or multiple bounded systems (cases) (Stake, 2005), involving multiple sources of information (Creswell, 2013). This qualitative case study used multiple cases (e.g., schools) as a bounded system.

The Location of the Study

This study was conducted in five EV primary schools (pseudonymized as UD, UL, SP, HS, and CT), of which three are located in the capital city, and the remaining two schools are located in two suburbs. These schools were selected considering the length of experience in running the English version and the location of the schools. The schools named UL (Pseudonym) and UD (Pseudonym) are pretty old in running their Bangla medium education, and both are located in the heart of the capital city. UL was established in 1964 as a Bangla medium school, and it started its English version in 2011. Now its English version continues until class IX. UD (Pseudonym) commenced its journey as an English medium school in 1955, and after several ups and downs, the school was recognized as a Bangla medium school. It opened its English version in 2013. The school SP (Pseudonym), however, is situated in the capital city, and it started its English version in 2003, along with its Bangla and English medium education. HS (Pseudonym) is located near the capital city, and it commenced its journey in 2006 as a Kindergarten school and later introduced an English medium school in 2007. It started its English version in 2016. On the other hand, the school CT started its journey as a Bangla medium school in the 1960s but introduced its English version in 2003 for grades 3-12 and English medium from grades nursery to two in 2015.

Participants and Sampling Techniques

The survey was conducted with 120 parents of children studying in the above five English version schools. Though schools were chosen purposively, a cluster random sampling technique was followed in selecting the parents of the children. Parents were accessed following ethical and administrative procedures. With the permission of the respective school heads and then with the help of class teachers, 30 parents from each school, a total of 150 parents were randomly selected from different classes. Each sampled parent received a questionnaire from their children from schools. After filling out the questionnaire, a total of 120 parents sent back these questionnaires to respective class teachers through their children in time. Later, researchers collected these filled-out questionnaires from class teachers. Hence,

a total of 120 survey questionnaires were finally counted for this study. Collecting qualitative data from many parents helped this study reach data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

In addition to the survey questionnaires, collective qualitative in-depth data were collected from fourteen parents through three FGDs from three EVs schools – UD, HS, and SP. In selecting parents, a convenient sampling technique was followed. For FGDs, the researchers requested teachers to invite some of the parents who participated in the survey. Those parents who managed time as per the schedule participated in the FGDs. Moreover, data were also collected from three principals from three EV schools in the capital city to understand the school management perspective of introducing EV schools. It also helps ensure data triangulation with data collected from parents using two other methods (e.g., survey and FDs).

According to the participants' demographic data, 40% of these parents were male and 60% were female. Additionally, 60% of the participants had master's degrees, 19% had bachelor's degrees, and 15% and 7% had completed the HSC and SSC, respectively. About 69% of parents had two children, 20% had one child, and the others had three or more children. Among the parents (n=120), about three-quarters (72%) of the parents sent their one child to English version schools, while the other one-fourth (28%) of the parents sent their two children to EVs. Children of 43% of the parents were studying in grade 4, whereas children of 29% of parents were studying in grade 2. 27% of parents' children were studying in grade 1. The parents belonged to diverse professions, including law, business, nongovernment, government services, engineering, and medicine. Among the participants in FGDs, a total of five parents were jobholders, and nine participants were housewives. Though parents had diverse educational qualifications, the majority seemed to hold a bachelor's degree.

Instruments

Three different instruments were used for data collection. While questionnaires and FGD guidelines were used for parents, KII was used for school principals. There were two parts to the questionnaire: part one includes demographic information, such as parents' gender, profession, education, number of children, and distance of schools from home, while part two includes closed-ended and open-ended questions. The second part contained items under the five-point Likert scale (strongly disagree to agree strongly) as well as some open-ended questions. However, only the data derived from the qualitative tools, such as interviews and FGD are presented in the paper, considering the nature of the journal. The open-ended questions in the questionnaire survey and questions in the FGDs focused on the parents' motivation to choose EVE and their expectations and challenges they and their children faced in EVE.

