

# Bengali Vs English Medium: A Comparative Study of Elementary Student Performance in Dakshin Dinajpur, Uttar Dinajpur and Malda District in West Bengal

**Dr. Jaydul Islam Sarkar**

Dakshin Dinajpur, West Bengal, India

## **ABSTARCT:**

The medium of instruction is crucial in transforming education and making it easier or difficult for a student in West Bengal. There is a considerable gap in the attitudes of the students getting the education in Bengali and English languages. The level of understanding among the students differs due to learning in the medium of instruction in international and mother tongues. The study aims to assess the role of mother tongue as a medium of instruction at Elementary level in the academic achievement in West Bengal. This study will also help us to investigate the merits and demerits of the medium of instruction in the mother tongue (Bengali) and English language. Most of the respondents think that intellectual development is more in Bengali (mother tongue) as a medium of instruction rather than English language. It was also found that the English language is the need of the time to cope with international developments in science and technology.

**KEYWORDS:** Academic achievement in Bengali Language, Academic achievement in English Language, Family environment.

## **INTRODUCTION:**

Language is basically a system of communication where sound or signs convey objects, actions and ideas. The history of language dates back to many thousands of years. Language is primarily spoken not written. But the development of the writing medium and later the printing system went a long way in the dissipation of knowledge and without which humans would have remained in the dark about the ways of life and the thought process of their ancestors.

Language is the key to human lives. They can eliminate misunderstanding by using it as an instrument to transfer communication among people. Malinowski suggests, language is “the necessary means of communication; it is the one indispensable instrument for creating the ties of the moment without which unified social action is impossible”. Language can thus be said to be at the core of humanity.

Medium of Instructions has prime importance in educational system. It plays vital role in the performance of students. The medium of Instruction is identified as the language of a teacher used in the classroom to impart teaching (Ahmed, et al.2013). The article 350 A of the Indian Constitution states that every state and local authority shall endeavour to provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother tongue (MT) at the primary stage of education, for all children belonging to linguistic minority

groups.

The National Curriculum framework (NCF: 2005) developed by the National council of educational research and training (NCERT) also strongly supports the use of mother tongue at the primary stage in addition to promoting multi-lingualism in the classroom. However, this decision has not been implemented in practice. Rather, the medium of Instruction in mother tongue at the primary stage has remained a desirable component in school curricula.

Educationists have different views on medium of Instruction. Most of the experts are in favour of mother language as medium of Instruction. Students can better understand the content of the subject only in mother tongue. To educate students by foreign medium of Instruction is half education. Through foreign medium of Instruction, sightless, captured minded, dumb students are prepared. A several years of life spend in learning and to be skillful in foreign language, a student cannot learn knowledge and foreign language at a time. A language which is not practicing in society is an artificial cover over human personality. The children who are not taught by mother tongue, their creative abilities do not develop. (Khaldoon, 2001).

But some intellectuals are against to adopt mother tongue as a medium of Instruction. According to their views, mother tongue will create biasness among provinces. In our country, such forces are getting strength. It is empirically proven that regional languages culminate national integrity. According to Kirmanmayiet al (2010), if the instructions do not adopt one common MI, it will break bias among the region/ states and will ultimately produce regionally minded elite. He will not communicate freely with their opposite members in different states. This ultimately weakens the political unity of the country and may even affect its cultural future.

Some intellectuals give third option. They say that there should be a national language or common language as medium of Instruction that may be combination of all regional/ mother/ provincial languages (Moyo, 2002). According to Maudoodi (1963), it is dangerous that English as a medium of Instruction may remain continue in our educational institutions. Moreover, it is said, if there are some hurdles in adopting national language as medium of Instruction. It is the duty of the intellectuals to seek out the solution of those problems. However, the role of using mother tongue as a medium of Instructions, particularly for linguistic minorities has been emphasized by various studies (e.g., Cummins, 1984; Skutnabb - Kangas 1984). Even for an effective educational development of a second culture language of the majority (national language), studies have pleaded for the necessity of promoting the learner's proficiency in their mother tongue; for example Muyangwa and Mvakade (1998) found that the pupils taught in mother tongue (Xhosa) performed better in their academic achievement than those taught in English. Ramasamy (2001) says that the balance is in favour of mother tongue, especially for the lower socio economic group. Researchers have suggested that bilingualism involves an intense degree of cognitive conflict which facilitates language learning. Nanda (1991) reports that medium of Instruction is crucial for both social and personality development of children.

The above review has shown contradictory results. The impact of mother tongue as a medium of Instruction in comparison to the use of non-mother tongue, particularly English as a medium of Instruction, has not only created a wide spread debate but also baffled the policy makers all over the country. As a result there are no uniform standards prescribed for primary and secondary level education in this country. These reasons have prompted the present researcher to take up this study and compare the performance characteristic of Bengali and English medium school children in West Bengal. Due to the constraints of manpower, time and other resources, this study has been delimited in West

Bengal.

