

YOUTH LANGUAGE IN BANGLADESHN”



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Youth Language in Bangladesh

Abstract. This study explores the dynamic and evolving nature of the youth language in Bangladesh, examining both the linguistic features and the perceptions of young people about their language usage. Using a mixed-method approach, the research combines qualitative analysis of linguistic innovations with quantitative data gathered through surveys. The findings reveal significant changes in language practices among Bangladeshi youth, including the adoption of new slang, the mixing of codes with English and Hindi, and the creation of unique expressions that reflect modern values and technological influences. The study also highlights the positive perceptions of youth language in enriching cultural diversity and fostering effective communication among peers, while noting resistance to its acceptance in formal settings. The implications underscore the importance of understanding youth language as a significant cultural phenomenon with sociolinguistic impacts on identity, communication, and language evolution in Bangladesh.

Keywords: youth language, Bangladesh, linguistic innovation, code-mixing, youth perceptions, sociolinguistics, language evolution.

Limba tinerilor din Bangladesh

Rezumat. Acest studiu explorează natura dinamică și în continuă evoluție a limbajului utilizat de tineri în Bangladesh, examinând atât trăsăturile lingvistice, cât și percepțiile tinerilor asupra modului în care folosesc limba. Folosind o abordare mixtă, cercetarea combină analiza calitativă a inovațiilor lingvistice cu date cantitative obținute prin sondaje. Rezultatele relevă schimbări semnificative în practicile lingvistice ale tinerilor din Bangladesh, inclusiv adoptarea unui nou jargon, amestecul de coduri lingvistice cu engleza și hindi, precum și crearea unor expresii unice care reflectă valorile moderne și influențele tehnologice. Studiul subliniază, de asemenea, percepțiile pozitive ale limbajului tinerilor în ceea ce privește îmbogățirea diversității culturale și facilitarea comunicării eficiente între colegi, remarcând totodată rezistența față de acceptarea acestuia în contexte formale. Implicațiile subliniază importanța înțelegerii limbajului tinerilor ca fenomen cultural semnificativ, cu impact sociolingvistic asupra identității, comunicării și evoluției limbii în Bangladesh.

Cuvinte-cheie: limbajul tinerilor, Bangladesh, inovație lingvistică, amestec de coduri, percepții ale tinerilor, sociolingvistică, evoluția limbii.

1. Introduction. The language of youth in Bangladesh represents a vibrant and unique facet of the linguistic landscape of the country, reflecting broader social, cultural and technological changes. As a country known for its diverse linguistic heritage, Bangladesh's youth contribute to the dynamic evolution of language through innovative practices that mirror and influence contemporary society. This study investigates the complex and ever-changing nature of youth language in the era of digitalisation and globalisation, examining the strategies employed by young people for linguistic negotiation and identity creation.

Youth language, often considered a social dialect, is characterised by significant borrowing, morphological, and semantic changes [1]. Young people use language to resist exclusionary relationships and establish positive social identities [2]. The incorporation of dominant second-language (L2) styles and vocabularies into first-language (L1) contexts leads to the creation of new words and expressions, reflecting the mutual inclusion of urban and global influences [3; 4]. Youth play a significant role in language change by constantly generating innovative linguistic forms that protect in-group identity [5].

This study aims to explore the changing language patterns and perceptions of youth language practices in Bangladesh, along with their acceptance at the social and national levels. By examining both the linguistic characteristics and the attitudes of young people, the research provides information on the evolving nature of language among Bangladeshi youth and its implications for cultural identity and communication.

2. Review of the literature. The language of young people, often characterised by slang and unique expressions, serves as a bridge for young people to establish their identity and solidarity within peer groups [6]. This form of language facilitates communication and reflects social change and rebellion against traditional norms [7]. Slang, a prominent feature of youth culture, is dynamic and evolves with each generation [8]. It functions as a tool through which young peo-

ple display their identity and assert their belonging to particular social groups [9]. The diversity and individuality among young people is reflected in the wide variation of slang usage [10].

Research indicates that slang is both a linguistic and a social phenomenon, with its usage tied to signalling coolness and resistance to established power structures [7]. The emergence and evolution of slang are influenced by linguistic, sociolinguistic, and sociodemographic factors [11]. The deliberate incorporation of slang into daily communication among youth serves to create a sense of belonging and to differentiate themselves from older generations [6].

