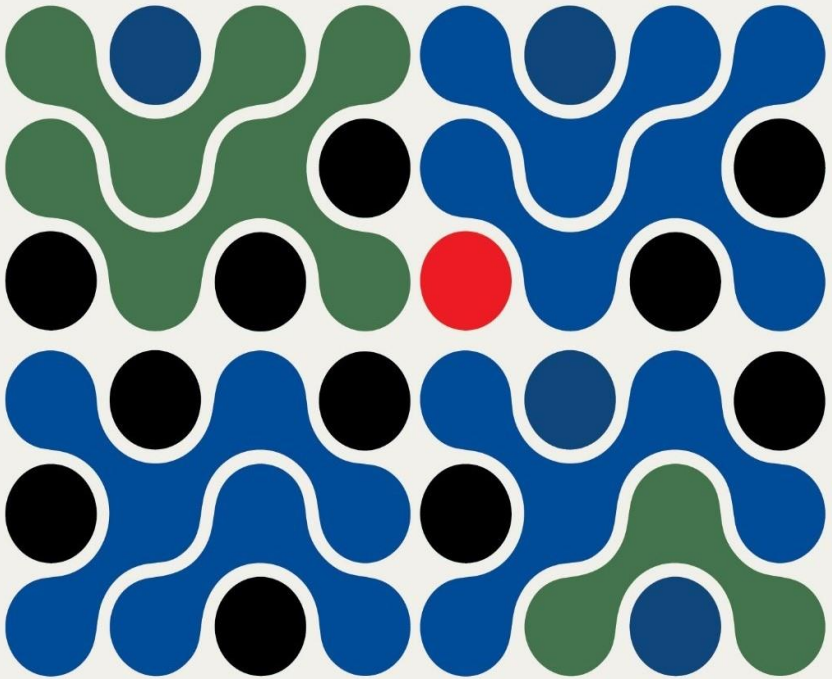


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Professor Dr. Mohammad Ashaduzzaman



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Contents

Beyond Borders: Language Barriers for Accessing to Education for Rohingya Children in Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Malaysia	5
B M Sajjad Hossain	
Empowerment, Social Identity, and Language Use: A case study of educated working women at the University of Chittagong	27
Fareen Rahman, Farzana Yesmen Chowdhury	
A Linguistic Review on the ‘Laleng Thar Language’ of the Patro Community of North-Eastern Bangladesh	49
Kawsar Ahmad	
A Survey Report on the Trust of Speakers towards their First Language	70
Mashrur Imtiaz	
Right to Learn in Mother Tongue: A Special Concern for Indigenous People of Bangladesh	101
Mohammad Abdul Hannan	
The Role of Arabic Language Education in the Socio-economy of Bangladesh: A Multidisciplinary Study	123
Mohammad Shamsul Karim, Muhammad Mohsin	
Struggling Against Social Exclusion: A Qualitative Study on the Odia Language Speakers in the Tea Community	153
Pollob Kumar Tanti, Mohammad Mojur-Ul-Haider	
An Analysis of the Slogans of the Quota Movement 2024 in Bangladesh using Speech Act Theory: A Pragmatic Perspective	174
Shorna Akter, Md. Minhajul Abedin	
International Mother Language Institute (IMLI) Essay/Article guide line	196



Beyond Borders: Language Barriers for Accessing to Education for Rohingya Children in Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Malaysia

B M Sajjad Hossain*

Abstract: This research aims to explore language barriers in accessing education for Rohingya children as refugees in Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Malaysia. As one of the most marginalized and displaced communities globally, Rohingya children face significant obstacles in realizing their right to education, exacerbated by linguistic differences in their host countries. By employing a comparative analysis framework, it attempts to elucidate the nuanced dynamics of language barriers and their impact on educational access and outcomes within diverse socio-political contexts. This study collected qualitative data from secondary sources and some by observation as primary data. It also used a document analysis method to examine the intersection of language, policy, and practice in educational settings catering to Rohingya children in the host countries after their arrival a few years ago. The paper discusses present language policies and practices in shaping the educational inclusion of the Rohingya children in overcoming the language-related barriers in those three countries. This study has made a comparison of the education and learning processes of the Rohingya children in Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Malaysia. It is observed that ensuring quality

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education for all refugee children is more difficult than basic education based on technical or non-formal only. However, the paper contributes to the broader arena of refugee education and their language rights.

Keywords: Access to education, Language barrier, Quality education, Education policy, Refugee education

Introduction

The Rohingya crisis, characterized by mass displacement and persecution, has thrust the plight of the Rohingya people into the global spotlight, illuminating the myriad challenges faced by this marginalized community. Rohingya refugee children face language barriers in accessing education in Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Malaysia. Among the many obstacles encountered by Rohingya individuals, access to quality education emerges as a critical concern, compounded by linguistic barriers within their host countries. Across Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Malaysia, where Rohingya refugees have sought sanctuary, language differences pose significant impediments to educational inclusion, perpetuating cycles of marginalization and hindering the realization of Rohingya children's right to education.

The intersection of language and education is a complex terrain, shaped by socio-political contexts, policy frameworks, and cultural dynamics. For Rohingya children, the journey to accessing education transcends national borders, traversing landscapes marked by legal ambiguities, resource constraints, and socio-cultural tensions. Understanding the nuances of language barriers in educational contexts for Rohingya children necessitates a comparative analysis that illuminates both commonalities and divergences across host countries, providing insights into policy gaps, promising practices, and avenues for intervention.

Five countries prohibit refugees from accessing public schooling, i.e. Bangladesh, Burundi, China, Malaysia, and Nepal (Palik, 2020). However, NGOs are operating only non-formal

education facilities for them on a small scale. Hence, this study embarks on a journey beyond the borders in which language becomes a barrier to accessing education for Rohingya children across Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Malaysia. By examining the experiences of Rohingya children navigating linguistic diversity within diverse educational settings, this research seeks to uncover the underlying factors shaping educational inclusion and exclusion. This paper pointed out how to face those obstacles for the bright future of refugee children.

The issue of language barriers transcends mere linguistic differences; it embodies broader questions of social justice, human rights, and global solidarity. By unpacking the complexities of language barriers in Rohingya children's education, this research endeavors to contribute to a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by one of the world's most vulnerable communities in three different countries (Shohel et al., 2023). It would like to contribute to world knowledge as well as advocate for policies and practices, especially for the refugee host countries that uphold the fundamental right to education for all, irrespective of linguistic background or national origin. The paper would like to suggest a few policy guidelines for further development in the context of those host countries that are supporting refugee children's education, especially with the Rohingya community, with a comparison of educational approaches in the three countries, highlighting that providing quality education to refugee children is a basic human right.

Literature Review

As one of the most marginalized communities, Rohingya children struggle to realize their educational rights, with language differences compounding many challenges earlier in their home country and now in the host countries. Rohingya refugee children struggle to access education in Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Malaysia due to language differences, which make it difficult for them to understand lessons and communicate with teachers. It limits their ability to fully participate in school activities and hampers the learning process. Rahman and Khan

(2020) and Hossain (2023) assessed the educational needs, challenges, and opportunities for Rohingya refugee children in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, and examined access to education, quality of learning, and the role of formal and informal educational initiatives in addressing the educational needs of Rohingya children. The study also explores policy implications and recommendations for improving educational outcomes for Rohingya children in refugee camps (Shohel, 2023).

Rohingya refugee children in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, are facing challenges in accessing education (Islam & Haque, 2018). Lack of infrastructure and trauma-related challenges with language barriers are crucial too. The study also examines the role of NGOs, community-based organizations, and international agencies in providing educational support to Rohingya children. Hassan et al. (2018) reported an overview of the educational situation for Rohingya refugee children in Bangladesh, focusing on access to education, quality of learning, and the impact of displacement on children's educational experiences. It highlighted the need for the education of Rohingya children and the importance of investment in education by considering a humanitarian setting.

Ashlee et al., (2020) examined the potential of digital learning interventions, i.e. using mobile app/s and other e-learning platforms, for the distinct needs of Rohingya refugee children in Bangladesh. It explores the opportunities and challenges of using technology to enhance access to education, improve learning outcomes, and promote educational equity among Rohingya children. Khan and Alam (2019) analyzed different language policies and educational practices for Rohingya refugee children in Bangladesh. It examines issues such as language of instruction, curriculum adaptation, and teacher training in addressing language barriers and promoting educational inclusion for Rohingya children. It suggested insights into policy implications and recommendations for improving language-sensitive education for Rohingya children.

Hossain (2023) discussed the contemporary educational crisis of Rohingya children in Bangladesh. It identified the challenges

of formal and non-formal education faced by Rohingya children. It also mentioned other supportive educational services and especially focused on crises in their lives. Overall negative socio-economic situations affect education and the learning process. Hence, the Rohingya children receive very limited access to education and are exceptionally vulnerable to illnesses, violence, and trafficking (Shohel, 2020).

Rahman et al. (2022) questioned the quality of teaching in Bangladesh, rather than mentioning the basic education without following a proper curriculum. Letchamanan (2013) mentioned that teaching and learning provided in the refugee learning centers in Malaysia are not well equipped, rather lack of legal employability makes the situation worse. Farzana et al. (2020) stated that Rohingya children are deprived of the right to education in Malaysia. However, Rohingya refugees are getting humanitarian support from the government in Indonesia including access to education, even though it did not ratify the 1951 Convention on Refugee Status and the 1967 Protocol (Rumiarta & Jayantiari, 2023).

A historical overview of the persecution of the Rohingya, providing essential context for understanding their displacement and statelessness plotted by Islam (2018) that concentrated on an overall scenario of the community living in Bangladesh. Later on, Karim (2019) focuses on the challenges of providing education in emergency settings, with specific attention to Rohingya refugees, discussing issues like language barriers and international support. Ashraf (2019) examines the Rohingya crisis from Bangladesh's perspective, analyzing the socio-political impacts and humanitarian responses, including education. Rahman (2020) explores Bangladesh's human rights approach to the crisis, highlighting policies, challenges, and international cooperation. and BRAC University (2019) emphasizes the importance of education in emergencies, detailing efforts to implement trauma-sensitive and language-supportive education programs for Rohingya children. It highlighted the intersection of education, human rights, and international support in the context of the Rohingya crisis in Bangladesh.

Recent studies were conducted based on specific geographic locations only. This paper wants to make a comparison among the three different nations, i.e. Bangladesh, Malaysia, and Indonesia where mostly the Rohingya community has migrated. However, this study offers a rich and multifaceted research agenda with implications for both academic scholarship and practical interventions aimed at promoting educational equity and inclusion for Rohingya children in diverse settings.

Methodology

This research employs a comparative analysis framework to explore the intricate dynamics of language barriers and their effects on educational access and outcomes across varied socio-political environments. Qualitative data were gathered through observations and document analysis. The study investigates how language, policy, and educational practices intersect within the educational settings serving Rohingya children in the host countries since their arrival a few years ago. It delves into the current language policies and practices that influence the educational integration of Rohingya children, addressing language-related obstacles in Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Malaysia. This research employs a comparative analysis framework, using qualitative data from secondary sources and primary data gathered through observation. It also utilizes document analysis to examine the impact of language, policy, and practice on the education of Rohingya children in Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Malaysia.

Discussion and Findings

The Rohingyas are one of the most marginalized and systematically persecuted communities (Amnesty International, 2017). Sexual violence, torture, and ethnic cleansing have been directed toward them in Rakhine State (Shohel, 2023). Since 1982, Myanmar has denied Rohingyas citizenship, rendering them stateless. Most Rohingyas sought refuge in Bangladesh, with over 655,500 refugees entering during the 2017 influx, 58% of whom were children under 18 which means children (UNHCR, 2023). Later

on, around 950,972 registered Rohingya refugees live in camps in Bangladesh (UNOSO, 2023). Despite challenges, efforts are being made to provide education to Rohingya children. Informal education centers, community-based learning facilities, and early childhood development programs are helping them. Many international organizations run learning centers, reaching over 69,000 refugee children with pre-primary and primary education (UNHCR, 2023). It is an urgent need for education and support for these vulnerable children. Their resilience and determination deserve more attention for ensuring education, a basic need of human beings.

As the Rohingyas have faced decades of harsh treatment and are made stateless by the military government in Myanmar, the majority have fled to Bangladesh, Thailand, or Malaysia (Letchamanan, 2013). The research delves into the intersection of language, education, and displacement, offering a comparative analysis of the challenges faced by Rohingya children in accessing education across multiple countries i.e. Bangladesh, Malaysia, and Myanmar. It discussed the issue from different angles of the lens such as- Cross-Cultural Comparison (how language barriers manifest differently in various contexts), Policy Implications (effectiveness of existing policies and initiatives in each country), Humanitarian Perspective (related to refugee rights for accessing education), And Practical Relevance (status of the project implementation).

The Rohingyas, considered an ethnic minority from Myanmar, have faced brutal oppression, discrimination, violence, and extreme poverty. They have been denied human rights, including nationality, and have suffered traumatic experiences in their homeland. The hostile situations in Rakhine State forced them to flee to neighboring countries, including Bangladesh and other neighboring countries (Shohel et al., 2023).

After arrival in the Refugee Camps, Rohingya Children live in overcrowded shelter homes provided by the government and

NGOs or self-made slums. Their conditions are dire: exhaustion, frustration, poor nourishment, and battling diseases like Covid-19. These children escaped their homeland with memories of trauma and hardship (Shohel, 2023). The situation is more or less the same for all the host countries where Rohingya people migrated.

The language barrier is indeed a significant challenge for Rohingya children accessing education in Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Malaysia. In Bangladesh, the Rohingya refugees primarily reside in Cox's Bazar district. The official language of Bangladesh is Bengali, which is different from the Rohingya language. Most educational resources and curriculum materials are in Bengali, posing a challenge for Rohingya children who may not understand the language. There are shortage of teachers who are proficient in both Bengali and Rohingya languages for the school at camps, further exacerbating the language barrier.

Rohingya refugees in Indonesia face similar language challenges. Bahasa Indonesia is the official language, and educational resources are primarily in Indonesian language. While there might be some efforts to provide language support, the lack of proficiency in Bahasa Indonesia among Rohingya children can hinder their learning.

Malaysia's official language is Malay, and the educational system operates primarily in Malay. Rohingya children in Malaysia face significant language barriers as they may not be proficient in Malay, making it difficult for them to comprehend lessons and interact with teachers and classmates effectively.

Table 1: The comparison of the education support provided for Rohingya children in the three different host countries in Asia

Key Aspect/s	Bangladesh	Indonesia	Malaysia
Official Language	Bengali	Bahasa Indonesia	Malay

Key Aspect/s	Bangladesh	Indonesia	Malaysia
Medium of Instruction	Bengali	Bahasa Indonesia	Malay
Rohingya Language Support from Teacher	Limited availability of Rohingya language instruction	Limited availability of Rohingya language support	Limited opportunities for Rohingya language learning
Curriculum	Designed in Bengali	Designed in Indonesian	Designed in Malay
Bilingual Teachers Availability	Shortage of teachers proficient in Bengali and Rohingya	The availability of bilingual teachers may be limited	The availability of bilingual teachers may be limited
Cultural Integration and Cross-cultural Function	Challenges due to linguistic and cultural differences	Cultural differences may pose integration challenges	Language barrier affects social and academic integration
Language Support Programs & Initiatives	Efforts may be limited	Limited language support programs	Limited language support programs
Language Barrier to the Education and Learning Process	Language Barriers to the education and learning process are very high	Language Barriers to the learning process are at a moderate level due to governmental policy and aggressive support	Language Barriers to the education and learning process are very high

Sources:Wali et al., 2018; Minar& Halim, 2020; Reid, 2023; Rumiarta & Jayantiari, 2023

This table provides a comparative overview of the language barriers encountered by Rohingya children in Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Malaysia, highlighting key differences and similarities across the three countries. As a large number of children migrate, their education is very important just after healthcare facilities. In the case of learning and education development, the refugee children are facing serious problems in getting lessons and lectures from teachers who are teaching at the host country camps with different languages. This study has identified a serious level of learning gaps due to the language barrier between teachers and students.

Wali et al.(2018), Minar and Halim (2020), and Reid (2023) argued that the language barrier deterred the overall education development process, even the attempts made in the refugee camps in Bangladesh and Malaysia. Where else, Rumiarta and Jayantiari (2023) identified a better scenario in the context of learning outcomes in the refugee camps in Indonesia. Government initiatives were taken to employ native teachers to reduce the learning gaps in the host country.

Rahman et al. (2022) revealed that language barriers made classroom instructions difficult as the teachers and students were not comfortable to communicate in foreign languages. Lack of teaching quality, insufficient funding, and other limited supports impede providing education among the children at Cox-Bazaar Refugee Camps in Bangladesh.

In Malaysia, this community has been living invisibly for more than three decades, are not permitted to work legally, and has no or very limited access to healthcare and education. UNHCR and local NGOs provided basic healthcare and education based in madrasahs. Huge discrimination is found in teaching and learning provided in the refugee learning centers for these refugee children in Malaysia (Mahaseth & Banusekar, 2022).

The root cause of the lack of education and learning process of the whole community of Rohingya is the present 'stateless' situation in Malaysia. They are in a crisis of self-identities, and especially the refugee children struggle for the right to education (Farzana et al. 2020). But Malaysia hosts the second-largest number of Rohingya refugees after Bangladesh (Palik, 2020). The number of Rohingyas in Malaysia is currently over 100,000 and the total number of refugees is about twenty million (UNHCR, 2023).

Indonesia is one of the major refugee transit countries in Asia. Indonesia hosted at least 12,704 refugees until May of 2023, mostly from Muslim nations, i.e. Afghanistan, Somalia, Myanmar, Iraq, and Sudan and 30% of the total are children (Alami et al., 2023). The refugees in Indonesia are from 51 countries, and more than a thousand Rohingyas migrated from Myanmar (UNHCR, 2023).

The Indonesian government has opened public schools for refugee children to have access to formal education. The government policy for the right to education for all, even refugees, is highly appreciated (Rumiarta & Jayantiari, 2023).

Table 2: The comparison of Rohingya children having access to public schools in Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Malaysia is as follows-

<i>Main Features</i>	<i>Bangladesh</i>	<i>Indonesia</i>	<i>Malaysia</i>
Common restrictions for children to obtain education	Refugee students/ children cannot attend public schools	Refugee children are allowed to attend public Indonesian schools after the pandemic period	They reside with the local community, often in overcrowded housing situations

Students rights as a Rohingya refugee	Access to non-formal education	Access to all private schools before 2022 and then the government opened access to public schools too	access to non-formal education in refugee camps
Major education provider	Local and International NGOs	Government and Private Organizations	Community-based refugee schools
Residence/ shelter	Mostly live in the government-approved camps in Cox Bazaar in Bangladesh with refugee status	May live in rented homes and GO/NGO support centers as the migrants wish and affordability	Rohingyas in Malaysia do not live in camps but reside with the local community as illegal migrants

Source: Authors Observation, 2024; Palik, 2020; Rumiarta & Jayantiari, 2023; UNHCR, 2023

Refugee students, especially those who are children, face miserable situations in having access to education, even as considered a basic human need. Refugee students in Bangladesh cannot attend public schools. The only option for them is to take non-formal education mainly run by NGOs. In Malaysia, the children are living with parents in the local community in overcrowded housing situations. They also have the right to access non-formal education as Bangladeshi refugee students. Refugee students in Indonesia are enjoying better accessibility and facilities to obtain education and other services, including healthcare facilities, compared to Bangladesh and Malaysia. The research observed that the language barrier is one of the major causes of effective education and learning development.

In Cox's Bazar, while there are over 315,000 children enrolled in learning centers, the majority only receive basic

education, often at pre-primary levels. Despite efforts by organizations like UNICEF to provide informal education based on a tailored curriculum, many Rohingya children lack the necessary academic skills to progress to higher education levels. This gap is largely due to their previous poor education in Myanmar, compounded by restrictions on formal education and a lack of certified schools (Human Rights Watch, 2019; Reidy, 2020).

Rohingya children in Malaysia experience legal and systemic barriers that hinder their educational access. They often live in fear of arrest due to their undocumented status, and as a result, many cannot attend school or participate in legal employment. Local NGOs and UNHCR provide some educational support, primarily through madrasahs, but significant discrimination and inadequate resources in refugee learning centers severely limit their educational opportunities (Reidy, 2020; Save the Children, 2021).

In Indonesia, Rohingya children face similar challenges, as they often remain in a state of invisibility without legal recognition. Limited access to formal education and substantial language barriers further exacerbate their situation. The lack of tailored educational programs means many children do not receive quality instruction, which impacts their prospects (Save the Children, 2021; Human Rights Watch, 2019).

Overall, these systemic challenges reflect the broader issues of marginalization and discrimination faced by the Rohingya community across these three countries, making it difficult for children to obtain the education they deserve. Employing the mother tongue and local languages as the medium of instruction in education accelerates the acquisition of knowledge, fosters skill development, and enhances the overall quality of learning outcomes, which has already been proven (UNESCO, 2024).

Though technical education is provided in Bangladeshi refugee camps, or NGO-provided education support is given in Malaysia, that is not up to the mark for ensuring better employability. The lack of education policy for refugee children is not properly prepared in those host countries. That is why, overcoming all those barriers and issues faced in the whole education and learning process for refugee children requires particular support programs from various stakeholders, such as

1. **Promoting Language Support Programs:** Implementing language support programs that teach Rohingya children the language of the host country can facilitate their integration into the educational system. Some international organizations have been actively involved in providing education to Rohingya refugee children. They often tried to overcome those challenges and find solutions related to language barriers and integration into educational systems (UNICEF, 2022).
2. **Establishing Bilingual Education:** Introducing bilingual education programs that incorporate both the host country's language and the Rohingya language can help bridge the gap and make learning more accessible. Save the Children (2018) highlights the significance of using mother tongue instruction for better learning outcomes and transitioning into national education systems
3. **Introducing Teacher Training:** Providing training for teachers to support Rohingya children effectively, including language instruction and cultural sensitivity training. IRC (2019) offers reports and guidelines on teacher training in crisis and refugee situations, focusing on integrating cultural sensitivity and language instruction
4. **Ensuring Community Engagement:** Involving the Rohingya community in educational initiatives and decision-making processes can ensure that the unique

needs and challenges they face are addressed appropriately. NGOs often emphasize community participation as key to designing educational programs that are relevant and effective for refugee populations. Their research includes practical frameworks for involving communities (Brugha et al, 2021).

5. **Providing International Support:** International organizations and NGOs can provide resources, funding, and expertise to support educational programs for Rohingya children, including language support initiatives. Education Cannot Wait (ECW, 2020) is dedicated to providing emergency educational support in crisis contexts, including Rohingya refugee camps. They collaborate with international organizations to provide comprehensive education programs.

By addressing language barriers comprehensively, educational opportunities can become more accessible to Rohingya children in all those nations, enabling them to acquire knowledge and skills essential for their future careers.

Recommendations

The Rohingya crisis has brought attention to the complex interplay between language barriers and access to education for Rohingya children across Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Malaysia. While a growing body of literature explores the challenges faced by Rohingya refugees, studies specifically examining language barriers in educational contexts remain limited. This literature review synthesizes to provide insights into the multifaceted dynamics of language barriers for Rohingya children's education in these host countries. A few suggestions are as follows for language policy development and implementation:

1. **Language Policies:** they play a pivotal role in shaping educational opportunities for Rohingya children in the host countries. In Bangladesh, the government's language policies predominantly favor Bengali as the medium of instruction in schools, posing challenges for Rohingya children who

primarily speak Rohingya, a distinct Indo-Aryan language. In contrast, Indonesia and Malaysia operate under different language policies, with Indonesian and Malay as official languages. However, the lack of formal recognition of the Rohingya language and culture in these countries impedes educational inclusion for Rohingya children, highlighting the need for language-sensitive policies and practices (Kingston & Hanson, 2022).

2. **Access to Formal Education:** Studies indicate significant disparities in Rohingya children's access to formal education across Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Malaysia. In Bangladesh, Rohingya children primarily attend informal learning centers within refugee camps due to limited access to formal schooling. Similarly, in Indonesia and Malaysia, Rohingya children face legal barriers to enrolling in public schools, leading to reliance on informal educational initiatives operated by NGOs and community-based organizations (Reidy, 2020). Language differences further exacerbate educational exclusion, as Rohingya children often struggle to navigate unfamiliar linguistic landscapes in host countries' educational systems.
3. **Informal and Community-Based Education:** Informal and community-based education initiatives play a crucial role in bridging gaps in formal education for Rohingya children. NGOs, religious institutions, and community leaders in all three countries have established informal learning centers and tutoring programs to provide basic literacy, numeracy, and life skills to Rohingya children (UNHCR, 2023). While these initiatives offer opportunities for educational engagement, challenges persist in ensuring their sustainability, quality, and alignment with formal education standards. Teacher training with parents' involvement in the school process may accelerate the whole project (Palik, 2020).
4. **Mother Tongue-Based Education (MTBE):** Efforts to introduce mother tongue-based education (MTBE) for

Rohingya children have gained attraction in Bangladesh, with initiatives aimed at preserving the Rohingya language and culture while facilitating learning (UNESCO, 2023). However, the implementation of MTBE programs faces challenges related to curriculum development, teacher training, and institutional support. In contrast, MTBE initiatives are less prevalent in Indonesia and Malaysia, where language policies and cultural factors present barriers to Rohingya language preservation and educational inclusion.

- 5. Mass-Media and Civil Society Involvement:** Language barriers in Rohingya children's education across Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Malaysia pose significant challenges to educational access, quality, and outcomes. However, these challenges also present opportunities for innovation, collaboration, and advocacy (CODEC, 2023). By adopting a comparative perspective, scholars, policymakers, and practitioners can identify common challenges, share best practices, and develop context-specific solutions to address language barriers and promote educational equity for Rohingya children in diverse host countries. GO and NGO cooperation is highly required to ensure a safer migration during unwanted situations i.e. war or genocide rather than blaming the migrants or refugees for creating social and economic problems that may lead to social disorder and mass discrimination in the society.

Concluding Remarks and Future Directions

Learning opportunities for Rohingya children are one of the crucial issues in the world at this moment. While existing literature provides valuable insights into the complexities of language barriers in Rohingya children's education, there is a need for further research to deepen our understanding of these issues and inform evidence-based policies and interventions.

By building on existing knowledge and engaging with diverse stakeholders, researchers can contribute to fostering inclusive and culturally sensitive educational environments that uphold the rights and dignity of Rohingya children in Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, and beyond. However, the refugee Rohingya children at the refugee camps in Indonesia are getting better education and learning facilities under the Indonesian government's direct supervision compared to the refugee camps established in Bangladesh or Malaysia.

To invest in education is not only to respect a fundamental right but also to build peace and progress for the world's peoples. Education for all, by all, throughout life: this is the great challenge. One which allows for no delay. Each child is the most important heritage to be preserved. (UNESCO, 1997).

Following the success and progress cases of Indonesia by removing and reducing language barriers between teachers and refugee children as students, other host countries of the Rohingya community learners, including Bangladesh and Malaysia, may increase investment in the refugee education program. The careers and future of the thousands of refugee children depend on this small initiative, support, and coordination. Future studies may focus on collecting comparable data from non-formal schools in host states to enhance the quality of the endangered community. Besides, it would improve the understanding of the structural challenges of NGOs, community-based organizations, and the government of the Rohingya host countries to overcome all deterrents, including the language barrier, to better the future of the luckless refugee students and children who are landless around the globe.

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Empowerment, Social Identity, and Language Use: A Case Study of Educated Working Women at the University of Chittagong

Fareen Rahman*, Farzana Yesmen Chowdhury**

Abstract: The empowerment of women is a multifaceted topic that connects with several social, cultural, and political identities. Language, as a medium of communication and expression, significantly influences and reinforces gender identities and power relations. The objective of this research is to investigate the ways in which language can either strengthen or challenge gender stereotypes to create a fair and equitable society. Specifically, a case study of 20 female academics at the University of Chittagong has been conducted through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. The results indicate that education, social identities and empowerment visibly influence the language use of highly educated working women. This research underscores the pivotal role of women's empowerment in shaping their social identity and its impact on linguistic expression within the societal context. This research on women's empowerment in language use has ultimately revealed the importance of linguistic practices as both reflective of and instrumental in shaping social power activities.

Keywords: Social Identity, Women Empowerment, Education and Empowerment

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Introduction

Napoleon once stated, “Give me an educated mother, I shall promise you the birth of a civilized, educated nation,” underscoring that educated women in society have the potential to influence communities and transform a nation positively. Education empowers women and instill self-reliance and confidence. Empowering women is a concept that argues for gender equality and the promotion of women’s participation in a variety of disciplines. In contrast to the traditional definition of gender as either male or female, it entails acknowledging and appreciating the diverse perspective of women. The objectives of both concepts are to empower women to excel in any industry by enhancing their lives without fear or hesitation. It is essential to advocate for gender equality, as women are often regarded as inferior which undermines their self-esteem.

Education, social identity and empowerment are interconnected. Education stands as a beam of empowerment, that can help the individuals to navigate the complexities of modern society. Beyond its fundamental role in acquiring knowledge, education drives social mobility, economic empowerment, and cultural enrichment. Within the context of language, education employs a profound influence, shaping linguistic expressions, attitudes, and perceptions. Identity denotes the processes by which people and groups define themselves in their interactions with other individuals and groups. Social identity refers to the characteristics of an individual that are defined by their affiliation with particular communities. It serves as a lens through which individuals perceive, interpret, and navigate interaction. Deaux (2001) had pointed out five distinct types of social identity: ethnicity and religion, political affiliation, vocations and avocations, relationships, and stigmatized identities.

