

# English and Sustainable Languages: Collective Consciousness in Bangladesh

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**Abstract:** In modern times, sustainability plays an important role, a fact which is also valid in sociolinguistic studies. The comparison of English to other languages in Bangladesh is examined from the point of view of sustainability. It has not yet been established whether the English language is sustainable or not in the context of Bangladesh and around the world. Most studies on sustainable development neglect the relationship between sustainability and a particular country's language. The purpose of this work is to expand our knowledge of how to measure sustainable language based on specific indicators. The research first explored the development of English in Bangladesh, sustainable language and collective consciousness. Overall, these results suggest the sustainability of Bangladesh's different languages. Ultimately, this article is intended to contribute to a new perspective on the English language in Bangladesh and sociolinguistics in general. The findings should make an important contribution to the field of *sustainable language*.

**Keywords:** Collective consciousness, environmental language, global language, language and development, sustainable language

## Introduction

This is the first study to undertake a longitudinal analysis of the English language and sustainability in the context of Bangladesh. Today, more than 6,000 languages are spoken around the world, but some 2,000 of them are spoken by fewer than a thousand speakers (Chan 2016). The English language is now considered a lingua franca worldwide for the sake of globalisation. People around the world are studying English to maintain scientific development and technology, especially since the Second World War. In Bangladesh, people started to learn English in the 18th century due to the British socio-political

engagement. In the linguistic history of Bangladesh, the English language has gradually been learnt due to people's professions, social status, globalisation and it being a lingua franca. Bangladesh's education policy has always made English lessons compulsory in order to promote global marketing, technology and scientific achievements. Though textbooks have still introduced English to learners as a global language, people have already begun to consider which language will ultimately be more sustainable in Bangladesh, because without expertise in a sustainable language an individual cannot develop a good career in the future. It is high time to consider the concept of a *sustainable language* rather than the term *global language*. The acceptance of a language in a given territory is closely related to the collective consciousness of the community there. The collective awareness of a language is always changeable in a region for various reasons. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate the collective awareness of English among Bangladeshi people and the proposed term *sustainable language*.

Throughout the paper, the term *sustainable language* refers to investigations of collective consciousness of a linguistic community to consider a surviving language which will be practically sustainable in the future. The term sustainable language can be defined as the collective consciousness of people in a competitive linguistic landscape where a language will be sustained in the long run in the fields of knowledge, media, diplomacy, economics, communication and the digital world. It is a relative prediction, decided and pragmatically practiced by the collective consciousness of a particular community. This definition highlights the speakers' activities, attitude and acceptance when considering a language to be sustainable. It can be broadened to include the relationship between sustainable goals and the role of a particular language around the world. In terms of the English language in Bangladesh, the term sustainable language is accepted by people instead of *global language* or *international language*. This paper proposes that a sustainable language can be determined by certain factors which are observed by the collective consciousness of people.

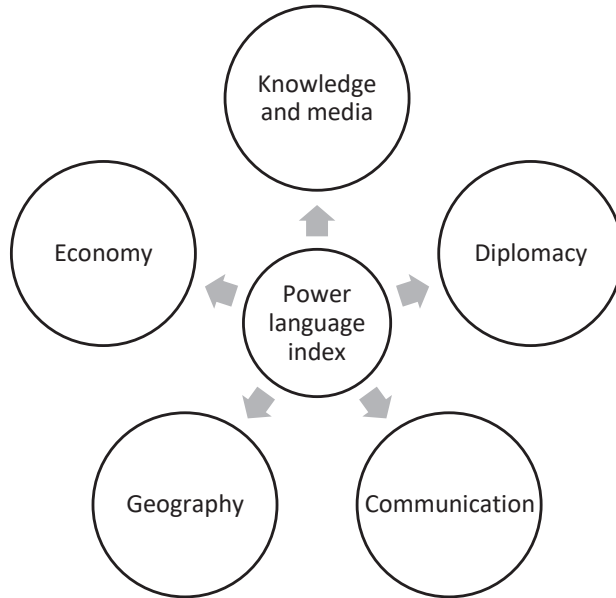
## Research Background

According to Springboard for Talent: Language Learning and Integration in a Globalized World (2017), there are 7097 languages spoken around the world; 2464 of these are endangered; 23 languages dominate, spoken by over one half of the world's population; 40% of people have no access to education

in a language they understand; furthermore, 244 million people are international migrants, of whom 20 million are refugees, a 41% increase since 2000; migrants and refugees alone would constitute the 5<sup>th</sup> most populous country in the world.

Chan (2017), an outstanding fellow at the INSEAD Innovation and Policy Initiative, explained the Power Language Index (PLI). He also identified five indicators by which to judge a language's power:

1. the ability to travel widely (geography)
2. the ability to earn a living (economy)
3. the ability to communicate with others (communication)
4. the ability to acquire knowledge and consume media (knowledge and media)
5. the ability to engage in diplomacy (diplomacy)



Based on the above indicators, Chan (2017) concluded that English is the most powerful language, followed by Mandarin, French, Spanish and Arabic. Even considering China's economic success, he said that by 2050 English would be the strongest language. However, Spanish will rise to third place and French and Arabic will occupy fourth and fifth places, respectively. According to "the Power Language Index (PLI)," the English language has a rank of 1. On the other hand, the Bengali language in Bangladesh has a rank of 39. The score is 0.029.

This language strength index (PLI) shows which languages in the world can survive and become a sustainable language (Chan, 2016).

