The Classroom Linguistic Landscape (CLL): examining English linguistic imperialism and [de] colonisation

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ABSTRACT: Classroom linguistic landscapes (CLL), the dynamics of linguistic imperialism, and (de) colonisation in educational spaces, and how they are reflected in (post)colonial linguistic ideologies were examined in this study. The quantitative content analysis was conducted using visual data and a linguistic landscape (LL) framework. The data were collected through the photographic documentation of classroom materials, signage, artefacts, and many other resources. The analysis revealed a significant discrepancy between Bengali medium (BM) and Qawmi madrasa education (ME) in Bangladesh, where BM reinforces the dominance of English signage as a linguistic and cultural tool. By contrast, ME has a more balanced multilingual representation within CLLs, as English, Bengali, Arabic, Urdu, and Farsi are all included, thereby resisting English hegemony and actively promoting a more equitable multilingual environment.
Keywords: Classroom linguistic landscape, decolonisation, English linguistic imperialism, general secondary education, multilingualism, Qawmi madrasa education

Paisaje lingüístico en el aula (PLA): Examinando el imperialismo lingüístico del inglés y la (des)colonización

RESUMEN: Este estudio examina los paisajes lingüísticos en el aula (PLA), las dinámicas del imperialismo lingüístico y la (des)colonización en los espacios educativos, y cómo se reflejan en las ideologías lingüísticas (post)coloniales. El análisis de contenido cuantitativo se realizó utilizando datos visuales y un marco de paisajismo lingüístico. Los datos se recolectaron mediante la documentación fotográfica de materiales de aula, señalización, artefactos, entre otros. El análisis revela una discrepancia significativa entre el Medio Bengalí (MB) y la Educación de las Madrasas Qawmi (EM) en Bangladesh, donde el MB refuerza el dominio de la señalización en inglés como herramienta lingüística y cultural. En contraste, la EM presenta una representación multilingüe más equilibrada dentro del PLA, incluyendo inglés, bengalí, árabe, urdu y farsi, lo que le permite resistir la hegemonía del inglés y promover activamente un entorno multilingüe más equitativo.
Palabras clave: Paisaje lingüístico en el aula, Descolonización, Imperialismo lingüístico del inglés, Educación secundaria general, Multilingüismo, Educación de las madrasas Qawmi

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the study of linguistic landscapes (LLs) has become important for investigating language dynamics in social, cultural, and ideological practices (cf. Abongdia & Foncha, 2014; Landry & Bourhis, 1997; Shohamy & Gorter, 2009). The LLs in classrooms are tangible reflections of institutional policies, historical legacies, academic ideologies, identity development, and pedagogical practices. The focus in this study is on two different streams of education in Bangladesh, namely general Bengali medium (BM) education and Qawmi madrasa education (ME), to examine how LLs are constructed, maintained, and interpreted in classrooms.

In general education schools (also called mainstream schools), students study a curriculum that emphasises Bengali as the national language and English as a compulsory language. This system of education is "more or less a colonial legacy" of the British (Ali, 1986). This mainstream education started in the colonial past and was implemented during British colonialism (Rahman et al., 2010); the ideology in these schools has been shaped by the "complex mix of colonial heritage" (Thornton 2006). Macaulay's (1835) *Minute* institutionalised Western knowledge through the use of English (Ghosh, 1993/2012; Mukerji, 1957). The rapid expansion of English schools and the establishment of Zila and collegiate schools in the 19th century entrenched the dominance of English (Seal, 1968; Ali, 1986); at present, this legacy reinforces the colonial framework that privileges Western linguistic and cultural capital (Nurullah & Naik, 1962).

By contrast, MEs were conceptualised and established as a "rejection to the British education policy" without receiving funding from the state; an example is the Darul-Uloom Deoband, which was established by the Muslim community in India in 1866 (Hussain, 2018: vii; see also Al-Hasani et al., 2017, p. 3). Similarly, due to British colonisation, the education, culture, and social condition of the Muslim society in East Bengal (now Bangladesh) has been demoralised to the point of destroying the local beliefs and national-racial identity. To decolonise the nation from Western (i.e., British) cultural aggression, a group of Muslim communities in Bangladesh decided to establish a madrasa called Darul Uloom Hathazari at Hathazari in Chittagong, Bangladesh, in 1901 following the model of the Darul-Uloom Deoband in India (AlHasani, 2020). Moreover, the teaching method and ideology were developed in accordance with the Dars-i-Nizami curriculum, which originated in Baghdad in the 11th century (Al-Hasani, 2017). Qawmi madrasas are managed by 19 independent private boards (Asadullah & Chaudhury, 2016). In April 2017, the Bangladesh government recognised the highest Qawmi madrasa degree as being equivalent to a university master's degree (Hussain, 2018).