Languages use us as much as we utilize words. Our ideas about things in the actual world also affect how we express ourselves about those things, in the same way, that the ideas we want to

communicate affect the forms of expression that we choose to use (Balamurali et al., 2023). Researchers are increasingly interested in the communication patterns of both males and women. In some contexts, men and women use language differently while women may use different languages due to their empowerment and education that impact their social identity. The relationship between language and women is also contested within feminist discourse (Malinowska, 2020). Women are formidable contenders in contemporary society, excelling across several domains and demonstrating that gender is only a reflection of their origin. Following a protracted period of struggle, a significant number of women have begun to fight for their fundamental requirements (Swirsky & Angelone, 2020). These may manifest as variations in language and non-verbal communication. Consequently, this research aims to provide linguistic evidence for a specific kind of inequality said to exist in our society: the disparity of language use in terms of education and empowerment. Can linguistic inequality be used to solve social inequality? This question is being asked in order to determine what language usage can tell us about the nature and severity of any disparity, as well as whether or not there is anything that can be done to address the linguistic aspect of the problem. Women experience linguistic inequality in two distinct contexts: their language training and how others communicate with them.

Education has a significant influence on the empowerment of women and the development of social status. It encourages minimizing gender inequality and make women more confident and self-reliant that reflected in their language use. That is why education, social identity and empowerment are interconnected. Focusing on educated working women at the University of Chittagong, this study aims to explore the interrelation between education, empowerment, social identity and language use.

Literature Review

Empowerment is the process of development and growth for the betterment of individuals or society. In the era of rapid globalization, the acceptance of empowerment has increased. It fosters power in people for their own lives, communities, and society by addressing important issues (Page & Czuba, 1999). Empowerment encompasses various components, such as women's empowerment and employee empowerment. Women's empowerment is a dynamic and symbolic concept. Globalization has significantly increased awareness and acceptance of empowerment.

Women's empowerment is a process that expands women's agency and choices, affecting their welfare (Siddaraju, 2019; Muberekwa & Nkomo, 2016). Research in India has focused on understanding factors affecting women's empowerment, particularly in a patriarchal nation like India. It involves women recognizing their inherent worth and participating on equal terms with men, aiming to dismantle patriarchy and promote social and economic development. However, empowerment is not solely determined by gender recognition.

Women's empowerment is a complex concept that empowers women to achieve self-worth and self-contentment, recognizing their abilities and rights. It is not about equal rights, but about social conditions and relationships that foster mutual cooperation and reach full potential (Siddaraju, 2019; Odigwe et al., 2017). Women's empowerment is the process of gaining visibility, autonomy, and recognition in society by challenging societal norms and culture, influenced by various factors (Agarwal et al., 2016).

Language is characterized as a semiotic instrument that conveys knowledge and values (Malinowska, 2020). Language is essential for fostering social contact in everyday life (Alvanoudi, 2018; Streufert, 2020). Lydia and Vighnarajah (2021) examine the function of the English language as a catalyst for the advancement

of women's empowerment. Language is a powerful tool for communication, knowledge transfer, and interaction, with English being the lingua franca. It is used by people from various ethnic and geographical backgrounds for communication and information delegation. Language can shape an individual's perception and thought processes, as it is not only a form but also influences their ideological thinking. The Linguistic Relativity principle, also known as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (Whorf, 1956; Sapir, 1949), suggests that differences in cultural concepts and categories in different languages affect cognitive understanding of the practical world, leading to different thoughts and behaviours among speakers. These differences govern how people perceive and think about the world around them.

Bhat (2015) asserts that education is crucial for women's empowerment in India, since it transforms their life by equipping them to address issues and challenge established norms. It is a potent instrument that may alter their status throughout society. This contributes to the reduction of inequalities and the enhancement of social status within society by breaking down stereotypical thinking. In addition, Engida (2021) said that education is essential for human progress. It impacts the whole development of the social economy. He also said that it plays a significant part in empowering women. It promotes women's understanding of gender equality, fosters self-confidence, enhances decision-making authority, and stimulates the pursuit of gender equality in all aspects of their lives. Nawaz et.al. (2017) found that higher education significantly impacts women's social status in Lahore. Data from 120 women studying and teaching at the National College of Business Administration and Economics revealed that highly educated women are more socially empowered and participate in decision-making and other familial activities, indicating a significant impact of education on women's social status.

The aforementioned studies serve as a motivating element to investigate the effects of education, social identity, and

empowerment on women's voices. Young women are increasingly interested in establishing professional careers and achieving financial stability by pursuing rising possibilities in the job market. This study focuses on three factors determining and promoting women's empowerment: education, knowledge, and values, which enable women to gain visibility, autonomy, and recognition in society, ultimately improving their well-being. Linguistic analysis of the interview and focus group discussion data will enable the examination of vocabulary choice, sentence structure and verb use to elucidate the activities, roles, and perspectives of women within society. The use of appropriate vocabulary and verbs may clarify the relationship between agency and passivity, exposing both the explicit and nuanced factors that affect women's empowerment and social status. Eventually, an understanding of verb use, and sentence structure offers essential insights into the construction of women's social identity and the possibilities for empowerment via language. This study will highlight the significance of verb forms, asserting that language serves as a transforming instrument, and calls for a more nuanced and equal portrayal of women's experiences in literature and daily conversation. This inquiry seeks to enhance the discourse on gender, language, and identity by challenging current paradigms and proposing a more inclusive framework for debate and expression.

This study addresses the following research questions-

RQ: How do educated women show empowerment through their language use?

RQ: How does such language use and empowerment have an impact on social identity?

Theoretical Discussion

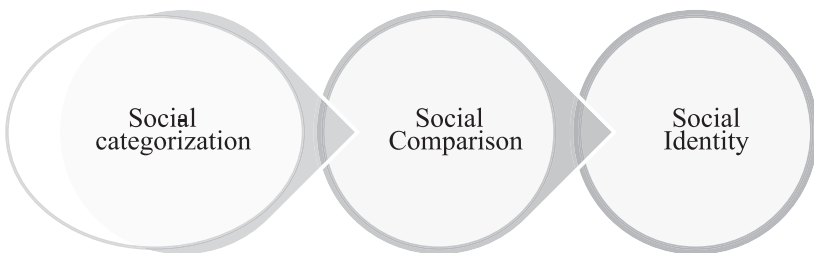
Social Identity

Identity is a significant factor that plays a significant part in defining how we view ourselves and how others view us. Identity encompasses our sense of self, integrating individual characteristics, values, beliefs, and experiences. Conversely,

social identity refers to the components of an individual's identity that emerge from belonging to social groups, such as nationality, ethnicity, religion, or professional ties (Deaux, 2001). Social Identity Theory, proposed by Tajfel and Turner in the 1970s, suggests that individuals' sense of self is influenced by their social group membership, focusing on cognitive processes and social conditions influencing intergroup behaviors.

Social identity theory defines an individual's identity as their membership in a particular social category or group (Burke, 2016). This social group comprises individuals who have a shared social identity and perceive themselves as members of the same group. These groups might include their family, social class, football team and so on. In 1979, Tajfel and Turner suggested that the groups to which individuals belonged were significant sources of confidence, a sense of belonging and pride. Social identity can offer shared goals, provide direction, boost self-esteem, and provide a framework for understanding oneself within a larger community. They also help define one's identity based on shared attributes, values, or goals.

Social identification is a process that can be described as-

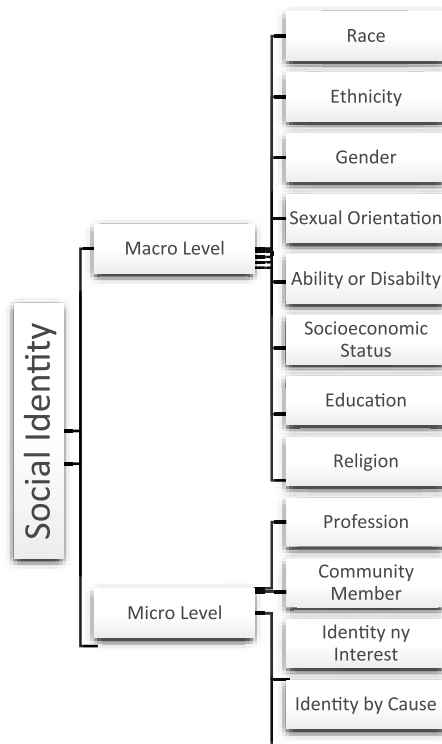


Social-categorization: Categorization is the tendency to classify individuals and objects based on attributes like race, gender, nationality, or religion. It helps simplify the social environment but can lead to stereotyping. Individuals can find out about themselves by knowing their social groups, and defining appropriate behaviour based on group norms. However, individuals can belong to many different groups, leading to distorted behaviour.

Social Identity: Individuals adopt the identity of a group by accepting its characteristics, norms, values, and behaviours. This can create an emotional connection with group membership, affecting self-esteem and the way individuals perceive themselves in relation to the group.

Social Comparison: Upon categorization and identification with a group, people engage in comparative analysis with other groups. This comparison often exhibits bias towards one's own group, resulting in in-group partiality. However positive inter-group comparisons often contribute to individuals gaining a positive social identity.

According to Ralston, social identity can be identified in different categories:



Social identity theory at the macro level categorizes people based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-

economic status, ability or disability, education, and religion. Race refers to physical characteristics, ethnicity refers to social or cultural backgrounds, gender is sexual identity, sexual orientation refers to emotional attraction, socio-economic status is lifestyle, disability is physical or mental limitations, education broadens thinking power, and religion includes different religious communities like Muslim, Hindu, Christian, and Buddhist. These levels help build social identity and contribute to a person's overall identity. On the other hand, the micro level of social identity theory identifies individuals based on their profession, community membership, interest in their work, and their identity based on causes like climate change, social justice, or cancer survivors.

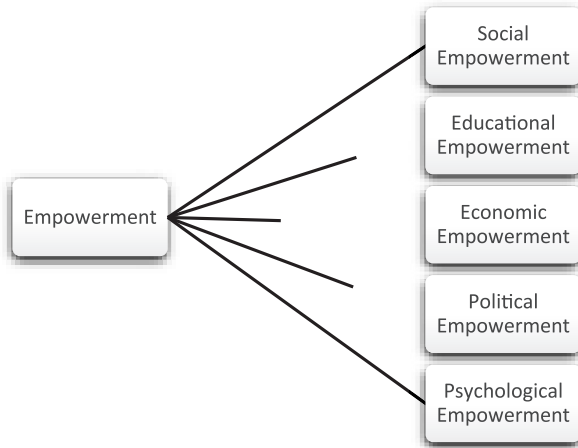
The aforementioned social identity types are distinguished from one another by a few distinctive or distinctive characteristics. Certain social identities may be broadly characterized as belonging to a common category, such as an occupational group, where professional identities are collectively shared and selected by individuals as an accomplished status. Conversely, some social identities, such as race or gender, are ascribed from birth.(Deaux, 2001)

Tajfel and Turner (1979) define social identity as aspects of an individual's self-image derived from their social categories. Each person belongs to various groups, such as social, family, sport, musical, and religious, which contribute to their understanding of themselves. Personal identity is formed based on individual goals and achievements, while social identity is shaped by the goals and achievements of these groups.

Women Empowerment

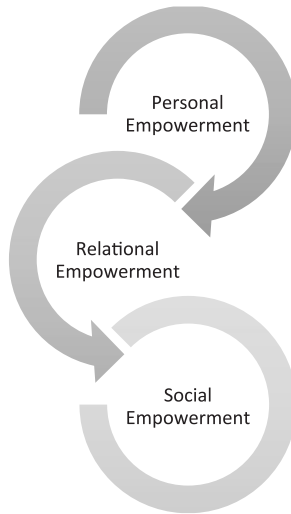
Women empowerment is a holistic approach that addresses gender inequality by integrating social, educational, economic, political, and psychological aspects to achieve overall empowerment.

According to Mandal (2013), there are five types of empowerments:



He stated that social empowerment involves enhancing women's social relations and positions, and addressing social discrimination based on disability, race, ethnicity, religion, or gender. It promotes equal rights, status, and freedom for self-help. Educational empowerment involves higher education, promoting self-confidence and participation in decision-making. Economic empowerment helps achieve economic independence and poverty reduction. Political empowerment encourages women to influence public decisions and promote justice. Psychological empowerment breaks traditional taboos, enhancing self-confidence and adaptability.

Education is a potent instrument that provides women with an alternative social identity and creates transformations in many aspects of life. It facilitates the closure of gaps and access to once unattainable possibilities. Education significantly contributes to women's empowerment by equipping them with knowledge, skills, and confidence. According to Engida (2021), education plays a pivotal role in empowering women across three dimensions propounded by Huis et al. (2017).



Personal Empowerment

Education helps women achieve knowledge, skill and self-confidence that can improve their quality of life. An educated woman can make better decisions in household or social activities. They can make decisions about marriage, family planning, health as well as social, economic and political issues. It encourages women to participate in public or social affairs as well.

Relational Empowerment

Education increases the chances to interact and communicate with the same group members they belong to and the other group members by participating in public and social affairs. It helps women to fit into diverse social settings and make decisions for their better living. An educated mother can make decisions in her children's education, nutrition, and other household decisions.

Social Empowerment

Education increases awareness among women about their rights and encourages them to fight against anti-social activities. It

provides knowledge, skills and wisdom that makes women more confident, self-esteemed and broad thinking. (Engida,2021)

The current study examines the psychological component of the social identity theory to determine how women establish a social identity. To achieve the objective of connecting social identity and empowerment as motivating factors and investigating their impact on language use, this study will necessitate the application of psychological, relational, and social empowerment theories. The complex connection between language and social identity highlights the essential function of linguistic expression in shaping both individual and societal identities. Language acts not just as a mean of communication but also as a medium through which people from different backgrounds express their values, beliefs, and experiences. For women, language may both reflect and contest cultural norms; the verbs used in statements frequently embody purposes and agency, influencing the construction and perception of women's identities within sociocultural settings. Analysing these linguistic selections reveals the power dynamics that shape language use and influence the empowerment or marginalization of certain social groups. Thus, language serves as an empowering tool, allowing women to declare their identities and navigate their roles within many societal contexts. The development of language across time reflects changing paradigms of social identity and empowerment, influencing continuing discussions about gender and language.

This study

This study focuses on the impact of education, empowerment and social identity on the language use of a group of highly educated female academics at the University of Chittagong. These are important topics of sociolinguistics which discuss the connection between language use and variation in terms of various social phenomena namely gender, education, employment and empowerment, social identity and so on. The study is qualitative research and employs focus group discussion

and semi-structured interviews as the primary tools for data collection.

We have gathered data from 20 female educators across different departments of Chittagong University, all of whom had advanced degrees, to examine the influence of empowerment on their voices. We have developed a semi-structured questionnaire seeking information about their educational history, profession selection, decision-making processes, economic contributions, and involvement in social activities. Additionally, we have hosted a focus group discussion with five educators from various disciplines, who discussed the topic of “future plans.” They have shared their plans and perspectives on life. These factors help us to recognize the indicators that demonstrate the empowerment of their voices. Three indicators have been chosen to measure empowerment in women’s voices: vocabulary choices, sentence structures, and the role of verbs. All interviews and focus group discussions are audio recorded and transcribed. Finally, data has been analysed using three indicators that have been chosen to measure empowerment in women’s voices: vocabulary choices, sentence structures, and the role of verbs.

Findings of this Research

This section analyses data collected by interviews and focus group discussions. The analysis of the data is discussed here based on three headings: selection of vocabulary, structure of sentence, and function of verbs.

Selection of vocabulary

Research shows that individuals exhibit significant variations in their regular patterns of thought, behaviour, and emotion (Yarkoni, 2010). These distinctions are evident not just in individuals’ thoughts, emotions, and actions but also in their verbal expressions about these aspects. Fundamentally, an individual’s disposition is reflected in their vocabulary choices or the manner in which they employ words. The individual can articulate their thoughts clearly by selecting the

appropriate word, which also demonstrates their confidence. Consequently, this study examines the participants use of discourse during their interviews and focus group discussion to ascertain their social identity, status, and self-assurance. The research highlights the following words that are evident from the individual interviews-

সিদ্ধান্তটি (this decision), নিজেই (self), সর্বোচ্চ স্বাধীনতা (higher independency), ইন্ডিপেন্ডেন্ট (independent), সোসাইটিতে সম্মানজনক অবস্থান (societal position with dignity), আমার নামে (in my name), এস্টাব্লিশড (established), ডিপার্টমেন্ট (department), হাইয়ার স্টাডিজ (higher studies), আমার ফ্যামিলি (my family), আমার পছন্দের (my choice), এরেইঞ্জড (arranged), আইডেন্টিটি বিল্ড (building identity), সুপারভাইজার (supervisor), এব্রোড (abroad), আমার বাচ্চার ফিউচার (my child's future), আমার কন্ট্রিবিউশান (my contribution), স্টুডেন্টদের হেল্প (to help students), রিসার্চ (research), ফোকাস (focus), দেশের জন্য কিছু করা (serve to the country), আমার কলিগ (my colleague), এনজয় (enjoy), ট্রান্সফরমেশান (transformation), আর্টিকেল পাবলিশ (to publish article), ফেলোশিপ (fellowship), আমার হাসব্যান্ড (my husband), সিঙ্গেল মাদার (single mother), আমরা দুজনই (both of us).

As per the findings of this study, their choice of words reflected their social identity and strength. Their use of terms signifies empowerment (নিজেই, সর্বোচ্চ স্বাধীনতা, সোসাইটিতে সম্মানজনক অবস্থান), authority (আমার নামে, আমরা দুজনই), engagement (দেশের জন্য কিছু করো, স্টুডেন্টদের হেল্প), decision-making capability (আমার বাচ্চার ফিউচার, আমার কন্ট্রিবিউশান), and self-assurance (আমার পছন্দের, আর্টিকেল পাবলিশ). They have also used English terminology that reveal their level of proficiency in English and higher education. Language of the participants is a reflection of their unique personality, offering insights into their choice of vocabulary, tone, and empathy. Analysis of discourses from their interview conversation show that their language represents emotional intelligence, self-awareness and personal growth.

Structure of sentence

Research has shown that language is an effective tool for investigating personality, individual differences, and the

lower-level processes that are responsible for such variables (Caplan et al.,2020). It has been established by a number of empirical research that the varied ways in which individuals express themselves via language are constant and consistent within a person regardless of the time or environment in which they experience it. Language can transform our lives if used confidently and powerfully. It can be used for self-empowerment and empowering others. Empowerment can be demonstrated through positive language, active voices, defining one's space and identity, and using open questions when needed.

The findings from the interview and focus group discussion with this group of female academics show their self- onfidence, power, right, or authority to act. For example:

1. আমি এই সিদ্ধান্তটি নিয়েছি (I took this decision).
2. আমি একজন ইন্ডিপেন্ডেন্ট নারী (I am an independent woman).
3. আমি ফ্যামিলিতে কনট্রিবিউট করি (I contribute to the family).
4. বাচ্চাদের পড়ালেখাটা আমিই দেখি (I look after the studies of my children).
5. আমার ব্যক্তিগত এবং পরিবার দুই জায়গায় আমি নিজে খরচ করতে পছন্দ করি (I like to spend money both in my personal expenses or family needs).
6. আমি সিঙ্গেল মাদার কিন্তু বাবার সব দায়িত্ব পালন করি। সন্তানদের কোনোকিছুর অভাব বোধ করতে দেই না (Though I am a single mother I do all the responsibilities of a father. I never let my children feel the absence of their father).
7. স্কলারশিপ নিয়ে পড়তে যাব এন্ড ক্যারিয়ার ডেভেলোপ করব (I wiil go for higher studies with scholarship and will develop my career).
8. আমার ফ্যামিলি আমার ডিসিশানকে ভ্যালু করে, তাই ছোটো ছোটো ব্যাপারগুলোতে আমি আমার মতো ডিসিশান দেই (My family values my decision that's why they ask for my opinion in every single matter).
9. ডিভোর্সের পর অনেক স্ট্রাগলক করতে হয়েছে কিন্তু আমি অভারকাম করেছি

আর এতদূর এসেছি (After my divorce I had struggled a lot but now I recovered and took myself here).

10. অবশ্যই দেশ এবং সমাজের জন্য সার্ভ করব এটাই স্বপ্ন (Obviously I'll serve my country and society).
11. আমি আন্তর্জাতিক লেভেলের রিসার্চার হতে চাই (I want to see myself as an international researcher).
12. আমি আমার বন্ধুকে বিয়ে করেছি (I married my friend).
13. এটা আমার আইডেন্টিটি, অবশ্যই আমি পেশাটা খুব এনজয় করি (This is my identity, and of course I enjoy this occupation).
14. আমার লিডারশিপ ভালো লাগে (I like leadership).
15. স্টুডেন্টদের গাইড করি মোটিভেট করি যেন নলেজকে প্রোপার ইউটিলাইজ করে (I guide and motivate students to utilize their knowledge properly).
16. আমি একটা ল্যাব খুলব ইনশাআলাহ (I will open a lab In Sha Allah).

In this context, the above examples (1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 12) suggests a strong personality, active voice, and confidence while others (2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 15, and 16) exhibit a positive attitude towards family, the job, and life. Their sense of identity and personal space are articulated in examples 2, 6, 7, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, and 16.

Function of verb

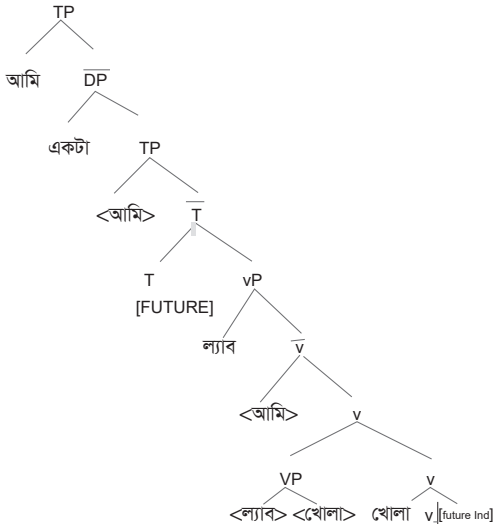
Researchers are exploring women's empowerment through action verbs as indicators of agency, highlighting the importance of their voices in challenging traditional narratives of constraint (Duarti et al. 2023). Verbs are crucial in expressing identity, especially in representing women's social positions and empowerment (Awal, 2023). Analyzing verb usage can reveal societal norms and power dynamics, influencing perceptions of gender equality and reinforcing or dismantling patriarchal structures. The choice of verbs impacts agency and power, with assertive verbs empowering women and passive constructions perpetuating subjugation. Sociolinguistic studies highlight the

transformative potential of verb usage in achieving gender equality, highlighting the role of verbs in elucidating identity and promoting women's empowerment (Emeka-Duru, 2022).

Findings of this study show that most of the time participants used active voice where the speakers played an active role in those sentences and showed their confidence, positivity and position. For example:

1. কন্ট্রিবিউট করি (I contribute).
2. সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছি (I have taken the decision).
3. আমিই দেখি (Only I look after this).
4. ডেভেলপ করব (I will develop this).
5. ল্যাব খুলব (I will open a lab).

In the aforementioned instances, speakers have identified themselves as agents using these verbs; here, a tree diagram of one of the phrases has been shown to illustrate the function of the verb. A sentence has been chosen আমি একটা ল্যাব খুলব ইনশাআল্লাহ (I will open a lab In Sha Allah).



The strong power of language is shown in the use of verbs. The speaker aspires to establish her own laboratory, demonstrating

her confidence, experience, expertise, authority, enthusiasm, devotion, and commitment to serving her country and assisting her pupils. The speaker is playing the role of an agent who undertakes the action independently and maintains her social identity. Indeed, these are the distinguishing characteristics of a woman who is both educated and empowered. The study explores how women's speech uses action verbs to express agency and empowerment, highlighting their autonomy in navigating diverse social landscapes. Zekri (2020) states that linguistic analysis of the speech or narratives of women reveals assertive action verbs are linked to stronger self-agency, particularly in educational settings.

According to the data, it is found that participants of this study used English phrases, which indicates that they are bilingual. They also employed a more advanced form of Bangla that is typically employed by intellectuals or educated individuals. During the interview, they discussed their social identity, which confirmed that they all belong to the same community and share the same identity. This includes their gender (female), occupation (academics), and education (completed graduation and post-graduation). If we examine it from a sociolinguistic perspective, it is evident that their language use is varied from others as they are highly educated and occupy a powerful position in society. Their professional expertise and strong voices can serve as a source of motivation, inspiration, and guidance for the newer generation to do productive and effective work for the society. Due to this fact, they are able to be categorized as a group of individuals that possess intellectual capacity. Furthermore, the social identity that they have developed gives them a sense of empowerment, which is reflected in the words that they use. The purpose of this research is to investigate the manner in which women's voices are affected by factors such as social identity, education, and power, particularly when they are in positions of authority within society. The data also reveal that the individuals

in this group have a high level of confidence, control, and expressiveness while speaking.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study analyzed the impact of education, empowerment and social identity on the language use of highly educated working women at the University of Chittagong. Language use has been analysed based on their selection of vocabulary, structure of sentence, and function of verbs. Their data represent their identity and culture through word choice, sentence structure, and language usage. They have used different patterns of language to express themselves as powerful members even though they belong to a patriarchal society. The study explores the selection of vocabulary, sentence structure and role of verb usage in women's social identity and empowerment, highlighting the complex relationship between language and societal perceptions. It highlights the role of verbs in shaping narratives about women's experiences and their agency. Verbs serve not only as linguistic tools but also as catalysts for social change, allowing women to assert their identities in a patriarchal environment. The study also highlights the potential of nuanced verb usage and vocabulary choices to challenge traditional stereotypes and empower marginalized voices, promoting a more inclusive discourse. This research provides valuable insights for understanding women's empowerment and identity formation in contemporary society.

The findings of the Research highlight the importance of education in empowering and developing women's social identities. Throughout the interview and focus group discussion, the data demonstrated that female academics of this study have articulated self-assurance, control, positivity, dedication to their work, contribution to their families, decision-making power, and active participation. These are the results of their education,

which served as a reflection of their identity in society. Education has motivated them to reduce gender inequality and engage in family and social events, as well as to participate in decision-making and exert control. This empowers women and facilitates the development of their identity.

The analysis provided critical insights into the relationship between language uses and the social identities of women, emphasizing that the selection of verbs has a substantial impact on perceptions of empowerment and agency. It is important to note that the prevalence of active versus passive verb forms in narratives pertaining to women demonstrates how language can either reinforce or challenge societal norms. The results indicate that assertive verbs, which are indicative of empowering language, have a positive correlation with the self-perception and societal roles of women. In light of this correlation, it is imperative to promote linguistic reforms that prioritize active voice in both written and spoken narratives about women. As this research focuses solely on female academics from the University of Chittagong, future research can involve participants from different educational institutions i.e. schools, colleges and other universities. Future research should delve deeper into the contextual variables that influence language use and empowerment, particularly in the context of diverse cultural landscapes. To enhance our understanding of female agency and identity within an array of sociolinguistic frameworks, it may be useful to examine themes such as intersectionality, which might illustrate the impact of varying experiences of oppression and empowerment on language use.

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MOTHER LANGUAGE

Vol.: 8 | Number: 1-2 | Page 49-69

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A Linguistic Review on the ‘Laleng Thar Language’ of the Patro Community of North-Eastern Bangladesh

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Abstract: In the present article, I have discussed the linguistic characteristics of the language ‘Laleng Thar’ spoken by the Patro community residing in the Sylhet region of Bangladesh. As the Patro community does not have its own script, they use the Bengali script to write their language. Therefore, in order to uncover new linguistic aspects, the ‘Laleng Thar’ language requires further research. In the present article, I have used a qualitative method in the linguistic analysis. Several important findings have emerged in this paper through the linguistic analysis of the ‘Laleng Thar’ language. These are as follows: 1) the use of five new consonant sounds. 2) A morphemic writing system that follows the Chinese language. 3) The extinction of certain counting-related words. 4) The use of some words of common genders alongside masculine and feminine words. 5) The influence of English and Hindi on the language. The present article is the result of an exploratory research on the ‘Laleng Thar’ language.

Key-words: Laleng Thar, Indigenous language, Patro, culture, Linguistic Characteristics, language extinction, community.

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Introduction

Language plays a significant role in identifying the ethnographic characteristics of a community. By analyzing languages currently spoken worldwide and extinct languages whose remains have been found, linguists have classified all languages into several genealogies. Linguists have classified languages into 26 branches (Biswas, 2017). In the Indian subcontinent, modern languages can be divided into four major groups: 1. Indo-European, 2. Dravidian, 3. Austric, and 4. Tibeto-Chinese (Ray, 1997). In Bangladesh, more than 45 indigenous or distinct linguistic and cultural communities reside. They make up about 2 percent of the total population. An analysis of the languages of the indigenous people living in Bangladesh reveals that there are approximately 30 languages from four of the world's major language families (Sikdar, *Bangladesher Adibasi: Bhasha Sangskti-Odhikar*, 2014). Among the ethnic communities in Bangladesh, languages from three major families are present (Karim, 2014).

Among these small ethnic groups in Bangladesh, there are primarily three major language families. The language of the Chakmas and Tanchangyas of the Chittagong Hill Tracts is part of the Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European family. Other hill tribes such as Marma, Tripura, Bom, Mro, and the Manipuri of Sylhet, as well as the Rakhine of Cox's Bazar and Patuakhali districts, belong to the Tibeto-Burman or Tibeto-Chinese branch of the Sino-Tibetan family. The languages of the Santals, Mundas, and Mahalis belong to the Austroasiatic family (Rahim, 2017).

