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The Language of Uprising: Multi-Layered Linguistic Practices During the July 2024 Movement in Bangladesh

Musharraf Hossain Tansen*

Article Info	Abstract
<i>Article History</i> Date of Submission 29-01-2026 Date of Acceptance 06-05-2026 Date of Publication 15-06-2026	The July 2024 uprising in Bangladesh was not only a political crisis but also a profound linguistic event. Protest mobilisation unfolded through a layered repertoire of Bangla, English, religious idioms, revolutionary slogans, and global activist vocabulary. This article examines how language shaped political meaning, collective identity, and justice claims during the uprising. Grounded in sociolinguistics, critical discourse analysis, and decolonial language theory, it analyses key protest terms such as quota, boishommo, fascist, inqilab, zindabad, zalem, mozlum, nipirito, azadi, insaf, Bangla blockade, and March to Dhaka. Drawing on media coverage, protest slogans, social media posts, and public statements, the study argues that multilingual protest discourse reflects Bangladesh's layered political history and contemporary struggles over power and legitimacy. Recognising protest language as political knowledge, the article highlights its central role in democratic participation, resistance, and post-uprising memory formation.
<i>Keywords</i> July 2024 Uprising, Language and politics, Protest discourse, Multilingualism, Mother language	

* Musharraf Hossain Tansen, Doctoral Researcher, University of Dhaka; email: tansenmh@gmail.com

Introduction

Language has long been central to Bangladesh's political imagination, serving not only as a medium of communication but also as a foundation for identity, resistance, and claims to justice. From the Language Movement of 1952—which established Bangla as a symbol of cultural autonomy—to later struggles over democracy and inclusion, linguistic practices have remained deeply intertwined with power and collective memory (Ahmed, 2014; Kabir, 2005; Rahman, 2010). Language has repeatedly functioned both as a rallying force and as a boundary marker, shaping belonging, voice, and legitimacy in public life.

The July 2024 Uprising represents a contemporary moment in this trajectory that also demands attention as a linguistic phenomenon. Protesters did not merely occupy streets; they actively produced and contested meaning through slogans, chants, hashtags, graffiti, and symbolic expressions. Language became a primary tool for articulating grievances, asserting moral claims, and challenging authority. The uprising can therefore be understood not only as a confrontation with political power but also as a struggle over narrative and legitimacy (Fairclough, 1995; Wodak, 2015).

Protest discourse during this period drew on a layered linguistic repertoire crossing cultural and ideological boundaries. Bangla remained central to emotional resonance and collective identity, while English political vocabulary and Arabic-derived moral terms expanded the movement's symbolic reach. Expressions such as *boishommo* (inequality), *insaf* (justice), *inqilab* (revolution), *fascist*, *shutdown*, and *March to Dhaka* circulated simultaneously, reflecting a negotiation between local meanings and global protest frames (Blommaert, 2010; Rahman, 2019). This multilingualism allowed the uprising to speak both to domestic audiences and to transnational publics.

By foregrounding language, this study argues that the July 2024 Uprising reveals deeper structural tensions within Bangladeshi society—over inequality, governance, morality, and belonging. Language functioned as a site of struggle where competing visions of

justice and authority were articulated and contested. Examining these practices shows that moments of political rupture are also moments of discursive transformation: words do not merely describe change; they help produce it.

Identification of the Research Problem

Although the July 2024 Uprising in Bangladesh has generated extensive political commentary, its linguistic dimensions remain largely underexplored in academic research. Most analyses have focused on governance, state–society relations, and protest dynamics, often treating slogans, chants, and key terms as peripheral rhetoric rather than as constitutive elements of political action. Such approaches risk overlooking how language actively shapes the articulation of grievances, the construction of collective identities, and the moral legitimacy of mobilisation (Fairclough, 1995; Wodak, 2015).

Research on political discourse shows that linguistic choices play a decisive role in framing injustice, mobilising participants, and drawing boundaries between “us” and “them” (Snow & Benford, 1988; Tilly, 2008). In multilingual, postcolonial contexts like Bangladesh, protest language is especially complex, combining vernacular Bangla, colonial English, religious vocabularies, and global protest idioms, each carrying distinct historical and ideological meanings (Blommaert, 2010; Rahman, 2010). Despite Bangladesh’s long history of language-centred mobilisation—from the 1952 Language Movement to contemporary protests—there has been little systematic analysis of how such layered linguistic practices operate during large-scale uprisings. The central research problem addressed in this article is therefore the absence of a structured, empirical examination of multi-layered language use in the July 2024 Uprising. Without this lens, interpretations remain incomplete, missing how linguistic practices mediated mobilisation, inclusion and exclusion, and competing visions of justice. By foregrounding language as a site of struggle, the study seeks to illuminate how political meaning is negotiated in moments of rupture and how discourse both reflects and shapes broader social transformation in Bangladesh and similar contexts.

