Standard and Non-Standard English in Bangladesh: A Sociolinguistic Exploration of Linguistic Identity, Post-Colonial Legacy, and the Quest for Global Englishes

Abdul Awal *
Research Scholar
Doctoral School of Humanities,
University of Lodz, Poland.

ABSTRACT

The article delves into the ongoing discourse concerning Standard English (SE) and Non-Standard English in Bangladesh. Historically, the trend of learning Standard English in the country traces back to its colonial roots. The British colonization introduced and popularized English learning, imprinting its influence on both the language and its speakers. Such historical ties lead to pertinent questions about the relevance and position of Standard English, especially in the sphere of English Language Teaching. The discussion critiques the idea of Standard English from a post-colonial perspective, particularly drawing connections between Standard English and linguistic dominance. Additionally, the concept of My English (ME) is brought forward as a counter to the hegemony of Standard English. A central theme of the article is the legitimacy of acknowledging local English forms within the umbrella of Global Englishes. It also touches upon socio-political factors that validate the acceptance of these regional English iterations. The research aims to illuminate English's role in Bangladesh's local linguistic scene, probing its influence across various societal layers. It identifies particular linguistic and extra-linguistic elements affecting the categorization of English versions in the nation. Emphasizing the crucial role of education, wherein English serves as more than just a subject but a medium for functional proficiency, the article stresses the necessity for Bangladesh to define and embrace its distinct English variant in the larger framework of Global Englishes.

Keywords: Standard English, My English, Colonialism, Linguistic Inferiority Complex, non-standard English, Linguistics Human Rights.

Introduction

Standard English is a variant of the English language that is frequently regarded as the proper form. This form of English holds a significant position in a number of countries, including Bangladesh. The impact it has can be followed back to the time during British colonialism when English was implanted as an emblem of power and prestige. English is considered a

valuable asset in Bangladesh, not just for global communication but also as a symbol of education and social status. Currently, the acceptance and practice of Standard English in Bangladesh carry consequences that extend beyond basic communication, embedding themselves deeply in the country's socio-political and educational landscape.

Language constitutes an indispensable and fundamental aspect of culture. Language is one of the constituent elements of culture, similar to food, clothing, religion, politics, music, and marriage. Linguistic human rights contend that language-based discrimination in favour of one language over another represents a social prejudice referred to as linguicism. The advocates of linguistic human rights argue that every language should be treated equally and that categorizing one language as standard while the other as different is a form of prejudice. The Creole continuum reminds scholars, including Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (1889) that Language reflects human behaviour, embodying actual practices rather than just theoretical constructs. This implies that the correctness of a language cannot be defined by its theoretical model. SE, which is imposed by English-speaking countries, is regarded as a variant of English.

One example of the impact of market forces is the collaborative endeavour undertaken by countries that predominantly employ the English language to enhance their recruitment of international students. The domain of higher education is increasingly viewed as an opportunity for capitalizing on market forces, and the British Government has set its sights on expanding this sector by 8% annually between 2004 and 2020. The British economy directly profits by a staggering £11 billion, with an additional £12 billion in indirect benefits being realized (British Council). More than half a million foreign students flock to language schools in Britain each year, with the English Language Teaching business serving as a pivotal contributor to the British economy (Phillipson, 2009). This article aims to examine the complex interconnection between Standard English and the linguistic ecology that prevails in Bangladesh. The investigation will explore the historical, legendary, and factual elements of Standard English in the educational system, the sociolinguistic dynamics that are in action, and the ongoing discussion about the genuineness and validity of Standard English compared to Non-Standard English.

The asserted dominance of Standard English over regional dialects has sparked discussions and reflections on linguistic identity, post-colonialism, and the necessity of including local variations within the scope of Global Englishes.

Literature Review

Definition and Perspectives of Standard English: The notion of Standard English (SE) is complex and multi-faceted, contingent upon the perspectives of various individuals and groups. Academics may take different approaches to the subject matter, with some dissociating from social factors, some integrating social considerations, and others focusing on popular beliefs concerning Standard English (Kerswill, 2006).

Historical and Sociological Context of SE: The ideologies relating to SE are essentially connected to the social and economic relations of particular temporal and spatial contexts. The literature underscores the genesis of a conviction in a standard pronunciation in Great Britain during the initial and mid-Victorian period (L. Milroy, 1999; Mugglestone, 1995). The conversion of rural dialects into class dialects and the emergence of an urban industrial working class played a significant function in this development.

The Role of Pronunciation in Class Distinctions: Pronunciation has been closely associated with class, as observed during the Victorian era (Graham, 1869 as cited in Mugglestone, 1995; Kerswill, 2006). Some researchers, such as Wyld (1934 as mentioned in J. Milroy 2000) and Kerswill (2006), have promoted the perceived inherent superiority of Received Pronunciation (RP), attributing its origins to upper-class usage.