However, several characteristics of the Chinese language can be observed in the Laleng Thar language such as the monosyllabic nature of many words, it also shows notable influences from English and Hindi.

Location of the Laleng Thar Language Speakers

In northeastern Bangladesh, a total of 3,999 Patro people live

across 33 villages and 705 families in four upazilas of Sylhet (Sylhet Sadar, Jaintiapur, Gowainghat, and Barlekha). Among them, there are 2,076 men and 1,923 women. The Patro community resides not only in Sylhet, Bangladesh, but also in parts of Meghalaya, Assam, and Cachar in India (Patra, Swarhi, & Patra, 2020).

Literature Review

The smallest community among the indigenous groups residing in the Sylhet region is the Patro community. Many anthropologists, linguists, and sociologists have discussed the language, culture, society, and other aspects of this community from its inception to the present day.

Although many have discussed aspects such as culture, life, language, and more, the first scholarly discussion on the linguistic aspect of the Patro community's language 'Laleng Thar' from a socio-linguistic perspective was conducted by Mohammad Asaduzzaman. In his unpublished Ph.D. dissertation titled "The Language and Culture of the Patro Community of Bangladesh: An Anthro-linguistic Analysis" he has discussed the Patro community in detail. Divided into twelve chapters, in the eighth chapter of his dissertation, he analyzes the language of the Patro community. In that analysis, he mentions a total of 24 consonant sounds. However, in the present article, 28 consonant sounds are mentioned.

In section 8.3.2.11 of the eighth chapter, he discusses number counting.

One of the distinctive features of the Patro language is the use of counting numbers. It is noteworthy that among the counting numbers from one to one hundred, the following numbers in the Patro language have distinct words of their own. [Tʃik] (One), [kʰani] (two), [tʰom] (three), [pʰalli] (four), [pʰana] (five), [phanakhani] (ten), [pʰaŋa inkbum] (fifteen), [innokol tʃik] (twenty), [pʰanapink antʃiki] (twenty-five), [inkʰomo pʰalli] (sixty), [inkʰolo ganta] (one hundred). The remaining

number words are borrowed from the Bengali language by the Patro community. Additionally, while the Patro people use the word *lākha* [lak^ha] for lakhs, they use the Bengali words for thousand and crore (Asaduzzaman, 2018).

However, currently, apart from the numbers one to five and twenty, the subsequent numbers in the Patro language are no longer found or used by anyone (Patra, Swartha, & Patra, 2020). In other words, the counting numbers (twenty-five) - /p^hanapink antʃik/, (sixty) - /ink^homo p^halli/, (one hundred) - /ink^holo ganta/, and lakh [lak^ha] are no longer used.

Additionally, in section 8.3.2.13 of the eighth chapter, he discusses gender. In that section, he mentions that there are primarily two types of gender in the Patro language: a) Masculine, b) Feminine (Asaduzzaman, 2018).

However, in the present article, several words of common genders have been observed. Mohammad Asaduzzaman's research will be considered a shining example for future studies on the life, culture, and language of the Patro community.

In the book *Bhashar Nanarup*, Dr. Md. Ashraful Karim, in one of the three essays titled “Adibasi Patra Bhasha: Bhashatathik Boishishtyer Swaroop Sandhan,” has conducted a morphological and phonological analysis of the Patra language. In the phonological discussion, he mentions 6 vowel sounds and 23 consonant sounds in the Laleng language. However, in the current research, 7 vowel sounds and 28 consonant sounds have been observed in the Laleng language.

In 2020, a publication titled *Patra Jati'r Sangskritik Oitihya* (Cultural Heritage of the Patra Community), edited by Gourang Patra, Labani Swarty, and Bichindra Kumar Patra, was released. This 80-page publication was produced under the planning and publication of the Patra Community Welfare Council (PASKOP), with funding from AIERP, IWGIA, and the European Commission. The book covers various aspects of the Patra community, including their habitat, language, tribe,

society, rural culture, family structure, and the status of women. It also discusses their economic condition, education, religious rituals, social governance, and the contribution of the Patra people in the Liberation War, along with other relevant topics. This publication can be considered of significant importance to researchers and enthusiasts of the Patra language.

Under the planning and publication of the Patra Community Welfare Council (PASKOP), another publication titled *Patra Bhasha O Shabdkosh* (Patra Language and Dictionary) was released as part of the same project. This 88-page publication was also published at the same time. The publication includes the Bengali meanings of all types of words, starting from the names of gods and goddesses to terms related to local roads and streets. It can be considered the first dictionary of the *Laleng Thar* language. Dr. Ratanlal Chakraborty has described the aforementioned topics in his book *Nihsha Adibasi Patra from Sylhet*.

In the book *Bangladesher Bhasha-Porikalpona*, Dr. Abdur Rahim, in the sixth chapter titled “Bangladesh-er Adibasi-der Bhasha-poristhiti O Bhasha-porikalpona” (Language Situation and Language Planning of Indigenous Peoples in Bangladesh), provides a detailed discussion on the language situation and language planning of the indigenous ethnic groups. In regard to the steps needed for the development of indigenous languages, Dr. Abdur Rahim mentions that for those indigenous communities that do not have their own script, it is necessary to transcribe their languages using another script (Rahim, 2017).

In the book *Bangladesher Adibasi Bhasha Sangskti Odhikar*, Saurav Sikdar discusses the origins of the languages of the indigenous communities, their alphabets, education, and culture.

In his book *Bangladesher Adibasi Bhasha*, published by the Bangla Academy, Saurav Sikdar has conducted research on the languages of 10 indigenous communities. In that book, he discusses the Laleng language, the population of the Patra community, their professions, and other related aspects. In

Adibasi Bhashar Obosthan Bangladesh Chitre, Saurav Sikdar classifies the Laleng language as belonging to the Sino-Tibetan language family (Sikdar, Bangladesher Adibasi Bhasha, 2011).

Pobitro Sarkar, in his essay *Matribhashar Madhyame Shikha: Koto Din, Kotodur* (Education through Mother Tongue: How Long, How Far), emphasizes the importance of preserving a language by stating that a language becomes an effective medium of education when it is used for teaching in the classroom, when textbooks are available in that language, when supporting books can be found, and when exams are conducted in that language (Sarkar, 2022).

In the article *Indigenous Languages in Bangladesh: Loopholes behind the Scene*, Abdullah Al Mamun Bhuiyan states that to secure a job, one must study in Bangla or English, where there is no value for the mother tongue. As a result, indigenous youth are compelled to turn away from their native languages (Bhuiyan, 2016).

From the above discussion, it can be said that while many researchers have worked on the material aspects of the Patra community, linguistic research on the *Laleng Thar* language is rare. The increasingly declining *Laleng Thar* language demands further fundamental linguistic research. The present article is the result of exploratory research aimed at uncovering the linguistic nature of the *Laleng Thar* language.

Ethnic Identity of the Patro Community

The Patro community is one of the indigenous groups in Sylhet. Historically, they were known as “Laleng” a term they prefer to identify with. Locals often refer to them as “Patar” or “Patro people”. However, the Patro community is now widely recognized by everyone as Patro. “They make coal and live in hills and forests” (Partha, 2020).

The Patro ethnic group is the true indigenous population of Sylhet, and according to ancient Patros, they have resided

in the Sylhet region since before the 14th century. The Patros are descendants or associates of King Gaur Govinda, which is a source of pride for them. During King Gaur Govinda's rule, a son was born to Borhan Uddin, a resident of Tultikar in Sylhet. To fulfill a previous vow, he sacrificed a cow and held a feast. Coincidentally, a crow dropped a piece of beef in the courtyard of the king's shrine, angering the king. As a result, the king became furious and cut off one hand of Burhan Uddin's newborn son. Borhan Uddin sought justice from the Emperor of Delhi. After the Delhi emperor's troops were defeated by King Gaur Govinda, Hazrat Shah Jalal (R.A.) of Yemen, who was in Delhi, came to Sylhet with 360 saints. A pact was made between the king and Shah Jalal (R.A.). If Shah Jalal (R.A.) could pierce an 80-mon (about 3,000 kg) spade with his bow and arrow, the king would leave his kingdom. King Gaur Govinda was defeated by Shah Jalal (R.A.) and fled north with his followers. Many were unable to follow him, and since then, this Patro ethnic group has remained in the deep forest, starting a new way of life.

The general physical anthropological characteristics of the Patro people are that they are of medium height, have long foreheads, and their body color is brown. The physical structure is not like that of the Bengalis. Although the lifestyle, culture, and behavior of the Patro community differ in their character traits, they lead a very simple and straightforward life in terms of attitude. Agriculture was their main occupation, and they later relied on producing charcoal by burning wood as a means of livelihood (Patra, Swartha, & Patra, 2020).

Like other indigenous communities, the Patro community is divided into various clans, each with unique symbols and customs. The Patro society is organized into twelve clans: (1) Langkhirai, (2) Gaburai, (3) Alairai, (4) Langthurai, (5) Tongrarai, (6) Tukurai, (7) Theklarai, (8) Kelaangrai, (9) Chamangrai, (10) Barai, (11) Tiprarai, and (12) Chandrakanyarai (Patra, Swartha, & Patra, 2020).

Clans are referred to as ‘rai’. There is no social or hierarchical stratification within the community, and they follow a patrilineal system. Although they practice Sanatan Dharma, they remain culturally distinct from Bengali Hindus (Patra, Swartha, & Patra, 2020).

The Patra people had their own traditional attire, but it has now become extinct. According to elders, men wore ‘jama’ (shirts) and ‘dhuti’ (loincloth), while women dressed in ‘sari’. They also had unique jewelry, such as silver rings, which were crafted from 25-paisa coins (Patra, Swartha, & Patra, 2020).

Their dietary habits are similar to those of Bengalis, though currently, they observe one vegetarian day per week. Traditionally, they had their unique dishes, including ‘Pachuben’ and ‘Falaben’, and a homemade beverage called ‘khar’, which is a part of their cultural heritage. However, many educated members of the younger generation are now refraining from consuming ‘khar’.

Research Aims, Objectives and Significance

Although some scattered studies exist regarding the origin and linguistic features of the Patro community’s Laleng Thar language, few studies have analyzed it from a linguistic perspective. This paper aims to identify and analyze the linguistic characteristics of Laleng Thar to gain a better understanding of the language.

Research Questions

1. What are the linguistic features of Laleng Thar?
2. What elements contribute to determining the linguistic characteristics of Laleng Thar?

Research Methodology

In the current research, I have adopted a qualitative approach. This approach involves three steps: literature review, language data collection, and data analysis. Data in the paper has been collected from primary and secondary sources. The primary source of this research is the field-collected linguistic data from

the Patra community residing in Sylhet Sadar Upazila of Sylhet Division, Bangladesh. Additionally, various research books, articles, reports, and websites on the Laleng Thar language have been used as secondary sources.

Research Process

In the initial stage, I formulated questions based on the linguistic features of the Patra community and specific vocabulary. Then, I went to the Patra linguistic community in Sylhet Sadar Upazila to collect data. On the other hand, I gathered responses to the questionnaire on linguistic features from four men, four women, three elderly individuals, and four children from the village. I then verified and presented this information in the paper based on the linguistic features.

Laleng Thar Language

The Patra community lives in several villages on the hills of Khadimnagar, about 12 kilometers northeast of Sylhet town (Karim, 2014). Due to various socio-economic challenges, they have struggled to preserve their language, and it has integrated elements from both Bengali and Sylheti. The influence of these languages has gradually narrowed the scope of Patra. For example, it can be said that the Patra community's alphabet includes the numbers 1 to 5 and 20, which can be found or observed in their usage. These are: সিক (one), খানি (two), থম (three), ফালি (four), ফাংঙ্গা (five), and ইনকোল (twenty). However, the subsequent numbers are not found in the Patra language or are not observed to be used by anyone currently. In this way, not only numbers but also many other words have become extinct from their language (Patra, Swarhi, & Patra, 2020).

Analyzing the phonetic features reveals that the consonant sounds of Bengali and English have notable similarities with those of the Laleng Thar language (Karim, 2014). Additionally, analyzing the origins of the Patra community shows that their roots can be traced back to the Tibetan-Himalayan region, specifically those known as Bodo. The Bodos are both an ethnic

group and a linguistic group, who were originally inhabitants of Assam in Northeast India.

Another study shows that the Patra people belong to the ‘Mongolic Monochrome’ family, which is part of the Tibeto-Chinese family. They are included in the Bodo sub-section of the Bodo-Naga section, which is a branch of the Tibeto-Burman group under the Assam-Burmese category (Chowdhury & Saha, December 2012).

The origin of the Laleng Thar language can be explained in the following sequence:

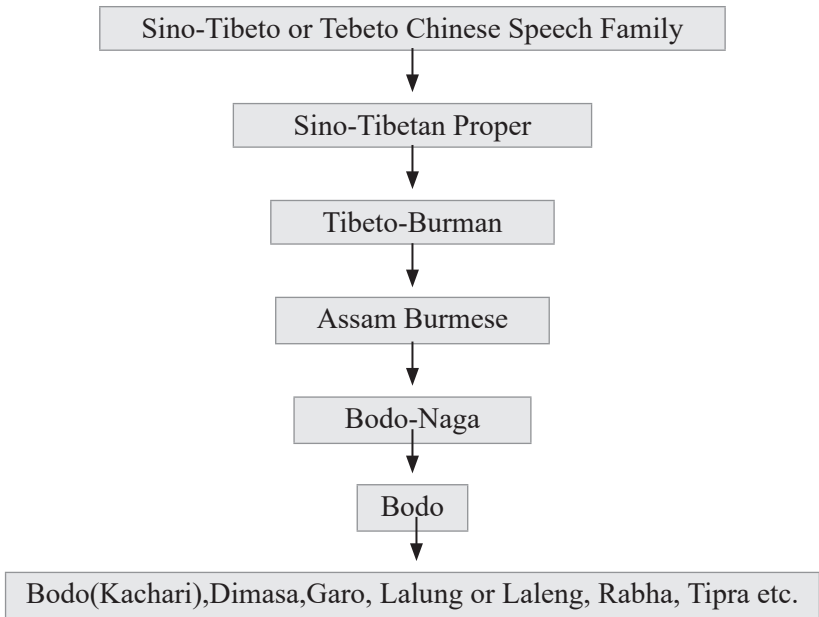


Fig. Origin of the Patro (Chowdhury & Saha, December 2012)

Script

The Laleng Thar language does not have its own script. The Patro people in Bangladesh write their language using the Bengali script (Patra, Swartha, & Patra, 2020). Languages of indigenous communities that do not have their own script need

to be documented using another script. Any small ethnic group can abandon their own script when necessary and adopt any preferred script (Rahim, 2017).

Linguistic Characteristics

The fundamental elements of language are sound, words or morphemes, sentences, and meaning. Language elements are grouped into hierarchical stages, leading to classifications within phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics (Morshed, 2009). This paper also emphasizes these four aspects of the Laleng Thar language.

Phonology

Language is a collection of sounds produced from human articulation. (Tewari & (Translator), 2018). The largest and most essential part of sound consists of vowels and consonants (Hi, 2000).

Consonants

Laleng Thar contains 28 consonants

ক | /k/ |, খ | /k^h/ |, গ | /g/ |, ঘ | /g^h/ |, ঙ | /ŋ/ |, চ | /tʃ/ |, ছ | /tʃ^h/ |, জ | /dʒ/ |, ঝ | /dʒ^h/ |, ট | /t/ |, ঠ | /t^h/ |, ড | /d/ |, ঢ | /t̪/ |, থ | /t̪^h/ |, দ | /d̪/ |, ধ | /d̪^h/ |, ন | /n/ |, প | /p/ |, ফ | /p^h/ |, ব | /b/ |, ভ | /b^h/ |, ম | /m/ |, র | /r/ |, ল | /l/ |, শ | /ʃ/ |, স | /s/ |, হ | /h/ |, ড় | /ɽ/ .

Although Karim (Karim, 2014) mentioned 23 consonant sounds. In the current research, the use of five additional consonant sounds has been observed in the Laleng Thar language:

ঘ | /g^h/ |, ঝ | /dʒ^h/ |, ধ | /d̪^h/ |, ভ | /b^h/ |, ড় | /ɽ/ .

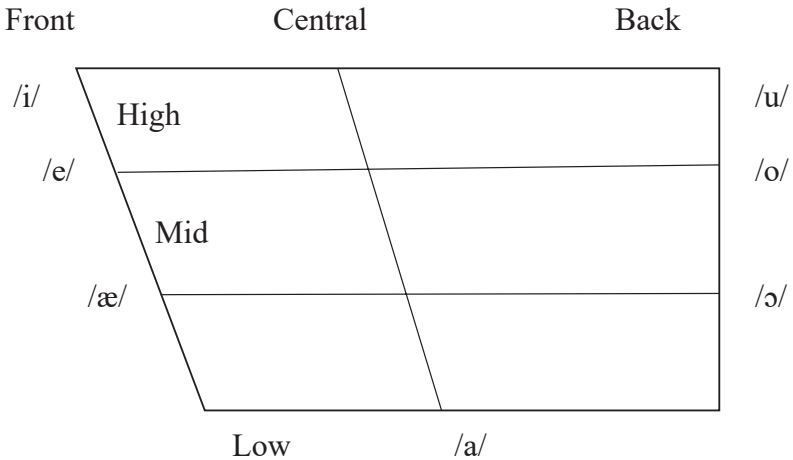
According to the feature-template, the 28 consonant sounds in the Laleng Thar language can be classified as follows:

1. Bilabial: /p/, /p^h/, /b/, /b^h/, /m/.
2. Dental: /t̪/, /t̪^h/, /d̪/, /d̪^h/.

3. Retroflex: /ʈ/, /ʈʰ/, /ɖ/, /ɖʱ/
4. Alveolar: /r/, /l/, /n/.
5. Palatal: /tʃ/, /tʃʰ/, /dʒ/, /dʒʱ/, /ʃ/.
6. Velar: /k/, /kʰ/, /g/, /gʱ/, /ŋ/, /ŋ̃/

Vowel Sounds

In all languages of the world, there are typically 3 to 5 vowel sounds found (Karim, 2014). In the Laleng Thar language, there are seven vowels ই | /i/ |, এ | /e/ |, অ্যা | /æ/, আ | /a/, অ | /ɔ/, ও | /o/, উ | /u/. Additionally, there are two semi-vowels, /j/ and /w/, along with two compound vowels, /ɔɪ/ and /ɔʊ/. The Laleng Thar language also features a prominent use of the nasal sound (/ŋ/). In contrastive words, stress is observed. However, variations in vowel stress, length, tonal patterns, pitch, and intonation do not result in differences in meaning.



Consonant Clusters

Laleng Thar	IPA	English
ইল্লং	/il:ɔŋ/	Hill
হালিং	/ɦa:liŋ/	We

Laleng Thar	IPA	English
নাং	/naŋ/	You
স্কুল	/sku:l/	School
মন্তানী	/mɔntani/	Elder
এস্কি	/ɛski/	Love
হিন্দি	/inti/	Salt
ছাত্ৰি	/tʃat:i/	Umbrella
চং	/tʃɔŋ/	Frog
ফাণ্টা	/fanta/	Goat

In the Laleng Thar language, there are both monosyllabic and disyllabic consonant clusters. Some examples include:

Diphthongs

The Laleng Thar language features a variety of languages and dialectal elements, resulting in a non-specific number of diphthongs. Some examples are provided below:

Base vowel	Laleng Thar	IPA	English
(i-i)	ঈ/য়ি	/i/ /ji/	blood
(ie)	থিয়ে	/tʰi.e/	will die
(ia)	ইয়াং	/jaŋ/	come
(io)	ইয়ো	/jo/	(mother
(ei)	যেইরং	/jæirɔŋ/	in this way
(eo)	এওলাং	/eɔlaŋ/	gooseberry
(aea)	ছেয়া	/tʃeja/	shadow
(ai)	দাই	/dai/	tongue
(ao)	ছাওয়া	/tʃava/	boy

Base vowel	Laleng Thar	IPA	English
(au)	আউওয়া	/aʊva/	fool
(ou)	মৌর লকওই	/mouɾ ləkwi/	mountain white flower
(oi)	ঐরা	/oira/	this way
(oy)	অয়	/ɔj/	sleep
(ua)	উয়া	/u.a/	this

Syllables

In the Laleng Thar language, there are syllable formations ranging from single syllables to multiple character syllables. It is discussed below.

Syllable Type	Example in Lalen Thar	IPA	Meaning in English
V	ঈ	/i:/	blood
VV	উয়া	/ua/	this
VC	আন	/a:n/	rice
CV	থাক	/tʰak/	above
CVV	ইরান	/i:ran/	song
CVC	মউল	/mɔʊl/	waist
CCV	চারই	/tʃa:r.i/	rope
VCC	অসদ	/ɔsɔd/	medicine

Morphology

The smallest meaningful unit of language is called a morpheme. In the Laleng Thar language, there are certain morphemes that are used as standalone words. When a single letter serves as the minimal meaning-bearing symbol of a morpheme, it is referred to as a morphemic writing system. The writing system of the Chinese language is similarly morphemic (Hi, 2000). Many morphemes can be observed in the Laleng Thar language. For example: i- /i:/ - (Meaning in English is blood). Here are some examples of free morphemes and bound morphemes:

Example in Laleng Thar	IPA	Meaning in English
খাজা	/k ^h ad̪ʒa/	stomach
লা	/la/	leaf
লক	/lɔk/	White

Gender

In the Laleng Thar language, there are primarily two types of gender: masculine and feminine. However, this language also exhibits forms of common gender. For example:

masculine		Feminine		common gender	
IPA	Meaning	IPA	Meaning	IPA	Meaning
/pa/	father	/jo/	mother	/tʃa.tʃu/	child
/kɔrtai/	brother	/i.d̪ʒor/	sister	/k ^h a.mai/	widow
/ga:bur/	groom	/kɔi.na/	bride	/dɔ.ra/	relative
/pin.tʃa/	man	/la.la.oi/	woman	/lɔ.gor/	friend

Determiners

In the Laleng Thar language, the most commonly used determiners are as follows:

Laleng Thar	IPA	Meaning
সিক	/ʃik/	one
খানি	/k ^h a.ni/	two
ওয়া	/wa/	the
উয়া	/u.a/	this
পিনচাউয়া	/pin.tʃa.u.a/	the man

Quantitative Determiners

In the Laleng Thar language, several quantitative determiners are observed. Notable among these are:

Laleng Thar	IPA	Meaning
চিচা	/tʃi.tʃa/	a little
আরোচিচা	/a.ro.tʃi.tʃa/	a bit more
অনচা	/ɔn.tʃa/	a small amount
উমফই	/um.fi/	more
পারাসিক	/pa.ra.sik/	a lot

Word Formation

Derivative words

The use of prefix can be seen in the Laleng Thar language. For example:

- তি (ti) – to throw → তিলো (ti.lo) – throwing (present continuous).
- পি (pi) – to give → পিরাতি (pi.ra.ti) – give it.
- দাম (da:m) – to walk → দামলো (da:m.lo) – walking.

Expansion

One of the important processes of word formation is inflection. Various types of affixes are attached to a root or base to form words. For example:

- তক (tɔk) – to chop → তককাং (tɔk.kãŋ) – chopping.
- বম (bɔm) – to hit → বমলো (bɔm.lo) – hitting (present continuous)
- বে (be) – to keep → বেরাতি (be.ra.ti) – keep it, etc.

Reduplicated Words

In the Laleng Thar language, words are formed through reduplication, such as:

Laleng Thar	IPA	Meaning
থেংথেংরং	/tʰẽŋ.tʰẽŋ.rɔŋ/	foliage
হইরা হইরা	/hoi.ra hoi.ra/	casually
হাসং হাসং	/ha.sɔŋ ha.sɔŋ/	truly

Compound Words

Name of Compound Words	Laleng Thar	Meaning
Duple Compound	চাকলাই ইজর – /tʃaklar idʒor/	brother and sister
	খেমার বউ – /kʰemar bəu/	bride and groom
Dependent Compound	দিকপন – /dik.pən/	marriage dowry
	লুরকি – /lu.r.ki/	nose ring
Digenetic Compound	চুকদাল – /tʃok.dal/	quadrangle
Attributive compound	সিগিল সাগাল – /si.gil sa.gal/	hug

Tense and Verbs

In the Laleng Thar language, a separate affix is added to verbs for each tense.

- হাই নে মাই দাখাং /hai ne mai da.kʰaŋ/ – I am also well.
- আলিং বাড়িকা খারাই রং দাখাং /a.liŋ 'baʒika kʰa.raɪ rəŋ da.kʰaŋ/ – There is a mango tree in our yard.
- ব্রজ পাত্র থাই খেতদার দাদিং /(brɔdʒ pa.tʰrɔ thai kʰɛt.dar da.ɗiŋ/ – Braj Patra was a big landlord.
- নাইলুং মাত আইন নেংকা দানা /nai.luŋ mat am neŋ.ka da.na/ – I will remember your words.

Past	Present	future
দাদিং /da.ɗiŋ/	দাখাং /da.kʰaŋ/	দানা /da.na/

However, the difference in verb tense based on grammatical number is not usually noticeable.

Case and Affix

The influence of Hindi is clearly evident in the case markers in the Laleng Thar language.

Bengali Case Marker	Laleng Thar	Example in Bengali and English	Example in Laleng Thar
te, e	কা	barite – in the house	বাড়িকি – in the house
r	কুং	Mamaar – of uncle	খালকুং – of uncle
diye	কুং	jal diye – with the net	জালকুং – with the net

Person and Pronouns

In the Laleng Thar language, pronouns and the presence of first, second, and third persons are observed. Additionally, there are variations in the usage of number (singular and plural).

Person	Singular		Plural	
	IPA	Example in English	IPA	Example in English
First Person	Hai – /hai/	I	Haling – /ha:.liŋ/	we
Second Person	Nang – /naŋ/	you	Naling – /na:.liŋ/	you all
Third Person	Alang – /a.laŋ/	he/she	Alaling – /a:.la.liŋ/	they

Syntax

In the Laleng Thar language, sentence structure follows the Subject-Object-Verb (SOV) order. Here are some examples:

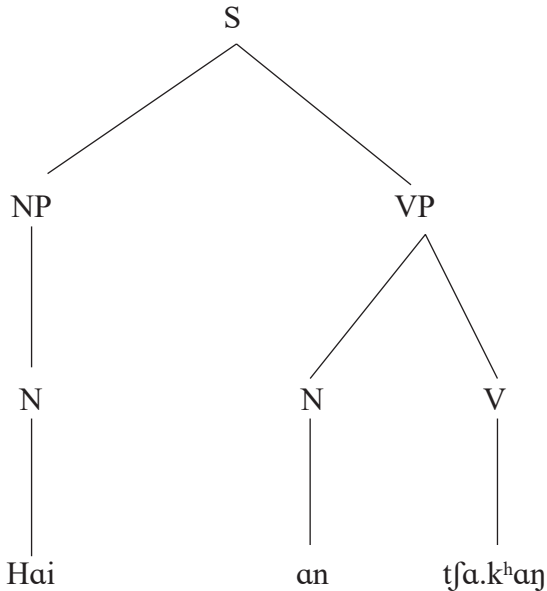
- How are you?
নাং মাই দাখাং /naŋ mai da.k^haŋ/
- I am fine.
হাই মাই দাখাং /hai mai da.k^haŋ/
- Where is your house?
নাং বাড়ি তংকা /naŋ 'bari tɔŋ.ka/
- My house is in Dalipara.
আইন বাড়ি দলইপাড়া /am 'bari dɔ.li'para/.

Tree Diagram of Laleng Thar Sentence

A sentence of the Laleng Thar language is analyzed through a tree diagram.

I have eaten rice.

হাই আন চাকাং /hai an tʃa.kʰaŋ/



Conclusion

In the present article, along with uncovering various linguistic features of the *Laleng Thar* language, I have attempted to present new aspects such as five new consonant sounds, the use of some words with common genders, similarities with the writing system of the Chinese language, and other characteristics. The steps that need to be taken to preserve this language are as follows:

1. Establish necessary arrangements for education in the Patra language, at least at the primary and pre-primary levels.
2. Promote and preserve the literature of the *Laleng Thar* language in mainstream media.

3. Create a grammar for the *Laleng Thar* language.
4. Provide opportunities for the community in the education sector.
5. Compile a dictionary on a larger scale with state sponsorship.

I believe that if the above recommendations are implemented, the gradually declining language of the Patra community can be preserved

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Appendix

A rhyme written by Moumita Patro in the Laleng Thar language (Patra, Swartha, & Patra, 2020).

লালেং থারুং বাং হাই- পাত্র ভাষায় লালেং থারুং বাং হাই লালেং থারুং চমলো । বাংলাদেশকা ইনছকাং হাই বাংলাদেশুং দামপইউং দামলো । থার আইন লালেং থার বাংলাদেশ আইন দেশ । হ দেশকা জন্ম ইনছরা ধন্য ইনছকাং বেশ ।	I am Human in Patra language I am Human in Patra language I speak in Patra Language I was born in Bangladesh And walk on the street of this country My language is Laleng Thar Bangladesh is my homeland I am proud to say that I am blessed being born here.
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A Survey Report on the Trust of Speakers Towards their First Language

Mashrur Imtiaz*

Abstract: The text discusses a study that aims to explore trust among individuals who use their first language in a multilingual setting. The study seeks to understand the level of trust that speakers have in their first language within specific domains and applications. Through a survey-based approach, participants were asked to respond to statements related to various domains where the trust in their first language was examined. The findings revealed that participants generally expressed a high level of trust in their first language, particularly in domains such as their place of residence, the perceived usefulness of the first language, the learning necessity of the first language, confidence-building through its use, its simplicity, and its importance among the younger generation. Conversely, domains such as academic discussions, linguistic inferiority, social media posts, and multimedia choice elicited contrasting responses. Additionally, the research aims to examine the connection between trust in the first language and the speaker's second language. The objective is to gain a deeper understanding of how speakers place their trust in their first language, which represents their mother tongue.

