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Tauquir Ahmed's *Fagun Haway*: Linguistic Imperialism of Urdu over Bangla

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Abstract: This paper is a qualitative study to show the significance of a contemporary Bangladeshi film *Fagun Haway* in understanding the history of language movement in 1952. Using the lens of Linguistic Imperialism (2024), an extension of a theory (1992) of Robert Phillipson, it examines how language is used as a mechanism of oppression in dominating a nation and as a form of resistance in breaking the structure of domination. In his article Linguistic Imperialism (2024), Phillipson mentions eleven processes through which a nation is linguistically, in the long run, economically, politically and culturally dominated. These eleven processes are used to dominate the Bengali-speaking people by imposing Urdu on them. The implementation of these processes is very realistically portrayed in the film *Fagun Haway*. This study is significant because it shows how to analyze the process of linguistic imperialism in any given country where a second or a foreign language is learnt. Using a thematic analysis, this study explores the cinematic narrative of a historical language movement of 1952 that reflects the persistence of colonial power structures in postcolonial governance.

Keywords: Linguistic Imperialism; language movement; *Fagun Haway*.

Introduction

Linguistic imperialism is a term theorized by Robert Phillipson in his book *Linguistic Imperialism* (1992) that refers to the imposition of a dominant language over a marginalized or colonized population. Getting rid of direct British colonialism, Bangladesh (East Pakistan at that time) experienced a neocolonialism of West Pakistan from the partition in 1947 to the Liberation War in 1971. Urdu was imposed on Bengali-speaking people in the form of linguistic imperialism.

Numerous scholars, writers, and filmmakers continue to draw inspiration from historical movements as a central motif in their works. This paper examines the film *Fagun Haway* (In Spring Breeze, 2019) by Tauquir Ahmed, a blend of historical and film genres. It portrays the history of the language movement between 1948 and 1952. The film is inspired by Tito Rahman's short story *Bou Kotha Kou*, which dramatizes the events leading up to the 1952 Language Movement, offering a vivid portrayal of how language can serve as both a tool of oppression and a means of resistance. Urdu was the mother tongue of only 2.3 percent East Pakistanis (Azher et. al., 2018), and the imposition of it as the sole language of Pakistan was seen as a form of linguistic and cultural domination. This imposition can be described through the lens of Postcolonialism, which explores the long-lasting effects of colonialism on colonized societies in the form of neocolonialism.

"Linguistic imperialism is a reality in many contexts worldwide" (Phillipson, 2024, p. 2). It is a pervasive legacy of colonial rule, continues to shape power structures and cultural identities in postcolonial societies. *Fagun Haway* offers a unique dramatization of persistence in postcolonial governance. This study is significant because it bridges historical and



contemporary perspectives, highlighting the enduring struggle against linguistic subjugation. By critically analyzing the cinematic representation of the Bengali Language Movement, the study contributes to the broader discourse on linguistic politics and postcolonial identity formation. Moreover, it emphasizes the inclusive language policies that identify the cultural and political significance of all linguistic communities.

There are extensive studies on linguistic imperialism, postcolonialism and the Bengali Language movement. But there remains a lack of focused research on how contemporary visual media, such as cinema, portray linguistic and cultural dominance and resistance. The previous studies have explored linguistic imperialism through historical and theoretical perspectives referencing different pieces of literature and books, but there is limited scholarly engagement with its representation in modern Bangladeshi cinema. *Fagun Haway* presents a unique dramatization of linguistic imperialism, making it a valuable piece for postcolonial analysis. There is no academic work analyzing the film *Fagun Haway* through the lens of linguistic imperialism. Therefore, this study aims to explore how language functions as an instrument of oppression as well as a means of resistance in the film *Fagun Haway*.

Linguistic Imperialism

It was common for colonists to impose their language on the people whom they subjugated. They prohibited the locals from using their mother tongues. In several instances, local languages were methodically forbidden by colonists, which is termed as 'Linguistic Imperialism' by Robert Phillipson (1992). According to Phillipson, language imperialism elevates the language of the prevailing group to a higher status and is required for social and political progress, demoting other languages to a lower status. "Phillipson (1992) clarified that the development of linguistic imperialism went through three stages: (1) imposing the colonizer's power and language; (2) training a group of local elites and privileged classes who serve the benefit of the colonists; and (3) ideological persuasion using media and technology" (Zeng, 2023, p.1).

