

## Language Shift and Bilingualism Among the Non-Sylheti Bangladeshi Immigrants Living in London

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### Abstract

This research is intended to determine the diverse factors accelerating the process of language shift among the Bangladeshi community living in London. There are numerous social, economic, demographic factors that lead the community to shift from their heritage language Bangla to English, which is widely recognized as a prestigious language. This study integrates qualitative and quantitative research methods to analyse language shift factors. The data of this study were collected through a questionnaire survey and semi-structured interviews. The study provides an insight into the language shift and maintenance among non-Sylheti Bangladeshi immigrants. The findings and results illustrate that among second-generation non-Sylheti Bangladeshi immigrants, the language shift from Bangla to English can be termed as ‘partial shift’ rather than complete shift. They shift their language from Bangla to English for some specific purposes. This study also shows that the participants want to maintain the Bangla language as their heritage or native language and express positive attitudes to maintain this language. This study's findings will also be adding value in the sociolinguistic area for further research about this community's language shift and maintenance.

**Keywords:** Language Shift, Language Maintenance, Bilingualism, Community, Bangla.

### 1. Introduction

Language is a powerful medium of communication in any speech community and plays an indispensable role in exchanging among people. Language is a part of any culture and reflects any nation's identity as well. People who speak in their mother tongue or native language feel relaxed or comfortable. Although numerous speech communities have shifted from their native languages to another due to various reasons.

Language is not constant; rather it is always changing, and language shift is a social phenomenon where one language replaces another. The purpose of this study is to examine the

prevailing language shift among the Bangladeshi community living in London. Usually, when language shift occurs, it moves towards a dominant or powerful group because the dominant language is associated with status, prestige and social success (Holmes, 2001). In this context, it can be elaborated that as an English country English is widely used in the United Kingdom (UK) as a common Lingua Franca for communication and is regarded as a highly prestigious international language and also English is spoken as a second or foreign language by an estimated 950 million people worldwide (Saville-Troike, 2006).

Generally, in bilingual and multilingual societies language shift is a usual scenario when a group of the same speech community progressively abandons their heritage language and adopts the language of the socially or economically dominant group (Fishman, 1971; Baker-Jones, 1998). The Bangladeshi communities are among the significant multicultural population living in London for a long time ago. With the changes of their homeland, their language also changes, and as a result, they shift from Bangla to English. If any linguistic group shifts from using its native language to a dominant, powerful language, there must be various factors or reasons behind this. Research on language shift has a long tradition but no previous research has investigated the language shift among the non-Sylheti immigrants living in London. So this paper attempts to provide a more detailed investigation on this particular area.

### **1.1 Objective**

The objective or aim of this study is to find out the major reasons for language shift among Bangladeshi people living in London and investigate their language choice. This study also inspects whether the community members want to maintain their heritage language, known as Bangla with their future generation or not. Moreover, this research also tries to get community members opinions regarding language maintenance.

### **1.2 Research Questions**

This paper seeks to address the following questions:

1. What are the possible factors or reasons for language shift from Bangla to English among second-generation Bangladeshi living in London?
2. To what extent are the community members aware of the maintenance of their mother tongue Bangla?
3. Do they want to take any steps to maintain the Bangla language among the community of London?

4. What is their attitude towards this shift from Bangla to English?

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Language Shift and Maintenance

Language shift and maintenance are interrelated and two sides of the coin. Both are collective results of any community's language choice (Fasold, 1984). Language shift has become a common fact in countries where more than one speech communities live.

People usually like to transfer to a dominant or powerful language from their native language in the process of language shift. The dominance or power of any language can be understood through its social prestige, status, or acceptance. Sometimes people want to express their social status or prestige through 'linguistic behaviour' and maintain their identity by choosing a specific language (Muysken & Appel, 1987). Weinreich (1953) defines language shift as the change from one language's habitual or regular use to another. He also points out that language shift should be investigated in terms of the languages' various functions in the contact situations, where a mother tongue group may shift to a new language for some specific functions but not in others. The definition given by Weinreich (1953) is more appropriate to define language shift among the target group because they shifted from their daily language Bangla to English for some purposes and in some domains, they cannot use their native language. Sometimes language represents people's identity and social position. Language shift has been defined by Mesthrie, Swann, Deumert & Leap, as 'the replacement of one language by another as the primary means of communication and socialisation within a community' (2001, p. 253). Usually, people shift from their native tongue to another due to communicating efficiently with the host country people.

