

# A LOOK AT THE NATIVIZATION OF BANGLADESHI ENGLISH THROUGH CORPUS DATA

## LA NATIVIZACIÓN DEL INGLÉS DE BANGLADESH: UN ESTUDIO DE CORPUS

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### Abstract

This paper explores Bangladeshi English, a relative newcomer to the family of world Englishes. First, we chart the evolution of English in Bangladesh across several phases of development. These show that a number of political and ideological factors make the evolution of English in Bangladesh unique in that it wavers between the status of an exonormative foreign language (English in Bangladesh) and a local variety (Bangladeshi English). From a linguistic perspective, recent studies agree that the current level of proficiency is very low, with a dearth of teachers and an absence of quality education. Second, we examine the degree of nativization of Present-day Bangladeshi English on the basis of (i) its postcolonial evolution and the more recent effects of globalization, following the most popular models of analysis (the Dynamic Model and the Extra- and Intra-Territorial Forces Model), and (ii) linguistic evidence obtained through the analysis of a selection of linguistic features associated with this variety, as represented in the Corpus of Global Web-based English.

**Keywords:** Bangladeshi English, nativization, globalization, morphosyntactic variation.

### Resumen

Este artículo explora el inglés bangladeshí, una variedad relativamente reciente en el panorama global de las variedades del inglés. En primer lugar, trazamos la

evolución de la lengua inglesa en Bangladesh en diferentes fases de desarrollo. Estas muestran que una serie de factores políticos e ideológicos hacen que el desarrollo del inglés en Bangladesh sea diferente y único, ya que el inglés navega entre dos estatus: el de una lengua extranjera exonormativa (que se denominaría el inglés de Bangladesh) y el de una variedad local (llamada inglés bangladeshí). Desde una perspectiva lingüística, los estudios más recientes señalan que el nivel de dominio actual en Bangladesh es muy bajo, con una gran escasez de profesorado y una acusada falta de educación de calidad. En segundo lugar, examinamos el grado de nativización actual del inglés bangladeshí, sobre la base de (i) su evolución postcolonial y los efectos más recientes de la globalización, siguiendo los modelos de análisis más reconocidos (el Modelo Dinámico y el Modelo de Fuerzas Intra- y Extra-Territoriales), y (ii) la evidencia lingüística obtenida del análisis de una selección de rasgos lingüísticos asociados con esta variedad, tal y como aparece representada en el *Corpus of Global Web-based English*.

**Palabras clave:** inglés bangladeshí, nativización, globalización, variación morfosintáctica.

## 1. Introduction

Bangladesh is a densely populated country located in South Asia. It was colonized by Britain in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century<sup>1</sup>. As with many other such colonies, English became the language of administration and the parliamentary and legal systems. However, in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century political developments led to a decrease in the proficiency of English because of the increased use of Bengali, the national language. Bangladesh has traditionally been a largely monolingual territory, with the national language, Bengali, spoken by 98% of the population (Banu and Sussex 2001).<sup>2</sup> However, the 21<sup>st</sup> century has witnessed a revival of English, driven largely by the current shift in the country's economic structure from agriculture to manufacturing, bringing with it the need to integrate the economy into global markets. Such internationalization demands a greater knowledge of English, and also implies the crucial role of English for employment in an era of technological innovation and international commerce (Erling et al. 2012: 4; Hamid and Erling 2016: 27; Nigar 2019). Together with the desire for professional success, the social prestige of English and its nature as the language of globalization are also factors in these recent changes.

This paper is concerned with the process of nativization of Bangladeshi English (BdE). Such a process would confer on it the status of English as a Second Language (ESL) and an Outer Circle variety (OC, Kachru 1985), as in many other postcolonial territories, rather than that of English as a Foreign Language (EFL)

and an Expanding Circle variety (EC). As Schneider's (2003, 2007) Dynamic Model (DM) and Buschfeld and Kautzsch's (2017, 2020) External and Internal Forces Model (EIF) have shown, the status of a language depends on a complex interaction of historical, social and linguistic factors.<sup>3</sup> For this reason, we aim to examine the degree of nativization of BdE taking into account, first, the socio-historical evolution of English in Bangladesh and its present-day situation. Second, we will examine BdE from a linguistic perspective, since for BdE the "localized features of English still remain undocumented" (Hamid and Hasan 2020: 312; see also Bolton 2008: 6), and this has hindered previous attempts to confirm whether English in Bangladesh is following a process of nativization. Our analysis intends to fill this gap with data from GloWbE (Corpus of Global Web-based English), a corpus which contains Internet material, one of the areas where BdE features most prominently. Indeed, as Hamid and Hasan have noted, in Bangladesh, "[t]he use of technology has increased significantly in various domains, paving the way for more English" (2020: 299), with 157 million people (95% of the population) having access to mobile phone connections, and Internet access reaching 91 million; this makes the Internet a good place to begin any corpus-based search for distinctive characteristics of BdE.

