

# **BSL**

A bi-lingual (English-Bengali) play in one act

By Sudipta Bhawmik

© 2005 by Sudipta Bhawmik  
28 McBride Way  
Bridgewater, NJ 08807  
(908) 429 1120  
bhawmik@gmail.com

## CHARACTERS

Nick (Nikhil)	A teenager (13-14yrs) of Bengali origin.
Neil (Sunil)	A teenager (13-14yrs) of Bengali origin, very smart.
Jay (Jayanta)	Teenager (13-14yrs), friend of Nick and Neil, funny, happy-go-lucky kind of guy
Seema	Nick's elder sister (15-16 yrs)

SETTING

Nick's room - a typical teenager's room with a door on stage right. A bed, a desk, a computer and bookshelf.

TIME

A Sunday morning

ACT I

SCENE 1

(Nick sleeping in his bed. Somebody knocks the door. Nick still sleeps, knocking grows louder.)

NICK

(Sleepily)

I am still sleepy Mom.... Let me sleep some more....

(Knocks continue)

JAY

(Strong whisper)

Nick, wake up.... It's us.... Open the door.....

NICK

(Still sleepy)

Who's us..... ?

(More knocks)

NEIL

Come on.... Open up Nick... it's me – Neil.

JAY

And Jay.... Open the door....

(Nick gets up and sleepily walks to the door)

NICK

Okay... Okay... hang on.... I am coming....

(Nick opens the door. Jay and Neil bolt into the room. Neil carrying a laptop bag.)

NEIL

(To Nick)

Close the door.

(Nick closes the door)

NICK

What's up guys? It's not even 9.30.

JAY

You won't even believe it. Neil's a genius!

NEIL

(Pulling out a laptop computer from his bag)

Nick, where is your power outlet?

NICK

Hold it guys... slow down... What are you talking about?

JAY

Nick, Neil has invented a fantastic computer program... it will solve all our problems...

NICK

All our problems?

JAY

Yes, all our language problems..... ha ha ha you won't believe..... Neil, are you all set?

(Neil is setting up his computer)

NEIL

Yes, I am almost there... This old computer takes a little more time to boot up.

NICK

Hey! Hey! Guys..... Can you please fill me in? What are you two up to? You know, I am in no mood for any practical jokes.

JAY

This program can....

(Neil stops him)

NEIL

Let me explain. Nick, I developed this program to solve some of our language problems. With the help of this program, one can learn to speak any language.

NICK

What's so special about it? There are hundreds of programs to help learn foreign languages.

NEIL

Well, this not your typical old man's language learning system. With this system you can learn to speak any language, fluently, in seconds.

JAY

Not just any language....Bangla..., Nick... pure Bangla!

NICK

But, how does this all work?

NEIL

You know that our ears have nerves in them that connect to our brain, right? When sound waves excite these nerves, these nerves fire up the synapses in our brain neurons and store up the patterns in a network structure.

NICK

Wait! Can we hear this in plain English?

JAY

He is speaking in English!

NICK

Come on Jay...

NEIL

OK, I'll try to cut out the technical details. But you know, this is how we typically hear and learn languages and other audio stuff. Nothing special. The special thing about my program is that it makes the process faster, by several orders of magnitude.

NICK

But how did you make the system to teach Bangla?

NEIL

I loaded up the entire English to Bengali dictionary, along with all the syntactic and semantic rules. The vocabulary is good enough to make you a Bangla orator or writer.

NICK

Really? That sounds quite interesting.

JAY

What do you mean interesting? It is just fantastic! Just think about your Dad and Mom's face when they hear you speak flawless Bangla. Boy, won't they be surprised?

NICK

Yeah, I can imagine that. At least they will stop bothering me about learning Bangla.

NEIL

OK, I think the system is up. Come on Nick, have a seat here.

NICK

Why?

NEIL

Why, don't you want to learn Bangla? You'll be the first person to use this great invention of mine.

NICK

What do you mean, "first person"? Haven't you tried this machine on anyone?

JAY

That's why we are here. We want to test it on you.

NICK

Why me? Why not yourself? Doesn't all scientists typically test their inventions on themselves?

NEIL

Well sometimes they do, but if I test it myself I won't be able to run the system or even make minor adjustments here and there, can I?

NICK

Then, why not Jay?

NEIL

Jay chickened out.

JAY

No, I never chickened out. I said... that my assistance might be required to help run the tests. If anything goes wrong..... I can help.

NICK

What can go wrong?

NEIL

No, no, nothing can go wrong. This is completely harmless. You will wear this pair of headphones and will only hear some noise, some buzzing sound maybe, for few seconds. That's all. I selected you as my first candidate because of other reasons.

NICK

And what's that?

NEIL

This system, at least in this early version, requires that the subject have a minimum level of intelligence.... You are quite a smart kid, aren't you?

JAY

Yeah! Nick is way way smarter than me. You always manage to get straight A's, not me.

NEIL

Nick, think about it, when I'll become famous, you will be famous too, just like Watson of Alexander Graham Bell. Nick, the first guy to try the BSL system.

NICK

BSL system?

JAY

Bangla as a second language system!