In minority communities, shift to the majority language occurs mostly within three or four generations, whereby the first generation of immigrants is predominantly monolingual in the language of the country of their origin, their children (the second generation) are bilingual in the heritage and the majority language, and the grandchildren (third generation) are predominantly monolingual in the language of the dominant group (Holmes, 2001). The process of language shift does not finish at the end of a person's life or of a group of people; rather, it gradually develops from generation to generation because it is the long-term result of a community's language choice (Fasold, 1984).

On the other hand, Language maintenance refers to a situation where community members try to keep their everyday language (Hoffman, 1991). Zhang (2004) considers it as the opposite side of language shift. However, Hoffman mentions that language shift and maintenance should not be regarded as a complete opposite term because while "one focuses

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on one the other may still be present, albeit less prominently” (1991, p.185) to continue and the other to replace. Mesthrie defines language maintenance as “the continuing use of a language in the face of competition from a regionally and socially powerful or numerically stronger language” (1999, p 42). In language maintenance, any speech community decides whether they will continue their mother tongue or not. In language maintenance, speakers of any language try to continue their native language despite the influence of powerful or dominant language speakers (Crystal, 1987).

## **2.2 Language Shift and Bilingualism**

Bilingualism is a term that is often associated with language shift. Holmes (2001) points out that bilingualism works as a ‘precursor’ for language shift. For language shift, people need to be bilingual, and the logic behind this is that if one cannot speak two languages at one point in time, one cannot shift from one language to another language (Penadaker, 1990). Weinreich (1953) the pioneer of bilingualism, defines “the practice of alternately using two languages will be called bilingualism, and the person involved, bilingual” (p.1). On the other hand, Macnamara (1967) mentions that bilingualism means having a minimum level of competence in listening, speaking, reading or writing. Four skills are necessary for being bilingual. The definition presented by Macnamara (1967) is more fitted for this research to describe bilingualism among Bangla speakers living in London because it is necessary to have four skills for being bilingual in both languages.

## **2.3 Factors of Language Shift**

The factors for language shift may vary for different individuals and different groups. Numerous factors trigger language shift, such as social factors, economy, politics, education, migration, industrialization, urbanization, prestige, and demographic factors (Holmes, 2001; Hoffman, 1991). Pendakur (1990) defines language use is determined by a set of demographic, social, and cultural factors. In every domain, there may be different types of pressures like economic, administrative, cultural, political, and religious, which influence the bilingual people towards the use of host country language rather than their native tongue (Fishman, 1966).

## **2.4 Ethnolinguistic Vitality**

Giles, Bourhis and Taylor (1977) have constructed a model which is the combination of three main factors (status, demographic and institutional support) within one factor which they define Ethnolinguistic Vitality (EV). According to Giles, Bourhis & Taylor (1977, p. 308), “vitality of an ethnolinguistic group is that which makes a group likely to behave as a typical and active collective entity in intergroup situations”. There is a debate that ethnolinguistic minorities who have less group vitality cannot exist as particular groups. In

contrast, if any linguistic group has more vitality, the more they can survive and progress as a collective group in an intergroup context. That means the higher the vitality of an ethnolinguistic group, the higher its chances of survival; the lower its vitality, the higher the risk of its ceasing to exist.

## **2.5 Background of Bangladeshi Community in London**

With more than 64,500 members, the Bangladeshi community in London is one of the largest communities in the UK and is considered the fastest-growing ethnic group (Rasinger, 2013). Usually, their mother tongue is Bangla or Bengali, which is the national language of Bangladesh. According to the UK census 2001, people of Bangladeshi origin represent possibly the largest bilingual minority group in London (Lawson & Sachdev, 2004).

There are two groups of Bangla speakers in the UK among Bangladeshi immigrants: Sylheti (people from Sylhet) and Non-Sylheti (people from different regions of Bangladesh). The majority of Bangladeshi people in the UK come from Sylhet, a north-eastern rural district of Bangladesh. People from this area have a long tradition of migration to the UK (Lawson & Sachdev, 2004).

