



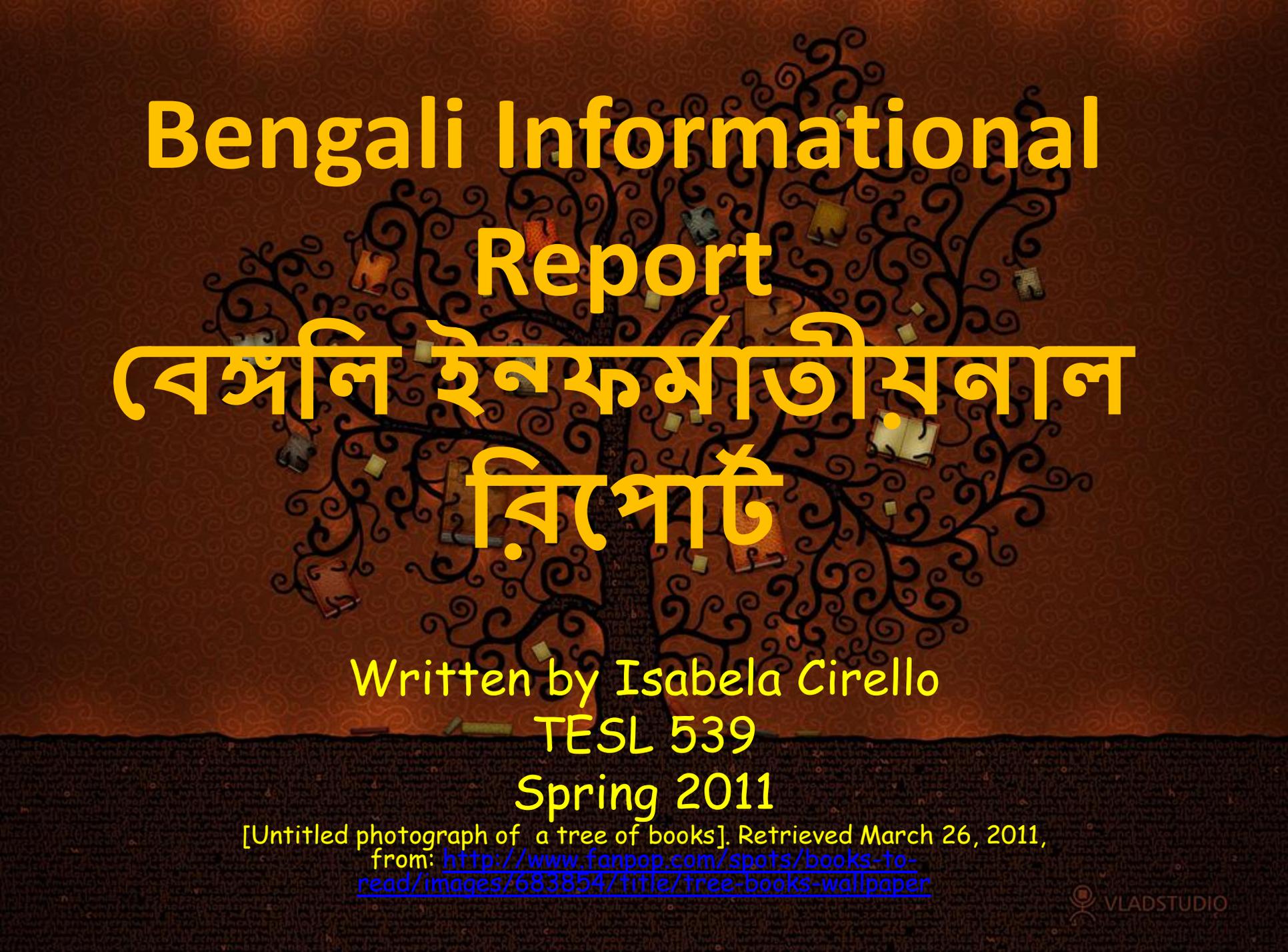
RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE

M.Ed. In TESL Program Language Group Specific Informational Reports

Produced by Graduate Students in the M.Ed. In TESL Program
In the Feinstein School of Education and Human Development

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Bengali Informational Report বেঙ্গলি ইনফর্মাতীয়নাল রিপোর্ট