On 7 June, 2022, the Vice Chancellor of Dhaka University in Bangladesh, Md. Akhtaruzzaman told that the simpler the language, the more sustainable it is; furthermore, he suggested that the easier a language is to understand and present, the more it will remain sustainable (as cited in M. Islam, 2022). It is important to note that there is growing concern about language and sustainability in Bangladesh.

### **Objectives and research questions:**

The objective of the research is to formulate predictions regarding sustainable language in the context of Bangladesh. Based on the collective consciousness perspective in Bangladesh, the following research questions were established:

- a. What will be the job language in Bangladesh by 2050?
- b. What are the main factors of a sustainable language?
- c. What terms do Bangladeshi people like to use for the English language?

The research questions and objectives were formulated and investigated using both primary and secondary data, to complete the study.

### **Literature review:**

A large and growing body of literature has investigated the English language in Bangladesh. Chowdhury and Kabir (2014) thought that English has always been a major concern in the school curriculum. Studies have associated this with the residual colonial legacy of the British education system. Hamid (2016) and Rahman and Pandian (2018) considered English language learning in Bangladesh to be a global marketing issue, which is needed for capital survival in increasingly globalised world markets. Rahman and Pandian (2018) also emphasised that the English language is necessary for technological development in Bangladesh. National education policies gradually imposed the English language, citing the need for it in interpersonal and international communication (M.S. Islam & Hashim 2019). Rahman et al. (2019) noted that the global importance of English in Bangladesh has become a top priority for preserving economic growth and building a trained workforce.

Traditionally, the term *collective consciousness* is generally understood to mean a series of shared beliefs, ideas and moral attitudes that work as a uniting force within society. A considerable body of literature has been published on collective consciousness. The collective consciousness of a nation is a consciousness shared by most individuals of the same nationality (Mathiesen,2010). Carl Jung first introduced the theory of the *collective unconscious*, which means that humans and their ancestors are connected through shared experiences (Gimbel,2020). Steve Beckow (2020) noted that collective awareness is the key to social impact on people. Emile Durkheim, a French theorist and sociologist, is credited with coining the term collective consciousness in sociology and related social sciences. Understanding what makes a society work is important for collective consciousness. He believed that primitive societies worked through *mechanical solidarity*. This is because society is somewhat simple and homogeneous (i.e. there are few differences based on race, class or profession and they are connected through shared beliefs and values. Lloyd (2007) stated that the collective consciousness of a society is formed by political acts, social constructs and contestable practices. The people of a society also develop collective consciousness about their language based on several socio-political issues.

The loss of linguistic diversity is a well-known phenomenon that linguists address in numerous ways. To give life to a language, Lewis (2014) developed a set of five conditions using the acronym “FAMED,” which comprises functions, acquisition, motivation, environment and differentiation. Furthermore, the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations have made people aware of the longevity of language among several linguistic communities. It develops a collective awareness of which language will persist and be sustainable for these professional and future careers. For example, young people and parents of children in Bangladesh have already started to think about which language will soon be prominent, powerful, survivable, dominant and sustainable for a better professional career in Bangladesh. For example, Faroque (2016) opined that

[e]very day there is so much scientific research, so many new theories are being published in English that it is almost impossible to translate it into Bengali immediately. What will happen in the future?

Therefore, the term *sustainable language* is used in this document to address some of the more prominent issues of recent sociolinguistics.

### **a. Population size and language sustainability:**

The sustainability of a language depends on the global population of the speakers of the language. The more people who speak it, the lower probability of language loss. Collective awareness of a language and the number of speakers is proportional. The influence of population size on language patterns and trends is controversial (Bromham et al., 2015). Bromham et al.(2015) stated that population size can play an important role in language development. A larger population will produce more innovation and is less prone to random loss of cultural elements. Wichmann and Holman (2009) noted that at least under certain conditions, major languages change more slowly than the smaller languages.

### **b. Technology and the Survival of Language:**

The modern world has seen great technological advancement in almost every facet of humanity (Tawil, 2019). Nations that cannot be involved in this massive technological revolution of the 21st century are in danger of losing their very existence. From the point of view of language, this combination of language and technology is called *human language technology* (Uszkoreit,2000).

Contemporary analysis claims that adequate use of technology complements development. Therefore, The *digital tool of affordability* ensures the sustainability of language through daily activities and public work (Tawil, 2019). Over the past two decades, studies of the phylo-genetic emergence of language have typically focused on grammatical characteristics (Mufwene,2013). Now, the survival of a language depends on its technological attachment to the digital world. Language technology involves computer performance in human language, whether spoken or written. Key technologies will drive the development of computing over the next decade. This includes spoken language, dialogue systems, machine translation, etc.

The development of a language also depends on the amount of language learning and language use. According to recent research, technology can be a means of creating a true and pleasant atmosphere for young language learners when it is used correctly and effectively (Iter,2015). It is thought that the more advanced a language is in the use of technology, the more likely it is that the language will be sustainable and viable in the future. Collective consciousness determines language competence by measuring the power and competence that

