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The Islamization of English Language in Higher Education in Bangladesh: Ideological Claim or Educational Reality?

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ABSTRACT

Background. The growing role of English as a global language has generated ongoing debates in many Muslim-majority societies regarding its relationship with religious identity, cultural values, and national education policies. In Bangladesh, concerns about the perceived "Islamization of English language education" have emerged within broader socio-political discussions.
Purpose. This study critically examines the claim of the "Islamization of English language education" in higher education in Bangladesh, exploring whether it represents a myth, a socio-political discourse, or an emerging educational reality.
Method. A qualitative research design was employed, drawing on in-depth semi-structured interviews with Islamic scholars, English language teachers, education analysts, and political leaders. In addition, relevant secondary sources such as policy documents, curriculum guidelines, and scholarly literature were analyzed thematically.
Results. The findings suggest that while there is limited institutional Islamization of English as a subject, ideological perceptions and cultural anxieties significantly shape discourse around English education. English teachers generally emphasize pedagogical neutrality, whereas scholars and political actors reflect divergent ideological interpretations. Education analysts highlight the tension between global competency demands and cultural-religious identity
Conclusion. The study contributes to existing knowledge by clarifying the distinction between perceived Islamization and actual curricular practice. It also offers insights for applied linguistics, education policy, and sociolinguistics. The findings provide useful guidance for policymakers to balance religious values with globalized English education demands in Bangladesh.

KEYWORDS

English language education, Higher education in Bangladesh, Ideology and curriculum

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INTRODUCTION

English language in higher education (HE) in Muslim majority societies is an increasingly contested terrain in which the issues of language, identity, epistemology and globalization correlate. It is especially relevant in the context of Bangladesh, where the country's linguistic context is unique from a postcolonial perspective, with Bangla as the main symbol of national

identity and cultural sovereignty, and English as a language of great importance for international communication, educational attainment, and socioeconomic mobility. In this context, scholars and policy makers have been debating whether English language education (ELE) is a process of Islamization (namely, the incorporation of Islamic values, ethics and epistemological principles) or still secular, nationalist and neoliberal.

As the pioneers of the intellectualization of Islamization, al-Attas and al-Faruqi promote the incorporation of contemporary knowledge in a worldview grounded in tawhid, in order to bridge the gap between religious and secular knowledge. This framework is not limited to theological issues but also has been expanded to curriculum development, pedagogy, and governance of institutions in Islamic HE (Utari et al., 2024; Hasim et al., 2025). However, Islamization is sometimes more symbolic than real, more in theory than in practice, and a more ideological than institutional process, as both its implementation and execution in some instances is limited by institutional, pedagogical and structural realities (Şahin, 2018; Akrim et al., 2022).

ELE in Bangladesh evolves through a series of layers of postcolonial state formation, linguistic nationalism, globalization and neoliberal reform. The current literature suggests that English Language Teaching (ELT) is becoming more and more discussed in terms of human capital, employability and world competitiveness, and not so much in terms of religion and epistemology (Hamid & Ali, 2023). Thus, English is mainly seen as a means of achieving economic progress and transnational migration as part of a general trend of educational marketization and globalization.

However, the public universities are still found to be deeply connected to Bangla-based linguistic nationalism, while the private universities are more and more becoming connected to internationalization agendas and the demand of the labour market (Rahman et al., 2020; Rahman & Hu, 2025). English has gained more and more importance as a symbolic and economic capital, but it has not created a systematic integration of Islamic epistemology in English curricula and pedagogy (Jahan & Hamid, 2019).

Islamic educational institutions (IEIs) like Qawmi and Alia Madarasas have increased their English teaching, but it is more due to pragmatic reasons of access to HE and job market (Golam & Kusakabe, 2020). As a result, there is an institutional disconnect and pedagogical underdevelopment between English and Islam.

In this context, the case of Islamization of English in Bangladeshi HE in this study is explored to see if it is an actuality in education or it is more of a discourse. The study gives new insights into the debate on language ideology in relation to competing discourses of secularism, neoliberalism and Islamic epistemology and into broader debates on curriculum change and the role of religion in contemporary higher education.