Phillipson (1992) argues that imposition of language is institutionalized through education systems, governance, and media, reinforcing the superior status of the dominant language while devaluing others. Linguistic imperialism operates through ideological and structural mechanisms. Phillipson critiques the assumption that the dominance of a particular language is natural or inevitable, instead framing it as a deliberate strategy rooted in power dynamics and colonial legacies. Linguistic imperialism first came into existence through colonization and then through economic, social, and cultural domination. Like other types of imperialism, English language imperialism threatened the survival and advancement of colonial native and indigenous languages as it accompanied the hegemony and growth of the United Kingdom and the United States. Minority languages lose their value and usage, and they are displaced (Shannon, 1995).

Linguistic imperialism provides a framework for understanding the historical and contemporary dynamics of language use in postcolonial societies like Bangladesh, where linguistic tensions and hierarchies have significantly influenced the nation's identity and development. The linguistic history of Bangladesh offers a compelling case study for Phillipson's framework. The imposition of Urdu as the state language of Pakistan after the 1947 partition exemplifies linguistic imperialism. Urdu, spoken predominantly in West Pakistan, was elevated as the national language, disregarding the linguistic and cultural identity of the Bengali-speaking majority in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). This policy not only marginalized Bengalis but also ignited the Language Movement, a pivotal struggle against linguistic imperialism and cultural hegemony (Rahman, 2020).

Although many colonized countries have gained political independence, the values and worldviews of the colonized are still controlled by colonial ideologies. In the Bangladeshi context, this critique resonates with the historical imposition of Urdu. This study delves into the movie *Fagun Haway* (In Spring Breeze, 2019) to examine the portrayal of linguistic imperialism of Urdu as a neocolonialist. The British colonial agenda of using language to subjugate, oppress, and divide local communities was reflected in the Pakistani state's imposition of Urdu as the only official language. The state uses language as a means of control by attempting to erase the cultural distinctiveness of the Bengali people, in the same way that the British had done by prioritizing English over local languages in colonial India. The film portrays the Bengali people's resistance to language imposition as a political, social, and emotional response to a larger battle against the legacy of colonialism.

Colonizers colonize not only the land and resources but also the minds of people (Fanon, 1952/1967). Devaluing their own culture, colonized people sometimes internalize the language and culture of the colonizers and create an inferior and fractured sense of identity. Memmi (1957/1965) discusses this prolonged colonial mindset as the ambivalence of the colonized, noticeable in simultaneous hatred and admiration for the colonizers. This colonial mindset needs to be replaced

with the mental and cultural dimension of resistance. This resistance requires the abolition of the superiority complex from the colonizers' minds and the inferiority complex from the colonized people's minds.

Phillipson (1992, 2009), in Phillipson (2024), identifies eleven features of linguistic imperialism:

- Linguistic imperialism interlocks with a *structure of imperialism* in culture, education, the media, communication, the economy, politics, and military activities.
- It is about *exploitation*, injustice, inequality, and hierarchy that privileges those able to use the dominant language.
- It is *structural*: more material resources and infrastructure are accorded to the dominant language than to others.
- It is *ideological*: beliefs, attitudes, and imagery glorify the dominant language, stigmatize others, and rationalize the linguistic hierarchy.
- The dominance is *hegemonic*, it is internalized and naturalized as being “normal.”
- This entails *unequal rights* for speakers of different languages.
- When the learning of an imperial language occurs at the expense of other languages, such educational policies are *subtractive*.
- It is a form of *linguicism*, a favoring of one language over others in ways that parallel societal structuring through racism, sexism, and class.
- Linguistic imperialism can be imposed by *force* or through a combination of *push and pull* factors.
- The evidence for or against linguistic imperialism can be investigated *empirically*.
- It is invariably *contested and resisted*. (p.1)

This study analyzes how *Fagun Haway* portrays these eleven elements of the historic linguistic imperialism of Urdu over Bengali. It depicts the process of neo-colonization, hegemony, ambivalence, and resistance in the film, which makes it a valuable piece of historical record.

Research Question

How does *Fagun Haway* depict the imposition of Urdu over Bangla as a tool of linguistic imperialism?

Research method

A qualitative method is applied to answer the research question. The qualitative method is suitable for this research as it focuses on textual and thematic analysis, allowing for an in-depth exploration of how language, power, and identity are depicted in the film *Fagun Haway*. The study is analyzed with both primary and secondary resources. For primary resources, Tauquir Ahmed's film *Fagun Haway* has been keenly observed. In addition, several journals, books, articles, research papers, and criticisms on linguistic imperialism are taken as secondary resources. Through textual analysis, this study identifies themes in the film related to linguistic imperialism, oppression, cultural resistance, and identity politics. It also examines character interaction, dialogues, and symbolism that reinforce imperialism and resistance.

Discussion

The data analysis is done on three stages. At first, Phillipson's (2024) idea of the processes of linguistic imperialism is described; secondly, how Phillipson's idea is assimilated in the historical Language Movement of 1952 is described; lastly, how Phillipson's idea is accommodated in the film *Fagun Haway* is analyzed.

