



Natural Semantic Metalanguage as a Pedagogical Bridge in Multilingual Higher Education Classrooms

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ABSTRACT

This article explores how Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) can function as a pedagogical bridge in multilingual higher education classrooms. In linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms, students and instructors often encounter culture-specific concepts and communicative practices that cannot be fully explained through direct translation or dictionary definitions. Drawing on NSM semantic explications and cultural scripts, this article examines selected Bangla concepts—*adda* (আড্ডা), *maya* (মায়া), and *shukh* (সুখ)—as well as Bangladeshi communicative practices related to respect for elders, family obligation, and indirect communication. The analysis shows that NSM can make culturally embedded meanings more accessible across linguistic and cultural boundaries while preserving their semantic richness. The article argues that NSM has pedagogical value not only for international students and instructors but also for monolingual English-speaking classroom participants who encounter unfamiliar cultural meanings. By offering a simple, cross-translatable framework for explaining complex meanings, NSM can support intercultural understanding, meaning negotiation, and more inclusive teaching and learning practices in multilingual higher education classrooms.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Introduce the Problem

Higher education classrooms increasingly serve as spaces where students and instructors from diverse linguistic, cultural, and educational backgrounds interact and learn together. In first-year composition classes that are taught by international instructors or other classrooms that enroll international students, it is very common that participants frequently draw upon multiple languages, cultural experiences, and communicative traditions when engaging in academic discourse. Research on multilingual learners has highlighted the importance of recognizing students' diverse linguistic resources and experiences instead of viewing linguistic difference solely through a deficit lens (Bergey et al., 2018; Cavazos, 2019). In the same way, contemporary higher education classrooms often function as sites of intercultural communication because in these classes participants negotiate not only language differences but also different ways of conceptualizing and expressing meaning.

One significant challenge that frequently emerges in such contexts involves the communication of culture-specific concepts and communicative practices. For example, multilingual students and instructors often bring culturally grounded concepts into classroom discussions, writing assignments, and interpersonal interactions. However, when some meanings are readily understood within one linguistic and cultural community, they may be completely unfamiliar or only partially accessible to members of another. Research has shown that translating culturally and religiously loaded words presents significant challenges for translators because important semantic and cultural nuances may be lost, altered, or reinterpreted in the target language (Hassanein, 2022; Kabakchi & Proshina, 2021; Khukhuni et al., 2019; Najjar et al., 2019). Similar challenges arise in multilingual educational settings. In such settings when both students and instructors attempt to explain culturally embedded concepts to each other who do not share the same linguistic and cultural background, it imposes a unique challenge on them, and it often leads to misunderstanding in the classroom.

It is important to understand that the difficulty is not merely a matter of vocabulary. There are many concepts that are deeply embedded in cultural systems of values, emotions, social relationships, and communicative expectations. Therefore, these culture-specific concepts, ideas or words may not easily be translated or explained in other languages. As Wierzbicka (1997, 2006, 2014) argues that words often encode culturally specific ways of thinking and understanding the world that cannot always be captured through direct translation. Direct translation of words or concepts may not always capture the meaning or understanding of the ideas fully. Cross-cultural semantic research has repeatedly demonstrated that apparent equivalents across languages frequently differ in important ways; it is because they reflect distinct cultural experiences and conceptualizations (Goddard, 2018; Goddard & Wierzbicka, 2014; Habib, 2025). As a result, conventional translation or dictionary definitions may be insufficient for explaining the full meaning of culture-specific concepts in multilingual and intercultural settings.

Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) and the cultural scripts approach offer a promising framework for addressing these challenges. Developed through extensive cross-linguistic research, NSM proposes that complex meanings can be explicated through a limited set of semantic primes that are argued to be universal across languages (Wierzbicka, 1996; Goddard, 2018). The cultural scripts approach which is closely connected to NSM seeks to make explicit the shared cultural assumptions, values, and expectations that underlie communicative practices and social behavior (Wierzbicka, 1991, 1994; Goddard, 2006). These approaches provide analytical tools for explaining culture-specific concepts and communicative norms in ways that are accessible across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