These instruments were developed specifically for achieving the overarching purpose of the study which is to explore the expectations, challenges, and prospects of the English version in Bangladesh. Instruments were developed based on an understanding of reading existing literature on EMI. Instruments were developed in Bangla – the mother tongue of the participants. FGDs and KIIs were conducted in Bangla to get rich data from the participants because it is experienced that the mother tongue helps people share details spontaneously. FGD and KII data were digitally recorded with the permission of the participants. The duration of FGD and KII was more than one hour but less than two hours. All tools were piloted with relevant stakeholders to determine their validity. Based on the piloting, some items (e.g., the ordering of the items, the wording of the scale), and language of FGDs (e.g., confusing language) that violated the tools' validity were revised before they were implemented in the field.

Data Analysis

After collecting FGD and KII audio data, those were transcribed following a nonverbatim or thematic approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and later translated into English. After translation, the transcripts were closely read repeatedly, and the qualitative data were coded following a pre-developed coding frame based on the literature review process (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020). After collecting qualitative data through open-ended questionnaires, all data were put into an excel file. Codes were developed following a pre-developed coding frame (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020). Some of the codes indicate the reasons for choosing EV (e.g., developing English proficiency, removing English fear, developing quality English, studying abroad, books in English, adjusting to the world, keeping children in both English and Bangla, and job and business). Then the codes were reviewed and classified into different subthemes (e.g., developing English language skills, pursuing higher education at home and abroad). Then from the sub-themes major key themes were developed (e.g., linguistic desire, cultural desire) by keeping the alignment with the research questions. It was a deductive approach to thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The coding frame was developed by the lead author, but intercoder reliability (ICR) was ensured (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020) by an independent coder who checked the coding system based on the data. Campbell et al. (2013) acknowledged that, in qualitative research projects, a single coder coded the majority of the data, but ICR could be produced by employing a second individual to code a sample of the data. From codes, themes were developed, and aligned with the themes generated from the qualitative questionnaire. Later, themes that emerged from different sources of data were put together to address the research questions. The findings are presented under the umbrella of major themes in the paper. Various data sources (parents and principals) and methods (questionnaire survey, FGDs, and KII), along with participants' direct quotations, have been used to support each other to triangulate the study findings and draw conclusions. This process plays a role in ensuring the trustworthiness of the study.

The researchers are well aware of research ethics, and they maintained it at different steps of research by taking permission from the key authority of the schools, taking consent from participants, and maintaining the confidentiality of the participants.

Limitations

An intensive literature review for this paper has identified that there has not been any reliable research on EVE, its efficacy as a new stream of education, the reasons behind its introduction, and its popularity among parents in the context of Bangladesh. Perhaps one of the reasons is its recent inauguration in the formal domain of education. Nevertheless, it has certain limitations. Compared to the population of parents and teachers involved in EVE, the numbers of participants were small. The paper, hence, did not intend to generalize the findings for all the parents in EVE in Bangladesh. Classroom observation as a research tool is not used in the research. Hence, the perception of parents could not be verified with the actual education system in EV schools. A longitudinal and cross-sectional study involving a variety of research tools may be done in the future.

Results

Based on the theoretical understanding of the English language as a commodity, linguistic market, and linguistic capital, this article explores parents' multiple desires to send their children to EV schools and how their desires play a role in promoting the English version

as a new commodity in the linguistic market in Bangladesh. This findings section presents the parents' desires for EV first; it then explains how parents' desires encourage the school management to introduce EV schools into the existing education system. On this ground, these findings present whether parents and school management consider EV education a new commodity in Bangladesh's linguistic/educational market.