NEIL

Shut up! BSL stands for Bilateral Sensory Language System. This system can do more than Bangla.

NICK

Bangla as a second language is not bad either.

NEIL

OK, I have no objection to that interpretation either. Now come on, have a seat and put on these earphones.

NICK

So, you are saying, that if I try this system, I can speak in Bangla?

NEIL

Yes.

(Nick sits down next to Neil)

NICK

Fluently, just like the folks in Kolkata?

JAY

Yes, of course!

NEIL

Absolutely!

(Puts on the earphones on Nick)

NICK

Will I be able to read and write?

NEIL

You should! We'll find out soon!

(Gets ready to start the system)

JAY

Why do you need to read and write in Bangla? Speaking is good enough.

NICK

That's true. Speaking in Bangla should be good enough!

(Neil puts the earphones on Nick)

Neil, you are sure this is not going to hurt?

NEIL

No not at all. As I said, this is completely harmless. You may only hear some noise, that's all. Most of the frequency will be beyond your audible range. OK, we are all set. Nick are you ready, I'll start the program now.

NICK

Yes, I am.

JAY

OK, I'll start the count down, 9 ...8...7....6....

NEIL

Shut up Jay. This is not a space shuttle launch.

(to Nick)

OK, here we go.

(Neil presses a button on the computer; Nick grimaces and screams, holds his palms to his ears)

NEIL

Nick? Nick? How do you feel?

(Nick opens his eyes, and blasts at Neil)

NICK

Mithye kotha bolli keno? Ki bikot awaaj holo ektaa. Tui bolli kichhui sona jaabe naa.

(Neil and Jay look at each other)

NEIL

Say again. How are you feeling? Say that again.

NICK

Bollam to, bhison baaje ekta awaaj holo... Kaane emon laaglo je mone hochhilo kaan phete jaabe.

(Neil and Jay starts to laugh)

JAY

Neil, did you hear that? It's working, man... it's working....

NEIL

Of course it is working.....

JAY

You are a genius, Neil, you are a genius!

NICK

Tora haaschhis keno, pagol holi naaki?

NEIL

Don't you get it?

NICK

Naa! Ki hoyechhe?

JAY

You are speaking in Bangla, Nick, in Bangla....!

NICK

Ami Bangla bolchhi? Hay, tai to... Banglai to bolchhi...(gets excited) Neil tor jontro kaaj korchhe tahole....

NEIL

Yes, it is. But we need to test it more.

JAY

OK, let me ask you few questions. What is your name?

NICK

Nikhil Dutta.

NEIL

What kind of question is that? What's your name? Isn't the answer same in any language?

JAY

Oh oh! Sorry, I goofed.

NICK

(Laughing)

Joy-ta ekta gadhaa....

NEIL

Let me try. Nick, what did you eat this morning?

NICK

Kichchhu naa.

NEIL

Tell me, how many days are in a leap year?

NICK

T'insho chheshotti din.

JAY

Is that right?

NEIL

(Whispering to Jay)

I'm not really sure...

NICK

(Laughing hysterically)

Toraa amaar kothaa bujhte paarchhis naa....toraa amaar ki porikkha korbi?  
Ekhon tora ei jontro pore aage bangla sikhe ne... taarpor amaake porikkhaa  
korish.

(Neil pulls Jay to a corner)

NEIL

Jay, you know what? I think I need some help in this matter. We need someone  
who knows Bangla better than us.

JAY

What should we do? Do you think we can ask any of our parents to help test  
this?

NEIL

Are you nuts? If they know that we now have this system, they will go crazy. They'll think that this is a quick fix and they'll never approve of this device's usage.

JAY

Yeah, they would not like to lose the fun of torturing us to learn Bangla, wouldn't they? Besides, your mom, Mollika mashi will have to fold up her Bangla school. She wouldn't like that either.

NICK

Jay, Neil, tora ki bolaboli korchhis? Son, toder ami ekta bangla kobita sonai,

Jack ebong Jill  
uthechhilo tilaar opore  
aante ek baalti jol

Jack gelo pore  
bhanglo mathar mukut  
Jill elo pechhone  
Gorate Gorate.....

Ha... Ha... Ha....

Kemon dilam... bujhte paarchhis?

JAY

Is that the Jack and Jill rhyme?

NEIL

I think so...but I am not sure...

(Some one knocks on the door. Seema, Nick's elder sister is heard from off stage)

SEEMA

Nick, get up...., you'll be late for Mollika mashi's school. ....Nick can you hear me...get up you lazy bones...

JAY

Hey, Seema can help us. She knows Bangla quite well.

NEIL

You think so? Are you sure she's not going to talk about this to anyone?

JAY

We need to convince her, I think she'll agree. Hey, Nick, do you think you Didi can keep a secret?

NICK

Jaanina, tobe ei darun khobor gopon rakhaar ki dorkar? Amaar to ichhe korchhe ekkhuni baire giye Baba ar Maake Bangla suniye ashi.

SEEMA

(Off stage)

Nick, are you still sleeping? Get up quick; else I'll call Maa.

NICK

(To Seema offstage)

Ami ghoom theke uthe porechhi...