English language in the HE of Bangladesh is rooted in the postcolonial language policies, nationalism and inclusion in the global economy. Since the independence of 1971, Bangla has been institutionalized as the primary symbol of the national identity and cultural sovereignty while English still plays a strategic but secondary role in higher education, administration, diplomacy and international communication in the country. English education has been argued by contemporary scholarships to be influenced by the intertwining of linguistic nationalism and neoliberal globalization than any coherent religious or Islamic framework (Hamid & Ali, 2023). Therefore, the ELT discourse is largely placed within the debates on national development, globalization and social mobility.

In higher education, English is often seen as a type of linguistic capital that can improve employment opportunities, mobility and competitiveness in the academic world and access to

global knowledge economies. The utilitarian attitude that underlies the English language is making it a neutral language that is market oriented as opposed to culturally or religiously oriented as an epistemic system (Hamid, 2022). Consequently, the ideology of the ELEin Bangladesh is mostly secular and there is very little work to include religious epistemologies in the main stream curricula and pedagogical practices in the institutions.

A considerable number of literary works have recognised secularisation as the main direction of the ELT policies and curriculum development in Bangladesh. The scholars state that the geopolitical realities after 9/11 and the nation-building agendas at home has led to the economization, nationalistization and relative demarginalization of explicitly Islamic perspectives in English education (Hamid & Ali, 2023). An analysis of the curricula and textbooks also indicates that civic values like tolerance, national cohesion, citizenship and multicultural coexistence are highlighted in the English language materials. When religious references are incorporated, it is largely done using universal ethical frameworks as opposed to Islamic epistemological ones (Hamid, 2022). The results indicate that English education exists in a secular knowledge system where there is only a neutralisation or symbolic peripheralisation of religion.

Medium of instruction (MOI) policies have been the subject of a wide body of literature that shows there is much disparity between public and private HE institutions. Public universities tend to focus more on the use of Bangla as a token of linguistic nationalism and cultural identity, while the private ones have been increasingly opting for English medium instruction (EMI) due to the influence of globalization, internationalization agenda, and the market demand (Rahman et al., 2020; Rahman & Hu, 2025). This shift is closely linked with the process of elite identity formation, institutional prestige, and integration to global labour markets. In this context, English is more of a symbolic and economic capital, which is not used as a means to construct religious identities (Jahan & Hamid, 2019).

English is dealt with differently at Islamic educational institutions, specifically at Alia and Qawmi Madarasas. It has been shown that English has been slowly introduced into the curriculum of the madrassa over pragmatic purposes such as access to higher education, employment, and social-economic mobility (Golam & Kusakabe, 2020). Yet, instruction is frequently traditional, with a high dependence on grammar-translation and with limited communicative methods that are not adequately prepared for by teachers. Islamic values are sometimes embedded in classroom dialogues, but these are often informal and depend on individual teachers and not on a formal curriculum (Golam, 2020; Ruman, 2022).

Islamization of education, as expressed by scholars like al-Attas and al-Faruqi, is an idea that suggests the incorporation of Islam, as a worldview, into modern systems of knowledge that are based on tawhid. Today, the goal was extended to the design of the curriculum, pedagogy, and the governance of institutions to address the gap between religious and secular knowledge (Utari et al., 2024; Hasim et al., 2025). There are more systematic attempts to integrate Islamic values in higher education, including in English language teaching, in countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia, where it is done through integrated knowledge and faith-based pedagogical models (Munadi, 2020; Syuhda et al., 2024; Hasan, 2013; Jailani et al., 2020). However, implementation issues remain, especially the need to integrate religious beliefs with the requirements of the global communicative competence.

Overall, the current scholarship suggests that English in HE in Bangladesh is more secular and is more neoliberal and modernist than systematic Islamization. There are some scattered examples of integrating Islamic values but these are not well documented and well connected. There is, therefore, a major lack of understanding of the operationalisation of Islamic values, if any,

in English Teaching in the daily practice of English in various HE contexts. To fill this lacuna, the current study attempts to examine and investigate whether Islamization of English in Bangladeshi HE serves as an ideological discourse, as an aspiration policy agenda or as a real pedagogical reality.