EV Education and Parents' Desires

The analysis of questionnaire data collected through open-ended questions and FGDs reveals that different parents chose the EV with different desires. The most common desires for choosing EV are (a) linguistic desires (e.g., language proficiency); (b) instrumental desires (e.g., higher education, jobs, business, and moving abroad); (c) educational desires (e.g., quality education); and (d) cultural desire (e.g., keeping children within Bangladeshi culture and curriculum). These desires have been discussed in detail in the following subsections.

Linguistic Desire: Developing English Language Skills

The analysis of the open-ended questionnaire data shows that almost all parents (n=105) reported that they chose EV for their children with a desire to develop English language skills of their children. They desire that the EV would likely give their children space, environment, and useful resources for developing English language skills, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing. They also aspired that EV would remove their children's fear of English. As parents shared their desire to send their children to EV schools, this was reflected in the following quotations collected by open-ended questionnaire:

- To increase English writing and speaking skills in schools. (Mustafa)
- To eradicate the fear of English. (Nahar)
- To make my child skilled in English from childhood. (Atika)

Data collected from parents through FGD also show similar findings, where the main desire for sending children to EVE was to develop the children's English language skills. One of the female parents shared:

I have two children, and I have sent both of them to the English version school because I want to see that my children are doing excellent in English with the support of the school (Sabiha, HS).

The parents further considered that the EVE would develop their children's English language skills and the quality of English. Their perceived quality of English refers to error-free English with acceptable accents and pronunciations highly regarded in the Bangladeshi context. Hence, the parents' linguistic desire for their children has been underscored. The parents' linguistic desire was endorsed by the principals who claimed in KII that the main attraction of parents was the English language. According to the Principal of SP School, parents wanted their children to attend these schools and develop their English skills.

People have a fascination with English. Parents prefer English language skills, but English-medium education is highly expensive. On the other hand, many do not trust the Bangla medium, which is accused of developing poor English skills in students. That's why they admit their children to English Version schools (Principal, SP).

Similar to the findings of our paper, there are plenty of other research studies that confirm that EMI is one of the effective means of developing the English language skills of students (Galloway et al., 2017; Hamid et al., 2013; Macaro et al., 2018). Moreover, according to Phan and Barnawi (2015), the desire for native speaker accuracy, fluency, and pronunciation is still the main target of ELT and EMI contexts across the world. The parents in Bangladesh shared the same aspiration, as the data show. The reasons behind parents' preferences and desires are presented in the following sections.

Instrumental Desires: EV Education for a Better Future

The second most prominent reason for choosing the EVE for children is to prepare children for the future. A substantial number of parents (n=48) considered that their children's futures would be very challenging, particularly in receiving higher education at home and abroad, where books are primarily written in English. If their children wanted to go abroad for higher studies, they would face challenges due to their limited proficiency in English; therefore, it was better to prepare them for future higher education regardless of whether they would study at home or abroad. Besides, participants (n=10) added that the future job market and career trajectory of their children would be more competitive than ever before, and they needed to face job interviews in English and do their activities in workplaces in English. This was another reason why parents chose EVE for their children. Parents felt that even if their children wanted to do business, their business dealings would be in English. Therefore, parents' desires to prepare their children for the future made them consider EVE facilitative for their future career development. One of the male parents commented in FGD,

We do not have any alternative option. Our children need English for higher studies. We faced various obstacles during our higher studies. We hope that our children will not face those same problems (Hasan, UD).

English is compulsory in jobs and business; world books are written in English, and they [children] would easily read and understand these books [if they learn English now] (Nurun, in the open-ended questionnaire).

Some of the parents reported in FGD further that they did not want their children to face challenges (e.g., fear of English, unemployment, underemployment) that they had faced in the personal and professional life of their limited competence in English. One of the female parents shared her experience:

I have completed my higher education, but I am weak in English. For this, I have struggled a lot in my life, and I am still struggling. I do not like to see my children suffer in their lives as I have in mine (Lubna, HS).