exist in human society. It can be called *linguistic collective consciousness*. Bangladeshis are looking for a technology-friendly language because recent research indicates that technologies have transformed human communication toward human dependence (Healey, 2016). As a result, what the language of the future will be depends on the coexistence of any language with technology. Therefore, in the field of language education, the emphasis is placed on various uses of technology. Thousands of language games, cartoons, etc. are being created all over the world for language promotion. Wealthy nations are developing technology-based online games, sites and entertainment to promote their languages. Teachers need support and training to integrate technology into language teaching (Ahmadi, 2018). Technology, the Internet, and some computer games could promote language learning if they are used correctly (Iter, 2015). Therefore, it has become clear that technology is the biggest weapon in the “language war” of the present world. The further ahead people in the language group are in the positive use of this technology, the more sustainable the language will be in the future. Language learning and technology research is often referred to as computer-assisted language learning, which covers research in all forms of computer use for language learning purposes, from software specifically designed for language learning to web environments such as virtual environments, social networks and computer games (Healey, 2016). It entails activities that occur in web-based environments within language learning (Healey, 2016). In the context of Bangladesh, people rely entirely on English-language technology. Through computers, software, technology and social networks, English is gaining prominence as a modern, technology-friendly and sustainable language for people who are completely dependent on English in Bangladesh. Furthermore, the more people in Bangladesh are involved in the use of technology, the more English is established as a sustainable, acceptable and modern language.

The powerful nations of the world tried to impose their language on other countries and the people. The relationship between language and power is very old, so the languages of powerful nations spread through other nations. In linguistic sociology, this is called *linguistic imperialism* (Akteruzzaman & R. Islam, 2017; Canagarajah, 1999; Khan, 2019; Phillipson, 2009, 1992; Rose & Conama, 2018). In this age of information and technology revolution, the languages of technologically advanced countries are constantly enriching and spreading digital content in the virtual world. Therefore, now that the competition language will be richer in digital content, the global community will



be forced to become dependent on that language. It will become one of the dominant languages of the future as well as a sustainable language in the virtual world. When analyzing the case of Bangladesh, it has to be said that most of the people in Bangladesh who access the Internet in the virtual world to take advantage of information and technology are relying on the English language and that digital content is created in English. As a result, people of all occupations in Bangladesh are learning the English language on their own through the virtual world and using the English language on their own through social networks. In fact, through this process, the idea is spreading among the people of Bangladeshi society that technology is one of the criteria that determines a sustainable language. According to the Worldwide Website Content Language Survey, the English language encompasses 63.4% of the Internet world (the virtual world). It is followed by the Russian language (8.1%). For the Bengali language, there is less than 0.1% of the total online content. Healey (2016) stated that English plays an essential role in the dissemination of primary and secondary languages around the world, especially with communication tools based on the Internet.

### **c. Persistence of the literature: A critical element in the survival of language:**

One of the elements determining the survival of a language is its literary vastness and permanence. The literary antiquity of a language depends on the permanence and sustainability of that language. The collective linguistic consciousness of people in society believes that the antiquity of language means the future of language. For this reason, the people of Bangladesh are interested in English, Chinese, and other long-lasting Western languages. It can be compared with the Survival of the Fittest, which comes from Darwin's theory of evolution (Campbell et al., 1994; Costa, 2014; Hodge, 1874; Johnson, 1996; Lennox, 2015) with the term *Linguistic Survival Theory*. Power and politics are directly associated with the language struggle. The collective thinking of people in society holds that the longer the language of literature struggles with power and politics, the more sustainable and fit the language is. Note that the practice of literature is equally important to ensure the development of a language. Renowned literature and writers influence the sustainability of a language. For example, the Bengali Renaissance that occurred in the early twentieth century brought the Bengali language to a sustainable state. Sustainable Bengali literature by the Nobel Laureate in Literature, Rabindranath



Tagore, the poet Kazi Nazrul, Michael Madhusudan Dutta and other writers later took the Bengali language toward temporary stability.

#### **d. Linguistic Adaptation and Survival of Language: A geocentric and web-based environment:**

A language's environment is essential for its true development. The language environment can be divided into two parts: the geographical environment and the web-based environment (Healey, 2016). The sustainability of a language depends on its ability to adapt to these two environments. In addition to how eco-friendly a language is, it is also important to determine the longevity of a language. This struggle for language can undoubtedly be compared to the ecological struggle of fauna for survival in their environment. From the point of view of sociolinguistics, this can be called *linguistic adaptation*. Depending on an animal's ability to survive and adapt, the probability of it surviving in a particular environment varies. Adaptation and survival are accompanied by the same linguistic environment in society and geographical range as the ecological formulas of animals and plants, showing the power of modern language. In the context of Bangladesh, for example, the Bengali language has to survive by fighting with other languages of the surrounding lands.

Linguistic adaptation is mainly of two types; they may be called *structural adaptations* and *behavioural adaptations*. As part of structural adaptation, the Bengali language can be spoken on the territory of Bangladesh. To survive in this land, the Bengali language has always been influenced by foreign languages. By evolving a bit, foreign languages constantly accept words in their own language as linguistic suicide. This can be called *structural linguistic adaptation*. For example, The number of subcontinental and foreign words entered Bengali from Persian, Turkish, Arabic, English, French, Dutch, German, Portuguese, Hindi, Urdu, Gujarati, Malayalam, Tamil, Telegu, Sindhi, Chinese and Japanese languages. The largest number of Bengali vocabulary there is mainly from Persian, Arabic, and English. These foreign words are used in Bengali language with *structural adaption* linguistically. Furthermore, if Bengali people did not compromise their geographical and virtual languages (web-based environments), the Bengali language would be in lexical crisis. Therefore, the people of Bangladesh assimilate into their own language words from the languages that become powerful as sustainable languages (in terms of promotion and expansion), through a kind of collective consciousness both officially and personally.

For example:

*kalama bandhu* > *kalamanist* (columnist)  
*methar* > *paricchannakarmi* (cleaner)

In the struggle for survival (structural adaptation) of Bengali words, the size of words in the language is sometimes decreasing and adapts to the influence of other languages.

