



DESIGN: KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD

How much Bangla should we really know?

MALIK ARAF

Recently, I noticed in a conversation between my mother and brother, that they were arguing about but their language was quite different.

My brother was speaking in English, and my mother responded in Bangla. Even though their communicative expressions were different, they understood each other. However, what really bugged me was that my brother wasn't very efficient in speaking Bangla. It got me thinking.

Many people in my bubble, including myself, often use English as the go-to language for communication. I text, speak, and have a better understanding of the English vocabulary than Bangla. While this is completely fine because I can express myself, to a certain extent, this is also a bit concerning. Because I should have better flexibility around my mother tongue. Likewise, I believe we should at least know Bangla to an extent where we can express our thoughts adequately.

In today's age, the English language has this "ceiling". Corporate environments, educational institutions and local societies have this unspoken concept that we all should know English. Hence, people put a significant emphasis on English and how to use it as a language. This has led to educational institutions enforcing more students to speak English the entire time they stay there. This has also led to increased sales of spoken English tutorial books. In a broader sense, this has also made English proficiency a prime requirement in the job market. People

are now constantly trying to consume more English media from the internet. Compared to Bangla media, the significant amount of English media doesn't help either.

I find this narrative a bit troublesome since it allows people to use English as their only mode of communication. This impacts people to a point where they are more comfortable with English. As a result, they lose their proficiency in Bangla. Don't get me wrong; I believe knowing English to a certain level is essential in today's competitive culture. Not at an expense where you lose your ability to speak in your mother tongue, though.

I'm not asking the average individual to be the next Nazrul. But I am asking them to be more serious about reading or talking in Bangla. Things like knowing all the numbers or the alphabets, or simply writing a sentence however you like should be the bare minimum.

Some can argue that understanding the history behind Bangla being the language we know today should also be known. That is a bonus. Some also argue that one should go to lengths to study Bangla literature. That is also tough to pick up on unless you already have a reading habit. It could be good practice, but I think expressing your thoughts in Bangla should be respectful enough.

Before I get called out for gatekeeping, it's okay if you don't use Bangla. But it's not okay if you don't know how to use it. Learn it, explore it. It's the least it deserves.

Malik Araf is running out of ideas. Help him at arafmalik04@gmail.com

Punctuality is an unfair demand in Dhaka city

IRINA JAHAN

At 7 AM, light winds blow and little birds chirp cheerfully. It marks the calm before the storm, the storm which conjures up without needing a weather forecast and makes people shudder by its mere remembrance. We are talking about Dhaka city's top nuisance: traffic jams.

With such insane traffic looming over our morning commute, is demanding punctuality even fair?

Just last month, our entire class watched with horror and pity as a student tried to make her way into class but was denied entry for being 15 minutes late. Harsh as it may seem, it is not uncommon for such incidents to occur, more so in recent times.

One would expect that the shared experience of having lived through Dhaka traffic would make one kinder to each other but the reality is far from it. It is unfortunate that it is as such because students and employees have very little, if any, hand in controlling road traffic. Dhaka is a highly centralised city with most corporate offices and good educational institutions located in clusters. This channels all buses, rickshaws, and private vehicles to the same few ill-planned routes that run across the city. And so, it remains to be a mammoth task for people living away from such places to make it to their destinations on time on most days.

For instance, gone are the times when one could reach Bashundhara from Uttara in under an hour. With the newfound madness of the city's traffic, and development work along the way, it is unlikely one will make it out of the airport road's traffic without losing all their patience and feeling vindictive of every single traffic signal. While this sounds extreme, it can hardly contest the tyranny of the long hours one has to wait on just about any road in Gulshan.

Gulshan, the place of ultimate corporate frenzy, is also a place where vehicles move only an inch at a time. At least that is what appears to be the case whenever one finds themselves around the Gulshan circles. It becomes nearly impossible for anyone trying to reach their office to predict if they would be able to make it on time. Sometimes the best option one is left with is to abandon their cars and walk so that they do not have to meet with glaring faces from their managers at work. Of course, this scenario is not a far stretch when we speak of places like Mohakhali, Karwan Bazar or Motijheel.

In the end, it is nobody's cup of tea to suffer through the orchestra of honking cars and heated cries of arguing drivers every day but when you live in a place like Dhaka, such encounters are inevitable. However, what isn't inevitable is teachers and employers becoming more forgiving of the occasional or perhaps even the routine tardiness so that we all may have one less thing to worry about every time we find ourselves stuck at another traffic signal.

Irina believes in the supremacy of taking naps to forget about her problems. Wake her up by reaching out at irinajahan17@gmail.com



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