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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Redefining Bangladeshi Variety of English: Print and Electronic Media Perspective

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Abstract

The rapid expansion and the use of English language all over the world have created a number of English varieties. Likewise, Bangladesh is no exception in creating an English variety. The aim of the study is to find out the variety of English existing in Bangladeshi print and electronic media and an attempt is taken to define what English variety does exist in Bangladesh. The total research is carried out through qualitative and quantitative design and all the data are collected from print and electronic media and from media personnel. The result and detail analysis of the study has brought out that syntactically, semantically and phonologically a new English variety is emerging in Bangladesh through print and electronic media working here. Finally, the study has found that the emerging variety is now getting local and international acceptance and is using in local and international arena in both written and spoken form.

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1. Introduction

From long before English has become the widely used language in the world and it has spread its wings from ordinary communication to education and local and international media. Print and electronic media fully or partially depend on English language. South-Asian countries like Bangladesh have experienced a long English ruling by the English. Therefore, whatever language we use, it becomes a mixture of English consciously or unconsciously. Bangladeshi print and electronic media is also using a number of English words and phrases for their telecasting purposes. Nevertheless, the English the print and electronic media uses here is not entirely the Anglicized English, rather a type of English generated, created or modified for the easier understanding of Bangladeshi peoples. Bangla language, the mother tongue of the people of Bangladesh, has much influence in the use of English including accent, vocabulary even in some sentence structures also. Meiorokord (2012) mentioned that “Bangladeshi English is now predominant variety. In the book, Meiorokord has compared South Asian Englishes and then showed that like Cockney dialect Bangladeshi English is also a variety. Thus, this newly created variety of English has become a wing or independent variety or modified variety of world English.

The hypothesis of the research is “Bangladeshi print and electronic media uses a type of English that is a distinct variety in world Englishes.” The core purpose of this research is to find out the variety of English in Bangladeshi print and electronic media and it will try to show whether this variety is a Bangladeshi variety or modified variety of world English or there is no variety existing here. Indeed, Bangladeshi radio, TV and newspapers use a different type of English that needs to be redefined whether it is a new variety or a deviated form of English used by the natives. Bangladeshi print and electronic media has been trying to give messages to the people using a particular register. The study explored to answer the following research questions,

- What English variety is used in Bangladeshi print and electronic media?
- In which aspects of language usage does a new English variety exist in Bangladesh or not?

2. Background and Context

Since 1600's English has been used as a language in India by the East India Company and English missionaries. A large number of Christian schools started to deliver education in English since 1800's. The process of establishing English as a language for education and trade has been firmly founded by the Minute of 1835. The Minute of Macaulay aimed at creating "a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern – a class of persons, Indians in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and in intellect" (Kachru, 1983). In line with this, English has now become a widely used language in Bangladesh. The position of English in the world today is the joint outcome of Britain's colonial expansion and the more recent activity of the USA National varieties started to emerge in the 18th and 19th centuries due to the colonial expansion of the English speaking people (Graddol, 2004). There are an increasing number of national standards including those related to "New Englishes", for instance SingE and Indian English. There are three kinds of speaker: those who speak it as a first language, those for whom it is second or additional language and those who learn it as a foreign language. Native speakers may feel that the language belongs to them, but it will be those who speak English as a second or foreign language who will determine its world future. But in Bangladesh, the variety is not yet standardized. Instead, the Bangladeshi constitution still did not recognize English as a second language though English has become a second language in practice if we compare its wider use with French, Spanish and Chinese languages.

The colonial rule for 190 years has introduced English in sub-continental education. Since then South Asian people are familiar with using English in education, business and trade. After the partition of Pakistan from India, Pakistan tried to use Urdu the educational language. But they could not do that successfully. After the independence of Bangladesh, our government restricted use of English in any situation. Again, our Language Act (1987) restricted use of English in all official activities and introduced *Bangla procholon Ain*. However, the need for international communication and business purpose, Bangladeshi people started using English widely. This wide use has created room for Bangladeshi words in English sentence and context. Now Bangladeshi print and electronic media are the preserver and upholder of Bangladeshi variety of English.

If the variety and its boundary are identified, then all the elements of print and electronic media could be brought under same umbrella and the new reservoir of English modified with culturally and linguistically shall be able to contribute in defining Bangladeshi variety of English or Bangladeshi English or BaE. This important research will help the print and electronic media people to specify their use of English and to bring certain English language uses within the media arena.