On the other hand, in the modern era, English has appeared as one of the most used languages for global communication. English become the language of textbooks and the medium of education at various levels. We can't deny the fact that English language can increase educational achievement and develop communication skill of the students. Those students who are weak in English language face many difficulties in communication as well as in their academic achievement in English. Good knowledge and skill in English has a great effect on students' achievement. When students' proficiency in English is good, it will definitely increase their academic attainment.

The most substantial results of any educational system are of its students' academic achievement. Academic Achievement has become a forecaster of a child's future. The investigator found that most of the Bengali medium students face difficulties with English because they are not able to understand the language in the educational perspective. It is also noticed that there are several aspects which are found accountable for the academic achievement and failure of a student. Among various factors Family Environment is one of the important factors. Family Environment plays a vital role in developing academic achievement in a student life. The type of environment found at a family plays an important role in determining various kinds of development of children. A child from a noble family environment demonstrates good educational performance. Involvement of the parents or other family members can have a positive or negative effect on academic achievement of a child.

#### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:**

India is multilingual country. Medium of Instruction has become an issue whether Bengali language may be medium of Instruction or English language. The problem to be studied in the study is to evaluate the impact of medium of Instruction on Elementary student's academic achievement.

#### **OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:**

The study was designed to investigate the impact of the medium of instruction on students' learning and achievements. Following are the objectives of the study:

1. To evaluate the medium of instruction on students learning at the Elementary School level.
2. To see the effect of medium of instruction at Elementary School level in teaching-learning process.
3. To find out the role of student's home environment at students learning.

#### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:**

This study could be beneficial for all stakeholders of the education system such as policymakers to know the real-time situation of the effectiveness of medium of instruction in the different context of these three districts in West Bengal. This study can help the teachers, head teachers, school administrators, student, parents and community to know the importance of medium of instruction and its effects on students' learning.

#### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:**

The study was quantitative, and descriptive research design was used in this study. Due to the limited sources and time, the study was delimited to the 250 participants in these three districts in West Bengal.

#### **SAMPLE AND SAMPALING TECHNIQUE:**

By using census sampling technique, all the Students of the Elementary School in three districts were selected as a sample of the study. These participants were gathered (both Boys and girls) from all over three district in West Bengal.

**RESEARCH TOOL:**

A Questionnaire was used as the instrument of the study which was developed on the basis of review of literature related to the topic of the study.

**DATA COLLECTION:**

Data was collected personally. The questionnaires were distributed among the participants with the request to respond up to the next day. The topic “Bengali vs. English Medium: A Comparative Study of Elementary Student Performance in Dakshin Dinajpur, Uttar Dinajpur and Malda District in West Bengal” Nine questions were asked from the 250 Students of the particular District in West Bengal. The districts- wise numbers of participants were as under:

SI No	Name of Districts	No of Participants
1	Dakshin Dinajpur	85
2	Uttar Dinajpur	80
3	Malda	85

**VALIDATION AND FINALIZATION OF THE INSTRUMENT:**

The instrument of the study was validated through experts’ opinion and on the basis of their recommendations; the questionnaire was finalized concerning the language correction, item relevancy, and face validity.

**DATA ANALYSIS:**

The data was analyzed by using statistical techniques, i.e. frequencies, percentage and mean score.

**RESULTS:**

On the basis of survey responses following results were obtained. Merits and Demerits of Adopting Bengal, English as a Medium of Instruction.

**BENGALI AS MEDIUM:****Merits:**

1. (I) Bengali is a Mother Tongue language. It is a widely understood language of West Bengal.
2. (II) Bengali plays a crucial role in creating love, respect, and national integrity.
3. (III) It removes cultural diversity among people.
4. (IV) Teacher and Students can easily understand it.
5. (V) Teaching in the Mother tongue enhance the understanding of the learner.
6. (VI) The findings of the latest researches show that a person thinks in his/her mother tongue. So, Mother tongue as a medium of instruction removes the confusions.
7. (VII) Education in the mother tongue enables the learners to gain fluency and confidence in speaking,

reading, and writing and to participate fully in, and contribute, to national economic and social development.

**DEMERITS:**

1. Bengali language is not a well-developed and advanced language in comparison to English.
2. Bengali medium students find it difficult to understand the latest advancement in the areas of research and technology.
3. Research work is not produced in Bengali language.
4. Bengali medium students feel inferiority complexes.
5. It is difficult for the students of Bengali medium schools to get maximum job opportunities.

**ENGLISH AS MEDIUM****MERITS:**

1. English medium students are able to understand the latest advancement in knowledge.
2. Advance research and literature is in English.
3. It is a rich language. It has thousands of words and phrases.
4. English is used as the language of Science and Technology.
5. Employment opportunities are more for English medium students.
6. It is necessary for the Internet and Computer usage.
7. It is the gateway to Higher Education.
8. At a higher level, all the books are published in English language.
9. We can read all the newspapers, magazines, research papers, etc. of foreign writers and researchers.