This study takes an interdisciplinary approach in terms of theoretical framework; combining Language Ideology Theory, Critical Political Economy of English Education and Islamization of Knowledge Theory, the study aims to examine whether the Islamization of English in Bangladeshi HE is a substantive practice or more of an ideology.

Language Ideology Theory considers language as a socially and politically produced phenomenon that is related to power, identity, and culture and is not a neutral medium of communication (Woolard, 1992; Irvine, 2022). From this point of view, English in Bangladesh can be seen as serving multiple purposes and as a means to multiple ends: socioeconomic development, elite status, and as a carrier of moral and religious values, with competing ideologies rather than a single vision of education (Cavanaugh, 2020; Spitzmüller et al., 2021).

Complementing this view, Critical Political Economy of English Education places English in the context of the dynamics of globalization, neoliberal governance and market-driven educational reform (Pennycook, 2001; Canagarajah, 2013). English is used as a linguistic capital that is linked to employment, global mobility and institutional authority, so that there is more emphasis on the rationality of economics than on the rationality of religion or epistemology (Sah, 2020; Smith, 2021).

Lastly, al-Attas's Islamization of Knowledge Theory (1993) and al-Faruqi's (1982) offer a normative framework for assessing the attempt to apply an Islamic Epistemology to the modern knowledge systems using the lens of tawhid (Syafe'i & Riadi, 2026; Zainuddin et al., 2026). Together, the policy frameworks understand English education in Bangladesh as a space of contestation with its ideological underpinnings influenced by the neoliberal agenda, conflicting language ideologies, and ongoing debates about secular and Islamic knowledge.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research paradigm used in this study is an interpretivist paradigm that understands that the nature of social reality is multiple, dependent on context, and produced through meanings and interpretations as well as lived experiences. In this perspective, "Islamization of English" is not considered as an objective aspect of educational reform, but a discursively and ideologically manifested phenomenon that is constructed through institutional practices, policy discourses, and stakeholder constructions. The main purpose is thus to explore the meaning making of the various actors in the realm of ELE in Bangladeshi Higher Education (HE) in respect of religion, morality and ideology.

The approach used is qualitative with induction so the emerging of themes and conceptual categories are not predetermined from the empirical data. This is especially relevant, as Islamization of English education (IOEE) is yet an under-theorized and contested concept. To conceptualise the study as a qualitative case study on HE in Bangladesh, which is conceived as a bounded but multiple and complex set of socio-educational system in which multiple sets of ideological, institutional and policy logics are intersect. This allows for the in-depth exploration of the ways in which ELE is negotiated at various institutional locations and with different stakeholder groups.

To achieve methodological triangulation, data were obtained from two different but complementary sources – semi-structured in-depth interviews and secondary documentary analysis. The selection of semi-structured interviews was made as it would enable the systematic exploration

of the themes (in this case ideology, curriculum, Islamization, etc.) while still allowing flexibility to discuss sensitive issues that involved religion, identity, and educational policy. This approach is especially appropriate for the collection of subtle interpretations of ideas that are subject to dispute and for obtaining detailed narrative descriptions of actual lived experiences.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Peer-reviewed academic literature, government policy documents (such as Ministry of Education reports), national curriculum frameworks, university policy guidelines and relevant media publications were among the secondary data. These sources gave institutional, historical and policy level context to help compare official discourse to stakeholder interpretations. They were also used as a tool to triangulate the data from the interviews and to provide strength to the analytical findings.

The selection of participants followed a purposive sampling where the respondents had direct involvement in the ELE and/or educational policy discourse in Bangladesh. In some instances, snowball sampling was used in order to find other informers who knew more about the specific topic. Finally, the number of the participants was 20, and they were divided into four groups: Islamic scholars (n=5), English language teachers (n=5), education analysts (n=5), political leaders (n=5). This distribution was specially designed to achieve a multi-dimensional perspective of the research problem in religious, pedagogical, analytical and policy-making fields. The principle of theoretical saturation was used to guide the sample size whereby data collection was stopped once no additional substantively new themes or conceptual insights emerged.

