
Code-switching in Bangladesh

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A survey of hybridization in proper names and commercial signs

CODE-SWITCHING is commonly seen as more typical of the spoken language. But there are some areas of language use, including business names (e.g. restaurants), where foreign proper names, common nouns and sometimes whole phrases are imported into the written language too. These constitute a more stable variety of code-switching than the spontaneous and more unpredictable code-switching in the spoken language.

Bangladesh provides an extensive and varied example of this type of code-switching, with English names and even phrases often transcribed into Bengali script in business names and commercial signs. The result is an extension of the normal concept of code-switching into the written medium which also involves graphology. In Bangladesh there are different kinds of Bengali-English code switching, involving partial and complete transfers from English. These hybrid varieties of code-switching are in a complex relationship with national language policy in Bangladesh, which prescribes the use of Bengali in public life.

Introduction

The offshore use of proper names from prestige cultures is a well established business practice in certain areas of commerce, particularly where chic, exotic connotations or dynamism are associated with a specific culture. In English-speaking countries it is common to find perfume and clothing shops with French names, reflecting the leading French image in these specific products. Restaurants also often have French names. But the growth of international gourmet and exotic cuisine has been accompanied by restaurant names from differ-

ent countries: names like *Bombay Express*, *Phuket*, *Bangkok*, *Peking Garden* and *Andes*.

The thrust of international English in business names is powerful and global. It can appear indiscriminate to purists and nationalists in the recipient culture. Two recent papers in *English Today* have described the penetration of international commercial English in Poland (Griffin 1997) and Italy (Ross 1997), where English is a foreign, rather than a second, language. These data involve advertisements (Griffin) and shop signs and names (Ross). Ross finds English names in Milan for many different kinds of businesses and shops, where the imported English names express dif-

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ferent degrees and flavours of consumer culture, teen culture, or international English-based commerce in a more general, global sense.

Business names are restricted to one word or phrase, and so are a one-shot attempt to capture the customer's attention. Griffin's advertising data are more subtle, since the printed advertisement contains more text, and so allows an interplay of a certain amount of language to attract the consumer and develop an impact. Not only product names (e.g. Marlborough cigarettes), but also whole words and phrases, and sometimes longer stretches of English as well, co-occur with Polish to promote the quality and character of the product.

These English–Polish and English–Italian examples all occur in Roman script. Syntactically speaking the types of mixing involved are fairly straightforward. Foreign names are implicitly in quotation marks, sometimes underlined by the word-order: *Gold-Park Bar* (from Ross 1997), but *Restaurant Bangkok* (sometimes *Restaurant "Bangkok"*). And in advertisements the English material is also often typographically or grammatically quarantined by being located in specific places in the advertisement, or not integrated in the L1 text, as with Griffin's data. These factors show that this type of code-switching is a structurally and functionally restricted one, and involves mainly proper names, common names and prenominal modifiers (Myers-Scotton 1993).

However, in modern Bangladesh there are some instances which are more unusual in the code-switching between Bengali and English. The nature and extent of this code-switching from English into Bengali is the topic of the present paper. We concentrate on the compact and better-defined area of business names and descriptions, leaving the question of advertising copy and its linguistic mixing for later investigation (Banu, in preparation).

Bangladesh: linguistic background

Practices of commercial business naming in Bangladesh¹ show more diversified and extensive code-switching. Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh, has undergone a population explosion to about ten million over the last decade, and the city itself has experienced a huge urban sprawl, which now extends far outside the historic old Dhaka on the banks of the river Buriganga. It is this newer city which pro-



vides our data on the linguistic nature and characteristics of code-switching in shop names and billboards in Bangladesh today.

The history of shop signs in Dhaka is, to a great extent, a reflection of the political turmoil and changing linguistic influences of the region. When East Pakistan was carved out of India in 1947 to form part of Pakistan, the influence of British India was evident in many things, including the predominantly English shop names. From 1947 to 1971 the majority of shops and industries had English names, and shop signs were also written in English. A few years after the Partition, a handful of shops had Urdu names and some shop signs were written in Urdu as well, reflecting the dominance of Urdu-speaking West Pakistanis and the recently arrived Urdu-speaking Muslim refugees from India in the business and commerce of a predominantly Bengali-speaking East Pakistan. There were hardly any shops in Dhaka with Bengali names or names which were written in Bengali script.