## **2.6 Language Shift & Bilingualism Among Bangladeshi Community in London**

Bilingualism, among second-generation Bangladeshis, moves towards ‘language shift’ because younger speakers lose fluency in their native language and the dominant language (English) becomes their first language (Baker & Jones, 1998). This definition is more relevant to describe the target group’s linguistic situation. Due to the absence of the Bangla linguistic environment, most second-generation speakers lose their fluency in Bangla. London is a city where English is the primary language for every aspect of life. Thus when Bangladeshi immigrants come to this country for survival and some primary reasons, they tend to learn English. As a result, they become bilingual with Bangla and English, and most of the time, they switch between Bangla and English in their conversation. After a certain time, they feel more comfortable in English because they have to use English for maximum purposes. Therefore, they lose fluency in Bangla because of a lack of interaction, and as a result, language shift occurs.

In London, most of the Bangla speakers who were fluent in Bangla, lose their fluency after coming here because they were mostly influenced by English and lack of interaction with Bangla. Here, the majority of Bangladeshi are Sylheti speakers and when they talk with non-Sylheti, they prefer to use English because both varieties are not mutually unintelligible. To gain acceptance or status in a society, an individual may deliberately use the majority and

dominant language and alternatively use a minority language to belong to any group (Baker, 1997).

## **2.7 Use of Bangla in Different Domains**

Bangla language and culture are used in many aspects among the Bangladeshi community. The Bangla language is widely used in various media like tv channels and newspapers. In most of the places of East London area, Bangla writing can be seen in different shops and restaurants on the signboard. To maintain Bangla among the community there are weekend Bangla classes held in Mosque to teach Bangla to children.

In the mid 1980s, several cultural organisations were established to flourish Bangla culture among Bangladeshi community ((Ullah & Eversley, 2010). Here people are not detached from Bangla culture and the use of Bangla can be seen widely in every aspect of lifestyle. Brick Lane is a place in East London that is regarded as ‘Banglatown’ by the press and the Bangladeshi community (Barker, 2004).

## **3. Research Methods**

### **3.1 Research Design**

The research was conducted using a mixed-method and describes the possible factors for language shift from Bangla to English and how much the target people are aware of the maintenance of their mother tongue and their attitude towards this shift. Data were collected through a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. Good ethical practise was maintained for this research and pseudonyms instead of original names have been used.

### **3.2 Participants**

The target group for this study were second-generation non-Sylheti Bangladeshi immigrants living in London. The total number of participants was 25, residing in East London and other parts of London. Among 25 participants 10 were male and 15 were female. The age range of the participants was 31- 42 years.

### **3.3 Instruments**

The study used two instruments to collect data: (i) a questionnaire (ii) a set of interview questions. Twenty-five participants completed the questionnaire. Ten participants were interviewed using the list of questions.

#### **3.3.1 Questionnaire**

To collect data from the participants, a questionnaire, comprising two sections, was devised by the researcher. The first part of the questionnaire was designed to find out

personal information like age, gender, place of birth, linguistic profile etc. The next part was designed to elicit respondents' language shift and maintenance.

### 3.3.2 Interview

The questions of the semi-structured interviews were designed to collect specific information about language shift and maintenance. Ten participants 4 male and 6 female were interviewed. The interview was fully conducted in English as all the participants were fluent in English.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

Collected raw data were analysed by statistically using Microsoft Excel (frequency counts and percentages). Later on, the percentages of the data were arranged in several tables and charts in Microsoft Word. The qualitative data were analysed based on the answers provided by the participants' interviews.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1 Findings of Participants' Questionnaire

In the beginning part of the questionnaire, it is found that almost 64% of participants prefer to use both Bangla and English for regular interaction. Also, 88% mixed both Bangla and English when communicating with family members. Approximately 56% prefer only Bangla and 40% prefer both Bangla and English when communicating with other Bangladeshi people. The rest of the responses from the questionnaire are elaborating here.

**Table 1: Changes in Language Use After Coming to London**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	20	80%
No	3	12%
Sometimes	2	8%
Total	25	100%

This table illustrates that 80% of participants responded that after coming to London they noticed changes in their language use, while 12% said there were no changes in their language and only 8% replied that sometimes they noticed changes in their language use.