Keywords: linguistic trust, first language, linguistic domains, contrasting response

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Introduction

First language users are individuals who possess their own mother tongue in a multilingual setting, and frequently employ it with varying degrees of confidence in its linguistic efficacy. This study aims to explore several aspects of trust among first language users, particularly within specific domains and applications. Additionally, this research endeavors to measure the level of trust that speakers have in their first language within certain established contexts. The objective of this research is to gain a deeper understanding of how speakers place their trust in their first language, which fundamentally represents their mother tongue. Furthermore, this study seeks to examine the connection between trust in the first language and the speaker's second language.

Literature Review

Language trust research has advanced over the last decade, especially for environments where people use many languages in a variety of contexts. Trust in one's first language, commonly known as the mother language, is becoming a growing issue as linguistic variety and globalisation threaten conventional linguistic limits.

Sperber defined trust as the willingness to depend on given knowledge, particularly when no supporting explanation is provided other than the fact that it was conveyed by an individual, in 2001. It is an essential component of human education, in which we learn who to trust and who to distrust based on often unreasonable, both historically and socially irrelevant considerations (Gefen, Fresneda, & Larsen, 2020). Trust interactions, like language, evolve through time and across communities. Historically, its speakers evolved and consciously used this language (Wubs-Mrozewicz, 2019).

Several studies have underlined the importance of a person's first language in shaping their identity and confidence. Pavlenko (2011) emphasises the strong relationship between language, personal experiences, and self-perception, particularly in multilingual settings. Trust in one's first language is generally highest in personal, familial, and cultural contexts, where it is an essential component of identity. García and Kleyn (2016) studied multilingual classrooms and indicated that incorporating students' first language throughout instruction increases their confidence and engagement. The incorporation of the mother tongue boosts confidence of the students in their language ability and creates a supportive environment that leads to better academic achievements. Nonetheless, the dominance of global languages such as English often undermine trust in the first language among various learning spheres as Angouri (2013) analysed the usage of first languages in comparison to English.

According to Jacquemet (2019), linguistic habits and communicative changes consistently reshape the linguistic and communicative explorations as the younger language users use their first language in digital communication in an increasing way. This change is a vital factor in this reformation and somehow uplifts trust in their first language. The discussion of diverse linguistic structures, social markers, and power dynamics in multilingual, mobile, and media-rich environments is necessary in this situation as the theoretical perceptions transcend linguistic boundaries in these settings.

There is a remarkable appearance of trust amongst the intergenerational trends of language use. Arnaut et al. (2015) demonstrated, the multilingual communities and the younger individuals of that community have a high level of confidence in their first language. Regardless of their proficiency in multiple languages, this trust is notably apparent in the context of

sociolinguistic preservation and identity. This trust is dependent upon the perceived value of the language in the modern and globalised environment.

The first language, also known as the mother tongue or native language, is the language that a speaker is exposed to from birth. According to Cook (1999), a native speaker is defined as a monolingual person who still speaks the language they learned in childhood. It is not possible for a first language speaker to have more than one native language, nor is it possible for a second language speaker to become a native speaker. However, in multilingual communities, a child may gradually shift from using one language as their primary language to using another. This shift can be influenced by various factors, such as the language taught at school or exposure to a different language used by others. In fact, the majority of the world is bilingual or multilingual, with most people growing up speaking two or more languages (Grosjean, 1982). Additionally, those who are not exposed to two languages from birth often begin learning their second language when they enter school, with additional languages being acquired during the school years (Bialystok, 2001; McLaughlin, 1984). Bilingualism or multilingualism is officially recognized in many countries. According to the Ethnologue website in 2005, there were 6,912 documented languages spoken in approximately 150 countries. It is worth noting that many speakers of the main languages live outside the source-group or country where that language originated.

According to Ethnologue (2023) and Statista (2024), roughly 373 million native speakers speak English, for a total of approximately 1.452 billion speakers worldwide. Mandarin Chinese follows closely, with approximately 929 million native speakers and 1.119 billion total speakers. Hindi has roughly 596 million native speakers and 603 million total speakers.

Approximately 496 million native speakers speak Spanish, with a total of 559 million speakers worldwide. French has around 79 million native speakers, but when including second-language speakers, the total number of speakers is 274 million. Arabic, including its different dialects, has approximately 310 million native speakers and 362 million total speakers. Bengali has around 234 million native speakers out of a total of 273 million speakers. The Portuguese has approximately 232 million native speakers and 263 million total speakers. Russian has 154 million native speakers and a total of 258 million speakers, whereas Urdu has approximately 70 million native speakers and 230 million speakers. Historical immigration, annexation, and colonisation have led to the widespread use of these languages.

In 1953, Ulrich Weinreich introduced the concept of interference as “those instances of deviation from the norms of either language which occur in the speech of bilinguals as a result of their familiarity with more than one language” (Weinreich, 1953: 1). It is widely believed that our first language has an effect on our second language, which is confirmed by the foreign accents we hear every day. For example, an English speaker can often identify whether someone is French or Chinese after hearing a few words of English. In the fifty years since Weinreich’s book, extensive research has been conducted on how the learning and use of a second language is influenced by the first language.

Research within adult bilingual populations has shown that speakers use two distinct systems in language processing. Subsequent studies have demonstrated parallel activation in both languages, even when bilinguals hear words from only one language (Marian & Spivey, 2003; Marian, Spivey, & Hirsch, 2003). Marian and her colleagues (2003) argue that this activation of both languages represents an early stage in language

processing. Furthermore, studies on the brain representations of two languages have shown that both lexicons are stored together, with some differences in the storage of grammatical information depending on whether the second language is acquired after the age of seven (Fabbro, 2001).

The term first language attrition (FLA) refers to the process of losing a native or first language. This occurs when a speaker is isolated from other speakers of their first language and is exposed to another language more frequently. All bilinguals to some extent experience interference from their second language, but it is more evident among speakers for whom a language other than their first language has started to play a significant role in everyday life. These speakers are at a higher risk of experiencing language attrition. However, only a few investigations have been conducted on first language attrition and were published in relative isolation by Sharwood Smith (1983).

Cognitive psychologists have taken a different yet complementary approach to studying the emotional resonance of multiple languages. Their aim is to match bilingual speakers' reports of having stronger feelings when hearing or speaking their first language with psychophysiological assessments in a laboratory setting. The work of Cathy Harris and her collaborators at Boston University is particularly relevant to the present study, as their experiments included bilinguals who are also first language attriters. In these experiments, the researchers monitored automatic arousal via fingertip electrodes while participants read or heard phrases in their first or second language. The stimuli used in the studies included taboo words and single words with varying emotional valence. The emotional resonance of first language speakers is deeply rooted within the individual, as suggested by the testimonies collected by Novakovich and Shapard (2000), but it is mediated by proficiency. Therefore, this

experiment suggests that the relationship between the use of the mother tongue and emotion is complex. However, it is evident that the first language retains strong emotional connotations even if it is not used regularly. Cognitive psychologists have developed a completely different yet a complimentary approach to the issue of emotional resonance of multiple languages. The aim was to match bilingual speaker's reports of having stronger feelings when hearing or speaking their first language with psychophysiological assessments in a laboratory setting. The work of Cathy Harris and her collaborators at Boston University is particularly relevant for the present study because her experiments included bilinguals who are also included as first language attriters. The researchers monitored automatic arousal via fingertip electrodes while participants read or heard phrases in their first or second language. Stimuli in the studies included taboo words and single words varying in emotional valence. The emotional resonance of the first language speakers is deeply anchored within the individual, as the testimonies collected by Novakovich and Shapard (2000) suggested, but is mediated by proficiency. Therefore, this experiment suggests that the relationship between the mother tongue use and the emotion is a complex one. But it is clear that the first language retains very strong emotional connotations even if that language is not used on a regular basis.

Operationalisation

Trust can be defined as the firm belief in the reliability, truth, or ability of someone or something. Trust is one's belief in the dependability, veracity, or capacity of someone or something. In a psychological and social sense, trust is the anticipation that others will behave in a way that either helps or at least does not compromise one's interests. In personal connections, institutions, and society contacts as well as in many other spheres, trust

shapes confidence, communication, and teamwork (Mayer et al., 1995). In linguistics, trust can refer to how people view the trustworthiness and suitability of a language inside particular contexts, such communication, education, or professional environments. On the contrary, a first language, or mother tongue, is the one a person learns from birth and becomes skilled in. The language learnt organically without formal training is utilized for daily family and community communication. The first language shapes linguistic identity management, intellectual growth, and cultural connection. Often the main vehicle for thought and emotion (Crystal, 2003). Multilingual people may trust their first language more than succeeding languages.

In this study, we specifically define ‘trust’ as the comfort level of individuals towards their first language in various linguistic contexts. This concept encompasses several related ideas such as first language proficiency, second language acquisition, multilingual environments, linguistic generation gap, the usefulness of language, language use in academic settings, linguistic superiority and inferiority, language in the context of social media and computer-mediated communication, and language and media learning of the first language. All these indicators are considered relevant based on our operational definition of trust among speakers of the first language. The statements representing these question items are as follows:

- (a) The younger generation should primarily use their first language.
- (b) Individuals living away from their native places should maintain a connection to their first language.
- (c) Speakers consider their first language to be more useful than their second language.
- (d) Speakers prefer using their first language to discuss new ideas and concepts in academics.

- (e) Speakers feel inferior when speaking their first language in formal occasions.
- (f) People feel more comfortable using their first language for social media posts and chatting.
- (g) Speakers feel confident when they are able to use their first language in a multilingual context.
- (h) Speakers believe they would communicate more effectively in their first language if they had formal training in it.
- (i) Speakers prefer listening to songs and watching TV shows/videos in their first language.
- (j) Speakers find their first language to be simpler than their second language.

After developing measures for the concepts of interest and refining our operational definition of trust, we will proceed to formulate the research question for this study. The above description provides a general overview of our operationalization.

Research Questions

The aim of this study is to assess the level of comfort that speakers have with their first language or mother tongue in various linguistic domains. We are particularly interested in understanding the factors that influence the trust level of speakers, considering their linguistic comfort, identity, and enthusiasm. In this study, we specifically address the following research questions:

1. Do speakers trust their first language in different linguistic domains?
2. What are the specific areas where their linguistic trust is reflected?
3. What factors differentiate the linguistic trust of speakers when using their first language?

Data and Methods

A quantitative method was employed to investigate the level of trust that speakers have towards their first language in survey research conducted in a multilingual society in India. Purposive sampling was the technique used in which participants were selected according on their status as first language users and the degree of faith they had in their first tongue. The target population was ensured to be represented in the sample by use of a purposive sampling technique. Particularly, a basic random sampling method was used whereby every member of the target population has an equal opportunity of being chosen. This approach raised the generalisability of the results and helped to reduce selection bias. All the responders were sent both online and paper forms of the survey questions. The online questionnaires were conducted using Google Forms, while participants who filled out the paper-based questionnaires were required to sign consent forms. Both online and paper-based questionnaires were utilized to gather a large amount of data in the shortest possible time. The survey questionnaire utilized Likert-type scales, with response options ranging from “Strongly agree” to “Strongly disagree”, assigned numeric values of 1 to 5, respectively. A score of “Strongly disagree” indicated the lowest level of trust, while “Strongly agree” represented the highest level of trust. The choice of a quantitative method allowed for the analysis of data in a quantitative manner. The internal consistency of the data was assessed using the Alpha Coefficient of Cronbach.

Our research aimed to determine the level of trust that speakers have towards their first language when living in a multilingual society in India. A total of 87 responses were obtained. In terms of gender, there were 46 male participants (52.9%) and 41 female participants (47.1%). The complex issue of trust in first languages in multilingual situations is shaped by

cultural background, linguistic competency, and social setting. By means of an analysis of variables like demographic data, language use motifs, and implied trust levels, researchers can learn a great deal about how first languages shape people's perceptions of themselves in varied environments, even if a small sample size of 87 respondents can restrict the applicability of results. The age range of the participants was between 20 and 35, with the majority having an educational level of either undergraduate (UG) or post-graduate (PG). There were 39 participants at the UG level and 48 participants at the PG level. The participants' places of origin were categorized as urban (35 participants), semi-urban (31 participants), and rural areas (21 participants). The survey included questions about linguistic generation gap, living place, comparison to a second language, as well as detailed information about first language usage and attitudes towards using their first language.

Data Representation and Interpretation

The data was analyzed using SPSS version 16, and the assessment of internal consistency of the survey questionnaire was conducted. Descriptive statistics such as mean, median, mode, and standard deviation were used to describe the data. Frequency tables, along with tables and pie charts showing the percentage of responses, were presented. Summary item statistics provided a summarized version of mean, minimum, maximum, range, maximum/minimum variance, and the number of items. These statistical representations were interpreted with basic descriptions of the analysis.

To begin the data representation, we will first examine the Reliability Statistics table, which provides the Cronbach's alpha coefficient. In this case, the score obtained is 0.749, indicating high internal consistency as a score above 0.7 is considered

reliable. The scale used in this study is titled “Trust of the speakers towards their first language.”

Table 01: Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	87	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	87	100.0

List wise deletion based on all variables in the procedure

Table 02: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.749	.750	10

The perceived task values scale was analyzed for reliability using Cronbach's alpha. The questionnaire reached acceptable reliability with an alpha of 0.749. This means that the scale is reliable and can be used to measure perceived task values. Most items were found to be reliable, as removing them would decrease the alpha. This means that the items are all measuring the same thing and are consistent with each other. The table provided shows the means and standard deviations for each question item. Most items have similar scores, which indicates that they are all measuring the same thing. However, question number 5, which asks about feeling inferior when speaking the first language on formal occasions, had a higher score compared to other items. This indicates that this item is measuring something different from the other items.

Table 03: Item Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
The young generation must primarily use their first language.	1.6667	.94827	87
People staying away from their native places must be connected to their first language.	1.6207	.76617	87
For speakers, the first language is more useful than second language.	1.7931	1.01315	87
To discuss new ideas/concepts in academics, the speakers prefer using their first language.	2.1494	1.12610	87
The speakers feel inferior when they speak their first language on formal occasions.	2.8391	1.27474	87
For social media posts and chatting, people feel more comfortable using their first language.	1.6782	.60028	87
The speakers feel confident when they are able to use their first language in a multilingual context.	1.9310	1.02064	87
The speakers would communicate more effectively in their first language if they have the formal learning of that first language.	1.8506	1.04022	87
The speakers prefer listening to songs and watching TV shows/videos in their first language	2.5862	1.21571	87
The speakers find that their first language is simpler than the second language.	1.9310	1.14925	87

Next detailed table shows the descriptive statistical detail of the collected data showing the individual mean, median, mode, and standard deviation for each of the question-based statement items. The valid number of the sample size is 87 (N). The lowest mean was 1.6207 (for Q2) and the highest mean was 2.5862 (for Q9).

Table 04: Descriptive Statistics with Mean, Median, Mode and Standard Deviation

	Q1. The young generation must primarily use their first language.	Q2. People staying away from their native places must be connected to their first language.	Q3. For speakers, the first language is more useful than second language.	Q4. To discuss new ideas/ concepts in academics, the speakers prefer using their first language.	Q5. The speakers feel inferior when they speak their first language on formal occasions.
N Valid	87	87	87	87	87
Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Mean	1.6667	1.6207	1.7931	2.1494	2.8391
Median	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	2.0000	2.0000
Mode	1.00	1.00	1.00	2.00	2.00
Std. Deviation	.94827	.76617	1.01315	1.12610	1.27474

	Q6. For social media posts and chatting, people feel more comfortable using their first language.	Q7. The speakers feel confident when they are able to use their first language in a multilingual context.	Q8. The speakers will communicate more effectively in their first language if they have the formal learning of that first language.	Q9. The speakers prefer listening to songs and watching TV shows/videos in their first language	Q10. The speakers find that their first language is simpler than the second language.
N Valid	87	87	87	87	87
Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Mean	1.6782	1.9310	1.8506	2.5862	1.9310

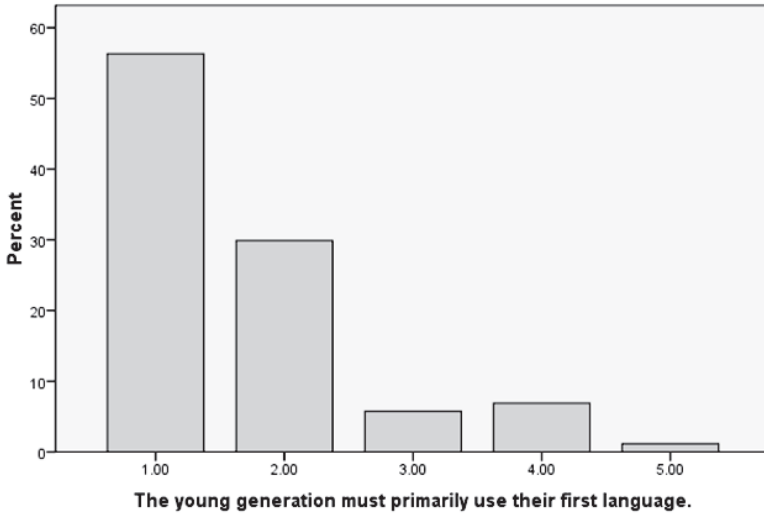
Median	2.0000	2.0000	2.0000	3.0000	2.0000
Mode	2.00	1.00	1.00	4.00	1.00
Std. Deviation	.60028	1.02064	1.04022	1.21571	1.14925

To provide a more comprehensive representation, we are going to offer the individual frequency table for each of the questions, coupled with a bar diagram that depicts the proportion of each question. The total number of participants was 87, and we are illustrating the unique range of replies that were obtained from the Likert chart for each of the responses.

Table 05: The young generation must primarily use their first language

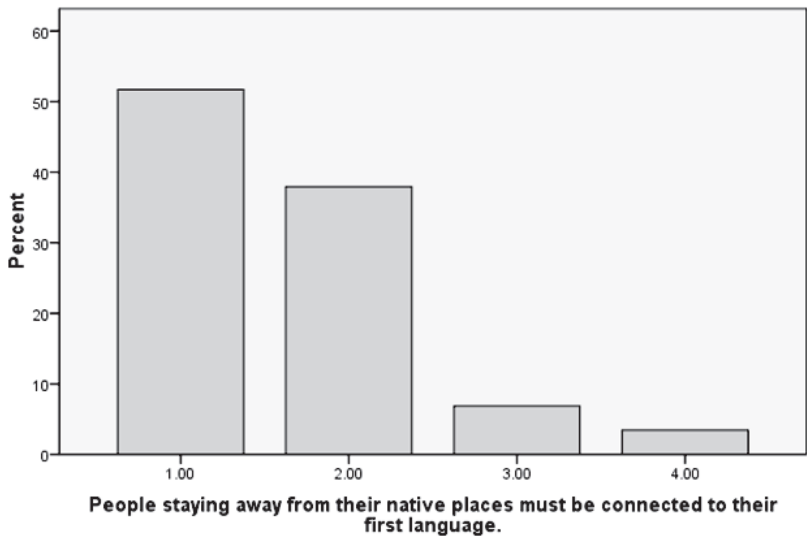
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	49	56.3	56.3	56.3
	2	26	29.9	29.9	86.2
	3	5	5.7	5.7	92.0
	4	6	6.9	6.9	98.9
	5	1	1.1	1.1	100.0
	Total	87	100.0	100.0	

During the first question, there were 49 participants who strongly agreed with the statement that the primary usage of their first language among young people accounts for 56.3% of the overall sample population. 29.9% of the participants agreed with it, and the total number of participants was 26. With a percentage of 5.7%, there were three of those who had absolutely no feeling at all. The percentages of individuals who disagreed and those who strongly disagreed were 6.9% and 1.1%, respectively. Six persons disagreed, while just one participant strongly disagreed.

Image 01: Bar diagram of first-question statement**Table 06: People staying away from their native places must be connected to their first language**

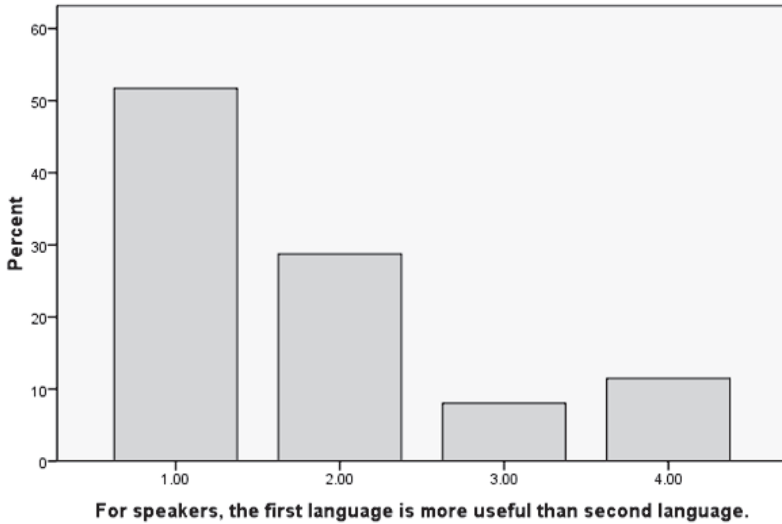
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	45	51.7	51.7	51.7
	2	33	37.9	37.9	89.7
	3	6	6.9	6.9	96.6
	4	3	3.4	3.4	100.0
	Total	87	100.0	100.0	

In Q2, most of the participants provided responses as Strongly Agree (51.7%) and Agree (37.9%). Nobody particularly disputed with the concept of people leaving their native countries having a connection to their first tongue.

Image 02: Bar diagram of Q2**Table 07: For speakers, the first language is more useful than second language**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	45	51.7	51.7	51.7
	2	25	28.7	28.7	80.5
	3	7	8.0	8.0	88.5
	4	10	11.5	11.5	100.0
	Total	87	100.0	100.0	

For Q3, 45 participants (51.7%) strongly agree with the highest peak whereas 7 participants (8.0%) disagree about the given statement. 10 participants (11.5%) do not have any suggestion regarding issue. Here again, there is no participant responding with the strongly disagree measure.

Image 03: Bar diagram of Q3**Table 08: To discuss new ideas/concepts in academics, the speakers prefer using their first language**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	29	33.3	33.3	33.3
	2	34	39.1	39.1	72.4
	3	8	9.2	9.2	81.6
	4	14	16.1	16.1	97.7
	5	2	2.3	2.3	100.0
	Total	87	100.0	100.0	

For Q4, 29 participants strongly agreed with the proposition that entails to discuss new ideas/concepts in academics, the speakers prefer using their first language, which is 33.3% of the total sample size. In here, most of the participants agree with the statement; 39.1% of the participants agreed with it where the participant number is 34. 8 of them had no feeling at all and the

percentage is 9.2%. 14 participants disagreed and 2 participants strongly disagreed where the percentage portrayals are 16.1% and 2.3% consecutively.

Image 04: Bar diagram of Q4

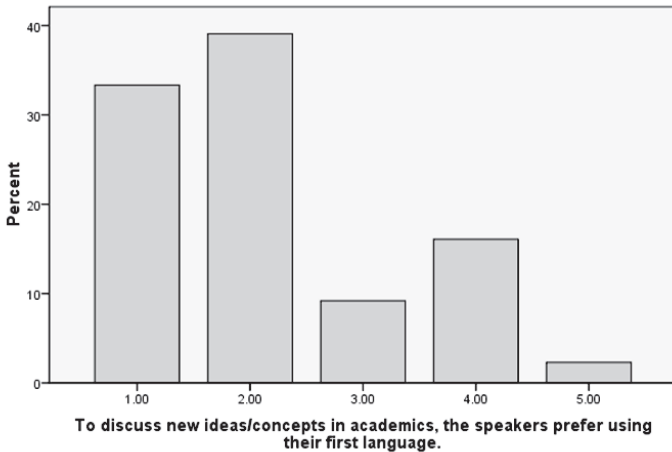
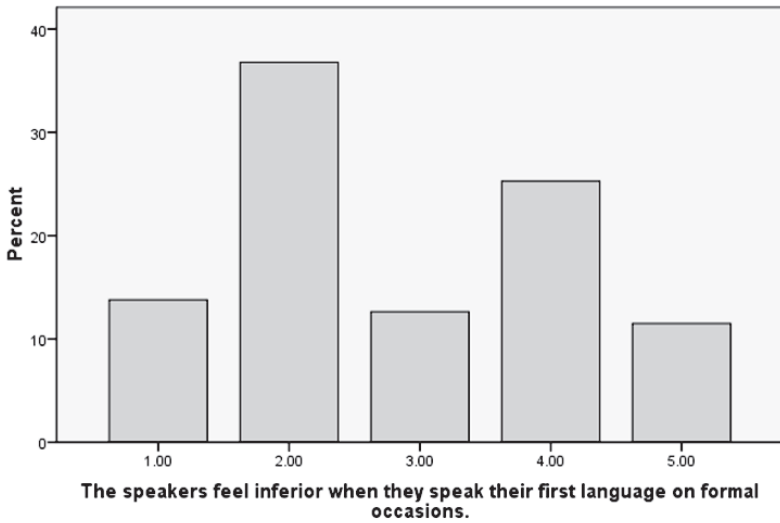


Table 09: The speakers feel inferior when they speak their first language on formal occasions

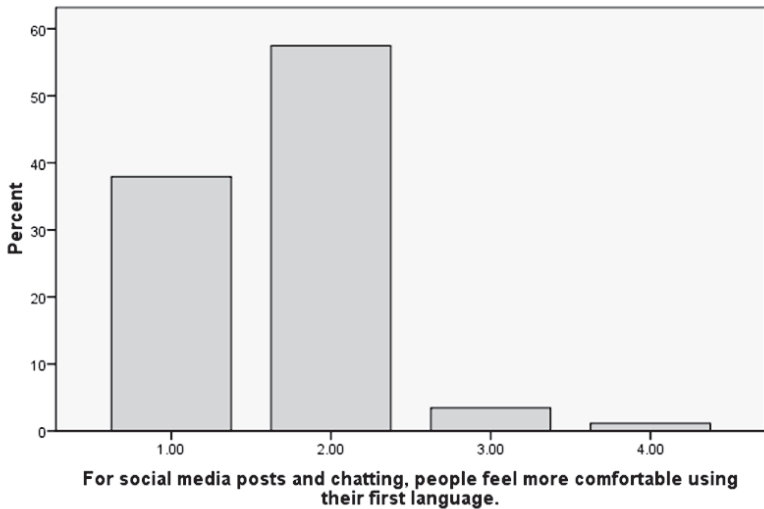
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	12	13.8	13.8	13.8
	2	32	36.8	36.8	50.6
	3	11	12.6	12.6	63.2
	4	22	25.3	25.3	88.5
	5	10	11.5	11.5	100.0
	Total	87	100.0	100.0	

Q5 shows different types of data representation comparing to the other frequency tables. Here, most of the participants either agree or disagree. The question entailed speakers feel inferior when they speak their first language on formal occasions. In this case, 32 participants agreed (36.8%) and 22 participants disagreed (25.3%)

Image 05: Bar diagram of Q5**Table 10: For social media posts and chatting, people feel more comfortable using their first language**

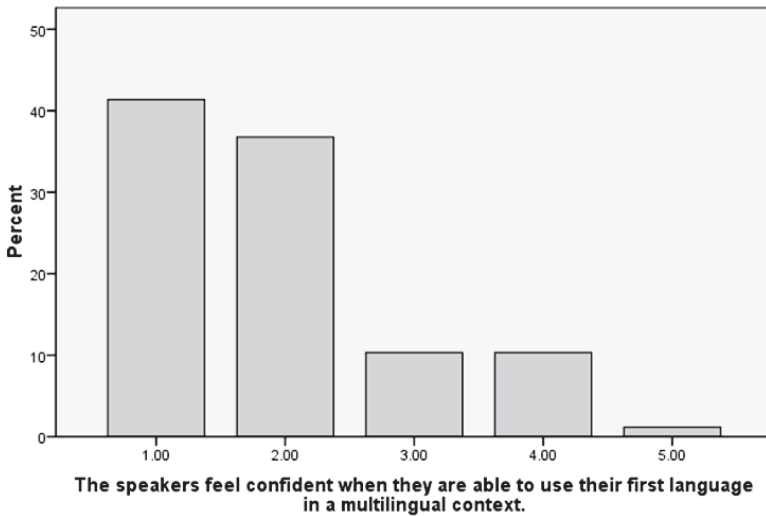
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	33	37.9	37.9	37.9
	2	50	57.5	57.5	95.4
	3	3	3.4	3.4	98.9
	4	1	1.1	1.1	100.0
	Total	87	100.0	100.0	

Q6 has a distinctive type of response. 50 participants (which is 57.5%) agree and 33 (which is 37.9%) participants strongly agree that for social media posts and chatting, people feel more comfortable using their first language. No participant strongly disagrees this statement.