For example:

*sasya kana* > *dana* (small grain)  
*khadyadrabya* > *khobar* (food item)

This evolution of language is essentially a struggle in the linguistic world to make one's own language sustainable or to assimilate another sustainable language into one's own language, which has been identified as linguistic adaptation in this study.

To investigate Bengali language as *behavioural adaptation*, in the twenty-first century, with the development of feminist thought in Bangladesh, there has been a change in the way people choose Bengali words. They are beginning to think that the use of certain words also degrades women. Therefore, they are objecting to certain words, leading to a current trend.

For example:

*beti* > *nari* (female)  
*chhatri* > *siksarthi* (female student)  
*dharsita* > *saririka niryatita* (rape)  
*kalankita* > *anakankhita* (scandal)

This type of change can be called *linguistic behavioural adaptation*.

#### **e. Sustainable languages: Economic and social psychology perspective:**

Historically, economics has been closely associated with a particular language. Economic development and growth in GDP per capita are associated with the development of language. A sustainable language is one that ensures economic

growth through education, practice and use, as determined by human collective consciousness. According to Faroque (2016), the English language was the mother tongue of those who ruled the capitalist world for the last two and a half centuries. As a result, science has been practiced in this language for a long time. According to the WEF Global Competitiveness Index, most competitive economies use English as an official language (Chan, 2016).

Most of the population in the language group believes that language sustainability is associated with economic development. Just as people change locations for economic development, so people become interested in changing their practical language in the pursuit of professional and economic development. This is a kind of voluntary *language shift*. As a result, the languages of underdeveloped and economically backward nations are less likely to develop and become sustainable. As a result, they gradually gain *social motivation* (Hamilton, 2017; Schultz et al., 2012; Pittman & Heller, 1987) to voluntarily shift their language into a sustainable language in the light of *collective consensus*. In the context of Bangladesh, the issue of this kind of language choice is very clear and visible. For example, we can say that the ethnic and indigenous peoples of Bangladesh were socially motivated to voluntarily adopt the state language (Bengali language) because they do not have professional advantages in their own language and their own language is constantly being lost, making them unable to develop appropriate opportunities in their own language. About 54 ethnic groups in Bangladesh are searching for a sustainable language due to their collective consensus. Collective consciousness and social motivation determine which language has the status of sustainable language for a given population.

More importantly, the population of young Bangladeshis is leaning towards online freelancing as a profession. According to the Information Communication and Technology Division of the Bangladesh Government, Bangladesh has 650,000 freelancers, of whom 500,000 work actively. Bangladesh also ranked eighth in Payoneer's 2019 Global Gig Economy Index ("Struggles of being a freelancer in Bangladesh", 2021). Therefore, Training institutions in Bangladesh emphasize English, which is of great importance. The medium for freelancing work online is the English language and millions of formally educated, semi-educated or job-seeking youths have adopted English as their working language. Because of the professional collective conscience, they are adopting English as a sustainable language. The Bangladeshi curriculum and education policy, classroom teacher motivation, job preparation, training, family motivation, knowledge

of English as a prerequisite and priorities in job vacancies are all in English, and English has a special status as a collective consensus. Consequently, English has recently been established as a sustainable language instead of as a global language for the people of Bangladesh.

In the twenty-first century, the languages of wealthy countries have the opportunity to integrate into advanced jobs, economic prosperity and international financing. In the context of Bangladesh, this issue can be explained with a few more examples. Due to the rapid development of technology and trade in China in the twenty-first century, a large number of Bangladeshis have recently become interested in learning Chinese. For economic reasons, people in Bangladesh have started to think of Chinese as one of the most sustainable languages. On the other hand, English has been considered a powerful and sustainable language for the Bangladeshi people for centuries due to global marketing and globalisation, which have led to economic growth in English. The direct association of employment with global languages is now noticeable. The Bangladeshi community collectively seeks to link employment with language. For example, in recent decades, the general population of Bangladesh has become interested in learning Arabic in order to create opportunities to work in human resources in Arab countries. More Arabic-language educational institutions (*madrasas*) are being established in Bangladesh than in the past, and the Arabic language has been introduced. Learning Arabic helps people in the Middle East find employment and experience economic growth. As a result, Arabic has become a sustainable language for the Bangladeshi people. Various government and non-governmental organizations are teaching the Arabic language.

It is clear that sustainable economic growth in the future field of employment is possible in a sustainable language. Therefore, learning sustainable languages is more important than learning a foreign language, an internal language or a global language for Bangladeshis. That is what prevails among the Bangladeshi people. In this new way of choosing languages by analysing practical languages, the selected language can be called a sustainable language. At one point in Bangladesh, only English was considered a preferred language for good professionals and better income. Hamid (2010) noted the benefits of learning English in Bangladesh as an objective of fostering human capital through English for national development. Now, people are thinking of a category language based on the sustainability of their collective consciousness of Bangladeshi society. According to World Economic Forum Report, of the approximately 1.5 billion

people who speak English, less than 400 million use it as a first language; that means over 1 billion speak it as a secondary language (Breene, 2019).