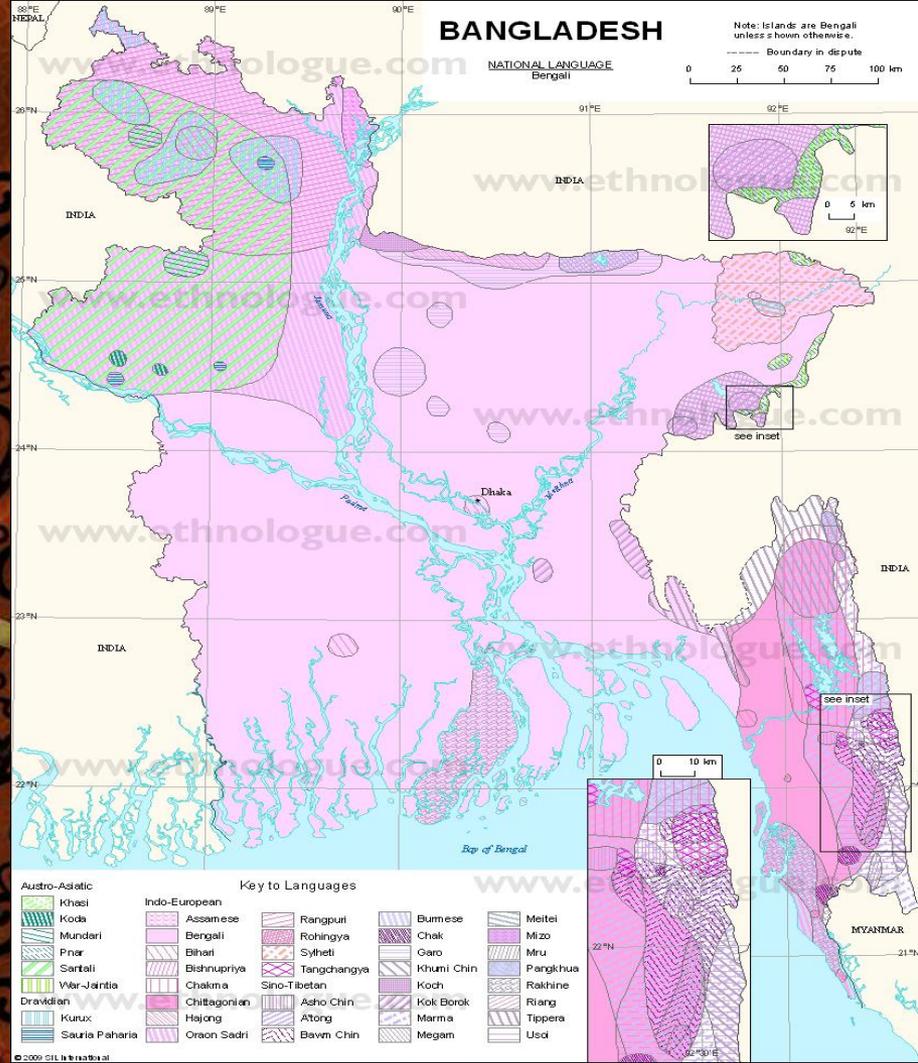
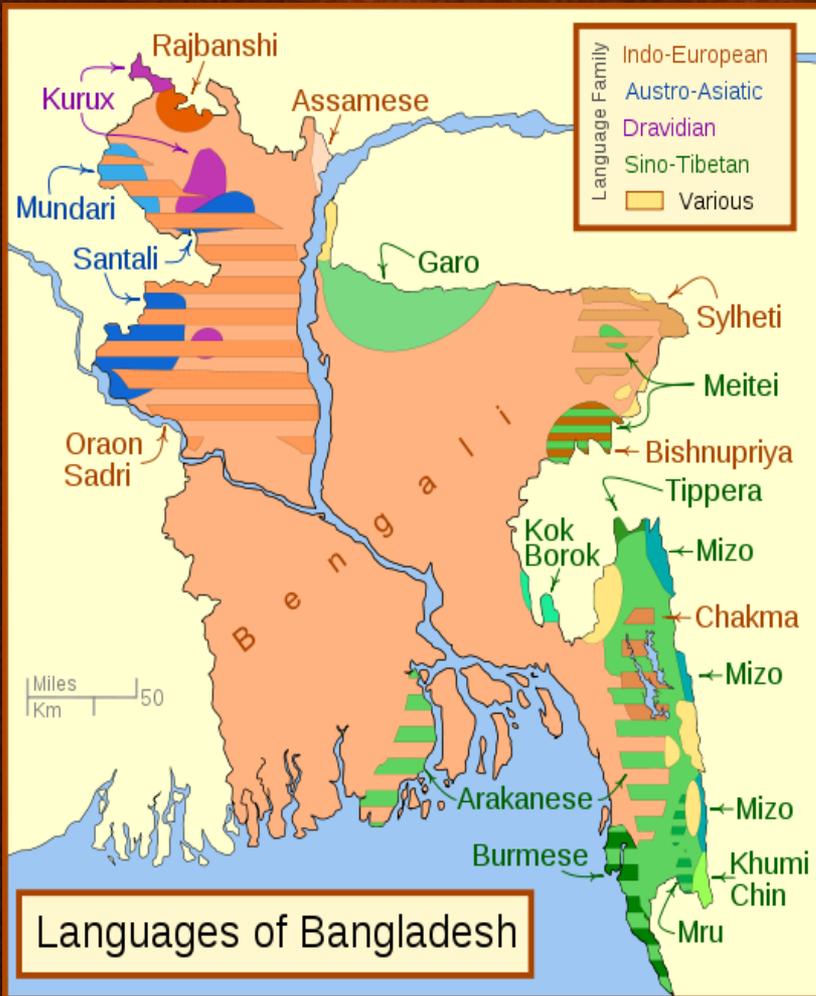
Written by Isabela Cirello
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History of Bengali Language