Changes in the Status of Standard Pronunciation

In the later part of the twentieth century, a notable shift occurred regarding the status of Received Pronunciation (RP). There is an increasing preference for regional accents like Estuary English, as highlighted by researchers such as Rosewarne (1984), Crystal (1995), and Kerswill (2001). However, some advocates, like L. Milroy (1999), continue to vouch for the inherent precision and appropriateness of Standard English and RP.

Contemporary Views and Standard Ideology: Many scholars believe that the prominence of Standard English in historical linguistics can be attributed to the "standard ideology" (J. Milroy, 2000). This mindset might still drive some linguists to view Standard English and RP as definable entities rather than abstract concepts shaped by discourse (Kerswill, 2006).

Research Methodology

The overarching aim of this qualitative investigation is to elucidate the multi-faceted relationship between Standard English (SE) and Non-Standard English (NSE) within the

context of Bangladesh, particularly focusing on linguistic identity, remnants of the colonial era, and the contemporary movement towards acknowledging indigenous variations of English within the paradigm of Global Englishes. This inquiry adopts a qualitative research design, providing nuanced, contextual insights through meticulously analysing archival documents, colonial legal texts, educational syllabi, and literary works to delineate the historical trajectory of English language usage in Bangladesh. The research includes conducting in-depth, semi-structured interviews with an assorted population comprising educators, linguists, students, and policymakers, and distinct focus groups engaging various stakeholders to foster candid discourse regarding the multi-faceted roles, impediments, and prospective evolution of English within Bangladesh's unique socio-political and educational landscape. Additionally, the investigator will conduct prolonged observations in divergent settings, including educational institutions and community contexts, both urban and rural, and execute an exhaustive content analysis on selected media content, textbooks, and governmental documents to ascertain how SE and NSE are portrayed and manipulated across different societal platforms. A complete thematic analysis will be applied to the collected data, with the involvement of multiple researchers, to fortify analytical rigour and minimize potential biases. The study will adhere to strict ethical protocols, acquiring requisite approvals from the relevant ethical oversight bodies, and procedures for obtaining informed consent, maintaining confidentiality and ensuring participant anonymity will be meticulously observed. It is acknowledged that this qualitative investigation may encounter certain limitations, notably concerning its generalizability and potential subjectivity, and these constraints will be duly recognized with methodological measures deployed to mitigate them. This inquiry is poised to yield vital insights into English's historical, pedagogical, and sociopolitical dimensions within a post-colonial society, thus contributing significantly to the broader discourse on Global Englishes.

Research Question

In the complex linguistic landscape of Bangladesh, the distinctions between Standard English (SE) and Non-Standard English (NSE) extend beyond mere grammatical or lexical differences. Indeed, they are deeply rooted in the country's socio-cultural, educational, and political fabric. A significant portion of the population still reflects the enduring impacts of colonial legacies, influencing their language choices and behaviours. However, there is a rising trend towards embracing Global Englishes, which recognizes the diverse ways English is spoken and used

worldwide, valuing unique accents and meanings. This study aims to examine these multi-faceted elements, leading us to the research question:

How do linguistic identities in Bangladesh navigate the dichotomy between Standard and Non-Standard English, and how are these identities influenced by historical colonial legacies and the contemporary movement towards Global Englishes?

Addressing this question would provide valuable insights into the roles, perspectives, challenges, and potential directions of the English language in various contexts within Bangladesh. This would deepen understanding of linguistic dynamics in a post-colonial setting.

Discussion and Findings

Standard English and Linguistic Evolution: Power, Colonial Legacy, and Sociocultural Dynamics

The concept of standard English is highly complex and showcases a complicated link with sociopolitical dynamics, economic factors, and historical contexts. The following sections provide descriptions of the interconnections of the various elements associated with Standard English.

Construction and Promotion of Standard English

The standardization of language is frequently advocated by powerful societal factions with vested interests, who promote the standardized form as a way to fortify their economic and commercial clout (Davies, 2003). The use of standard English is typically favoured by the erudite and powerful upper class, who support its usage to strengthen their control. An instance of this can be seen in the extensive usage of British English, which helped in the standardization of communication throughout vast territories and, consequently, reinforced the dominance of the British Empire.

Colonial Legacy and English Expansion

The diffusion of the English language was significantly impacted by colonialism. The colonizers actively disseminated Standard English in areas like British-India to reinforce their dominance, establishing English as the " heart of the colonial enterprise " (Pennycook, 1998: 68). The spread of English in places like India, Nigeria, and South Africa commonly caused

the extinction of local languages and traditions. The colonial powers implemented a modus operandi that established a linguistic hierarchy, positioning English at the topmost level, to secure a more convenient mode of control and influence.