### **English language and prediction of sustainability:**

English is the most widely used language in the world. In different countries, different languages are spoken. However, people from different countries speak English. Therefore, there are many job opportunities abroad for those who know English. America is well ahead in terms of technological and economic development in the world. The British proposal placed English in Australia, New Zealand, Canada and some parts of Africa, India and various other countries. English has also been adopted as a second language in Germany, Norway, Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands. Thanks to the English language, the culture of the people of these countries is now able to be exhibited to others. Another important reason to learn English in developing countries like Bangladesh is to learn science. The language of science and technology is now prominently in English. English is also a language of the film industry. Therefore, if people learn English, they no longer need subtitles to watch movies. There will be no shortage of opportunities for them. After learning English, they can teach it to their children. If their children already know English, the family can speak in English. In the United States, those who can speak English are in high demand on the job. Their earnings are also high. Learning English will greatly help Bangladeshi people secure a job.

### **Emergence of Chinese Language Learning in Bangladesh: Collective consciousness for economic development**

It is undeniable that in the past few decades China has become a global business hub. Chinese products form a large part of Bangladesh's trade and commerce, and their scope is growing day by day. Therefore, the number of businesses connected to China is continuously increasing in this country. Our business needs Chinese-speaking professionals to establish contact with Chinese companies. Various companies employ someone who can speak, write and read in this language with a handsome salary. Although the number of businesses has increased according to the demand of the country, the number of skilled people who know Chinese is not increasing. Because it takes time to acquire sufficient

skills in writing, reading and speaking Chinese as with other languages. Mandarin Chinese is a character-based language. A symbol is used for each word, changing over about 5,000 years. This current form is called simplified Chinese. Chinese language courses are offered at various educational institutions in Bangladesh, notably the Institute of Mother Language at Dhaka University, the Confucius Institute of North South University, BRAC University, Bangladesh Open University and Santa Mariam University etc. In addition, many people in different parts of Dhaka are teaching on their own initiative. Chinese language skill would open the doors for Bangladeshi people to prospects of versatile exchanges with China including cooperation in diplomacy, construction, industry, agriculture and technology (Weiming, 2010 as cited in “Chinese language learning recommended in Bangladesh”, 2010). Furthermore, in Wu Qiu’s opinion, many young people in Bangladesh now know China and have begun to learn Chinese because of China’s technological products; Huawei, Xiaomi, Lenovo, Gionee and many other Chinese brands are popular in Bangladesh (Chengyuan, 2016). According to Soofi (2019), Learning Chinese has been a boon for a lot of youngsters in Bangladesh as Chinese language proficiency is in much demand in the job market and comes with the promise of brilliant career.

Together, these studies highlight the need for creating a new term *sustainable language* to signify the strength of a particular language’s survival in a competitive linguistic area. These studies collectively outline a critical role for investigating the linguistic attitude of Bangladeshi people about the English language and their collective consciousness regarding the survival of languages in Bangladesh.

### **Research Methodology:**

Best and Kahn (1989) pointed out that the scientific method of analysis is carried out in a more formal, methodical and thorough procedure known as research. It incorporates a more structured inquiry, which usually ends in a documented record of the procedures and a report of the findings or conclusions. The goal of a study is to use scientific procedures to find answers to questions. Based on the nature of the information, the research can be described as quantitative research, because the ratio of people in Bangladesh who are starting to consider English a sustainable language is presented as a number. The content or nature of the research subject make it pure research, as its utility is universal in its sociolinguistic scope. It is a cross-sectional study because the examples of this category are

experimental, and a descriptive survey according to the approach of the research. The research can be described as experimental on the basis of the research method because it is purely quantitative in nature and deals with future events.

Therefore, the quantitative method was chosen as the methodology for this investigation, where the qualitative, close-ended responses from the participants were collected with surveys, and descriptive statistics were used for a quantitative analysis and visualisation of the data. The quantitative method contributed to explaining the comparison between the sustainable language and English in Bangladesh, with the help of a questionnaire and in-person interviews.

The straightforward character of a qualitative methods chapter unfortunately does not spill over into qualitative research reports. At first sight, this simply is a matter of different language. So, in reporting qualitative studies, we do not talk about “statistical analysis” or “research instruments”. But these linguistic differences also reflect broader practical and theoretical differences between qualitative and quantitative research (Silverman 2000, p.234).

Pandey and Pandey (2015) supported using the term *survey* for the technique of investigating through directly observing a phenomenon or systemically gathering data from a population through personal contact and interviews when adequate information about a certain problem is not available in records, files and other sources. The survey is an important tool to gather evidence relating to a certain social problem (Pandey & Pandey, 2015). The survey method is used in this research to direct the close contact of the researcher to the phenomenon under study, to collect general information, to explain language and sustainability and to investigate the opinions and changing attitudes of the people towards the English language. Based on the type of descriptive method, it is a representative social survey with structured interviews to study the research problem and collect data for predicting relationships between the variables. The study was conducted in the form of a survey, with data being gathered via interviews with close-ended, structured questionnaires.

### **Research Design:**

According to Kerlinger (1973), “[r]esearch design is the plan, structure and strategy of investigation conceived so as to obtain answer to research questions and to control variance.” Furthermore, Zikmund (1988) used the term *research design* to refer to a master plan that specifies the methods and procedures for



collecting and analysing the necessary information. Thus, research design can be described as arranging conditions for collecting and analysing data with the objective of generating sample results on the population. Exploratory design is used to conduct the research. When there are few or no previous studies to refer to or rely on in order to anticipate an outcome, an exploratory design is used. The emphasis is on gathering insight and familiarity in preparation for further. Exploratory designs are frequently used to determine how best to proceed with a study or what methodology would be most effective in gathering information about an issue. The research is designed with the following characteristics: objectivity, reliability, validity, generalisability and adequate information.