(Neil rushes to Nick and covers his face)

NEIL

In English man, in English. We cannot let Seema suspect anything now...

(Seema knocks heavily on the door)

SEEMA

Nick, open the door.... What are you doing in there? Open up.

JAY

Neil, I think we should let her in. I am sure she'll understand. Else she's going to call her parents.

SEEMA

(Still knocking)

Nick, is there someone in your room? Come on... open the door.

NEIL

(Quickly covers his computer with some sheets)

Okay, Nick let her in, open the door.

NICK

Dara, khulchhi...

(Opens the door; Seema enters)

SEEMA

Oh, you two folks are here too. So what are you guys doing here so early in the morning?

JAY

Nothing, we are doing nothing? Just chatting with Nick, aren't we Neil?

NEIL

Yeah, just chatting.

SEEMA

Chatting? About what?

NICK

Are golpo korchhila, nanan bishoy niye, kheladhula... bidyaloy.... Eisob..

(Neil gestures to Nick, pleading him to speak in English)

SEEMA

Golpo korchhili? Something is funny... (Notices Neil)... Neil what are you trying to say?

NEIL

Nothing.... I am saying nothing.... I am having this strange itch on my chin...allergies maybe..

NICK

Hay, bodhoy kono allergy hobe... tui ki kichu kheyechhili naki Neil... kono poka kamaray ni to?

SEEMA

Ki byapar Nick? How come you are speaking in Bangla with Neil?

JAY

Oh, Oh, Nick is practicing Bangla before going to Mollica mashi's school. We all are practicing. Tai naa, Neil.

NEIL

Hain, amra obbhash korchhilam....Nick tui ki golpo taa porechhis?.... Aaj test hobe...

SEEMA

Something is fishy. I never heard you folks speak so much Bangla before... not even in Bangla class... Come on, tell me what's going on?

NICK

Kichchhu hoyni Didi, sob thik achhey. Keno Bangla bola ki kharap? Maa, Baba, Mollika mashi sobai to bole je nijeder modhye Bangla bolte. Bangla chorchaa naa korle to shikte paarbo naa, tai naa.

SEEMA

(Very very surprised)

Nick... how can you give that speech in Bangla, with all those tough words and without a single English word? How could you do this? This is absolutely fantastic!

NEIL

You really think so?

SEEMA

Of course! You boys should learn a thing or so from my brother. Mollica mashi will be so proud of you Nick. You must have been secretly practicing a lot. This just cannot happen overnight.

NICK

Naa, ek raate ghoteni, ghotechhe koek muhurte, bolte parish chokher poloke.

SEEMA

What?

JAY

We can explain everything. But first, tell me, do you like the idea of being able to learn Bangla very quickly?

SEEMA

Of course I do... but no language can be learnt quickly, it takes time.

JAY

(proudly)

Not with our boy genius Neil's BSL system!

NICK

Sotti Neil, tui atyanto protibhadhor chhele.....(hugs Neil)

SEEMA

My God Nick... tui ki sob kothaa bolchhis...atyanto... protibhadhor....; Jay BSL ki? What is this BSL system.

JAY

Bangla as a Secondary Language System.

SEEMA

What?

NEIL

Jay, let me explain. Seema, I sort of invented this system.... With this you can learn Bangla in a matter of seconds... maybe even less...

SEEMA

You are kidding, right? Else you must have gone mad.

NEIL

No, I am not kidding, it is true.

JAY

Nick is our proof, a living, talking proof.

SEEMA

He must be faking. You guys must have prepped him up with some Bangla sentences to fool me. I know he cannot speak Bangla.

NEIL

Well, why don't you test Nick yourself? You know Bangla better than any one of us.

NICK

Thik achhey, tui amake porikkha kor naa? Je kono proshno kor, ami uttor debo.

JAY

Yes, go ahead. Ask him some tough questions. That will help us test this system better, wouldn't it Neil?

NEIL

Yes, of course!

SEEMA

Are you sure? I can ask him some really tough questions, you know?

JAY

Sure, go ahead.

SEEMA

Okay! Nick, translate this sentence to Bangla. "I have been thinking about how to teach you all a lesson"

NICK

Ami bhabchhilaam ki kore toder shobaike sikkha deoa jay!

SEEMA

Not bad!

NEIL

That was too easy. Ask him some real tough ones.

SEEMA

Tell me, what is the Bangla of, mmm...”positive thinking”?

NICK

Eetibaachak bhaabna.

SEEMA

Amazing! You are right!

JAY

That was a tough one. I never heard of “eetibachha”.. or what ever you said.

NEIL

Seema, don't ask him words only, I have the entire dictionary loaded, it will be too easy for him. Ask him some sentences, the semantics was the most difficult part to implement.

SEEMA

Nick you know the entire dictionary? You must be kidding?

NICK

(Smiles)

Ami jaanina sampurna abhidhan aamaar jyato kina, tobe Neil jodi bole tahole kothata sotti. Tui aro porikkha kornaa amaake.

SEEMA

Thik aachhey, you cannot fool me so easily. Here take this book, read it and translate to Bangla.