This article argues that Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) can function as a pedagogical bridge in multilingual higher education classrooms by facilitating the explanation and negotiation of culture-specific meanings. By drawing on NSM semantic explications and cultural scripts, the article demonstrates how culturally embedded concepts and communicative practices can be made more accessible across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Accordingly, the objective of this study is to examine how NSM semantic explications and cultural scripts can facilitate the explanation of culture-specific concepts and communicative practices in multilingual higher education classrooms. For example, NSM can help international students explain culture-specific concepts to their monolingual English-speaking classmates and instructors. It can assist international instructors in explaining culturally grounded concepts to their students and support intercultural understanding among classroom participants from diverse backgrounds. Besides, it can help a monolingual English-speaking instructor who tries to understand a culturally grounded concept brought into class by an international student. However, the guiding research question is: How can Natural Semantic Metalanguage facilitate the explanation of culture-specific concepts and communicative practices in multilingual higher education classrooms? To address this question, the article first reviews relevant literature on multilingual classrooms, cultural meaning, and intercultural communication before introducing the theoretical foundations of Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) and cultural scripts. It then analyzes selected Bangla concepts and communicative practices through NSM semantic explications and cultural script analysis and discusses their implications for multilingual higher education pedagogy and intercultural understanding.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Multilingual Higher Education and Intercultural Communication

Higher education institutions increasingly bring together students and instructors from diverse linguistic, cultural, and educational backgrounds. It leads the classrooms to function as intercultural spaces where

participants engage with individuals whose experiences, communicative practices, and cultural assumptions may differ substantially from their own. This kind of diversity enriches classroom interactions by introducing many perspectives and ways of understanding the world. However, it may also create challenges for communication and mutual understanding. In multilingual classrooms, students, instructors, or both possess diverse linguistic repertoires and cultural backgrounds. In these classes, instructors or students naturally bring references to many ideas and concepts. These classrooms may not use multiple languages during instruction. They just have the presence of participants who bring different linguistic and cultural resources into the learning environment. For example, in the U.S. context, globalization and changing demographics have contributed to increasingly diverse and multicultural classrooms, making intercultural communication an important component of educational practice (McCalman, 2014). In U.S. higher education, multilingual classrooms frequently include international students, multilingual domestic students, heritage language speakers, and international instructors. But the academic work is primarily conducted in English while drawing on experiences shaped by other languages and cultures. The growing presence of international instructors and students further contributes to the linguistic and cultural diversity of contemporary university classrooms (Chen et al., 2022).

Research has emphasized the importance of recognizing multilingual learners' linguistic and cultural resources rather than viewing linguistic differences solely through a deficit perspective (Bergey et al., 2018; Cavazos, 2019). In the classroom multilingual students contribute diverse forms of knowledge and experience that can enrich the discussions and promote intercultural learning. Similarly, international instructors often introduce alternative perspectives or bring examples and communicative practices that broaden students' understanding of language, culture, and communication. Such diversity in the classroom is very important for cross-linguistic understanding. Research has increasingly highlighted the cultural wealth that multilingual and international participants bring to educational settings, challenging deficit-oriented views of linguistic and cultural difference (Chen et al., 2022).

At the same time, successful communication in multilingual classrooms requires more than grammatical competence or shared use of English. In these classrooms, participants frequently encounter concepts, values, emotions, and communicative practices that are deeply embedded in particular cultural traditions. Everyone in the class may not have equal understanding of these concepts and ideas because of different linguistic and cultural exposure that they have. Because of such situations, intercultural communication in higher education often involves the negotiation of meanings that may be easily understood within one cultural context but unfamiliar or difficult to interpret in another. These challenges highlight the importance of developing approaches that can facilitate the explanation and understanding of culturally grounded meanings across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

2.2 Culture-Specific Concepts and Meaning Negotiation

Communication across linguistic and cultural boundaries involves more than the exchange of information. People also communicate different concepts, ideas, emotions, and social values or practices. This is why a concept or idea that is easily understood by speakers of one culture might not be easy to understand by the speakers of another culture. NSM scholars have argued that many culturally significant words have meanings that cannot be fully captured through simple lexical equivalents in another language (Wierzbicka, 1997, 2006, 2014). The lexical equivalents used to describe those words or concepts could be critical or they may not have universal meanings across languages. In other words, words that appear to be translation equivalents often differ in subtle but important ways because they reflect distinct cultural experiences, social values, and conceptual frameworks. Therefore, dictionary definitions and direct translations may provide only a partial understanding of a concept's meaning. Habib's (2025) analysis of culturally significant concepts across English, Arabic, and Hebrew illustrates how seemingly comparable words may encode different cultural meanings and associations. Therefore, in higher education classrooms where students and instructors frequently encounter unfamiliar concepts and communicative practice, negotiation in meaning is crucial. This perspective is consistent with recent research demonstrating that successful communication relies on shared cultural knowledge and communicative norms as well as linguistic competence (Poly, 2026).