The paper is structured as follows. Section 2 charts the evolution of English in Bangladesh following colonialization. Section 3 discusses the degree of nativization of BdE on the basis of the historical and socio-political conditions that have contributed to the present sociolinguistic situation. Section 4 analyses potential linguistic traces of nativization by providing a linguistic, corpus-based description of BdE. Finally, Section 5 provides a summary of the study and conclusions.

## 2. Modelling the Evolution of English in Bangladesh

### 2.1. The Foundation of English

Present-day Bangladesh (formerly Bengal) was once an important trading post, resulting in the construction of a factory in Dhaka in 1668 under the auspices of the British East India Company. Disagreements with the local population were constant and led to the Battle of Plassey (1757), which resulted in the British East India Company being established as the new ruler of Bengal and the incorporation of East Bengal, present-day Bangladesh, into British India (Van Schendel 2009: 43-49; Roy 2017: 331).

From 1757 onwards, British rule saw the introduction of new ideas and organization that over the years would lead to changes in Bengal's society and to profound cultural shifts therein. One of these was the establishment of Kolkata as

the capital not only of colonial Bengal, but, as British power expanded, of all colonial India. With Kolkata as the new political and cultural center, the former Bengal capital, Dhaka, lost power and population, and East Bengal in general saw little modernization, remaining largely a rural society (Van Schendel 2009: 49, 56, 64-67).

By the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, British rule was firmly established in Bengal and the colonial status of the territory was settled. During British rule English was the main language of administration, the legal system, the media, and parliamentary affairs (Iman 2005: 473; Logghe 2014: 23). Although missionaries and the East India Company had already established some educational institutions, it was in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century that imperialist education began in earnest under the British colonial presence, with the founding of English language schools based on the British model (cf. Rahman et al. 2021; Hamid and Erling 2016: 28; Chowdhury 2017: 5). Since the region was mainly used for trade and business by the British, only those members of the indigenous population who were proficient in English were employed in the civil service. Accordingly, the British began to provide English-medium education for a small sector of the population, in this way affording these people access to Western knowledge. This is expressed in Macaulay's *Minute on Indian Education*:

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We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern — a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of the country. (1835)

This was a conscious attempt to produce a hybrid population of indigenous people who, native by birth, were British in taste and ideology, and would spread the language and culture of the colonists to the rest of the indigenous population. The promotion of English was part of a well-defined strategy and a key element in the linguistic and cultural imperialism favored by the political, economic and social powers (Schneider 2007: 164; Chowdhury and Kabir 2014: 6; Hamid and Erling 2016: 28; Chowdhury 2017: 5). The 19<sup>th</sup> century also witnessed the emergence of literary production in English by Bangladesh writers, such as the Nobel Prize winner Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), among others.

This whole period, from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the late 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, can be characterized linguistically in terms of features of phases 1 (Foundation) and 2 (Exonormative Stabilization) of Schneider's DM, and of Buschfeld and Kautzsch's model (see Section 1). The colonization of Bangladesh by the British is the beginning of the Foundation phase, which lasts until 1757 with the Battle of Plassey and the integration of East Bengal in British India. From this period onwards, the situation of English in Bangladesh evolves into a phase of Exonormative Stabilization, in

which British English is adopted as the standard in education, culture and politics, in a similar way to what occurred in neighboring countries (e.g. India; cf. Suárez-Gómez and Seoane, forthcoming).

### 2.2. The Decline of English

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century the lower social classes and some members of the indigenous gentry began to join forces politically with the aim of ending economic exploitation and claiming self-determination, this within the framework of anti-colonialism through nationalist and communist action. Despite British attempts to defuse the conflict, using both repression and concessions, the final decades of colonial rule were tense, with nationalists mounting campaigns of non-cooperation and civil-disobedience, with the demand that the British abandon India (Van Schendel 2009: 78-79).

Following independence in 1947, British India was divided into India and the Muslim country of Pakistan. Pakistan itself was made up of West Pakistan (Present-day Pakistan) and East Pakistan (Present-day Bangladesh). The separation of Pakistan from India was made on religious grounds, since both territories of Pakistan were largely Muslim. However, West and East Pakistan did not share the same culture and language, and were geographically distinct (Banu and Sussex 2001: 61; Chowdhury and Kabir 2014: 6; Hamid and Erling 2016: 28; Roy 2017: 331-332). East Pakistan (today Bangladesh) suffered economic and linguistic discrimination from West Pakistan: in 1948 Urdu was established as the language of the new Muslim nation, very much against the wishes of the Bengali opposition (Mousumi and Kusakabe 2017: 681). The new Pakistani rulers considered that, as well as a common religion, a common language was also needed to create unity. Unlike what transpired in other postcolonial territories, English was not chosen as a neutral, co-official unifying language of government, law and education (Bolton 2008: 4); rather, Urdu was seen as a better choice due to its association with Islamic identity, and also because it was effectively a minority language for all speakers, and thus would not be a greater hindrance in communication for any one segment of society.