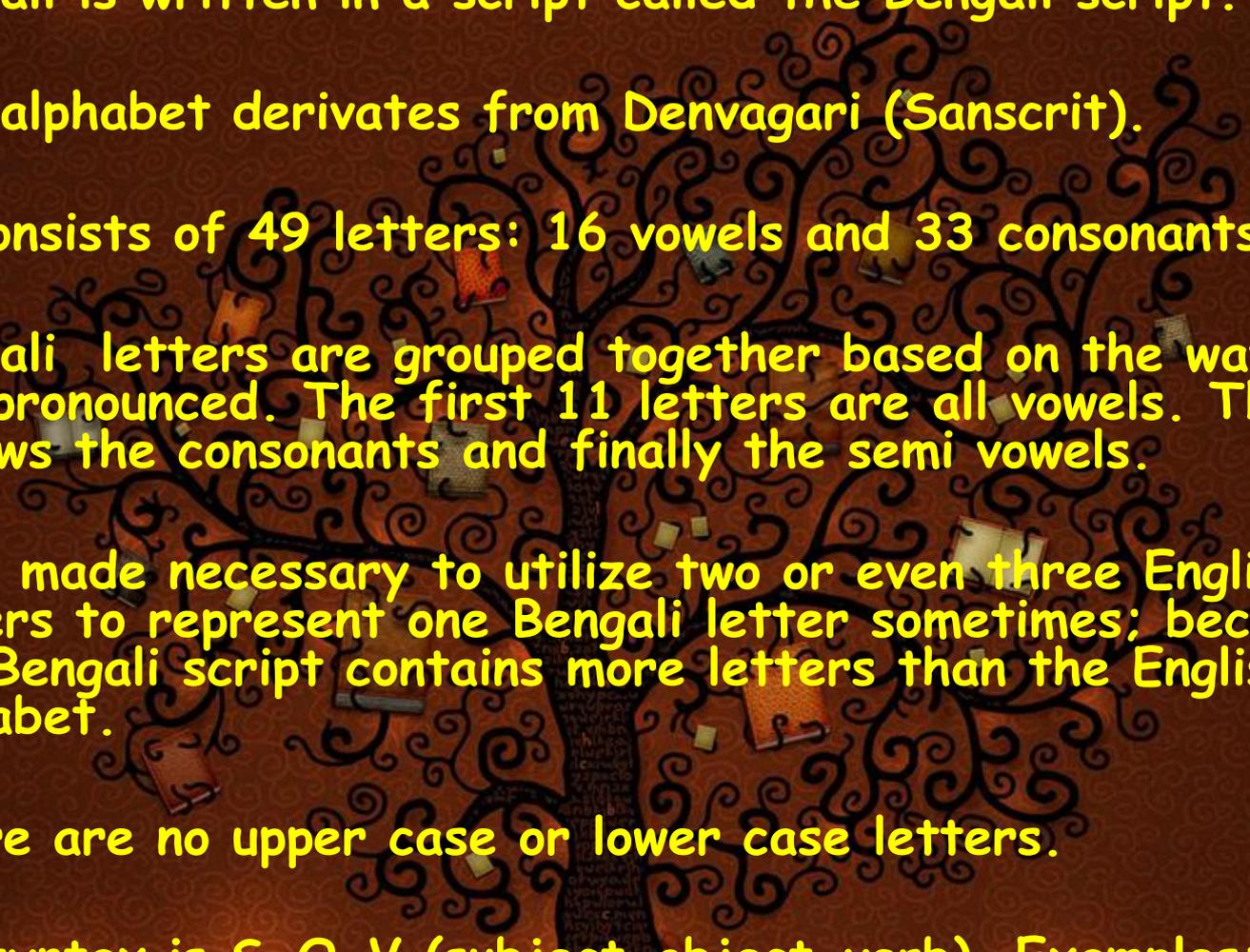


- Bengali belongs to the Indo-European language group.
- It has a rich literature - maybe one of the riches in the South Asian region.
- Nobel prize Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), a world-famous writer from India, wrote in Bengali.
- It is the official language of Bangladesh.
- It is one of the 22 official languages spoken in India.
- It is also known as Banga-Bhasa, Bangala, Bangla (alternative names).
- According to 2001 census, there are 110 million speakers in Bangladesh, and 250 million including L2 speakers around the world in places like India state of West Bengal, Canada, Malawi, Nepal, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, and the United States.



http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Languages_of_Bangladesh_map.svg

http://www.ethnologue.com/show_map.asp?name=BD&seq=10

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- Bengali is written in a script called the Bengali script.
 - The alphabet derives from Devanagari (Sanskrit).
 - It consists of 49 letters: 16 vowels and 33 consonants.
 - Bengali letters are grouped together based on the way they are pronounced. The first 11 letters are all vowels. Then follows the consonants and finally the semi vowels.
 - It is made necessary to utilize two or even three English letters to represent one Bengali letter sometimes; because the Bengali script contains more letters than the English alphabet.
 - There are no upper case or lower case letters.
 - Its syntax is S-O-V (subject-object-verb). Examples:
 1. Bengali: I Bengali speak.
I store to go.
 2. English: I speak Bengali.
I go to the store.

Bangladeshi Culture & Society

- Hierarchical society
- Age and position matters
- Elders are viewed as wise and are granted respect