2.3 Politeness, Pragmatics, and Cultural Explanations

Research on intercultural communication has long been influenced by Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory. The theory proposes that communicative behavior is shaped by concerns for positive and negative face. This framework has been highly influential, but scholars have questioned the extent to which its assumptions can be applied universally across cultures (Eelen, 2001; Watts, 2003). Critics argue that concepts such as politeness, directness, and indirectness are often interpreted through culture-specific

understandings. They may not have same meaning across different linguistic and cultural communities. From an ethnopragmatic perspective, communicative practices cannot be completely understood through broad universal categories alone. There are examples when similar linguistic behaviors may be motivated by different cultural values, assumptions, and social expectations. For instance, in some cultures indirect communication is often associated with respect, social harmony, or interpersonal obligations. This could be completely different in another culture where direct communication is much appreciated. Therefore, the explanations that are based solely on general notions of politeness may overlook important aspects of cultural meaning.

3. Method

This study adopts a qualitative conceptual approach grounded in the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) framework. The article uses illustrative Bangla culture-specific concepts (*adda*, *maya*, and *shukh*) and selected Bangladeshi communicative practices to demonstrate how NSM semantic explications and cultural scripts can facilitate intercultural understanding in multilingual higher education classrooms. The selected examples were chosen because they represent culturally salient concepts and communicative practices that lack precise English equivalents and therefore illustrate the pedagogical value of NSM. The analyses are informed by established NSM principles and existing scholarship on semantic explications and cultural scripts.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM)

Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) is a linguistic theory developed primarily through the work of Anna Wierzbicka, Cliff Goddard, and their colleagues over several decades (Goddard, 2021; Goddard & Wierzbicka, 2014; Habib, 2022a, 2022b, 2023, 2024; Levisen, 2024; Wierzbicka, 1972, 1980, 1985; Ye, 2017). NSM incorporates four key analytical constructs: semantic primes, semantic molecules, explications, and cultural scripts. The framework proposed by these two prominent linguists is based on the proposition that all human languages share a set of fundamental meanings known as semantic primes, one of the four key constructs of NSM. These semantic primes are considered universal because they can be identified across languages and cannot be defined in simpler terms (Wierzbicka, 1996; Goddard, 2018). There are 65 semantic primes which are expressed in English as: I, YOU, SOMEONE, SOMETHING, PEOPLE, BODY, KIND, PART, THIS, THE SAME, OTHER, ONE, TWO, MUCH, SOME, ALL, GOOD, BAD, BIG, SMALL, THINK, KNOW, WANT, DON'T WANT, FEEL, SEE, HEAR, SAY, WORDS, TRUE, BE, THERE IS, MINE, LIVE, DIE, WHEN/TIME, NOW, BEFORE, AFTER, A LONG TIME, A SHORT TIME, FOR SOME TIME, MOMENT, WHERE/PLACE, HERE, ABOVE, BELOW, FAR, NEAR, SIDE, INSIDE, NOT, MAYBE, CAN, BECAUSE, IF, VERY, MORE, AND, LIKE. Another important construct of NSM is Semantic molecules. They are relatively complex concepts. Semantic molecules play an important role in NSM analysis. Some of them are considered universal (e.g., *child*, *mother*, and *father*), whereas others are culture-specific (e.g., *God*). These concepts can be explicated using semantic primes alone or through combinations of semantic primes and simpler semantic molecules (Habib, 2025). For example, one may use semantic primes to define the word *child*, then *child* could be used as a semantic molecule to explain a more complex concept such as FAMILY, PARENTING, or a culture-specific concept. However, building upon the semantic primes discussed above, NSM employs semantic explications to explain the meanings of more complex words and concepts. Semantic explications of a word or concept are made of combinations of semantic primes that are arranged according to simple grammatical patterns. Since NSM explications are designed to be translatable across languages, they explain meanings without using culture-specific concepts or terminology. This makes the NSM framework useful for cross-cultural semantic analysis and intercultural communication (Wierzbicka, 1996; Goddard, 2018).

