

Socio-Psychological Barriers and Linguistic Challenges in English Learning at Qawmi Madrasas: Bangladesh Perspective

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Abstract

This paper aims at discussing some socio-psychological barriers and linguistic challenges in teaching and learning English language especially reading and writing skills in Qawmi madrasas. The writer has used questionnaire, focused group discussion, and interview as data collection tools and the data has been analyzed following the quantitative and qualitative methods. After analyzing the data it is found that the linguistic challenges faced by the students of Qawmi madrasa include poor rate of fluency, learners' ignorance of phonetics and phonology, beliefs of teachers and learners about the nature of language and nature of learning, absence of any methodology in teaching and learning, and lack of effective interaction in the target language. The socio-psychological barriers include poor classroom environment, institutional obstacles for learners, perception of the society about Qawmi students, lack of qualified English teachers, and attitude towards the English language. Some recommendations are also made to overcome those barriers and challenges to bring the young learners into mainstream education in Bangladesh.

Keywords: Qawmi madrasa, Challenge, TEFL, EFL, English, Socio-Psychology, Mainstream, Education.

Introduction

English language is a communication tool amid nations around the globe. Islamic world also follows this tool to equip its people with English as a means of communication. Though Arabic is used as a communication tool in Islam, English is also needed to teach Islam to both the Muslims and Non-Muslims around the world. Teaching English as a foreign language is a challenging task in developing countries like Bangladesh, particularly in Qawmi madrasas that are a type of Islamic faith-based educational institution. English included in the curriculum of these madrasas demands considerable attention. However, students here need an intensive care of the teachers to overcome their challenges concerning reading and writing skills.

In this study a wide range of challenging issues faced by the primary level learners in Qawmi Madrasas have been discussed including the poor unsystematic approach toward teaching-learning English language focusing on reading and writing skills. The economic and social settings of the locality have also been observed closely, as these are closely connected with the issues of teaching and learning.

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All these findings have been compared to up-to-date research findings and theories so that the facts and the challenges regarding these two skills can be clearly seen. This will also be seen from the perspective of current curriculum in Bangladesh.

Background

The structure of education in Bangladesh is divided into four categories. The first one is the general system of education which consists of three stages such as primary, secondary, and tertiary level. The second one is the madrasa education system which consists of two different categories- Alia and Qawmi. Thirdly, the technical or vocational and the final one is professional education. Bangladesh has two kinds of madrasas: Qawmi madrasas and Alia madrasas. Since 20th century the Qawmi madrasa system has been flourishing throughout Bangladesh. There are approximately 6,500 Qawmi madrasas in Bangladesh with approximately 1.5 million students which are supported by private contributions. By contrast, there are approximately 7,000 Alia madrasas, which are entirely supported by the state (Ahmad, 2005). On the other hand, mainstream primary education in Bangladesh means the government ruled education system which is run under the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education (MOPME) and formulates all the policies and implementation for primary education.

Brief history of Qawmi madrasa education

Qawmi madrasa is a unique institution with some special characteristics. Qawmi madrasa in Bangladesh is one of the major Islamic teaching institutions. This education system originated from traditional Muslim educational system in Bangladesh during British colony known as 'Khariji' (outside of government teaching). Later the term qawmi emerged from the word 'qom' which means the 'public.' While regular primary schools teach students a subject called Islamic Education, Qawmi madrasas classify that subject down into some other subjects; Fiqh, Aqidah, Akhlaq, Arabic language, and others. These institutions used to teach its students only the Islamic subjects because these specifications encouraged students to acquire deeper understanding of Islamic norms, values, and understanding. The later part of the 20th century witnessed a radical change in Qawmi education. The people changed their mentality and started considering English as a prominent subject in their sector though very few institutions allowed this change, especially in metropolitan cities. It is also found that teaching English skills starts at a very early age in Qawmi madrasas, from its first grade which is called in Urdu 'poheli' (equivalent to class one in primary school) and it continues up to tertiary levels.

Research Questions

1. What types of socio-psychological barriers and linguistic challenges do the Qawmi madrasa learners face in learning English? Can we overcome those challenges?

Literature Review

From different analysis of literature it is found that madrasa education has not reached its peak of research interest. A number of researchers have shown their interest to work in this sector especially in the area of the language processes, students' conditions, cultural circumstances, teaching and learning processes and so on. Current practices regarding language learning are also a serious issue of study especially for the foreign language learners where the term TEFL is used. Kachru (2006) provided a picture of three different circles to emphasize the rate of English speakers around the world. Therefore he showed inner circle population, which speaks English as a first language and this number is about 408 million. While the outer circle population speaks English as a foreign language that can be counted about 416 million. Finally, in his expanding circle about 306.9 million population speaks English as a foreign language. So the picture shows that the number of population who speaks English as native language is lower than the number of population who uses English as a foreign language.

According to Middleton, (1976: xiii) the main concern of education in any society is the inculcation and understanding of its cultural symbols, moral values, sanctions and cosmological beliefs.