**Table 2: Reasons for Language Shift from Bangla to English**

Responses	Strongly Agree	Agree	Partly Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Sure
2.1 to have better job opportunities	68	24	8	0	0	0
2.2. English is related with social status and prestige	40	36	12	8	0	4
2.3. Bangla is not highly valued	4	24	40	16	12	4
2.4. As a result of migration	44	32	8	4	0	12
2.5. pressure from educational institutions	44	36	20	0	0	0
2.6. to adapt with majority culture easily	48	40	12	0	0	0
2.7. to communicate with everyone comfortably	60	24	16	0	0	0

Table 2 shows that 68% of participants strongly agreed with the statement that they shift from Bangla to English to have better job opportunities. According to Holmes (2001), getting a good job is a key reason for language shift. Particularly in English speaking countries, people learn English to have a better career. During the interview participants also mentioned the same reason for language shift. While 24% agreed with this view and no disagreement with this statement. Besides, Giles, Bourhis & Taylor (1977) state that English has high status as a language of international communication. From the participants, 40% strongly agreed with this view that they shift from Bangla to English due to the social status of English. 36% of participants agreed and 12% of participants partly agreed that English has social value. But only 8% disagreed with this statement.

On the other side, 44% of participants strongly agreed that as a result of migration they shift their language from Bangla to English. Only 4% of participants disagreed with this statement and 32% of participants agreed with it. Next, 40% partly agreed and 24% agreed that another reason for language shift is that Bangla is not highly valued here, while 16% disagreed and 12% strongly disagreed with this view. In question 2.5 among the total participants 44% strongly agreed, 36% agreed and 20% partly agreed that pressure from the educational institution is another reason for language shift. To communicate with other people is necessary for society. 60% of participants strongly agreed that for communicating with the majority group they shift from their native language to English. While 24% agreed and 16% partly agreed



with the statement. Also, 48% strongly agreed and 40% agreed that to adapt to the majority culture they shift from their native language.

**Table 3: The language shift from Bangla to English also lead to a cultural shift**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	8	32%
Disagree	1	4%
Sometimes	14	56%
Not Sure	2	8%
Total	25	100%

This table shows that 32% of participants agreed that language shift leads to cultural shift while 4% disagreed with this statement. Besides, 56% mentioned that sometimes it leads to a cultural shift and 8% not sure regarding this issue. Language is closely related to culture and both are deeply rooted. Language is used to maintain culture.

**Table 4: Switch between Bangla and English in conversation**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	12	48%
No	0	0%
Sometimes	13	52%
Total	25	100%

Table 3 illustrates that 48% of participants viewed that they switch between Bangla and English in their daily conversation while 52% said sometimes they switc between Bangla and English. Code-switching is very usual among bilingual people. The following graph shows the ratio of participants' views.