In 2020, the total enrolment in Bangladesh's secondary schools was approximately 9,016,773 students; by 2022, this figure had decreased to around 8,930,245, a net reduction of 86,524 learners over two years. These students were distributed across approximately 18,874 government and nongovernment secondary institutions, highlighting the extensive reach of the country's formal education system. By contrast, the Qawmi madrasas have experienced exponential expansion: There are currently 39,612 registered Qawmi madrasas nationwide; when unregistered institutions are included, the total rises to an estimated 64,000–70,000 madrasas. Over the past four decades, the number of Qawmi madrasas has increased sev-

enty-fold (an average annual increase of approximately 1,750 new establishments); these institutions currently educate around 5,247,660 students (54% of their enrolment), with 85% being situated in rural areas and 85% of students residing in boarding facilities (see Hakim, 2021, amongst many others).

2. Literature review

2.1. Defining an LL

An LL is broadly defined as the language "displayed and exposed in public spaces" (Shohamy & Gorter, 2009, p. 1). LLs have been examined across multiple disciplines since Landry and Bourhis (1997) first described LLs as "the visibility and salience of languages on public and commercial signs in a given territory or region". Studies have also characterised an LL as the study of writing on display in the public sphere (Coulmas, 2009) or as "language that is visible to all in a specified area" (Gorter, 2006, p. 2). Brito (2016) provided an overview of various definitions and methodological approaches, while Mensel, Vandenbroucke, and Blackwood (2016) emphasised the breadth and focus of linguistic landscape research. They defined the field as one concerned with the representation of language(s) in public spaces, where the objects of study include any visible display of written language—referred to as "signs"—as well as the ways in which individuals interact with these signs (p. 423).

Signs may range from road signs to names of streets, shops, and schools (Shohamy et al., 2010) and texts on billboards or other public media (Torkington, 2009). Regarding LLs, Gorter (2006) differentiated between "the literal study of the languages as they are used in the signs" and "the representation of the languages", while Jaworski and Thurlow (2010, p. 3) presented LLs as a "way of seeing the external world", including everyday activities such as conversations and shopping. Kallen (2010) also highlighted portals — spaces in which mobility and technology converge — as a lens through which to view the dynamic nature of signage. Of note, Landry and Bourhis (1997, p. 25) focused on "the language of public road signs, boards, street names, place names, commercial shop signs, and public signs on government buildings", while Bourhis and Landry (2002) clarified that an LL "refers to language that is visible in a specified area", and Sciriha (2004) and Sciriha & Vassallo (2001) adopted the concept to analyse multilingual realities in larger regions. An LL has both informational and symbolic functions, as it indicates where services or locations are situated while also signalling the ethnic or linguistic communities that claim these spaces (Landry & Bourhis, 1997; Lou, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c). The LL framework reveals broader power and identity issues (cf. Blommaert, 1999); for example, Grishaeva (2015) viewed LLs as a crossroads of professional and social interests of a region.

Similarly, Perono Cacciafoco and Cavallaro (2023) identified four components - nature, culture, society, and economy - through which LLs illustrate how people's social identities are formed in context. Kallen (2023) observed that displayed language contained "pragmatic principles", thus revealing its power as a socially conventional system that often manifests in indexical or symbolic meanings (Eragamreddy, 2024). In particular, commercial signage may emphasise modernity or tradition, in addition to marking status (Gorter & Cenoz, 2023; Shohamy & Gorter, 2009).

2.2. LL: Scopes and Utility

The scope of LLs has been extended in sociolinguistic studies due to the era of globalisation, the "techno-feudal society" (Varoufakis, 2024), and the emergence of the post-colonial voice. As can be seen, multilingual signs, symbols, and makers in bottom-up and/or top-down situations are regarded as having cultural power, where multilingualism arises as a consequence of the local district's confrontation with globalization (Lee, 2019). For example, Ahmad and Hillman (2021) argued that, in multilingual or multicultural regions, government messages alone were insufficient when literacy rates were low and emphasised the crucial role of public figures and community involvement in disseminating vital information. However, it is essential to differentiate LL studies from studies of signed languages, which focus on the visually perceived communicative systems of Deaf communities (Brentari, 2010; McBurney, 2006; Sutton-Spence, 2005). While signed languages rely on gestures and on visual-spatial modalities (Sutton-Spence, 2005), LL studies mainly examine written forms in public spaces (Torkington, 2009).