Previous NSM research has been applied to a wide range of concepts, including emotions, interpersonal relationships, cultural values, speech practices, and religious vocabulary, and in theology (Wierzbicka, 1999; Goddard & Wierzbicka, 2014, Habib, 2024). The present study adopts NSM as its primary analytical framework because of its potential to facilitate the explanation of culture-specific concepts in multilingual educational contexts. By expressing complex meanings through simple and cross-translatable semantic components, NSM offers a practical means of making culturally embedded concepts more accessible to individuals who do not share the same linguistic and cultural background.

4.2 Cultural Scripts

The cultural scripts approach which is an important construct of Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) framework has become an important component of ethnopragmatic research (Wierzbicka, 1991, 1994; Goddard & Wierzbicka, 2004). Cultural scripts are unwritten social rules and they describe shared cultural norms, values, assumptions, and expectations that influence people's thinking, speaking, and behavior. They seek to make explicit the often-unspoken cultural knowledge that members of a community take for granted. Like semantic explications, cultural scripts are formulated using semantic primes and other simple cross-translatable terms. As a result, they provide a useful framework for describing and comparing communicative practices across cultures without relying on culture-specific terminology. In the present study, cultural scripts are used to analyze selected Bangladeshi communicative practices and their relevance to multilingual higher education classrooms.

4.3 Analysis of Culture-Specific Concepts

Culture-specific concepts frequently emerge in multilingual higher education classrooms through classroom discussions, writing assignments, presentations, literary analyses, and interpersonal interactions. International students and instructors may refer to concepts from their own linguistic and cultural backgrounds when describing personal experiences, social relationships, cultural practices, emotions, or values. In many cases, these concepts do not have precise English equivalents. Therefore, it is sometimes very difficult for monolingual English-speaking students and instructors to fully understand these concepts through direct translation alone. Sadow (2014) proposed that L2 teachers could use Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) to facilitate explanations of cultural concepts. Similarly, this article argues that NSM can serve as a valuable pedagogical tool in multilingual higher education classrooms. By explaining culture-specific concepts through semantic primes and simple cross-translatable meanings, NSM enables students and instructors to communicate culturally embedded meanings more effectively across linguistic and cultural boundaries. The following examples illustrate this pedagogical application through three culturally significant Bangla concepts: *adda* (আড্ডা), *maya* (মায়্যা), and *shukh* (সুখ).

Adda (আড্ডা): Among Bangla cultural concepts, *adda* (আড্ডা) is a frequently used and culturally significant word. The word *adda* (আড্ডা) does not have a precise equivalent in English. It is sometimes translated as "chat," "conversation," or "hanging out," but these words or expressions fail to capture important aspects of its cultural meaning. In Bangla-speaking communities, *adda* (আড্ডা) typically refers to an informal social interaction in which people spend time together talking about a wide range of topics without a specific practical purpose. The activity is valued not primarily for accomplishing a task but for the enjoyment of conversation, companionship, and the exchange of ideas.

From an NSM perspective, the meaning of *adda* can be explicated as follows:

Adda (আড্ডা) (proposed NSM explication): people are together in one place for some time, these people want to be with one another, these people say many things to one another, they can say things about many kinds of things, they do not say these things because they have to do something, they say these things because they want to be together, and when people do this, they can feel something good.

The explication highlights several components that distinguish *adda* from simple conversation. The concept involves voluntary social interaction, the sharing of ideas and experiences, and the enjoyment of spending time together. Unlike many English expressions that may emphasize conversation itself, *adda* places equal importance on social connection and collective participation.

Maya (মায়্যা): Another culturally significant Bangla concept is *maya* (মায়্যা). Although it is sometimes translated as "affection," "attachment," "love," or "compassion," none of these English words fully capture its meaning. In Bangla-speaking communities, *maya* (মায়্যা) often refers to a deep emotional bond that connects a person to another person, animal, object, or place. The concept involves feelings of affection, care, emotional attachment, and difficulty in letting go of someone or something that is emotionally important.