The Bangladesh Experience

The English language has become a symbol of modernity and globalization in Bangladesh. Serving as a widely-used secondary language, its influence spans various sectors, including media, education, and business. The distinct pronunciation and vocabulary of Bangladeshi English highlight its evolution and demonstrate the adaptability of the language to local nuances. The shift from core British English sounds to unique tones in Bangladeshi English showcases the emergence of a distinct linguistic identity, mirroring the nation's cultural essence. This divergence from British or American standards fosters a localized version of the language, enhancing the sense of national identity.

Evolution and Perception of Language

Language is a fluid and constantly transforming phenomenon. Changes in language represent a natural aspect of this evolution; however, these organic modifications are frequently met with opposition, as individuals perceive them as deviations or corruptions of the original language. The application of colloquial language or regional dialects in formal settings generates a discourse due to such opposition. In Bangladesh, the colonial background has resulted in potential tensions between the adaptation of Standard English and the current expressions and usage widespread in the region. Moreover, the concept of a pure language is complex given the ongoing blending of languages, evident in the emergence of Spanglish in the United States or Hinglish in India, which challenges the notion of linguistic purity.

Standard English as an Elite Sub-Variety

The determination of appropriate language has frequently been attributed to the privileged and influential members of society throughout history. Trudgill's (1999) depiction of Standard English as a privileged sub-variety accentuates the social dynamics that underlie linguistic norms. The proposition that " a language is a dialect with an army and navy" (Maxwell, 2018; Abend, 2023) highlights the role of political power in shaping linguistic standards. The adoption of the Queen's or King's English was not predicated on its inherent superiority but rather on its association with the ruling class.

Beyond Prejudice and Stereotypes

Cubrovic and Paunovic (2009) demonstrate how socio-political beliefs can shape prejudiced evaluations and perceptions of language, leading to the treatment of one's accent or dialect as a reflection of their social status. This overlooks the conveyed message, as highlighted by Ingram (2009). For instance, African American Vernacular English (AAVE) is subject to undeserved criticism despite being a highly refined and culturally significant dialect. Freeborn (1998) suggests that imposing a single linguistic model is perilous, as it fails to recognize the influence of culture, background, society, and economics when discussing Standard English. Acknowledging language as a dynamic art form is crucial in achieving effective global communication.

From Origins to Global Dominance: The Evolution and Impact of the English Language in Britain and the Indian Subcontinent

Since its emergence in the fifth century, the English language has disseminated globally, resulting in the emergence of diverse dialects including pidgins, creoles, and koinés. Additionally, numerous forms of English have evolved as a result of learners adopting it as a subsequent or non-native language (Schreier et al., 2010). During the Medieval period, English was regarded as "rude and barbarous" compared to the authoritative French language (Mugglestone, 2007). In the 16th century, Standard English gradually emerged as the dominant linguistic form. By the 18th century, non-standard accents were viewed with contempt, as they failed to conform to this linguistic norm (Freeborn, 1998; Hickey, 2012). Eighteenth-century language myths marginalized the lower classes and promoted a perceived moral high ground associated with Standard English (Watts, 2011). Prior to this, all English dialects in Britain held equal prestige. This shift to standardization in the 18th century occurred due to various socio-political influences, particularly during the eras of Queen Anne (1702-1714) and King George (1714-1727), which aimed to fix the language (Hickey, 2012).

From the 19th century, a language hierarchy came into play, with non-standard English being deemed coarse. In contrast, refined language became synonymous with the elite and Oxford English (Hickey, 2012; Mugglestone, 2007). Linguist Albert Marckward's term Colonial Lag (1958) differentiated colonial language forms from their original versions (Bauer, 2002). With the advent of media institutions like the BBC, Standard English was popularized, and there were calls to eliminate "evil habits of speech" patterns (Beal, 2010). Despite its status, most

British speakers currently use non-standard English variants (Gimson, 1984; Cheshire, 1984). Even in the U.S., some accents, particularly Asian and Spanish, face negative bias (Ingram, 2009).

In the Indian context, the groundwork for English's introduction was set on December 31, 1600, when a trading charter was sanctioned by Queen Elizabeth to London merchants (Kachru, 2005). English's foothold in Bengal started with trade establishments in Kolkata and later at Hughli. Sultan Shuja's 1751 decree for the East India Company signified the start of British political influence in India. English's official status in India was cemented in 1835 by Lord McCall, and Lord Bentinck later mandated English-based education. In Bengal, English initially served trade purposes. The region saw irregular English learning until the establishment of public English schools, with Calcutta's first in 1831. By the 19th century's close, Calcutta was a hub of English education. Dhaka University's founding in 1921 extended this to East Bengal.