The Bengali population, who had very much welcomed the idea of a Muslim state, was angered by the imposition of Urdu, and a period of civil unrest began in East Pakistan (Hamid and Erling 2016: 28; Roy 2017: 331). In 1952 students and political activists led a movement in favor of Bengali, and in 1956 Bengali was granted the status of an official language in Pakistan. Bengali became the symbol of a new identity for the people of East Pakistan and also served as a source of inspiration in their struggle for freedom from Pakistan; it became the basis for Bangladeshi nationalism, which sought the restoration of Bengali and which would

lead to the Liberation War of 1971 and the emergence of an independent country, Bangladesh (Chowdhury and Kabir 2014: 9; Hamid and Erling 2016: 28; Roy 2017: 332). Following independence, Bangladesh underwent a period of turmoil, with military rule introduced repeatedly during the 1970s and the 1980s. An enduring democracy was finally restored in 1991, and since then the country has continued to develop, seeking to integrate itself into, and benefit from, the globalized economy.

Such political, territorial and linguistic disputes did not affect the English language directly, since English-based education was maintained. In addition, English was retained as an official language and was legitimized as the link language between the linguistically diverse territories, acquiring the status of an ESL (Chowdhury and Kabir 2014: 9; Logghe 2014: 23; Hamid 2015; Hamid and Erling 2016: 28-29; Chowdhury 2017: 1). Prior to independence, and particularly in East Pakistan, English was used as a tool to resist Urdu and was spoken in domains such as administration and inter-state communication (Banu and Sussex 2001: 61). However, when East Pakistan became the independent nation of Bangladesh, both Urdu and English were officially removed from the public sphere in Bangladesh, in favor of Bengali (Logghe 2014: 23; Roy 2017: 332). As a consequence, the presence of English saw a considerable decline. The 1972 constitution established Bengali as the sole national language, and the government went to great lengths to replace English with Bengali. In 1987 the Bengali Language Implementation Act was passed, and stipulated that the new national language was to be used in administration, the legal system, and as a medium of instruction in education (Logghe 2014: 23; Begum 2015: 240; Hamid 2015: 37; Hamid and Erling 2016: 29-30; Roy 2017: 332-334; Nigar 2019).

This attempt to remove English from use in the country led to the predictable evolution of English into the Nativization phase (phase 3 of both the DM and EIF models) to grind to a halt, a process which, had it continued, would have involved the accommodation of the variety of English into the local language ecology. The Bengali-only language policy that was now applied, which can be classified as an intra-territorial force in the EIF Model, would be largely responsible for the general loss of proficiency in English in Bangladesh.

### 2.3. The Re-foundation of English

Policy makers have recently realized the extent of the negative repercussions that these language policies, feeding as they did on post-independence nationalism, have had on English proficiency. From a social perspective, the language policies were also a disruptive force: in the years after 1972, when Bengali became the only official language, social differences were reflected in differences of English

proficiency, since wealthy families still made sure their children learnt English in private schools, while most of the population saw a progressive lowering in levels of proficiency. Nevertheless, more recently “English [has begun] to shine again in Bangladesh” (Begum 2015: 241). This re-foundation (or ‘re-entering’ in the words of Banu and Sussex 2001: 53) has been associated with a growth in the awareness of the practical, global needs of the country and a desire on the part of Bangladesh to benefit from increasingly international spheres of culture, the economy, education, and technology (Rahman et al. 2006: 1; Begum 2015: 241). This in turn led the president of Bangladesh to declare in 2002 his intention of emphasizing the teaching of English together with the mother tongue “with a view to promoting employment abroad and encouraging the transfer of technology” (Roy 2017: 335), so that “younger Bangladeshis may acquire a better knowledge of English than their parents” (Banu and Sussex 2001: 61). Currently, over 17 million children are learning English at school; it has been a compulsory subject in education, introduced at the primary level, since 1997 (Chowdhury and Kabir 2014: 11).

English today is used in a number of public and private roles by people in higher education and those seeking to increase their social status, and the national education policy does indeed place special emphasis on English (Banu and Sussex 2001: 59; Shanta 2017: 35). For example, since 2007 it has been the working language of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (Bolton 2020: 6). Complementary use of English and Bengali arises for sociopolitical reasons, and English has a wide variety of functions, such as in education, entertainment, the media, business, official trade correspondence, and personal communication (Banu and Sussex 2001: 59; Roy 2017: 336). It can probably be understood to be spreading in what Kachru calls “an invisible way”, in that “[t]he spread of English in the various domains is not necessarily planned; it is often ‘invisible’ and ‘unplanned’. The invisible and unplanned channels are contributing more to the diffusion and functional range of English than are the planned strategies” (1994: 150).

In terms of education, the Bangladeshi National Education Policy of 2010 placed greater emphasis on English, with the aim of creating a “strong and progressive knowledge-based and information technology-oriented society” (Chowdhury and Kabir 2014: 12). Writing and speaking skills were to be enhanced in primary education and continued at higher levels. At the secondary level, schools can now choose to introduce English as the medium of instruction, in addition to English being a compulsory subject. At the tertiary level, it is the medium of instruction, and is also a compulsory subject in all colleges and universities. There is also a new focus on the teaching of English and on learning how to teach English (Hamid and Erling 2016: 31; Roy 2017: 335-336). In fact, English Language Teaching (ELT) is a

growth area with national, international, private and non-governmental organizations all working to improve the quality of instruction in this area (Begum 2015: 247).