The film *Fagun Haway* (*In Spring Breeze*, 2019) shows the eleven processes of linguistic imperialism put forward by Phillipson (2024). It is composed of several scenes that take place in the early 1950s and show how Bengali identity perspectives intertwine with the linguistic awareness that is a part of Bengali nationalism. The director's initial effort to instill a sense of Bengali linguistic awareness and nationalism in the minds of the audience is represented in a historical

reference in the prelude of the film.

In 1947, the Indian subcontinent was divided based on religion. And Bangladesh became a part of Pakistan. The next 24 years were an era of deprivation and suppression. The people of Bangladesh, with a strong cultural heritage and history, were pressured to change their culture and language. On the 27th January 1952, the Pakistan government again declared that Urdu shall be the only official language of Pakistan. (Ahmed, 2019, 0:35)

The story of *Fagun Haway* (In Spring Breeze, 2019) centers on Jamshed Khan (Yashpal Sharma), a Pakistani police officer who gets a punishment posting to Chandranagar, an outlying part of Khulna district, which is far away from the capital city, Dhaka. He, who considers himself the purest Pakistani, is portrayed in the story as a metaphor of the entire West Pakistani dictatorship. Being excessively communal, he is intolerant of the Bengali language and culture. Many dialogues or cinematic statements are used throughout the movie to convey this. He is the character who serves as the main tool of linguistic imperialism. To please the Pakistani government and to escape his punishment posting, he works closely with the authority and enforces Urdu over Bangla. Not only his language, his attire, appearance, food habits, daily activities, etc. symbolize Pakistani culture. His denial of eating Bengali food, saying, “No fish and rice. No Bengali food”, also demonstrates his hatred towards the Bengali culture and tradition (Ahmed, 2019, 15:40). He aims to replace Bangla and spread Urdu.

The residents of Chandranagar seem to be afraid of Jamshed. Director Tauquir Ahmed depicts the political struggle and the narrative of the Bengali people, who were brutally tortured and denied the basic right to freedom of expression under the dictatorship in West Pakistan, via the figure of the character, Jamshed. He views the language and culture of Bengal as his rival. He chastises his subordinate police officers for not meeting him at the police station when he arrives. Jamshed bluntly states, “You Bengalis are liars” (Ahmed, 2019, 13:00). Jamshed, therefore, sees the Bengali people as inferior to the West Pakistani people from the beginning of the story.

The male lead of the film is Nasir (Siam Ahmed), a Dhaka University student of History Department, and the female lead is Dipti (Nusrat Imrose Tisha), a Hindu girl who attends the Dhaka Medical College. These two characters, along with their theater group, act as a force of resistance against Urdu’s imperialism. Their Bengali attire, devotion to the Bengali language, and involvement in Bengali drama serve as acts of resistance against Jamshed’s linguistic imperialism.

The representation of eleven elements of linguistic imperialism in *Fagun Haway* is described below:

i. *Structure of imperialism*

“Linguistic imperialism interlocks with a *structure of imperialism* in culture, education, the media, communication, the economy, politics, and military activities” (Phillipson, 2024, p. 1). Thus, linguistic imperialism is not an isolated phenomenon; rather, it is intertwined with other broader structures of society that are aligned with the values and worldview of the dominant group, often sacrificing the indigenous culture (Phillipson, 1992).

A structure of linguistic imperialism is evident in the history of Bangladesh. The British left Indian subcontinent by making a partition based on religion. Through the partition, a Muslim state, Pakistan, was created which was comprised of two geographically, linguistically and culturally distinct regions- West Pakistan (current Pakistan) and East Pakistan (current Bangladesh). Although East Pakistan had a larger population, political power was concentrated in West Pakistan (Uddin, 2025). “The Constituent Assembly of Pakistan was in session at Karachi- then the capital of Pakistan-from 23 February 1948. It was proposed that the members would have to speak either in Urdu or in English at the Assembly” (Helal, 2021, para 3). On 21 March, 1948, When Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, declared that only Urdu would be the state language of Pakistan, “Bengalis felt their language, culture, and identity were under threat” (Uddin, 2025, Para 2).

The domination of Urdu is portrayed in *Fagun Haway*. Jamshed uses Urdu with everyone in the police station. He exerts his authority by demeaning Bengali, insisting on Urdu as the only legitimate language: “The language of this resident will be the Holy Urdu. Nobody should speak Bengali; they should only speak Urdu. Use Urdu everywhere: at police stations, at homes, at shops. Use Urdu while eating, Urdu while drinking, and Urdu, Urdu, and Urdu” (Ahmed, 2019, 28:54).