Parents further considered English a *means* of fulfilling the dream of children because English is a global or an international language for world communication that helps to understand the world, its civilization, its culture, its challenges, and ways to address challenges and to adjust to the world. One of the male parents firmly believed that:

English is the requirement for a bright life and future in this era, it prepares children as a lifelong asset and they are bound to choose it (Hasan).

Like parents, school principals also underscored EVE as an instrument for worldly gains. They argued that EVE enriched students' English language skills to get ready to adjust to a global society and go abroad when necessary.

They will acquire knowledge and enrich their skills in the English language. They will be able to go abroad whenever they want. They will fit everywhere. I want to globalize my students to adjust to any environment, whether a village or an international conference (Principal, UD).

This finding presents the *use-value* and *exchange-value* of English which is aligned with previous research by Mahboob (2002), who argued with reference to the role of English in Pakistan that "no English, no future." Tollefson (2000, pp. 14-15) described the linguistic situation in the Philippines, and a similar trend was observable in other countries such as Nigeria, Tanzania, Kenya (Bamgbose, 2003), India (Bhatt, 2005), and Sri Lanka (Canagarajah, 1999) where English proficiency was a significant criterion for access to higher education and jobs. As Al-Seghayer (2011) observed in the context of Saudi Arabia:

Currently, those who can communicate in English ensure a much brighter future for themselves in terms of securing a wide range of employment opportunities, seeking knowledge, enriching their understanding of other cultures, pursuing studies abroad, especially higher ones, widening their horizon, and having a better understanding of the world, or even leisurely pursuits, such as traveling internationally for pleasure (p. 14).

The existing linguistic scenario has become increasingly multifaceted in Bangladesh with the recent popularity of English as a global language and its instrumental value in higher education and the job market (Mojumder & Roshid, 2018; Sultana et al., 2021). Private companies prefer to employ university graduates with higher English proficiency, legitimizing English's mythical values. Because of the varied roles and functions of English in life, students seem to experience conflicted feelings (Sultana & Bolander, 2021). Even people in rural villages want their children to be proficient in English (Erling et al., 2012).

Quality Desire: English for Quality Education

The third reason for choosing the EVE for children, as reported by many parents (n=24), is receiving a quality education. In their consideration, EV education provides quality education. To them, EMI was intertwined with quality education, meaning better content understanding or learning. One of the parents claimed in the open-ended questionnaire that "The English version education provides quality education (Mustafa)." This perception of a parent was both supported and contradicted by the opinions of a principal, who claimed that their school offered a quality education that developed better English skills for their students regardless of whether they belonged to the EV or Bangla medium schools. However, according to them, students from EV schools had better skills in English.

Still, I think students in English Version schools have better skills in English. They don't need to get any extra tuition for English. I think we provide a better quality of English education in our school (Principal, SP).

While the principal of an SP school cited above seemed to feel assured that students from EVE were better equipped with English language skills, recent studies show little

evidence that EMI enhances language learning and content knowledge (Macaro et al., 2018; Yeung & Lu, 2018). For example, in Nepal, Sah and Li (2018) argued that despite the school's claim to provide EMI education, students did not develop content knowledge or English language skills due to teachers' lack of English proficiency and insufficient resources. Macaro et al. (2018) concluded that there was insufficient evidence to say that EMI supported language learning or was harmful to content learning based on current studies. Bangladesh has similar issues in EVE, where parents and principals expressed their concern about the lack of teachers with English language proficiency.

Cultural Desire: EV Education for Cultural and National Aspirations

Parents' (n=21) final reason for choosing the EVE for their children was to keep them in the education system supported by the NCTB. They felt that the national curriculum developed for EVE emphasized both the English and Bangla languages with equal emphasis on the Bangladeshi culture. To unpack this strong notion of the parents, the study analyzed the FGD data closely, and it was found that some of the parents were more cautious about holding their own cultures and values rather than adopting and nourishing foreign cultures (e.g., English and western cultures). It is commonly believed that various factors of EM education (e.g., EMI, English materials, environment, peer group, and the future destination of graduates) foster English cultures. As a female parent observed,

I want my child to grow up in Bangladeshi culture while she develops her knowledge through the national curriculum (Runa, in the open-ended questionnaire).