The increasingly prominent role of English in Bangladesh is most conspicuous in the media. English is extremely common on the radio, television channels, and in advertisements and the press (e.g. *The Daily Star*, *New Age*, *Dhaka Tribune* and *The Independent*, all accompanied by regular literary supplements, and the magazines *The Star*, *Slate* and *Dhaka Courier*). Modern literature in English includes the works of writers of the Bangladeshi diaspora, such as Tahmima Anam, Neamat Imam, Monica Ali and Zia Haider Rahman, all born in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (cf. Askari 2010; Erling et al. 2012; Begum 2015: 241; Chowdhury 2017; Roy 2017: 336). In the judicial system, English is said to be the *de facto* language (Mousumi and Kusakabe 2017: 681); however, the use of Bengali has increased for both lawyers and judges at higher levels of the legal system, while lower-level courts have always used Bengali (Shanta 2017: 35). Similarly, Bengali is more common in administration, but some senior government officials use English in higher social and administrative spheres, which gives rise to dichotomous reactions, in tune with Kachru's 'linguistic schizophrenia' (1994: 147): some see the hegemony of English as a remnant of the colonial mentality and as a form of linguistic imperialism bringing with it a wish to marginalize Bengali (Chowdhury 2017: 7); others see it as a welcome addition to the linguistic ecology of the country, with which the population can attain greater visibility and opportunities in the international sphere.

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In relation to this, the attitudes of Bangladeshi people towards English differ depending on their socio-economic and cultural background. Bristi (2015) observes differences between students of private and public universities, with the former having a more positive attitude towards English, as also reported by Alam (2017). On similar lines, Rahman et al. (2021) found that Aliya Madrasah students with wealthier and more educated parents expressed greater motivation to study English: these respondents deemed it important to learn the language in order to achieve professional success, and also cited social reasons here (see also Nigar 2019 for similar results). All these studies report positive attitudes when it comes to the value placed on learning English in terms of professional success, international connections and global migration. Nevertheless, they also report a shortage of qualified teachers (Sultana 2013), criticize the use of old-fashioned teaching methodologies, especially in public schools (Bristi 2015; Rahman et al. 2021), and complain that there is little exposure to English outside the classroom (Rahman et al. 2021). Ara (2020) goes further and ends her study with a plea to make English a co-official language in the country in order to help raise levels of English proficiency and thus to establish Bangladesh more firmly within the international

sphere. As Rahman et al. (2021: 80) concluded, it is necessary that planners, teachers and students work together to overcome these obstacles as a means of increasing learning success.

In sum, the 21<sup>st</sup> century has brought about the resurgence of English in Bangladesh as part of the broader aim of the country in establishing itself as part of the globalized world. Globalization, an extra-territorial force in the EIF Model, acts as the pull factor that explains why English is flourishing despite political attempts to eradicate it: English is a passport to modernity and professional success, and consequently a sign of social status and prestige. The new education policies promoting the teaching of English (an intra-territorial force) plus the presence of English in the media both illustrate how English is now socioculturally embedded in Bangladesh, and that it exhibits a dominant power in the country.<sup>4</sup>

### **3. The Nativization of English in Bangladesh: Historical and Socio-political Factors**

While the colonial history of the country might lead us to assume the nativization of BdE and thus to associate it with ESL status, evidence from other non-colonial varieties (e.g. Tswana English and English in Tanzania and Cyprus) shows that a colonial background does not guarantee nativization, entrenchment and local restructuring (cf. Schneider 2007; Gilquin and Granger 2011; Buschfeld 2013; Buschfeld et al. 2018: 21). According to Bolton (2008: 3), British colonialism has brought about a long history of contact with English, making it amenable to being regarded as an ESL and as an OC language from a historical perspective (similar to the situation in India or Sri Lanka). However, as noted in Section 2.2, after independence from India in 1947 and from Pakistan in 1971, the government attempted to remove English from use in the country. Thus, internal language policies would in large part be responsible for the general loss of proficiency in English in Bangladesh, and for the fact that BdE has traditionally been considered an EFL and an EC variety (cf. Hoffmann et al. 2011; Bolton 2008: 3).

An issue which is independent of the colonial background of the country is the recent resurgence of Bangladeshi English (see Section 2.3) and the widespread initiatives to extend the role of English in education. These have to do with factors such as cultural and economic globalization, the current role of English as a global Lingua Franca, and transnational attraction (Schneider 2018) which shape current varieties of English (see Section 2; see also Suárez-Gómez and Seoane, forthcoming). As a consequence of the country's desire to benefit from the economic and social advantages that greater fluency in English permits, new education policies promoting the teaching of English are now in place. From this,

it can be inferred that the observed re-emergence of BdE is independent of the language's initial foundation as a result of British colonization. Rather, globalization serves as a surrogate for colonization in the re-establishment and development of English. This is in line with observations by Schneider (2014: 28), who argues that English today has been appropriated for communicative purposes internationally, driven mainly by its status as an economic resource and a symbol of modernity leading to prosperity (cf. Kachru 2005: 91).