The dominant language carries the literature, values, beliefs, and norms of the powerful group which marginalizes the local culture. Linguistic imperialism is reflected in the incident when Jamshed stops staging an anti-colonial drama prepared by a local theater group. Moreover, he tells to stage an Urdu drama (Ahmed, 2019, 1:35:53). He stops a Baul singing a Bengali folk song of Lalou. Jamshed lifts his hand on the Baul and rebukes him with harsh Urdu reprimand. When Nasir opposes Jamshed's inappropriate behavior, Jamshed shows power over Bengali-speaking natives and asks, "Do you know who I am?" (Ahmed, 2019, 4:39), and uses "Shut up" repeatedly. Thus, Jamshed suppresses Baul's voice, and when Nasir requests Baul to sing a song again, the subaltern voice rejects, "The song cannot be sung now" (Ahmed, 2019, 0:5:01).

Linguistic imperialism in education is depicted in *Fagun Haway*. The chief officer of Police, Jamshed, opens a non-formal school for teaching Urdu, appoints Mawlana as a teacher and forces everyone to join the class (Ahmed, 2019, 42:43).

The dominant language is used in official documents, government announcements and communication. In the film *Fagun Haway*, the police officer Jamshed replaces the Bengali nameplate of the police station with an Urdu nameplate. He communicates with the center, explaining the necessity of declaring Urdu as the state language. When he hears the declaration of Urdu as the state language, he celebrates the news with sweets (Ahmed, 2019, 1:12:50).

Ngugi wa Thiong'O (1986) finds that the imperial power needs military governance to implement the imperial language framework. This military governance appoints local elites and administrators as intermediaries to work as translators, officers and clerks to establish command and authority. In *Fagun Haway*, police officer Jamshed appoints Mawlana, a local religious leader and Muslim scholar, who teaches Urdu to local people.

Jamshed exercises his power with others; for example, he unnecessarily brings an old doctor to his house for his treatment at midnight and tells the doctor that the doctor has to comply with his order as he is the chief officer of that police station (Ahmed, 2019, 22:38). He exploits this power structure through out the film. Even, he orders to shoot the rebels who demand the right of Bengali (Ahmed, 2019, 1:42:10).

ii. *Exploitation*

About linguistic imperialism Phillipson (2024) tells, "It is about *exploitation*, injustice, inequality, and hierarchy that privileges those able to use the dominant language" (p.1). Thus, exploiting a power structure is a component of linguistic imperialism.

Uddin (2025) describes the exploitation of West Pakistan, "The significance of the Language Movement extended beyond linguistic recognition. It exposed the structural inequalities between East and West Pakistan, highlighting the political and economic disparities that fueled discontent among Bengalis" (Uddin, 2025, para 4). In East Pakistan, Urdu was the mother tongue of only 2.3 percent and Bengali was the language used by the majority, 54 percent of the people (Azher et. al., 2018). However, West Pakistan forced East Pakistan to accept Urdu as the official language. In 1952 the language movement reached its peak. Not only the political condition but also the economic condition deteriorated. "There was a growing sense of deprivation and exploitation in East Pakistan and a realisation that a new form of colonialism had replaced British imperialism. Under these circumstances, the Language Movement got a new momentum in 1952" (Helal, 2021, para 7).

In the movie *Fagun Haway*, Jamshed is a symbol of exploitation and injustice. Throughout the movie, he relentlessly subjugates the Bengalis in various ways. He rapes a dumb and deaf Bengali girl who works as a helping hand at his house (Ahmed, 2019, 49:45). He exploits power and claims extra privileges rebuking a poor cart driver for asking fare from him (Ahmed, 2019, 9:31), shouting at other police officers and calling them liars for not receiving him from station although they had not been informed (Ahmed, 2019, 12:30), and berating a low-wage worker for asking payment from him for carrying his baggage (Ahmed, 2019, 12:48). He asks bribe from a poor villager who comes to police station to case a file (Ahmed, 2019, 27:00).

Exploiting and marginalizing the speakers of other languages, speakers of the dominant language enjoy socioeconomic mobility (Pennycook, 1994). In this film, Ajmat, a rich businessman, his younger brother (Obayed), and the Mawlana are privileged for knowing the dominant language 'Urdu'. From Jamshed, Ajmat gets unlawful support in

transporting smuggled goods; moreover, he pays bribes to Jamshed to continue his illegal business. The Mawlana works as a translator and teacher who exerts power and enjoys the best food from a local restaurant.