Table 01. Participants' Profile

Participant Group	Coding ID	Gender	Age Range	Years of Experience	Position / Academic Rank
Islamic Scholar	IS1	Male	50–59	22	Professor of Islamic Studies
	IS2	Male	45–54	18	Associate Professor
	IS3	Female	30–39	15	Assistant Professor Islamic Studies
	IS4	Male	55–64	30	Senior Scholar / Khateeb
	IS5	Male	48–57	20	Muhaddith / Madrasa Scholar
English Teacher	ET1	Male	30–39	8	Lecturer (English)
	ET2	Female	28–37	6	Assistant Professor
	ET3	Male	35–44	12	Associate Professor
	ET4	Female	32–41	10	Lecturer
	ET5	Male	40–49	15	Associate Professor
Education Analyst	EA1	Male	45–54	20	Policy Researcher
	EA2	Female	38–47	14	Curriculum Specialist
	EA3	Male	50–59	25	Senior Education Consultant

The participants ranged from senior academics, scholars of the madrasa, university lecturers, curriculum experts, policy researchers to political actors. This diversity allowed the possibility of cross-comparisons between institutional positions and ideological orientations, which allowed for a more in-depth analysis.

The data collection method was face-to-face and online interview using Zoom and Google Meet as per the availability of the respondents. Interviews were about 45-90 minutes in length. All of the interviews were recorded with informed consent and were transcribed verbatim. Field notes also were kept to document observations, non-verbal cues and analytic impressions as they arose. The secondary sources were systematically collected from academic database (Google Scholar, JSTOR), institutional repository and official government sources and then were categorized based on their relevance to english education and Islamization discourse.

Thematic analysis, a systematic method of analysing data, was used to analyse the data, which involved familiarisation, coding, categorisation, and theme development. The transcripts were read multiple times to allow immersion into the data, and initial codes were developed to identify meaningful patterns in the data concerning ideology, curriculum practices and perceptions of Islamization. These codes were then clustered into more general analytical categories and were broken down further into higher order themes. Interview data was analysed and supplemented with secondary documents to allow contextual interpretation and cross-source analysis. Triangulation was used to cross-validate results from sources and groups of stakeholders to increase the interpretive range.

The study adopted the qualitative criteria to ensure trustworthiness. Member checking was used to enhance the credibility of the interpretations, for which selected participants reviewed and validated preliminary interpretations. Thick description of context, participants and institutional setting supported transferability. Reliability was established through the use of an audit trail of methodological choices such as coding processes and themes. To ensure that the data was grounded and that the researcher's bias was minimized, systematic use of participant quotations and cross validation with documentary records supported conformability.

Ethical issues were carefully adhered to during the research. All participants were fully informed about the goals of the study, voluntary participation, and the right to drop out of the study at any time without repercussions, and all signed informed consent forms. To guarantee anonymity, the data were anonymized using pseudonyms and de-identification. All data, both digital and transcribed were held securely in encrypted, password protected files, which were accessible to the researcher only.

The study was ethically approved by the Research Ethical Committee, Center for Research and Publication, International Islamic University of Chittagang, Bangladesh before collecting the data. This approval attested to the adherence to institutional and international ethical standards in undertaking this research.

Improvements in language skills, including English proficiency, are associated with various societal benefits, including better job prospects, higher wages, and increased competitiveness on the globe, which makes English proficiency a key element in the process of human capital development (Ali et al., 2023). In this context, the curricula of secondary English education and the reform of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) are largely argued in terms of their capacity to equip graduates to make better progress on the labour market, their earning potential, and to join the world of knowledge economies. English is also seen as cultural and economic capital in curriculum documents and policy narratives that serve to open pathways to higher education, to skilled jobs and

to upward social mobility (Chowdhury & Erling, 2020; Hoque et al., 2023; Ali et al., 2023; Ali et al., 2025; Milon & Ali, 2023).

The results from the interviews, which are very rich, reinforce this instrumental orientation. EA1 stated, "English in Bangladesh is not about religion or culture; it is about survival in the global job market", which underlines the notion that English is a means of economic survival. Similarly, PL2 commented that "our graduates can't compete internationally without English", and the policy discourse as it is generally understood, is about the link between English and national development and competitiveness.