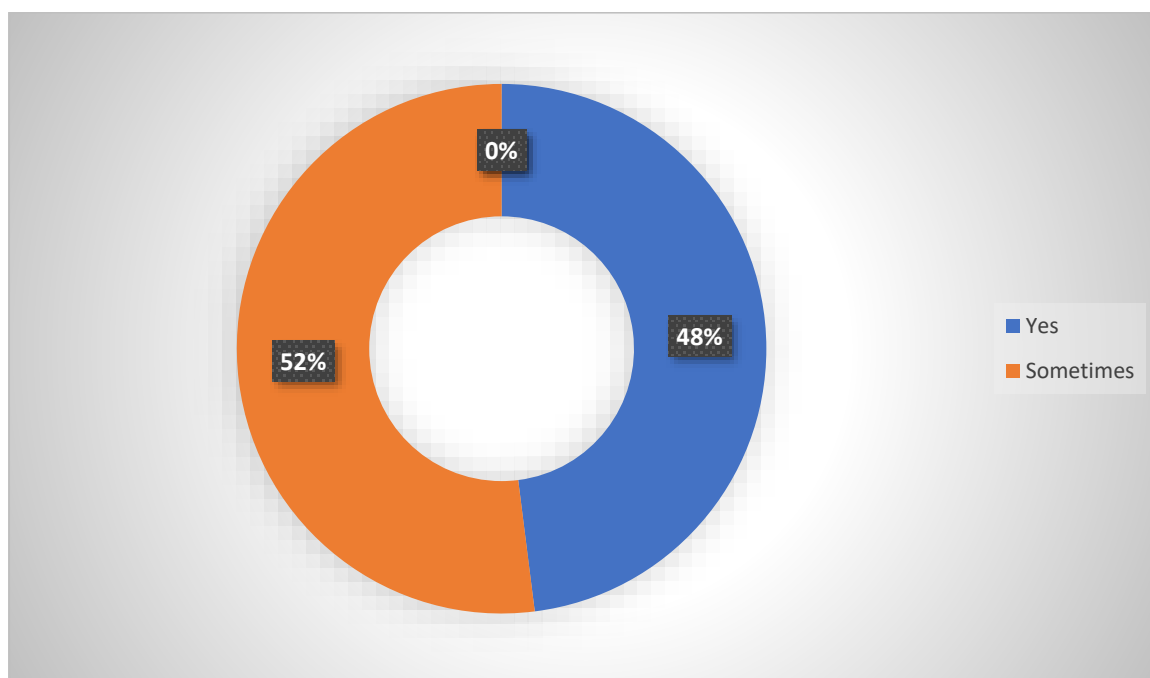


Fig: Ratio of switching between Bangla and English

**Table 5: Necessity to practice Bangla language and culture among Bangladeshi community living in London**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	22	88%
Not Necessary	2	8%
Not Sure	1	4%
Total	25	100%

Table 5 demonstrates that 88% of participants think that Bangla language and culture need to be practised among the Bangladeshi community while 8% viewed that it is not necessary and 4% not sure about this.

**Table 6: Importance to take some steps to maintain Bangla language among the Bangladeshi community**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	22	88%
Not Necessary	2	8%

Not Sure	1	4%
Total	25	100%

This table reveals that 88% participants agreed that it is necessary to take initiatives to maintain Bangla. On the other side, 8% mentioned that it is not necessary and 4% not sure regarding this issue.

## 4.2 Findings of Interviews

The interview with the participants revealed the following information. Participants will be referred to as Participant 1, Participant 2 and so on.

### Question 1

#### In your daily life in which language do you feel comfortable?

Most of the participants responded that they feel more comfortable in the Bangla language because it is their mother tongue, and they acquire that language as their first language. They learn that language from their childhood and they use this language with their dear and near one. They also added that in Bangla they can express their feelings in such a way that is not possible in other languages. When people become emotional, they use their native language at that time. Participant 7 viewed that “The Bangla language has some own words which do not have any translation in other languages, so I feel more comfortable in Bangla than English. In Bangla, I can express my feelings and emotions fully”.

On the other side, participants 1, 3, and 4 said that they are more comfortable in English than Bangla. Although they know Bangla, they are not comfortable in it because in this country in most of the places they have to use English. Participant 3 mentioned that “when I came to this country at that time I was comfortable in Bangla. But later on, it changed and I feel more comfortable in English now”. Participant 4 said that “My wife is from Sylhet and speaking Sylheti dialect which is a bit difficult for me to understand. So I prefer to use English at home with my wife and kids”. Participants mentioned that the use of English comes naturally and sometimes they did not realize which language they are using.

Besides, participant 2 said that “I am comfortable in both Bangla and English because I am fluent in both languages. So I use both languages when it is necessary.”

### Question 2

#### Which language do you identify as your first language? Why?

Most of the participants replied that they identify Bangla as their first language because they were born in Bangladesh since their childhood they speak in Bangla and they acquired the

language first. Even with their relatives, they use Bangla for communication. Although they have to adapt to English, they cannot deny Bangla as their native language. Participant 7 said that “I feel proud to be a Bangladeshi because Bangla language has a glorious history and for the sake of language Bangladeshi martyrs sacrificed their lives willingly in 1952. So, this language is my first identity”.

On the other side, participants 3 and 4 mentioned different views. According to them, they considered English as their first language. When they were back home that time they regarded Bangla as their first language but after coming to the UK they have to use English maximum time of the day. It is an English country and English is everywhere. Participant 4 said that “in a day I use Bangla only for half an hour when I spent time with my parents”. Participant 3 mentioned that “when I came to this country I was in a kind of language shock and I was feeling down for changing my language from Bangla to English. Now, English is my first language because everywhere I have to use English”. With the changes of the country, their identity of language also changes; from Bangla they shift to English and identify English as their first language.