Youth language plays a crucial role in the formation of adolescent peer groups and the maintenance of distinctiveness within these groups [12]. Understanding and studying youth language provides information on the values, beliefs, and behaviours of younger generations, offering a window into the evolving nature of society [13].

In the context of Bangladesh, exploring language use among young people reveals insights into code switching behaviours and the use of acrolect, shedding light on bilingualism and the psychological motivations behind language choices [14]. English language proficiency is crucial for Bangladeshi youth, linking language skills to employability in a globalised market [15]. The language landscape in Bangladesh reflects a complex interplay of policies, challenges, and initiatives that aim to improve language proficiency among the youth population.

3. Research Methodology. This research adopts a mixed method approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative strategies to explore the dynamic features of youth language in Bangladesh and the perceptions of youth about their language usage. The research design includes data collection through surveys, content analysis, and review of the existing literature.

3.1 Research questions. Research aims to address the following questions:

1. What are the changing characteristics of the youth language in Bangladesh?

2. What are the perceptions of young people regarding their language usage?

3.2 Participants. The study involved 50 participants, comprising 31 men (62%) and 19 women (38%), between 15 years of age and 27 years of age or older. The majority were in the 19 to 22-year range (36%). Regarding educational attainment, most of the participants reported having a secondary education (40%), followed by higher secondary education (26%), undergraduate education (26%), and postgraduate education (2%).

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the study participants. The sample predominantly consists of young adults, with 36% aged between 19 and 22 years and 24% between 23 and 26 years. The gender distribution shows

Table 1
Demographics of the participants (N = 50)

Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age		
Under 15 years	3	6.0
15–18	13	26.0
19–22	18	36.0
23–26	12	24.0
27 or above	4	8.0
Gender		
Male	31	62.0
Female	19	38.0
Third Gender	0	0.0
Educational background		
Secondary Education	20	40.0
Higher Secondary Education	13	26.0
Undergraduate	13	26.0

Note. N = 50.

a higher proportion of men (62%) compared to women (38%). Educationally, 40% of the participants have completed secondary education and 26% each have higher secondary and undergraduate education. This demographic profile aligns with the target Generation Z population and provides a representative sample to explore the usage of youth languages in Bangladesh.

3.3 Data collection. Quantitative data was collected using structured Likert scale questionnaires designed to assess participants' perceptions of youth language usage, cultural impact, identity, effective communication, and acceptance. The questionnaires were randomly distributed among Generation Z individuals (born between 1997 and 2012) in Bangladesh, selected from different educational institutions and social media platforms. Additionally, qualitative data was gathered by content analysis of digital media platforms, newspaper portals, existing literature, and personal communications. This included analysing linguistic expressions and slang commonly used by young people, collecting data from social media interactions, and reviewing references to popular culture.

3.4 Data analysis. Quantitative data was analysed using SPSS (Version 25) statistical software. The descriptive statistics provided an overview of the demographics of the participants and their perceptions of the use of youth languages. Qualitative data were thematically analysed to identify patterns and themes in the changing features of youth language.

4. Results. This section combines the qualitative and quantitative results of the study, providing a comprehensive understanding of the changing characteristics of the youth language in Bangladesh and the perceptions of young people about their language usage.

4.1 Changing characteristics of the youth language in Bangladesh. The qualitative analysis reveals several key aspects of linguistic innovation among Bangladeshi youth.

4.1.1 Linguistic Innovation and Identity Shortened Forms for Communication. In SMS and social media contexts, traditional Bangla words are being shortened or altered for faster, casual communication.

Table 2 illustrates examples of English word clipping used by Bangladeshi youth in sentences. The use of abbreviations such as “pb” for “problem”, “dlt” for “delete,” “thn” for “then,” and “fds” for “friends” demonstrates the influence of English and the adaptation of language for quick communication in digital platforms.

Table 2
Examples of English Word Clipping in Sentences

Sentences	English Equivalent	Usage Context
Pore abr pb hbe na to	Will it be a problem next?	Interrogative speech acts to ask for assurance.
Dlt kore dilam	I have deleted it.	Commonly used in messaging and commenting online.
Try korli ki holo thn?	What happened then?	Shortening words in online communication.
Ok byy fds	Okay, bye friends.	Used for farewells.

Note. pb = problem; dlt = delete; thn = then; fds = friends.