All this changed virtually overnight when Bangladesh became independent in 1971. Shop signboards with Urdu names or script were torn down and burnt. In the enthusiasm of liberation, English signboards also suffered a similar treatment. Legislation established Bengali as the language to be used for state purposes. For about five years after independence, Bengali nationalism expressed itself in a wave of creative renaming of shops and industries in Bengali. *Victoria Park* became *Bahadur Shah Park*; *English Preparatory School* became *Udayan Biddyalaya*, or 'Sunrise School'; the city itself changed from an anglicised *Dacca* to *Dhaka*. Gradually, however, English has been

re-entering the life of the former colonial nation at various levels, and in various forms (Banu, in preparation).

Business names: socio-economic profile

While the use of Urdu in Bangladesh has become a matter of history, the use of both English and Bengali, both separately and mixed, is now common in the naming of shops and in shop signs.

The socio-commercial profile of business names and the interpenetration of the two languages can be seen in most shopping-cum-residential areas which are largely populated by middle-class and upper middle-class educated Bengalis. Many of the roads have developed rapidly into popular shopping areas, and the range of shop signs on view illustrates the main types of business names involving English and Bengali elements. Alongside some genuinely Bengali business names there are some old business names showing English vocabulary and structure, but usually written in Bengali script. Most of the examples given below have been taken from some major roads in Dhaka: Mirpur Road, Elephant Road near New Market, the adjacent locality of Kataban near the University of Dhaka, Farmgate, Airport Road, Sonargaon Road, Mymensingh Road, Motijheel, and main roads in the Banani and Gulshan residential area. These are all busy thoroughfares, surrounded by or leading to middle-class and upper-middle-class neighbourhoods.

In the examples cited in this paper English-script names are in *italic*. Bengali-script words are in **bold type** and where relevant are given in broad phonemic transcription. Inconsistencies in transcription reflect the variable English expertise of the shop owners and sign writers. Some photographic examples of Bengali and English material and scripts are given at the end of the paper. The English and Bengali scripts themselves occur in parallel or in sequence, and English phrases sometimes co-exist in both scripts on shop signs (Photograph #6). English language material, however, switches into Bengali script with ease.

It is customary for various accommodations to be made in Bengali representations of English words where Bengali phonology does not match English. Some of these are conventional, like the replacement of English /z/ by /dʒ/, or of /v/ by /b/ or /bh/, and the use of /ɛ/ for both Eng-



lish /ɛ/ and English /æ/. Bengali does not have phonemic /z/ or /v/. It has /ɛ/ as well as /æ/ (Klaiman 1987, 497). However, both /ɛ/ and /æ/ in initial position are represented by the one written letter. Thus the phonetic realisation and transliteration of the English words *and* and *fat* in the examples appear in Bengali script as /ɛnd/ and /fet/ respectively. The transliteration cannot be taken as a strict guide to pronunciation and depends heavily on one's knowledge and intuition of how to pronounce a word. Other conventional adaptations involve the voiced allomorph /z/ of the English plural -s, which is sometimes transliterated into Bengali as /s/, so avoiding the more distinct Bengali parallel /dʒ/ (Photograph #4). There is strong evidence of letter-by-letter transliteration, especially in the post-vocalic /r/, which is pronounced in Bengali but not in English, and is copied from the English orthography. Where English words are transliterated in Bengali it is generally the dental /r/ and not the retroflex that is used. The reverse is the case with dental/retroflex transliterations of English /d/ and /t/, where the retroflex Bengali sounds are usually preferred.

These practices are fairly regular. But some Bengali-script representations of English are irregular and spontaneous, as are some colloocations (e.g. "Needle Fight" for a tailor's shop), and show the uneven level of English literacy on the part of the business people and sign-writers.