Objectives of the Research

This study pursues five interrelated objectives to deepen understanding of the linguistic dynamics of the July 2024 Uprising in Bangladesh. First, it aims to identify and categorise the principal linguistic registers used in protest discourse, including vernacular Bangla expressions, English political terminology, Arabic-derived moral vocabularies, and hybrid slogans. Mapping these registers enables a systematic account of the uprising's multilingual and layered communicative landscape (Blommaert, 2010; Rahman, 2010).

Second, the research analyses how specific words, phrases, and slogans functioned as political, moral, and symbolic instruments. It examines how language framed injustice, legitimised resistance, attributed responsibility, and articulated reform demands (Fairclough, 1995; Snow & Benford, 1988). Third, the study explores the relationship between language, power, and collective identity, focusing on how linguistic choices produced inclusion and exclusion, moral binaries, and contested authority among protestors, the state, and other actors (Bourdieu, 1991; Wodak, 2015). Fourth, the research situates July 2024 protest language within Bangladesh's longer history of language-based mobilisation, particularly the legacy of the 1952 Language Movement, to identify continuities and transformations (Kabir, 2015; Rahman, 2019). Finally, it contributes to global debates on mother language, multilingualism, and political discourse from a Global South perspective, foregrounding linguistic agency as central to democratic participation and social justice (May, 2012; Pennycook, 2017).

Literature Review

The role of language in political mobilisation has been extensively studied across sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, and political theory, revealing that language does not simply reflect social realities but actively shapes them. Fairclough (1995) argues that discourse constructs social practices by legitimising power relations and normalising inequality, while van Dijk (2008) emphasises that political

discourse structures ideological positions by controlling access to meaning, particularly in contexts of conflict and resistance. In protest movements, language becomes a critical resource for articulating grievances, framing injustice, and mobilising collective action.

Social movement theory highlights the strategic function of linguistic framing in shaping mobilisation outcomes. Snow and Benford's (1988) theory of collective action frames shows that movements use diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational language to define problems, propose solutions, and inspire participation. Slogans, chants, and symbolic terms are therefore not merely rhetorical devices but instruments of resonance, legitimacy, and identity formation. This framework provides a useful lens for analysing how protest language during the July 2024 Uprising articulated moral claims, constructed oppositional identities, and contested dominant narratives.

In South Asia, language has historically intersected with power, identity, and nationhood. Colonial and postcolonial language policies established hierarchical linguistic orders privileging certain languages while marginalising others, shaping access to education, employment, and cultural capital (Alim, 2010; Rahman, 2002). Bangladesh's Language Movement of 1952 exemplifies the political power of mother language, where Bangla served as a medium for resistance, collective identity, and moral legitimacy. Ahmed (2016) notes that the movement elevated Bangla beyond communication, symbolising dignity, autonomy, and democratic aspiration.

Contemporary scholarship emphasises the growing complexity of protest discourse in a globalised, digital era. Movements increasingly operate through multilingual and hybrid repertoires, blending local languages with global vocabularies of rights, justice, and resistance (Blommaert, 2014; Pennycook, 2017). Techniques such as code-switching, borrowing, and semantic recontextualisation allow activists to address multiple audiences simultaneously, from local communities to international observers. Tarrow (2011) similarly observes that transnational protest cycles rely on widely circulated slogans and keywords, which acquire locally specific meanings.

Digital media amplifies these dynamics by accelerating the circulation, remixing, and visualisation of language. Zappavigna (2012) demonstrates that social media platforms enable rapid dissemination of evaluative language, hashtags, and slogans, transforming linguistic practices into networked political action. In Bangladesh, online and offline protest spaces have become closely intertwined, allowing language to move fluidly between street demonstrations, social media, and mainstream news.