Image 06: Bar diagram of Q6**Table 11: The speakers feel confident when they are able to use their first language in a multilingual context**

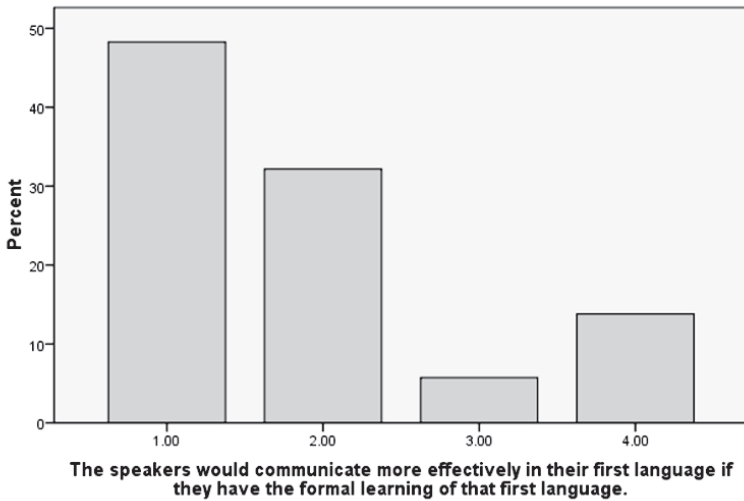
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	36	41.4	41.4	41.4
	2	32	36.8	36.8	78.2
	3	9	10.3	10.3	88.5
	4	9	10.3	10.3	98.9
	5	1	1.1	1.1	100.0
	Total	87	100.0	100.0	

Q7 represent that the speakers feel confident when they are able to use their first language in a multilingual context and 36 (41.4%) participants strongly agree with that and 32 (36.8%) participants agree with the statement. On the other hand, 9 participants do not possess any feeling for this statement (10.3%) and the same number, and the percentage also disagree in the same occasion.

Image 07: Bar diagram of Q7**Table 12: The speakers will communicate more effectively in their first language if they have the formal learning of that first language**

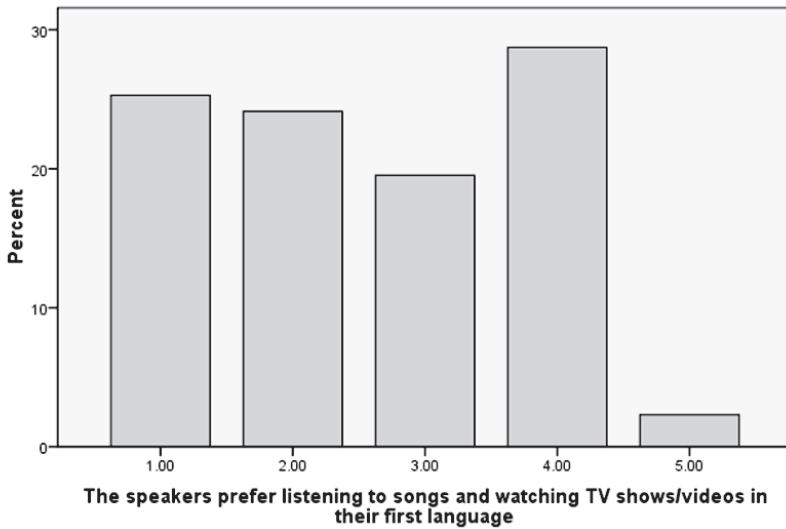
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	42	48.3	48.3	48.3
	2	28	32.2	32.2	80.5
	3	5	5.7	5.7	86.2
	4	12	13.8	13.8	100.0
	Total	87	100.0	100.0	

In Q8, we can find the similar positive response regarding the idea showing the speakers will communicate more effectively in their first language if they have the formal learning of that first language. 42 participants (48.3%) strongly agree with it, on the contrary, 12 participants (13.8%) disagree with the proposition, and no one strongly disagrees with it.

Image 08: Bar diagram of Q8**Table 13: The speakers prefer listening to songs and watching TV shows/videos in their first language**

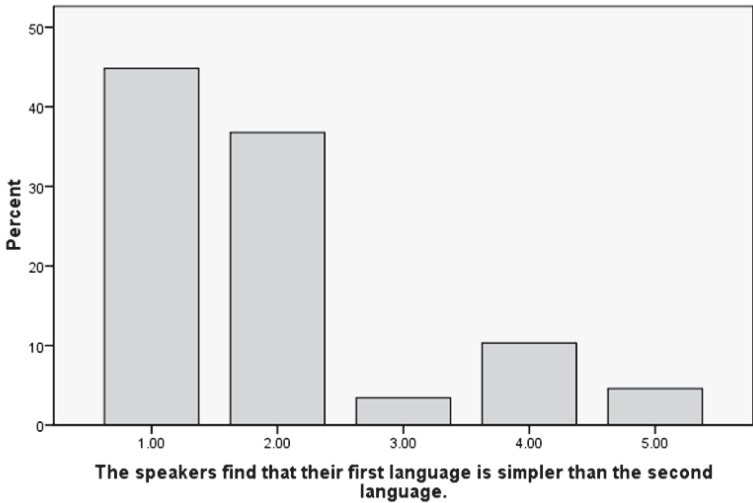
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	22	25.3	25.3	25.3
	2	21	24.1	24.1	49.4
	3	17	19.5	19.5	69.0
	4	25	28.7	28.7	97.7
	5	2	2.3	2.3	100.0
	Total	87	100.0	100.0	

Q9 is quite different by the representation of collected data. This is the only statement where 25 participants (28.7%) disagree about the preference of listening to songs and watching TV shows/videos in their first language; in outnumbers the strongly agree marker as well agree marker. 22 participants strongly agree with that (25.3%) and 21 participants agree with the statement (24.1%).

Image 09: Bar diagram of Q9**Table 14: The speakers find that their first language is simpler than the second language**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	39	44.8	44.8	44.8
	2	32	36.8	36.8	81.6
	3	3	3.4	3.4	85.1
	4	9	10.3	10.3	95.4
	5	4	4.6	4.6	100.0
	Total	87	100.0	100.0	

In Q10, we have found that most of the participants are positive on the simplicity of their first language than the second language. The cumulative percentage between strongly agree and agree is 85.1%, where 39 participants strongly agree, and 32 participants agree only.

Image 10: Bar diagram of Q10

The following summary table basically highlights the N of items which is 10 and the mean is this case is 2.005 which shows the agree based responses.

Table 15: Summary Item Statistics

	Mean	Mini- mum	Maxi- mum	Range	Maximum / Mini- mum	Vari- ance	N of Items
Item Means	2.005	1.621	2.839	1.218	1.752	.167	10

Discussion

This study aimed to investigate the level of trust that first language users have in their language across various linguistic domains. The domains examined include the participant's place of residence, the perceived usefulness of the first language, the learning necessity of the first language, the confidence gained from using the first language, the simplicity of the first language,

and the importance of using the first language among the younger generation.

Table 16: Question-Statement Percentiles on the Agreement

Statement	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	No feeling at all (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
Disagree (%)					
Q1. The young generation must primarily use their first language.	56.3	29.9	5.7	6.9	11
Q2. People staying away from their native places must be connected to their first language.	51.7	37.9	6.9	3.4	0
Q3. For speakers, the first language is more useful than second language.	51.7	28.7	8.0	11.5	0
Q4. To discuss new ideas/concepts in academics, the speakers prefer using their first language.	33.3	39.1	9.2	16.1	2.3
Q5. The speakers feel inferior when they speak their first language on formal occasions.	13.8	36.8	12.6	25.3	11.5
Q6. For social media posts and chatting, people feel more comfortable using their first language.	37.9	57.5	3.4	1.1	0
Q7. The speakers feel confident when they are able to use their first language in a multilingual context.	41.4	36.8	10.3	10.3	1.1
Q8. The speakers will communicate more effectively in their first language if they have the formal learning of that first language.	48.3	32.2	5.7	13.8	0

Q9. The speakers prefer listening to songs and watching TV shows/videos in their first language.	25.3	24.1	19.5	28.7	2.3
Q10. The speakers find that their first language is simpler than the second language.	44.8	36.8	3.4	10.3	4.6

The findings indicate that the participants strongly agree with the statements related to these domains. On the other hand, in domains such as academic discussions, linguistic inferiority in relation to the first language, social media posts, and multimedia choice, there is less agreement among the participants. This suggests that the level of trust in the first language varies depending on the linguistic sphere being considered.

The study also aimed to identify the domains that are associated with linguistic trust and to examine the contrasting responses to statements regarding linguistic trust among first language users. The findings reveal that there are statements that receive strong agreement as well as statements that receive agreement from the participants. The percentage of participants who disagree or strongly disagree with the statements is relatively low compared to those who agree or strongly agree. Additionally, there is a notable percentage of participants who express no particular feeling towards the statements.

The findings indicate that participants strongly agree with most of the question items. Specifically, the highest percentages of agreement are observed for Q1, Q2, Q3, Q7, Q8, and Q10. For Q4, Q5, and Q6, the highest percentages are based on agreement.

Interestingly, there are four statements for which no participants strongly disagree. The choice of TV/video program shows a marked difference compared to the other statements, as participants tend to prefer the second language in this context. The neutral feeling towards all the questions is relatively low, except for the statement about speaking the first language in formal occasions, which elicits a different response.

Overall, these findings provide support for the research questions and suggest that first language users trust their language across various linguistic domains. The majority of participants either strongly agree or agree with the statements, indicating a high level of trust in their first language. The table below presents a summary of the findings in a simplified manner.

Our findings suggest that speakers are more likely to trust and use a language if they feel comfortable with it. This is because comfort is associated with positive emotions, which in turn lead to increased trust. Additionally, our findings suggest that speakers are more likely to use a language if they have positive attitudes towards it. This is because positive attitudes are associated with a sense of belonging and identity, which in turn lead to increased use.

Conclusion

In conclusion, our study highlights the significance of linguistic trust and attitudes towards language use in shaping language behavior. Moving forward, we recommend that future investigations adopt a multidimensional approach to deepen our comprehension of this phenomenon. For instance, exploring the influence of linguistic trust and attitudes towards language use in diverse settings, including education, employment, and healthcare, would provide valuable insights. Furthermore, examining the impact of linguistic trust and attitudes towards language use across various languages and cultures would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of this complex interplay.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire: Trust of the Speakers towards their First Language

The following are statements regarding your trust in your first language in all areas of language use. Please respond to each statement by giving your initial reaction. Please answer all items from (i) to (x) by placing a check mark. "Strongly disagree" indicates the lowest level of trust, while "strongly agree" indicates the highest level of trust.

Thank you very much for taking the time to participate.

<i>Serial</i>	<i>Statement</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>
		<i>Strongly agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>No feeling at all</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Strongly disagree</i>
i.	The young generation must primarily use their first language.					
ii.	People staying away from their native places must be connected to their first language.					
iii.	For speakers, the first language is more useful than second language.					
iv.	To discuss new ideas/concepts in academics, the speakers prefer using their first language.					
v.	The speakers feel inferior when they speak their first language on formal occasions.					
vi.	For social media posts and chatting, people feel more comfortable using their first language.					
vii.	The speakers feel confident when they are able to use their first language in a multilingual context.					
viii.	The speakers would communicate more effectively in their first language if they have the formal learning of that first language.					
ix.	The speakers prefer listening to songs and watching TV shows/videos in their first language.					
x.	The speakers find that their first language is simpler than the second language.					



MOTHER LANGUAGE

Vol.: 8 | Number: 1-2 | Page 101-122

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Right to Learn in Mother Tongue: A Special Concern for Indigenous People of Bangladesh

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Abstract: The “Right to Learn in Mother Tongue” is an essential component of educational and cultural rights, especially for indigenous groups. In Bangladesh, the formal education system is primarily conducted in the national language, Bangla. However, indigenous peoples frequently encounter substantial obstacles when attempting to receive education in their own languages. This study aims to explore the consequences of this problem in achieving education. In addition, this study examines the learning process through one’s native language, emphasizing a rights-based approach. The notion of Linguistic Human Rights (LHRs) has been explicitly articulated through both national and international legal systems. The study demonstrates that the universal recognition of Human Rights includes the right to receive education in one’s mother language, particularly for indigenous populations worldwide. This study employs a descriptive, thematic, and doctrinal legal research technique, utilizing an integrated literature review to focus on the right to education of indigenous people in Bangladesh, namely through the use of their mother tongue. This study is grounded in the philosophical approach of epistemological constructivism, which focuses on analyzing theoretical knowledge related to linguistic Human Rights.

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Keywords: Right to Learn, Mother Tongue, Human Rights, Curriculum, Indigenous People.

Introduction

Recognizing linguistic rights as a fundamental human right is widely acknowledged in the contemporary global context. Language is a fundamental aspect of human existence and can be considered a valuable possession of an individual. Aziz (2022) states that Bangladesh, located in Southeast Asia, is home to indigenous populations in the northern and southeastern regions that speak a diverse range of local languages. However, none of their languages are incorporated into the primary educational programme for instruction or acquisition. Consequently, these individuals frequently lack the incentive to enrol their children in school. The country's language policy does not incorporate these indigenous languages into the main curriculum. Besides, Awal (2019a) states that an individual's identity is directly linked to the language or linguistic variation they use. The linguistic rights of minorities and indigenous people have been incorporated into international treaties, such as the UNCRC (1989), with regards to language and education. It is widely recognized that language plays a fundamental role in shaping cultural identity and enabling individuals to exert influence and control over their lives. It is imperative for the diverse indigenous language communities in Bangladesh to collaborate in order to preserve these languages. Murshed (2011) states that about 45 indigenous communities in the country constitute linguistic minorities. These groups speak more than 30 distinct languages and have an ethno-linguistic identity that differs from the majority of the Bangla-speaking population. Until recently, the country's educational programs have disregarded language concerns pertaining to the ethno-linguistic minority. According to Lyons (1981), language is the fundamental support system of a civilization. Language is

crucial in the construction of a society or nation. Each language possesses unique characteristics that differentiate it from other languages.

In addition, as stated by Cummins (2000), bilingualism in children leads to improved academic performance and provides linguistic advantages. When children are taught effectively in their native language, they tend to perform better in the majority of academic areas. Nevertheless, if pupils are prohibited from using their mother tongue, it might harm their conceptual and personal development. According to Pinnock (2009), there is conclusive evidence that adopting a language for teaching that is not dominant in children's daily lives has a detrimental impact on their education. Azizi (2011) states that in the 21st century, state authorities have thoroughly and earnestly examined the right to education in one's native language, in response to the genuine needs and requirements of the public. When children encounter additional obstacles in education, the use of unsuitable language for instruction can push them towards complete exclusion. In compliance with a wide range of languages spoken, especially those with large rural populations or significant divisions, it is logical to consider the language used in schools as a crucial factor in promoting high-quality learning outcomes and increasing access to education. Awal (2019b) narrates that according to the United Nations Department of Public Information, approximately 96 percent of the world's 6,700 languages are spoken by a mere 3 percent of the global population. Despite comprising fewer than 6% of the global population, indigenous peoples are fluent in over 4,000 languages worldwide. Indigenous languages worldwide serve as both a means of communication and a vital medium for conveying a vast and intricate system of transmitting and exchanging knowledge.

At the same time, Ullah and Reza (2023a) stated that the restoration of indigenous language rights is stipulated in Article

23(A) of Bangladesh constitution and also in the 2010 Education Policy. In accordance with the government's decision, the National Curriculum and Textbook Board releases primary school textbooks in five indigenous languages. However, these measures are insufficient to ensure the preservation of all indigenous languages. Rahman (2011) asserts that the National Education Policy 2010 advocates for an education policy that is centered on the native language of the indigenous minorities in the country. Sajib (2017a) narrates that the policy strongly suggests that the government should move quickly to recruit educators from diverse backgrounds and to work with indigenous communities to develop curriculum materials in their native languages. On top of that, the current state of some indigenous languages in Bangladesh as a result of both globalization and the widespread dominance of Bengali in the country, the use of indigenous languages is steadily dwindling. Because they are unable to attend school in the language they were born into, indigenous students are dropping out at alarming rates. Because of this, kids will not have the opportunity to enjoy their time in high school. However, education in any of their languages is not a priority. This makes it difficult for many families to afford the cost of education for their children. According to the language policy, these indigenous languages are not part of the national curriculum. There has been little success in implementing the government of Bangladesh's initial aim to provide education in the mother tongues of the five most prominent indigenous languages spoken in the nation.

Background of the Study

Many indigenous peoples of Bangladesh have their own unique ways of life. The diverse locales and natural surroundings are protected and preserved by the ethnic communities in various parts of the country, particularly in hill tracts. The nation is

home to around fifty distinct indigenous groups, including the Chakma, Marma, Khasia, Garo, Tanchangya, Magh, Hajang, Munda, Kachhari, Oraon, Kuki, Tripura, Santali, Malpahad, Mikir, and Shadri etc. Ullah and Reza (2023b) narrates that by implementing new legislation and releasing textbooks in a handful of indigenous languages, the government of Bangladesh has made a conscious effort to safeguard indigenous languages and cultures. The government has a duty to ensure that all indigenous languages and language variants have a safe space to thrive. Thus, the government and media play a significant role when dealing with language extinction and rebirth. According to Rahman (2022), the state of Bangladesh is obligated to preserve and promote indigenous languages and cultures in the country's constitution and other national policy papers.

Similarly, according to Chowdhury (2014), ethnic minority communities in Bangladesh are dispersed around the nation. This includes districts in the northwest, like Dinajpur and Rajshahi, as well as districts in the central northern, like Tangail and Mymensingh, districts in the northeast, like Greater Sylhet, and districts in the south and southeast, like Greater Barisal, Chittagong, and Cox's Bazar. Around 1,586,141 people identified as members of an ethnic minority in the country (BBS, 2011). According to the official count, that amounts to 1.8% of the total population. Moreover, in order to promote peaceful cohabitation of Bangladesh's many languages, language-in-education planners should strike a balance between Bangla, the official language, English, and indigenous languages. Since Bangla is the *de jure* state language, it would appear that the entire country speaks only Bangla. Contrary to popular belief, English has not yet achieved formal recognition despite its widespread use in the country's educational system, news

outlets, and government. The government has not yet decided what the respective roles of Bangla and English would be. Most educational policies in the country have long ignored the languages of ethno-linguistic minorities. Similarly, Jacob (2016) states that the National Education Policy 2010 (MOE 2010) is the primary educational policy document of the GoB. It lays the groundwork for educational equity, openness to educational possibilities, and comprehension of education's function and significance in Bangladesh. The National Education Policy of 2010 laid the groundwork for future implementation of several of its policy suggestions, however these have not yet been put into action. Even though Article 28 of the Constitution forbids discrimination based on race, religion, and place of birth, no Bangladeshi law or constitutional provision explicitly acknowledges or safeguards the rights of indigenous people in Bangladesh. As a result, the Constitution is very important when considering the future of the country's languages. Government choices in Bangladesh primarily steer language planning initiatives, which are seen as implementations of language policy (Sahin, 2018). In this context, there seems to be a trend toward removing mother language teaching from public schools and replacing it with private ones. Some consider this method as a breach of human rights and aggravating educational inequality. According to Islam (2020), learning one's native language is a fundamental human right.

Objective of the study

The objectives of the study are:

- To evaluate the legal frameworks and policies that support the right to education in indigenous languages, particularly in the context of international human rights conventions.

- To investigate the educational, cultural, and socioeconomic obstacles that indigenous communities encounter as a result of the absence of mother tongue education.
- To provide effective suggestions for using mother tongue in teaching learning of indigenous people

Methodology

This study is grounded in the epistemological constructivist philosophical framework, which asserts that our knowledge is constructed through social conventions, individual perceptions, and collective experiences. This study aims to analyze the concept of Linguistic Human Rights (LHRs) according to the definition provided in the Social Research Glossary of 2022. This study primarily employs a doctrinal and pure legal research approach. It is a content analysis-based research study aimed at elucidating the deprivation of indigenous people in Bangladesh in their ability to learn through their mother tongue. Essentially, an integrative literature review has been conducted to fulfill the study's objectives, as described by Torracco (2005). The doctrinal legal research approach involves meticulously examining and comparing different texts to detect ambiguity, reveal inconsistencies between laws and principles, discover disparities, and apply legal analysis. The article centres around the utilization of a rights-based strategy to ensure indigenous people's right to education and learning, namely through the use of their native language (Salter and Mason, 2007). This study utilizes descriptive, explanatory, analytical, and critical approaches to assess and examine the laws and policies pertaining to the establishment of the right to learn in one's native language, as discussed by Chatterjee (2000) in their research. Moreover, the study employs a critical analysis methodology to assess and form comments regarding the legal system's shortcomings in enforcing existing laws.

Literature Review

The right to freely express one's thoughts and ideas is guaranteed in article 19 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (Luca, 2017). Besides, the transmission of cultures, beliefs, and traditional knowledge through local languages particularly those of indigenous and minority populations is a key factor in ensuring sustainable futures, according to UNESCO (2017). There has been a severe shortage of both users and preservation efforts for ethnic languages in Bangladesh, leading to the extinction of numerous dialects. There is a growing danger to linguistic diversity due to the extinction of languages, warns the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Sajib (2017b) reports that 40% of the world's population is unable to receive an education since their native language is not taught in the classroom. In addition, according to Sakib (2022), most Bangalees are learning and using English alongside Bangla, and most tribal people are learning and using both English and Bangla alongside their mother tongue in various socio-economic domains. As a result, Bangladesh is becoming an unofficially multilingual country.

Kangas (2004) argues that an important objective of minority education is to facilitate the development of a fundamental level of bilingualism among pupils. Bilingual education, in all its manifestations, is a subject of intricate and sensitive analysis in the fields of academic research and public policy discussions. Wamalwa and Oluoch (2013) conducted study on the conservation and vulnerability of Kenyan languages. The factors contributing to the endangerment of languages include the degree of bilingualism in the language, the socio-economic status of the minority language, the prevalence of negative attitudes towards the minority language, and the inability to pass

down the minority language to future generations. McKay (2011) highlights the importance of language rules, such as “language categories” and “language maintenance,” in safeguarding indigenous languages in Australia. “Language awareness” and “language learning” refer to the process of acquiring a second language, whereas “language revival” refers to the maintenance of one’s native language and includes three subcategories: revitalization, renewal, and reclaiming. Debnath (2019) states that the local Santals, like indigenous communities worldwide, have the notion that education has the power to liberate them and future generations from poverty, marginalization, and isolation. Nevertheless, embracing this religion has the drawback of becoming disconnected from their tribal background and the potential risk of forfeiting their distinctive collective identity as Santals. Prinsloo (2009) states that most South African students who speak an African language as their first language only receive instruction in their mother tongue for the first three or four years of primary school. Stoop (2017) states that the constitution of South Africa ensures the protection and promotion of one of its eleven official languages. Section 9 of the South African Constitution ensures that the law grants all individuals equal protection and prohibits any kind of discrimination, including prejudice based on an individual’s language. According to Section 29(2) of the Constitution, in public schools, whenever feasible, each student is entitled to receive education in their preferred official language or languages.

Rumenapp (2014) defines Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) as an instructional approach that utilizes the native language of the family as the main medium of teaching. The MTB-MLE movement has emerged as a response to the need for equitable educational options for indigenous language speakers. The Mother Tongue framework aims to enhance educational chances for all students

by prioritizing the initial emphasis on the first language before transitioning to other languages. Nishanthi (2020) states that many children in undeveloped countries do not acquire much knowledge in school due to the teachers' use of a language they do not understand. Consequently, individuals are less inclined to gain and develop new skills, encounter more adverse and alone situations, and exhibit a higher probability of repeating or discontinuing their education. In order to enhance educational standards, policymakers should incorporate mother-tongue learning into their language strategies. Disregarding the mother language throughout the early years might have detrimental impacts on children's learning and productivity. Benson (2005) states that when delivering a high-quality basic education, it is crucial to consider many factors, with the utilization of suitable language being of utmost significance. Ozfidan (2017) found that students who possess fluency in both their native language and the language of instruction in the classroom have enhanced proficiency in reading and writing the target language. According to Spolsky (1998), it is necessary to take into account the rights of both the speakers of a language and the language itself. In this context, it is feasible to distinguish between the entitlements of language speakers to utilize their language and their entitlements to conserve it by transmitting it to future generations.

More significantly, Quader (2014) asserts that Bangladesh's national fabric is strengthened by its cultural diversity, particularly due to the presence of indigenous groups. The preservation of indigenous languages in Bangladesh has encountered obstacles, resulting in a loss of vitality in these languages. In this instance, the government must guarantee the inclusion of indigenous individuals in specific educational and cultural activities by allowing them to utilize their native languages. Meanwhile, indigenous groups must be aware of and understand their linguistic rights. Preserving indigenous languages should be a

paramount concern for all parties involved, as it is a basic aspect of human rights. As per Bhuiyan (2016), it is opined by Jose Martinez Cobo, the Special Rapporteur of the UN Commission on Human Rights, indigenous communities, peoples, and nations are those that have a historical connection to societies that existed on their territories before invasion and colonization. These groups see themselves as separate from the dominant sectors of society that currently exist on those territories.

Results and Discussion

The right of indigenous children to receive education in their mother tongue in accordance with international legal principles is recognized. Here is an analysis of the origins of international law that establishes the structure for the right of indigenous children to receive education in their native language. On September 13, 2007, the United Nations announced indigenous people's rights, including individual and communal rights, cultural rights and identity, and rights to education, health, employment, language, and other areas. Therefore, the internationally recognized Human Rights law has identified the approach of learning through one's mother as a fundamental right.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) was established in 1989. The CRC, specifically Article 28, Article 29, and Article 30, is a significant treaty that guarantees the right of indigenous children to learn their native language. Article 28 ensures that State parties acknowledge a child's right to education, while Article 29 outlines the primary objectives of education. Additionally, Article 30 states that in states with ethnic, religious, or linguistic minorities or indigenous populations, a child from such a minority or indigenous group cannot be deprived of the right to embrace their own culture, practice their own religion, or use their own language, while being part of their community. The International Covenant on Civil and Political

Rights (ICCPR) of 1966 includes Article 27, which states that in countries where ethnic, religious, or linguistic minorities exist, individuals belonging to these minorities must not be deprived of their right to participate in and enjoy their own culture, practice their own religion, or use their own language, alongside other members of their group.

The UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education, established in 1960, emphasizes the importance of acknowledging the educational rights of national minorities. Article 5 (1.c) specifically highlights the recognition of their right to engage in educational activities, such as maintaining schools and, depending on the educational policies of each country, using or teaching their own language. General Comment No. 11 (2009) issued by the Committee on the Rights of the Child: The document outlines the rules aimed at promoting the rights of indigenous peoples, with a particular emphasis on the rights of indigenous children in the field of education. The Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (also referred to as ILO Convention No. 169): Article 28 (1) of ILO Convention No. 169 states that children who are part of the indigenous communities should, whenever possible, receive education in their native language or in the language commonly spoken by their group. If it is impossible to accomplish this, the authorities in charge will engage in discussions with these groups to implement measures that will help achieve this goal.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) was adopted in 2007. The High Commissioner for Human Rights expressed satisfaction with the approval of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) by the General Assembly on September 13 2007. This achievement is considered a significant victory for fairness and human worth, after over twenty years

of discussions between governments and representatives of indigenous communities. The Declaration is a highly detailed document that outlines the rights of indigenous peoples under international law and policy. It establishes baseline requirements for recognizing, protecting, and promoting these rights. The international legal frameworks for human rights are crucial for promoting a rights-based approach to education and teaching in one's native language.

The basis for this right was established by examining the international legal sources that allow indigenous children to study their mother tongue in the classroom. Intending to address the specific situations in Bangladesh, the law of the country incorporates and details the use of these components. The National Education Policy of 2010 and the Law of 2010 (the "Small Ethnic Groups Cultural Institutes Act of 2010") in Bangladesh propose a policy of first-language education for the indigenous minorities in the country, even though most international treaties in this area have already been implemented. Indigenous children's right to learn their language at school has not been effectively realized for a variety of other reasons as well. The lack of a conducive learning environment and the issue of legislation's continuous revisions are two of these issues.

Whether one's mother tongue is a minority language or a dominant one, the idea of linguistic human rights (LHRs) suggests that everyone should be able to identify positively with their mother tongue and have that identification acknowledged and valued by others. It denotes the right to acquire the mother tongue, whether verbally or in writing, to receive at least a basic education in the mother tongue, and to use the mother tongue in many public settings. Limitations on these rights could be seen as a violation of basic LHRs. In addition, as shown by Kangas's (2012) research, it suggests that minority groups have the right

to create and run their own educational institutions, including schools, with the authority to decide on course content and the ability to teach in their native languages.

The constitution of the Republic of Bangladesh explicitly states that the state is responsible for safeguarding and promoting the distinct local culture and traditions of tribes, minority groups, ethnic sects, and communities (Act 23-A). Bangladesh's constitution guarantees indigenous peoples' right to maintain and utilize their original languages. Thus, it is imperative for children to directly encounter and engage with it, both cognitively and corporeally. Indigenous people have a multitude of problems in their efforts to safeguard their languages. Acquiring linguistic skills should offer native populations enhanced employment prospects. In the absence of job security, a few indigenous individuals may choose to acquire knowledge of their indigenous languages to preserve their cultural identity. However, the majority of individuals are unlikely to demonstrate interest in doing so. In Bangladesh, the limited utilization of indigenous languages in the workplace, especially in areas outside of the hill regions in the southern half of the nation, is a significant concern. In addition, the government initiated the production of books in five distinct languages, namely Chakma, Marma, Kokborok, Garo, and Sadri, covering the pre-primary to class three levels (Roy, 2021). Nevertheless, the curriculum is inadequately prepared, and the scarcity of available books has worsened the situation. There are currently no published books available in other indigenous languages.