Nashruddin's study (2015) focused on English as a major concern in madrasa education. In his study, he mentioned that "mastering English is a key to the mastery of information, which in turn, helps people gain knowledge. English leads as the main language used in the world."

Bhuiyan (2010) examined the processes that are followed by Qawmi Madrasa in creation of a 'good Muslim' persona. His study described a wide range of issues related to socio-economic condition, traditional belief and practices of the authorities' regarding schooling process, dynamic locality of the patrons and so on. He focused on a particular type of nature within Qawmi madrasa education system such as an orthodoxical practice within and outside the schools which is reinforced and inculcated by the wider community of different adults and learners by systematic studies and mingling of various qualities through schooling process. According to Akinasso (1992, 77-81), the Qawmi madrasa system is actually a formal learning system given that it has been organized deliberately to transmit Islamic knowledge. This study also concerns the challenges faced by religious structures in teaching and learning English.

In this present study the researcher shows how differently the Bangladesh government treats the mainstream education and the education of Qawmi madrasas. A few people support the Qawmi madrasas' education and most of the people in Bangladesh think the religious education should be an integral part of general education. It is worth mentioning that it was the constitution of newly independent Bangladesh, adopted in 1972, that established secularism and first relegated Islam from the polity. After that people started encouraging the emergence of Islamic education and as a result, only the Aliya madrasas degrees received government recognition (Banu, 2007). Moreover, "in order to situate the Qawmi madrasa system within this context we must recognize

the Islamization of Bangladesh's polity and society, as described above, which has facilitated the growth of madrasa education" (Benu, 2007).

In his study, Bhuiyan (2010) mentions that madrasa education has been modernized after the liberation war. The attitude of the mainstream Bangladeshi media towards the Qawmi madrasa system is predominantly negative but often disguised as a concern for modernizing the system and for mainstreaming it. English language literacy is necessary for anyone for securing a well-paid job, information and skills that they have not been given by the madrasa education (Bhuiyan, 2010). The author mentioned that the Qawmi authorities believe that the counting, reading, and writing lessons that the students receive in the first seven years of their *madrasa* schooling are enough for meeting many practical needs, such as reading an important document, managing financial transactions, writing a loan application, or even filing a complaint against someone, et cetera (Bhuiyan, 2010). Physically, Qawmi madrasas not only provide much needed schooling to the marginal rural masses but also give them a spiritual shelter (Ahamed and Nazneen: 1990, Hartung: 2006, Uddin: 2006).

The importance of learning languages is seen from the holy scriptures of Islam. The Quran describes the importance of other languages in the following verse: "And we did not send from a messenger except with his nation's tongue/language, to clarify/explain to them, so God misguides whom He wills/wants, and He guides whom He wills/wants, and He is the glorious/mighty, the wise/judicious." (14: 4). The prophet Mohammad also whispered about the importance of learning languages of other nations: 'Those who learn the language of any community they can save themselves from their mischief.'

It seems that Qawmi madrasas are evidently reinforcing and synchronizing various ideologies and expectations through the schooling process but they face a number of challenges including lack of learning aids, non-efficient teachers, low level accommodation, lack of good status, lack of communicative practices, irrational beliefs and practices in the name of Islam, inadequate teaching opportunities and so on. Teaching materials are, in general, socially and culturally incongruous and this may alienate learners and provoke them to develop negative attitudes towards learning English (Uddin: 2006). A further challenging factor is students' beliefs about the nature of learning English as a subject consisting of a list of words and a set of grammatical rules which are to be memorized and separate skills to be acquired rather than a set of integrated skills and sub skills (Oxford, 2001).

From the above mentioned views it is simply identifiable that Qawmi madrasas as a mainstream sector did not receive much attention from research and policy making communities. Though many of the scholars worked on this sector, they mostly focused on overall rather than specific issues. They have shown their interest to work in this sector on the areas especially on the language procedure, environment or the setting of the madrasas, cultural conditions, progression of education and knowledge in general. Learning English as a foreign language is a must for a third world developing country like Bangladesh and teaching English language is a part of mainstream education. Qawmi madrasas are not considered as the part of mainstream institutions

due to their social barriers. Thus, this paper has explored different types of socio-psychological barriers and linguistic challenges the Qawmi madrasa teachers and learners face in teaching and learning both reading and writing skills in English. If they go through certain above-mentioned problems, it is assumed that their problems will remain the same forever or mostly they will not be able to overcome those problems. One of the teachers of Qawmi madrasa Mawlana Mamun said, “Learning English would give members of these communities the opportunity to interact with other sections of the society and also aim for jobs that are otherwise unachievable with knowledge of their own languages and cultures”.