Before British rule, religious teachings in India were in Arabic and Sanskrit, while Persian was the administrative language. English's introduction altered this linguistic landscape. Leaders like Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar and Syed Ahmad Khan pioneered this English educational culture. Nineteenth-century Bangladesh displayed the prominence of English as the colonial language. While public universities in Bangladesh introduced the Bangla medium in 1972, the momentum for the Bengali language waned over time, with English gaining preference. Private universities have always used English as the instructional medium, even for courses like Bangladesh Studies.

Currently, linguistic variations continue to define socio-cultural demarcations and hierarchies. Such distinctions give rise to accent and dialect-based biases (Irvine & Gal, 2009; Bishop, 2005). English's prevailing influence in public spheres testifies to its intricate history and continuous transformation globally.

English Language and Linguistic Inferiority: Colonization, Standardization, and Psychological Impact in Bangladesh

The spread of the English language has had complex and far-reaching effects on societies around the world, affecting not only communication but also cultural identity and self-perception. This exploration examines the rise of English in Bangladesh and India, focusing on

the concept of linguistic inferiority and its influence on education, social structures, and self-perception.

Linguistic Inferiority- Definition and Implications

The phenomenon of linguistic inferiority in Bangladesh encapsulates the psycho-social dynamic whereby speakers within particular social groups perceive their native dialect or tongue as less honourable or inferior compared to other languages, including foreign ones. In post-colonial Bangladesh, the perpetual effects of English as a symbol of hegemony, excellence, and modern stature are palpable, particularly in urban areas and among the educated elite. The preference for English, or Standard English (SE), not only reflects a linguistic tendency but also embodies deeper socioeconomic and cultural hierarchies, reflecting a larger global trend in which English is often associated with social mobility, international connectivity, and financial prosperity.

The creation of this complex linguistic inferiority in Bangladesh has significant repercussions, potentially leading to a diluted sense of confidence and pride in local language forms that are crucial to the nation's cultural identity. Furthermore, the prioritization of English in academic environments can impede the education of people who lack contact with or feel uncomfortable with the language, exacerbating economic disparities and giving rise to a society stratified by language artistry. Additionally, the excessive emphasis on SE sustains a homogenized view of English, concealing the diverse Englishes spoken worldwide, including in Bangladesh. The concept of standard language perpetuates the legacy of colonialism, suggesting that deviations from the norm are somehow flawed or inadequate, ignoring the nuanced and diverse aspects of language that are constantly adapting to their local environment.

The question of linguistic inferiority in Bangladesh is not exclusively a personal preference or aesthetic judgment but is intimately tied to historical, cultural, and socioeconomic factors that have influenced the country's relationship with both its own dialect and English. This situation requires a meticulous analysis of linguistic regulations and mechanisms that can safeguard the diversity of local linguistic traditions while fulfilling the practical requirements and ambitions of an interconnected global community. It underscores the inadequacy of an unbalanced approach that disregards the multidimensional role of language in determining individual and collective identities, social connections, and opportunities for growth and progress.

English Language Education and Linguistic Prejudice: Today's English language education is primarily based on Standard English, leading to other varieties being marginalized and considered less prestigious. This standardization creates a form of linguistic prejudice, where individuals are judged by their linguistic variety or language, rather than their ideas or merits. In Bangladesh, for instance, English language teachers often feel compelled to suppress local dialects, leading to feelings of inferiority among students who are not proficient in Standard English. Example: As emphasized by Gret Haller, a former ambassador and mediator in Bosnia, the English language is widely regarded as a language of dominance. Drawing from her extensive experience, Haller observed that individuals who are not proficient in English are frequently overlooked, as the ability to speak another language is frequently regarded as an indication of inferiority (Council of Europe, 2001).

Psychological Colonization and Historical Context: The imposition of English by colonizing nations has not only transformed communication but also led to a form of psychological colonization. This phenomenon can be seen in how English has supplanted Arabic, Sanskrit, and Persian in India, initially becoming the language of rulers and later spreading to other castes and communities. Example: Bengali writer Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay once warned of the encroaching influence of English, predicting a day when even traditional Bengali festival invitations would be written in English.

The Globalization of Economics and Business: The recent phenomenon of globalization has caused a notable increase in the importance of Standard English in Bangladesh, resulting in its hegemonic position. This has led to significant psychological effects on individuals, influencing their personal beliefs, professional opportunities, and cultural values.

The rise of English language in Bangladesh is a remarkable demonstration of how language can shape cultural identity, self-perception, and societal values. Linguistic inadequacy and the resulting psychological subordination have far-reaching implications, affecting an individual's self-confidence, educational prospects, and the preservation of their cultural heritage. To tackle these intricate dynamics, policies and educational practices need to acknowledge and endorse linguistic diversity while recognizing the continued significance of English in an increasingly globalized world.