3. Literature Review

Everyone knows that language is variable. If structure is at the heart of language, then variation defines its soul (Saphir, 1921). Likewise, the creation of new varieties of English is more due to the influence of group behavior than individual idiosyncrasies. In fact, Dorian (1994) suggests that there is a kind of "personal-pattern variation" that does not co-vary with external social factors. Speakers are both individuals with idiosyncratic life histories as well as affiliated members of a complex array of social groups, making it impossible to explain away all individual-based variation in terms of social group norms. New variety of language generates from grammatical, phonological, semantic or complete new vocabulary point of view. The new variety is influenced by social factors such as age, sex, status, situational context and sometimes from deliberateness of the group (Bailey, 1973). Before the complete creation of a new variety, all new varieties pass a transitional period. When the use of the newly formed words, meanings, pronunciation is accepted both as written and spoken form by different stakeholders, then we call it New English or name it with the regional name, for instance, SingE or Indian English.

However, in Bangladesh, English has not yet got the recognition of second language in any legal documents. However, in practice, English has become a second language due to the rapid expansion of business and higher education. Bangladeshis tend to use a variety of English that is typical to South Asian English varieties. They use many words derived from Bangla, and often do code-mix with English words. Even Bangladeshi newspapers started using these changed words and made them part of their English (Rahman, 2007). Because of long term affiliation

with English in South Asia, people here started using a type of English that can be called “localized” or “nativized” English by adopting some unique features of its own, such as sound, intonation patterns, words, expressions etc (Kachru, 1994; Platt, Weber and Lian 1984). Usually, the local variety is widely accepted by the local people and this acceptance help in origin of new variety of English (Kachru, 1992). Bangla language variety has influenced the pronunciation part of English used in Bangladesh and has created some new pronunciations of English words that are locally intelligible (Faquire, 2012). This paper will try to discover what variety of English exists in Bangladesh and to define that variety print and electronic media is taken as the source. Indeed, print and electronic media easily defines the norm of English used in a particular region and Bangladesh is no exception of this.

However, English used by Bangladeshi speakers may be labeled as Bangladeshi English. But much research needs to be conducted to formulate that kind of English which is unique to Bangladesh. Attitude towards that kind of variety by Bangladeshi people should be kept in consideration. “Some instances of lexical, semantic and syntactic features of English that is used in Bangladesh –both in spoken and written forms, is a deviation from International English (IE). They may be unacceptable but these characterize the typical Bangladeshi patterns that have emerged from the greater South Asian English context (Rahman, 2007). There are other researchers who define English used by Bangladeshi people as Bangladeshi English or *Banglish*. Kachru (1994) claims that the particular role English plays in Bangladesh after its independence makes Bangladesh fall between ESL and EFL. But the growing demand and the subsequent rise of use of English may give way to a new Bangladeshi variety.

Banu (2000) in her article Bangladeshi English: A New Variety explores the possibility of a variety like Indian English; Pakistani English that are typical features of larger South Asian English. Banu affirms that over the years because of uncontrollable expansion of English use, “Bangladesh will have developed some special features of its own that can be described as systematic and recurrent deviations from the British English.”

Not much research is done on the English variety of Bangladeshi print and electronic media. Therefore, we need to find out what English variety is used in Bangladeshi print and electronic media. It is to be noted that the language variety in any country is formed by its print and electronic media. In creating English variety in Bangladesh, the print and electronic media plays a vital role.

4. Methodology

This study has been conducted using both qualitative and quantitative method. All the data related to the research was collected from previous research, print and electronic media and personnel working there. The data has been collected from four sources and these are radio, television, FGD with media workers and printed newspapers. We have selected two daily newspapers and one private TV channel. We think that from the frequent use of a number of words we can identify the variety of English language. Likewise, the TV channel is one widely watched channel in the country to all classes of people.

We selected the newspapers and TV channel due to our affiliation with some of the people working there. Firstly, we have recorded 50 TV shows conducted fully in English or partially in English and then we recorded 50 English news telecasted in different hours in different Tv channels and Fm radio stations. All the TV shows are recorded as audios, not as videos. Then these recorded English events are transcribed and emerged new patterns of English are brought under different categories for finding out whether a new variety of English or new usage of English is found in Bangladeshi print and electronic media. Afterwards, a focus group discussion (FGD) with 20 reporters and news presenters and Radio Jockeys (RJs) have been conducted to know the way they use English and the reason for using a different type of Bangla language used as English.

The aim of sampling was to find out a pattern or variety of English in print and electronic media. We categorize the printed data in one category and the television and radio data in another category. Then we took the English phrases and words mentioned by the reporter, presenter, anchor and RJs during the FGD. Variety was also found in pronunciation influenced by regional tone.