(Seema picks up Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets from Nick's table and hands it to read. Nick opens the book and reads)

NICK

Oh, khub sohoj! Shon, ami porchhi. Harry Potter ebong gupto-rahasshya prokoshtho. (Turns page) Prothom odhyay. Ek joghonyo jonmodin. Ei prothom noy, je abar ek tarka shuru holo pratorasher somoy, chaar nombor Privet sharani-te. Sri Vernon Dursley aaj ati bhore ghoom bhenge gechhey ek joralo penchaar daake jaa ashchhilo taar bhaipo Harry'r ghor theke.

“Tritiobaar ei soptaah!” tabiler epaas theke gorje uthlen, “Tui jodi oi penchaat take niyontron naa korte parish, oke ekhaan theke jete hobe!”

JAY

Is he speaking correct Bangla? Is the translation correct? It sound like jibberish to me.

NEIL

Well it's not perfect yet...

SEEMA

No, No, it is quite OK. Quite amazing I should say. Some words are a bit difficult for me too, and the accent needs some work; but most of it seems to be all right.

NEIL

BSL can't do much about the accent, that requires muscle reconditioning; but it'll come in time.

NICK

Tora thik moto bujhte paarchhisnaa tai bol. Tora aar koto-tuku Bangla jaanish.

JAY

Well, I can understand that you are speaking in Bangla, but how can we be sure that you are translating correctly?

SEEMA

Nick, why don't you first read a sentence in English first and then translate it to Bangla. I can then better understand if you are translating the sentences correctly.

NEIL

That's a good idea.

NICK

Thik aachhey tai porchhi.

Uni onaar stree Petuniar saathe gaarho drishti binimoy korlen.... Uni onaar stree Petuniar saathe gaarho drishti binimoy korlen.

(Jay an Neil exchange looks)

SEEMA

Nick, I said read the sentence in English first, then say the same sentence in Bangla.

NICK

Tai to bolchhhi.

NEIL

No Nick, you repeated the sentence in Bangla, both the times.

NICK

Tai naaki. Thik aachhey abaar porchhi.

(Reads again)

Harry cheshta korlo protibaad korte kintu or kothaguli Dursley'r chhele Dudley'r ek bikot dhekurer awaje taliey gelo.

(Nick stops)

SEEMA

Nick, you are again doing the same thing. Read it in English first.

(Nick is silent)

SEEMA

Ki holo? What happened?

NICK

Paarchhi naa.

SEEMA

Ki paarchhis naa.

NICK

(Almost in a crying voice)

Ami English bolte paarchhi naa. Mukh diye Bangla beriye jaachchhe.

SEEMA

What? That's impossible, try again. Let me see what you are reading.

(Seema moves next to Nick, Jay too moves in; they can both now read the book)

Come on read this sentence now, "I want more bacon".

NICK

Amaar aro shuor chai.

JAY

Bacon ki shuor? Shuor is pig, right?

SEEMA

Jay, it's not funny. Come on Nick, enough of this practical joke. Read this sentence in English. Come on.

NICK

Ami chestaa korchhi.

"Bhajar paatre aaro achhey misthisona," bollen Petunia kaki, taar bheja chhokh ghoralen taar bishaal chheler opor.

Ami paarchhi naa Didi, sotti bolchhi kebol bangla berochchhe mukh diye. Kichhutei English bolte paarchhi naa.

JAY

Hey Nick, I found one problem with your BSL system. It should be Petunia maashi, not kaaki, Aunt Petunia is Harry's mother's sister.

NEIL

Yes, I noticed. That can be fixed, but.....

SEEMA

(Almost yelling)

You got to fix more than that morons. Don't you see that Nick cannot speak English at all?

JAY

Come on Nick, cut it out! How can you not speak English? That's impossible! You must be joking.

NICK

Naa aami thatta korchhi naa. Sotti bolchhi. Bishwas kor.

SEEMA

He is saying the truth, you idiots. Why don't you understand that he cannot speak English any more. That dumb machine of Neil did something to him.

NEIL

That should not happen. Nick, you can understand me, when I speak in English, right?

NICK

Hay, bujhte parchhi, kintu bolte paarchhi naa.

NEIL

That's odd, really odd. OK, Nick repeat after me – human!

NICK

Maanush

NEIL

Dog

NICK

Kukur

NEIL

Sophisticated.

NICK

Satarkabaani - Amaar abhidhan-e ei shobdo nei

JAY

Aha! That cannot be right!

NEIL

That's a warning message – means the word does not exist in his dictionary database. But something is wrong.... This message should not have been uttered in Bangla.

SEEMA

Now you understand, Eh, Mr. Genius?

NEIL

Yes, his neural networks must have been altered during the process of uploading. It is trying to translate any English word he sees or hears to Bangla.

JAY

That's good! That's what you have been trying to do, isn't it?

SEEMA

That's not good! He lives in USA you moron. He needs to speak in English. How do you think he'll do in his school tomorrow?

NICK

Tai to, kaalke bidyaloy jete hobe. Nick ki hobe? Tui taratari kichhu kor, kaal bidyaloye ami kebol Bangla bolle to keu kichhu bujhte paarbe naa. Doya kor Neil, thik kor amake.