Studies have approached LLs from both macrolevel perspectives, analysing entire regions or nations (Sciriha & Vassallo, 2001; Sciriha, 2004), and microlevel approaches that focus on specific urban signage (Landry & Bourhis, 1997). In both cases, LLs function as a "social reproduction system" (Blommaert, 1999, pp. 10-11) that disseminates dominant linguistic ideologies and values. The research ranges from Landry and Bourhis' (1997) foundational definitions to broader explorations of how "language in the environment, words and images displayed and exposed in public spaces" (Shohamy & Gorter, 2009) and shapes social identities and ideologies. An LL's informational and symbolic functions are evident in various contexts, ranging from commercial signage, which signals modernity or prestige (Lee, 2019; Tan & Tan, 2015), to educational environments in which power dynamics are navigated (cf. Dressler, 2015; Im, 2020). The LL also adapts to convey urgent public health messages during crises (Ahmad & Hillman, 2021; Alhazmi, 2024; Marshall, 2021). Collectively, these studies illustrate how public displays of written language reflect and reshape cultural, economic, and social transformations, thus establishing LLs as a powerful lens for understanding multilingual management, collective identity, and meaning negotiation in shared spaces.

Existing frameworks such as "schoolscapes" mainly address the physical manifestations of signage in educational settings (Gorter, 2018) and the influence of sign content on language ideologies (Alsaif & Starks, 2018). However, the term classroom linguistic landscape (CLL; see Section 2.3) has been introduced to capture a broader, more nuanced reality. Unlike schoolscapes, which mainly focus on external, top-down signage, CLL encompasses the entire classroom as a dynamic semiotic environment in which heterogeneous textual and visual artefacts (e.g., textbooks, motivational quotations, digital interfaces, and official documents) collaboratively construct and negotiate linguistic meaning. This expanded concept acknowledges not only the informational role of signage, but also the active and interactive processes that shape communicative practices, identity formation, and power relations within the classroom. CLL provides a more comprehensive framework for understanding the internal microlevel dynamics of language in education, thus necessitating its distinction from the somewhat limited notion of schoolscapes.

2.3. CLL

In developing a theoretical framework for CLL, the proposition in this study is that the classroom constitutes a complex semiotic environment in which heterogeneous textual and visual artefacts collaboratively construct and negotiate linguistic meaning. The framework posits that traditional textual resources (i.e., written texts, motivational quotations, textbooks, workbooks, and official documents) operate in conjunction with visual representations, including posters, charts, maps, timelines, and digital interfaces, thereby engendering a multifaceted LL. This landscape not only reflects existing sociocultural and pedagogical dynamics, but also actively shapes communicative practices, identity formation, and power relations within the educational setting. Consequently, the CLL framework provides a robust analytical paradigm for examining the intricate interplay amongst language, symbolism, and institutional norms in the classroom. Therefore, a CLL is defined as a dynamic semiotic environment within educational settings in which heterogeneous textual and visual artefacts collaboratively mediate linguistic meaning, identity, and power relations.

CLL is a key pedagogical tool for enhancing learning through (inter)cultural awareness in the classroom. This involves the visible language in a given environment, including signs, posters, and other texts. Studies have shown that integrated educational settings improve language learning by providing real-world scenarios for language applications (e.g., Wiśniewska, 2024; Zhu & Fu, 2023). One of the main benefits of using CLLs in the classroom or in teaching materials is their ability to promote translanguaging practices, intercultural acceptance, and the development of linguistic ideologies that allow students to draw on their entire linguistic repertoire. For example, they can create spaces in which students' diverse linguistic backgrounds are acknowledged and valued, thereby enriching their learning experiences (e.g., Straszer et al., 2020; Wedin et al., 2021). CLLs enhance language learning and foster a sense of belonging and identity (e.g., Guarda & Mayr, 2023).

High-quality visual materials assist in language acquisition (Yildiz, 2020). Similarly, English signage in the classroom helps learners to engage with the language and to understand its cultural nuances (Dumanig & David, 2019). Moreover, CLL may help to develop language skills while encouraging students to think critically about linguistic diversity and power in multilingual contexts; for example, signage in the classroom can stimulate discussions about linguistic power relations and the importance of different languages in society (e.g., Brinkmann et al., 2022). This engagement is essential for intercultural competence, as it helps learners to navigate and appreciate diverse language uses (Ahmed, 2024). Thus, CLL in language classes aligns with experiential pedagogies (e.g., Victoria, 2018; Zhou, 2023), thereby enhancing relevance through authentic engagement and translanguaging while fostering inclusive environments that increase linguistic proficiency and cultural awareness.