From an NSM perspective, *maya* can be explicated as follows:

Maya (মায়্যা) (proposed NSM explication): someone can think about another person like this: "this person is someone very important to me, I feel something good when I think about this person, I want good things to happen to this person, because of this, I feel something when I am with this person. because of this, I do not want to be far from this person", and when someone thinks like this, this person can feel something like *maya*. The explication highlights the relational and emotional dimensions of the concept. Unlike many English equivalents, *maya* (মায়্যা) emphasizes emotional connectedness and attachment rather than a single emotional state. It often reflects an enduring bond that influences how individuals think, feel, and act toward others.

Shukh (শুখ): There are many significant emotion-related concepts in Bangla. One of them is *shukh* (শুখ). It is often translated into English as "happiness." However, the two concepts are not entirely equivalent. Happiness in English generally refers to a positive emotional state, but *shukh* (শুখ) often carries broader associations with personal well-being, contentment, fulfillment, peace of mind, and satisfaction with one's life circumstances. Therefore, translating *shukh* (শুখ) simply as "happiness" may not fully convey its cultural and emotional significance. From an NSM perspective, *shukh* (শুখ) can be explicated as follows:

Shukh (শুখ) (proposed NSM explication), someone can think like this: "many things in my life are good now, I wanted some things before, these things are like this now, because of this, I feel something good, I do not feel something bad now", and when someone thinks like this, this person can feel *shukh* (শুখ).

The explication of the word *shukh* (শুখ) highlights that the concept is not merely a momentary emotion but is often associated with a broader sense of well-being and satisfaction. The concept frequently reflects a person's evaluation of important aspects of life, including family relationships, personal circumstances, and social harmony. In this way, *shukh* (শুখ) extends beyond simple pleasure or enjoyment and may involve a deeper sense of contentment.

4.4 Analysis of Cultural Scripts

While culture-specific concepts such as *adda*, *maya*, and *shukh* reveal culturally grounded ways of thinking and feeling, cultural scripts provide insight into the shared assumptions and expectations that shape communicative behavior. Cultural scripts make explicit the cultural reasoning that often remains implicit to members of a community but may not be immediately accessible to outsiders (Wierzbicka, 2003; Goddard, 2006; Goddard & Wierzbicka, 2004). Some examples are discussed below to illustrate how cultural scripts can be used to explain selected Bangladeshi communicative practices.

One important cultural value in Bangladeshi society concerns respect for elders. Younger individuals are generally expected to communicate with older people in ways that demonstrate respect and consideration. Consequently, communication with elders may involve greater caution, deference, and indirectness than communication among peers. This expectation can be represented through the following cultural script:

Respect for Elders (proposed cultural script), people can think like this: "some people are older than me, because of this, I have to think about these people in a special way, I should not say some things to these people as I can say them to other people, I should speak to these people in a good way, it is good if these people can think something good about me".

Another example concerns family obligations and expectations. In Bangladeshi culture, family relationships are often characterized by strong interpersonal responsibilities and emotional connectedness. For example, when parents tell their children to return home during Eid, it does not indicate a simple invitation. Rather, it often reflects expectations concerning family togetherness, belonging, and relational obligations. This cultural understanding differs from more individualistic interpretations in which attending a family gathering may be viewed primarily as a matter of personal choice. The following cultural script captures some of these assumptions: *Family Obligation and Eid (proposed cultural script)*, people can think like this: "people in a family should be together at some times, it is not good if someone in the family is not with other people at these times, when these times come, people should want to be together, because of this, someone can say to another person: 'I want you to be here with us'".

A third example involves the frequently used distinction between direct and indirect communication. Broad cultural descriptions often characterize Bangladeshis as indirect communicators. On the other hand, Americans are often characterized as direct communicators. However, such generalizations may oversimplify complex communicative practices. From a cultural scripts perspective, the important question is not whether communication is direct or indirect but why people communicate in particular ways. In some Bangladeshi contexts, indirect communication may be motivated by concerns about respect, social harmony, interpersonal relationships, or the desire to avoid causing discomfort to others. The following cultural script represents one possible cultural rationale: *Indirect Communication in Sensitive Situations (proposed cultural script)*. People can think like this: "I do not want this person to feel something bad because of my words, because of this, I do not want to say some things in a very direct way, it can be good if I say these things in another way, because of this, this person may not feel something bad".