Methodology and Research design

Methodology

The researcher intended to make the study qualitative and observational. The researcher tried to collect information for this study through interviews where the participants shared their experiences, views, and feelings. The subjects of this study were hundred (100) male students of primary level who are studying at different classes equivalent to the primary level of mainstream education. Firstly, information was assembled through questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussion and respondents for the interviews include teachers, students, and patrons. All are opinion-based questions to draw response on challenges the learners face in their lessons and opinions of the teachers regarding their findings about their system. Secondly, various publications related to the Qawmi education system as well as overall educational system of Bangladesh, the madrasa syllabus and text books developed by the curriculum committee, and various relevant journals and periodicals were used as good sources of information. All the data were collected from the formal setting of different madrasas from several places such as Maniknagar, Motijheel, Mugda, Rampura, Mohammadpur and Mirpur in Dhaka.

Limitations

It was not possible to bring out the picture of all Qawmi madrasas’ administrative process and the activities. Above and beyond, the researcher was fully aware of the limitations so that they do not affect the general outcome of the study.

Results

In the past, English was not taught at the Qawmi madrasas at the early stages but now the interest and the urge for worldwide development is directing the system towards the inclusion of English language. Therefore, the present scenario requires the needs analysis of the students of Qawmi madrasas as the needs of English in Qawmi madrasas are acknowledged but the proper implementation of the language through reading and writing skills is still rejected. Results of the findings are given below.

Section A
Results on students' responses

Serial	Statements on reading skills	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1.	I can read fluently.	6.67%	60%	13%	13%	6.67%
2.	I cannot read.	6.67%	27%	0%	6.67%	60%
3.	I feel blocked when I read something.	66.67%	26.67%	0%	6.67%	0%
4.	I understand all the meaning when I read.	26.67%	60%	0%	20%	6.67%
5.	I can understand specific information in a text.	60%	20%	20%	0%	0%
6.	I use reading strategies during reading and I am comfortable with reading aloud in class.	53%	40%	0%	7%	0%
7.	I do not understand meaning.	26.67%	0%	0%	13.33%	60%
8.	I can only read text book.	60%	40%	0%	0%	0%
9.	I often read outside classroom for my own interest such as reading English newspaper.	26.67%	40%	6.67%	13.33%	13.33%
10.	I am not familiar with phonetics.	20%	60%	20%	0%	0%
11.	I understand the main idea in a text.	33.33%	26.67%	6.67%	33.33%	0%
12.	I adjust speed as per the reading materials.	0%	53.33%	0%	40%	6.67%
13.	I look up new vocabulary in text to improve English language.	26.67%	66.67%	0%	0%	6.67%
14.	Use of classroom strategies engages me to read more in English.	33.33%	40%	0%	0%	26.67%
15.	We are given reading activities in class.	13.33%	26.67%	0%	33.33%	26.67%

Frequency Table 1: Students' responses to the statements on the reading skill.

Section B

Serial	Statements on writing skills	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1.	I can write English.	6.67%	60%	13.33%	13.33%	6.67%
2.	I can write English fluently.	13.33%	46.67%	13.33%	6.67%	20%
3.	I have grammatical problems when I write English.	53.33%	13.33%	6.67%	20%	6.67%
4.	I have no grammatical problem.	6.67%	20%	6.67%	13.33%	53.33%
5.	I have punctuation problem.	33.33%	20%	13.33%	26.67%	7%
6.	I have capitalization problem.	13.33%	53.33%	0%	26.67%	6.67%
7.	I can write simple sentences.	20%	60%	0%	20%	0%
8.	I can write longer (compound as well as complex) sentences.	0%	13.33%	6.67%	60%	20%
9.	I can express the subject matter of my topic in my writing.	26.67%	46.67%	0%	20%	6.67%
10.	I use active voice in writing.	13.33%	26.67%	0%	33.33%	26.67%
11.	I can use passive voice properly in my	13.33%	26.67%	13.33%	26.67%	20%

	writing.					
12.	I can write in paragraph.	6.67%	46.66%	0%	26.67%	20%
13.	I can arrange words accurately in sentence.	6.67%	26.67%	0%	6.67%	60%
14.	I cannot write English.	6.67%	26.67%	0%	6.67%	60%
15.	We are given writing exercise regularly.	13.33%	26.67%	0%	33.33%	26.67%

Frequency Table 2: Students' responses to the statements on the writing skill.