The government should uphold and safeguard both fundamental rights and constitutional recognition concurrently. In this context, the government can examine many national constitutions, such as those of Finland, Australia, Peru, and other countries, to promote the development of indigenous languages.

According to Section 17 of the Finnish Constitution, individuals are granted the explicit right to utilize their native language and cultural heritage freely. Indigenous groups are granted the right to protect and promote their native language. Another exemplary instance can be observed in the Austrian Constitution, namely in Article 9 of the Austrian Constitutional Law, which ensures equal rights for all regional languages in the domains of public life, education, and administration as opined by Zmyvalova (2015). Significantly, Indigenous individuals must recognize that the loss of their language equates to the loss of their primary means of identifying their cultural heritage.

It is imperative to establish research cells dedicated to indigenous languages to ensure their preservation and advancement. The International Mother Language Institute (IMLI), affiliated with the University of Dhaka, can significantly assist in collaborating with indigenous communities. Introductory classes can be provided initially. Simultaneously, it is essential to construct public libraries in indigenous communities. These libraries will serve as knowledge centres for the community and promote indigenous people's social, cultural, and economic integration and solidarity. These community information centers are operated by the Directorate of Public Libraries, which is under the control of the Government of Bangladesh. Increasing the collection of language and literature materials in libraries is essential to improve indigenous communities' literary and linguistic resources. It is also essential to spread information among the members of indigenous groups.

Having said that the topic of ensuring the right to learn in their mother tongue for indigenous people in Bangladesh is a crucial one that involves human rights, cultural conservation, and educational fairness. Here are some bold points of significant findings of the research:

- a) **Government actions and challenges:** The Bangladeshi government has introduced projects called Mother Tongue-based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) in certain areas to meet the educational needs of indigenous children. However, these endeavors have been disjointed and often impeded by insufficient resources, a lack of political resolve, and inadequate community involvement. The available evidence indicates that the existing MTB-MLE programs are insufficient in meeting the needs of indigenous children, as only a small proportion of indigenous students are able to receive teaching in their native language.
- b) **Constitutional Framework:** The Constitution of Bangladesh recognizes Bengali as the official language, although it does not explicitly mention the incorporation of indigenous languages in education. Bangladesh has officially approved and accepted the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), which emphasizes the significance of offering education in the languages spoken by indigenous communities. However, the current national policies have not fully incorporated these international norms into the existing domestic legislation. Research suggests that there is a divergence between the international duties related to human rights and the practical implementation of these rights within a country. There has been a lack of progress in creating precise procedures for teaching indigenous languages.
- c) **The impact on cognitive and social development:** Gaining knowledge in one's mother tongue enhances cognitive abilities, particularly during early childhood. Indigenous children can feel disconnected from their cultural history and

the mainstream education system when they are not given the opportunity to receive education in their native language. A study conducted in Bangladesh has shown that indigenous students who start their education in their mother tongue achieve better academic results compared to their peers who switch to Bengali or English in later years. This suggests that educational approaches that include bilingual or multilingual teaching are not only possible but also beneficial.

- d) The long-term consequences of language loss: Without assistance, many indigenous languages in Bangladesh, such as those spoken by the Khasi, Mro, and others, are in risk of becoming extinct in a few generations. Linguistic experts warn that the disappearance of indigenous languages would result in the disappearance of unique viewpoints on the world, oral customs, and ecological knowledge, all of which are essential for the continued existence of these communities and their surrounding environment.
- e) Cultural and Linguistic Marginalization: The dominance of Bengali as the main language in formal education creates linguistic hegemony, leading to a sense of marginalization and disconnection from their cultural identity among indigenous students. There is evidence suggesting that pupils from indigenous communities, such as the Chakma, Marma, and Santal, encounter difficulties with their personal identity when they are required to adapt to a curriculum that is focused on Bengali culture. Language barriers lead to higher dropout rates and reduced academic performance.
- f) Educational disparities: Indigenous kids face substantial inequities in schooling due to the limited availability of textbooks and instructional resources in their native

languages. Empirical research confirms that children who are educated in their mother tongue during the early years of schooling demonstrate higher academic achievement due to the positive impact on cognitive development and the fostering of self-assurance.

Conclusion

The indigenous people in Bangladesh still face an unresolved difficulty in obtaining the right to learn in their mother tongue. Although there is an increasing acknowledgment of the necessity for education that is based on the mother tongue, the legal, political, and practical obstacles to its execution continue to exist. Extensive academic research continuously demonstrates that providing education in a child's native language promotes superior academic achievement, improves cognitive growth, and safeguards cultural heritage. Therefore, it is imperative to prioritize mother-tongue education for the indigenous groups in Bangladesh. Nevertheless, in the absence of more comprehensive government intervention, active participation from the community, and global assistance, the objective of providing fair and all-encompassing education for everyone remains far from being achieved. Moreover, the primary language used for education, particularly in the first 8 years, should be the one that is least likely to advance to a highly formal level. This is in accordance with the Basic Principles of Linguistic Human Rights (LHRs). This language serves as the mother tongue for all minority children. The majority of youngsters can be instructed using a minority language as the medium of instruction.

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The Role of Arabic Language Education in the Socio-economy of Bangladesh: A Multidisciplinary Study

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Abstract: Arabic language education holds significant importance in shaping the socio-economic landscape of Bangladesh. Traditionally associated with religious instruction, its potential extends beyond the theological domain, serving as a key tool for socio-economic development. This article seeks to explore the multifaceted role of Arabic language education in Bangladesh, analyzing how it contributes to the country's economy, cultural identity, and global connectivity. Drawing on various disciplines, including education, economics, and cultural studies, the research examines how Arabic language proficiency influences employability, trade relations with Arab countries, and the development of the financial sectors. The paper argues that the expansion of Arabic language education could enhance Bangladesh's economic ties with the Arab world, opening up new avenues for trade, investment, and employment, particularly in sectors like migration and tourism. Despite its potential, Arabic language education remains underutilized in the broader socio-economic fabric of Bangladesh. The paper aims to explore (a) the ontic basis

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of Arabic language instruction as embedded in the Islamic education system of Bangladesh, (b) how Arabic proficiency may be integrated into vocational and technical education to improve employability, and (c) the impact of Arabic language education on social mobility, particularly among the Muslim population. In addition, the present paper emphasizes identifying key challenges in the current Arabic language curriculum that hinder its wider applicability in the job market and economic sectors. The study employs a multidisciplinary methodology, including qualitative interviews with educators, economic analysis, and a review of Arabic language instruction models from other countries. The findings reveal that a stronger emphasis on Arabic language education could lead to broader economic opportunities for Bangladesh, particularly in the Middle East, while also reinforcing the cultural and religious identity of its Muslim majority. This paper contributes to the academic discourse on the role of language education in economic development, highlighting how Arabic proficiency can influence socio-economic behavior, migration patterns, and international relations. By connecting linguistic education with economic prospects, the research advocates for a more integrated approach to Arabic language teaching in Bangladesh, aligned with national development goals.

Keywords: Arabic Language Education, Socio-economy, Employment, Migration, Bangladesh.

Introduction

Arabic language education has played a profound role in shaping the socio-economic and cultural landscape of Bangladesh. Historically, Arabic has been intertwined with the Islamic identity of the country, stemming from the early days of the Bengal Sultanate when Arabic was introduced through Islamic scholarship and religious practices. As the language of the Quran, Arabic remains a central part of religious education, but its socio-economic relevance extends far beyond religious

boundaries. In today's globalized world, proficiency in Arabic is increasingly viewed as a valuable skill that can enhance employment opportunities, promote trade relations with Arab-speaking countries, and contribute to cultural diplomacy.

This multidisciplinary study seeks to explore the role of Arabic language education in Bangladesh by analyzing its impact across various sectors. The relationship between language education and economic development is particularly significant in the context of Bangladesh's growing labor migration to the Middle East, where knowledge of Spoken Arabic provides a competitive advantage in securing employment. Furthermore, the rise of Islamic banking and finance has underscored the need for professionals proficient in Arabic to navigate and lead in these sectors.

Despite its potential, Arabic language education in Bangladesh faces several challenges, including the narrow scope of curricula that often focus solely on religious instruction, and the limited integration of Arabic Skills into vocational and technical training. These challenges hinder the broader socio-economic benefits that could be realized through more comprehensive and pragmatic Arabic language programs. As a result, this paper aims to address how Arabic language proficiency can be better leveraged for socio-economic development, particularly in terms of employability, international trade, and cultural exchange.

This article will further investigate how Arabic language education can be restructured to align with the national development goals of Bangladesh, considering the diverse motivations of learners and the evolving needs of the job market. By drawing from both historical context and contemporary analysis, this study will provide a comprehensive overview of the role Arabic language education plays in fostering socio-economic progress in Bangladesh.

Theoretical Framework

This study's theoretical framework rests on the notion that language functions as a tool for socio-economic development,

cultural preservation, and global interaction. While traditionally focused on religious scholarship, Arabic language education in Bangladesh has the potential to foster broader societal goals by promoting economic ties with Arab-speaking nations, improving employment prospects, and preserving cultural identity. This section reviews the historical and cultural context of Arabic language education in Bangladesh and its socio-economic implications, laying the foundation for subsequent analysis.

Arabic Language Education in Bangladesh: Historical and Cultural Context

Arabic language education in Bangladesh dates back to the Bengal Sultanate, when Islam first gained prominence in the region. Arabic, as the language of the Quran and Islamic scholarship, became central to religious and educational life, linking Bengal to the broader Muslim world (Karim, 1992). The focus on Arabic during this period laid the groundwork for its lasting significance, particularly in madrasahs, where it continues to be central to religious instruction.

Arabic education in Bangladesh primarily evolved through religious institutions like madrasahs and Islamic universities, offering Muslims access to Islamic texts in their original language and reinforcing cultural and religious identity. However, during the British colonial era, English supplanted Arabic as the dominant administrative and educational language, limiting the scope of Arabic instruction to religious education (Rahman, 2003). Despite this shift, Arabic has retained its importance within religious circles.

Post-independence, Arabic education expanded as Bangladesh's economic ties with Arab nations grew, especially through labor migration. The demand for Arabic proficiency rose as more Bangladeshis sought employment in the Middle East, and the need for professionals with Arabic skills increased with the

development of Islamic finance and trade. Nevertheless, Arabic language education in Bangladesh remains largely focused on religious instruction, limiting its broader contribution to socio-economic development.

Understanding Arabic's dual role in Bangladesh as a preserver of religious and cultural heritage and as a tool for global economic engagement is key to realizing its untapped potential for advancing socio-economic progress.

Socio-economic Potential of Arabic Language Education

Arabic language education in Bangladesh offers substantial socio-economic growth opportunities by improving employability, boosting trade relations, and supporting key sectors like Islamic finance. Historically linked to religious studies, Arabic has evolved to provide broader benefits in the global marketplace.

One of the most immediate advantages of Arabic proficiency is enhanced employability, particularly in the Middle East. With many Bangladeshis working in industries like construction, domestic work, and hospitality, proficiency in Arabic gives them a competitive edge, leading to better communication, higher earnings, and improved working conditions (Hossain, 2016). Beyond labor migration, Arabic skills open up careers in diplomacy, international organizations, and multinational corporations that engage with Arab-speaking nations.

Moreover, Arabic proficiency strengthens Bangladesh's trade relations with the Middle East, a key trading partner, especially in textiles and agriculture. Effective communication in Arabic improves negotiations, fosters cultural understanding, and helps establish stronger business partnerships, ultimately promoting economic growth and global integration (Ahmed, 2022).

The rise of Islamic finance further emphasizes the importance of Arabic. As the sector grows globally, demand for Arabic-

speaking professionals who can interpret Islamic legal texts is increasing. These professionals are crucial for navigating Islamic banking, making Arabic proficiency a valuable asset in Bangladesh's financial sector (Miah, 2019).

In addition, Arabic plays a role in cultural diplomacy. It is one of the United Nations' official languages, making it critical for international relations. Proficiency in Arabic helps diplomats, scholars, and professionals strengthen ties with the Arab world and engage in cross-cultural dialogue.

In conclusion, Arabic language education presents vast socio-economic benefits beyond religious studies. Expanding the scope of Arabic education to meet the demands of a globalized world will enable Bangladesh to enhance its workforce, improve trade, and strengthen diplomatic ties with Arab-speaking nations.

Methodology

This study adopts a multidisciplinary approach to investigate the role of Arabic language education in the socio-economic development of Bangladesh. To achieve a comprehensive understanding of the subject, both qualitative and quantitative methods have been employed. The methodology includes qualitative interviews with educators, quantitative data collection through surveys, and a comparative review of Arabic language instruction models. These methods provide a holistic view of the current landscape of Arabic language education and its socio-economic potential in Bangladesh.

Qualitative Interviews with Educators

The qualitative interviews conducted with 15 educators across a range of institutions, including madrasahs, universities, and language institutes, provided valuable insights into the current state of Arabic language education in Bangladesh. However, a critical analysis of the data reveals significant gaps between

the intended goals of Arabic education and its actual impact on socio-economic development. While educators acknowledged the importance of Arabic language proficiency in religious, cultural, and economic contexts, the analysis highlights several key areas where the current system is failing to maximize its potential.

Curriculum Design

A critical evaluation of the interview responses indicates that the current curricula remain heavily focused on religious instruction, with little integration of practical language skills that could enhance employability. Several educators expressed concern over the outdated curriculum, noting that while students gain proficiency in Quranic Arabic, they are often unprepared for the demands of modern communication, trade, or the workforce. This gap between traditional pedagogy and contemporary needs reveals a systemic shortfall in adapting Arabic education to the evolving job market.

Furthermore, while some educators recognized the need for curriculum diversification, they expressed skepticism about whether institutions would be willing to make necessary reforms. This suggests that institutional inertia and resistance to change could be significant barriers to transforming Arabic education in Bangladesh. The lack of career-oriented Arabic courses, such as Arabic for business or Islamic finance, limits students' ability to apply their language skills in professional settings, thereby curbing the socio-economic impact of their education.

Pedagogical Challenges

The interviews revealed widespread dissatisfaction with the availability of resources and the quality of teaching materials. Several educators pointed out that the textbooks and resources used in madrasahs and even some universities are outdated (although there are some updated materials exist, the educators are not trained to teach them), with limited relevance to

contemporary socio-economic realities. Educators highlighted the need for better training programs for Arabic teachers, as many lack the pedagogical skills to teach beyond the traditional religious framework. Some of the educators expressed their ignorance about the pedagogy, even some of them didn't hear about any of the pedagogies.

Critically analyzing these challenges suggests that the root cause lies in the disconnect between policy-level educational objectives and the realities faced by teachers on the ground. Although many educators expressed a desire to incorporate modern teaching tools and methodologies, such as digital learning platforms, few had access to the necessary resources or institutional support to do so. This disparity underscores the need for systemic reforms at both policy and institutional levels to improve the quality and relevance of Arabic education in the country.

Employability and Skill Development

A common theme among educators was the need to better align Arabic education with employment opportunities, particularly in sectors such as migration, trade, and Islamic finance. While most educators agreed that Arabic proficiency could significantly enhance job prospects for students seeking work in Arab-speaking countries, they also noted that students are rarely equipped with the practical language skills required for professional environments. The interviews suggest that Arabic education is often too narrowly focused on classical Arabic, leaving students unprepared for modern Arabic dialects used in the workforce. This finding reflects a broader issue within the educational system: the failure to integrate vocational training into Arabic language programs. Many educators suggested that introducing career-oriented Arabic courses, such as those focused on business communication, negotiation, or legal Arabic, could

greatly improve the employability of graduates. However, the lack of such programs points to a missed opportunity to harness the full socio-economic potential of Arabic language education.

Integration of Modern Technology

The educators interviewed unanimously agreed on the importance of integrating digital tools and online learning platforms into Arabic education. However, most noted that their institutions lacked the technological infrastructure to implement these changes effectively. This highlights a critical issue in the broader education system: the need for technological upgrades and training to enable educators to use modern platforms effectively. Additionally, while some institutions have started to adopt online platforms, educators pointed out that these efforts are often piecemeal and lack coherence, leading to inconsistent results.

A critical analysis of this data suggests that the problem lies not just in the availability of technology but also in the institutional readiness to embrace these tools. Many educators expressed frustration over the slow pace of technological adoption, which further underscores the need for strategic investment in modernizing Arabic education through digital means.

Cultural Impact

The interviews confirmed the cultural significance of Arabic language education, particularly in preserving religious identity and fostering a sense of belonging to the broader Muslim world. However, several educators pointed out that while Arabic education fosters religious and cultural continuity, it often fails to promote cross-cultural engagement with the Arab world beyond religious boundaries. This is especially problematic given the increasing economic and diplomatic ties between Bangladesh and Arab-speaking countries.

The analysis reveals a missed opportunity to position Arabic education as a bridge not only to religious scholarship but also to cultural diplomacy and global communication. Educators highlighted the need for more cross-cultural exchanges and programs that would enable students to engage with the modern Arab world in a socio-economic context, rather than just a religious one.

Critical Insights

The qualitative data gathered from educators highlight several critical shortcomings in Arabic language education in Bangladesh. While the educators acknowledge the socio-economic potential of Arabic proficiency, they are constrained by outdated curricula, limited pedagogical tools, and a lack of institutional support for modernization. This analysis suggests that for Arabic education to fulfill its potential as a tool for socio-economic progress, systemic reforms are necessary. These include updating curricula to include practical, vocational components, integrating modern technology, and providing teacher training that equips educators with the skills needed to teach Arabic in a global context. The findings of this study underscore the importance of bridging the gap between traditional Arabic education and contemporary socio-economic needs, a challenge that requires both policy reform and institutional innovation.

Economic Analysis

To understand the socio-economic potential of Arabic language education in Bangladesh, an economic analysis was conducted to quantify the relationship between Arabic proficiency and its impact on various economic factors, including employment, income levels, and trade relations. This analysis employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative insights from the interviews with quantitative data gathered through surveys and economic indicators relevant to the labor market and trade dynamics.

Impact on Employment Opportunities

The economic analysis reveals a direct correlation between Arabic language proficiency and employment opportunities, particularly in sectors heavily reliant on Arabic-speaking labor markets. According to the survey conducted, approximately 65% of respondents indicated that they sought Arabic language education primarily to enhance their employability, especially in the Middle East. Data from the Bangladesh Bureau of Manpower, Employment, and Training (BMET) shows that the demand for Bangladeshi workers in Arab countries has been steadily increasing, particularly in industries such as construction, healthcare, and hospitality (BMET, 2023).

A comparative analysis of income levels among Arabic-speaking and non-Arabic-speaking expatriates highlights that those proficient in Arabic tend to earn significantly higher wages. For instance, workers who can communicate effectively in Arabic reportedly earn, on average, 15-20% more than their counterparts who lack language skills. This finding underscores the economic advantage that Arabic proficiency can provide to individuals seeking employment in foreign markets (World Bank, 2023).

Economic Contributions through Remittances

The role of Arabic language education in facilitating remittances is another critical aspect of the economic analysis. According to the World Bank, remittances from Bangladeshi expatriates contribute substantially to the national economy, accounting for nearly 7% of the country's GDP (World Bank, 2023). Arabic-speaking expatriates, due to their language skills, often secure better job placements and are more likely to return with higher remittance amounts. A survey of returnees indicated that those who had received Arabic language education sent home, on average, 30% more in remittances compared to those who did not possess such skills. This financial support not only benefits families but

also contributes to local economies, facilitating investment in education, healthcare, and small businesses (BMET, 2023).

Strengthening Trade Relations

The economic analysis also examined the implications of Arabic language education for Bangladesh's trade relations with Arab-speaking countries. The Middle East is one of Bangladesh's largest export markets, particularly for textiles and garments, which make up a significant portion of the country's exports. Effective communication in Arabic can enhance negotiation capabilities and facilitate smoother transactions, fostering stronger bilateral trade ties (EPB, 2023).

An analysis of trade agreements and business interactions indicates that companies with employees proficient in Arabic are better positioned to navigate cultural nuances and build trust with Arab business partners. According to data from the Export Promotion Bureau of Bangladesh, firms with Arabic-speaking staff report a 25% higher success rate in securing contracts and negotiating favorable terms compared to those without such capabilities (EPB, 2023).

Investment in Islamic Finance

The growth of the Islamic finance sector in Bangladesh further illustrates the economic potential of Arabic language education. As the demand for Shariah-compliant financial services increases, so does the need for professionals skilled in Arabic who can understand and apply Islamic finance principles. A review of job postings in the financial sector reveals a significant increase in demand for Arabic-speaking professionals, with a projected growth rate of 10% annually over the next five years (Bangladesh Bank, 2023).

The analysis shows that educational institutions offering Arabic programs aligned with Islamic finance principles are increasingly sought after, highlighting a market opportunity for Arabic language education to play a pivotal role in shaping

a skilled workforce for this emerging sector. The economic analysis underscores the substantial socio-economic benefits of Arabic language education in Bangladesh. Proficiency in Arabic not only enhances employability and income levels but also contributes to national economic growth through remittances and improved trade relations. Additionally, the increasing demand for Arabic-speaking professionals in the Islamic finance sector positions Arabic language education as a critical element for socio-economic advancement. Addressing the gaps in current educational practices and aligning curricula with these economic opportunities can significantly elevate the role of Arabic language education in fostering sustainable development in Bangladesh.

Comparative Review of Arabic Language Instruction Models

This section presents a comparative review of various Arabic language instruction models employed globally and evaluates their applicability to the context of Bangladesh. By examining successful frameworks from different countries, the study aims to identify best practices that can enhance the effectiveness of Arabic language education in Bangladesh. The analysis focuses on the following models: traditional classroom instruction, total immersion programs, language institutes and universities, online learning platforms, and community-based language exchange initiatives.

Traditional Classroom Instruction

Traditional classroom instruction has long been the predominant model for Arabic language education, particularly in religious institutions like madrasahs. This model typically follows a structured curriculum focusing on grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. While it provides foundational knowledge, the limitations of this approach often include a lack of emphasis on conversational skills and real-world applications (Al-Ameri, 2022). In countries like Egypt and Jordan, traditional instruction has been augmented with modern methodologies that incorporate

communicative language teaching, emphasizing speaking and listening skills. Adapting similar pedagogical strategies in Bangladesh could address the need for more practical language skills, allowing students to use Arabic in everyday contexts and professional environments.

Total Immersion Programs

Total immersion programs, commonly conducted in Arabic-speaking countries, offer an intensive learning experience where students are surrounded by the language and culture. This model has proven effective for rapid language acquisition and cultural immersion. Research from countries like Morocco shows that learners who participate in immersion programs can achieve a high level of proficiency in a short period (Khamies, 2023). However, the feasibility of implementing such programs in Bangladesh poses challenges, particularly related to accessibility and funding. Nevertheless, creating local immersion experiences, such as community workshops and cultural events, could provide similar benefits without the need for extensive travel, thus fostering a greater connection between language learning and cultural appreciation.

Language Institutes and Universities

Many countries have established dedicated language institutes and universities that specialize in Arabic language instruction. These institutions offer structured programs that cater to different proficiency levels and often include specialized courses in areas such as business Arabic and media Arabic (Yousef, 2023). In contrast, Bangladesh's Arabic language education is largely concentrated in madrasahs, with limited offerings in higher education, like the Institute of Modern Languages (IML), University of Dhaka, and the Department of Arabic, University of Dhaka, and other university's Arabic Departments. Besides, there are some other Language institutes operated by individuals on a very small scale. A comparative analysis indicates that introducing job-specialized Arabic programs in universities

could enhance the academic and professional landscape for Arabic learners. Such programs would not only attract a wider audience but also prepare students for specific careers that require advanced language skills, such as translation, diplomacy, and international relations.

Online Learning Platforms

The rise of online learning platforms has transformed language education by providing flexible and accessible resources for learners worldwide. Platforms such as Duolingo and Rosetta Stone have incorporated gamification and interactive exercises to engage learners effectively. Studies indicate that online learners can achieve proficiency levels comparable to traditional classroom learners when they actively engage with the material (Al-Harbi, 2022).

In Bangladesh, leveraging online platforms could help overcome the geographical and resource barriers that hinder access to quality Arabic education. By integrating online resources with traditional methods, educators can create a blended learning environment that caters to diverse learning preferences and increases student engagement.

Community-Based Language Exchange Initiatives

Community-based language exchange initiatives, where learners engage with native Arabic speakers, have gained popularity in many countries. These programs promote conversational skills and cultural understanding through informal interactions (Al-Ghamdi, 2022). In countries like Tunisia, community language exchange programs have proven effective in enhancing linguistic competence and fostering intercultural dialogue. Implementing similar initiatives in Bangladesh could facilitate practical language use while promoting social cohesion among diverse communities. Partnerships with local Arab expatriate communities could create opportunities for language exchange, allowing learners to practice conversational skills in real-life contexts and gain insights into Arab culture.

The comparative review of Arabic language instruction models highlights several best practices that can be adapted for the context of Bangladesh. By integrating modern methodologies from successful programs worldwide, such as communicative approaches in traditional classrooms, local immersion experiences, specialized university programs, online learning resources, and community-based initiatives, Bangladesh can enhance its Arabic language education framework. These improvements can better align Arabic language proficiency with the socio-economic needs of the country, ultimately fostering greater cultural understanding and economic development.

The Role of Arabic Language Education in Economic Development

Arabic language education plays a crucial role in the economic development of Bangladesh by enhancing employability and facilitating migration. Given the country's historical ties with the Arab world and the increasing demand for skilled labor in Arabic-speaking countries, proficiency in Arabic has become a vital asset for many Bangladeshis seeking better employment opportunities. This section explores how Arabic language education influences employability and migration patterns, contributing to both individual and national economic growth.

Cultural and Ethical Considerations

Arabic language education also plays a role in fostering a deeper understanding of the cultural and ethical dimensions of Islamic finance. By learning Arabic, professionals gain insights into the values and principles that underpin Islamic financial practices, enabling them to navigate the sector with cultural sensitivity and awareness. This understanding is vital for promoting ethical investment practices and ensuring compliance with Shariah guidelines (Bangladesh Bank, 2023).

In addition, cultural competency gained through Arabic education can enhance the effectiveness of community engagement initiatives undertaken by Islamic financial

institutions. As these banks aim to serve diverse communities, understanding local customs and practices can improve customer relations and build trust (Bangladesh Bank, 2023).

In conclusion, Arabic language education is integral to the development of the Islamic financial sector in Bangladesh. By equipping individuals with the necessary linguistic skills to navigate Shariah-compliant finance, Arabic education fosters a skilled workforce that can support the growth of this sector. As the demand for professionals fluent in Arabic continues to rise, educational institutions need to align their Arabic programs with the needs of the Islamic finance industry. This alignment will not only enhance the quality of education but also contribute to the overall development of Bangladesh's economic landscape through the expansion of its Islamic financial sector.

Cultural and Religious Identity Reinforcement

Arabic language education reinforces the cultural and religious identity of Bangladesh's Muslim population by connecting individuals to Islamic texts and cultural heritage. This section explores how Arabic proficiency strengthens religious and cultural ties.

Connection to Islamic Texts

Arabic proficiency allows individuals to engage directly with the Quran, Hadith, and other Islamic texts, deepening their religious understanding and connection to Islamic practices (Spolsky, 2018). Direct engagement with these texts enables a more profound religious observance and personal spirituality, which fosters a stronger commitment to Islamic values and traditions (Khan, 2017). Access to Arabic education allows individuals to incorporate these texts into their daily lives, enhancing their personal and communal religious experiences (Mazrui, 2002).

Cultural Heritage and Identity

Arabic is not only a religious language but also a key to understanding Islamic art, literature, and history. Proficiency in Arabic enables individuals to connect with their rich cultural

heritage, fostering a sense of pride and belonging (Ahmed, 2020). This connection is particularly significant in Bangladesh's diverse society, where cultural identity is often influenced by multiple factors. Arabic education provides a gateway to understanding Islamic culture on a deeper level, allowing individuals to appreciate their cultural roots and heritage (Al-Zoubi, 2018; Spolsky, 2018).

Role in Community Building

Arabic-speaking individuals often assume leadership roles within mosques and community organizations, strengthening communal ties and contributing to the development of community cohesion (Ghaleb, 2021). Events such as Quranic recitation competitions, cultural festivals, and religious gatherings further reinforce these communal bonds, creating spaces where shared values and identities are celebrated (ILO, 2020). Arabic proficiency enhances the ability to engage with these community activities, fostering unity and collaboration within the Muslim population.

Challenges to Cultural Identity

The growing influence of Western culture and globalization poses challenges to the preservation of traditional Islamic values in Bangladesh. The influx of global cultural norms can sometimes dilute the significance of Arabic as a cultural and religious cornerstone (Khan, 2017). To counter this, expanding access to quality Arabic education is essential for preserving the cultural and religious identity of Bangladesh's Muslim population (Mazrui, 2002). Addressing this challenge requires strategic investment in education to ensure that future generations maintain a strong connection to their cultural heritage (UNESCO, 2020).

Arabic proficiency plays a vital role in reinforcing the cultural and religious identity of Bangladesh's Muslim population by fostering engagement with Islamic texts and cultural heritage. Ensuring continued access to quality Arabic education is crucial for preserving this identity in the face of globalization and changing cultural dynamics. By strengthening ties to both

religious and cultural roots, Arabic education can help maintain a strong sense of identity and belonging in an increasingly globalized world.