English medium is not aligned with Bangladeshi culture and society, and foreign culture and curricula invade it. I want to develop my children within Bangladeshi culture (Rubel in FGD).

In other words, some parents seemed to believe that EME is likely to be compatible with English culture. Since they had reservations about the culture, they felt demotivated to send their children to EME and preferred EVE.

Another gender-biased point is in relation to the fact that graduates from EME prefer English-speaking countries (mainly in the US, UK, Canada, and Australia) for higher education and parents do not like their children, particularly daughters, to be exposed to foreign culture in these countries. In FGD, parents, particularly mothers, further strongly expressed their desire to hold on to Bangladeshi culture, specifically for their daughters. They would prefer keeping their daughters in Bangladesh rather than sending them abroad for higher studies alone and before marriage. One of the parents from HS school stated,

I want my daughter to stay in the country and do something for the country rather than go abroad. But they will need to be skilled in English wherever they go (Tamanna, HS).

Parents seemed to carry a strong desire to uphold Bangladeshi national values and cultural identity and preferred to transfer them to the next generation as a legacy. Though EMI promotes and consolidates the notion that the “west is better” (Phan, 2020), this study problematized the perceived cultural supremacy of the West, as perceived by the parents of EVE.

Another interpretation of this finding is that parents put proficiency in English and national culture in two dichotomous, simplistic positions: Bangladeshi culture for Bangladeshi nationalism and identity and English as a tool for economic advancements. They believed that they would keep their children rooted in their culture with EVE. The stance somewhat reflects the linguistic ideologies - the predominant “double monolingualism ideologies” (Heller, 2002) observable in the context of Bangladesh: language use should be separate and unmerged (a homogenous monolingual variety of Bangla for local, social, cultural, and national activities, and English only for academic and economic activities; Sultana, 2012). The parents' perception also supported that the English language and culture had recently become the subject of rising apprehension in Bangladesh. Parents nowadays preferred EV to EM education, considering their children might continue to be anchored in Bangladeshi cultures while developing their linguistic competence in English.

Parents' Desire and Marketizing of EV Schools

This section presents how the above desire-based demand of the parents helps to marketize EV schools in Bangladesh. In addition, the affordable cost of EV education plays an important role in this marketization. Three principals shared their experiences during KII, where they reported that the most common reason for introducing and administering EV simultaneously with another medium of education (either Bangla or English) was the local parents' demand. Two principals claimed:

Guardians feel attracted to the English language. We had English medium school before. But as a renowned school, guardians expected an English version of education from us, and they wanted the national curriculum in English (Principal, HS).

We want to fulfill the parents' demands. Day by day, the demand for English version education is increasing (Principal, SP).

The principals observed that parents were attracted to EVE because of the unique nature of the school, where the development of the English language skills of children is addressed by keeping them within the national curriculum and culture.

To fulfill the demand and expectations of parents, they (principals) convinced their school authority to introduce EVE in their existing school system. One of the principals further pointed out that people strongly believed in the supremacy of the English language in Bangladesh, which is another reason for the increasing number of English-version schools.

Actually, in our country, English dominates every sector. People of our country think that whoever knows English is intelligent and wise but do not judge his/her depth of knowledge. Upper-class, middle class even lower-class people in our country are obsessed with acquiring competence in English. That is why the demand for English Version Schools is increasing (Principal, HS).