Section C

Results on teachers' response

Serial	Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1.	They have little or no knowledge of English.	6.67%	6.67%	0%	73.33%	13.33%
2.	Students want to learn English only to pass in the exam.	6.67%	13.33%	0%	66.67%	13.33%
3.	Students want to learn English to be proficient in English.	13.33%	53.34%	6.67%	13.33%	13.33%
4.	Learning English only through books is effective.	13.33%	26.67%	0%	46.67%	13.33%
5.	Students find difficulty when learning English.	26.67%	46.66%	6.67%	20%	0%
6.	Students are not motivated to learn English in interesting and funny ways.	6.67%	33.33%	13.33%	46.67%	0%
7.	Students are apprised with communicative value.	0%	46.67%	0%	46.67%	6.66%
8.	Learners are taught to use their capacity to learn English Language.	6.67%	53.33%	33.33%	6.67%	0%
9.	Language awareness is raised during lessons.	13.33%	40%	0%	46.67%	0%
10.	Learners are told why and how they are learning English language.	6.67%	33.33%	33.33%	20%	6.67%
11.	Students are stimulated to show natural interest and curiosity about language.	13.33%	33.33%	13.33%	27%	13.33%
12.	Students are serious enough to learn English.	20%	53.33%	0%	26.67%	0%
13.	The contents of the English books are relevant to the society.	0%	26.67%	40%	33.33%	0%
14.	Contents of language learning are regarding their daily life.	13.33%	26.67%	26.67%	33.33%	0%
15.	Teachers use additional teaching aid materials while teaching English.	6.67%	20%	0%	73%	0%
	Some psychological factors:					
16.	Teachers do not praise them for any effort, no matter how slight.	6.67%	33.33%	20%	40%	0%
17.	Teachers try to avoid continuous looking at their faces when they speak.	0%	13.33%	26.67%	46.67%	13.33%

18.	English class teacher usually starts lesson in English language.	6.67%	27%	26.67%	33.33%	6.67%
19.	Teachers usually start lesson by giving motivation on language learning.	6.67%	20%	40%	26.67%	6.67%
20.	Students ask teacher to repeat, if they fail to understand English language.	20%	60%	0%	20%	0%
21.	English teachers apply emotional punishment if they fail to understand the language and punishment given by teachers leads the learners to dislike the subject.	6.67%	20%	13.33%	53.33%	6.67%

Frequency Table 3: Teachers' responses to socio-psychological factors.

Section D Results on parents' responses

Serial	Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1.	My child can speak in English fluently.	6.67%	46.67%	26.67%	13.33%	6.66%
2.	We foster our children to learn English.	26.67%	33.33%	6.67%	13.33%	20%
3.	Our child has difficulties in understanding English.	13.33%	46.67%	33.33%	6.67%	0%
4.	My child is reluctant to learn English.	6.67%	26.66%	0%	46.67%	20%
5.	Due to economic insolvency children are not facilitated to learn English and sent to Qawmi madrasa.	0%	40%	0%	60%	0%
6.	English language cannot set their mind for afterlife.	6.67%	26.67%	20%	33.33%	13.33%

Frequency Table 4: Parents' responses to sending their children to Qawmi madrasas

Discussion

Analysis of Findings

The research deals with some general findings based on the questionnaires and interviews with the students, teachers and parents. All the data have been presented through different tables, charts, bars, columns and percentage methods. Different pictures are about different barriers and challenging issues. However, the factors that bring socio-psychological barriers and linguistic challenges are the following:

Linguistic Challenges

Poor rate of Fluency

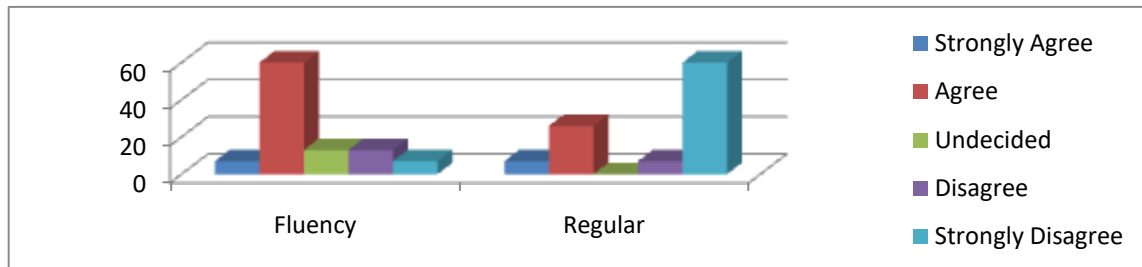


Figure 1: Views of the respondents to the poor rate of fluency

It is important to discuss the challenges the Qawmi students' encounter in the process of learning English through reading skills. The rate of fluency is low compared to primary learners. Though 60% of the learners in this sector seem fluent, more than 20% of the learners are considered not to be fluent and 13% of the learners cannot ensure their rate of fluency.

Learners' ignorance of phonetics and phonology

The significant role of the English language of today's world in establishing foreign relations is simply neglected in Qawmi education. A small number of learners and teachers are skilled at English and make their journey beyond their Qawmi world as well as outside their nation. Some of the learners as well as teachers follow the English speaking countries and their way of speaking and thereby they have learnt their phonetics and phonology. Based on the question if students are familiar with phonetics or not, the result is as follows:

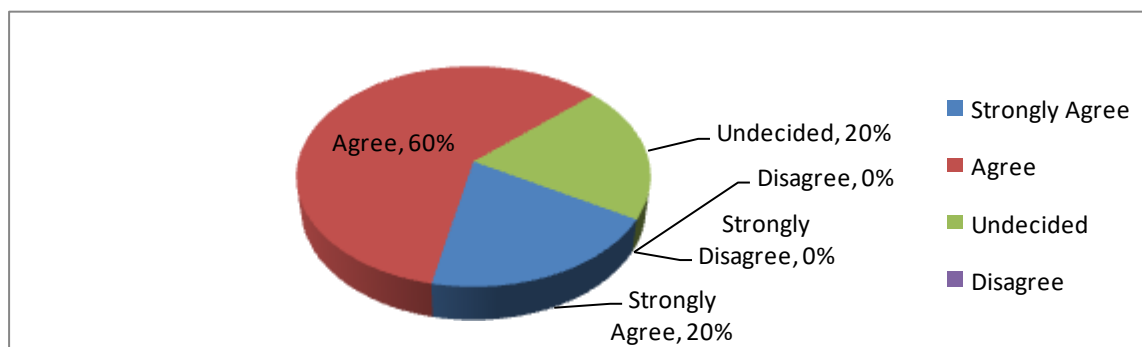


Figure 2: Views of respondents to learners' ignorance of phonetics and phonology

From this chart it is stated that 60% learners are ignorant of phonetics and phonology, only 20% of the students are familiar with the phonetics of the English language. The remaining 20% of the students did not share their views about the fundamentals of phonetics and phonology.

Beliefs about the nature of language and learning

Another challenging factor is the beliefs of learners and teachers about the nature of language and the nature of learning English. They believe that it is a subject consisting only of a list of vocabularies and a set of sentence structures which are to be memorized. Language study does not focus on lesson sequence and students study language without exploring the topic with the help of reading and writing strategies such as skimming, scanning, brainstorming, drafting, writing, editing and so on. They do not even use the reading strategies properly though many readers are comfortable with reading aloud process inside classroom.

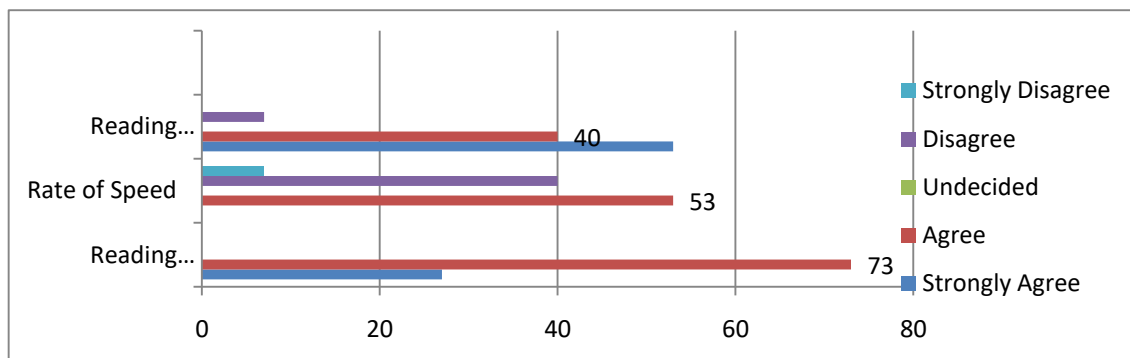


Figure 3: Views of respondents to beliefs about the nature of language and learning

The bar diagram shows that most of the primary learners are comfortable with reading aloud process and they use it while they read in the class. Also, the rate of speed is good for the majority though they are unaware about correct reading process and they do not use different reading strategies while they practice reading materials. A few students strongly disagreed with the idea of implementing reading strategies in Qawmi madrasas.

Inadequate logistic support

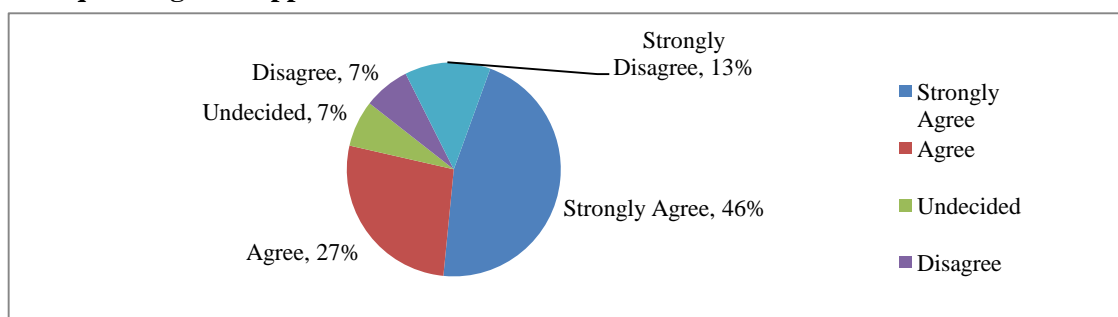


Figure 4: Views of respondents to inadequate logistic support

Linguistic development along with inadequate infrastructures is another major challenge in Qawmi madrasas as shown in the chart that 46% of the students have strongly agreed with the inadequate facilities for reading and writing skills. They are not taught the English language in the

way their peers are taught in public and private schools. There is a clear discrimination between those who learn English and those who do not learn even if they want to learn. In metropolitan areas some of the students take advantage of using satellite programs, audio-video tapes, and go to private teachers besides their reading in madrasas, but most of the students just have their textbooks as the only source of learning English. This makes the situation even much worse for the weak students and in some areas they mostly depend on guide books.