2.4. Resisting Linguistic Imperialism in CLLs: Multilingualism

Linguistic imperialism may remain evident in CLLs. For example, the use of English signage has become dominant globally as a symbol of prosperity and status and for decorative functions (Tan & Tan, 2015: 66). Dressler (2014) used nexus analysis to show how teachers' sign-making is shaped by their social roles, interactional practices and bilingual

ideologies, while state and school agencies may often use CLLs to convey hidden agendas and implicit messages (cf. Przymus & Kohler, 2017).

English linguistic imperialism is rooted in historical (neo)colonisation, which may create inequalities between English and other languages in different forms and manners (Brown, 2022; Phillipson, 1992). For example, in Ireland, the control of language policies in education by authorities outside of the Deaf community resulted in a lack of representation and support for minority languages such as Irish Sign Language (Rose & Conama, 2017). Similarly, in the Philippines, the spread of English has undermined local languages and cultural identities (Zeng & Tian, 2022). Thus, the spread of English worldwide has been referred to as the "McDonaldization" of public signage, and English often eclipses local languages (see Vandenbroucke, 2016). These inequalities privilege English speakers (Roth, 2018). Moreover, the visual dominance of English on commercial signage is often associated with modernity and elitism (Hasanova, 2010).

As described above, the hegemony of English in a CLL affects culture and ideology. For example, Saba (2023) showed that stereotypes and cultural hierarchies were embedded in teaching materials such as English textbooks, which may result in homogeneous cultural expressions and identities (cf. El-Qassaby, 2015; Fitriyantisyam & Munandar, 2021). By contrast, a multilingual CLL can provide a balance of voices and resist linguistic imperialism in the classroom.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

This study used a qualitative case study design based on the principles of visual ethnography and situated within the framework of linguistic landscape (LL) research. This approach enabled a context-sensitive investigation of classroom-level linguistic landscapes (CLLs) in different secondary educational institutions in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The aim of the study was to investigate how visual and textual artifacts such as textbooks, posters and digital interfaces reflect linguistic hierarchies and ideologies in the classroom.

3.2. Data Collection and Analysis

Photographic documentation (Özkalıpçı & Volpellier, 2010; Tahir & Bidin, 2019) was used in this study as an instrument to systematically collect CLLs within classroom spaces, including textbooks, posters, noticeboards, and other educational artefacts. The data were collected from January 2025 to March 2025.

Data were analysed using a semiotic approach, focusing on the symbolic meanings, compositional structures, and linguistic features of the artefacts. This qualitative analysis was complemented by descriptive and inferential quantitative techniques, including frequency counts and percentage distributions across language types and artefact categories. Table 2 presents the distribution of linguistic representations across English, Bengali, Arabic, Urdu, and Farsi within multiple artefact types (e.g., motivational quotes, textbooks, digital content). This mixed-method approach allowed for both contextual interpretation and pattern identification.
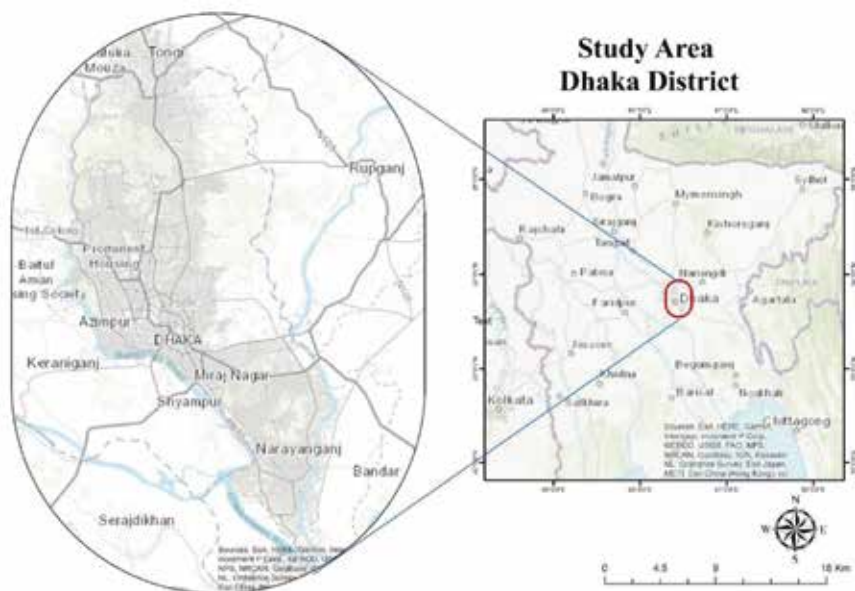
Figure 1. *Area of the study*