Our first examples are three retail outlets of different kinds, with signs in Bengali script: one sells hardware materials, another building materials, and the third retails sanitary wares. The names are fairly traditional, a local proper

noun being followed by a generic English business term like 'enterprise', 'traders', or 'agency'.

/midʒan ɛntɹpraɪdʒ/	Mizan Enterprise
/faruk treɪdars/	
/treɪdɪŋ kɔmpni/	Farouk Traders/Trading Co.
/amin ɛdʒɛnsɪs/	
/kɔmpni/	Amin Agencies/Co.

In other cases of more irregular usage, words like *plaza*, *arcade*, *parlour* are often added to shop names in ways which may be at variance with their western use, as with

/ɪstɑrn plɑdʒɑ/	Eastern Plaza
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which is a small, enclosed building housing a few shops. Or a small fast food restaurant may be ambitiously called a *parlour*, as in:

/kʰal kʰai parlɑr/	Khai Khai Parlour (literally 'eat eat parlour').
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But some business names of this phrasal type are catchy, more recent and less traditional. They again occur in Bengali script. Consider the following one tailoring shop and four corner stores

/ju:ɹ tʃɔɪs/	Your Choice (a corner store)
/nɪdɪl fɑɪt/	Needle Fight (a tailor).

Since final consonant clusters are almost non-existent in standard colloquial Bengali, /ɛ/ is inserted to satisfy Bengali phonological rules (Ferguson and Chowdhury 1960).

/bʒudʒɪ bi:/	Busy Bee (a corner store)
/prɛʃɑ pɔɪnt/	Pressure Point (a corner store)
/ju: ɑskd fɔɹ ɪt/	You Asked For It (a corner store) (named after the popular TV program).

There is an obvious stylishness in the names, once they are recognised, but the original English pronunciation is sometimes so distorted in the Bengali scripts that even local educated Bengalis may not immediately recognise the original English phrases.

An excellent example of code-mixing resulting in confusion is:

/ekani lɔ: fɛt doi pawɑ dʒɑl/	(Lit. 'here low fat yogurt available is').
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Low fat yogurt (Bengali *doi* "yogurt") is a product aimed at health-conscious Bangladeshis, particularly those who have been abroad. The area

where this advertisement appears is predominantly frequented by upper-class shoppers familiar with the prestige of low fat products among certain socio-economic classes. The English words "low fat" written in Bengali and embedded in a Bengali phrase do not so readily yield up their meaning. This example is also syntactically more complex.

Business names: formal analysis

The code-switching of English and Bengali in business names repeats what Ross found in Italy, but goes further in two important respects. First, English words are included in Bengali contexts in either Roman script, usually in parallel (Photograph #6); or in Bengali script, involving both linguistic and graphological code-switching. Switching graphology in this way, which does not arise in inter-European code-switching because of the common Roman script, presents some difficulties of phonology as outlined above. Furthermore, the structural range of English phrases transcribed into Bengali script is wider than that found in common foreign language naming practice in Western countries. It is not merely a matter of importing a foreign proper name, brand name or single word into a Bengali context; rather, it can involve incorporating partial or whole English constructions and transliterating them into Bengali script. This practice is also common in India, e.g. with commercial names like *Air India* written in both Roman and Devanagari script; and in Pakistan, as we shall see.

The various types of business names, excluding Bengali names in Bengali script, form four categories: English in Roman script; contemporary western single-word product or business names in Bengali and English script; English phrases in Bengali script only; and hybrid signs involving both languages and both scripts.

The structural types of the examples in this and the following section are fairly restricted. The main pattern is Name+Product/Place. Most involve proper or common nouns:

- Bengali proper name, English product name: **Alauddin Sweetmeat**
- English proper name, English product name: **Oxford Shoes**
- English proper name, Bengali product name: **Jenny Kabab Ghar**

The other alternative, a Bengali proper name and a Bengali product, might be found in

English-switched business names, but it is not relevant here.