Table 3
Common Slang Terms Used by Bangladeshi Youth

Terms	English Equivalent	Usage Context
Jounokormir chele	Son of a sex worker	Used to verbally tease or insult others; popularised by a television drama.
Chapri	Idiot	It refers to someone acting irresponsibly or immaturely.

This practice reflects linguistic innovation and the blending of languages to meet the needs of modern communication among youth.

New Slang and Expressions

The youth are adopting a number of new slang terms and expressions that differ significantly from traditional vocabulary.

Table 3 presents common slang terms used by Bangladeshi youth. The term “Jounokormir chele” translates to “son of a sex worker” and is

used as an insult or to tease others, gaining popularity through media influence. “Chapri” means “idiot” and describes someone behaving immaturely. These examples illustrate how youth language incorporates new expressions to convey specific meanings within their peer groups.

Revitalisation and Re-meaning of Words

Young people popularise certain words and phrases through social networks, memes, and viral content.

Table 4
Revitalisation of Phrases Used by Bangladeshi Youth

Phrases	English Equivalent	Usage Context
Baparta ki?	What is the problem?	Used to enquire about an issue or situation.
Bujho nai bepar ta	Do you not understand?	Expresses confusion or lack of understanding.
Sohobas	Physical intercourse	Used to tease others; popularised by a TV drama.

Table 4 shows how Bangladeshi youth revitalise and popularise phrases, often giving them new meanings or contexts. For instance, “Sohobas”, traditionally meaning “cohabitation”, is used colloquially to refer to physical intimacy, gaining popularity through the media. These linguistic changes reflect the dynamic nature of

language and the influence of popular culture.

Hybrid Language Forms (Code-Mixing)

Young people often mix English and Hindi words into their Bangla conversations, reflecting the impact of globalisation and exposure to multiple cultures.

Table 5
Code-Mixing Used by Bangladeshi Youth

Terms	English Equivalent	Usage context
Ajeeb	Strange or weird	Borrowed from Urdu/Hindi.
Posh	Stylish	Adopted from English.
Cringe	Awkward	Common in youth conversations.

Table 6
Cultural Impact and Identity (N = 50)

Statements	Mean	SD	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
The language of youth is a part of my cultural identity	3.84	0.79	12	70	10	6	2
Youth language enriches cultural diversity.	3.94	0.79	18	66	10	5	2
Youth language reflects modern values with more precision.	3.78	0.91	12	70	6	8	4
The youth language is crucial for the evolution of our national language.	3.88	0.75	14	68	10	8	0
Using the language of the youth diminishes traditional customs.	2.26	0.88	4	6	12	68	10
Youth language promotes creativity among young people.	3.50	1.14	8	66	6	8	12
Youth language should be documented as an important cultural phenomenon.	3.86	0.92	18	64	8	6	4

Note. SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; N = Neutral; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree.

Table 5 highlights examples of code mixing, where Bangladeshi youth incorporate foreign words into their language. Terms like “Ajeeb” and “Cringe” are used seamlessly within conversations, indicating a fusion of linguistic elements from different languages and cultures.

4.2 Perceptions of young people regarding their language usage. The quantitative analysis of survey responses provides insight into young people’s perceptions about their language usage.

4.2.1 Cultural Impact and Identity. Participants generally agreed that the language of youth is an integral part of their cultural identity and enriches cultural diversity.

Table 6 summarises the responses of the participants on the cultural impact and identity associated with the language of the youth. High

mean scores (above 3.5) indicate general agreement with positive statements about youth language. Specifically, 82% (SA + A) of the participants agreed that the youth language is part of their cultural identity (M = 3.84, SD = 0.79). Similarly, 84% agreed that it enriches cultural diversity (M = 3.94, SD = 0.79). The majority also believed that the youth language reflects modern values more accurately than the traditional language (82% agreed). In contrast, 78% disagreed with the idea that the use of youth language diminishes traditional customs (M = 2.26, SD = 0.88), suggesting that participants do not view it as a threat to traditional values. These findings highlight the recognition of the language of youth as a significant component of cultural identity and diversity.