In short, BdE is not a link language as such. It does not have official status, does not have such a prominent role in education as other ESL varieties of English, and has a low level of proficiency, all of which points to an EFL, a non-nativized variety with EC status (Hoffmann et al. 2011: 273). However, the growing presence of English in education, entertainment, the media, business, official trade correspondence, administration and the legal system suggest that BdE is on the way to becoming a nativized ESL and OC variety. This expansion is both intentional, through recent education policies, and invisible, to use Kachru's (1994: 150) term, as a consequence of the aspirations of many members of the population to increase their opportunities for professional success, as illustrated in the findings of several attitudinal studies (see Section 2.3). So, at the current time BdE can be located on the ESL-EFL continuum, apparently leaning towards EFL, that is, on the non-nativized side (cf. Suárez-Gómez and Seoane, forthcoming).

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## 4. The Nativization of English in Bangladesh: Linguistic Evidence

### 4.1. Previous Research on Bangladeshi English

BdE is considered to be an offspring of Indian English (cf. Gries and Bernaisch 2016: 1), in the sense that both emerged within the British Raj in South Asia. After the independence of Pakistan (1947), and Bangladesh (1971), the situation regarding English in India, Bangladesh and Pakistan evolved in different ways.

Unlike Indian English (IndE) or Pakistani English (PkE), BdE has not been described or discussed in any recent handbooks on varieties of English. Thus, South-East Asian varieties of English (SAEs) such as IndE, PkE and Sri Lankan English (SLE) are included in *The Electronic World Atlas of Varieties of English* (eWAVE 3.0; cf. Kortmann et al. 2020), but BdE is not. Regarding corpora, there is currently no Bangladesh component in the *International Corpus of English* (ICE), unlike IndE and SLE, which are both represented; however, the GloWbE (Davies 2013a), the *News on the Web corpus* (NOW; Davies 2013b) and the *South Asian Varieties of English Corpus* (SAVE; Bernaisch et al. 2011) do include BdE data.

Within SAEs, only IndE and SLE have been analyzed in detail. Corpus studies which do include BdE have looked at linguistic features of SAEs generally, and have mostly used the SAVE corpus, and more recently GloWbE (cf. Hoffmann et al. 2011; Bernaisch and Lange 2012; Hundt et al. 2012; Koch and Bernaisch 2013; Bernaisch et al. 2014; Logghe 2014; Romasanta 2019; García-Castro 2020).

The results for most of these studies show heterogeneity in the different SAEs. Hundt et al. (2012), for example, find that SAEs do not cluster together, as initially hypothesized, and show different quantitative findings: for example, in terms of past subjunctives with *were* in counterfactual *if*-clauses (see (1) below), in variation with the indicative alternative (2), and in the modal periphrasis with *would* (3). Within this heterogeneity, BdE, as represented in the newspaper *Daily Star*, emerges as the least nativized variety (2012: 160), the one that displays “the highest relative frequency of patterns typical of L2-varieties of English” (2012: 158). This is confirmed by Bernaisch and Lange (2012: 8) in a study of the use of *itself* as a presentational focus marker (4), and Hoffman et al. (2011: 273) with regard to light-verb constructions with zero articles (e.g. *to give boost*, example (5)).

- (1) There is nobody to beat the politician in doling out sheer twaddle as if it were the profoundest truths of life! (The Statesman, 24/05/2004) (from Hundt et al. 2012: 150)
- (2) Our cricketers endorse products as if advertising was going out of fashion tomorrow. (The Statesman, 22/02/2003) (from Hundt et al. 2012: 150)
- (3) ...a top UN official would not hesitate ... to go further if that would achieve the desired result? (The Statesman, 02/06/2003) (from Hundt et al. 2012: 150)
- (4) We had a chance to see two militants adorned with Kalashnikov when they got down at Gangerbal from our bus itself. (IN\_SM\_2003-08-09) (from Bernaisch and Lange 2012: 8)
- (5) We really need to give boost to our export to maintain their competitiveness. (Daily Star, 9/12/2005) (Hoffman et al. 2011: 272)

These studies, then, have concluded that BdE is not currently undergoing endonormative stabilization (phase 4 in the DM), unlike other SAEs such as IndE and SLE. It has been argued that this different behavior of BdE is related to its status as a foreign language rather than an institutionalized ESL variety, since English in Bangladesh is not a link language and does not have official status (Hoffmann et al. 2011: 273). Yet, as described in Section 3, although not being official, English is very much present in Bangladesh, especially in academic and professional fields. In fact, code switching, code mixing and linguistic forms

which are neither Bengali nor English are easily identifiable features in the speech of many Bangladeshi people (Shanta 2017: 34). This is certainly the case in the linguistic landscape of Dhaka, the capital city, where we can find abundant code-switching between Bengali and English, both linguistic and graphological (Banu and Sussex 2001: 53, 66), as well as in print and electronic media, not only as a means of localizing the news and thus guaranteeing better understanding, but also as a step in the process of developing a local variety (Hossain et al. 2015).