Primary data sources have been used to obtain basic information from in-person interviews. This section gives an overview of the research methods and contains a report on the procedures used in the study, including the design of the research, the selection and description of the participants, the arrangement, the instruments used for the collection of data, the analysis of data and the credibility of the study.

### **Participants in the study:**

A total of 80 representative participants were surveyed with different educational levels from different age groups, occupations and geographical areas. The participants were selected in such a way as to represent primarily the attitude of educated Bangladeshi people. The respondents were selected to be representative of the total educated. The study involved 20 college and university students, 15 entrepreneurs or businesspeople, 20 professionals belonging to a variety of professions, 14 teachers, six school students and five unemployed persons with a certain level of education, all of whom are permanent residents of Bangladesh. To bring heterogeneity, the participants were chosen from both rural and urban areas and equal proportions of men and women were maintained in order to ensure balance in the study. These participants were asked to complete the questionnaire and were later asked to participate in structured interviews with close-ended questionnaires.

### **Tools of Data Collection:**

A researcher needs a lot of data, tools and techniques. This research has contributed to our understanding of the sustainability of Bangladeshi language

from a sociolinguistic point of view and to an examination of the future of sustainable languages in the region. This was done through questionnaires and follow-up interviews, using a list of questions related to English and sustainable language in the context of Bangladesh. According to Goode and Hatt (1952), “[i]n general, the word questionnaire refers to a device for securing answers to questions by a form which the respondent fills in himself.” To analyse and visualise the data, frequency measurement as a descriptive statistical method and Microsoft Excel were the tools or instruments used for the research.

### **Written questionnaires (Appendix 1):**

Thirteen questions were designed for each in-person interview. The structured, close-ended survey questions used in this study were designed with driving factors contributing to the conclusions and some key questions driving the assessment of whether the objectives of this research were met. Eighty participants were surveyed to explore the sustainability of language in the region and their understanding of linguistic realities. The survey consisted of close-ended questions to investigate Bangladeshi people’s changing attitude towards the English language and their acceptance of the term sustainable language.

### **Interviews:**

Interviews with questionnaires from the research participants are another important way to collect data for the study. The interview lasted about 15 minutes, including a list of closed-ended questions about Bangladesh’s linguistic situation, where the concept of *sustainable language* was demonstrated to each participant so they may better understand it and respond effectively. In an interview, a rapport is established between the interviewer and the interviewee. Structured interview questionnaires were used. The interviewers asked the participants a series of written questions and ticked boxes with their responses. This is highly structured and conducted face to face. Such interviews with questionnaires are used to receive a wide range of responses during one meeting, to lessen the impact of researcher bias and to help participants remember issues they might otherwise have forgotten.

**Data collection procedure:**

Prior to commencing the study, ethical clearance was sought from each participant. Eighty respondents were contacted through different channels from various parts of Bangladesh and were later invited to participate in the interview. Of the eighty participants, 41 were men and 39 were women. Most of the respondents were adult professionals. To ensure the quality of the study, a minimum level of primary education was chosen for the participants, but 99 per cent of them had at least a secondary school education. There was skilful face-to-face contact between interviewer and interviewee.

**Data analysis procedure:**

Statistical approaches and procedures were used in this quantitative study. Statistical approaches and procedures have earned a significant place in research because they provide solutions to problems. The analysis of the closed-ended questions entailed a descriptive statistical analysis of frequency measurements. The main purpose of the data analysis was to find the speakers' attitudes towards English and sustainable language in Bangladesh. The survey of written questions is discussed and presented in the form of charts prepared using Excel.

**Limitations of the research:**

Some limitations are obvious in this research, as it is based on the survey method. The sample size (N=80) is the main limitation, as it is quite small in proportion to the total population of Bangladesh. In order to minimise the impact of this limitation, heterogeneity among the participants was maintained. The research was carried out in both rural and urban regions of Bangladesh and included participants from Dhaka, Chittagong, Rangpur, Rajshahi, Khulna and Sylhet. I interviewed stakeholders and sent questionnaires related to the study. The research participants consisted only of educated people from Bangladesh. Furthermore, since the study could have been carried out covering an even wider range of rural and urban regions of the country, the results of the study cannot accurately describe the overall picture of rural people using English and sustainable languages in the context of the whole country. However, the qualitative research is an attempt to paint a picture of the entire Bangladesh linguistic situation.

### **Study site:**

The quantitative research was conducted in both urban and rural areas of Bangladesh. The inhabitants of these regions do not face any communication difficulties in obtaining their education. Bangladesh is remarkably diverse in social and economic terms. The urban area enjoys comparative advantages in terms of communication in education, health care, etc. compared to rural communities. To bring diversity and represent the population more accurately, participants from rural regions were also selected.

### **Conceptual framework:**

The English language and language survival have become a new trend in communication. Therefore, a new term, *sustainable language*, was proposed in this investigation. The concept of this research is based on why and how the term sustainable language is important. Furthermore, the major impacts of language sustainability are conceptualised in this research.

### **Results and discussion of analysis:**

In the current sociolinguistic context, the terms *global language* and *international language* are insufficient to deal with the entire linguistic situation in Bangladesh. In the context of Bangladesh, people are looking for languages that will be suitable for their future career and the coming world. Therefore, a collective consciousness has risen among people to investigate the socio-political future of language with economic and environmental indicators. They are not clinging to ideological perspectives on language choice; rather, they prefer to choose a language based on sustainability predictions and indications.