Despite these insights, a gap remains in scholarship on Bangladeshi uprisings, particularly from a mother language-centred perspective. Analyses often prioritise institutional, electoral, or security dimensions, relegating language to a symbolic or secondary role. Systematic exploration of multilingual and morally charged protest discourse—as a site of struggle, memory, and meaning-making—remains limited. This study addresses this gap by examining the linguistic dimensions of the July 2024 Uprising, situating them within Bangladesh's historical legacy of language-based resistance and contemporary global debates on language, power, and political mobilisation.

Research Rationale

This study is significant academically and socially, as it positions language at the centre of understanding political mobilisation in Bangladesh. While existing scholarship on Bangladeshi politics has focused on electoral processes, governance challenges, and social movements, comparatively little attention has been paid to the linguistic practices through which political meanings are produced, contested, and circulated during mass mobilisation. By analysing the linguistic registers of the July 2024 Uprising, this research demonstrates how language functions not merely as a medium of expression but as a constitutive force shaping political subjectivities and collective action (Fairclough, 1995; Wodak & Meyer, 2016).

The study also contributes to scholarship on mother language and multilingualism in postcolonial contexts. Contemporary political

communication increasingly employs hybrid linguistic repertoires, including colloquial Bangla, English, digital slang, and symbolic visual-textual forms such as graffiti. Examining how Bangla functioned alongside other linguistic resources during the July 2024 Uprising challenges monolithic views of mother language and aligns with sociolinguistic perspectives that conceptualise language as fluid, strategic, and context-dependent (Blommaert, 2010; Pennycook, 2017).

From a societal perspective, understanding the language of the uprising is crucial for democratic engagement, policy discourse, and reconciliation processes. Language choices influence whose voices are heard, which grievances are legitimised, and how moral authority is constructed in political movements (Bourdieu, 1991). Slogans, chants, and digitally circulated phrases mobilise participants while shaping public narratives and institutional responses. Analysing these linguistic practices offers insights into the symbolic operations of power during crises and the formation of collective memory (Assmann, 2011).

By situating the July 2024 linguistic practices within Bangladesh's historical trajectory of language-based political movements, this research provides a historically grounded framework for interpreting contemporary struggles. The study advances scholarly debates on language and power while offering practical insights for more inclusive, reflective, and linguistically conscious approaches to governance, democratic participation, and post-uprising societal reconciliation.

Research Questions

This study is guided by four interrelated research questions that collectively examine the linguistic dynamics of the July 2024 Uprising and their broader political and historical significance in Bangladesh. The study first investigates the types of language and linguistic registers mobilised during the uprising. This includes exploring the range of linguistic forms circulating across protest spaces, such as formal and colloquial Bangla, regional and youth registers, slogans, chants, placards, graffiti, and digital texts. By tracing linguistic

practices across street demonstrations and online platforms, the research analyses how different registers functioned communicatively, politically, and symbolically within the movement.

A second area of inquiry focuses on how particular terms and keywords—such as *quota*, *boishommo*, *fascist*, and *azadi*—operated as political, moral, and symbolic signifiers within protest discourse. The study examines how recurring words condensed complex grievances, articulated ethical claims, and fostered collective identification among protesters. It also explores how meanings were negotiated, contested, and stabilised through repetition and circulation, drawing on both local political histories and transnational vocabularies of resistance.

The research further examines the role of multilingualism in shaping the reach, resonance, and interpretation of the uprising. This involves analysing interactions between Bangla, English, and other linguistic resources in slogans, media narratives, and social media communication. The study considers how multilingual practices extended global visibility and intergenerational accessibility while also producing tensions around authenticity, authority, and inclusion.

Another key concern of the study is the historical positioning of the movement's language practices within Bangladesh's longer trajectory of struggles over mother language, political rights, and symbolic recognition. By comparing contemporary protest discourse with earlier mobilisations—particularly the 1952 Language Movement—the research identifies continuities and transformations in how language functions as a tool of resistance and identity formation.

Collectively, these questions are grounded in critical discourse analysis and sociolinguistic perspectives that view language as social action embedded in power relations (Fairclough, 1995; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). They also draw on postcolonial and globalisation-oriented sociolinguistics, which emphasise the hybrid and strategic use of linguistic resources in political movements (Blommaert, 2010; Pennycook, 2017). Linking micro-level linguistic practices to macro-level historical processes enables a multidimensional analysis of language, power, and collective identity in Bangladesh.

Research Theoretical Framework

This study adopts an integrated theoretical framework combining critical discourse analysis (CDA), sociolinguistics, and decolonial language theory to examine the multi-layered linguistic practices of the July 2024 Uprising in Bangladesh. This approach allows protest language to be understood simultaneously as a site of power, social interaction, and historical struggle.