More recent linguistic evidence, this time on clausal complementation in SAEs, shows that BdE tends to reflect the pattern of IndE and to differ from SLE and PakeE. Thus, García-Castro (2018, 2020) examines the clausal complementation of the verb *REMEMBER*, which allows both finite (6) and non-finite clausal complements (CCs) (7), in BdE, IndE and SLE; Romasanta (2019, 2020) also examines the variation between finite (8) and non-finite (9) CC alternation for another retrospective verb, *REGRET*, in BdE, PakeE, IndE and SLE.

- (6) *Remember* you have to compose two different parts. (GloWbE, BD)
- (7) I do not *remember* hearing any of the Anglo-Saxon words even through four years at Oxford University. (GloWbE, IND)
- (8) I am satisfied with the decision, definitely I will never *regret* that I took the decision (GloWbE, BD)
- (9) Do you *regret* not playing more matches? (GloWbE, BD)

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	GloWbE GB		GloWbE IN		GloWbE BD		GloWbE LK		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Finite CCs	5	4.0	13	9.5	14	9.0	4	4.0	35	6.5
Non-finite CCs	117	96.0	125	90.5	144	91.0	104	96.0	490	93.5
Total	122	100	138	100	158	100	108	100	525	100

Table 1. Distribution of finite and non-finite complement clauses after *remember* in four sections of GloWbE (data from García-Castro 2018: 302)

Table 1 shows the distribution of finite and non-finite complement clauses of *REMEMBER* in three SAEs compared to British English (BrE). The varieties with a slightly higher relative proportion of finite complement clauses are IndE and BdE, in tune with the tendency of ESLs to favor finite CCs to a greater extent than ENLs, here represented by BrE (cf. Steger and Schneider 2012; García-Castro 2018: 302; Romasanta 2020). This is due to the increased isomorphism of finite clauses motivated by the presence of a complementizer and an explicit subject in the complement clause.

## A Look at the Nativization of Bangladeshi English

As to the variability in the complementation profile of *REGRET* in Asian Englishes, Table 2 below shows that in BdE the percentage of non-finite complement clauses is similar to that of IndE, and slightly more frequent than in SLE and PakeE.

	Finite		Non-finite	
	No.	%	No.	%
GloWbE GB	156	27.0%	422	73.0%
GloWbE IN	126	39.4%	194	60.6%
GloWbE BD	41	40.6%	60	59.4%
GloWbE LK	79	54.5%	66	45.4%
GloWbE PK	117	57.1%	88	42.9%

Table 2. Distribution of finite and non-finite complement clauses after *REGRET* in five sections of GloWbE (data from Romasanta 2020: 158, 163, 167, 171, 175)

In the existing literature, then, no linguistic features have been identified which are characteristic or exclusive to BdE, and variability very often seems to be governed by stable predictors across varieties, as is the case with dative alternation (Bernaisch et al. 2014: 28), to mention one widely-researched feature. So, the currently available linguistic evidence suggests the non-nativized status of BdE.

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### 4.2. Bangladeshi English in GloWbE

In this section, we provide a linguistic analysis of BdE as represented in GloWbE. In line with previous research (see Section 4.1), where different varieties of SAEs are analyzed, we selected a series of morphosyntactic features that IndE, SLE and PakeE share in eWAVE 3.0 (Kortmann et al. 2020). From a list of 36 features classified there as ‘pervasive or obligatory’ or ‘neither pervasive nor extremely rare’ in at least two of the three represented varieties, we analyzed the following five and checked for their presence and frequency in BdE. Since this is a preliminary analysis, we started with the features that involve a fairly straightforward manual filtering, as will be shown below.

- a) Extension of uses of the progressive (eWAVE feature 88)
- b) Extension of analytic comparatives to monosyllabic adjectives (eWAVE feature 80)
- c) Double comparatives (eWAVE feature 78)
- d) Different count/mass noun distinctions and pluralization (eWAVE feature 55)
- e) Specific forms for the second person plural (eWAVE feature 34)

The individual analysis of each of these features is presented below.

4.2.1. *Extension of Uses of the Progressive*

SAEs, in particular IndE and SLE, report a wider range of uses of progressive *be + V-ing* than Standard English, motivated mostly by the extension of the periphrasis *be + -ing* to stative verbs (feature 88), as in (10) (cf. Paulasto 2014; Rautionaho 2014).

- (10) What the Bengalis *had really been wanting* were regional autonomy and social and economic justice. (GloWbE, BD)

A search of five frequent stative verbs (WANT, LIKE, LOVE, KNOW and CONCERN) occurring in the periphrastic construction *be + ing* yields the results in Table 3. For the search, we looked for all the forms of BE followed by the *ing* verbal form of those five frequent stative verbs. This automatic search had to be manually revised in order to discard examples such as (11), which includes *liking* not as a verb but as a quotative (by analogy with *like*) and (12), where *concerning* is an adjective rather than a verb.