### **Question 3**

#### **Did you use English for daily conversation before coming to London?**

All the participants mentioned that they did not need to use English for regular interaction when they were in Bangladesh. Participant 3 said, “at that time in Bangladesh there was no culture to speaking in English to communicate with others. English was limited in the classroom to pass the exam”. Participant 1 said “I didn’t use English in that way. I use some common English words like ‘sorry’, ‘thank you’, ‘hello’, ‘come’ and so on. Also, there are some English words used in Bangla language such as, ‘tomato’, ‘chair’, ‘table’, ‘fan’, and ‘fridge’ and many more. In school, we studied English as a subject. From the classroom, we have learned some sentences, vocabulary, some grammatical rules and there was no exposure or pressure for speaking English. They had to learn English as a subject rather than to communicate”.

From the interview, it is revealed that when they were in Bangladesh they knew some English words but not competent enough to communicate with others and they did not get any exposure to communicate in English.

### **Question 4**

#### **What are the possible reasons for shifting from Bangla to English?**

This is the most pivotal question of this research. The participants mentioned various reasons for their language shift from Bangla to English. Firstly, the majority of the participants

said that to do better in education they had to shift their language. Participant 2 said “at the beginning when I came here was not so skilled in English and in the school, the medium of instruction was in English. All the subjects were taught in English. So, it was difficult for me to understand the lectures due to lack of English knowledge. At that time learning English was the only way to succeed in education”.

Participant 1 mentioned that “I started my secondary school here, although I came from Bangladesh, but I could read English and can write to some extent. I could recognize lots of things but was not able to communicate in English. I felt pressure within myself to learn English for achieving my target”. Besides, Participant 3 said that “I had a good concept in math but after coming to London I could not understand the same math which I knew in Bangladesh and the reason for that was my shortage of English knowledge.”

To get a better job was another reason for language shift from the participants' point of view. Knowing better English is an advantage to get a job. Participant 9 said that “in this country, English is necessary for everywhere and in the workplace, without proper English it is difficult to continue”. Moreover, Participant 3 shared that “at the beginning of my job I did not get much attention for my lack of communicative competence. To succeed in job to know better English is a must”.

To communicate with other people is an important reason for shifting the language from Bangla to English and all the participants agreed with this. Without knowing English; it is difficult to interact with the majority group of people because English is widely used everywhere in London.

Participant 1 and Participant 5 illustrated that to be independent English is a must in this country. It is difficult to survive without English. If people know English, then they do not have to rely on somebody else.

Participants also said that as a result of migration they have to shift their language from Bangla to English. English is the official language of this country which has international status. So, when people come to this country; they influenced by the dominant language of the majority group which has social status and value.

### **Question 5**

#### **Do you use Bangla with your family members/children? Why or why not?**

All the interviewees replied that they use Bangla when they interact with family members like parents, siblings, relatives. With their parents they use Bangla because their

parents feel comfortable in this language and from childhood, they used to speak Bangla with them. Native language comes naturally with family interaction.

Most of the participants have children. Some participants use only English and some participants use both Bangla and English with their children. Participant 4 said that “with my son, I use only English because he is comfortable in English rather than Bangla and it is not easy to learn two languages at the same time at an early age. My son has the opportunity to learn Bangla from his grandparents and also he can learn Bangla by taking it as a subject when he will go to secondary school. In this way, my son can learn better Bangla”. Next, Participants 2 and 3 said that they hardly use Bangla with their children. They mentioned that the use of English becomes a habit. Participant 2 said “I tried to teach them Bangla, but they did not pick up the language that much and they were not interested to learn it. They think they don't need to learn Bangla.”

However, Participants 5 and 6 mentioned that they use both Bangla and English with their children. They want that their children should know Bangla. Participant 5 said, “my daughter understands Bangla but cannot speak in it. Besides, participant 1 said, “my daughter knows that she can survive in this country without Bangla and that's why she does not put much effort to learn it.”

Most of the participants said they want to teach their children Bangla. Participant 1, 2 and 3 mentioned being bilingual is an extra skill and ability and children should have that ability. Participant 3 also said that “children should know Bangla because it is part of identity and as parents, we should create the platform to learn Bangla language for them”.