An offensive instance of exploitation is shown through the use of derogatory slang words by Jamshed. He uses these words very frequently for the Bengali-speaking people. For example, he repeatedly uses the word “Bettomiz” (means ill-mannered) seven times in the movie, even directing it once at a senior old doctor (Ahmed, 2019, 2:14, 4:29, 9:34, 14:55, 29:28, 41:08, 57:31). He uses another derogatory slang “Ullu ka pattha” (means ‘idiot’) (Ahmed, 2019, 1:45:22). Moreover, he uses very offensive and vulgar terms, e.g. “Motherc**d” means “mother f***er” (Ahmed, 2019, 1:11:02), “Bainc**d” means “sister-f***er” five times at a time (Ahmed, 2019, 1:11:49).

In order to add a stylistic element to the story, Ahmed (2019) utilizes a bird, *Bou Kotha Kou* (Dear wife, talk to me) as a metaphor to symbolize the exploitation. The Bengali name *Bou Kotha Kou* (dear wife, talk to me) is very similar to the tone of the bird’s chirping. Recognizing the significance of the bird’s name, Jamshed tries to shoot the bird but fails. Then he engages it with the help of others. Subsequently, Jamshed attempts to teach the incarcerated bird Urdu by playing Urdu songs on the radio (Ahmed, 2019, 52:58) and by teaching Urdu words (Ahmed, 2019, 59:08). This symbolism shows a grave injustice not only to the language Bengali but also to the species speaking it.

iii. *Unequal material structure*

Phillipson (2024) identifies, “It is *structural*: more material resources and infrastructure are accorded to the dominant language than to others” (p. 1). Sometimes, schools and educational institutions serving the dominant language get better funding or advanced facilities (Garcia & Wei, 2021). The Mawlana gets a scope to teach Urdu to Bengali people at the police station compound (Ahmed, 2019, 42:33) and enjoys extra privileges. Moreover, he proudly claims that the police officer Jamshed likes and admires him more than others. This type of linguistic imperialism, through systematic allocation, disseminates social and cultural domination.

iv. *Ideology of linguistic hierarchy*

“It is *ideological*: beliefs, attitudes, and imagery glorify the dominant language, stigmatize others, and rationalize the linguistic hierarchy” (Phillipson, 2024, p. 1). Ideologies for linguistic imperialism portray the dominant language as superior and the dominated language as backdated and impractical. These ideologies force the marginalized group to accept the dominant as inevitable and desirable (Tupas & Rubby, 2023).

Helal (2021) finds that in 1948, Bangla was omitted from the language of the Constituent Assembly, Pakistani coins and stamps, and West Pakistan forced the use of only Urdu in the recruitment tests for the navy. In 1952, “the government also proposed that Bangla be written in Arabic script” (Helal, 2021, para 9). On 27th January, the prime minister, Khaja Nazimuddin, told that the attempt to write Bengali in Arabic alphabets is found successful in 21 centers, and people are voluntarily opening more centers like these (Ahad, 2017).

In *Fagun Haway*, Jamshed uses imagery to establish the superiority of the dominant language. He names the four strongest roosters on his farm after the names of four patrons of Urdu “Jinnah, Liakat, Najimuddin and Iqbal” (Ahmed, 2019, 24:18). He instructs his subordinates not to slaughter these roosters rather to look after them with great care. Thus, he symbolizes Urdu as the language of power and strength.

Urdu is placed in the superordinate position when Mawlana, a Bengali collaborator of linguistic imperialism, tells a local tea stall owner to transfer the Bengali name of the stall (which was given after the owner’s mother’s name) to an Urdu name (Ahmed, 2019, 1:06:28).

v. *Hegemony*

“The dominance is *hegemonic*, it is internalized and naturalized as being ‘normal’” (Phillipson, 2024, p. 1). Through hegemony, the linguistic hierarchy is internalized by both the dominant and the marginalized group. This internalization is reinforced by the discourses in media, schools, and administration that represent the dominant language as a medium of social mobility (Canagarajah, 2020) and the marginalized group starts to shift towards the dominant language. In the

context of imperialism, a group of local people collaborate with the imperialists. With the help of these people imperialists implement the law on imperialism.

Phillipson's (2024) idea of hegemony is found in the context of language movement. Tarkabagish (2017) finds that there was a group of East Pakistanis who supported Urdu as the state language. He also finds that Urdu-speaking Bengalis did not express opinion openly. He adds, "When we ask them they tell that they support Bangla as the state language, but when ministers and politicians ask them they tell that they want to see Urdu as the state language. In this way, a debate was started among the members of the East Bengal Legislative Assembly" (p. 23).

In *Fagun Haway*, Mawlana, Ajmat, Obayed and some police officers support imperialism and become a tool for hegemony described by Phillipson. The Moulana in *Fagun Haway* uses Urdu not only with Pakistanis but also with his countrymen. Some Bengali police officers also use Urdu with their countrymen (Ahmed, 2019, 45:25).