The CLL data were captured using a high-resolution digital camera (12 megapixels) from a standardised distance (1.5 m) to minimise distortion and to document accurate sizes and placements. Every visible sign (virtual and material), defined as any publicly displayed textual or combined text-image artefact, was photographed. The metadata that were recorded for each image included the institution type, classroom identity, the date and time of capture, and the physical (or virtual) location (e.g., left wall, top centre). All the photographs were saved in JPEG format with filenames coded according to the institution, the classroom, and the sign's ID (e.g., BM01_CR02_SIGN15.jpg). With regard to personal information, identifiable information was blurred during postprocessing to ensure anonymity. The data were analysed using a semiotic analysis with descriptive and inferential quantitative statistics to reveal symbols, patterns, and hierarchical structures.

3.3. Sampling

This study was conducted in secondary level classrooms (grades 6-10, BM and ME) in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Simple random sampling was used to select 20 institutions in the study area. Three classrooms were purposely selected from each institution based on the relevance of the study. The purposive sampling strategy was used to ensure diverse representation. A total of 876 photographic data from 60 classrooms with 2139 students. The selected classrooms included a range of linguistic backgrounds and CLLs. As can be seen in Table 1 and Figure 1, the settings were categorised by type. A total of 20 equally staffed institutions were selected, comprising 876 samples.

Table 1. *Sampling Framework*

Type of institution	Level of study	Number of institutions	Classrooms per institution	Number of photos	Students
					Total number of students in classrooms
General Bengali Medium (BM)	Secondary school	5	15	226	531
		5	15	196	546
Qwami Madrasas Education (ME)		5	15	263	509
		5	15	191	553
Total		**20**	**60**	**876**	**2139**

4. RESULTS

4.1. CLLs in BM and ME Classrooms

Table 2 shows the linguistic composition within the CLLs of BM and ME classrooms in Bangladesh and the significant differences in the language use in these educational contexts. As can be seen, English was the dominant language in BM institutions, accounting for 36.97% of linguistic artefacts compared to 20.85% in Bengali. This disparity was evident across several key categories. For example, in official documents and notices, English accounted for 9.00% of the artefacts, whereas Bengali accounted for just 6.61%. In the combined text-images category, English comprised 13.03% of the linguistic elements, while Bengali accounted for only 2.84%. English was also represented in 9.72% of the technological interfaces, while Bengali only accounted for 0.71%. These findings indicate a marked institutional preference for English, which probably reflects the on-going influence of linguistic imperialism in shaping educational practices and reinforcing dominant-language ideologies.

Conversely, the CLLs in the ME institutions showed a pronounced multilingual orientation. Arabic predominated (27.31%) in the categories of written texts and textual artefacts, followed by Bengali (12.33%), Urdu (11.01%), Farsi (5.29%), and English (5.51%). The focus was also on Arabic (5.29%) in official documents and communications, while Bengali (1.98%), English (1.76%), and Urdu (1.10%) constituted smaller proportions and Farsi did not appear. In the combined category of text-images, English (7.92%) and Arabic (6.61%) were represented most frequently, whereas Bengali accounted for only 1.76%, and Urdu and Farsi were not represented. Technological interfaces also illustrated multilingual characteristics, with English accounting for 7.05%, Arabic for 2.86%, Bengali for 1.10%, Urdu for 0.44%, and Farsi for 0.66%. Overall, these findings highlight the dynamic and diverse nature of the LLs in MEs and illustrate how the integration of multiple languages can foster a rich communicative environment and strengthen the cultural and educational identities within these institutions.