Sometimes the switch involves more than a single word:

- (a) Bengali proper name, English product name: **Abdul Metal Industries**
- (b) English proper name, English product name: **Delta Diagnostic Centre**
Gorgeous Tailors and Fabrics
- (c) English proper name, Bengali product name: **Star Bakery and Kabab Ghar**

Usually the structure of the noun phrase involves one language followed by another. In a few instances there is more than one switch:

New Dhaka Builders
Bombay Sweets and Chanachur

Several examples discussed under “Hybrid signs” below go much further than this.

The Airport Road and Sonargaon Road are important arterial roads linking the city with prestigious suburbs where most of the expatriates live, and where embassies and foreign missions are located. Billboards and posters along these roads mostly advertise products with an international market and image. Most of the signboards are written in English and are instantly recognisable by their world-famous logos (photographs #1–2). Among the products advertised are: *Sony, Akai, Aiwa, Coca Cola, Pepsi, Kodak, Singer, Konika, Fuji, Agfa, Tata, Dunlop* and many other international brands. These products may be written in Bengali in middle- and lower-class residential areas. Even *Coca Cola* and *Fuji* are written in Bengali in some areas.

Shops that use English names also written in English script are fairly common, and include *Swan Stone, Marble Sanitary Wares, Marble Stone Slabs, TOEFL Coaching, Spoken English, Century Coaching Centre, Shahinoor Foam* and *Apex Foam*. Shop signs and billboards using names written in English present little problem of intelligibility or communication – at least, to those who know English. Some more examples from a strip of pet shops in Kataban include: *Discus Aquarium, Hobby & Pets/Fixed Price Shop, Dreamland, Asia Aquarium, Water Zoo and Aquarium*. Though the meaning is not always clear (in *Discus Aquarium*, “discus” are a type of fish), and though the spelling is sometimes faulty (*Hobby*), the attempt at creativity is evident.

Contemporary Western commercial names or imitations in Bengali and Roman script

Another group of shop names represents the more contemporary influence of Western culture. These are most frequently observed in front of small takeaway restaurants or fast-food outlets and other miscellaneous shops. Either English or Bengali script is used, and sometimes both. Again the customers are mainly the younger members of wealthy upper class or upper middle class Bangladeshis and expatriates:

/kupars/	Cooper's
/bi:g bait/	Big Bite
/pidʒa hat/	Pizza Hut (not a franchise of the multinational company)
	Pizza Palace
/pidʒa pæles/	Pizza Lake
/pidʒa lek/	Pizza Garden
/pidʒa garden/	Macdonald's
/mægdonalds/	(not a franchise of the multinational company)
	MacDonalds (a Chinese restaurant)
/mægdonalds/	Dominous Pizza
	(corruption of 'Domino's Pizza')
/dɔmɪnʊs pidʒa/	
	Peter Pan Cafe and Pastry Shop (Actually sells local savoury snacks – <i>dalpuri</i> and <i>kabab</i>)
/pitar pæn kæfe end pestri ʃɔp/	Heartthrob
/harttʰrɔb/	

English phrases in Bengali script only

There are a number of shops in different parts of Dhaka city which bear English names written only in Bengali script. Some of these have been in use for a long time; others are relatively new. These English-sounding names seek to confer prestige on the shops as well as the shop owners, many of whom are from humble rural backgrounds. This knowledge is displayed in the often-mispronounced but undeniably English names for a wide variety of stores and enterprises. A row of shops in Kataban displays the following English names in Bengali script: **Black Sea Aquarium, Rose Garden, Happy Flower Shop, Melody Flowers** (followed by a Bengali phrase stating that it is a shop specialising in fresh flowers), **Best Flower, Fish Garden** and **Lovely Birds**. The reading of these

English names written in Bengali script forms an interesting linguistic exercise.