Critical discourse analysis serves as the primary lens for investigating how language both reflects and actively constructs power relations during political contestation. CDA scholars argue that discourse is not a neutral medium but a form of social practice through which dominance, resistance, and legitimacy are produced and challenged (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 2008). In the context of the July 2024 Uprising, CDA enables close analysis of how terms such as *fascist*, *boishommo*, and *insaf* functioned to morally evaluate authority, shape oppositional identities, and frame claims for justice. This involves examining lexical choice, repetition, intertextuality, and discursive framing across slogans, speeches, placards, and digital communication.

Sociolinguistic theory complements CDA by foregrounding the strategic and context-dependent nature of language use in multilingual societies. Drawing on work on linguistic repertoires, code-switching, and register variation, the study conceptualises protestors as deploying multiple linguistic resources to navigate diverse audiences and communicative spaces (Blommaert, 2010; Gumperz, 1982). The simultaneous use of Bangla, English, and Arabic-derived moral and political terms is understood not as inconsistency but as deliberate practice shaped by education, media circulation, religious registers, and global political vocabularies. This perspective illuminates how multilingualism extended the movement's reach while generating internal debates about authenticity, ownership, and linguistic authority.

Decolonial language theory provides historical and ideological grounding. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's (1986) critique of linguistic imperialism underscores that language choice in postcolonial

contexts is inseparable from struggles over cultural sovereignty, epistemic justice, and political emancipation. In Bangladesh, Bangla carries historical significance as a symbol of resistance rooted in the 1952 Language Movement, while global terms such as *azadi*, *inqilab*, and English bureaucratic expressions link local struggles to transnational discourses of rights, justice, and governance.

By integrating CDA's focus on power, sociolinguistics' attention to practice, and decolonial theory's emphasis on historical and ideological context, this framework facilitates a multidimensional analysis of the July 2024 Uprising. It situates protest discourse within immediate power dynamics while embedding it in Bangladesh's historical trajectory of language-based mobilisation, illustrating how language functions both as a resource and a battleground in moments of political rupture.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design, appropriate for exploring the meanings, functions, and socio-political implications of language during collective mobilisation. Qualitative approaches allow in-depth engagement with how social actors construct and negotiate meaning through discourse, symbolism, and interpretive practices (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

Data Sources

Data were collected from three primary sources to capture the diversity and circulation of linguistic practices during the July 2024 Uprising. First, protest slogans, placards, and banners documented in newspapers, online portals, and photojournalistic archives were gathered. These visual-textual materials reflect the public-facing language of the movement and condense complex political claims into symbolic forms (Chilton, 2004).

Second, social media content—including posts, comments, hashtags, and shared images on platforms such as Facebook and X

(formerly Twitter)—was analysed to examine the evolution, circulation, and recontextualisation of protest language. Social media functions as a crucial site for contemporary political discourse, enabling rapid dissemination and remixing of linguistic forms (Zappavigna, 2012).

Third, public speeches and statements by protest leaders, student representatives, and state actors were collected from televised broadcasts, official press releases, and verified online recordings. This inclusion allowed comparative analysis of movement and state discourses, showing how legitimacy, authority, and moral claims were linguistically constructed (van Dijk, 2008).

Sampling Strategy

A purposive sampling approach was employed to identify recurrent and symbolically significant linguistic elements. Focus was placed on terms, phrases, and expressions that frequently appeared, circulated widely, or became central to public debate (Paltridge, 2012). Examples include politically charged terms such as quota, boishommo, fascist, azadi, and inqilab, as well as hybrid Bangla–English expressions.

Analytical Approach

Data were analysed thematically using discourse analysis informed by CDA and sociolinguistic theory. Analysis focused on how language produced meaning, articulated grievances, assigned blame, and imagined alternative political futures. Attention was given to lexical choice, metaphor, moral and emotional framing, audience orientation, and patterns of multilingualism and code-switching (Fairclough, 1995; Blommaert, 2014). Iterative coding refined themes to capture dominant discursive patterns and internal tensions within the protest language.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical guidelines were strictly followed. Although data were publicly available, social media users were anonymised to protect privacy and prevent harm (British Sociological Association, 2017). No private

communications were accessed, and the focus remained on linguistic and discursive patterns rather than individual identities, in line with standard practices in qualitative and digital discourse research.