Parents seemed to be coerced to believe in the supremacy of English because of the prevalent linguistic ideologies in society. The above finding also indicates the existence of linguistic ideologies that equate competence in English with individual intelligence, depth of knowledge, and class (cf. Khan & Sultana, 2021; Sultana, 2021a, 2021b; Sultana & Bolander, 2021). According to Gramsci (1971; as cited in Al-Kahtany et al., 2016), hegemony means domination through consent and persuasion, consisting of three concurrent processes: (a) dominance

without coercion; (b) domination by legitimacy; and (c) domination by consensus. The dominant group has dominance over the subordinate group in the first phase by generating consciousness rather than exerting force. The second is the one in which the subordinate group recognizes the dominant group's rule as accurate, just, right, and unquestionable. In the third step, most subordinate group members believe they are there by choice because they benefit just as much as the dominant group from having similar needs and concerns. The promotion of EVE in Bangladesh reflects the third phase, where the people of Bangladesh believe that they benefit from learning English. Accordingly, they desire to send their children to EV schools, which contributes to the rapid growth of EV schools. The popularity of English across the social classes also indicates that EVE has become a desirable new commodity in Bangladesh's linguistic market. Many scholars, however, viewed many EMI policies as the legacy of colonial education (Pennycook, 1998). Initiation and running of English-version education reinstates being transplanted as part of a neo-colonization or re-colonization process, strategy, and force, rather than liberty. According to Qiang and Woolf (2005), EFL is a modern-day Trojan horse that intends to re-colonize the world to remake it in the image of Western democracy. Similarly, EVE is an unstoppable Trojan horse because, like the Trojan horse, EVE is silently entering society and colonizing the parents' minds with multiple hopes, desires, and promises (see also Valdez, 2011).

English-Version Education to Make English Affordable

The distance of EV schools from home and their affordable cost compared to the ones of EM schools are the other reasons that motivated some school principals to introduce EV schools. The principal from UD shared her personal experience and stated that when she came back from the UK, she struggled to enroll her children in an EM school due to her financial inability and the distance of an EM school from her residence. She also observed similar problems among other parents and guardians that encouraged her to introduce EVE in her school:

We keep both versions – Bangla and English - so students can choose their desired one. Here two things are essential: one is the ability to accept, and the other is the ability to achieve. Moreover, one more important concern is the guardians' financial ability (Principal, UD).

The finding suggests that ability and desire are both critical in choosing EVE. Here, *ability* refers to parents' financial and students' mental and scholastic abilities. At this point, this indicates the common prejudice that linguistic ability in English is synonymous with individual intellectual ability.

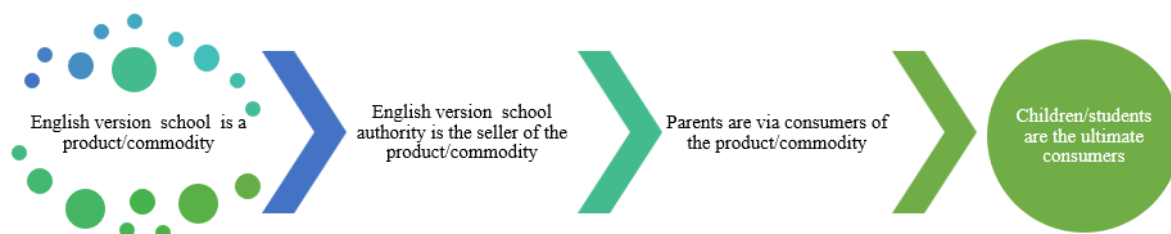
EVE – A New Commodity or A Language Desire

By considering the rapid mushrooming of EV schools in urban areas in the country, participants were asked if they viewed EVE as a commercial commodity or product in the present context. A mixed opinion was revealed in the voices of the parents in FGDs. Parents who perceived EVE as a commercial commodity argued that education itself was a commodity, and the schools sold it. EVE was a new product, and schools started a new business. One of the parents commented in FGD, “Yes, the school system is always a business; the English version is a new business in our society” (Rumana, HS). Here, EVE is the product, the school authority seemed to work as a service provider, and parents were consumers of the product and receivers of the service. The final consumers of education were the students/children

themselves, too (see also Kogar, 2014). All product stakeholders promoted and marketed this linguistic business in Bangladeshi society (Figure 1).