Standardization and Suppression: The Paradox of English Mastery and the Quest for Linguistic Diversity

Language serves as an indispensable component of culture and an essential aspect of social interaction. Therefore, it should not be restricted or shackled by the artificial constraints of standardization. In the same manner as other cultural expressions, language thrives on individual choices and unique practices, reflecting the richness and beauty of human diversity. Searle (1983: 68) captures this concept, stating,

Thus, when we talk of 'mastery' of the standard language, we must be conscious of the terrible irony of the word, that the English language itself was the language of the master, the carrier of his arrogance and brutality.

In some countries, such as Bangladesh, this standardization takes on a more oppressive form. Here, the anxiety and trepidation around making mistakes in English result in an educational focus on Standard English, suppressing other forms of the language. This fosters an image of English that is both intimidating and arrogant, and the local populace often perceives it as brutal.

The contemporary phenomenon of globalization has resulted in the appreciation of Standard English, which has fortified its preeminent status in Bangladesh. This has had a profound psychological impact, affecting personal conceptions, professional prospects, and cultural principles.

It is notable that there is a prevalent intimidation towards the English language in rural areas where 70% of the population resides. Within these communities, English is viewed as an unfamiliar and threatening language, to the extent that basic questions in English, such as " What's your name? " can be met with total silence (Bhattacharjee, 2008: 17).

This notion of English as a symbol of perfection infiltrates the educational system of Bangladesh. Educators uphold Standard English as the exclusive acceptable form of communication and as a means to a lucrative and promising career. Such an approach provides a gateway to social prestige, affluence, and power (Soboleva, 2015). However, the pressure to conform to this standard leaves many learners feeling powerless and uneasy with English, regarding it as an unattainable ideal.

Nevertheless, the insistence on Standard English as a universal norm poses problems. In reality, linguistic standards should vary across regions and cultures. The imposition of Standard English by English-speaking nations can become a manifestation of linguistic imperialism

reminiscent of colonial practices. In the present global landscape, the imposition of Standard English frequently mirrors the tactics of Colonial English, focusing on strict adherence to norms instead of promoting understanding and appreciation for the diversity of languages. This mindset perpetuates a tradition of linguistic colonialism that seeks to dominate and subjugate rather than celebrate the rich tapestry of human expression.

An Exploration of Non-Standard English: Linguistic Diversity, Cultural Identity, and the Imperative for Preservation

The multi-faceted significance of non-standard English goes beyond language and includes cultural identity, social dynamics, and political history. According to Skutnabb Kangas (2000), preserving linguistic human rights is crucial for linguistic diversity, and any infringement on these rights in educational settings can challenge both linguistic and cultural diversity.

Non-standard forms of English are vital in conserving the unique characteristics of diverse social groups and cultural backgrounds. The use of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) reflects the distinct cultural and historical background of African Americans, highlighting the significance of non-standard dialects in maintaining diverse social groups. This assertion reflects a complex combination of individual identity, cultural heritage, and unique expression rather than a simple linguistic preference. Similarly, the use of Scots in Scotland or Hawaiian Creole in Hawaii demonstrates how non-standard dialects function to maintain cultural identity. Advocating for the preservation of non-standard dialects not only promotes diversity but also upholds the values and self-expression of society's members.

It is important to note that societal perceptions of certain dialects have the potential to foster prejudiced beliefs and biased attitudes. Standard dialect speakers may perceive non-standard dialect speakers as less intelligent or inferior, leading to unfair treatment. For instance, speakers of Cockney English in London may face negative stereotypes about their education and social class. Thus, embracing non-standard dialects allows for more equitable social interactions and combats the negative stereotypes that may exist.

Davies (2003) further highlights the unequal distribution of standard language norms, leading to misunderstandings and stigmatization. In educational settings, this can manifest as teachers unfairly judging students based on their dialect rather than their abilities. Yet, within this, variation is accepted as human and tolerable as long as it does not abandon the norm. This

perspective recognizes the value of non-standard dialects and the richness they contribute to linguistic landscapes.

Moreover, in post-colonial contexts like Bangladesh, non-standard English can symbolize a form of resistance against colonial dominance. For example, the development of Bangladeshi English, with its unique phonetics and vocabulary, reflects the country's struggle against linguistic colonization. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (2000) explain how mimicry portrays the complex relationship between colonizers and colonized, extending into language and culture. Non-standard English in this context can be seen as a reaction against linguistic imperialism, reflecting multi-layered relations and creating regional varieties that challenge colonisers' control.

In short, non-standard English plays a vital role in sustaining cultural and linguistic diversity, promoting equality, and reflecting complex historical and social dynamics. From AAVE in the United States to Bangladeshi English, these dialects are not merely variations of language but profound symbols of identity, resistance, and human diversity. Their preservation and recognition are vital to fostering a more inclusive and understanding world.