4.2. Spatial Distribution and Typographic Characteristics of CLLs

Table 3 shows the spatial and typographic characteristics of CLLs across the BM and ME institutions. As can be seen, 876 signs were analysed, of which 492 (56.2%) were bilingual or multilingual. In BM settings (n = 164), Bengali signage was predominantly displayed horizontally (9.96%) and was frequently positioned on the left (15.44%) or at the top (15.04%). By contrast, English signage in BM contexts appeared less frequently in a horizontal orientation (4.87%) and more often vertically (9.95%), with 15.44% of signs exhibiting variations in font size. Conversely, the CLLs in ME institutions (n = 328) were notably more diverse. Bengali signage in these settings was observed at 6.91% horizontally and 5.48% vertically, while English signage was displayed at 4.26% horizontally and 11.17% vertically, with 6.91% showing different font sizes. Of note, Arabic signage, which was minimally present in BM environments, accounted for 9.14% of the vertical signs and 27.23% of signs that had varied font sizes in ME institutions, suggesting a strong visual emphasis. In addition, Urdu and Farsi signage in ME settings were present less frequently (e.g., Urdu: 2.43% horizontal, 6.30% vertical; Farsi: 1.21% horizontal, 0.40% vertical) with variations in the placement. These findings indicate significant and different uses of language(s) in the CLLs in BM and ME institutions.

The spatial and typographic patterns of classroom signage revealed competing semiotic hierarchies and identities within the BM and ME institutions. In BM classrooms, the left-aligned, horizontally oriented Bengali signs occupied "prime real estate", reflecting a default orientation towards the national language as being both normative and pedagogically central. By contrast, English appeared in smaller fonts and in vertical formats, signifying its instrumental value for global capital rather than as a locus of everyday cultural belonging. This layout mirrors a postcolonial bifurcation in which English functions as a secondary aspirational code that is visible but is spatially subordinated to Bengali.

Conversely, the ME CLLs inverted these hierarchies through the pronounced visual prominence of Arabic signage — large fonts, vertical placement, and frequent positioning at the top — to assert religious authority and cultural continuity. The more peripheral placement of Bengali, English, Urdu, and Farsi indicated a deliberate multilingual collection: Arabic was not only visible, but was also visually prioritised, thus reinforcing its symbolic centrality in religious studies. This spatial ordering enacted a form of resistance to monolingual nationalist and anglophone ideologies and valorised the scriptural language as the primary semiotic resource and materials for learning at the MEs.

Table 2. *Visual and Textual Representations in CLLs*

Category	Type of representation	English n (%)		Bengali n (%)		Arabic n (%)		Urdu n (%)		Farsi n (%)		Total
		BM	ME	BM	ME	BM	ME	BM	ME	BM	ME	
Written texts / textual artefacts	Motivational quotes	27 (3.08)	8 (0.91)	19 (2.16)	11 (1.25)	0 (0)	22 (2.51)	0 (0)	5 (0.57)	0 (0)	0 (0)	92
	Textbook covers	22 (2.51)	12 (1.36)	38 (4.33)	24 (2.73)	2 (0.22)	40 (4.56)	0 (0)	29 (3.31)	0 (0)	18 (2.05)	185
	Workbooks and handouts	32 (3.65)	2 (0.22)	17 (1.94)	9 (1.02)	0 (0)	25 (2.85)	0 (0)	12 (1.36)	0 (0)	5 (0.57)	102
	Posters and charts (e.g., grammar rules)	36 (4.10)	3 (0.34)	9 (1.02)	5 (0.57)	0 (0)	12 (1.36)	0 (0)	4 (0.45)	0 (0)	1 (0.11)	70
	Nameplates, diaries, note-books	39 (4.45)	0 (0)	5 (0.57)	7 (0.79)	0 (0)	25 (2.85)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	76
Official documents and notices	Policy guidelines (micro)	12 (1.36)	5 (0.57)	15 (1.71)	3 (0.34)	0 (0)	15 (1.71)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	50
	Announcements (e.g., event or examination notices)	26 (2.96)	3 (0.34)	11 (1.25)	6 (0.68)	0 (0)	9 (1.02)	0 (0)	5 (0.57)	0 (0)	0 (0)	60
Combined (text-images)	Maps /instruments/ time-lines/charts	17 (1.94)	16 (1.82)	7 (0.79)	2 (0.22)	0 (0)	11 (1.25)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	53
	Flags and other national or international symbols	23 (2.62)	7 (0.79)	5 (0.57)	2 (0.22)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	37
	Calendars	15 (1.71)	13 (1.48)	0 (0)	4 (0.45)	0 (0)	19 (2.16)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	51
Technological interfaces	Screens and digital content (e.g., presentations)	12 (1.36)	7 (0.79)	3 (0.34)	5 (0.57)	1 (0.11)	13 (1.48)	0 (0)	2 (0.22)	0 (0)	3 (0.34)	46
	Devices (e.g., default language settings on computers or tablets)	29 (3.31)	25 (2.85)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	54
Total		290	101	129	78	3	191	0	57	0	27	876

Note: BM = Bengali medium; ME = Madrasa education.