Discussion

The analysis demonstrates that the July 2024 Uprising in Bangladesh was characterised by the interplay of multiple linguistic layers, reflecting both the complexity of the movement and the heterogeneity of its participants. Protestors mobilised a diverse repertoire of administrative, moral, revolutionary, religious, and globalised expressions, using language not merely as a medium of communication but as a central tool of political meaning-making. Importantly, this discourse was not abstract; it was materially visible in placards, graffiti, chants, and hashtags circulating both on the streets and across digital platforms. Language functioned simultaneously as expression, mobilisation, and political action, shaping how grievances were framed, legitimised, and disseminated (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 2008).

A closer examination of protest artefacts reveals how key terms were embedded in powerful, widely circulated communicative forms. Placards bearing slogans such as “Quota = Boishommo”, “No More Zalem Rule”, and “We Want Justice Now” condensed complex policy concerns into emotionally resonant and morally charged statements. Similarly, hashtags such as #NoQuotaNoPeace, #JusticeForStudents, #MarchToDhaka, and #InqilabZindabad #WeWantInsaf circulated rapidly on platforms like Facebook and X, transforming local linguistic expressions into networked political discourse. These examples illustrate that terms such as boishommo (inequality), zalem (oppressor), and insaf (justice) did not operate in isolation; rather, they were embedded within collective action frames that enabled participants to align around shared meanings and demands (Snow & Benford, 1988). Through repetition and circulation, these linguistic forms acquired symbolic power, reinforcing both emotional solidarity and political clarity.

Administrative and bureaucratic language also underwent significant transformation during the uprising. The term quota, originally confined to policy discourse, was re-signified into a potent symbol of systemic injustice and exclusion. Its frequent pairing with moral vocabulary—such as in the slogan “Quota means Boishommo”—demonstrates how technical language can be politicised and moralised. This transformation underscores a key insight of critical discourse analysis: language is not neutral but embedded within power relations, capable of both reproducing and challenging structures of authority (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 2008). In this context, protestors appropriated institutional terminology and rearticulated it in ways that exposed underlying inequalities.

At the same time, Bangla remained the emotional and symbolic core of the movement. Expressions such as *boishommo*, *nipirito* (oppressed), and *rastro meramot* (repair the state) carried deep cultural and historical resonance, grounding the uprising within Bangladesh’s long tradition of language-based political mobilisation. These terms constructed a moral narrative that framed the movement as a struggle between justice and injustice, echoing earlier historical moments such as the Language Movement of 1952. However, this Bangla-centric discourse did not operate in isolation; rather, it intersected dynamically with English and Arabic-derived vocabularies, producing a layered and hybrid linguistic field.

Another defining feature of the July 2024 Uprising was the influence of Gen-Z communication styles, particularly meme culture, sarcasm, and dark humour. Unlike earlier protest movements that relied primarily on formal rhetoric, this uprising incorporated digital-native forms of expression that blended humour with critique. Memes circulated widely with captions such as “দেশ ঠিক করতে এসে WiFi-ও বন্ধ” (“Came to fix the country, even WiFi got shut down”) or ironic Bangla-English hybrids such as “System reboot needed – রাষ্ট্র মেরামত চলছে”. These forms used parody, exaggeration, and irony to critique authority while maintaining engagement.

Meme culture served several important functions within the movement. First, it made political discourse more accessible, especially for younger participants accustomed to digital communication. Second, humour functioned as a coping mechanism in a politically tense environment, enabling dissent without always relying on direct confrontation. Third, memes enhanced the virality of protest language, allowing slogans and ideas to spread rapidly and be continuously reinterpreted. As Zappavigna (2012) argues, social media discourse thrives on shareability, and memes became a key vehicle for linguistic circulation. Importantly, humour did not dilute the seriousness of the movement; rather, it coexisted with moral and political registers, reinforcing the multi-layered nature of protest discourse.

The presence of revolutionary and religiously inflected terms such as *inqilab*, *zindabad*, *azadi*, *zalem*, and *mozlum* added further depth to this linguistic landscape. These terms connected the movement to broader historical and transnational imaginaries of resistance, embedding contemporary grievances within longer trajectories of struggle. This reflects what Blommaert (2014) describes as “layered historicity,” where words carry accumulated meanings across time and are reactivated in new contexts. In the July 2024 Uprising, such language enabled protestors to situate immediate demands within broader narratives of justice, liberation, and dignity. English-language expressions also played a strategic role in extending the movement’s reach. Terms such as “Bangla Blockade,” “complete shutdown,” “Gen-Z protest,” and “March to Dhaka” were widely used in both domestic and international media, ensuring that the movement was legible beyond national boundaries. This reflects a form of strategic multilingualism, where different languages are deployed for different audiences and communicative purposes (Tarrow, 2011). English functioned as a bridge to global visibility, while Bangla maintained local legitimacy and emotional depth.