The collected data has been triangulated to find out if there exists the variety. During sampling and analyzing the data, we have checked all the words and utterances if they are also common in any other country. We did this through using Google. If any data matches with the any other countries English that might not be solely the variety of Bangladeshi English. It was also attempted to find out if the words uttered or used in Bangladeshi newspaper and TV channels are really coined, pronounced and newly meant by Bangladeshi people or these are borrowed from any

other countries. This research also tried to show the intonation pattern of Bangladeshi English. Throughout this process of sampling and analyzing we tried to answer the research questions if there is a variety of English in Bangladeshi print and electronic media. If a variety exists, what are the commonly used words, phrases, sentences, pattern of pronunciation found here are analyzed in the study.

5. Results

5.1 Findings from FGD

During the study, we tried to gather as many new or deviated English items as possible for showing the newness and variety of English in Bangladesh, especially in print and electronic media. Different nativized English words and expressions found common in FGD with the five media personnel are as follows,

Political Words

Hartal instead of strike

Lathicharge instead of baton charge

Aborodh instead of blockade

Common people meaning the non-political people

Boarder meaning India to many people

BNP, AL, *Jamaat, sangshad, joy bangla*

Religious and Cultural Words

Eid, puja, durga, akherimonajat (meaning final prayer)

Boishakhimela, nabanna, sanghai

Somoti, Greater comilla

In response to the question of why they use the Bangla where English words are available, all 20 participants mentioned that they use Bangla words to make English localized and comprehensible to all people of Bangladesh. Bangladeshi people may not understand the utterances fashioned by the natives and that is why Bangladeshi pronunciation is needed, they mentioned.

Next to the question of why they think these new uses are a variety of English, most of them replied that

“Bangladeshi expressions are also used in international media like BBC and CNN sometimes. One female participant responded that these words have become English because our literature also uses these words.”

The media personnel also told that the word “blogger” is not perceived as a person who uses a blog. Rather to a group of people in Bangladesh, “blogger” or “bologer (a local pronunciation)” means a person who does anti-Islamic activities and who is an atheist or infidel. Thus, a new variety of English is growing in Bangladeshi print and electronic media.

5.2 Findings from Radio English

While transcribing the radio English we have found some words like “sweets dreams”, “vuut (meaning ghost) fm”, “radio friends” and the RJs frequently pronounce Bangla words in English tone. Code switching and code mixing is also common in radio English. One RJ answered in FGD that

“Without code switching and mixing from Bangla to English and vice-versa, radio shows are impossible.”

A short transcribed radio code-switching and code-mixing data is presented here,

“.....*apnader sathe royechi me your friend Rajib. Kotha hocche funny funny hope to continue more talks tonight. Aj rater special boishistho is that akashe chand peep korche.....*”

From the transcribed data, it has been found that *Jhakkas* (meaning excellent and it is Englishization of Bangla), *jotils* (meaning extreme and it is Englishization of Bangla) and *fines* (meaning very fine and nativization of English) etc.

5.3 Findings from Print Media

The research question aimed at finding out if there is a variety of English in Bangladeshi print and electronic media and to get the answer to the problem we tried to look into the print media to find out what norm of English they contain. In print media, we have found a number of Bangla words used with English words. Headlines of daily newspapers and some other captions frequently contain Bangla words. We have analyzed five newspapers if they really use the Bangla words and we found the words and phrases like “Hartal by opposition”, “Ilish (meaning hilsha fish) price hike”, “putul (meaning inactive) government”, “cattle hut (meaning market) in Gabtali”. It is found that three out of five newspaper headlines contain one or two Bangla words. This wide use of Bangla in English is actually Englishicizes the Bangla words and helps generate a new variety of English that is more localized or nativized.

5.4 Pronunciation Variety in Electronic Media

Pronunciation also contributes in generating new variety of English. In Bangladesh, people pronounce Bangla in different tone that is directly noticed in TV and Radio shows. People here tend to pronounce the “ns” cluster in “nos” for instance they pronounce the word institution and constitution respectively as “inostitution” and “conostitution”. They are found uttering the word pleasure in nativised form of pronunciation.

As the study aimed at finding out the variety of English spoken in Bangladesh, it also investigated into the movie and drama since these are the wings of electronic media. In Bangladeshi movie and drama it is found that regional tone highly dominate English pronunciation. For example,

“S” is pronounced as “sh” in Thakurga

“P” is pronounced as “f” in Noakhali

“C” and “s” are uttered same in kustia

During data collection, it is noticed that people in Bangladeshi context do not maintain IPA symbols or Received Pronunciation. The way people utter sounds seem a localized or nativized pattern, not the native-like pronunciation.

6. Analysis and Discussion

This study aimed at finding out a variety of English in print and electronic media if there is a variety really. The research question and hypotheses are in line with the finding of the new variety of English used by the Bangladeshi print and electronic media. During the research the words, expressions and semantic changes and pronunciation are separately collected and all the patterns show that there is a variety of English used by the print and electronic media in Bangladesh. This variety is not yet in the state to be recognized as new English but it exists as new emerging English regarding pronunciation, accent, meaning, abrogation and appropriation.