Some local people help Jamshed to stop an anti-colonial drama that a local theater group was going to stage (Ahmed, 2019, 1:58:01). In a Gramscian sense of hegemony, some local people accept and allow the linguistic imperialism of Jamshed. Moreover, some police officers who are local collaborators of linguistic imperialism enjoy extra privileges and power. Two of them show power and force a doctor to obey their order (Ahmed, 2019, 21:56).

vi. *Unequal rights*

Phillipson (2024) defines linguistic imperialism, "This entails *unequal rights* for speakers of different languages" (p. 1). This linguistic inequality towards the speakers of other languages restricts their right to education and employment.

Uddin (2025) identifies the extension of unequal rights in the context of language movement, "The significance of the Language Movement extended beyond linguistic recognition. It exposed the structural inequalities between East and West Pakistan, highlighting the political and economic disparities that fueled discontent among Bengalis" (para 4). He again tells, "The deeper issues of political domination and economic exploitation remained unresolved. Over the next decade, dissatisfaction grew as the central government continued to marginalize East Pakistan in governance, economic policies, and military appointments" (para 4).

In the film *Fagun Haway*, a local collaborator of the imperialists and a businessman, Ajmat, and his brother (Obayed) enjoy unlawful support from Jamshed for running a smuggling business (Ahmed, 2019, 1:44:15). Ajmat insults a doctor and tries to forcefully occupy his property (Ahmed, 2019, 1:41:00). Also, Jamshed rudely rebukes his cook for not knowing Urdu (Ahmed, 2019, 14:44) and criticizes the other policemen for appointing this cook who does not know Urdu.

Unequal rights restrict the social mobility of the marginalized group as well as erase the linguistic and cultural diversity. The character, Baul (a Bengali folk singer), while singing Bengali folk songs, is silenced twice by Jamshed (Ahmed, 2019, 4:17 & 1:0:25). Not only that, by asking him to sing a song in Urdu (Ahmed, 2019, 59:47), Jamshed dominates and marginalizes Bengali language and culture.

vii. *Subtractive educational policy*

The impact of linguistic imperialism is identified by Phillipson (2024), "When the learning of an imperial language occurs at the expense of other languages, such educational policies are *subtractive*" (p. 1). Learning the dominant language does not remain an additive factor rather becomes a forced choice, which marginalizes the local language.

Phillipson's idea of subtractive education policy is found when West Pakistan was desperate to promote Urdu in education. From 1948 to 1952, "Serious preparation was being taken in various forums of the central government of Pakistan under the initiative of Fazlur Rahman, the central education minister, to make Urdu the only state language of Pakistan" (Helal, 2021). Kashem (2017) talks about a report published by the government specialist committee named 'Purbobongo Sikkha Punorgothon Committee' (East-Bengal Education Restructure Committee) published on 29 January 1951, "There is no attempt to make Bangla the medium of instruction till class 1... Later in the time of 'Juktofront', there was no effort to use Bangla as medium of instruction in higher education and as official language in communication" (pp. 41-42). He also finds, "To establish Urdu as the official language and medium of instruction at every level of education,

the local East Pakistan government of that time got millions of money from the central government to write textbooks in Urdu and to take some constructive initiative” (p. 42).

Jamshed in *Fagun Haway* compels the people of Chandranagar to learn Urdu which, according to Phillipson, subtracts Bangla. Also, he forces the passersby to join the language class (44:8 & 59:25).

viii. *Linguicism*

Linguistic imperialism intersects with the other forms of structural inequality. “It is a form of *linguicism*, a favoring of one language over others in ways that parallel societal structuring through racism, sexism, and class” (Phillipson, 2024, p. 1). Jamshed advocates racism and communalism so vehemently that he punishes the Baul (a folk singer) for singing a song against communalism (Ahmed, 2019, 1:01:10). For being too conservative, inflexible, and dominant, he thinks that his language, race, and religion are the best. To him, any demand for equality means devaluing his own race and identity. Bursting into a rage he gives a cruel and humiliating punishment to the Baul. He forcibly cuts the Baul’s hair and smears his face with paint. Further, he parades the Baul through the village and makes him a subject of public ridicule. As a result, the Baul leaves the country forever.

ix. *Push and pull factor*

Language policy is backed by legal mandate. “Linguistic imperialism can be imposed by *force* or through a combination of *push and pull* factors” (Phillipson, 2024, p. 1). To ensure a legal mandate, in *Fagun Haway*, Jamshed writes a letter to the Prime Minister of Pakistan requesting a declaration of Urdu as the state language of Pakistan (Ahmed, 2019, 37:05). He celebrates when it is declared. In linguistic imperialism, the push factors marginalize the local languages by denying support and stigmatizing their speakers; on the other hand, the pull factors enhance the prestige and economic value of the dominant language.