Lack of effective interaction in target language

In Qawmi madrasas the learners have little opportunities in using language within real life communication context where real information can develop their cognitive and interactive ability. Thus, they lack complete knowledge and the ability to use these skills for their own creative or critical thinking, for delivering religious messages to the world, which slow down their chances of success in the real world.

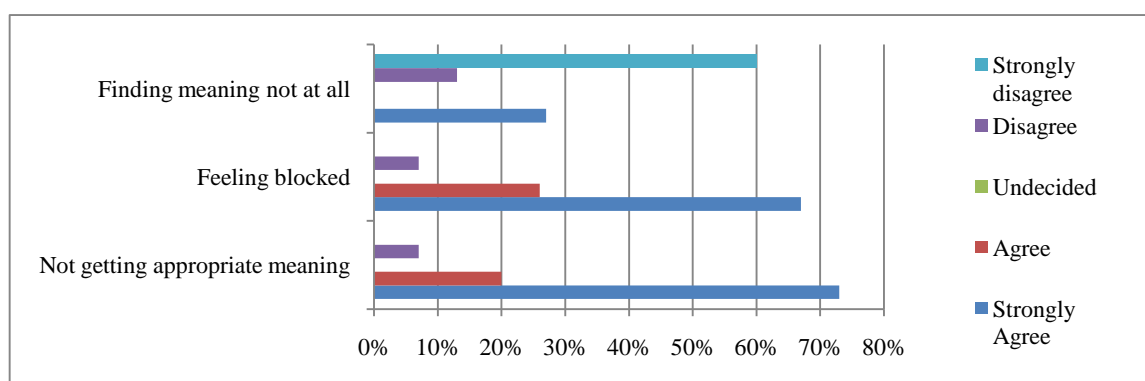


Figure 5: Views of respondents to the lack of effective interaction in target language

Writing challenges

Most of the students said, they can write in English but they are ignorant of grammatical correction. They face grammatical troubles such as punctuation, capitalization, subject-verb-agreement problems.

Socio-psychological Barriers

The data gathered through focus group discussion about the shortcomings that the Qawmi learners and teachers come across to learn and teach the English language are following:

Poor classroom environment

The setting of Qawmi madrasas is noticeable. Classes are mostly soggy and often roofed by mats to provide minimum service to the learners especially in the days of winter. In some madrasas the classes are overcrowded and congested. Therefore, most of the students do not have enough opportunities to practice English and do not overcome language learning problems due to uncomfortable surroundings. As a result, to become proficient enough to communicate in the foreign language seems impossible.

Moreover, there is no place for working interactively for the learners in many Qawmi madrasas. Learners even do not know how to discuss in groups or they do not even know that there is anything called pair, peer and group discussion. Group work in the educational context generally involves a small number of students working together to achieve a task (Amatobi & Amatobi, 2013; Dooly, 2008).

Institutional obstacle for learners

A student studying in a Qawmi madrasa has to spend a great deal of time of a day reading his lessons designed by the authority in madrasa where the English syllabus is hardly available. A student has to complete a lot of lessons from the holy Quranul karim, Hadith sharif, the Fiqh, the Usulul Fiqh, the Akaid, the Tajwid and so on. After completing these kinds of syllabuses, the learner has no time to learn English language. The students studying in a college or a university take English language as a medium to acquire knowledge but the teachers in Qawmi madrasa foster their learners to take Arabic language as a medium for gathering knowledge and skills. For this reason English syllabus is rare over there. Furthermore, students' are unable to stand in real life job market because of their inefficiency in English. The expected competencies and outcomes are not found and learning only Arabic becomes aimless in Bangladeshi context. English teachers are not recruited for learners' development and creating an environment conducive to learning.

Perception of the society towards Qawmi students

Some students in Qawmi madrasa try to learn English but they have rare chances to practice English outside their madrasas. A student from Qawmi madrasa narrated an incident that 'once upon a time he came home on leave. For any reason, he spoke English with one of his neighbors. His neighbor said to him negatively, "Is it possible for a Qawmi madrasa student to speak in English?"' After hearing those kinds of words that student had been disappointed. He thought, "It was never possible to learn English or speak English. They have no partner in madrasa to practice English but whenever they come to house from madrasa, they have to face a lot of difficulty to study English." Thus, societies in Bangladesh often look negatively to Qawmi students on the subject of learning English language though a large number of people are Muslim in Bangladesh. It is also true that a large number of children are learning in the Qawmi madrasas and most of the people in our society who are educated from various colleges or universities hardly accept these large numbers of students positively. For a variety of reasons, they cannot learn English with a partner in the society.

Reluctant to teach Qawmi students

It is rare that a good English teacher, graduated in English from a public university in Bangladesh or other country, is teaching in a Qawmi madrasa. Even so, the teachers, graduated from national university or a private university are reluctant to develop their teaching profession in this sector. The Islamic educational background of the teachers helps them transferring their knowledge about Islam and helps students understanding and implementing Islam in their daily lives. Thus, Qawmi madrasa is a place considered only to shape Islamic future generation.