More samples of business names in Bengali script include:

/bjuti parlar/	Beauty Parlour
/buk kornar/	Book Corner
/delta daigɔnɔstik sentar/	Delta Diagnostic Centre
/delta farnifars/	Delta Furnishers
/dama dipartment ftɔ:r/	Diana Department Store
/hɛltʰ kɔmpleks/	Health Complex
/hɛrbal klinik/	Herbal Clinic
/mɛdɪsɪn kɔrnar/	Medicine Corner
/muslim trɛdɪŋ kɔrpɔrɛʃɔn/	Muslim Trading Corporation
/ɔfis farnitfars/	Office Furniture(s) (a regular plural in Bangladesh)
/ɔksford fudʒ/	Oxford Shoes
/pæthɔlədʒi end eksrɛ klinik/	Pathology and X-Ray Clinic
/rɔʒal stɛʃɔnari/	Royal Stationery
/wɪmɛns wɔrld/	Women's World
/frɛntʃ bɛkari/	French Bakery
/kwɪns kɛk end pɛʃtri/	Queen's Cake and Pastry
/daɪmɔnd teɪlars end fɛbrɪks /	Diamond Tailors and Fabrics
/gɔrdʒɪas teɪlars end fɛbrɪks/	Gorgeous Tailors and Fabrics
/mɔdɛrn mɔdʒaɪk ɛmpɔriam/	Modern Mosaic Emporium
/kædet kɔtʃɪŋ prɔmɪdʒ/	Cadet Coaching Promise

In all the examples above, both product names (shoes, medicine, stationery, textiles) and services or place of service (like corner, house, palace, world, centre) are English but written in Bengali. Descriptors like **Oxford**, **Diamond**, **French** or **Royal** are also English, but in Bengali script.

Hybrid signs (mixed: both languages, both scripts in parallel)

Some shop-names and posters are hybrid constructions with some components from both English and Bengali. The names are in English and Bengali script, or both, and English and Bengali proper and common nouns are freely mixed (for example: **Probal Aquarium** mixes

Bengali *Probal* (coral) with the English *Aquarium*); 'aquarium' is variously spelt in Bengali /ɛkurijam/, /ɛkɔrijam/ and /ɛkwarijam/. Such hybrid signs are a common and productive category. Shop names occur in both languages in no particular order of appearance: sometimes English is followed by Bengali; sometimes the reverse. The following are samples from pet and aquarium fish shops in Kataban:

/endʒɛl fiʃ/	Angel Fish
/mɛrmɛɪd/	Mermaid
/rɛd si ɛkuriam/	Red Sea Aquarium
/rɛmbɔʊ bards/	Rainbow Birds
/akwa hɛvɛn/	Aqua Heaven
/di bards wɔrld/	The Bird's World
/mɪnɪ hɔbi dʒu/	Mini Hobby Zoo

Other examples from a variety of other enterprises include:

/abdul metal indastridʒ/	Abdul Metal Industries
/alauð:in swit mit/	Alauddin Sweetmeat
/bɔbita hɛɛr katiŋ/	Babita Hair Cutting
/bɔmbe swits end tʃanatsur/	Bombay Sweets and Chanachur
/dʰaka daiŋ end tekstails/	Dhaka Dyeing and Textiles
/dʒamdani: kɔtɛdz/	Jamdani Cottage
/madradʒ fudʒ/	Madras Shoes
/radʒʃahi: sɪlkhaus/	Rajshahi Silk House
/ʃari: mʃudʒɪam/	Saree Museum
/ʃari pɛlɛʃ/	Saree Palace
/dʒɛni kabab gʰɔr/	Jenny Kabab Ghar
/star bɛkari end kabab gʰɔr/	Star Bakery and Kabab Ghar
/ʃumi kɔnfɛkʃɔnari/	Sumi Confectionery
/fakrud:in end sɔns/	Fakruddin and Sons
/harun ɔfis end skul stɛʃɔnari/	Haroon Office and School Stationery
/dʒʰɔrna dʒuwɛlars/	Jharna Jewellers
/nʃu dʰaka bɪldars/	New Dhaka Builders
/ʃɔfik pɛɪnt end hardwar/	Shafiq Paint and Hardware
/titaʃ tɪmbar end tʃʰɔ: mil/	Titas Timber and Saw Mill

This use of /tʃʰ/ for English /s/ is unusual. In some dialects of Bengali in Bangladesh a /s/ is the etymological counterpart of /tʃʰ/ (Ferguson and Chowdhury 1960, 35). This spelling is used in many Muslim proper names of Perso-Arabic origin and Islamic texts.