Figure 1

EVE as a Commodity and its Stakeholders



Some other parents saw English positively as today's daily necessity rather than as a commodity. However, their arguments indicated that they also indirectly acknowledged English as a commodity. For instance, one parent stated,

No, I do not think English is a product. We need English. Every parent cannot afford EVE or EME. Parents who cannot afford these education streams for their children prefer BME and get their children admitted into it (Habib, UD).

This finding suggests that, like other commodities available in the market, EV education could be purchased by people who could afford it. This finding indicates the commodity status of EMI-based education in the new capitalist world (Prendergast, 2008).

Similar to parents, the principals of EV schools have mixed opinions. The principal of SP strongly disapproved of EVE as a commodity and argued that she wanted to prepare children as global citizens by developing English communication skills. In contrast, the other two principals treated EV as a social enterprise.

You see, we are buying rice, and pulses every day. Someone is selling it. However, have we stopped buying these products? Education itself is a commodity. The English version is connected with demand and supply. I think there should be freedom to generate these products (UD, principal).

Our school is private, so we have to think of our business too. Nevertheless, we first think of the students' welfare and then, keep them in national cultures, and business comes after that. We always give importance to students' needs and then business (Principal, HS).

The opinions of the principals suggested EV as a social enterprise, as it gave importance to students' welfare and business. In a broad sense, the term *social enterprises* refer to a range of organizations, from for-profit companies engaging in socially beneficial activities to non-profit companies engaging in mission-supporting business activities (Kerlin, 2006). These are carried out in the public interest on the basis that business acumen can be extended to community causes to achieve economic and social capital (Zappalà, 2001). According to the HS Principal, EVE had two sides to its mission as a social enterprise: on the one hand, in the public interest, EVE prepared students as economic and social capital with necessary sociocultural and national values to serve the social and community objectives; on the other hand, EVE earned

money to survive in the market. Here, the social purpose was given more importance than that personal gains. This new form of business is known as a *social business*, which aimed to fulfill social goals while recouping all of its costs to remain self-sustaining (Yunus et al., 2010). This finding indicates that EV schools and the education they offered are linguistic products that had an exchange-value (Heller 2010; Marx 1990 [1867]) and were sold in exchange for money.

Discussions

The paper examines Bangladeshi parents' desire to choose EVE – a new kind of EMI-based primary education in Bangladesh. It also discussed how their desires were treated as a demand for introducing and running this education system as a commercial commodity in Bangladesh. We can make several observations based on the data presented in this article.

Firstly, EVE has successfully been able to draw the attention of urban and metropolitan customers (e.g., parents) with multiple hopes, desires, and promises. They believe EVE develops English language skills that have both use-value and exchange-value in the linguistic market where people trade their linguistic proficiencies, which serve as linguistic capital and produce linguistic profit (Hamid, 2016). Data show that in use and exchange for these English skills, students may pursue higher education at home and abroad, live in a modern and globalized world, ensure quality/standard education, manage a good job, and do good business. As English has various use-values and exchange-values, more parents are investing in this linguistic market for their children's perceived future benefit. Recognizing the benefits of English, mainly since it is considered a means of socioeconomic benefits and empowerment by its users (Hamid, 2010; Roshid & Chowdhury, 2013; Roshid, 2018), the Bangladesh government has taken the EMI policy in education and planned to establish EMI-based EV schools in each district of the country as a public good and national development and modernization agenda to develop human capital (Ali, 2013; Hamid, 2010).

Secondly, this new linguistic market of EVE is limited to metropolitan areas of the country. This urbanized education/linguistic market may marginalize rural students, possibly creating education divides between urban and rural students and between EV and other mediums of education students. This new type of education has drawn many parents' attention, particularly those of middle-class socioeconomic backgrounds. Sah and Li (2018) argued that EMI in Nepal (re)created linguistic marginalization, educational inequality, and injustice for children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. EMI in Nepal failed to be an educational equalizer. Likewise, according to Jayadeva (2019), EM schools promote social mobility among middle-class people while fostering new types of inequality for others (see also Murray, 2020).