Table 3. *Size and Emplacement of CLLs*

Medium of instruction	Bilingual & multilin-gual signs	Horizontal signs n (%)		Vertical signs n (%)		Different font sizes n (%)	
		Left	Right	Top	Down	Large	Small
BM (n = 164)	Bengali	49 (9.96)	24 (4.88)	15 (3.04)	76 (15.44)	18 (3.65)	74 (15.04)
	English	24 (4.87)	49 (9.95)	76 (15.44)	15 (3.04)	94 (19.10)	12 (2.43)
ME (n = 328)	Bengali	34 (6.91)	27 (5.48)	14 (2.84)	20 (4.06)	19 (3.86)	23 (4.67)
	English	21 (4.26)	55 (11.17)	34 (6.91)	17 (3.45)	41 (8.33)	19 (3.86)
	Arabic	0 (0%)	45 (9.14)	134 (27.23)	13 (2.64)	142 (28.86)	13 (2.64)
	Urdu	12 (2.43)	31 (6.30)	4 (0.81)	23 (4.67)	6 (1.21)	26 (5.28)
	Farsi	6 (1.21)	2 (0.40)	3 (0.60)	16 (3.25)	3 (0.60)	19 (3.86)

Note: BM = Bengali medium; ME = Madrasa education.

4.3. The Language(s) Difference(s) in CLLs in BM and ME
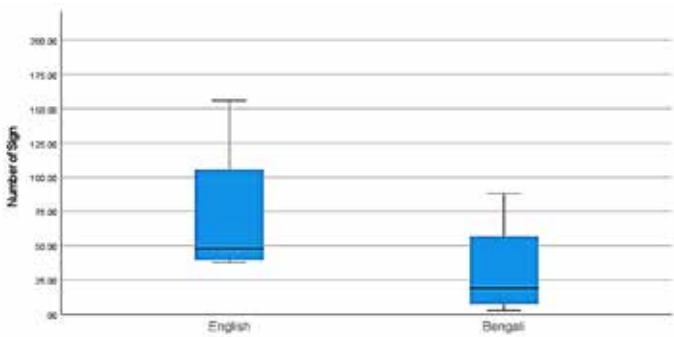

Figure 2. *Boxplot Visualisation of Signs in BM*

Figure 1 provides boxplot visualisations comparing the distribution of bilingual signage in BM classrooms across four categories: written texts/textual artefacts, official documents and notices, combined text-images, and technological interfaces for English ($M = 72.50$) versus Bengali ($M = 32.25$) signs. As can be seen, English signage showed a substantially wider interquartile range and overall range compared to Bengali signage, indicating greater variability in its presence across BM classrooms. The median value for English signs was markedly higher than it was for Bengali signs, and the dispersion of English data points extended further towards both extremes, whereas the Bengali dataset remained tightly clustered around its median with a comparatively small interquartile range. These descriptive patterns demonstrate that English signage was both more abundant and more variably de-

ployed across classroom settings, whereas Bengali signage was more uniformly present, but at lower frequencies (see Figure 2).
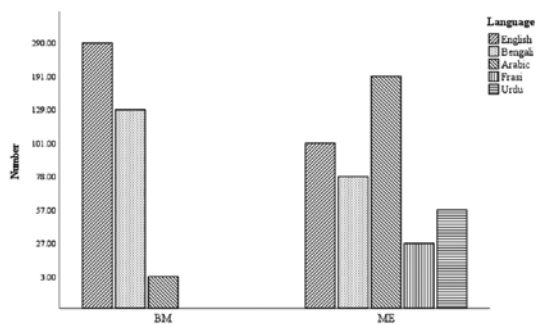

Figure 3. *Use of Languages by CLL Actors*

The bar chart illustrates the distribution of five languages across two mediums of instruction. In the BM English emerges as the dominant language with ($n = 290$), followed by Bengali ($n = 129$), with minimal promotion of Arabic, Urdu, and Farsi. In contrast, the ME exhibits a more diversified linguistic distribution, with substantial promotion of Arabic ($n = 191$), moderate use of Urdu ($n = 57$) and Farsi ($n = 27$), and notable inclusion of English ($n = 101$) and Bengali ($n = 78$). These patterns, supported by the statistically chi-square results in table 4.