3



5



4



6

The photographs at the end of this paper show code-switching going even further. Photograph #3 shows the following sign:

/di medikal sentar
kɔmpjuʔaraidʒd daigɔnɔstik ɔ kɔnsaltɛfɔn
sentar/

The medical centre
Computerized diagnostic o [= and]
consultation centre

The insertion of the Bengali coordinating conjunction *o* 'and' in what is otherwise transliterated English is typologically unusual for code-switching. Note "diagonostic", which better fits the rules for Bengali syllable structure.

Photograph #4 shows a herbalist's sign which even transfers English apostrophes into Bengali script:

/bitʰi's harbal
skɪn kear klɪmɪk ɛnd
bjuti parlər
gruʔ ɔb sɪstərs/

Bithi's herbal
skin care clinic and
beauty parlour
Group ob [sic] sisters

[address information follows in Bengali].

Here the apostrophe, which does not exist in Bengali, has been imported to be consistent with the rules of English punctuation, since the

entire name and description for the business are transcribed in Bengali. Note also *ob* (unaspirated) for *of* and /sɪstərs/ rather than /-z/.

In Photograph #5 we have a Bengali adverb in final position after a string of English:

[In Bengali: 'You can rent cars here']
English transliterated:

/kɔmpjuʔar fɔtɔstæt
kɔntɪnental sarvɪs
mastər bɪdʒnɪs sentər dotalæ/

Computer, photostat,
continental courier service
master business centre dotalæ [= upstairs]

And in Photograph #6 two paint shops show a complex interplay of English and Bengali language and scripts, both code-switched and in parallel:

Paint shop signs:

On the left:

[In Bengali]	/pailak peɪnt/
[In Roman]	Pailac Paint
[In Bengali script]:	/lokkʰɪpʊr hɑrdwɑr/ : / ɪletrɪk sɑplɑrs/ (Lokkhipur hardware: electric supplies)

On the right:

[In Bengali]	/ɛɪlɪt peɪnt/
[In Roman]	Elite paint

both paint cans have Roman script as well.

Table 1 Language of product names

Category	Total	English	Bengali	Mixed/Both
Household appliances	23	23	0	0
Foodstuffs/Drinks/Cigarettes	10	8	2	0
Cosmetics	18	16	2	0
Industry/Cement/Batteries	12	12	0	0
Shoes and clothing	2	2	0	0
Housing/Construction/Furniture	12	8	1	3
Institutions/Banking	3	1	0	2
Vehicles/Cars/Motorbikes	4	3	1	0
Healthcare/Medical services	8	8	0	0
Miscellaneous	8	5	1	2
Total	100	86	7	7
		86%	7%	7%

Discussion: the socio-cultural dimension

The influence and appeal of English in these commercial contexts is pervasive. In spite of the official policy that established Bengali as the national language in 1971, and so disestablished English from its imperial role, advertisers and businesses in contemporary Bangladesh continue to use English to identify and project their image. There are obvious sociolinguistic implications in the correlation between the socio-economic levels of the suburbs and the selection of language: the same product, and especially multinational corporations, will be advertised in English in more prosperous areas and where international travellers pass, like Dhaka Airport. But the same product may be advertised in Bengali script in suburbs where knowledge of English is more restricted.

This tendency to code-switch English names into Bengali script, however, is not universal at the upper socio-economic levels, even in certain shops catering almost exclusively for an upper-class and expatriate clientele. These shops, usually owned by non-governmental organisations (NGOs), stock indigenous artefacts, handicrafts and locally-made textiles. Nationalistic pride or the projection of a specifically Bangladeshi identity is denoted by a kind of ethnic chic in self-consciously Bengali names like **Aarong** (rural marketplace or fair), **Karika**

(crafts), **Bichitra** (variety), **Probortona** (Introduction), **Kanishka** (name of an emperor), **Tantuj** (handloom products) and **Karupanna** (arts and crafts). The signs on these shops may be written in English or Bengali script, or quite commonly in both.