JAY

Don't worry Nick, I am sure the effect will wear off. All such inventions do. Didn't you read those science fiction stories. Won't it Neil?

NEIL

(Bit nervous)

I am not sure about that. The effect is supposed to be permanent; at least it will not wear off in the near term.

NICK

Taholey ki hobe? Nick kichhu ekta kor.

SEEMA

Yes, you better do something soon Neil. How could you try something like this on Nick without being sure of the possible side effects? Do you know, you can be jailed for this?

NEIL

Seema, don't get excited. I am trying to figure something out. Give me few seconds.

(Works frantically on the computer)

JAY

But Seema, at least Nick can read English. So even if Neil cannot fix him today, he can still survive tomorrow at school.

SEEMA

How? Doesn't he need to speak to his teachers, to his friends?

JAY

Nick, all you have to do is to act dumb, I mean, as if you cannot speak... you know.. that kind of dumb. You have developed a mouth condition, like sore throat or something... just take a note with you. If someone asks any question, just show the note and mumble something like gnnn...gnnnn....!

NICK

Kintu amaake likhte hobe naa? Takhon ki korbo?

SEEMA

Yes, What about Language arts, social studies, science classes? He may have to write essays, take notes.

JAY

That's easy. Just include in your note that you have injured your fingers or your arm too, and you cannot write. Hang it on a string around your neck, Simple!

NEIL

Okay, I think I fixed the problem. Come on Nick, lets try this again.

NICK

Thik hobe to? Ar kono gondogol hobe naa to?

SEEMA

Neil, make sure everything is Okay. Are you sure the problem is fixed?

NEIL

Oh I am absolutely sure. It was a simple bug. I should have caught it earlier. Come on Nick, put this on.

(Hands over the headphones to Nick. Nick hesitates to put them on.)

JAY

Don't worry, put them on. Neil is saying that the problem is fixed. Trust him. Besides it cannot be worse... ha ha ha (laughs)

SEEMA

Shut up! Put it on Nick, I think we need to trust Neil for this one.

NICK

Thik achhey, porchhi... (Puts on the earphones)

NEIL

Okay, hang in there...here I come...one...two...three....

(Seema and Jay gather round Neil....stares tensely at the computer screen and Nick. Neil presses a key and the

program starts. Nick grimaces for a second, then calms down)

Nick....Nick....how are you feeling....are you OK?

(Nick is silent)

SEEMA

Nick... Nick....are you all right? Come on, say something Nick....

NICK

Ki bolchhis didi? Tora ki bolchhis?

SEEMA

Kemon laagchhe? Thik achhis to? Are you feeling OK?

NICK

Hay, thik achhi.... Bhaloi achhi mone hochhe....

NEIL

Speak in English Nick, speak in English.... I'd like to see if you have recovered your full vocabulary.

NICK

Ki bolchhis tui? Ami kichchhu bujhte parchhi naa.

(Neil and Jay look at each other)

SEEMA

What do you mean, kichhu bujhte paarchhi naa? Tui amader kothaa bujhte parchhis naa?

NICK

Tui jokhon Bangla bolchhis, takhon bujhte paarchhi. Kintu onyo kotha gulo bujhte parchhi naa. Ektu porishkaar kore bolbi?

SEEMA

Ki bhashay bolchhi mane? Tui English bujhte paarchhis naa?

NICK

English? Taa kemon kore hobe. Ami to English jaani!

JAY

Nick, do you understand what I am saying? I am speaking in English. Can't you follow me?

NICK

Jay, Ami kichchhu bujhte parchhi naa.

SEEMA

Oh my God! Neil, what have you done to him? He can't even understand English now!

NEIL

Don't panic Seema. Don't panic. It may be.... You know... only a temporary effect.

SEEMA

(Yells at Neil)

Temporary effect? How do you know that? You were supposed to fix him, such that he can speak English again. Do you at all understand what's going on? This time he cannot even understand English! Don't you get it you moron?

NEIL

It was not supposed to work that way.. Something must have gone wrong.

SEEMA

You say this now? Shouldn't you check before using it on my brother? What do think he is, a guinea-pig?

JAY

Oh my God, now we are in trouble.

NICK

Tora please banglay kothaa bolbi. Ami je kichhu bujhte parchhi naa. Abaar kono gondogol holo naaki Neil!

SEEMA

Anek boro gondogol hoyechhe. Tui English sob bhoole gechhis. Neil-er ei computer tor brain theke English wipe out kore diyechhe.

NICK

English bhoole gechhi? Oshombhob! English ki kore bhoolbo?

SEEMA

Hay, tui English bhule gechhis! Amra English bolchhi, tui boojhte parchhis naa to.

NICK

Ashombhob! Ami chotobele theke English bolchhi. English holo amaar prothom bhasha. Ami English bhulte pari naa. Oi Neil-er BSL er jonno hoyto bolte paarchhi naa, kintu ami to English bujhte paari, porteo paari.

SEEMA

Porte parish? Thik achhey, ei Harry Potter biota abaar por dekhi?

(Seema hands over the book to Nick; Nick picks it up, open the book and his face turns pale.)

JAY

Read it Nick! Come on, read it?