x. *Empirical investigation*

As it requires a mandate, according to Phillipson (2024), “The evidence for or against linguistic imperialism can be investigated *empirically*” (p. 1). Policy documents, historical records, media communication, curriculum, etc. can be investigated to know about it. There is a huge amount of fictional and nonfictional writings on the Language Movement of 1952. In the film *Fagun Haway*, the depiction of the declaration of Urdu as the state language by the Prime Minister is a mandate and a policy document (Ahmed, 2019, 1:12:27). Not only the nameplate of the police station (Ahmed, 2019, 41:26), but also all other nameplates are shifted to Urdu translation (Ahmed, 2019, 45:56). The linguistic imperialism of Urdu can be investigated using these documents.

xi. *Resistance*

About linguistic imperialism Phillipson (2024) says, “It is invariably *contested and resisted*” (p. 1). Marginalized communities often mobilize different movements to protect their languages. The resistance through protest can be for official recognition, against monolingual education policy, or against any discriminatory policies.

Phillipson’s element ‘resistance’ is found in the history of the Bengali language which started in 1947 and reached its climax in 1952 with the sacrifice of the lives of some language martyrs. “Politicians, intellectuals, and students mobilised to demand the recognition of Bengali as one of the state languages. On March 11, 1948, a massive protest was organised, leading to violent clashes with the police” (Uddin, 2025, para 2). On 21 March of 1948, Jinna’s declaration of Urdu as the state language intensified a resistance movement. The Pakistani government’s proposal to write Bengali in the Arabic alphabet was also strongly opposed (Ahad, 2017).

In 1951, the All-Party State Language Action Committee, was formed which was consisted of students, politicians, and activists. It demonstrated organized movements. The resistance movement reached its climax on 21 February, 1952, when students organized a protest march defying the Pakistani government’s Section 144 that was given to stop any kind of public gathering. “Police opened fire on the demonstrators, killing Salam, Rafiq, Barkat, Jabbar, and many others. These martyrs became symbols of resistance, and their sacrifice ignited a nationwide movement demanding linguistic and cultural rights” (Uddin, 2025, para 3). The language movement achieved its goal in 1956 by compelling Pakistan

Constituent Assembly to adopt both Bangla and Urdu as the state languages of Pakistan (Helal, 2021).

Philipson's resistance is manifested in the movie *Fagun Haway*. There is a group of rebels (mainly the theater group) who resist the imperialism of Jamshed. Also, Nasir's deceased father was a rebel who revolted against the British. Nasir's mother tells him to follow his father, "Nasir, never forget that you are the son of a rebel who did not fear the gun of the British and hesitate to sacrifice his life" (Ahmed, 2019, 36:06). Nasir's father fought against the British colonialism, and Nasir is resisting the neo-colonization of West Pakistan.

As a protest against the exploitation of Bengalis by West Pakistanis, the local theater group prepares an anti-British drama *Nil Darpan* (1860) written by Dinabandhu Mitra (Ahmed, 2019, 13:36). The theater group consists of some conscious people of the society of different ages and backgrounds. Among them, there is a growing awareness of Bengali Nationalism and self-determination, where the head of the theater, Arun Da, raises a question, "The British has gone, but the Pakistanis are now above our heads. Where is our freedom?" (Ahmed, 2019, 17:41).

When Jamshed stops Baul, Nasir shows resistance by starting another folk song of Lalon against cast system (Ahmed, 2019, 0:5:40). The rebels of the area show resistance by slaughtering and grilling Jamshed's favourite four roosters, which were named after four patrons of Urdu (Ahmed, 2019, 1:11:48). Also, two Bengali police officers burn the letter that Jamshed writes to the Prime Minister requesting to declare Urdu as the state language (Ahmed, 2019, 43:38).

Graffiti is a strong form of resistance. The rebels paint the walls of Jamshed's house with some slogans for language rights and inscribe lines from a famous revolutionary poem *Deshlayer Kathi* of Sukanta Bhattacharya (Ahmed, 2019, 1:46:11). This poem also talks about resistance against imperialism. Furthermore, the resistance group of Chandranagar writes slogans for language rights on the walls of the city. When a local collaborator of the imperialists, Obayed, tells them to erase the slogans, they deny. When one of the rebels, Monju, protests strongly he is stabbed and killed by Obayed (Ahmed, 2019, 2:00:00).