Attitude towards the English Language

Attitude has cognitive, affective, and co-native components; it involves beliefs, emotional reactions, and behavioral tendencies related to the object of the attitudes. Some of the students' attitude towards English was not positive because they think there is a hierarchy among languages and English is considered as the supreme among all. Therefore, it will hinder the position of Arabic and hinder the status of religious value. On the other hand, English language helps to get a good job. It ensures economic solvency. It helps to learn from other cultures as well. Well equipped classroom, factors like better teaching strategies, and encouraging social environment can significantly reduce negative attitudes of the learners (Choy, 2002). Not all students have the same motivation or purpose for learning English. Some of them look at English just as a course that should be passed and do not understand its importance as a means of communication with which they can adapt themselves to new improvements in technology and other sciences. For most learners, learning English is a duty — something that they have to, but do not want to do. They do not get pleasure in learning English. These students have low motivation to participate in class, and they simply try to get a passing mark to get rid of the course.

Lack of qualified English teacher

One of the mudarris (teachers) said English teachers do not come to madrasas because authorities do not allow them. 'Students coming out from madrasas generally get incorporated into the very system that produces them. Most of them, who come from poor families, get employment in the schools and religious institutions of the community'. They easily get small jobs as muazzins and imams in mosques or as mudarris (teachers) in small madrasas or maktab. They are asked to teach learners English language with other subjects. Overall 60% of the respondents believe that well-trained qualified English teachers do not come to Qawmi madrasas because they do not have the facilities like the teachers in mainstream institutions.

De-motivating factors during learning

From both students and teachers psychological perspectives some de-motivating factors during learning were identified. A few teachers in Qawmi madrasas start their English classes with some motivation and praise their students for giving feedback after finishing a lesson. It is also found that some teachers, rebuke their students if they fail to understand the language which works as a kind of fear or emotional punishment for the learners to learn English language.

Review of Interviews

The questions on how to sustain their English language learning one of the teachers said a few words from his own perspectives which are the following:

English is a global language and we cannot do anything without it but it is a matter of regret that our Qawmi madrasa education system is mostly paying no attention to this language. And the people involved here think that English language is so antagonistic. Though the concerned have taken many steps to sustain English language learning but they are facing some obstacles as the patrons of Qawmi madrasa are not willing to spread English language among their community. In this situation the new generation who realize the importance of learning English language has to

come forward with strong view in favor of it and ought to break the wrong conception about English learning. At last he wanted to say that if Qawmi leaders learn to improve Muslim ummah and wish to lead the world they can never ignore the importance of learning English language. The teacher also mentioned his perception whether the learners of Qawmi madrasas are really away from mainstream education or not. According to him, learners of Qawmi madrasa are not truly away from the mainstream education rather this is their system and way to reach their ambitions.

Based on another interview with a lecturer in a public university, department of Arabic Literature, some information was collected through some open ended questions which are given below.

On asking the condition of learning English language in the Qawmi madrasa the teacher said, “You have to think where English language practice is available and where there is no practice at all. Then these kinds of questions are perfect to ask where English language learning and teaching are found over there. I think, in 90% Qawmi madrasa in BD, English language is not taught. The question you have asked me is based on where English language is taught and the students of over there are inspired for learning that language. After that it will be counted what condition of learning and teaching English language is. But I think the practice of English language is never found even in one.”

In another question “Why are English language learning and teaching not available in the Qawmi madrasa?” the teacher said, “Well, first of all I want to ask you why the students in general sides, especially in the schools, colleges, and universities are learning English language with great importance and why the teachers of those institutions are always encouraging their students properly with great seriousness. The answer is very simple. First one is that both teachers and learners took English language as a medium of acquiring knowledge without the understanding of English language skills. And second one is that a good skill in English language is surely a favor to get a lucrative job in BD or in other country where English is available or English language is used as a second language. Besides this language, some teachers and students in the Qawmi madrasa think that some other languages including Urdu, Persian languages are more important than English language. This is presumably because many renowned Islamic scholars wrote in the past and even at present are writing Islamic books in Urdu, Persian or Arabic. Thus teachers and students in the Qawmi madrasa are giving more importance these languages besides Arabic”.