(Nick does not understand; stares at Jay, he is very nervous)

SEEMA

Jay, talk to him in Bangla. You know he cannot understand English.

JAY

Oh, I am sorry. Porte paarchhis, Nick.

NICK

Naa, ami kichchhu porte parchhi naa. Kichhu naa. Egulo ki bhasha? English? Kintu ami kono akkhar bujhte paarchhi naa.

SEEMA

Ekhon bujhte paarchhis to, ki rokom bokar moto Neil-er phande porechhis? Tor moto boka chhele ami kokhono dekhini.

NICK

Ain! Ki hobe tahole? Ki kore holo emon? Neil, siggiri amake thik kore de. Ami kaal ki kore bidyaloye jaabo?

NEIL

I am trying Nick, I am trying?

NICK

Ki bolli? Ki bolli?

NEIL

Ami chestaa korchhi... Worry korish naa.... We'll fix you.

NICK

Neil, ki bolchhis? Ki korbo naa? Ekhon jodi Maa Baba jaante pare, tahole ki hobe? Bidyaloye ki kore jaabo? Oh, amaar sob guliye jaachchhe, mathar shob gondogol hoye jachchhe?

(Nick sits down, almost crying)

SEEMA

Neil, toke kichhu kortei hobey... taratari...

JAY

Yeah Neil, we got to do something... Oh in Bangla... Neil kichhu kor...

NEIL

Ami kichhu ektaa korechhi... try korte paari... jaanina work korbe kina... Nick ear phone taa porbi?

NICK

Hain porbo...

SEEMA

Naa, ekdom naa. Neil you cannot try anything unless you are absolutely sure!  
Jodi onyo kichhu gondogol hoy.

NEIL

Tahole aro time, I mean somoy, laagbe. Amaar dorkar aaro somoy.

NICK

Sorbo naash! Tui amake ki bipode phelli bolto? Ami ekhon ki korbo

JAY

Eureka, I have a great idea... I mean koob bhalo buddhi esechhe amaar.... Lets  
teach Nick English.... English is easy... he'll learn in no time...

NICK

Ki bolli tui..? Ki buddhi esechhe tor?

SEEMA

Jay, are you nuts? Nick, Jay bolchhey toke ekhon English sekhabe.

JAY

Why not? Nicker khoob buddhi... o shikhe nebe... taratari...

SEEMA

Impossible... Oshombhob...

NEIL

No no Seema, It may not be a bad idea... Jay'r buddhita kharap naa... English  
sekhale bhalo hote pare.... Or sob mone porte pare... You know, if we give  
him a crash course in Bangla... his neural networks may rearrange... he may  
recall his English knowledge and vocabulary.

NICK

Ki bolli abaar bol? Amake Jay English sekhabe... Pore sob ki bolli?

SEEMA

Nick, Neil bolchhe toke English sekhale tor abaar sob English mone pore  
jaabe...tui hoyto thik hoye jaabi... Neil, do you really think it will work?

JAY

I think it will. Let's give it a try... amraa ekta cheshtaa di... But where do we start.

SEEMA

Let's start with the alphabets. We need a book.

JAY

You find a book. I'll start with Nick anyway. Nick, repeat after me,....sorry.... amaar sathey bol.... A B C D E F..

(Nick hesitates)

Come on, sing with me, amaar sathe gaan kor... it will help remember better... bhalo mone thaakbe...

(Sings the popular rhyme)

"A B C D E F G, H I J K L M N O P, L M N O P Q R S T, U V W X Y Z"

(Nick tries to sing along, Seema joins)

SEEMA

Okay, now you sing yourself.

(Nick sings the song, almost correct)

NICK

Kire, thik hochchhe?

SEEMA

Hain, thik hochchhe.

NEIL

Jay, teach him phrases.... You know... Nick-ke bangle phrase.... I mean kotha... onek words niye.... like they teach us in Spanish class...

JAY

That's right. Thik achhey... Nick what is English for Ami?

NICK

Ki?

SEEMA

Jay, don't ask him questions without teaching him. Nick, "Ami" mane holo "I" English bhashay...Thik achhey? Amaar saathhey bol.. Ami holo I.

NICK

Ami holo I

SEEMA

Ami khete chhai holo I want to eat.

NICK

Ami khete chai holo I want to eat.

JAY

Seema, we need to teach him sentences that he can use in school tomorrow. Nick, bol "My Dog ate my home work", mane holo .... Neil how do you say this in Bangla...

NEIL

Amaar kukur amaare baarir kaaj khey phelchhe"

NICK

"baarir kaaj khey phelchhe"?

NEIL

Hain, school theke barite kaaj dey naa? Bol, Amaar kukur, MY DOG...

NICK

MY DOG...

JAY

ATE MY HOME WORK.

NICK

ATE MY HOME WORK

JAY

Purota bol... “My Dog ate my home work”

NICK

My Dog ate my home work.

JAY

Good, Very Good...mane bhaalo , khuub bhaalo

NICK

Good, Very Good....mane bhaalo, khub bhaalo.

NEIL

That’s it! Toke keu kichu jiggasha korelei bolbi, Good Good Very Good!