## **Question 6**

### **Do you want to maintain Bangla as a language for future generations?**

The majority of the participants said that they want to maintain Bangla with the next generation, but it depends on them. They mentioned they have relatives in Bangladesh. If they do not maintain Bangla, their future generation will not keep in touch with Bangladeshi relatives.

Participant 1 mentioned that “I am not sure about the following generation whether they can continue Bangla or not. But I want that my daughter should know the Bangla language.” All the participants said that as a heritage language they want to maintain Bangla language with their future generation. From the participants' opinion, it is found that they want to continue Bangla with their next generation but it is uncertain to what extent they will be able to do this.

### **Question 7**

**Do you think that the Bangla language will die out with the next generation? Why or why not?**

Considering the present situation some participants were not sure whether Bangla will remain or die out from their next generation. Participant 3 and Participant 5 said that it will not fully die but remain to some extent. However, Participant 2 and Participant 4 mentioned that Bangla will die out from their future generation because they do not use this language with children. So, the children will not be able to speak Bangla with their following generation. Participant 2 said, “I am not able to teach my children Bangla, so in future they cannot maintain Bangla language”. Participant 6 mentioned that “maybe Bangla will remain until the third generation.”

Participants 1, 7 and 8 said the Bangla language will not die out from their next generation. Participant 1 illustrated that “nowadays there are many Bangla channels which broadcast news, dramas and also child programs to attract them, so they can learn Bangla from these sources. Some mosques teach Bangla on Friday. Nowadays there is lots of exposure to the Bangla language. So, it will not fully die out with the future generation”.

### **Question 8**

**Do you think that the standard Bangla language needs to be maintained in London among Bangladeshi immigrants?**

All the participants replied that it is necessary to maintain the standard Bangla language among the Bangladeshi community. They said that the community can arrange various Bangladeshi traditional programs to maintain Bangla language and culture. Some participants said that community members are arranging various occasions like Pohela Baishak (Bangla New Year), Book fair, Musical programmes, Language Day programme and so on. Participant 1 said that “Bangla language should be maintained because it is related with Bangladeshi culture with which we have grown up. We shift the country, but it does not mean that we forgot the language and culture”. Participant 4 said “along with Bangla language, Bangla culture should be maintained.” Participants 5 and 10 mentioned the same view that due to the majority of Sylheti people it is difficult to maintain actual standard Bangla language.

### **Question 9**

**Do you think that your language use represents your identity?**

All the participants mentioned that their language use represents their identity. It is their root and background from where they come from. Participant 3 said “language is the key component to represent identity and culture”. Participant 1 said “although we have to shift our language for certain purposes but our identity is Bangladeshi which we cannot deny.”

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All the participants agreed that through Bengali language and culture they can maintain their identity as Bangladeshi. Participant 8 said, “when I speak in Bangla it represents my identity that where I am from”.

## 5. Discussion

The objective of this research was to explore in detail the phenomenon of language shift and the target group’s willingness to maintain standard Bengali language. The data from the questionnaire and interview reflect that for some basic reasons they have to shift their language from Bangla to English. The questionnaire and interview have contributed to outlining the research findings.

From the interview and research questionnaire, it is observed that participants shift their language from Bangla to English for various reasons. Based on the questionnaire survey it is seen that 64% of participants use both Bangla and English for daily interaction. None of them use fully Bangla or English for daily communication. Here it can be said that they switch between Bangla and English in their daily discourse. Bilingualism is an essential factor for both language shift and code switching. This study also finds that the participants were not fully bilingual before came to this country. They knew some English but were not in the criteria to call them bilingual. They became bilingual after came to this country through exposure to English. According to the chosen definition to define bilingualism among target group it can be said that they have four skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening) in both languages for using the languages simultaneously. Both from the questionnaire survey and interview it is found that the majority of the participants pointed out that they feel comfortable in Bangla language because it is their mother tongue and from their childhood have learned that language. 2-3 participants said they are comfortable in English just for the habit of daily interaction.