- Senior male is the decision maker. This is also valid in businesses, the majority of which will be family owned/run.
- Majority are Muslim
- Strong tradition of music, dance, and literature that includes classical devotions of Hindu and Muslim music

Bengali Literary Styles

- **Sadhubhasa: elegant language**
- **Chaltibhasa: everyday language**

Etiquette, Protocol and Customs in Bangladesh

- Greetings: between members of the same sex
- Wait for a woman to extend her hand before you do it so.
- Age dictates how people are addressed: if people are of the same age, they use first names. If the person being addressed is older than the speaker, Bangladeshis will append a suffix to a person's name to denote respect and the level of closeness between the two people.
- Bangladeshis are quite implicit/indirect communicators: they communicate in long, rich and contextualized sentences and also use body language.
- People who come from explicit/direct cultures may be seen as rude and the information that they provide may be understood as inadequate.
- Personal space is less of an issue in Bangladesh than many European cultures. Bengalis stand close when speaking to someone of the same gender and touch is common. However, when speaking with a woman the space is often increased.
- More information can be obtained at <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/bangladesh.html>

- Dr. M. Maniruzzaman published a study called "Learning EFL by Bengali Speaking Learners: Major Linguistic Problems and Possible Solutions" where he discusses the major challenges faced by Bengali speakers while trying to learn English:

1. Phonetic and phonological problems
2. Stress and intonation
3. Morphological and syntactic problems
4. Semantic and pragmatic problems