The widespread promotion of the Sustainable Development Goals by the United Nations could lead to new perspectives on applied linguistics around the world. The term sustainable language can now be used as an alternative to the term global language. This period of language history can be called the era of sustainable language. At that time, people in all countries were looking for a sustainable language that would be conducive to their professional development, which would ensure a better future. The Bengali people have been searching for a sustainable language for a long time. Due to distrust towards

the mother tongue (Bengali) and the fact that the Bengali language is not fully developed, the people of Bangladesh have chosen Persian, Urdu or English as a sustainable language.

### Data analysis:

As part of the descriptive statistical analysis, the primary data from the 80 participants were incorporated into the tables. Frequency distributions were drawn from the data and various bar charts were created in the survey process in order to depict the scenario of the survey and to prove the study objectives.

### Gender: Male-to-Female ratio

To ensure balance and objectivity in the study, a male-to-female ratio of nearly 50:50 was maintained in the data collection process. Therefore, out of the total of 80 participants, 41 were men and 39 were women. All participants were provided the same questionnaire. Table 1, respectively, presents and visualises the frequency distribution.

Gender	Frequency
Female	39
Male	41

Table 1: Frequency of female and male participants

### Age Group

Five different age groups – 14 to 18, 19 to 23, 24 to 30, 31 to 40 and 40+ were asked questions regarding the rank and evaluation of the sustainability of the English language. A certain age is required to have an understanding of the questions and then to respond appropriately, but to introduce a variety of opinions from different experiences and understandings, the participants were divided into five age groups. The relative measures presented in Table 2 show that the largest group (31.25%) belonged to the 24 to 30 age group, representing the most efficient and mature youth group.

Age group	Frequency
14 to 18	10
19 to 23	21
24 to 30	25
31 to 40	14
40+	10
Total	80

Table 2: Frequency distribution by age group

### Level of education:

The education level of a respondent is another important factor that impacts an individual's decision-making when it comes to comparing languages and choosing a sustainable one. To make decisions regarding the sustainability of English as a language, education plays the most vital role because a person who has not received a minimum education will not be able to understand the significance of a particular language and its sustainability issues. Five different levels of education were listed in the survey questionnaire, prioritising respondents with a comparatively high level of education. The mode a measure of the central tendency for the category with 27 participants (33.75%) was the education level *Graduation*. The frequency distribution is shown in Table 3.

Highest education level	Frequency
Graduation	27
Higher Secondary	25
Post-Graduation	20
Primary	1
Secondary	7

Table 3: Frequency distribution for level of education

### Occupation

Occupation was chosen as another factor to represent the variety of opinions among the participants. Six categories: student, entrepreneur, other professional (representing people from any job with remuneration), school students (to capture

the opinions of teenagers), teachers (representative of academicians for making decisions about the sustainability of language) and unemployed people (to capture opinions from both voluntarily and involuntarily unemployed people) of occupation were given to the participants, where even the participants from the unemployed group contained a portion of graduates and those with higher secondary or secondary school education. The largest group of participants contained 20 college/university students, primarily representing the age groups of 14 to 18 and 19 to 23; the next largest group had 15 entrepreneurs, 20 other professionals or job holders and 14 teachers (most of whom teach higher secondary school and a few primary or tertiary levels). Table 4 shows the frequency for this category.

Occupation	Frequency
College/university student	20
Entrepreneur	15
Other professional	20
School student	6
Teacher	14
Unemployed	5

Table 4: Frequency distribution for occupation

### Issues behind the sustainability of language

The particular category of issues behind the sustainability of a language represents the main causes or factors that lead people to contribute to maintaining a language from era to era. Five main topics were listed in the questionnaire, among which 30 out of 80 participants (37.5%) chose the topic *economic/occupational/career benefits*. This indicates that most of the participants thought that if a language offers the benefits of getting more or better jobs, earning a higher income or generating more sources of income, then that language is highly likely to survive into the future. The second popular issue, selected by 31.3% of the participants, was *Population*, indicating that the more a language is practiced by people, the more likely its survival. Likewise, the more a population speaks a particular language, the more the language is practiced. The third most prominent issue was *Environment / Culture*, which indicates that an individual uses a language with the environment, people, ethnicity and culture. Table 5 represents the frequency distribution of this factor.



The main issue in sustaining a language	Frequency
Economic/occupational/career benefits	30
Environment/culture	14
Literature	3
Population	25
Technology	8

Table 5: Frequency distribution for issues behind language sustainability

It was found that there was strong evidence of the relationship between language survival and other elements, such as technology, population, literature, environment, and economy. The results, as shown in Table 5, indicate that Bangladeshi people find economic benefit to be the strongest factor of a language's sustainability, followed by population. They also consider literature the weakest factor among all to make a language sustainable.

### The existence of English as a language in Bangladesh

Participants were asked what language they know well after Bengali or their mother tongue, and 71 out of 80 (88.75%) of them responded with *English*. Such a strong response regarding their existing knowledge of English is a great indicator that English is already a sustainable language in Bangladesh, at least among people who have received a secondary or tertiary education. Table 6 shows the frequency distribution of the responses for this question.

What language do you know the best other than your mother tongue?	Frequency
Arabic	12
Chinese	1
English	80
Hindi	5

Table 6: Frequency distribution for which language the respondents know best other than their mother tongue.