Comparisons with commercial English in India and Pakistan

Two recent studies have been devoted to the interplay of English and the national language in Pakistan (Meraj 1993) and India (Bhatia 1987). These studies are more widely based than ours, in that they cover not only business names, but also some of the less defined and amorphous area of advertising language. Their results broadly confirm what we have demonstrated here, but with some important and indicative differences which point to the differences in the roles of English in these two major players in the evolution of English on the Sub-Continent.

Meraj is concerned with the interaction of commercial English and Urdu in contemporary Pakistan. She covers about 800 advertisements in different written genres, which makes her study wider because she handles advertising as well as business names. Our data set is significantly smaller, but still allows instructive comparisons. We have summarized the Bangladesh data following Meraj's general categorization.

Table 2 Script of product names

Category	Total	Roman	Bengali	Mixed/Both
Household appliances	23	12	5	6
Foodstuffs/Drinks/Cigarettes	10	1	7	2
Cosmetics	18		17	1
Industry/Cement/Batteries	12	3	8	1
Shoes and clothing	2		1	1
Housing/Construction/Furniture	12	2	9	1
Institutions/Banking	3		2 (Local life insurance company)	1 (local banks)
Vehicles/Cars/Motorbikes	4	2	2 (Rajdoot, Indian motorbike)	
Healthcare/Medical services	8		7	1
Miscellaneous	10	2 Gateway, Amadeus	3 Spoken English, computer course, data entry operator course	5 Winner, Sunrise, Luminous, Just Academy, World Cup France
Total	102	22	61	19
		21.56%	59.80%	18.62%

Table 3 Language of manufacturers/dealers/distributors names

Category	Total	English	Bengali	Mixed/Both
Household appliances	23	18	1	4
Foodstuffs/Drinks/Cigarettes	10	7	0	3
Cosmetics	18	12	2	4
Industry/Cement/Batteries	12	7	0	5
Shoes and clothing	2	1	0	1
Housing/Construction/Furniture	12	6	3	3
Institutions/Banking	3	1	0	2
Vehicles/Cars/Motorbikes	4	1	0	3
Healthcare/Medical services	8	5	0	3
Miscellaneous	10	9	0	1
Total	102	67	6	29
		65.68%	5.88%	28.43%

We can consolidate these figures into a format which allows direct comparison with the Pakistan data (Table 4a).

We can compare these figures to the distribution in Pakistani English products and manufacturers' names in Urdu newspapers and the

Table 4a Combined figures for Bangladesh

	English/ Roman	Bengali	Mixed/ Both
Language of product names	86%	7%	7%
Script of product names	21.6%	59.8%	18.6%
Language of manufacturers' names	65.7%	5.9%	24.4%

Table 4b Combined figures for Pakistan

	English/Roman	Urdu/Nastaliq	Mixed/Both
Language of product names	70%	9%	21%
Script of product names	6%	35%	59%
Language of manufacturers' names	60%	3%	37%

Urdu Nastaliq script, as presented in Meraj (1993) (Table 4b).

These figures show some statistically telling differences. In terms of the language of product names the use of the homeland language is approximately the same, but Bangladesh has a higher figure for English names (86% vs. 70%); the Bangladesh figure is close to the 90% of English product names in India (Bhatia 1987). Bangladesh also has a lower figure than Pakistan for mixing languages (7% vs. 21%). For the script of the product names Bangladesh more strongly favours English (22% vs. 6%) and Bengali (60% vs. 35%), while Pakistan has much higher figures for script-mixing (59% vs. 9%). And for the language of the manufacturers' names, Bangladesh is again ahead in English names (66% vs. 60%) and has about twice as many homeland language names (6% vs. 3%), while Pakistan again strongly favours mixing (37% vs. 24%). These figures indicate a significant difference in the degree of interpenetration of the two languages, with Pakistan showing much higher results. On the other hand, Bengali is strongly ahead in two out of the three categories for single-language use. And Bangladesh is strongly ahead in the use of English, overwhelmingly so for the script of product names.