Challenges in the Current Arabic Curriculum

The current Arabic curriculum in Bangladesh faces several challenges, limiting its relevance to economic and employment prospects. This section explores key issues within the curriculum that hinder students' preparation for the job market.

Hindrances to Economic and Employment Opportunities Limited Focus on Practical Skills

The current Arabic language curriculum in Bangladesh places a heavy emphasis on classical and religious Arabic, with insufficient attention to practical language skills required in modern professional environments such as business, healthcare, and international relations (Ahmed, 2020). Graduates often report feeling inadequately prepared for professional communication, which limits their employability in sectors that demand proficiency in spoken and written Arabic (Al-Kindi, 2020).

Outdated Teaching Methods

The reliance on traditional teaching methods, particularly rote memorization and grammar-focused instruction, is increasingly ineffective for today's learners (Al-Zoubi, 2018). Modern language learning emphasizes interactive and communicative practices, which are largely absent in current Arabic programs. The lack of modern teaching tools and resources, such as multimedia aids and interactive platforms, further reduces student engagement and retention of language skills (ILO, 2020).

Curricular Rigidities

The rigid structure of the Arabic language curriculum in many institutions prevents the introduction of relevant and up-to-date content that reflects the evolving needs of the job market (UNESCO, 2020). For example, there is little to no emphasis on business Arabic, financial terminology, or other specialized language skills that would enable students to enter professions

in sectors like Islamic finance and international trade (Khan, 2017). This rigid approach limits the potential for graduates to pursue careers in these fields.

Inadequate Industry Collaboration

A significant disconnect between educational institutions and industries means that Arabic language programs do not reflect the practical skills employers seek. In sectors like Islamic finance and international trade, employers increasingly require candidates with specialized language skills that are not addressed in the current curriculum (Ahmed, 2020). Strengthening industry collaboration through internships, job placements, and curriculum input could help align educational outcomes with labor market demands (ILO, 2023).

Resource Limitations

Many educational institutions in Bangladesh suffer from a shortage of qualified Arabic instructors and lack the teaching materials necessary to provide high-quality language education (Ghaleb, 2021). Overcrowded classrooms, outdated textbooks, and limited access to digital tools further impede the learning experience, resulting in poor language proficiency among students (World Bank, 2023). Addressing these resource limitations is essential for improving the quality of Arabic education and ensuring that students are well-prepared for employment opportunities.

Addressing the challenges within the current Arabic language curriculum such as placing greater emphasis on practical language skills, updating teaching methods, and fostering stronger collaboration with industries will significantly enhance its relevance to the job market. By reforming the curriculum and increasing access to resources, students will be better prepared for professional careers and economic advancement. Such reforms will enable Arabic language education to contribute more effectively to Bangladesh's socio-economic development.

Curriculum Gaps and Solutions

Several gaps in the current Arabic curriculum limit its

effectiveness in preparing students for employment in modern sectors. This section outlines the key gaps and provides potential solutions for enhancing the relevance of Arabic education.

Gap: Lack of Practical Language Skills

Solution: Incorporate interactive and communicative teaching methods, such as role-playing, scenario-based learning, and group discussions, to improve students' conversational and practical language skills. Introducing vocational modules focused on industry-specific Arabic such as medical Arabic, business Arabic, or legal Arabic will ensure that the curriculum aligns with students' career aspirations and enhances their employability.

Gap: Limited Exposure to Modern Arabic

Solution: Integrate contemporary Arabic materials, including newspapers, films, podcasts, and social media content, into the curriculum to expose students to various modern Arabic dialects and linguistic trends (Ahmed, 2020). Providing students with access to authentic media sources will help them apply their language skills in real-world contexts, particularly in industries like journalism, tourism, and international trade (UNESCO, 2020).

Gap: Rigid Curricular Framework

Solution: Implement a more flexible curriculum that can be regularly updated to reflect changes in the labor market and evolving economic needs (Khan, 2017). A modular approach, which allows students to select electives such as Islamic finance, cultural studies, or diplomacy, would make the curriculum more adaptable to individual career goals and emerging industries (ILO, 2023).

Gap: Limited Industry Collaboration

Solution: Strengthen partnerships between educational institutions and industries to ensure that the Arabic curriculum reflects the practical skills required in the job market (Ghaleb, 2021). Collaborating with companies in sectors like Islamic finance, healthcare, and international business can help shape

relevant training programs. Internships, job placements, and guest lectures from industry professionals can provide students with practical experience and networking opportunities.

Gap: Inadequate Resources and Training

Solution: Invest in professional development programs for instructors to enhance their teaching methodologies and knowledge of modern Arabic applications. Improving access to digital resources, such as online learning platforms, language learning apps, and multimedia tools, will also enhance the overall quality of Arabic education. Educational institutions should prioritize the acquisition of up-to-date teaching materials and expand the use of digital technologies to engage students more effectively.

Addressing these curriculum gaps is essential for making Arabic language education more relevant to the modern job market. By focusing on practical skills, integrating modern Arabic resources, and fostering collaboration with industries, Arabic education can better equip students for economic opportunities. A more dynamic and flexible curriculum will ensure that graduates possess the language skills necessary for thriving in various professional sectors.

Discussion

This study highlights the significant role of Arabic language education in Bangladesh's economic development. However, there remains a gap between language education and economic policy. This section explores strategies to bridge this gap and align educational initiatives with national economic goals.

Bridging the Gap between Language Education and Economic Policy Aligning Educational Objectives with Economic Needs

Aligning Arabic language programs with the demands of the labor market is crucial for fostering economic growth and employment opportunities. Sectors such as Islamic finance, healthcare, and international trade require professionals with

Arabic proficiency. To meet these needs, educational institutions and policymakers must collaborate to design curricula that reflect the specific demands of these industries (El-Said & Harrigan, 2019). Conducting regular labor market assessments will help to ensure that Arabic language education remains responsive to shifting economic trends and evolving job market requirements (Abdalla & Al-Khateeb, 2021).

Promoting Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs)

Public-private partnerships (PPPs) can effectively address the skill gaps between academic training and practical job requirements. Companies in sectors such as tourism, hospitality, and finance can collaborate with educational institutions to provide internships, job placements, and workshops, allowing students to apply their language skills in real-world contexts (Zahra & Fathy, 2020). Such partnerships would not only enhance job readiness but also offer a direct pathway to employment for graduates (El-Ghannam, 2018).

Integrating Arabic into National Development Plans

Arabic language education should be formally integrated into national development strategies, recognizing its importance in driving economic growth and international trade. Identifying Arabic as a strategic asset would encourage investment in language programs that support sectors such as trade relations, foreign policy, and international cooperation (Farooq & Ismail, 2020). Moreover, integrating Arabic language education into national plans can strengthen the country's ties with Arab nations, thereby promoting economic collaboration (Jamal, 2017).

Enhancing Teacher Training and Resources

Improving teacher training programs and providing access to up-to-date resources is essential for raising the overall quality of Arabic language education. Teachers should be equipped with modern teaching methodologies and tools that reflect contemporary language use in various sectors (Salem, 2019). Additionally, educational institutions need to invest in advanced

educational technologies and digital resources, which can significantly enhance student engagement and learning outcomes (Fakhry, 2022).

Raising Awareness of Economic Benefits

Public awareness campaigns can shift perceptions of Arabic language education from being solely religious to one with significant economic potential. Highlighting success stories of individuals who have utilized their Arabic proficiency in sectors like finance, diplomacy, and healthcare can motivate more students to pursue language education (Al-Hashimi, 2021). These campaigns would emphasize the practical career benefits of Arabic proficiency, encouraging greater community and parental support for language programs (Mokhtar & Wahab, 2020).

Bridging the gap between Arabic language education and economic policy is critical for fully leveraging the economic potential of language proficiency. Aligning educational objectives with labor market demands, promoting public-private partnerships (PPPs), integrating Arabic into national development plans, and raising public awareness of the economic value of language skills are essential strategies for fostering a skilled workforce. These steps will position Arabic language education as a vital tool in contributing to national economic growth and international competitiveness.

Strategic Alignment with National Development Goals

Aligning Arabic language education with Bangladesh's national development goals can significantly contribute to economic growth, cultural preservation, and social cohesion. This section explores how language education can support these broader objectives.

Incorporating Language Education into Economic Plans

Arabic proficiency plays a crucial role in facilitating trade, labor mobility, and investment. By including language education in national economic plans, policymakers can ensure that Arabic-

speaking graduates are prepared to meet the needs of sectors like tourism, Islamic finance, and construction, which are vital for economic expansion (Abdalla & Al-Khateeb, 2021). This strategic integration would enhance the nation's ability to engage with Arab-speaking countries, thus boosting trade and attracting foreign investments (Farooq & Ismail, 2020).

Aligning with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Aligning Arabic language education with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 4, which focuses on quality education, can significantly enhance the relevance and impact of Arabic language programs. Practical language skills not only increase employment opportunities but also promote equality and access to education, especially in underserved areas of Bangladesh (Mokhtar & Wahab, 2020). By expanding access to Arabic education, the country can address disparities and support broader economic and social development.

Enhancing Cultural Diplomacy and International Relations

Arabic proficiency is a key asset in strengthening cultural diplomacy and fostering international relations with Arab countries. Programs such as student exchange initiatives and scholarships can promote mutual understanding between Bangladesh and Arab-speaking nations, deepening political and economic cooperation (Jamal, 2017). This cultural diplomacy can enhance Bangladesh's international standing and create opportunities for collaboration in areas such as education, tourism, and economic development.

Supporting Human Resource Development

Investing in Arabic language education directly supports human resource development by preparing individuals for careers that require specialized language skills. By integrating Arabic training into vocational and technical education, Bangladesh can create a workforce that is better aligned with the needs of its growing industries, including Islamic finance, healthcare, and international trade (El-Ghannam, 2018). This alignment helps to

ensure that language education contributes to national economic objectives.

Promoting Community Engagement and Social Cohesion

Arabic language programs can play a vital role in promoting social cohesion by fostering cultural exchange and dialogue. These programs encourage greater community engagement, which can contribute to social stability and inclusion. Strengthening social cohesion through language education can support national development by creating more connected and harmonious communities, which are essential for sustained socio-economic progress.

Aligning Arabic language education with Bangladesh's national development goals is essential for maximizing its benefits. By incorporating language education into economic strategies, supporting human resource development, and fostering cultural diplomacy, Bangladesh can better position itself for success in a globalized world. Investing in Arabic proficiency will not only enhance economic prospects but also preserve cultural identity and promote social cohesion.

Conclusion

This study examined the role of Arabic language education in shaping the socio-economic landscape of Bangladesh, focusing on its significance for employability, trade relations, and cultural identity. The findings emphasize that Arabic proficiency is a critical tool for enhancing economic prospects, particularly in sectors like Islamic finance, healthcare, and trade. However, challenges such as the lack of practical language skills, outdated teaching methods, and limited industry collaboration hinder the effectiveness of the current Arabic curriculum. Addressing these challenges requires collaboration between policymakers, educational institutions, and industry stakeholders to reform the curriculum and align it with labor market demands. By strategically integrating Arabic language education into national development plans, Bangladesh can cultivate a skilled workforce

and strengthen its international relations with Arab-speaking nations. Investing in Arabic education will enable Bangladesh to leverage its linguistic resources for sustainable economic growth and cultural preservation.

Recommendations

This section provides recommendations to improve the effectiveness of Arabic language education and align it with Bangladesh's economic development goals.

Curriculum Reform

- o **Focus on Practical Skills:** Revise the curriculum to include conversational Arabic and industry-specific terminology, such as in business, healthcare, and tourism sectors.
- o **Introduce Modern Dialects:** Incorporate contemporary Arabic and colloquial dialects to prepare students for professional communication.

Strengthening Teacher Training

- o **Professional Development:** Implement training programs for instructors, focusing on modern teaching tools and methodologies.
- o **Collaborative Networks:** Create networks for teachers to share resources and strategies, enhancing the quality of instruction.

Enhancing Resources

- o **Increase Funding for Educational Resources:** Invest in teaching materials, digital platforms, and interactive resources to improve language learning.
- o **Establish Language Labs:** Provide students with immersive language learning experiences using language labs and modern technology.

Encouraging Industry Collaboration

- o **Public-Private Partnerships:** Foster collaboration between

educational institutions and industries to align training programs with labor market needs.

- o **Labor Market Assessments:** Conduct regular assessments to identify emerging industry trends and adapt educational programs accordingly.

Promoting Community Engagement

- o **Awareness Campaigns:** Launch campaigns to promote the economic value of Arabic proficiency, highlighting successful individuals who have benefited from language skills.
- o **Community Programs:** Develop community-based initiatives to encourage Arabic language learning and foster cultural inclusivity.

Aligning with National Development Goals

- o **Integrate Arabic Education into Development Plans:** Include Arabic education in national economic strategies, recognizing its potential to promote trade and human resource development.
- o **Support for Research:** Encourage research on the impact of Arabic language education on economic growth and social mobility.

Implementing these recommendations requires collaboration among policymakers, educational institutions, and industries. By reforming the curriculum and aligning Arabic education with economic goals, Bangladesh can unlock the full potential of Arabic proficiency to promote socio-economic growth, enhance cultural identity, and foster social mobility. This integrated approach will strengthen Bangladesh's position in the global economy.

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MOTHER LANGUAGE

Vol.: 8 | Number: 1-2 | Page 153-173

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Struggling Against Social Exclusion: A Qualitative Study on the Odia Language Speakers in the Tea Community

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Abstract: The tea community people of Bangladesh have their own languages. Odia is one of them, The Bangladesh government is currently implementing initiatives to protect the language and culture of indigenous communities. Primary education in the mother tongue will help these ethnic communities protect their rights, and it is a process of inclusion. But the tea community is deprived of this initiative. The government does not provide them with any opportunities to get primary education in their mother tongue. It is a process of social exclusion. A total of 40 interviews had been carried out with the participants following purposive sampling to conduct this research. Observation, 24 in-depth interviews (IDI), 12 key informant interviews (KII), 1 Focus Group Discussion (FGD) methods were followed to conduct the research. Results revealed that, the Odia language is a rich language having a written form, an alphabet, and an extensive amount of literature. Despite its richness, the Odia language of the tea community is being ignored day by day. As a result, the new generation is losing interest in communicating in their mother tongue. As these things are in the opposite position of inclusion, they can be identified as excluded.

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Keywords: Struggle, Tea community, Odia language, Inclusion, Exclusion, Bangladesh.

Introduction

Language is the finest channel of communication. Every community has its own language, through which the community members express their thoughts, emotions and communicate with one another. A language not only represents an individual's identity but also expresses the identity of a community. The language of a society expresses the history, past, and current conditions of its culture as well as the society itself. Education is the most effective means for the development of a society. And a society or a community will be properly educated when they get the privilege to receive their primary education in their mother tongue. The Bangladesh government is currently implementing initiatives to protect the language and culture of minor ethnic communities. Primary education in the mother tongue will help these ethnic communities protect their rights, and it is a process of inclusion. However, the tea community is deprived of this initiative. The government does not provide them with any opportunities to get primary education in their mother tongue. It is a process of social exclusion.

The concept of social inclusion and exclusion emerged in French policy debate in the mid-1970s (Jackson, 1999, 125). Later, in the late 1980s, the European Union adopted the idea as a crucial social policy term, frequently displacing the concept of poverty. Progressive agencies extensively recognized the concept and progression readings as an alternate method of appreciating and reducing deficiency in the South (Jackson, 1999, 125). Furthermore, the portrayal of social exclusion in relation to Southern cultures suggests an interaction of societal strategies for globalization and global immigration between the North and South (Maxwell, 1998, cited in Francis, 2000, 75). According to Silver (1994), the sense of social exclusion is

determined by the characteristics of the society or the leading example of the culture from which exclusion occurs (Francis, 2000, 75), and it varies in meaning according to national and philosophical milieus (Silver, 1994, 539). O'Brien and Penna (2007) said that the concept of social exclusion, as well as the modern European exploration programme based on it, were shaped by the difficulties associated with maintaining social direction and solidity.

Aside from the Bangali, several ethnic communities have lived in this land for a long time. The number of such categories varied between researchers. According to Shahed Hassan (2011) and others, “more than 45 small ethnic groups living in Bangladesh at present” (p. 07). The tea community is one of them. They have their own language and culture. In addition to their mother tongue, the community members practice the Bengali language from childhood. As the mainstream people’s language is Bengali and the medium of education is also Bengali, these people have to practice the Bengali language. Furthermore, even if you want to acquire a job in the country, you must be able to communicate well in Bengali; thus, most parents push their children to speak and learn the Bengali language. As a result, the new generation is losing interest in communicating in their mother tongue. As these things are in the opposite position of inclusion, they can be identified as exclusions.

Relevant Literature Review and Study Gap

The Odia-speaking tea workers in Bangladesh represent a marginalized community facing linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic exclusion. This literature review explores existing research on their struggles, focusing on identity, language preservation, labor rights, and social integration.

Historical Context of Odia-speaking Tea Workers in Bangladesh

The tea workers in Bangladesh are primarily descendants of indentured laborers brought by British colonial rulers from

Odisha, Bihar, and Andhra Pradesh in the 19th century (Bose, 1964; Rahman & Islam, 2018). Despite their long-standing presence, they remain socially and politically marginalized (Siddiqui, 2001). Historical studies highlight how colonial labor policies entrenched their exclusion, relegating them to low-wage plantation work with limited mobility (Guha, 1977).

Linguistic and Cultural Marginalization

Bangladesh government has implemented policies that promote education in the mother tongue. And some of those were established incorrectly. Lack persists, and these inclusions can occasionally be the source of social marginalization (Tripura et. al., 2017). Odia-speaking tea workers face linguistic discrimination, as Bangla dominates education, media, and governance (Mohsin, 2003). Their native language is often stigmatized, leading to generational erosion (Das, 2015). Ethnographic studies reveal that language barriers restrict access to healthcare, legal rights, and employment outside plantations (Chakma & Roy, 2020).

Socioeconomic Exclusion and Labor Exploitation

Research indicates that tea workers endure severe economic hardships, with wages below the national minimum (ILO, 2019). They live in isolated labor lines with poor infrastructure (Bhowmik, 2016). Studies highlight systemic discrimination in land ownership and citizenship rights (Sarker & Davey, 2020).

Resistance and Advocacy Efforts

Despite marginalization, Odia-speaking communities engage in cultural preservation through festivals (e.g., Durga Puja, Rathyatra) and oral traditions (Sen, 2018). NGOs and labor unions have mobilized for better wages and education (Bhattacharya, 2021). However, political underrepresentation remains a challenge (Ahmed, 2022).

Comparative Studies on Linguistic Minorities

Bangladeshi ethnic peoples indicate the presence of a ‘mother tongue’ and a ‘national language’ that is ideologically infused, complex, value-laden, relational, and paradoxical at the micro level (Sultana, 2021). Similar cases, such as Urdu-speaking Biharis in Bangladesh or Tamil tea workers in Sri Lanka, show parallel struggles (Hossain, 2017). Policies like mother-tongue education (e.g., in India’s Odisha) could serve as models for linguistic inclusion (Patnaik, 2020).

There have been several research studies on how vernacular education can help ethnic people understand and anchor their cognitive and psychological talents. While labor exploitation is well-documented, few studies focus on Odia language erosion and identity politics. Qualitative research on grassroots resistance is also limited. However, it is not addressed how language might improve social inclusion or the functional upbringing of social exclusion among ethnic groups. This study seeks to demonstrate that social exclusion through language fills a vacuum in existing literature.

Objective

The study’s major objective is to explore the pattern of Odia language as well as common conceptions and struggles about practicing this language.

The specific objectives are,

- a. to know about the Odia language of the tea community in Sreemangal Upazila, and
- b. to analyze the causes and patterns of social exclusion through this language.

Methods and Materials

Study Design and Data Sources: This study was exploratory in character, with a qualitative approach. As the study was focused,

we used purposive sampling. We conducted interviews to obtain detailed information from the respondents. Both primary sources and secondary sources were used in this study. At the primary source, data were collected from rigorous fieldwork. In-depth Interviews (IDI), Key Informant Interviews (KII), and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were conducted to collect primary data from participants. Both observation and field notes were taken throughout the field visit. Apart from the primary data, secondary data were extracted from websites, books, articles, journals, research reports, and newspapers to compare the situations.

Sample Size and Selection Procedure: A total of 40 participants were finally picked up using the purposive sampling technique. A cross-sectional study was conducted to acquire information about the exclusion process.

Table 1. Category of Informants, Methods, and Sample size

Category of Informants	Methods	No. of participants	Comment
Tea Worker (Odia Language Speaker)	In-depth interview (IDI), Key Informant Interview (KII), & Focus Group Discussion (FGD)	22	IDI (14 Persons), KII (4 Persons), FGD (6 Person)
Odia Language Teacher	Key Informant Interview (KII), Case Study	3	KII (2 Persons) Case Study (1 Person)

Students	In-depth interview (IDI)	8	IDI (8 Persons)
Social Worker and Professionals (Govt. and NGO job holder, odia language speaker)	Key Informant Interview (KII), Case Study	7	KII (6 Persons) Case Study (1 person)
Total Participants		40	

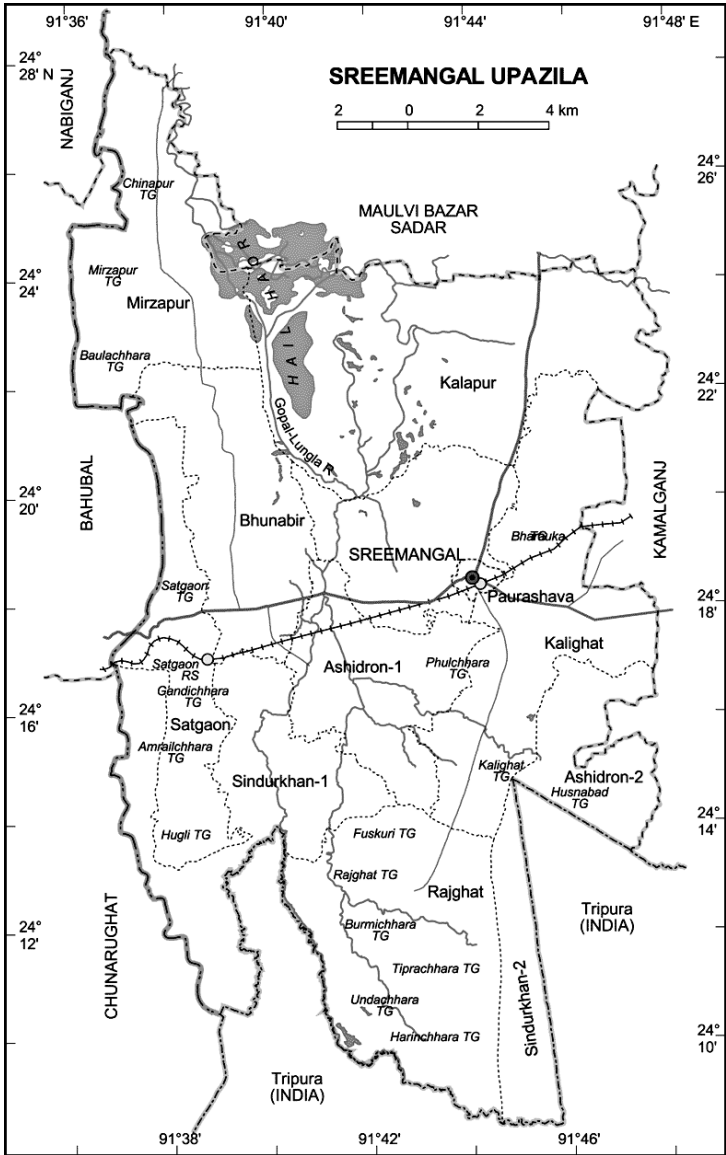
Ethical Issues: All information about participants was ethically considered. Before collecting data, both verbal and written consent of the participants was taken, and the participants were well explained the purpose of the research. Data were collected anonymously, and they considered the difficulties of writing the entire conversation on paper; an audio recording was used to record conversations and brief notes.

Study Setting: The study was carried out in two tea estates from two unions of Sreemangal Upazila under the Moulvibazar district.

Table 2. Study Area

District	Upazila	Union Council	Village
Moulvibazar	Sreemangal	7 no Rajghat	Rajghat Tea Estate
		8 no Kalighat	Kalighat Tea Estate

The fieldwork took place over a six-month period, from October 2023 to April 2024.



Map of the Study Area : Sreemangal Upazila, Moulvibazar District.

Source: <https://images.app.goo.gl/BZixBSyvBpN7BZMB8>

Results and Discussions

The findings of this study demonstrated how the vernacular could influence the social structure of both ethnic and non-ethnic communities. The Bangladesh government has launched an initiative to promote ethnic literacy in the home tongue. Ethnic development and understanding are significant developmental and programmatic priorities at both the national and regional levels. The government's top priorities include understanding ethnic concerns and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. A study developed from the information provided above will be an important source for determining the situation of the ethnic people at the bottom. It will continue to be the primary reference for any initiative aimed at benefiting the tea community people in that specific location. So, this study is highly crucial and a solid guideline for the government to increase its focus on pursuing future development efforts.

Noam Chomsky (1957), in his book 'Syntactic Structure,' said that "Language is a set (finite or infinite) of sentences, each finite in length, and constructed out of a finite set of elements." (p. 13). A society's language conveys both the history and present circumstances of its culture and the society as a whole. In general, the term 'identity' refers to an individual's behavior and personality that allow the collective awareness of a society to form. It is primarily concerned with a person's positions, relationships, roles, reputations, and social dimensions within the society to which he or she belongs. Language and identity are fundamentally linked. Furthermore, language can express a society's culture in an experimental way.

In this study, the development process of ethnic community people was observed. And these types of development achievements are seen as social inclusion for ethnic community members. For these ethnic communities, the government and

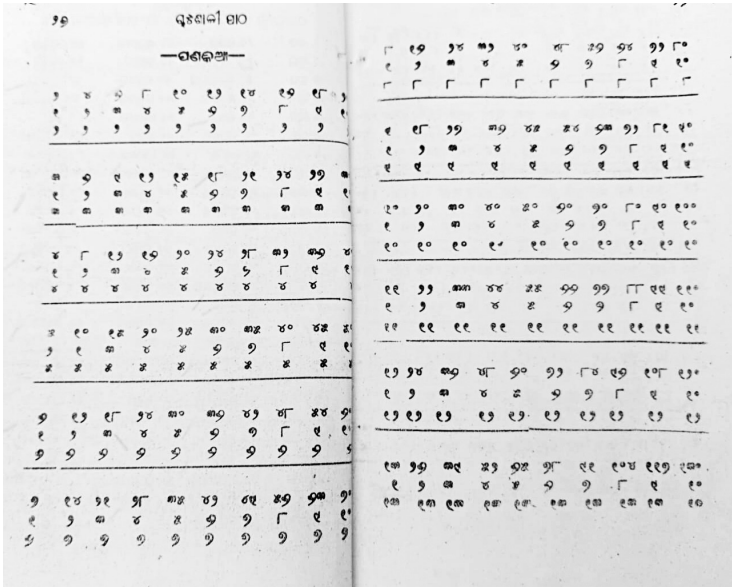
other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have adopted some initials. And these initials are considered to be development projects aimed at protecting the rights of ethnic community members.

Odia language speakers are impacted as well by this issue, and as a result, several non-governmental organizations and governments are taking steps to protect their rights. After a lengthy period of time, the process of education through mother tongue has lately begun. Several ethnic communities are also able to receive an education in their mother tongue. This can be considered social inclusion if it runs properly. But the Odia language speakers of the tea community are deprived of this opportunity. No steps have been taken by the government or any NGO to preserve the linguistic rights of the tea community. As a result, the Odia language is gradually becoming extinct. This can be considered as social exclusion.

However, the tea community's Odia language has become muddled, and the current generation is unable to properly communicate in their mother tongue. It is because community members are required to talk in Bengali or English in academic settings.

Odia Language and Culture

The mother tongue of this community is Odia. The Odia alphabet has a total of 52 letters, of which 13 are vowels and 39 are consonants. The book for learning the Odia alphabet is called Chattashali Patho. Kalisas Kobi and Sarla Das Kobi are well known among the Odia poets. The pronunciation of the Odia alphabet has some similarities with the Bengali alphabet. However, Bengali and Odia consonants are both 39. It is believed the Odia language, like Bengali, has originated from the 'Gauro Apabhrangso.' Odia, like most languages worldwide, including Bengali, is written from left to right (left peripheral).



Source: Collected from fieldwork (Rajghat Tea Estate, December 22, 2023)

Language and culture have an unbreakable connection; one cannot be imagined without the other. In this regard, the words of the structuralist anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908) are appropriate. Explaining language and culture, she said, ‘Firstly, language and culture are homologous; secondly, historically, both are similar; and thirdly, language and culture are interrelated.’ Culture is expressed through language, whether written, spoken, abstract, or symbolic. A close relationship between language and culture is also observed in the case of the Odia speaker of the tea community. Language and culture have an unbreakable connection; one cannot be imagined without the other. In this regard, the words of the structuralist anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908) are appropriate. Explaining language and culture, she said, ‘Firstly, language and culture are homologous; secondly, historically, both are similar; and thirdly, language and culture are interrelated.’ Culture is expressed through language, whether written, spoken, abstract, or symbolic. A

close relationship between language and culture is also observed in the case of the Odia speaker of the tea community.