### The most sustainable language in Bangladesh in future

In order to measure the collective consciousness of Bangladeshi people regarding language and sustainability, one of the questions asked the participants

to determine whether they think English can be sustained in Bangladesh in future. Surprisingly, 70 out of the 80 participants selected *English* from the various language options, including Bengali. Sustainability here means that the form of the language is kept intact as it is, and it is practiced the same way over the years, while one's mother tongue is practiced more colloquially, experiencing frequent changes due to variation in regional dialects and people moving between regions within the country. For a foreign language, this practice of changing is less likely due to strict grammar adoption and formal communication practices. Before filling in the questionnaire, this concept of sustainability was explained to the participants, which made them realise the sustainability of English in Bangladesh. Table 7 shows the frequency distribution of the responses for this question.

Which language do you think will be the most sustainable in Bangladesh in future?	Frequency
Bengali	10
English	70

Table 7: Frequency distribution for the most sustainable language in Bangladesh in future

### Willingness to learn a new language

The participants were asked to observe the willingness to learn a new language other than their mother tongue, Bengali. About one third of them responded with *English*, as they felt they were still improving their skills in this language; 15 of them chose Arabic, and for business and professional purposes, 11 voted for the Chinese language. Table 8 shows the frequency distribution of the responses for this question.

If you would like to learn another language besides your mother tongue, which language would it be?	Frequency
Arabic	15
Chinese	11
English	26
French	4
German	10
Japanese	11
Other	3

Table 8: Frequency distribution for the willingness to learn a foreign language (bar chart)

### Addressing sustainable language

The participants were asked to choose the best term to describe English as a language. English was referred to as a *sustainable language* by 53 out of 80 (66.3%) respondents. This response was highly aligned with the main research objective. Table 9 shows the frequency distribution of the responses for this question.

By what name do you prefer to consider the English language in the current context of Bangladesh?	Frequency
Global/ International Language	27
Sustainable Language	53

Table 9: Frequency distribution of choosing the best name for English in the current context of Bangladesh

The table shows that there has been a gradual change in accepting English as a *sustainable language* rather than a global/international language in a number of people from different classes and professions in Bangladesh.

### Conclusion:

The paper attempted to evaluate the linguistic sustainability of English and other languages in Bangladesh. The main research questions were related to English, sustainable language and collective consciousness. This shows a need to be explicit about exactly what is meant by the term *sustainable language*. This was the first study to define this term, and it offered some important insights into language and sustainability. Sustainable language may be defined as a systemic process of a language which consists of some geopolitically relative elements or components: population, technology, literature, linguistic adaptation, economy and socio-psychological strength. Sustainable languages are languages that can be used in future for daily, social, economic and digital activities. This term embodies a multitude of concepts that depend on the geopolitical and social existence of the speakers. Throughout the paper, the term sustainable language is used to refer to the changing attitude of Bangladeshi learners towards the English language based on practical linguistic sustainability. The current study

has helped in the understanding of the major factors of sustainability of different languages spoken in a country. Based on the results of the current study, the collective consciousness of Bangladeshis predicts that English will be a sustainable language in Bangladesh. The data show that people believe that English will become Bangladesh's most sustainable language by 2050. Furthermore, the results show that there are some main factors of a sustainable language in a country: population, technology, literature, environment and economics. This means that we must rethink the term sustainable language in the sociolinguistic field. Thanks to this research, it can be concluded that the Bangladeshi people prefer to treat English as a sustainable language rather than a global language, foreign language or international language.

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## Written survey questionnaires (Appendix 1)

Question/ Key Point	Options	Response
1. What is your name ?	-	
2. Your age group	1. 14 to 18 2. 19 to 23 4. 24 to 30 5. 31 to 40 6. 40+	
3. Your gender identity	1. Male 2. Female	
4. What is your occupation ?	1. School student 2. College/ university student 4. Teacher 5. Entrepreneur 6. Other professional 7. Unemployed	
5. Where do you live ?	1. Rural area 2. Urban area	
6. Your highest education level	1. Primary 2. Secondary 3. Higher Secondary 4. University	
7. Which language do you think will be sustainable in Bangladesh in future?	1. English 2. Bengali 3. Arabic 4. Hindi 5. Chinese 6. French 7. German 8. Japanese 9. Russian 10. Other	
8. Which language will be the most sustainable in professional and economic fields in Bangladesh by 2050?	1. English 2. Bengali 3. Arabic 4. Hindi 5. Chinese 6. French 7. German 8. Japanese 9. Russian 10. Other	

<p>9. Which language do you know the best besides your mother tongue?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. English</li> <li>2. Bengali</li> <li>3. Arabic</li> <li>4. Hindi</li> <li>5. Chinese</li> <li>6. French</li> <li>7. German</li> <li>8. Japanese</li> <li>9. Russian</li> <li>10. Other</li> </ol>	
<p>10. If you would like to learn another language besides your mother tongue, which language would it be?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. English</li> <li>2. Bengali</li> <li>3. Arabic</li> <li>4. Hindi</li> <li>5. Chinese</li> <li>6. French</li> <li>7. German</li> <li>8. Japanese</li> <li>9. Russian</li> <li>10. Other</li> </ol>	
<p>11. What do you consider the strongest factor to make a language sustainable?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Population</li> <li>2. Technology</li> <li>3. Literature</li> <li>4. Environment</li> <li>5. Economic</li> <li>6. Occupational/career benefits</li> <li>7. Culture</li> </ol>	
<p>12. By which term do you prefer to consider the English language in Bangladesh?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sustainable language</li> <li>2. Global/foreign/international language</li> </ol>	
<p>13. Do you prefer to judge English as a sustainable language in the current context of Bangladesh?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Yes</li> <li>2. No</li> </ol>	