1. Some Phonetic and Phonological Problems

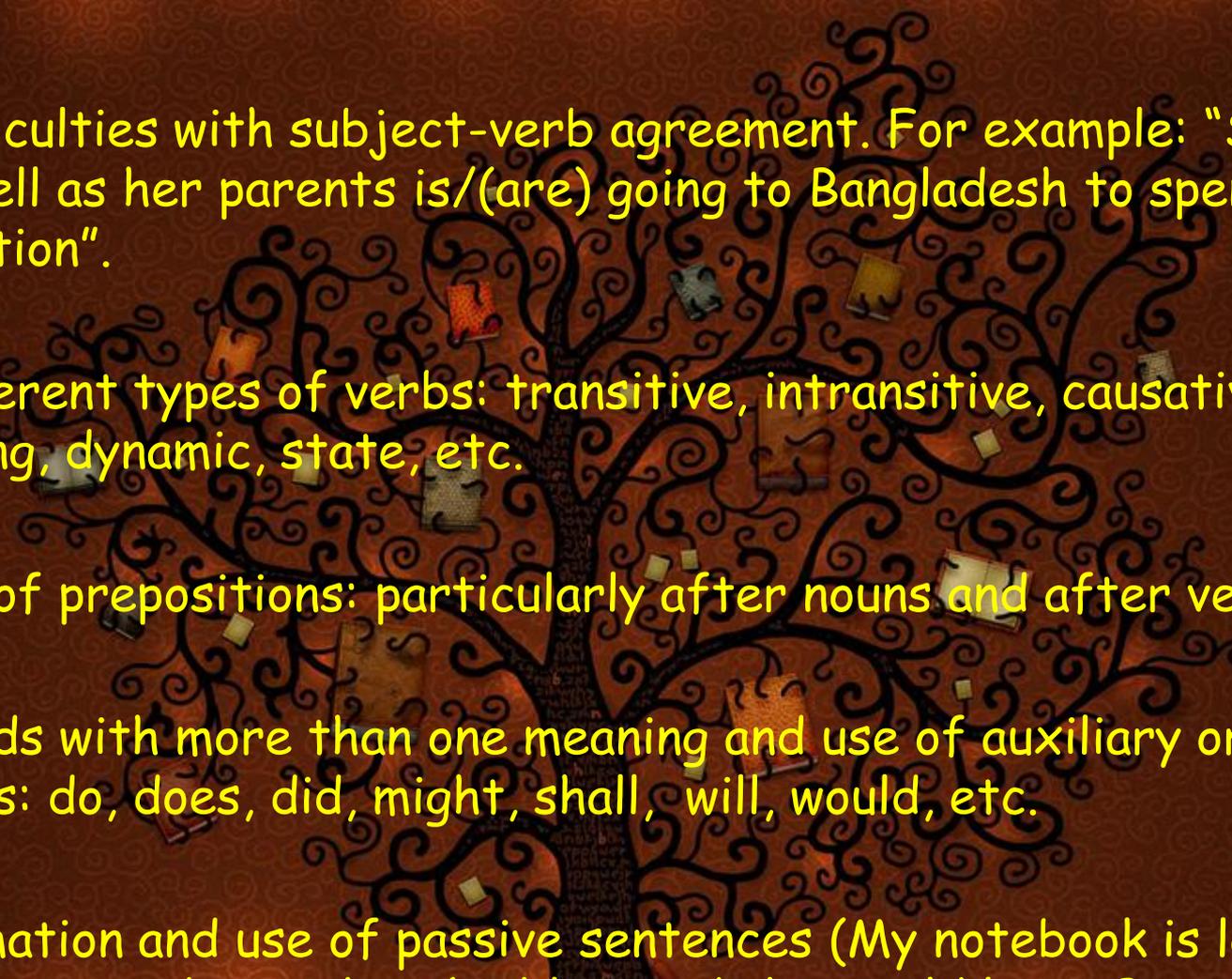
- Speech production: English is a "non-phonetic" language.
- Bengali speaker cannot easily and authentically pronounce schwa or also called reduced vowel (not existent in Bengali)
- Monophthongs and diphthongs : affect his/her auditory and perceptive ability and hence reduce his/her capability of listening.
- They cannot exactly articulate and even perceive English inter-dental fricatives /θ ð/ since there is no inter-dental fricatives in the Bengali language.
- They are unable to differentiate between English voiced alveolar fricative /z/ , voiced palato-alveolar affricate /dʒ/ and voiced palato-alveolar fricative /ʒ / : no similar sound in Bengali.