JAY

Right! So, keu jodi bole, “How are you doing?” tui bolbi

NICK

Good Good Very Good.

JAY

How’s the weather today?

NICK

Good Good Very Good!

JAY

Tokey aro duto kotha sikhiye dichchhi. Yes – mane Hain, No – mane Naa.

NICK

Yes – mane Hain. No – mane Naa! Yes – mane Hain, No – mane naa!

JAY

Jokhon keu kono question, I mean proshno korbe, bolbi Yes ba No ba Very Good. Thik achhey.

NICK

Thik achhey, Yes - ba – No – ba Very Good!

SEEMA

So, Nick did you complete your assignments?

NICK

Yes!

SEEMA

Can you hand them over to me?

NICK

No!

SEEMA

Do you know that you will lose points if you do not submit your assignments?

NICK

Good Good. Very Good!

SEEMA

Aaah! See you morons, do you understand that only Yes, No Very good will not help?

NICK

No!

SEEMA

Shut up! You are going to be a disaster tomorrow! Tui kalke ekta jachchetai kando korbi.

JAY

Seema, but if Nick can use these three word correctly he may be able to get by for some time till Neil fixes the system.

NICK

Yes! Very Good!

SEEMA

And how do you think he's going to answer any question which needs a more descriptive answer?

JAY

Aha! Solution ache. Nick can join the ESL class.

NICK

ESL class ki?

SEEMA

ESL class holo jekhane English sekhano hoy, jaara English bhaalo jaanena tader. But that is a long term solution. What about now? Maa Baba jokhon jaante paarbe, tokhon ki hobe?

JAY

Why, They prefer Bangla don't they? Ora to chay Amra... Nick... Bangla boli!

SEEMA

But, they are used to listening to English from us. Orao to amader sathe englishe kotha bole, seta jokhon Nick bujhte paarbe naa tokhon ki hobe.

JAY

Shoot! You are right! Thik bolechhis, oraa jodi suspect kore taahole ki hobe Neil?

NICK

Hain, tai to! Maa Baaba thik dhore phelbe. Ami kintu bole debo Neil tor BSL-er kothaa. Ami lukote paarbo naa.

NEIL

Please, Nick oder kichhu bolish naa. Borora jaante paarle jhamela hobe. Ami promise korchhi, ami eta thik kore debo, khub taratari.

SEEMA

To hell with your promise! You are the most irresponsible person I have ever seen.

NICK

Ki bolli Didi? Ki bolli?

SEEMA

Shut up you fool! Chup kor boka kothakar. Neil toke bollo ei BSL chestaa korte, aar tui kaane lagiye phelli? Tor kono buddhi nei, chintaa korli naa ki side effect, I mean khoti hote pare?

NICK

Ami to bhablaam Bangla shikte paarle bhaloi hobe. Maa Baba sobshomoy bole Bangla boli naa keno. Dida, thamma, sobai bole. Monika mashir bangla shikkha kendre giye kototuku sekhaa jay bol, aar ki bhishon birokti kor.

NEIL

You know Seema, few months ago, Kolkata theke baabaar ekjon bondhu eshechhilen; some bangle writer; amaar saathe banglay kothaa bolchhilen...ami bhalo bangle bolte parchhilam naa...English bolchhilam. That guy ridiculed me...amaake bollo, bangaalir chhele baangla bolte paaro naa? Baaba Maa-keo bollo... Maa kemon Bangla school korchhe...chhele bangle jaane naa? Maa khub rege giyechhilo amaar opor, Baba-o! Amaake khub bokechhilo, in front of that guy! They said, I kniew Bangla but I was not speaking intentionally! But I wasn't! Amaat vocabulary bhaalo naa. I cannot express myself in Bangla! But they wouldn't understand! That day I decided that I got to do something about it. Amaake kichhu kortei hobe. Seema, sei jonyoi to ei machine, I mean...jontro-ta baaniye chhilam. Ami bhebechhi shokolei khushi hobe...amadero ato koshto kore bangle shikte hobe naa. We can become Bangla experts in no time.

SEEMA

Hain, jaani je amader baba maa-ra Bangla sekhar jonyo khub chaap den, kintu toder bojhaa uchit chhilo je kono kichu eto taratari sekhaa jay naa. You need to work hard, toder koshto korte hobe. This machine is dangerous! For heavens sake Neil, you are playing with someone else's brains! Tui onyo ekjoner....brain...mogoj...niye khela korchhis.

JAY

But Seema, tell me, Amake bolo, keno amader koshto korte hobe? Why? What's so great about Bangla? Bangla shikke ki hobe? Amra shokolei English jaani, amader to banglay kotha bolar dorkaar nei. Kolkatay amaar sob relative,

cousins, sobai English bole, oder saatheo bangle bolar dorkaar nei; English is just fine. Ami jaanina keno amader parents...baba maa... amader bangle shikte insist kore? Ora jodi eto pressure....heck I don't know the bangla for pressure..

NEIL

Chaap

JAY

Hain, jodi chaap naa ditto, tahole Neil to ei machine..jontro...banatoi naa. Isn't it Neil. Necessity is the mother of all invention....proyojon holo sob abishkaarer maa.