But, there are challenges to this utilitarian interpretation from Islamic educational writers. IS1 stated that "the use of English is limited only to work and it will not be able to integrate with moral and spiritual education" which is concerned that if English is only used for the market, the moral and spiritual education that is connected with Islamic epistemology will be separated.

Meanwhile, ET2, EA3 and PL4 want to balance economic and moral goals. PL4 said that the integration of English teaching with Islamic moral and principles is possible and useful as "English mixed with Islamic morals and principles is not impossible". The view has its own qualities as it could be considered as a new hybrid discourse which sees Islamization not as an alternative strand to human-capital development but as a complementary ethical dimension.

The literatures reveal that the overall design of the English language curriculum in Bangladesh is largely grounded on a secular competency-based model, with a limited presence of Islamic epistemology and/or explicitly religious viewpoints. Higher education studies are mainly devoted to language policy and medium of instruction and not much to religious content. The public–private difference lies primarily in the instructional media used, Bangla or English, English being the case in the private universities, which are increasingly following English-dominant models for internationalization and employability concerns (Hamid et al., 2013; Rahman & Hu, 2025). At the same time, there is an indication from the available materials that there are no structured religiously oriented courses in English in the main stream universities, despite the fact that religion is important in students' personal identities (Aziz, 2024; Huq, 2021).

The secular trend is also found in the absence of formal policies which integrate Islamic ethical or theological principles into ELE. This is reflected in interview data. ET5 said, "There is no guideline which is related with English teaching and Islamization." It means that there is no institutional direction for Islamization in ELT. Therefore, it can be surmised that such integration of Islam is often informal and relies on individual teachers and does not form part of standard curricula.

But this was accompanied by a more nuanced view among the participants. ET4 noted that "even without Islamic framing, students can still develop good character through language learning", indicating that good character could be developed without religious integration.

The literature clearly shows that there is a public–private dichotomy in the use of MOI in HE in Bangladesh. The public universities usually adopt the Bangla dominant or bilingual policies that are based on Bangla nationalism and the legacy of the Language Movement of 1952. Often, however, classroom practices refer to translanguaging between Bangla and English to enhance understanding and interaction (Rahman et al., 2020; Karim et al., 2021). The private universities, on the other hand, have a tendency to have English-dominant MOI policies, focusing on internationalization, employability, and institutional prestige. This is a reflection of wider trends of neoliberalism in the use of English, yet in practice, translanguaging is prevalent as a way of bridging linguistic and cultural gaps and creating effective learning. (Sarker et al. 2021).

The findings of the interviews carried out in the present study support these ideologies. PL5 talked about a nationalist view, "Bangla is first, English is secondary", which significantly emphasizes the correlation between language policy and cultural sovereignty. However, an education analyst noted that in some cases, the over-emphasis on Bangla creates a problem of lack of exposure to geographical knowledge in the field of education which leads to lack of access to international knowledge and mobility.

A similar case was cited by ET4 that students would have better employment prospects as a result of English-medium education, which referred to the instrumental motivation for English-medium education. But IS01 raised doubts on such attitude and said that, "Private universities inculcate prestige in English but they do not consider cultural or ethical grounding, there is identity dilution and there is a lack of value based framing in neoliberal higher education.

In the context of modern education, Islamization of education in Bangladesh is believed to be the introduction of Islamic values, values of ethics and epistemological principles in modern educational framework, however, not replacing the western knowledge systems. It aims to create a balance between religious identity, moral formation, and professional relevance in the context of globalization and secular state structures in public and private universities, Islamic universities, and Alia and Qawmi madrasas (Ullah, 2023; Islam, 2023). Alia madarasas are state-run institutions in which Islamic education is integrated with regular education, whereas the Qawmi madarasas have more autonomy and are more focused on Islamic classical learning, albeit with growing emphasis on employability skills (Roy et al., 2020; Al-Hasani, 2023). In recent studies there has been a move away from the more ambitious "Islamization of knowledge" initiatives and towards more pragmatic efforts to bring Islamic ethics into the mainstream of academic and labour market requirements. This is seen in some institutions like IIUC and BIU where Islamic values are not only reflected through a huge transformation of curriculum but are also institutionalized (Ahsan et al., 2026; Islam, 2023).