- (11) You co-curate an exhibition: it's *liking* co-editing a book. (GloWbE, BD)

- (12) But what is *concerning* for President Barack Obama is that there seems to be a certain trend of unification. (GloWbE, SL)

Feature 88	BdE	IndE	PakE	SLE
BE <i>wanting</i>	2.48	2.92	2.38	2.19
BE <i>liking</i>	0.38	0.34	0.31	0.18
BE <i>loving</i>	0.66	1.67	0.72	0.50
BE <i>knowing</i>	1.34	1.16	1.34	0.66
BE <i>concerning</i>	0.56	0.24	0.52	0.46

Table 3. Frequency per million words (pmw) of progressive *be + -ing* in five frequent stative verbs

Results from Table 3 show that this construction is used in BdE in proportions either higher or similar than in the other SAEs (higher with LIKE and CONCERN, similar with WANT, KNOW and LOVE). We can conclude, then, that in broad terms the extension of the progressive periphrasis to stative verbs is a common feature of SAEs, and that BdE is not an exception to this trend.

4.2.2. *Extension of Analytic Comparatives to Monosyllabic Adjectives*

The extension of analytic marking to synthetic comparatives (eWAVE feature 80) mostly affects monosyllabic adjectives, as in (13):

- (13) Emergence of new chemical equipment makes the market share of crusher accessories more and *more high*. (GloWbE, BD)

To check for this feature in GloWbE, we selected the nine most frequent monosyllabic adjectives in the analytic comparative form in this database (excluding the adjectives *good*, *bad* and *far*, with irregular formations). The manual selection of examples involved excluding examples in which *more* was a quantifier, as in [*more (old people)*] and [*more (high maintenance technology)*]. Table 4 sets out the findings:

Feature 80	BdE	IndE	PakE	SLE
<i>more high</i>	0.18	0.06	0.08	0.06
<i>more great</i>	0.15	0.06	0.06	0.06
<i>more low</i>	0.05	0.03	0.04	-
<i>more old</i>	0.07	0.03	0.02	0.04
<i>more large</i>	0.10	0.05	0.02	-
<i>more big</i>	0.10	0.13	0.10	0.02
<i>more small</i>	0.07	0.08	0.04	-
<i>more young</i>	0.20	0.16	0.23	0.12
<i>more long</i>	0.05	0.06	-	0.06

Table 4. Frequency pmw of analytic comparatives in the most frequent monosyllabic adjectives

Table 4 shows that use of the analytic structure for the comparative has been extended to monosyllabic adjectives, especially in BdE, since six out of nine of the selected adjectives (HIGH, GREAT, LOW, OLD, LARGE and BIG) show values higher than in the other varieties analyzed. Since analytic constructions are more iconic and transparent, they are easier to learn and use than synthetic ones, and this might itself indicate that English input and use in Bangladesh has been relatively more scarce than in the other SAEs analyzed.

#### 4.2.3. Double Comparatives

Within comparatives, the construction which contains a double comparative (14) is also pervasive in the varieties included in eWAVE (feature 78):

- (14) Other teams becoming *more weaker* makes it *more easier* for us to beat them, but we have to have the right set of players to get the job done. (GloWbE, BD)

For the analysis of double comparatives we selected the 10 most frequent adjectives, this time including also irregular forms (e.g. *better*) and disyllabic

adjectives (e.g. *EASY*). In the manual cleaning of the database, examples like (15) below were excluded because *more* is part of the correlative comparative *the more...the more*.

- (15) The more rigorous the job looks the *more better* profits you can reap from it. (GloWbE, IND)

Feature 78	BdE	IndE	PakE	SLE
<i>more better</i>	1.44	0.80	0.91	0.43
<i>more easier</i>	0.96	0.67	0.56	0.69
<i>more stronger</i>	0.30	0.54	0.56	0.17
<i>more older</i>	0.10	0.05	0.04	0.04
<i>more worse</i>	0.39	0.28	0.39	0.13
<i>more younger</i>	0.07	0.10	0.02	0.02
<i>more happier</i>	0.03	0.18	0.12	0.11
<i>more cheaper</i>	0.13	0.17	0.12	0.15
<i>more smaller</i>	0.03	0.05	0.02	0.14
<i>more higher</i>	0.28	0.16	0.12	0.08

Table 5. Frequency pmw of double comparatives in the 10 most frequent adjectives

As was the case with the use of analytic comparatives with monosyllabic adjectives, double comparatives also tend to score higher in BdE than in the other SAEs, as shown in Table 5. This is very clear with the adjectives *GOOD*, *EASY*, *OLD* and *HIGH*. As for *STRONG*, *YOUNG*, *HAPPY*, *CHEAP* and *SMALL*, differences with respect to the other adjectives are less marked. As in 4.2.2 above, BdE grammar opts for redundant marking and increased isomorphism, which is common in varieties in an early stage of development (cf. Suárez-Gómez 2017; Scontras et al. 2017).