SEEMA

Bokar moto kotha bolish naa Jay. Then why do you learn Spanish or French at school? Tui jaanish Bangla holo world's fifth most spoken language; prithibir modhye panch number bhasha; tui jaanish koto bhalo bhalo literature ... sahityo achhey banglay... Rabindranath Tagore nobel prize peyechhilen for his English translation of his poems... gitanjalir jonyo! Baba bole, if properly translated, anek anek bangla lekhok achhen jaara Nobel prize pete parten. Besides it is our heritage, our roots.

JAY

Yeah, Yeah Yeah! Eshob anek shunechhi, kintu the reality is that in future we will hardly use Bangla... Amra agey aar bangla use korbo naa.. Nick don't you agree? Oh, I mean ami thik kotha bolchhi naa?

NICK

Ami jaaninaa agey ki hobe, kintu ekhon jodi aami English naa bolte paari tahole khub mushkil hobe etaa jaani. Amake English jaantei hobe, edeshe thakte hole.

JAY

That's an idea! Why don't you go to Kolkata? Tui tahole Kolkata chole jaa, okhane to sobai Bangla bole, tor okhane kono oshubidhe hobe naa. Tui Bangla school-e jaabi, bangle bolbi, bangle porbi, bangla likhte paarbi.

SEEMA

Shut up! Is that a solution? Nick kohonoi Kolkata jaabe naa. Tachhara, kolkataeo English jaante hobe, English chharra okaneo chobe naa. Neil what's happening, when are you going to fix your system.

NEIL

I am trying, I am trying.....This machine is too slow...

NICK

Nick taratari kor, ektu porei kintu Maa amake daakte ashbe... Tartatari kor..

(At that moment, we hear a loud pounding on the door. A female voice is heard)

FEMALE VOICE

Nick, oth, dorjaa khol. School-e jaabi naa. Uthe por...

NICK

Ei re, Maa daakchhey. Ki hobe ekhon? Neil Ki hobe?

SEEMA

Ebaar thela bojho! Ish, tora jodi age baangla niye ektu besi interest dekhati, taholei Neil-keo eta abishkaar korte hoto naa, aar erokom gondogolo hoto naa.

JAY

Seema, we can argue about this later. Ekhon ki korbo. Mashi je daakchhe. Please do something.

NEIL

Seema, please save us. Mashike ekdom ei kothaa bolbi naa. Tahole more jaabo, we'll be all dead. Please kichhu koro.

NICK

Didi, tui Maa-ke bojhaa, bhethore dhukte dish naa. Tui giye make atka...

SEEMA

Naa, tahole Maa aro sondeho korbe. Neil, Jay, you hide behind the bed, bichhanar pechhone luko. Nick tui abaar kombol muri diye shuye por. Taratari. Ami make dekhchhi.

(The door knocking continues. Neil and Jay hides behind the bed. Nick goes back to bed and covers up)

SEEMA

Sobai lukiyechhis? OK. (Loud) Maa, ami Nick-ke daakchhi, o uthchhei naa. Ei Nick Oth...Oth....Bangla school-e jete hobe naa...

(Lights fade out)

Nick Oth Oth bolchhi.... Oth.....

(Lights fade in. We see Seema shaking Nick, trying to wake him up)

Nick Oth....Oth naa....Of ar koto ghumobi? Bangla school-e jete hobe naa....Oth....Get up... you lazy bones....get up...will you?

(Nick wakes up suddenly, startled)

NICK

Maa esechhe....Maa kothay re....kichu bolish ni to Didi?

SEEMA

Ki bolbo? Maa ashbe keno? What are you talking about? Are you alright?

NICK

Aain? Hain ami thik achhi! I am feeling alright. I am fine.

SEEMA

Then get up and get ready. We got to go to Mollica mashi's Bangla class.

NICK

Didi, ami English boojhte parchi. I can understand English. Hurrah! I can speak English! Neil, Jay, I can speak English now. You can come out!

SEEMA

Nick, what are you talking about? Of course you can speak English, what's so strange about that. You must be dreaming. Wake up!

NICK

What? I am dreaming? Where is Neil and Jay? They were hiding here...

(Nick looks for Jay and Neil behind the bed. Can't find them there.)

SEEMA

Neil and Jay? Why would they come at this time of the morning?

NICK

Neil was here...with his BSL system....

SEEMA

BSL system? What is that?

NICK

Oh never mind., never mind. It was just a dream. Thank God, it was just a dream. Swapno dekhchhila aami.

SEEMA

Ki swapno dekhchhili re?

NICK

Pore bolbo, some other time... it was quite interesting. Ami ready hochchhi.

SEEMA

Okay, taratari korish. (Seema moves towards the door, about to leave)

NICK

Didi, tor kaachhe bhalo Bangla boi ache re?

SEEMA

Keno? Suddenly why are you interested in Bangla boi?

NICK

Naa emni. Bhabchhi ekhon theke Bangla-ta ektu bhaalo kore porbo!

SEEMA

Good, Very Good!

NICK

Yes! Good Good Very Good!

(They both laugh. Lights fade out)

**THE END**