2. Stress and Intonation

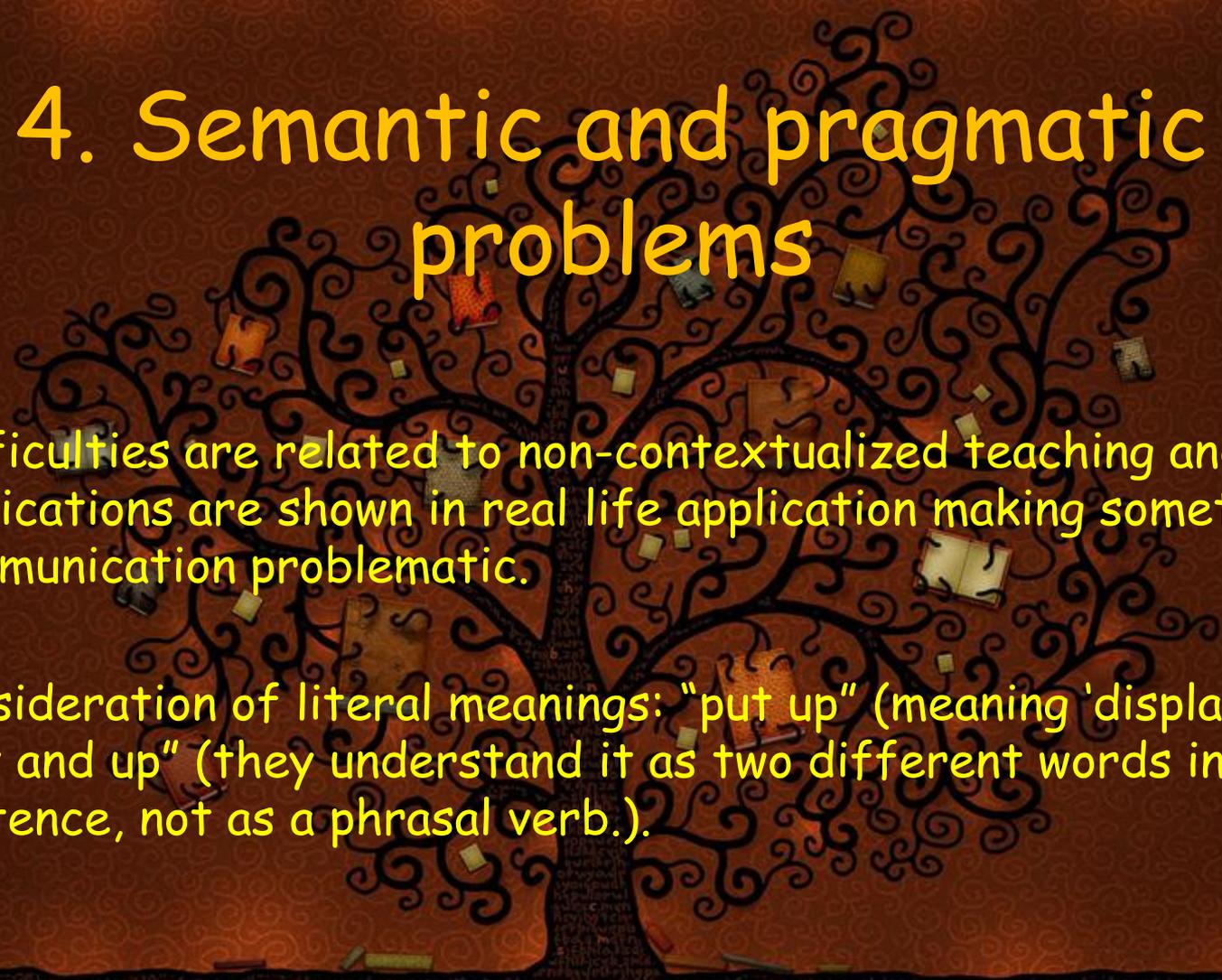
- English: stress-timed vs. Bengali: syllable-timed
 - Difficulties in the stress placement
 - Difficulties with intonation what can cause speech to sound unnatural and even unintelligible

3. Morphological and Syntactic Problems

- Addition of prefixes and suffixes:
 - use of prefixes which are affixed before stems, for example:
 - » affix 'in-' or 'un-' before the stem 'complete', 'in-', 'un-' or 'im-' before 'perfect' to make adjectives with a negative property
- Basic sentence structure in the English (SVO): Bengali sentence structure is SOV.
- Difficulties in where to use an adverb or an adjective; and how to change a noun into an adjective.
- Difficulties related to functions of a word depending on its position in a sentence. For example; "the word 'round' functions as five different parts of speech? adjective, adverb, preposition, noun and verb in five environments (Hornby 2000)"