Table 7
Communication and acceptance of the language of the youth (N = 50)

Statements	Mean	SD	SA (%)	A (%)	N (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
The language of youth makes communication faster among peers.	3.82	0.85	14	66	10	8	2
The language of youth should be accepted in professional settings.	2.42	1.07	4	18	8	56	14
Using youth language in formal documents is acceptable.	2.36	1.08	4	16	10	52	18
The language of youth excludes those who do not understand it.	3.56	1.03	10	62	6	18	4
The language of youth is essential for effective communication among young people.	3.48	1.05	8	60	10	16	6
There should be initiatives to educate older generations about the language of the youth.	2.14	0.97	2	12	6	58	22
The language of the youth improves inclusiveness by adapting local dialects.	3.92	0.83	18	66	6	6	4
Rejection of youth language by some is unjustified.	3.70	1.05	16	60	8	10	6
The language of youth serves as a bridge between social and economic groups.	3.78	1.01	16	66	8	8	2

Note. SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; N = Neutral; D = Disagree; SD = strongly disagree.

4.2.2 Communication and acceptance.

Youth language is perceived as improving communication between peers but faces resistance in professional and formal contexts.

Table 7 presents the perceptions of the participants about the communication and acceptance of the youth language. A significant majority (80%, SA + A) agreed that the language of the youth makes communication faster between peers (M = 3.82, SD = 0.85). However, there was significant resistance to its acceptance in professional settings, with only 22% agreeing and 70% (D + SD) disagreeing (M = 2.42, SD = 1.07). Similarly, only 20% agreed that using youth language in formal documents is acceptable, with 70% disagreeing (M = 2.36, SD = 1.08).

Participants recognised that the language of the youth could exclude those who do not understand it, 72% agreeing (M = 3.56, SD = 1.03). Despite this, 68% agreed that it is essential for effective communication among Bangladeshi youth (M = 3.48, SD = 1.05). There was limited support for initiatives to educate older generations about the language of youth, with only 14% agreeing and 80% disagreeing (M = 2.14, SD = 0.97).

A strong majority (84%, SA + A) agreed that youth language improves inclusiveness by adapting words from various local dialects (M = 3.92, SD = 0.83). Furthermore, 76% felt that the rejection of youth language by some segments of society is unjustified (M = 3.70, SD = 1.05). Lastly, 82% agreed that the language of youth

serves as a bridge between different social and economic groups ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 1.01$). These findings indicate that while youth language is valued for its role in peer communication and inclusion, there is resistance to its integration into formal and professional contexts.

5. Discussion. The findings highlight the dynamic and evolving nature of the youth language in Bangladesh. Qualitative analysis reveals significant linguistic innovations, including new slang, mixing codes with English and Hindi, and unique expressions reflecting modern values and technological influences. These changes indicate the fluidity and adaptability of language among young people, influenced by globalisation, digital communication, and exposure to international media. The quantitative results demonstrate a generally positive perception of the language of the youth, particularly in terms of its role in expressing modern values, enriching cultural diversity, and improving communication between peers. Youth language is seen as integral to cultural identity and essential for effective peer communication. For example, most of the participants agreed that the language of the youth enriches cultural diversity (84%) and is part of their cultural identity (82%), as shown in Table 6.

However, there is resistance to accepting youth language in formal and professional settings due to concerns about excluding those unfamiliar with it and impacting traditional linguistic norms. Tables 6 and 7 illustrate this tension, with 70% of the participants disagreeing with the acceptance of youth language in professional settings. The recognition that the language of the youth can exclude those who do not understand it (72% agreement) underscores the need for careful consideration in its broader application. These findings have implications for understanding the sociocultural dynamics of language evolution in Bangladesh. Recognising and valuing youth language can inform cultural studies, sociolinguistic ideologies, and language policy development, promoting inclusiveness and acknowledging the contributions

of young people to language evolution.

6. Conclusions. This study presents a thorough analysis of the linguistic practices of adolescents in Bangladesh, employing both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to investigate the evolving linguistic attributes and attitudes among the youth demographic. The results indicate that the linguistic expressions of young individuals constitute a dynamic and essential element of cultural identity, mirroring extensive social, cultural, and technological transformations. While the language utilised by youth enhances communication and fosters inclusivity among peers, the resistance encountered regarding its acceptance in formal contexts underscores the necessity for a continuous discourse concerning language practices and their consequences. Recognising youth language as a significant cultural phenomenon can facilitate initiatives aimed at documenting, studying, and assimilating these linguistic innovations into more expansive linguistic and cultural paradigms.

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