Thirdly, EVE seems to cater to the needs of the emerging middle-class communities in Bangladesh who have strong reservations against the culture associated with English. Instead, they desire to uphold the national curriculum and culture while simultaneously developing English at an affordable cost. These are the key factors that help promote the linguistic market of EVE despite having other established mediums of education, such as EME and BME. Parents strongly believe that their children may take advantage of their English communicative competence (Canale & Swain, 1980; Roshid, 2009; Savignon, 2018) while still adhering to Bangladeshi culture and values. They have various dreams, desires, and aspirations about their children concerning English and Bangla, endorsing domain-specific use of languages: English for formal domains, such as education and work, and Bangla for the informal domain, such as the home and the hearth. Parents seem to be rooted in their nation and culture, as they want to see their children's future in Bangladesh within the local culture. Hence, their decision can be considered a "counter-hegemonic act" on the parents' part to resist the cultural imperialism of English. EVE may, thus, play an influential role in the de-eliticization of English, robbing it of its associated culture (Shaila & Roshid, 2021). EVE also serves the needs of the middle-class

masses, desiring a utopian world where their children speak English but breathe in Bangladeshi culture. Considering its popularity and promotion, it seems that it is considered a balanced education system in the context of Bangladesh, particularly for middle-class families.

Fourthly, in this neoliberal economy, the commodification and commercialization of English and education have become normalized (Block et al., 2012; Cameron, 2012). Participants, with few exceptions, regard the EVE as a commodity. Here, the notion of symbolic capital in Bourdieu's sociological theory, together with cultural, economic, and social capital, is appropriately suitable since it stresses the symbolic dimensions of social life (Lebaron, 2014), the symbolic effects of (all sorts of) capital (Bourdieu, 1997). Following Bourdieu's symbolic capital, the findings suggest that EV schools are metaphorically education/linguistic shops/markets, school leaders are market managers, English teachers are salespeople, English proficiency is a form of capital, English teaching is a profit-driven commercial activity, and English learning as a capital investment.

Conclusion and Future Directions

The paper investigates parents' desire to send their children to the EV education system. Findings show that EMI is popular because it promises ownership of linguistic capital for their children. Parents believe that their children in EVE will benefit from their English proficiency in future.

The emergence of EVE has multiple implications for policies and educational practices. It will create an avenue for new research because, to date, no research has been conducted in this exponential area of education. As EVE is a new popular commodity in the linguistic market of Bangladesh, it is necessary to be cautious in making any education policy related to EVE. As mentioned earlier, the government plans to introduce this new commodity to each country district (Staff Correspondent, 2021). However, a large-scale survey is necessary to understand the pros and cons of EVE before it is introduced on a mass scale.

It is also necessary to see if EVE fulfills parents' expectations and develops their children's communication skills in English as per the parents' desire. If it develops parents' desired English communication skills, the pedagogy used in this education paradigm can be used in other education systems, including Bangla and the English medium of the country. The national curriculum, the textbooks translated into English from Bangla, other teaching and learning materials, the educational practices, resources, and the environment in EVE need intensive and extensive evaluation. The affordability of the EVE concerning its cost, adequacy, appropriacy, and suitability in developing students' competence in English and knowledge in content areas requires intensive research. It also needs to consider in policy that too much promotion of English education in society may marginalize the mother tongue Bangla and Bangla medium mainstream education.

It is also crucial to explore how the graduates of EVE negotiate their positions in different communities of practice in the future, where both languages and cultures may have distinct yet conflicting and contradictory roles. EVE may give rise to a new kind of class in competition with the privileged one consisting of the people from the upper echelon of society with an EME. The possible emergence of a new class of people from EV education and their experiences need further investigation. Only then the value of EVE as a new commodity and sociocultural acceptance of EVE in the linguistic market may be understood.

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