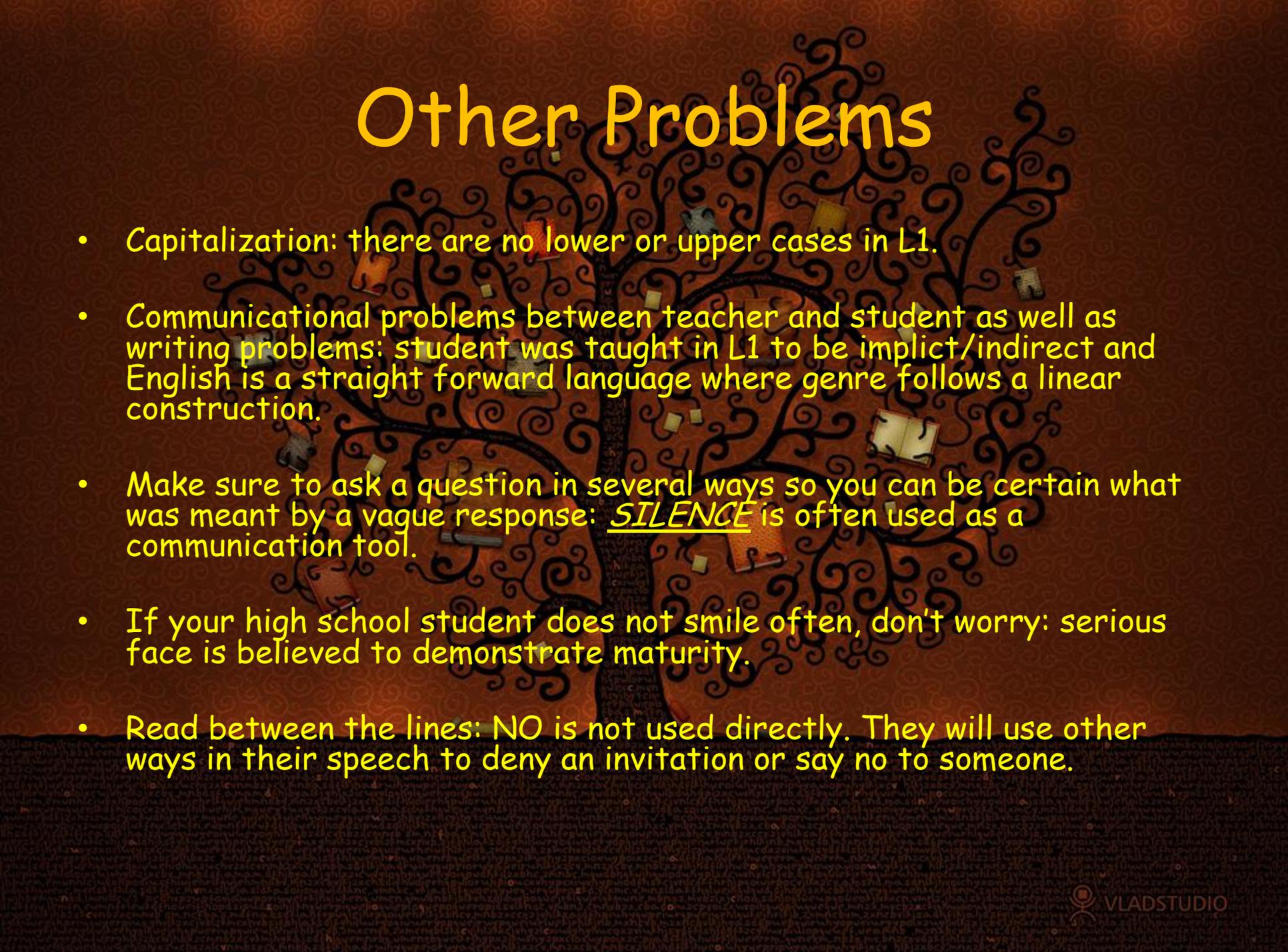
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- Difficulties with subject-verb agreement. For example: "Shana as well as her parents is/(are) going to Bangladesh to spend the vacation".
 - Different types of verbs: transitive, intransitive, causative, linking, dynamic, state, etc.
 - Use of prepositions: particularly after nouns and after verbs.
 - Words with more than one meaning and use of auxiliary or modal verbs: do, does, did, might, shall, will, would, etc.
 - Formation and use of passive sentences (My notebook is lost) and reported speeches (Ashley said she would learn Bengali).