Thus, when the teachers are asked to say about their opinion on English language, they replied English is a language, not the source of all knowledge. It can be a medium to gather knowledge as any other language can provide. But if it is a matter of communication with different nations then it can be considered as a subject to communicate with one other globally. A student or a teacher, who knows English properly, may not know about politics, economics or sociology of a country. These kinds of subjects or topics are considered at the same time important for study. Like English language any other languages including Arabic, Urdu, and Persian can be the media to gain knowledge. Therefore, they think the students from different levels in different institutions in BD are taking English language as medium for gaining knowledge which is to some extent a biased perception. On the other hand, the students in Qawmi madrasas of Bangladesh are taking

Arabic language along with Urdu and Persian language as medium for gaining Islamic knowledge including the holy Quranul Karim and the Hadith Sarif.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper described the challenges and barriers of Qawmi EFL learners. Accordingly, the following recommendations are given to overcome the difficulties and challenges and improve their reading and writing skills. The recommendations aim at giving effective suggestions to the EFL learners in Bangladesh Qawmi madrasa context hoping that learners will be benefited in learning English language. It is also hoped that the authority will be able to bring Qawmi learners into mainstream education eliminating the socio- psychological barriers and linguistic challenges of reading and writing skills. The lack of awareness about the importance of learning English can be responsible for not to bring the students into mainstream instruction. Thus, to ensure effective English language teaching and learning we must bring some changes. They are as the following:

1. Introducing the syllabus followed by other institutions of the country to develop the English language learning as well as to emphasize teaching reading and writing skills particularly.
2. Teaching should not be aimed for learning Arabic only rather introducing religious education in English language through reading and writing practices instead of memorizing the study materials.
3. Recruiting English teachers with similar government facilities to change teachers' perception about teaching inside Qawmi sector.
4. ELT program through CLT method needs to be included in their syllabus.
5. Students can be facilitated with good setting, environment, and materials development and so on.

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Appendix A

Survey Questionnaire for Qawmi Learners, Teachers and Parents

Dear Respondents,

The questionnaire is strictly designed to investigate the socio-psychological barriers and linguistic challenges faced by *Qawmi Madrasa* EFL learner at primary level in Bangladesh. All information provided here must be treated with utmost confidentiality. The answers will be used only for academic purposes and never will be disclosed to anybody or any organization. Kindly, respond to the items by ticking (✓) to the spaces given beside.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Section A

Serial	Statements on reading skills	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1.	I can read fluently					
2.	I cannot read					
3.	I feel blocked when I read something					
4.	I understand all the meaning when I read					
5.	I can understand specific information in a text					
6.	I use reading strategies during reading and I am comfortable with reading aloud in class					
7.	I do not understand meaning					
8.	I can only read text book					
9.	I often read outside classroom for my own interest such as reading English newspaper					
10.	I am not familiar with phonetics					
11.	I understand the main idea in a text					
12.	I adjust speed as per the reading materials					
13.	I look up new vocabulary in text to improve English language					
14.	The use of classroom strategies engages me to read more in English					
15.	We are given reading activities in class					

Section B

Serial	Statements on writing skills	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1.	I can write English					
2.	I can write English fluently					
3.	I have grammatical problems when I write English					
4.	I have no grammatical problem					
5.	I have punctuation problem					
6.	I have capitalization problem					
7.	I can write simple sentences					

Serial	Statements on writing skills	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
8.	I can write longer (compound as well as complex) sentences					
9.	I can express the subject matter of my topic in my writing					
10.	I use active voice in writing					
11.	I can use passive voice properly in my writing					
12.	I can write in paragraph					
13.	I can arrange words accurately in sentence					
14.	I cannot write English					
15.	We are given writing exercise regularly.					

Section C

Serial	Teachers' Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1.	They have little or no knowledge of English					
2.	Students want to learn English only to pass in the exam					
3.	Students want to learn English to be proficient in English					
4.	Learning English only through books is effective					
4.	Students find difficulty when learning English					
5.	Students are not motivated to learn English in interesting and fun ways					
6.	Students are apprised with communicative value					
7.	Learners are taught to use their capacity to learn English Language					
8.	Language awareness is raised during lessons					
9.	Learners are told why and how they are learning English language					
10.	Students are stimulated to show natural interest and curiosity about language					
11.	Students are serious enough to learn English					
12.	The contents of the English books are relevant to the society					
13.	Contents of language learning are regarding their daily life					
14.	Teachers use additional teaching aid materials while teaching English					
	Some psychological factors:					
17.	Teachers do not praise them for any effort, no matter how slight					
18.	Teachers try to avoid continuous looking at their faces when they speak					

Serial	Teachers' Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
19.	English class teacher usually starts lesson in English language					
20.	Teachers usually start lesson by giving motivation on language learning					
21.	Students ask teacher to repeat, if they fail to understand English language					
22.	English teachers apply emotional punishment if they fail to understand the language and punishment given by teachers leads the learners to dislike the subject					

Explain the following questions.

1. What is the condition in learning English language in the *Qawmi Madrasa*?

2. Why are English Language learning and teaching not available in *Qawmi Madrasas*?

3. How do you consider English Language?

Section D

Serial	Parents' Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1.	My child can speak in English fluently					
2.	We foster our children to learn English					
3.	Our child has difficulties in understanding English					
4.	My child is reluctant to learn English					
5.	Due to economic insolvency children are not facilitated to learn English and sent to <i>Qawmi madrasa</i>					
6.	English language cannot set their mind for afterlife.					

1. Explain your reasons for sending your child/children to *Qawmi madrasa*?

Thank you very much for your kind cooperation.