After the declaration of Urdu as the state language, the neo-colonialism of Urdu is evident from a speech of Nasir, "Dear friends, we strongly oppose this illegal declaration. We do not obey this declaration of Pakistani dictators. British have gone; now these Panjabis are dominating us. The communal division of the country is oppressing us now. They have neglected Bengali which is the language of fifty-six percent of people. They want to impose Urdu on us that the mass people of this country neither know nor obey. I don't obey this declaration of Pakistani dictators. I want my language, Bengali, as my state language" (Ahmed, 2019, 1:14:48).

The film ends with a resistance. Jamshed is found to have run away. And the last scene shows a long and massive procession against linguistic imperialism, where people of all walks of life join (Ahmed, 2019, 2:03:06); moreover, the Mawlana, the local collaborator of the imperialists, also joins the procession. The postlude of the film shows the history of the sacrifices of lives on 21 February 1952 and the declaration of the day as "International Mother Language Day" (Ahmed, 2019, 2:04:17).

Analysis of Filmography

Linguistic imperialism is portrayed through the characters, plot, setting, costume, music, literary devices, etc. The main plot along with the subplots centers around linguistic imperialism. For example, the subplot of Jamshed's raping the hearing-speaking-impaired girl is an exploitation. The mute-subaltern girl's not having a voice and Jamshed's torture of her are symbols of linguistic imperialism.

The setting and location also supplement the authentic context of Urdu's linguistic imperialism over Bangla. For example, Chandranagar (a village of Khulna district), the police station, the theater stage, and all the settings are chosen carefully to depict a realistic picture of the contemporary picture of the Language Movement of 1952.

All the processes of linguistic imperialism are supported by characterization. The characters of Jamshed, Moulana, Ajmaot Ali, etc. are the exploiters and the theatre artists, the mute girl, her father etc. are the exploited. The theater artists are the rebels against the domination. All the characters move around the main theme of linguistic imperialism.

The attire of the characters is an authentic representation of the time of 1950s when the linguistic movement occurred in Bangladesh. At the theater, girls in *saree* and boys in *panjabi* and loose *pajama*, and the *Baul* in full white attire, are a representation of Bengali culture and a tool of resistance against Jamshed's uniform of a police officer that is used for linguistic imperialism.

Ahmed (2019) uses color very meaningfully to support the main theme of the film. In the beginning credit part of *Fagun Haway*, he uses black and white colors (0:18-1:04) which are the defining colors of *Ekushe February* (21st February, International Mother Language Day), when People wear black and white to solemnly mourn and honor the martyrs who sacrificed their lives for Bangla. The main characters, Nasir and Dipti, wear white attire in the last procession of the rebels. Moreover, with a white *saree*, Dipti wears a green *blouse* because green and red are the color of the Bangladeshi flag and nationalism.

In the movie, local Baul song, Lalon song, and classical music are used, portraying patriotism, secularism etc. For example, Jamshed's stopping the Baul's song (4:28) is a symbol of linguistic hegemony whereas Nasir's starting a Lalon song "Sob loke koi Lalon ki jat songsare" (Everyone asks the caste of Lalon) is a resistance against hegemony. Another song "Robir Aroke rod gaane gaane vor hok" (Let the morning start with sunlight and song) is a metaphorical song that symbolizes an end of darkness and domination. During this song, the entrance of bright sunlight in the room shows a meaningful use of light in the film. Additionally, not only the songs but also supporting background music is used to heighten the impact of linguistic imperialism. For instance, in the police station, when Jamshed was declaring the supremacy of Urdu, fast-paced background music is used to take the tension of domination to the climax.

Ahmed (2019) uses strong symbolism through birds. The film starts with a scene of birds in cages. Then a talking Myna bird, which can mimic human sounds, is shown in a cage (2:41) that symbolizes the linguistic subjugation of Bengalis. Nasir's resistance to keeping the bird in a cage and Dipti's setting the bird free show the process of achieving linguistic liberty.

Conclusion

Phillipson's Linguistic Imperialism is a framework that can analyze the linguistic imperialism of West Pakistan on Bangladesh (East Pakistan then). Bangladesh is the country that resisted this imperialism and protected Bengali. The film *Fagun Haway* vividly portrays this historical truth.

The film *Fagun Haway* effectively dramatizes how language became a political battleground, with Bengalis resisting linguistic domination to reclaim their cultural and national identity. The imposition of Urdu by West Pakistan reflects a neocolonial strategy of linguistic control, similar to British imperial policies in South Asia and Africa. These findings emphasize the cyclical nature of linguistic imperialism, demonstrating how power structures continue to shape language policies in postcolonial nations.

Authors' contributions

Farhana Ahasan conceptualized the research, designed the methodology, conducted the data analysis, and wrote the original draft. Sumaiya Meem contributed in data collection, helped in data analysis and critically revised the manuscript. Both authors approved the final version of the manuscript.

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