4. Semantic and pragmatic problems



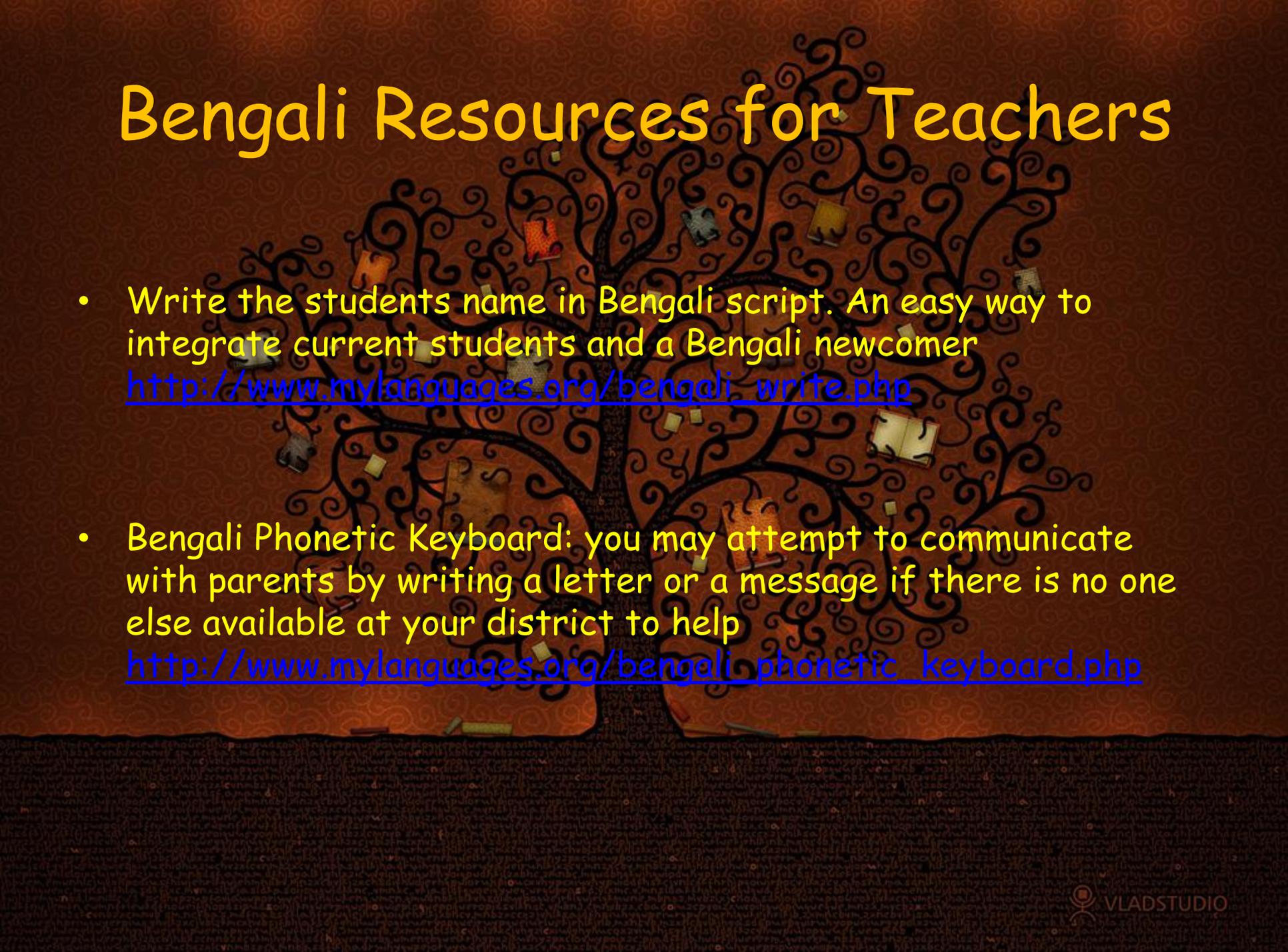
- Difficulties are related to non-contextualized teaching and implications are shown in real life application making sometimes communication problematic.
- Consideration of literal meanings: "put up" (meaning 'display') vs. "put and up" (they understand it as two different words in a sentence, not as a phrasal verb.).

Other Problems



- Capitalization: there are no lower or upper cases in L1.
- Communicational problems between teacher and student as well as writing problems: student was taught in L1 to be implicit/indirect and English is a straight forward language where genre follows a linear construction.
- Make sure to ask a question in several ways so you can be certain what was meant by a vague response: SILENCE is often used as a communication tool.
- If your high school student does not smile often, don't worry: serious face is believed to demonstrate maturity.
- Read between the lines: NO is not used directly. They will use other ways in their speech to deny an invitation or say no to someone.

Bengali Resources for Teachers



- Write the students name in Bengali script. An easy way to integrate current students and a Bengali newcomer
http://www.mylanguages.org/bengali_write.php
- Bengali Phonetic Keyboard: you may attempt to communicate with parents by writing a letter or a message if there is no one else available at your district to help
http://www.mylanguages.org/bengali_phonetic_keyboard.php

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Images

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