Standard English (SE) and 'My English' (ME):

Discussing the fundamental nature of language change and lack of ownership: In order for language change to transpire, it is requisite for individuals to possess distinct characteristics and for their respective grammars to vary. It is equally imperative for an individual's grammar to undergo change over a period. Language inherently exhibits variations both within and among individuals, and these variations allow and mirror changes in the language itself (Davies, 2003). Moreover, the concept of language is abstract, suggesting that it cannot be owned. By this logic, other abstract notions like love, mercy, and honesty, as well as academic disciplines like chemistry, physics, and biology, cannot be owned either. Furthermore, the notion of language being abstract indicates that it is not something that can be owned. Therefore, each person has their own unique connection with every language. English is spoken by approximately 380 million people as their first language and more than 700 million people as their second language worldwide (as per the English Language Guide in 2008, and Christen in 2008). As such, English is not solely the property of native speakers, but is also democratically shared.

Connecting literature and colonization: The relationship between Caliban and Prospero in The Tempest by William Shakespeare can be interpreted as a form of colonization, where Caliban once trusted and adored Prospero but was ultimately enslaved by him upon his arrival on the island. Caliban's character holds significant potential. Similarly, the English language was forcefully imposed upon colonized people and the world at large, with praise and adulation. However, contemporary African literature has subverted this trend and utilized the English language in a different manner.

Introducing the Concept of My English

The term My English (ME) is a self-invented working concept that challenges the traditional hierarchy of Standard English (SE), promoting individual expression and ownership of the language. Conceived as a response to the increasing globalization of English, this innovative term advocates for a personalized and democratic approach to the language. It recognizes that each person's use of English is unique and shaped by their cultural background, personal experiences, and needs. Undoubtedly, Standard English is the most eminent form of the English language. Nonetheless, given the purported 700 million non-native speakers worldwide (as per the guide to the English Language, 2008), it is increasingly impractical to claim that there is just one accurate way to utilize this language for communication. My English celebrates the idea that English belongs to everyone, no matter where they are from. As more and more people around the world learn and speak it, English is not just for native speakers anymore. It is a global language for all of us to share. The concept being discussed is revolutionary in its essence. The fundamentals of My English (ME) are rooted in three fundamental principles. Firstly, it gives precedence to communication over adherence to established grammatical regulations, laying emphasis on comprehensibility and interpretability. Secondly, it acknowledges the unqualified entitlements of individuals to tailor English to their requirements, fostering personalization of the language. Finally, My English extends beyond native speakers and promotes non-native speakers to acquire the language, challenging the cultural hegemony of English-speaking countries.

In areas where English has been introduced through colonization or trade, local dialects have merged with English to create new forms that reflect unique cultural perspectives. These forms are not considered broken or incorrect English but rather a localized expression of the language. Esteemed writers such as Chinua Achebe and Salman Rushdie have utilized English in ways that celebrate their cultural heritage, highlighting how the language can be used to convey

distinctive viewpoints. On the internet, people from diverse backgrounds use English in various ways to communicate, with internet slang, abbreviations, and localized expressions contributing to the evolving landscape of My English.

Advancing My English poses a challenge to established power dynamics linked to Standard English, thereby generating room for linguistic multiplicity and resisting the enforcement of a single accurate mode of speech. By endowing individuals with the capability to utilize English as a medium of self-expression, My English renders the language more accessible and facilitates its growth in unforeseen and innovative ways. Nonetheless, advocates who support maintaining traditional linguistic regulations may criticize My English due to its potential impact on clarity, professionalism, and the preservation of a common understanding.

The concept of My English is a revolutionary idea that exalts the association of an individual with the English language. It acknowledges that English is accessible to all its users and can be modified to accommodate diverse contexts and individual necessities. The adoption of this notion fosters varied linguistic expressions, cultural awareness, and personal development. This is achieved through the abandonment of inflexible and authoritarian conventions that traditionally governed the use of the English language. My English amplifies the voices of those previously unheard and establishes ownership of the language in the hands of each speaker. It is not just a matter of defying established rules, but also an acceptance of the fact that norms are constantly changing and are owned collectively. The introduction of the term My English provokes a discourse and inquiry into how English is assimilated, customized, and made accessible by speakers around the world. The concept of My English is a novel notion that underscores the democratization and global reach of the English language, promoting individual ownership and linguistic variation.

Providing a specific literary example: Amos Tutuola, born on 20 June 1920 and deceased on 8 June 1997, is a prime example of a writer who challenged the conventions of the English language. In 1952, Tutuola's debut novel, The Palm-Wine Drinkard, showcased his unique style of English, which highlighted the grammar and expression of African soil. Despite receiving acclaim in England and the United States, Tutuola's broken English was widely rejected in his homeland of Nigeria. Some critics argue that Tutuola's English perpetuates a negative stereotype of uneducated and uncivilized Africans. However, proponents of post-colonial theory view Tutuola's English as a form of protest against colonial power. Tutuola's novel, based on Yoruba folklore, was written in Yoruba English or Pidgin English, further

adding to its controversy. The widespread translations of the novel indicate its importance as a foundational text in African literature. Contemporary research on World Englishes acknowledges the presence of multiple Englishes, each having their own distinct vocabulary and significance, which have been marginalized (Kubota, 2015).