This has a functional orientation, which was confirmed by the interview data. EA3 and ET1 termed Alia madrasas as structurally hybrid, but clarified that the formal Islamization has little impact on the teaching of English language. IS01 noted that Alia institutions are a blend between Islamic and modern education, but that "English itself is not Islamized." Likewise, teachers reported that use of Islamic stories, names, or moral examples is occasionally used, but rather depends on the individual teacher, and not curriculum requirements.

The same situation prevails in the Islamic universities. IS01, ET3 and EA2 mentioned that pupils are studying Islamic course of study along with the English course which is still mostly conventional. Although some teachers may include some aspects of adab, responsibility and communication in an Islamic manner, there is no systematic Islamized ELT framework or Islamized English textbooks.

Neutralisation of English and de-Islamisation of English in Bangladesh refers to an ongoing process of depicting English language teaching by secularism, national development and economic competitiveness instead of the Islamic identity (Golam & Kusakabe, 2020; Hamid, 2022). It is a process that has been informed by post-independence nation-building, the linguistic nationalism, and globalization, which has made English a powerful tool of employability and mobility for the citizens of the world. (Chowdhury & Kabir, 2014; Rahman & Pandian, 2018). While the secular orientation which specifies tolerance and national integration is strengthened in the National Education Policy 2010, there are both competing secular, nationalist, neoliberal, and religious forces that contest this path (Hamid and Ali, 2023; Hasan and Anoraga, 2025).

The findings from the interviews tend to confirm this interpretation and bring to the fore the various normative interpretations. There were multiple participants who highlighted that the English curriculum is "neutral" and therefore is inclusive in its approach. EA1 said, “The education curriculum is designed in a neutral way in Bangladesh as it is intended for the students from different background and must follow the national education policy to achieve those goals.” Similarly, an English teacher ET3 noted, “There is no rule or guideline for English teaching to include Islamic values, the focus is on communication skills and global relevance.” Some respondents appreciated the neutrality while others stated that it could actually have a negative impact on Islamic views and a decrease in focus on moral and spiritual aspects of education. Despite this, however, participants recognized that religious and cultural aspects still show up in a more informal way in the classroom through the values held by teachers, and through the social contexts that influence these values.

Malaysia and Indonesia are well known examples of successful implementations of higher education Islamization, not only in their own native language but also in English language education. The integrated knowledge paradigm is the one that can be found most extensively in Indonesia, specifically within Islamic State Universities (UINs), where integrated efforts have been carried out to incorporate Islamic values and epistemology into the curriculum, pedagogy, evaluation, and teaching of the English language (Munadi, 2020; Syuhda et al., 2024; Irwansyah, 2018). Malaysia has taken a similar stance by institutions like IIUM, where English is used as a global academic language that is bound within Islamic moral framework. But Malaysian scholarship does not emphasize on the classroom level (Idris and Badaruddin, 2006; Hasan, 2013, 2016; Ilias et al., 2022).

Interviewed results demonstrate that the knowledge of those institutional models is limited amongst the Bangladeshi participants. There is a general discussion about Islamization in the world of education but teachers are not aware of how Islamization is working in Malaysia and Indonesia,” said EA01. However, participants generally had a positive attitude towards the feasibility and transferability of IOEE although there is a lack of knowledge about Islamization. IS01 suggested that the experiences of Malaysia and Indonesia showed that English could be taught in the Islamic worldview and one English teacher proposed that Bangladesh could follow such experiences without giving up the quality of teaching and learning of English.

The participants also highlighted the need for policy support and institutions' commitment. PL01 and PL04 remarked that in case the English language were to be formally Islamized by such government bodies as the Ministry of Education or the UGC, then the universities may adopt a structured Islamization of the language. Meanwhile, most respondents recognized that there is no coordination in place for the country. No systematic work has been done in Islamization of the English curriculum in neither public universities nor private universities as one teacher said.