Table 4. *Chi-Square Results of Language Usage across two mediums*

Language	BM		ME		χ^2
	n	**%**	**n**	**%**	
English	290	68.72	101	22.25	
Bengali	129	30.57	78	17.18	
Arabic	3	0.71	191	42.07	$\chi^2(4) = 369.43\ p < .001$
Urdu	0	0	57	12.56	
Farsi	0	0	27	5.95	
Total	422	100	454	100	

As can be seen, an analysis of language distribution across two educational mediums, BM and ME revealed distinct linguistic orientations. In the BM context, language promotion was overwhelmingly concentrated on English (68.72%) and Bengali (30.57%), with minimal representation of Arabic (0.71%) and no inclusion of Urdu or Farsi (0%). In contrast, the ME context demonstrated a more multilingual profile. Arabic constituted the highest proportion of language promotion (42.07%), followed by English (22.25%), Bengali (17.18%), Urdu (12.56%), and Farsi (5.95%). A chi-square test of independence confirmed that these differences were statistically significant, $\chi^2(4, N = 876) = 369.43$, p < .001, indicating that the

association between medium of instruction and language distribution is not due to chance. The result supports the conclusion that BM and ME represent fundamentally different approaches to multilingualism, shaped by their sociolinguistic, cultural, and ideological frameworks.

5. DISCUSSION

CLLs can play a role in resisting or promoting the linguistic hegemony of colonial legacies, and a range of textual and visual artefacts can promote or challenge the traditional language hierarchies of dominant colonial norms. Thus, multilingual CLL practices may further support decolonisation by using local languages in classroom materials. Moreover, pluralistic linguistic repertoires in CLLs (regional and continental) resist symbols of colonialism**.** They may also enable learners to develop a positive multilingual ideology via cultural engagement.

In Bangladesh, general BM schools prioritise English either overtly or covertly, whereas English is somewhat equal and less prioritised in ME institutions due to the use of multilingual (e.g., Urdu, Arabic, Bengali, English, and Farsi) practices (macrolevel and microlevel) as local and/or continental languages and culturally specific knowledge. ME education's deliberate challenge to the hegemony of the sole use of English reinforces the local linguistic and cultural identity and resources. The CLLs divide the use of language skills in BMs and MEs. For example, BM students can only belong to English and Bengali academic domains, whereas ME students are capable of using a number of continental languages, together with Bengali and English (see Figure 3). The distinct CLLs in these two streams originated in and impacted on sociocultural ideologies. For example, ME institutions deliberately adopt diverse texts from multilingual resources and focus on orientalism. However, BM institutions have adopted the colonial language (i.e., English) due to its socioeconomic benefits. As a result, the ME students show less linguistic bias towards any language, rather belonging to multilingualism.

The spatial configurations and the typographic variations in the CLLs differed markedly between the BM and ME classrooms, and suggest different linguistic ideologies, institutional policies, and individual practices. For example, the dominance of English was visible in BM classrooms due to the bilingual signage in Bengali and English, with English mainly being placed on the right of horizontal signs or at the top of a vertical sign in a larger font size than Bengali, reflecting a conventional layout that reinforces established linguistic hierarchies. This pattern suggests that BM institutions may promote English as a symbol of modernity and perpetuate the perception of English superiority. By contrast, ME institutions have a more complex and diverse linguistic composition. In particular, the substantial presence of Arabic signage, particularly with high percentages at the top in a vertical orientation and mainly in a larger font size, indicates a deliberate effort to demonstrate linguistic and cultural ideologies. In addition, the moderate inclusion of Urdu and Farsi signage in ME classrooms indicates multilingual CLLs to reflect cultural identities. The varied placement and sizes of the signage across languages may suggest that ME institutions engage in nuanced spatial arrangements to symbolise the relative prominence and ideological position of the languages. Therefore, CLLs are a crucial area for the negotiation of language, power, and cultural identity.

6. CONCLUSION

This study examined CLLs in BMs and MEs in Bangladesh. Despite the political rhetoric of multilingual inclusion, general (mainstream) academies reinforce the dominance of English in their signage and textual artefacts, reflecting the continuing influence of colonial language hierarchies. By contrast, ME classrooms exhibit a more balanced multilingual CLL, thus actively resisting the linguistic hegemony. These differences in CLLs represent linguistic belongings and ideologies that shape and reinforce institutional priorities and sociocultural identities. This study may contribute to understanding linguistic power structures in education by showing how different streams manage language hierarchies. The privileged status of English in BMs is a response to global economic demands, while the multilingual focus in MEs reinforces multilingualism for oriental cultural and religious identities. Future research should investigate students' and teachers' perceptions of CLLs and their impact on language ideology and identity formation.

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