Shifting focus to Bangladesh: Bangladeshi students, despite English being a mandatory subject at primary, secondary, and higher secondary education levels, often face challenges in acquiring effective communication skills when learning it as a second language. In conclusion, the employment of only Standard English for English language instruction in Bangladesh may be interpreted as a manifestation of cultural supremacy, which could impede the establishment of a common language for communication and, therefore, put at risk the objective of enhancing proficiency in global communication abilities. In the end, this could compromise the goal of developing skills in global communication.

Discussing standard vs. non-standard English: Standard English, as a linguistic concept, carries several misconceptions and implications. The utilization of Standard English language in daily discourse is not inherently associated with an individual's financial affluence, level of formal education, or standing within society, despite the potential implications suggested by the aforementioned research paper. In other words, one should not automatically assume that an individual who employs Standard English is necessarily affluent, highly educated, or holds a privileged social status. The procedure of standardizing language is not a natural progression but rather an intentionally constructed system of fixed rules and norms. In essence, languages undergo natural evolution and change over time, but standardization entails the imposition of specific structures or guidelines, which may not necessarily reflect the organic state of the language. This artificial standardization, however, serves a purpose. Every nation requires a standardized version of its language to ensure clear communication in widely broadcasted mediums like newspapers and TV news. Yet, it is crucial to note that this standard language should not overshadow or replace the diverse local variants. Equally important is the realization that Standard English can be viewed as a linguistic imposition by native speakers onto non-native speakers globally.

> Detailed examples of linguistic variations in Bangladesh: Phonetics and phonology, linked to our physical organs, vary among people globally. This variation results in different phonological patterns regionally and individually. A study in Bangladesh found that English speakers there deviated from the standard Received Pronunciation, as documented by Hoque (2010).

Concluding with the promotion of linguistic diversity in Bangladesh

The idea of safeguarding the linguistic rights of humans is emphasized by the acknowledgement and acceptance of all variations in language, regardless of whether they arise from physical, social, cultural, or personal factors. Within the framework of Global Englishes, Bangladesh has yet to fully acknowledge its distinct rendition of the English language, which is largely confined to specific domains. Nonetheless, it should be observed that the English employed in Bangladeshi publications and transmissions is a nascent variety of language that is gaining significance on a global level. Despite the current limitations of Bangladeshi English, this incipient form possesses a distinct Bangladeshi identity. Hossain, Hasan, and Meraj (2015) speculate that it is improbable that forthcoming research will uncover the attributes of this unique version of English and how it is utilized by the Bangladeshi populace.

Conclusion

In the current era, characterized predominantly by capitalist values, language itself has been commodified. This is particularly evident in the context of Bangladesh, where the English language is being treated as a product, subject to the influences of what is referred to as the imperialistic forces of Standard English (SE). Consequently, the unique Bangladeshi variety of English finds itself imperilled, overshadowed by the ubiquity and dominance of SE. This circumstance not only poses a threat to the diversity of language but also has wider implications for cultural identity and individual expression within the country. There is an urgent demand for the development of educational resources in English that reflect and incorporate the Bangladeshi variant of the language. This transition would acknowledge the profusion of local linguistic customs, challenging the homogenizing effect of Standard English. Furthermore, educators in the domain of English Language Teaching are advised to adopt all forms of English in their teaching methodology, thereby encouraging a more inclusive and culturally pertinent approach. This strategy aims to preserve the unique way English is spoken and understood in Bangladesh, ensuring it aligns with the country's distinct cultural context. By according equal value to all English dialects, it is possible to foster a more democratic perception of the language, thereby aligning education with the current linguistic landscape and cultural heritage of Bangladesh. This perspective represents a significant step towards a more diverse and localized comprehension of the English language on a global scale.

References:

Abend, G. (2023). Words and Distinctions for the Common Good: Practical Reason in the Logic of Social Science. Princeton University Press.

Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G. & Tiffin, H. (1889). The Empire Writes Back. Routledge.

Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., & Tiffin, H. (2000). Post-colonial Studies: The Key Concepts. Routledge.

Bauer, L. (2002). An Introduction to International Varieties of English. Edinburgh University Press.

Bhattacharjee, N. (2008). Developing Speaking Skill at Secondary and Higher Secondary Levels: Problems and Few Recommendations. Stamford Journal of English, 4, 15-29.