These examples show that communicative practices often reflect culturally shared assumptions that may not be immediately apparent to individuals from different cultural backgrounds. As demonstrated in previous cultural script studies (e.g., Wierzbicka, 2003; Goddard, 2006), representing these assumptions explicitly can

promote intercultural understanding. Cultural scripts help make these assumptions explicit and understandable without relying on culture-specific words. In multilingual higher education classrooms, such cultural assumptions may influence how international students participate in discussions, respond to instructors, express disagreement, or interpret the behavior of others. By making the cultural reasoning underlying communicative practices more transparent, cultural scripts can reduce the likelihood of misunderstanding. It can also foster more effective intercultural communication in linguistically and culturally diverse educational settings.

4.5 Implications for Multilingual Higher Education Classrooms

Multilingual higher education classrooms are not only linguistically diverse but also culturally diverse spaces. In these classrooms, students and instructors bring different ways of conceptualizing and expressing meaning. Many concepts encountered in classrooms, writing assignments, literary analyses, presentations, and everyday conversation are rooted in specific linguistic and cultural traditions — meanings that resist direct translation or simple dictionary definitions. Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) offers a practical solution: by breaking complex, culture-specific meanings down into simple, universally translatable semantic components, it makes those meanings accessible across languages and contexts.

Previous studies have primarily explored the pedagogical applications of NSM in second and foreign language teaching, demonstrating its value for explaining cultural concepts, teaching communicative norms, and promoting intercultural competence (Goddard, 2010; Sadow, 2014; Sadow & Fernández, 2022). Building on this work, the present study argues that NSM has considerable potential in multilingual higher education classrooms, where international students, international instructors, and monolingual English-speaking classroom participants and instructors regularly negotiate culture-specific meanings during classroom interactions.

On the one hand, for international students, NSM provides a systematic way to communicate culture-specific meanings without sacrificing their semantic richness. When students reference concepts from their own languages that lack precise English equivalents, semantic explications allow them to convey those meanings through simple, cross-translatable components — making them accessible to classmates and instructors from diverse backgrounds (Sadow & Fernández, 2022).

On the other hand, international instructors face similar opportunities, particularly in first-year composition courses where personal experience and cultural perspective shape classroom interaction. Rather than relying on reductive translations, instructors can use semantic explications and cultural scripts to explain unfamiliar concepts in ways that are systematic and culturally grounded (Goddard, 2010; Sadow, 2014).

Additionally, NSM's value extends to monolingual English speakers as well. When engaging with concepts introduced by multilingual peers — whether in discussion, writing, or literary analysis — semantic explications support deeper comprehension and enable reciprocal learning across linguistic boundaries. Cultural scripts complement this by making explicit the cultural assumptions underlying language use. Rather than describing communicative differences through vague categories like politeness or directness, they reveal the cultural reasoning behind particular ways of speaking (Goddard & Wierzbicka, 2004; Sadow & Fernández, 2022), helping reduce cross-cultural misunderstanding.

Together, NSM and cultural scripts serve as practical pedagogical tools — preserving the semantic and cultural richness of diverse concepts while making them accessible across linguistic boundaries, and fostering more inclusive teaching and effective intercultural communication in multilingual higher education classrooms.

5. Conclusion

As multilingual higher education classrooms grow increasingly diverse, explaining culture-specific concepts and communicative practices remains a central pedagogical challenge. Direct translation and approximate English equivalents often fail to capture the semantic and cultural richness of meanings deeply embedded in particular linguistic traditions. This article has argued that Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) offers a practical and theoretically grounded alternative — one that explains such concepts through universal semantic primes and cross-translatable explications.

Through the Bangla concepts *adda* (আড্ডা), *maya* (মায়া), and *shukh* (সুখ), alongside selected Bangladeshi cultural scripts, the article has demonstrated how NSM can make culturally embedded meanings accessible without reducing or replacing them. Rather than substituting culture-specific concepts with approximate equivalents, NSM preserves their semantic richness while enabling understanding across linguistic and

cultural boundaries — supporting intercultural comprehension, meaning negotiation, and more inclusive classroom practices.

While the discussion has focused on Bangla concepts and communicative practices, the framework is broadly applicable. Future research might explore NSM's pedagogical use with culture-specific concepts from other languages, or examine how students and instructors actually employ semantic explications in multilingual classroom settings — further advancing our understanding of NSM's role in intercultural communication across diverse educational contexts.

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