Digital platforms further intensified these dynamics by enabling rapid circulation, remixing, and hybridisation of language. Hashtags,

memes, and short-form posts created a feedback loop in which linguistic expressions were continuously reproduced and reinterpreted. However, this speed also introduced certain limitations: while it amplified key messages, it sometimes simplified complex issues into easily shareable forms. This tension between depth and visibility is a defining feature of contemporary protest communication.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the July 2024 Uprising cannot be understood as a single, unified discourse. Rather, it functioned as a dynamic assemblage of linguistic practices, where formal and informal, local and global, serious and humorous elements coexisted and interacted. The inclusion of placard slogans, meme culture, and multilingual intersections demonstrates that protest language operated across multiple registers simultaneously, each contributing to the movement's overall impact.

Ultimately, this multilayered linguistic landscape reinforces the central argument of this study: in moments of political rupture, language becomes a site of struggle where meanings are negotiated, identities are constructed, and futures are imagined. The July 2024 Uprising illustrates that words—whether spoken, written, or memed—do not merely describe political change; they actively participate in producing it.

Results and Findings of the Research

The findings of this study demonstrate that language functioned as a central organising force during the July 2024 Uprising, shaping mobilisation, moral framing, and collective identity rather than serving merely as a decorative element. Across protest slogans, banners, social media posts, and public statements, linguistic choices structured both the communicative strategies and the symbolic universe of the movement. The results are presented under four interrelated themes.

First, language was integral to mobilisation. Protest discourse did not simply reflect pre-existing grievances; it actively constructed shared

meanings that enabled collective action. Administrative and policy terms such as quota were repeatedly invoked and recontextualised, transforming bureaucratic language into potent symbols of systemic injustice. This process illustrates the constitutive role of language in political action, consistent with critical discourse perspectives that emphasise how meaning-making mediates power and resistance (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 2008). The circulation of specific terms across both offline demonstrations and digital platforms indicates that linguistic cohesion was a key factor in sustaining the movement's momentum.

Second, Bangla served as the emotional and symbolic core of the uprising, even as English was strategically deployed to broaden reach. Bangla expressions—including *boishommo*, *zalem*, *mozlum*, *awaz uda*, *kotha ko*, and *rastro meramot*—conveyed moral, affective, and cultural resonance, facilitating solidarity and emotional identification among local participants. Concurrently, English phrases such as “blockade”, “Bangla blockade” “shutdown,” “complete shutdown,” and “March to Dhaka” acted as communicative bridges to international media, global civil society actors, and diasporic audiences. This pattern aligns with sociolinguistic research showing that multilingual repertoires enable local solidarity while supporting global visibility (Blommaert, 2014; Tarrow, 2011).

Third, moral and symbolic language was pivotal in constructing legitimacy and collective identity. Revolutionary and religiously inflected terms such as *inqilab*, *zindabad*, *azadi*, and *insaf* framed the uprising as an ethical struggle encompassing justice, liberation, and dignity. Such framing helped universalise grievances and legitimise resistance, resonating with social movement theory that underscores the mobilising power of moral discourse (Snow & Benford, 1988). Hybrid expressions combining Bangla, English, and symbolic terms expanded the movement's appeal across diverse audiences, reinforcing solidarity while negotiating different cultural and political registers.

Fourth, the linguistic diversity observed reflects Bangladesh's layered political and cultural history. The coexistence of Bangla,

English, and Arabic-derived terms illustrates how contemporary protest language draws on multiple historical trajectories, including the Language Movement of 1952, postcolonial state formation, and global political imaginaries. This “layered historicity” highlights the sedimentation of past struggles within present discourse, situating the July 2024 Uprising within a continuum of language-based political mobilisation rather than as an isolated event (Ahmed, 2016; Blommaert, 2014).