The words and expressions like “hartal”, “aborodh”, “common people” etc gives a picture of new realm of political words with which all Bangladeshi people are familiar. Print and electronic media frequently uses these words in their telecasting of news to the people. They use these words deliberately to make people understand the fact better (Bailey, 2002). These types of deliberate use of Bangla in English context Englishizes the Bangla words. Consequently, we find that Bangladeshi words are being accepted more or less by world communities and a new variety of English is on the way to be established soon in Bangladesh.

Localization or nativisation is also common in the print and electronic media. The people working in print and electronic media intentionally or for convenience of understanding of the story localize the description in the news. For instance, the media personnel use Bangla words frequently instead of English in situations like “*Lathicharge* by police” instead of “Baton charge by police”. This process of using Bangla helps nativize or localize the English language. The process of cutting the English word is called “abrogation” and the use of Bangla is called ‘appropriation’. Thus, English becomes localized or nativized and consequently nearly a new variety is created in Bangladeshi print and electronic media. Thus, the hypothesis is well defined since the result matches with the guess done in the beginning of the study.

“Truly” in using new words, Bangladeshi print and electronic media is making a reservoir of Bangladeshi words. In the FGD, it is found that Bangladeshi writers have started using Bangla words in English writing like Nigerian writer Chinua Achebe’s (1958) use of Nigerian words in the novel *Things Fall Apart*. In this way, the study finds the variety of Bangladeshi words as stated in the hypothesis.

The use of code-switching and code-mixing by the RJs and anchors tell that they use a new type of mixed language for common peoples' easier understanding. The code switching and code mixing of RJs mentioned in the result section implies that the speakers use Bangla in an English tone. This can be called the Englishization (a process by which any other language is used or uttered in English intonation) of Bangla words. Indeed, some of Bangla words like '*jotils*', and '*jhakkas*' are uttered in English tone. The day is not far when these type of words shall be used as Bangladeshi English words by Bangladeshi and South Asian people.

Bangladeshi electronic media represents Bangladeshi English through dramas and movies where it is found that Bangladeshi people pronounces words in Bangladeshi tone. The local Bangladeshi tone makes English Bangladeshi. For example, the words institution, constitution, pleasure and vote are found uttered in *Banglacized* tone as mentioned in result section. Likewise, pronunciation of 'p', 'f', 's' and 'c' are also uttered in a Bangladeshi pattern of pronunciation. This localized pronunciation is a local variety of pronunciation. Thus, it is found that the mentioning of Banu (2000) is authentic while she mentioned that a Bangladeshi variety is noticed in Bangladesh. In addition, this Bangladeshi variety is a sister of South Asian variety of English language. Therefore, in this regard, the hypothesis of the study is partially matched with the result of the study.

From the international point of view, it is seen that BBC and CNN use Bangladeshi English words though the number of use is not bigger. However, the use of one Bangla word by an international media is recognition of possibility of the emergence of Bangladeshi English. This international recognition through media is a green signal for the broader emergence of Bangladeshi variety of English. In FGD, one TV reporter's mentioning of three-four Bangla words used by CNN tells us the future expansion of Bangladeshi English. Indeed the future of English will be controlled more by the ESL and EFL countries than the ENL (English as Native Language) countries (Graddol, 1997).

Another important point is that if for little difference in spelling, pronunciation, meaning and structure American English can be separated from British English, then for a new reservoir of words and complete creation of new pronunciation, Bangladeshi new variety is Bangladeshi English. To define Bangladeshi variety this study reached to print and electronic media because print and electronic media are the creator and bearer of new variety of language to the people. Bangladeshi print and electronic media has almost created Bangladeshi English or it has nationalized the newly generated English in Bangladesh. The variety of English used by Bangladeshi print and electronic media and by Bangladeshi people is created by Bangladeshi print and electronic media through linguistic interpellation or telecasting frequently, a process that scatters any new thing to larger population.

7. Limitations and Delimitations

This study has some limitations. Due to the new field of research, we could not get much literature to relate the present study. Therefore, a dependence on South Asian and native English speaker written language variety are used here. Lack of time has created another problem during the data collection and analyzing time. If we could get more time, the study might have been far better.

8. Conclusion

Finally, it can be said that the variety of English in Bangladeshi print and electronic is an emerging English variety in world English territory. This new localized variety exists in Bangladeshi print and electronic media. People in Bangladeshi copy the localized English used in Bangladeshi print and electronic media. The reservoir of Bangladeshi English may be small, but the new variety English emerging here is completely Bangladeshi English. It is hoped that a next research will define English language variety existing and used by Bangladeshi people in a broader context.

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