**DEMERITS:**

1. Level of understanding decreases, Students could not understand effectively. They are compelled to memorize knowledge. Concepts of the students remain unclear.
2. Students fail to integrate the knowledge, which the teacher is imparting in their minds, with their natural setting. It makes their minds get confused.
3. English medium students are proud of them and have a sense of superiority about their own language and culture.
4. To get full command on that language is a hard task for the students.
5. It doesn't reflect our culture, values, and traditions.
6. English is the foreign language, and education in foreign language places an enormous strain on students, forcing them to memorize and to spend a large proportion of their time on learning the language.
7. Students could not understand effectively. They are compelled to memorize knowledge. Concepts of the students remain unclear.
8. Students fail to integrate the knowledge, which the teacher is imparting in their minds, with their natural setting. It makes their minds get confused.

**CONCLUSION:**

The cited literature has empirically proven that students perform better when instructed in their Mother tongue language. Parveen et.al(2008)found that students should be instructed only in the medium of

Instruction to which students are familiar. Environment plays significant role in developing language skills. In our society, schools and homes Bengali language is used in daily affairs of life. English is a foreign language. It is only language of content matter or books and not language of teachers. Thus English language is difficult for the students for reading, comprehension and analysing as well as writing. The results of the study at hand are also compatible with the results of the study of Ahmed et.al (2011). In another study in Hong Kong high schools, Marsh, Hau and Kong (2000) compared the achievements of high school students in Chinese( firstlanguage)and English ( second language) medium of Instruction and found the negative effects of English instruction in the achievement of most of the school subjects. We can say that in the elementary classes medium of Instruction should be Bengali and once the child learns concepts English can be introduced in higher grades. To meet the international needs, we require individuals who are proficient in English as well.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:

From the above-mentioned findings and conclusion, following recommendations are suggested.

1. Curriculum developers should focus on such development of a curriculum which can be imparted Bengali as the medium of instruction.
2. Basic concepts of any subjects should be in the Bengali language.
3. English should be as a second language of instruction, so that the students can feel comfortable at a higher level of their education.
4. Concepts of any subjects should be easily clear in the Bengali language such as Mathematics, Social studies in elementary education.

It is, therefore, recommended to the teachers, schools, administrators, and policy-makers to devise and implement workable policies for the medium of instruction to facilitate the students for the growth of their academic career.

### REFERENCES:

1. National council of educational research and training (2005). National Curriculum framework 2005 .New Delhi, India: Government of India.
2. Ramasamy,K. (2001) Mother tongue and medium of Instruction – A continuing battle. In M.S. Thirumalai&B.Malikarjun (eds).Language in india: strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow, Vol 1(6).
3. Sampath, K. (2005) Effects of bilingualism on intelligence. In J.cohen,K.T. Mc Alister,K.Rolstad,&J.Mac Swan (Eds), ISB4:Proceedings of the 4<sup>th</sup> International Symposium on bilingualism (pp .2048-2056).
4. Srivastava, A. & Khatoon,R. (1980) Effect of difference between mother tongue and another language and creativity of 8<sup>th</sup> standard children. In E.Anamalai(Ed), Bilingualism and achievement in schools (pp 31 -48) Mysore, India: Central institute of indianlanguage.
5. Parveen,S.,Gopang, A. &Shaikh, I. (2008) Language and learning:Impact of language on cognitive development of secondary school children. Journal of education, Vol 38(2008), 93-107.
6. Moyo,T.(2002) Mother tongue versus an ex-colonial language as media ofInstruction and the promotion of multilingualism: The south African experience. South African Journal of African languages, Vol 22(2), 149-160.
7. Ganguly, S. (1996) Personality factors in second language learning: A psycho – social perspective.

Psycho- lingua, Vol 26(2),67-78.

8. George, A., & Balow, I. (1978) Metropolitan Achievement Test. The psychological corporation.
9. Holmes, J. (1973) Culture shock: Remedial teaching and the immigrant child. London educational review, Vol 2(2):72-91.
10. Akter MN. English Language and its Problems and Challenges faced by the Bengali Medium Minority Students of Murshidabad District, West Bengal. International Journal of Research, Culture Society; 2022;6(26). ISSN: 2456-6683.
11. Mishra S, Bamba V. Impact of Family Environment on Academic Achievement of Secondary School Students in Science Subject. International Journal of Research in Economics and Social Science. 2012;2:42-49.
12. Rajput KS. Perceived Family Environment in Relation to Adjustment and Academic Achievement. Journal of the Indian Academy of Applied Psychology. 1992;31(1- 2):18-23.
13. Periasamy R, Jayarani JR. Family Environment of Senior Secondary Students in relation to Achievement with special reference to school related variables. International Research Journal of Modernization to Engineering Technology and Science. 2021;03(11):161- 177.
14. Barmola KC. Family Environment, Mental Health and Academic Performance of Adolescents. International Journal of Scientific Research; 2013;12(12), ISSN No. 2277-8179.
15. Khatoon A, Sharma M. Relationship between Family Environment and Academic Achievement. Xllkogretim Online-Elementary Education Online. 2021;20(1):3202- 3207.
16. Sahragard R, Baharloo A, Soozandehfar SMA. A closer look at the relationship between academic achievement and language proficiency among Iranian EFL students, Theory and Practice in Language Studies.