Based on the interview and questionnaire survey various reasons were identified by participants for language shift. According to their view to have a better job and career they have to shift language. In English dominated countries often people learn English to get a good job (Holmes, 2001). 68% of participants strongly agreed and 24% agreed with this opinion. In the interview, they also mentioned the same opinion. Communication with everyone is another important reason. 60% of participants strongly agreed with this view and in the interview, they mentioned if they cannot communicate in English they will be ‘cornered’ in the society. Migration (Holmes, 2001 & Hoffman,1991) is a vital reason for this language shift. Language shift to English has been often expected among immigrants especially English country like UK where English is treated as a sign of success (Holmes, 2001). Another essential reason is the educational purpose. In the interview, the majority of the participants mentioned that to know better English was the way to success in education because all the subjects were in English. In



the questionnaire survey around 44% of participants strongly agreed that there was pressure from educational institutions to learn English. From this study, it is explored that the participants shift languages for specific purposes, not for all purposes. Weinreich (1953) states that language shift should be analyzed in terms of the various functions of the languages in the contact situations, however a native language group may switch to a new language in certain functions, but not for all. He also mentions that in such cases it can be described as 'partial' rather than a total shift. From this research finding it can be said that the target group shift from Bangla to English language for some specific purposes which can be termed as 'partial shift'. The findings of the study also revealed that the participants want to maintain Bangla language with the next generations. In the home domain, most of them use Bangla and it is reserved for in-group language as well as a home language. The parents want that their children should know Bangla and they are trying to teach them. If the children know the Bangla language they can communicate with relatives of those who live in Bangladesh. They also said it is considered an extra skill to know two languages. A few numbers of the participants think their children can survive here without Bangla as they donot need to learn.

This study also investigates that among third-generation they have a strong preference for the use of English for all communicative domains. The participants think that the Bangladeshi community in London need to promote or arrange programmes which are related to Bangladeshi culture. Sometimes these kinds of programmes will be effective for the third generation to feel attach towards Bangladeshi culture. Here the problem is two Bangladeshi communities existed in London: Sylheti and non-Sylheti. And the Sylheti culture and language are much influential than non-Sylheti. So sometimes it is not easy to maintain standard Bangla here.

To maintain Bangla language among community, the participants suggested that by organizing different types of social and cultural programs, Bangla language and culture can be maintained. Various exposures to Bangla language can be effective to maintain the Bangladeshi language and culture.

This research also demonstrates participants' attitudes towards this language shift. According to their view, they have to shift from their language to English for migration and other purposes. This shift does not have any negative impact on the Bengali language. Maybe Bangla is not widely used here in each domain, but they are not separated from the Bangla language. In their daily life, they are using Bangla more or less along with English.

## 5.1 Recommendations

The present study has brought so many areas under the spotlight on which several pieces of research can be done in future. For example, research can be done on the status of other regional languages of Bangladesh; it will help in knowing about the status of other regional languages.

The present research was carried out on second-generation non-Sylheti speakers; likewise, future research can be carried on third-generation language behaviour. Moreover, research can also be conducted to find the differences between Sylheti and non-Sylheti languages. So, it will help to get detailed information about language use widely used by Bangladeshi people living in London.

## 6. Conclusion

This research reflects the trend of language shift among non-Sylheti Bangla speakers living in London. From the collected data it is observed that they use Bangla and English for a certain domain. Maybe for some reason, they shift from Bangla to English, but it does not mean that they will not maintain or practice their native language. Native language is the root of any nation's identity and culture.

Clyne & Kipp (1999) mention that the home has often been regarded as a place for language maintenance. If a language is not maintained in the home domain, then it cannot be maintained elsewhere. Among the Bangladeshi community to maintain the Bangla language they need to use it in the home domain. Since language spoken within the family is related to its cultural self-identity, it is often dependent on parents who decide on whether to teach their native language to their children or not (Fishman, 1991). To continue the Bangla language in future they need to think about it from now on. If they cannot create encouragement among the third generation to learn Bangla then day by day it will die from the following generation. To maintain any language there should be people who can communicate among themselves daily (Holmes, 2001). In this regard, several Bangladeshi immigrants are living in London, who can communicate among themselves with the native language to maintain their heritage language in this country. In a community when two or more languages come into contact, either they co-exist side by side, or the powerful language dominates the minority group's language.

Language shift is sometimes called Language Decline or Language Death (Hoffman, 1991). When any community stops using a minority language, that language will be dead. Maybe after some generations Bangladeshi community in London will be shifted to English completely, in that case, Bangla will not become a dead language because there are millions of

Bangla speakers in Bangladesh. Maybe for the Bangladeshi community in London it will be a dead language if the future generation stops using the Bangla language.

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