The literature reveals a great lack of conceptual clarity in the Islamization of English learning in Bangladesh especially in the definition, operationalization in the curriculum and implementation in classroom. While numerous teachers, policymakers, and scholars have voiced their interest in implementing Islamic values in English language teaching, there is still a lack of consensus about what is exactly involved in the process of integrating Islamic values into ELE in terms of lesson planning, material development, assessment, and pedagogical planning (Ali et al., 2026; Safitri et al., 2023).

This uncertainty in thinking is evident in stakeholder stories. The pragmatic and ad hoc interpretation of the Islamicization are more common among the English teachers. One (ET2) said, “Sometimes, in class we use Islamic examples or moral stories but there is not any official concept

or training about the 'Islamization' of English." Likewise, EA4 noted that "Islamization policy of English is not clearly defined in the policy documents and therefore, each institution interprets it differently or avoids Islamization of English at all." These accounts suggest a continuing policy–practice disconnect, with poor institutional leadership and individual teacher practices.

A lack of awareness and even skepticism about Islamization among academics was also mentioned by some of the participants. ET01 commented that, "If I speak about Islamization of English, my colleagues mock it and laugh at me. They don't know anything about Islamization of English." This underlines the conceptual uncertainty of the discourse but also the marginalization of the discourse in the mainstream professions.

On the other hand, Islamic scholars are more inclined towards an epistemological approach. IS1 argued "Islamization should refer to perspectives of knowledge in line with Islam and not just make religious examples to know English. However, even within the realm of scholars, there is no agreement on the extent of Islamization of the English language or its contextualization or whether it should be left as a secular language and its ethics added.

The uncertainty is compounded by the actions of policy actors. PL2 pointed out "Islamization is talked about in policy discussion, but there is no clear framework for implementation in English curriculum." This is an indication of the lack of institutional standardization and symbolic over operational discourse.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that ELE in Bangladeshi HE is predominantly structured by a secular–neoliberal rationality, with only limited and fragmented forms of Islamic or religious inflection. Triangulation of literature and interview data consistently indicates that English is constructed primarily as a utilitarian, globally oriented resource linked to employability, human capital formation, and institutional competitiveness rather than a systematically Islamized educational field (Hamid, 2022; Hamid & Ali, 2023).

Policy and curriculum evidence further shows that English education is largely framed through secular, communicative, and civic orientations, with minimal incorporation of Islamic epistemology. Institutional differences reinforce this pattern: public universities reflect Bangla-centered nationalist orientations, while private universities emphasize English-medium instruction shaped by neoliberal logics of internationalization and market competitiveness (Rahman et al., 2020; Rahman & Hu, 2025). In both settings, English is primarily associated with economic mobility and symbolic capital rather than religious identity formation.

Islamic educational institutions introduce only partial variation. Alia madrasas maintain a hybrid structure, yet English remains pedagogically conventional and largely secular. Similarly, in Islamic universities such as IIUC and BIU, Islamization is more visible at the institutional ethos level than within English curricula, where integration of Islamic values is informal, inconsistent, and teacher-dependent.

Interview findings strongly support these conclusions. Participants frequently reported that Islamization of English is conceptually unclear, weakly institutionalized, or absent from formal policy frameworks. While Islamic scholars express normative aspirations for integrating an Islamic worldview, teachers and education analysts emphasize the absence of structured curricular guidance. Where Islamic elements appear, they are mainly ad hoc pedagogical practices rather than standardized instructional models.

Overall, the study concludes that Islamization of English in Bangladesh is best understood as a discursive and inspirational construct rather than an institutionalized educational reality,

characterized by the coexistence of dominant secular–neoliberal structures and localized, uneven, and uncoordinated moral–religious adaptations.

DECLARATION OF AI AND AI ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS

During the preparation of this work the author(s) used Grammarly and Consensus in order to develop literature review and English grammar. After using this tool/service, the authors reviewed, paraphrased and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the content of the publication.

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AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing.
Author 2: Conceptualization; Data curation; In-vestigation; Writing - original draft.
Author 3: Data curation; Investigation.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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