Bishop, H., Coupland, N., & Garrett, P. (2005). Conceptual accent evaluation: Thirty Years of accent prejudice in the UK. Acta Linguistica Hafniensia, 37(1), 131-154. https://doi.org/10.1080/03740463.2005.10416087

Cheshire, J. (1984). Indigenous nonstandard English varieties and education. In P. Trudgill (Ed.), Language in the British Isles. Cambridge University Press.

Christen, S. (2008). Native or Non-native speakers. Who are the better English teachers? Retrieved from https://www.grin.com/document/140542

Council of Europe (2001). Linguistic Diversity for Democratic Citizenship in Europe. Éditions du Conseil de l'Europe.

Crystal, D. (1995). The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language. Cambridge University Press.

Čubrović, B. & Paunović, T. (2009). Ta(l)king English Phonetics across frontiers. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Davies, A. (2003). The Native Speaker: Myth and Reality. Multilingual Matters Ltd.

Freeborn, D. (1998). From Old English to Standard English (2nd ed.). University of Ottawa Press.

Gimson, A. C. (1984). The RP accent. In P. Trudgill (Ed.), Language in the British Isles. Cambridge University Press.

Graham, G. F. (1869). A book about words. London.

Hickey, R. (2012). Standards of English: Codified Varieties around the World. Cambridge University Press.

Hoque, M. A. (2010). The Influence of the Local Varieties on the Sound Patterns of English: A Case Study of Bangladeshi Tertiary Students. IIUC Studies, 7, 197-220.

Hossain, M. M., Hasan, M. & Meraj, A. A. (2015). Redefining Bangladeshi Variety of English: Print and Electronic Media Perspective. International Journal of Advanced Research, 3(6), 1280-1286.

Ingram, P. D. (2009). Are Accents One of the Last Acceptable Areas for Discrimination? Journal of Extension, 47(1).

Irvine, J. T. & Gal, S. (2009). Language Ideology and Linguistic Differentiation. In A. Duranti (Ed.), Linguistic Anthropology: A Reader (2nd ed.). Wiley-Blackwell.

Kachru, B. B. (2005). Asian Englishes Beyond The Canon. Hong Kong University Press.

Kachru, Y. & Smith, L. E. (2008). Cultures, Contexts, And World Englishes. Routledge.

Kerswill, P. (2001). Mobility, meritocracy and dialect levelling: the fading (and phasing) out of Received Pronunciation. In P. Rajamäe & K. Vogelberg (Eds.), British studies in the new millennium: the challenge of the grassroots. University of Tartu.

Kerswill, P. (2006). RP, Standard English and the standard/non-standard relationship. In D. Britain (Ed.), Language in the British Isles (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

Kubota, R. (2015). Unequal Englishes - The Politics of Englishes Today. Palgrave Macmillan.

Maxwell, A. (2018). When theory is a joke: The Weinreich witticism in Linguistics. Beiträge zur Geschichte der Sprachwissenschaft, 28(2), 263-292.

Milroy, J. (2000). Historical description and the ideology of the standard language. In L. Wright (Ed.), The development of Standard English, 1300–1800. Theories, descriptions, conflicts. Cambridge University Press.

Milroy, L. (1999). Standard English and language ideology in Britain and the United States. In T. Bex & R. J. Watts (Eds.), Standard English. The widening debate. Routledge.

Mugglestone, L. (1995). 'Talking Proper'. The rise of accent as social symbol. Clarendon Press.

Mugglestone, L. (2007). Talking Proper: The Rise of Accent as Social Symbol. Oxford Scholarship Online.

Pennycook, A. (1998). English And The Discourses Of Colonialism. Routledge.

Phillipson, R. (2009). Linguistic Imperialism Continued. Orient Blackswan Private Limited.

Rosewarne, D. (1984). Estuary English. Times Educational Supplement, 42, 19 October.

Schreier, D., Trudgill, P., Schneider, E. W., & Williams, J. P. (2010). The Lesser-Known Varieties of English. Cambridge University Press.

Searle, C. (1983) A common language. Race and Class, 25(2), 65-74.

SkutnabbKangas, T. (2000). Linguistic Genocide in Education—Or Worldwide Diversity and Human Rights?. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Soboleva, S. (2015, Feb). Global Language: New Opportunities or Inferiority Complex. US-China Foreign Language, 13(2), 85-91. https://doi.org/10.17265/1539-8080/2015.02.001

Trudgill, P. (1999). Standard English: What it isn't. In T. Bex, & R. J. Watts (Eds.), Standard English: The widening debate (pp. 117-128). London: Routledge.

Watts, R. J. (2011). Language Myths and the History of English. Oxford Scholarship Online.

Widdowson, H. G. (1994). The Ownership of English. TESOL Quarterly, 377-388.

Wyld, H. C. (1934). The best English. Proceedings of the Society for Pure English, 4, 603-21.