Collectively, these findings emphasise that the July 2024 Uprising was both a political and discursive phenomenon. Language emerged as a site of struggle, memory, and meaning-making, shaping how grievances were expressed, legitimised, and remembered. By foregrounding linguistic practices, this study provides empirical evidence on the centrality of mother language, multilingual repertoires, and symbolic discourse in postcolonial political mobilisation.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are proposed for scholars, educators, policymakers, and cultural institutions. These recommendations aim to enhance analytical, pedagogical, and policy engagement with language as a central dimension of political life in Bangladesh.

First, scholars should give greater attention to language in analyses of political movements, particularly within Bangladeshi and South Asian contexts. Existing studies often prioritise organisational structures, leadership, and policy outcomes, while marginalising language. This research demonstrates that mobilisation, legitimacy, and collective identity are fundamentally produced through discourse. Future studies should integrate critical discourse analysis and sociolinguistic approaches to capture how power is enacted and contested through linguistic practices (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 2008). Comparative analyses of linguistic repertoires across different uprisings could illuminate patterns of continuity and transformation in political discourse.

Second, educators should incorporate protest discourse into curricula on language, politics, and citizenship. Secondary and tertiary students can engage with slogans, chants, and digital texts from the July 2024 Uprising to develop critical awareness of how language shapes political realities. Such approaches align with critical literacy and democratic education frameworks, encouraging learners to interrogate language as a tool of power, resistance, and social meaning (Pennycook, 2001; Freire, 1970). Integrating real-world protest language into classroom discussions also reinforces the relevance of mother-language studies beyond literary and historical contexts.

Third, cultural institutions, universities, and archives should systematically document and preserve protest language. Slogans, banners, graffiti, and social media expressions are often ephemeral but constitute vital historical records of collective thought and emotion. Ethical collection and archiving, respecting anonymity where needed, would extend Bangladesh's tradition of language documentation, linking contemporary movements to earlier struggles such as the 1952 Language Movement (Ahmed, 2016). Archiving these linguistic artefacts creates resources for research, public reflection, and democratic engagement.

Finally, policymakers should recognise protest language as a legitimate form of political participation. Slogans, chants, and symbolic terms should not be dismissed as mere disruption; they represent meaningful contributions to public debate and moral discourse. Engaging with protest language through inclusive dialogues aligns with deliberative democratic principles and can foster trust, reconciliation, and more responsive governance (Habermas, 1996).

Collectively, these recommendations highlight the need to move beyond instrumental views of language and recognise its constitutive role in political life. By investing in research, education, documentation, and policy frameworks that foreground linguistic

practice, Bangladesh can strengthen democratic culture and its rich tradition of mother-language-based political engagement.

Conclusion

The July 2024 Uprising demonstrates that language is not merely a vehicle for protest but a constitutive force in political action. This study shows that the movement's multi-layered linguistic practices—ranging from Bangla mother-language expressions to English, Arabic-derived moral vocabularies, and revolutionary idioms—served as sites of meaning-making, through which grievances were articulated, moral boundaries drawn, and collective identities forged. Bangla remained central to emotional resonance and historical continuity, while hybrid registers expanded the uprising's symbolic reach and political legitimacy, reflecting Bangladesh's complex linguistic ecology and long-standing struggles for justice, dignity, and rights.

Analysing the uprising as a linguistic event deepens understanding of how discourse operates during moments of rupture. Findings confirm critical discourse insights that language actively shapes power relations rather than simply reflecting them (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 2008). Terms such as *boishommo*, *azadi*, and *fascist* functioned not only as descriptive labels but as moral framings that delineated adversaries and legitimised resistance. In this sense, language acted as a form of political practice, enabling participants to negotiate meaning, authority, and belonging amid rapidly shifting contexts.

The study also underscores the significance of mother language scholarship in political analysis. From the 1952 Language Movement to the July 2024 Uprising, linguistic consciousness in Bangladesh has been intertwined with democratic aspiration (Ahmed, 2016; Rahman, 2002). Yet the findings highlight the strategic coexistence of Bangla with other linguistic registers, challenging singular or purist notions of mother language and affirming sociolinguistic perspectives that multilingualism can be a resource for mobilisation rather than a barrier (Blommaert, 2014).

More broadly, the research highlights language's enduring power in public life. Where formal political channels are constrained or distrusted, linguistic spaces become crucial arenas for participation, dissent, and imagination. Recognising the language of protest is therefore essential not only for scholarly understanding but also for democratic practice. The July 2024 Uprising demonstrates that words do not merely accompany history—they help make it, shaping how societies remember, interpret, and act toward more just futures.

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