The much higher figures for script mixing in Pakistan are interesting. *Ceteris paribus*, one might expect less script mixing when a left-to-right script like Roman is mixed with a right-to-left script like Nastaliq: there are cognitive and typographical problems which are not so severe with the mixing of two left-to-right scripts like English and Bengali. However, the overall results make more sense when we con-

sider the relative profile of English–Bengali and English–Urdu in their respective polities. Bangladesh is a substantially mono-ethnic nation, and the status of the national language vis-à-vis English, while not uncompromised by historical survivals from Imperial times, is relatively straightforward. In Pakistan, however, while Urdu is the national language it is not the language of an indigenous majority, and has to compete with large languages like Pashto, Baluchi, Sindhi and Punjabi in different parts of the country.

There are more sociolinguistic factors which may be relevant to these figures, including relative levels of literacy in each language in different socio-economic classes, and the question whether the level of code-switching is proportional to the number of languages involved in multilingual interactions. In addition, the Pakistani Constitution and Law are written in English (Haque 1993). While this may have an only indirect effect on everyday commercial life, the symbolic position of English is rather different from that in Bangladesh, where the Law is increasingly conducted in Bengali, and where the Constitution is written in both languages, with Bengali specifically taking precedence if there is a disagreement of fact or interpretation between the two versions (Banu and Sussex 1999).

Conclusion

The use of English in business and shop names in Bangladesh, which goes back to the era of British imperial rule, has survived the strongly nationalist movements of the 60s and 70s, and is now showing a resurgence under the more

global and internationalizing forces of the 90s. But while one would expect this development in large national and international corporations, it is less probable in small local businesses like fast-food stores in less prosperous suburbs, where knowledge of English would be less common in both the owners and the customers. To be sure, there is a residual effect of Imperial English, especially among older Bangladeshis. And there are widespread initiatives to extend the role of English in both public and private education in Bangladesh, so that younger Bangladeshis may acquire a better knowledge of English than their parents (Banu, in preparation). Nonetheless, the scope and variety of English proper nouns, words and phrases used in these business names show that we are dealing here with a well-entrenched phenomenon. While writing English expressions in Bengali script is a partial concession to the norms of the national policy on language, it still makes significant demands on a knowledge of English in the market place. This does not necessarily matter where a proper name is used to add commercial force to a business enterprise where the nature of the business is clear from other parts of the name, as in **Jenny Kabab Ghar**. But it can matter where the entire identity of the business enterprise is expressed in English words, as in **Delta Diag(o)nostic Centre**. But writing it in Bengali at least makes it readable if not comprehensible to someone who lacks adequate knowledge of English.

While words like *plaza* and *parlour* will easily spread generically to businesses of varying sizes with aspirations to benefit from the image value of English names, more specialized names like *Confectionery* or *Herbal Clinic* risk being misunderstood, or not understood at all, by consumers whose knowledge of English is more restricted. A situation like this would be more perilous in a country like France, where the Loi Toubon has been applied in the courts to penalize the usage of offshore language, especially English, where there are existing viable French equivalents (Machill 1997).

We can expect that globalization will further encourage the current tendency to use English in business names in Bangladesh. The increasing internationalization of English (Crystal 1997) is one such force; another is the revival of English in Bangladesh as a language of international, and to some extent national, currency

in business, education and culture. And while national policies are actively promoting literacy in Bengali, they are finding that they have to accommodate to the dynamic and forceful effect of English, especially in the commercial world. ■

Notes

1 Bangladesh has approximately 120 million inhabitants. Its national language is Bengali, an Indo-European language spoken in Bangladesh and in the adjoining parts of India. It is written in the Bengali script, which is close to the Devanagari script used in Hindi (Klaiman 1987). Literacy levels in Bengali are estimated at around 32.4% (*Statistical Pocketbook 1997*). The rate of English-language literacy is not known, but is probably between two and three per cent (Crystal 1997).

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