#### 4.2.4. Different Count/Mass Noun Distinctions and Pluralization

The indeterminacy of count/mass nouns (eWAVE feature 55) is observed in the irregular use of plurals that are not possible in Standard English (e.g. *informations*, *furnitures*, see (16)):

- (16) In the court proceedings both the parties try to present all types of *evidences* in front of the judge and the judge decide based on the *evidences* presented by both the conflicting parties. (GloWbE, BD)

This variable was examined in a selection of mass nouns listed in Quirk et al. (1985: 251-252). The manual filtering of the examples retrieved automatically involved mainly verbal forms wrongly tagged in the corpus as nouns, as is the case of *advices* in (17). The results are reported in Table 6:

- (17) She advises us to follow the path of truth and honesty. She also *advices* us to be polite, gently and modest (GloWbE, BD)

Feature 55	BdE	IndE	PakE	SLE
<i>informations</i>	2.36	1.20	0.45	0.86
<i>moneys</i>	2.61	1.43	0.84	1.93
<i>advices</i>	2.63	1.70	1.32	1.07
<i>abuses</i>	6.53	3.98	5.98	13.35
<i>evidences</i>	6.26	4.38	9.99	4.14
<i>furnitures</i>	0.08	0.10	0.10	0.13
<i>applauses</i>	0.15	0.03	0.04	0.02
<i>equipments</i>	6.18	5.70	3.52	3.28
<i>homeworks</i>	0.10	0.00	0.08	0.04
<i>researches</i>	4.36	3.00	3.93	3.05
<i>educations</i>	0.66	0.47	0.60	0.64
<i>harms</i>	1.16	0.68	3.02	1.44
<i>safeties</i>	0.20	0.05	0.06	0.06
<i>violences</i>	0.08	0.01	0.10	0.09

Table 6. Frequency pmw of a selection of mass nouns in the plural

Table 6 shows particularly high numbers for two semantically similar nouns in SLE: *abuses* and *harms*. For these two nouns, BdE ranks second, and for nine of the remaining twelve nouns analyzed it ranks first, that is, it is the variety within SAEs that shows the strongest tendency to add plural markers to mass nouns. These nine nouns are *informations*, *moneys*, *advices*, *applauses*, *equipments*, *homeworks*, *researches*, *educations* and *safeties*.

#### 4.2.3. Specific Forms for the Second Person Plural

The development of specific forms for the second person plural has been reported as pervasive in SAEs as well as in other varieties of English, both L1 and L2 varieties (eWAVE feature 34). GloWbE data (see results in Table 7) reveal that these forms exist in SAEs, especially *you guys* (18), the most frequent one.

- (18) Can *you guys* give these baby sittings a break? (GloWbE, BD)

Feature 34	BdE	IndE	PakE	SLE
<i>you guys</i>	12.26	14.55	24.08	17.30
<i>y'all</i>	0.46	1.27	0.43	0.52
<i>youse, you ones</i>	-	2.16	3.06	1.80

Table 7. Frequency pmw of specific forms for the second person plural

Frequencies in BdE are lower and thus in line with the findings for analytic comparatives with monosyllabic adjectives, double comparatives, and pluralization of mass nouns. That is, four of the five individual features analyzed in BdE point to a lower degree of nativization as compared to the other three SAEs (IndE, PakE, SLE). So, the linguistic evidence here broadly corroborates earlier findings that nativization of BdE is still an ongoing process.

## 5. Conclusion

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This paper has analyzed BdE, an under-researched postcolonial variety of English which deviates from the process described for other varieties of English with a colonial background, in that lineal progression in the case of BdE was interrupted by several sociopolitical events. After independence, Bengali was favored to the detriment of English, which led to a decline in proficiency and to the status of a non-nativized variety. However, the recent revival of English in Bangladesh, motivated by the need for an international language to respond to the growth of globalization, together with new education policies promoting the teaching of English, might now serve to position BdE in such a way that it is becoming a nativized variety. Indeed, this is what we have explored here in terms of (i) the current sociopolitical situation of the country, where educational policies and general attitudes favor the use and consequent nativization of BdE, and (ii) the linguistic analysis of various features, which confirms that structural nativization is in an early phase, since BdE shares with other Asian Englishes just one of the five linguistic features examined here. The other four features appear to indicate that structural nativization has not yet been reached.

Further research is required to confirm the current status of English in Bangladesh. So far, attitudinal studies point to a widespread desire to learn and improve English, with differences between speakers here reflecting their socioeconomic background. There is also evidence that educational policies now favor English teaching and learning to a greater extent than was the case until fairly recently. However, only a thorough assessment of the real situation of English in education would shed light on whether the emphasis placed on English in education translates

into practice, and thus whether English is indeed permeating a wide range of social spheres effectively. Further linguistic studies on the basis of existing corpora of BdE are also necessary to confirm what we believe is the current status of BdE: that of a variety of English which remains non-nativized.

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### Notes

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1. Bangladesh's population in 2020 was estimated to be almost 169 million, with 39.4% residing in urban areas (Worldometers 2023).

2. Over 40 other languages are spoken in the country. After Bengali, the most widely-spoken of these are Urdu, used largely by Pakistanis; Hindi, from neighboring India, bolstered by the influence of Bollywood films

and music; and Arabic, used in the religious practices and education of Muslims (Hamid and Erling 2016: 27-28; Bolton 2020: 53).

3. For further information on the application of these models to BdE, see Suárez-Gómez and Seoane (forthcoming).

4. See Suárez-Gómez and Seoane (forthcoming) for further details on the 'Re-foundation' phase of English in Bangladesh.

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