The tea community's Odia speakers follow the Sanatan faith. All religious works on Sanatan Dharma are also written in Odia. Padma Purana, Surya Purana, Garuda Purana, Vishnu Purana, Vishamitra Purana, Kalki Purana, Narasimha Purana, Chandi Purana, Brahmabaivarta Purana, Shiva Purana, Lakshmi Purana, Markand Purana, Kartik Purana, and others (a total of 18 puranas) are well-known Sanatan Dharma Puranas written in Odia.

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Figure 3: Some Religious Literature (Puranas)



Source: Collected from fieldwork (Rajghat Tea Estate, December 28, 2023)

The Odia language has much folklore and literature. The Odia-speaking people also discuss and try to follow all of the

guidelines necessary for daily living that they have learned from numerous Odia literatures. Odia texts describe how a married couple should treat each other, how to treat others in the family, when is the best time to wake up, what to do next after waking up, and how everyone should act and perform in their daily activities. Some of these books include Prastaba Sindhu, Samsara Sargita, Gopibhasa, Rajokrira, Nandikaloganana, Bilongka Ramayana, Yamuni Bharato, Hanumano Prashan, Tustimalika, Sita Bilapo, Trinatho Mala, Narasimha Kabocho, Gurubaro Usha, Ganesho Bivuti, Sarvamangala Tusti, Murguni Tusti, Tulsi Malika, Gunasagro, Keshavkaili, Kantakaili, Baromasi Kaili, Mahabharata, etc.

Figure 4: Some Religious Literature



Source: Collected from fieldwork (Rajghat Tea Estate, December 28, 2023)

Social Exclusion through Odia Language

In Bangladesh, the Odia language-speaking tea community is bilingual and, in certain cases, multilingual. The majority of them can communicate in Bangla, Hindi, Jangli, and English as well. It does not imply that they have a high level of education;

rather, they need to learn those languages in order to survive and earn a livelihood. Their feelings towards the Odia language are ambivalent. Most of the tea workers (less educated or uneducated) on tea estates teach their children the Odia language. All communication with them is conducted in Odia. However, because no one understood the Odia language at school or outside the tea garden, they encouraged them to study Bangla in addition to the Odia language.

Case 1: Social Exclusion through Odia Language Speakers

Rumon Boonerjee, age 34, is a tea community member who lives in Rajghat Tea Estate. He holds a master's degree and works as a social worker. He is quite proud of his rich Odia culture and eager to learn more about it. As a result, he has collected some Odia literature. Unfortunately, he does not know how to read or write Odia. His mother tongue is Odia, but he has not had the opportunity to read or write in it since he was a child. As a result, he had difficulty understanding and receiving primary education in Bengali, the mainstream language. He didn't grasp many of the teachers' phrases. He gradually learned Bengali and completed his postgraduate studies. Even though he could read and write Bengali, his inertia kept him from speaking the language. He frequently blurted out words when speaking in Bengali, which made him feel humiliated. As a result, he struggled to make friends with mainstream Bengalis, with the exception of his own Odia-speaking buddies. In this scenario, he felt excluded from the others. Despite his advanced education, he regrets his inability to speak Bangla fluently. He also regrets his inability to read and write in his own language, Odia. According to him, there are no qualified teachers to provide Odia education in his area. As a result, despite his high level of education and passion, Rumon is denied an education in his mother tongue.

Pseudonym used to protect privacy

On the other hand, educated tea community members living on tea estates converse with their children in Bangla. All forms of communication are conducted in Bangla. They do not speak to their children in Odia, instead emphasizing the significance

of learning Bangla more than Odia. They believe that being able to speak and write Bangla fluently is essential for success in Bangladesh; thus, they prioritize teaching their children Bangla. These children's mother tongue is Bangla, as their parents never speak Odia to them. They have spoken to them in Bengla since they (the children) were born. Although the mother tongue of their parents is Odia, the mother tongue of the children is Bangla. Furthermore, when children of tea workers (who converse with their children in Odia) are asked if their mother tongue is Odia, they respond that it is Bangla. Because they learned from textbooks that our mother tongue is Bengla.

A tea worker, Kamal Boonerjee, (age 45) said,

People used to laugh at us when we spoke to our friends in the Odia language outside the tea estate. They said, 'Look, the baganis are talking.' Many people insulted us by calling us 'Bagani Kuli.' But we are not 'Kuli'; we are 'tea workers.' I did not allow my child to speak Odia so that he would not have to go through this humiliation. We taught him Bangla since he was a child, and we solely spoke to him in Bangla.

The Odia-speaking tea community must communicate in the mainstream Bangla language in all aspects of their everyday lives, beginning with primary education. As a result, they and their children must learn Bangla. When asked why you don't teach your child Odia, a tea worker, Bosonto Tanti, (age 37) replied,

Will anyone give my son a job if he knows the Odia language?
To acquire a job in Bangladesh, you must know Bangla well;
thus, I taught my son Bangla from a young age.

Case 2: Struggle against Social Exclusion

Suresh Tanti, age 47, is a tea worker at Rajghat Tea Estate. He is also an Odia language teacher. He learned to read and write in his mother tongue, Odia, from his father. Now, he occasionally teaches the Odia alphabet to interested men and women in the evenings, but he is unable to do so on a regular basis. As a result, many interested students fail to show up at other times. He wishes to provide comprehensive Odia instruction to all interested parties, including primary school students. However, in order to earn a living, he must work in a tea plantation; thus, he is unable to fulfill this task. He wants to draw the attention of government and private groups by stating that if the government or any non-government organization pays his teaching costs for his living, he will be able to fully deliver his learning to everyone who requires it. In this way, students who have dropped out of primary school will be motivated to learn and will be able to complete primary school more easily if they have the option to learn in their native language.

Pseudonym used to protect privacy

To establish oneself professionally in Bangladesh, you must be able to speak and write in Bangla. Furthermore, the Odia-speaking tea community is not given the opportunity to acquire education in their mother tongue other than Bengali. As a result, while many people can speak Odia, they are unable to read or write it. As a result, the current generation has lost interest in the Odia language. If this trend continues, the Odia language will eventually die. A student, Probir Nayek (14) Said,

I can't speak the Bengla language properly. When I try to speak in Bengla, sometimes the Odia language slips in, and for that reason, I often feel embarrassed. People sometimes say that even though I'm educated, I still can't speak Bengla well. But at home, I always speak Odia; I only speak Bengla when I go to school. When I make mistakes while speaking Bengali, I feel very humiliated.

Initiative taken by the Government and NGO

The Bangladesh government signed an agreement with ethnic communities under the Peace Accord Act (1997). This agreement includes basic education in the mother tongue as well as the quota system for higher education. Section B-33(2) refers to 'basic education in the mother tongue.' Also, part D, number 10, specifies 'quota reservation and scholarship.' In the context of 'basic education in mother tongue,' the government announced that only five ethnic groups, Chakma, Marma, Tripura, Garo, and Sadri, would be covered by the method. In the National Education Policy, the government stated about the ensuring of the educational rights and the education in the mother language of the ethnic community people. But the Odia-speaking tea community people are deprived of the opportunity. Despite having all the characteristics of an ethnic community, they are not gazetted as an ethnic minority by the government. As a result, this community is denied access to all of the facilities and services accessible to minority groups. The IDEA, one of the familiar NGO sectors, owns the project named 'ALOY ALO' that aims for pre-primary education in the villages of the tea communities. They provide pre-primary education through their ECD centers. But the language used for teaching in these ECDs is Bangla, like in government institutions. No initiatives have been taken by the NGO to preserve the linguistic rights of the tea community.

The Odia-speaking tea community in Bangladesh faces multidimensional exclusion. Future research should explore language revitalization strategies and policy interventions for inclusive development.

Conclusion

Bangladesh is a state with a high level of cultural diversity. Bangladesh's indigenous people have the right to practice their culture. Because language is a cultural symbol, learning and speaking your mother tongue is a way to acquire rights. Members

of ethnic communities should begin practicing their mother tongues as children, both orally and in writing. Indigenous people's rights must be respected, and it is vital to comprehend their language and culture. This enables us to create a truthful history of the Bengali nation. The government has taken some initial steps by creating policies that can help ensure ethnic communities' linguistic rights. However, the tea community is deprived of these initials. It is necessary because children in the tea community should be taught in their native tongue rather than Bangla, since this will decrease language mixing and allow children to acquire lessons with greater ease. In this instance, government and non-governmental organizations can help reduce marginalization. If any of the aforementioned organizations provide students with an opportunity to obtain primary education in their mother tongue, Odia, in addition to Bengali and English, Odia-speaking pupils will be able to receive primary education more easily, reducing this exclusion. This study focuses on the Odia people. Due to shortages of time and resources, all Odia members from the tea community were unable to be observed. Only a few individuals from two tea estates are chosen. If our approach could accomplish that, the data would be far more accurate and precise, as different people's perspectives differ. During the empirical investigation, the researchers encountered numerous issues and limits. For example, validity was not examined; reliability was not measured in a subsequent study; the study used a small number of participants proportionate to the population; and non-parametric tests were employed to elaborate information. Only the linguistic aspect, particularly education in one's mother tongue, has been addressed. However, the language component is rich in itself and is not detected at all. Language practice in everyday life, as well as language mixing, would be more perfect and pragmatic if thoroughly researched.

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Conflict of interest Statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest. The article does not represent the views of any organization, but rather the views of the authors.

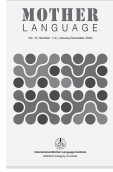
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হাসান, শাহেদ ও অন্যান্য। (২০১১)। ক্ষুদ্র নৃগোষ্ঠীর লোকায়ত জ্ঞান। রাজশাহী: রাজশাহী বিভাগীয় ক্ষুদ্র নৃগোষ্ঠীর কালচারাল একাডেমী।



An Analysis of the Slogans of the Quota Movement 2024 in Bangladesh Using Speech Act Theory: A Pragmatic Perspective

Shorna Akter *, Md. Minhajul Abedin **

Abstract: The study aims to analyze the use of speech acts in the slogans of Quota Movement 2024 in Bangladesh. Using Searl's (1969) taxonomies of Speech Act Theory (SAT), the researchers analyzed the selected slogans following a qualitative approach from a pragmatic perspective. The findings show that all the illocutionary acts have been used in the concerned slogans. Also, the study has shown how the slogans of the Quota Movement 2024 in Bangladesh played a crucial role in driving the listeners from the micro level to the macro level based on the situation demand of an ultimate goal.

Keywords: Movement, Pragmatics, Quota, Slogans, Speech Act Theory

Introduction

While communicating people use language to share ideas and at the same time, get their necessities fulfilled through different functional languages like request, order, narration, asking, etc. Apart from the use of language for oral communication in any

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negotiation, it is also used for conveying messages through posters, slogans, speech, and so forth. The discourse of the slogans has the artistic potential to pursue political groups and common people (Halim, n.d.). The development of ideas in the slogans is likely to be influenced by the development of the movement. While analyzing any slogan, it is not enough to consider only its semantic aspects to make sense. In other words, any communication is likely to be analyzed in its context (Iqbal, Najmi & Dara, 2022; Manouchakian, 2018). So, through the lens of pragmatics within the framework of relevant social context, slogans must be scrutinized to make sense of apparent and not-so-apparent meanings. In the present study, the discourses of the slogans of Quota Movement 2024 in Bangladesh have been chosen by the researchers to explore using speech act theory in the background of the then social context.

Merriam-Webster Learner's Dictionary defines the term 'slogan' as "a word or phrase used to express a characteristic position or stand or a goal to be achieved." The slogan is structured in the fewest possible words to portray the biggest scenario on a tiny canvas (Gounari, 2018). Terseness, constancy, imperative expressions, association with a certain group being easy for memorization, and catchy word selection are the idiosyncrasies of slogans (Leopold, 1942). Ford (2019) opines that slogans are not only a juxtaposition of some words to display on posters, boards, and to chant. They have many important functions to play; for example, they are to familiarize common people with the latest happenings so that they can express their viewpoints and take their stands. In doing so, slogans can unite people from all walks of life and they also have some educative value. Above all, this can help raise awareness among the commoners (Ford, 2019).

The discourse of slogans can influence tremendously any movement (Gounari, 2018). Perhaps slogans are one of the most effective linguistic means that can deliver a detectible note with greater simplicity. The audience's reaction can help identify the effectiveness of the discourses of slogans. Slogans can also give

directives to the people in society to develop social awareness and take steps for reformation (Sardoč & Prebilič, 2022).

Background of the Study

The Quota Reform Movement 2024, though initially was a movement for a discrimination-free quota system, later turned into a movement for justice, and at last, the common people joined, and it became a movement against the government claiming the step down of the then Prime minister. Al Jazeera Explainer (“What’s behind Bangladesh’s violent quota protests?”, 16 July, 2024), Borthakur (2024), and Prothom Alo English (“Central Shaheed Minar turns turbulent with slogans”, 2024, 3 August; “Quota movement timeline: Unfolding events”, 2024, 2 August) are the sources of the following background information.

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman introduced the Quota system in 1972. Initially, 80 percent of government jobs were reserved as quotas. However, in 1976, it was restructured, and merit-based recruitment was increased to 40%, and then by 1996, it became 55%. At different times, because of the misuse and also for anti-discrimination issues, the students raised their voices, but it was not a regular activity. Up to 2018, there was provision for a 56% quota for the freedom fighters, disabled, and other categories. Because of the students’ movement for reducing the quota to 10%, the High Court verdict went in favor of the cancellation of the Quota Act in the case of 9th to 13th-grade jobs. After that, protests continued concerning the quota issue at different levels during other periods. Later, due to the students’ protest, the authority declared the cancellation of the reserved quota in the face of protest by the students in 2018.

At last in 2024, when the High Court of Bangladesh restored the provocative quota system, labeling the government’s pronouncement for quotas in 2018 as “unconstitutional, illegal, and ineffective,” and instantly, a group of students, primarily through nonviolence, voiced across the country, protesting the latest development in the Quota act. At first, under the banner

of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement (ADSM) in support of the reformation for quota, the students raised their voices just on the quota issue, but later, in the following days of the movement, that is, from July 5 to August 5, 2024, the torture, oppression, arrest, and massacre against the students and people who supported the movement changed the direction of movement.

During the entire movement, students protested from time to time staying on the highway and some other important points of the country. They created slogans based on the movement's sequence to express their demands. The present researchers chose the discourse of the slogans to explore using speech act theory with a pragmatic perspective.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to bring to light the illocutionary points and their effects as reflected in the slogans of the Quota Reform Movement 2024. Through an in-depth analysis of the background with a pragmatic perspective, this study also attempts to demonstrate how the changes in the movement got the discourse of the slogans featured with dynamism.

Literature Review

Speech act theories and pragmatic perspectives are used to study the discourses of slogans, speech, or any form of communication. Speech Act theory is presumably the most effective approach to explore the functionality of language use as Mabaquiao (2018) mentioned that analysis of discourse using SAT can help understand the function of language. In addition, among the three types of speech acts, the illocutionary act can potentially operate the functions of language (Brown, 2000). Moreover, one can develop communicative skills by gaining knowledge of the SAT (Brown, 2000). Acquiring virtuosity over SAT in analyzing discourse with a pragmatic perspective can ultimately ensure effective communication. Speech act theories and pragmatic perspectives are used to study the discourses of slogans, speech,

or any form of communication. Also, the role of slogans in different social and political movements has been a research topic for a long time. For example, Ford (2019) shows the types and roles of slogans applicable to different contexts in different critical situations during the Russian revolutionary movement 1971. Slogans have many different facets to demonstrate in terms of the settings, motto, and structures (Ford, 2019).

Kaleem (2022), through a qualitative analysis, exposes how the choice of words, sentence structure, and figure of speech can help convey a desired ideology through slogans, create a good image of a political party, and discard the discourse and ideology of other groups. Likewise, Anyanwu and Onuohu (2022) show through their research that convincing the commoners through the well-structured discourse of slogans in the election campaign is possible. In Bangladesh, an investigation was conducted on the Quota Movement 2018 by Hasan and Biswas (2020). They found that the impetus behind the success of the Quota Movement 2018 was 'technological determinism'. Facebook and messenger chat groups played key roles in the movement's success. On the other hand, using the perspective of Aristotle, Newsome (2002) has researched the political rhetoric of slogans to show the structures, semantics, and word arrangement of the discourse of slogans and, above all, the motivational function in pursuing the audience for a noble cause.

Again, focusing on a variety of formerly ignored features related to slogans and governmentality, Sardoč and Prebilič (2022) showed the emblematic nature of zero tolerance in the ideology of slogans and emphasized the likelihood of utilizing slogans for confrontation. On the other hand, Hartig (2018) investigated Chinese political slogans to increase their comprehensibility and presented the fact that the discourse of the slogans of the concerned type can be of great use sometimes and some other times, which may cause a dilemma for the government. Likewise, the article of Kovalevska (2020) explicitly discovered the idiosyncrasies of political slogans that are created in promotion of an election. He analyzed the incongruities between the political

and business slogans. Using the Speech Act theory, Rahayu, Arifin and Ariani (2018) investigated the speech of the main character of the 'Mirror Mirror movie and showed that the protagonist mainly used directive points through request, order, asking, and command.

In many research works, SAT has been used to analyze discourse of different communicative situations. To the best of the present researchers' knowledge, no research has ever been conducted on the slogans of the Quota Movement 2024 using SAT and a pragmatic perspective. The present study is an attempt to start working on this area.

Conceptual Framework Based on Theoretical Concept

Language should always be considered as a context-dependent phenomenon and along with the setting, language-based communication involves social and psychological factors (Rahayu, Arifin and Ariani, 2018; Yule, 1996). Asserting, informing, requesting, commanding, praying, asking, and expressing excitement are the different purposes for which language is employed. "Discourse is always socially and culturally constituted and conditioned, it constructs situations, identities, social and cultural relationships between people and groups" (Kaleem, 2022, 263).

However, delivering a speech does not only mean uttering a string of meaningful words. Rather, based on the pragmatic aspects, a speaker has always some message or intention to convey. That is why it is imperative to find out the psychology and the story behind any speech. Therefore, to analyse a speech taking into account its background information is important.

Manouchakian (2018) says that Pragmatics is a branch of linguistics, which reviews the features of language to make sense in context. In other words, this is a logical means of elucidating the use of language in context. When a person utters a discourse in the communicative situation he/she intends to convey some information to influence the hearers. In this regard, speech act

theory is relevant to refer to as it has issues with the context and the purpose of a speech. Yule (1996) states that a Speech Act (SA) is a concept that examines an act done through articulation. He emphasizes the use of pragmatics for discourse analysis, defining it as “Pragmatics is the study of the relationships between linguistic forms and the users of those forms” (1996, 4).

SAT can be treated as an effective tool for analyzing different discourses in the domain of pragmatics. Searle (1969, 1979) and Grice (1975) have significantly contributed to promoting research through the speech act framework. Concentrating on Searle’s (1969) opinion, Nordquist (2024) and Mukhroji et al. (2019) mention that a speaker can transfer five illocutionary points embedded in discourses:

- The assertive (subtypes: inform, conclude, assume, confirm, accept and so on)
- The commissive (subtypes: promise, suggest, agree and so on)
- The directive (subtypes: question, request, suggest, hope, instruct, invite, order and so on)
- The declaratory (subtypes: thank, apologize, welcome, congratulate and so on)
- The expressive (subtypes: greet, thank, compliment and so on)

Certainly, a speaker has a certain purpose while delivering a discourse irrespective of its structure (Yule, 1996). The illocutionary points each have their way of conveying meaning and it is the speaker who utilizes or even can manipulate the mindset of the readers or the listeners (Yule, 1996). According to Vanderkeven and Kubo (2002), the speakers manage the following purposes when they speak about something:

The *assertive point* when they represent how things are in the world;

The *commissive point* when they commit themselves to doing something;

The *directive point* when they make an attempt to get hearers to do something;

The *declaratory point* when they do things in the world at the moment of the utterance solely by virtue of saying that they do;

The *expressive point* when they express their attitudes about objects and facts of the world (Vanderkeven and Kubo (2002) in Nordquist, 2024, para. 6)

In this regard, Adiniu and Uchenna (2023) explicate that slogans carry illocutionary forces to convince the listeners to agree with their discourse and get the perlocutionary reaction from the audience whereas Oishi (2024) presents a complete framework by analyzing the illocutionary acts giving special importance to context.

In the present study, the researchers aim to analyze the discourse of slogans meant for the Quota Movement 2024, taking into account the five illocutionary forces (proposed by Searle, 1969) and their subtypes and the context in which they are voiced in front of the people in Bangladesh to draw the attention of the government.

Methodology

The present research is qualitative. It has followed qualitative approaches both at the data collection and analysis levels.

Sampling

The researchers have collected 21 most famous and repeatedly chanted slogans during the quota movement 2024 from July 1 to August 5, 2024. These slogans were the means of vocal protest for the students only initially and later for the commoners. Data was collected from online and offline newspapers, Facebook, Instagram, online documents, and YouTube videos during the protest.

Data Analysis

The data regarding the background of the movement in which

slogans were chanted has been collected from online and offline newspapers and online documents. To be more specific, Prothom Alo English (2 August 2024; 3 August 2024), The Daily Star (6 August 2024) and Al Jazeera Explainer (16 July 2024), Corea and Erum (2024) and Borthakur (2024) are the sources of information in this respect. The slogans are divided according to the phases of the movement. After selecting the data, they have been translated from Bengali to English, and only one has already been in English, whereas the researchers have translated the rest.

Context-dependent information has been incorporated into the analysis of slogans following the development of the movement since the slogans were created based on the particular consequence of the movement. Both speech act points and pragmatic perspectives have been considered while analyzing the data.

Discussion and Findings

The total movement from 1 July to 5 August 2024 has been organized into four phases. The protesters' demands to the government and the counter-narratives are reflected in the discourse of the slogans selected for the research.

First Phase

The Context of the First Phase

Students of ADSM rallied and demonstrated at the University of Dhaka and different other universities. They declared 4 July 2024 for meeting the demands for Quota reformation by giving the verdict in favour of staying reestablishment of the Quota Act of 2018. In the following days, they blockaded the Dhaka-Aricha highway in front of the campus of Jahangirnagar University and other places. The Appellate Division went against the stay of the High Court verdict that canceled the 2018 circular on the cancellation of quota. Because of the blockade activities named 'Bangla blockade,' Dhaka came to a standstill, students refused

to attend classes. Later, the blockade activity extended to other highways despite the police's hindrance.

The Slogan of the First Phase

1. কোটা না মেধা?/মেধা মেধা

Quota or Merit? /Merit! Merit!

Both directive and assertive acts are used here through a rhetorical question, “Quota or Merit?” to reflect the speakers’ standpoint regarding the ongoing quota issue. “A *rhetorical question* is not a question about the art of speaking effectively; it is a question that is asked for effect, rather than from a desire to know the answer” (*Merriam-Webster Dictionary*). The protesters assert their demands that merit should be emphasized in the reformation of the Quota Act 2024. This slogan marks the start of the July-August movement.

The Second Phase

The Context of the Second Phase

The protesters got agitated because of Sheikh Hasina’s (the then-prime minister of Bangladesh) comment about the movement. On 14 July 2024, she said, “Why do they have so much resentment towards freedom fighters? If the grandchildren of the freedom fighters don’t get quota benefits, should the grandchildren of *Razakars* get the benefit?” (What’s behind Bangladesh’s violent quota protests? 16 July 2024, para 7) and this speech gave a new dimension to the movement. Through the placement of a memo before the president, the protesters gave an ultimatum of 24 hours for the reformation of quotas in all the grades of government jobs. The students of Dhaka University assembled at Raju Memorial Sculpture. Later, being instigated by Obaidul Quader, Bangladesh Chatro League (BCL) started oppressing the students who protested, and later, the injured received treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Slogans for The Second Phase

2. তুমি কে আমি কে? রাজাকার! রাজাকার!

কে বলেছে? কে বলেছে?/ স্বৈরাচার স্বৈরাচার

Who are you? Who am I? /Traitors! Traitors!

Who said? Who said? /The Autocrat! The Autocrat!

This slogan reflects both the directives and expressive acts, ironically stating the standpoint of the protesters. The protesters caught the moment in this slogan. Through a question-and-answer structure, this slogan creates a dramatic moment to expose the anarchy going on with them to the country and the whole world. The use of irony is present in this mini dialogue form of slogan. In this regard, Reboul (1974) is relevant in that he says, “The most effective slogans are those we do not recognize as slogans” (62). The form of interrogation through the illocutionary force makes the audience speculate otherwise.

The word *rajakar* in Bengali is a derogatory term used to describe individuals who collaborated with the Pakistani military during the Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971. This is an encumbered term, arousing memoirs of war misconducts, which include the murder and sexual abuse of the Bengali population and other racial sectors in 1971 (Zakaria in Hussain, 22 Jul 2024). “They were a force of collaborators used by Pakistan to try to crush the movement for an independent Bangladesh” (Hussain, 2024, para 1).

Specifically, this slogan catches the moment when the government in a speech, called student protesters, ‘traitors’ or ‘perfidious’ (*rajaker*). In the first part of this slogan, apparently, the protesters identified themselves as traitors but in the next question and answer form of the slogan it gets clarified that this is the statement of the government. Through directive and assertive speech acts, the protesters explicitly addressed the problem they were facing. They expressed their reaction declaring the then prime minister ‘autocrat’ on hearing her comment.

3. “চেয়েছিলাম অধিকার/হয়ে গেলাম রাজাকার”

“We struggle for rights. /But turn out to be conspirators.”

4. “এক, দুই, তিন, চার/আমরা হলাম রাজাকার”

“One, two, three, four/We all are traitors!”

These two slogans were chanted using assertive speech acts to protest the then-prime minister’s comment that the protesters were traitors. The protesters expressed their demands for a discrimination-free Quota act, but ironically, they were wrongly accused of treason while seeking rights. The protesters could not bear the insult of wrong acquisition while raising their voices against malpractice and so chanted this slogan. In short, through a statement or assertive expression, the students stated the consequences of how the government wrongly accused them.

As Robert Denton (1980) emphasizes, “[t]he final rhetorical characteristic of slogans is that they usually attempt to create a blinding effect. They are created in such a way as to blind the targeted audience to alternative ways of thinking” (p.18). Here, the slogans of the third phase are found to make the listeners contemplate otherwise and pursue not to take things at face value.

Third Phase

Context of the Third Phase

The students were shot and attacked by BCL, Jubo League (JL) and the police positioned at different places, especially at different universities. A student named Abu Sayeed from Begum Rokeya University was killed by police. The protesters declared *Gayebana janaza* (a kind of prayer for the salvation of the departed soul of the martyred) and ‘Coffin Procession’ as activities for the following day. Eventually, the activists drove out BCL leaders from different campuses including Dhaka University and declared the campuses ‘free from politics’.

Violent confrontations involving a good number of people, blockades and processions took place countrywide. Along with the police at this time, Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) came in action in the whole country on 18 July 2024, ‘Complete

shutdown' was going on in response to the call of the protesters, on the following day the army was deployed at night as curfew was imposed, internet service was not provided and the local people also started joining the movement. On 20 July, three coordinators of the ADSM met three ministers including the state minister and placed their eight-point demands which was increased to 9 point later. On 21 July, the Appellate division of the Supreme Court reorganized the quotas reducing it from 56% to 7%.

On 26 and 27 July at first, the five coordinators and then the fifth one were detained by the DB police. 'Block raids' began in different parts of the country on 26 July 2024. Countrywide attacks on the students went on by BCL and the police at various places during the protest of the ADSM group and some local people.

University teachers, several prominent personalities, students' guardians and common people started joining the protest. They followed the 'March for Justice' program in protest of the mass killings, detentions and all the brutal activities of the government, and continued with both online and offline fights supporting the movement.

On 1 August, the protesters followed the "Remembering the Heroes" program countrywide in commemoration of the martyred, the affected, and the injured. On this very day, the six ADSM coordinators were released, and they declared that the protest would continue.

Slogans for The Third Phase

5. হামলা করে আন্দোলন/বন্ধ করা যাবে না

By attacking people/Movement cannot be stopped.

6. গুলি করে আন্দোলন/বন্ধ করা যাবে না

By shooting people/ Movement cannot be stopped.

Both slogans reflect the use of assertive speech acts. These are the eventual consequences of the attack inflicted on the students whose strong determination to carry on the movement to ensure

justice is evident here. The two slogans vividly demonstrate the brutality done towards them by the government. At this point, the students were shot and beaten ruthlessly so that they may not go ahead on the issue of quota movement.

7. আমার ভাইয়ের রক্ত/বৃথা যেতে দিব না

আমার বোনের রক্ত/বৃথা যেতে দিব না

I will not let the bloodshed of my brother/Go in vain.

I will not let the bloodshed of my sister/ Go in vain.

In this slogan, the commissive point is utilized as the protesters promised not to let the sacrifice of the students go without securing justice for the martyrs. They used expressions like, “আমার ভাইয়ের” (‘my brothers’) and “আমার বোনের” (‘my sister’s’) which imply their attachment with the comrades in the movement and their onus also gets reflected here. Deeply emotional, this slogan represents students’ promises to secure justice, fellow feelings, and responsibilities to their comrades through commissives.

8. আমার ভাই মরল কেন/জবাব চাই জবাব চাই

Why have my brothers died? / I want an answer; I want an answer.

The speakers here demanded an answer when people in authority started oppressing and shooting the students. So, the directive point is utilized to get the desired behavior from the listeners, that is, the ruling party or the government. Again, using the phrase, ‘আমার ভাই’ (my brothers), the speakers represent their sense of responsibility to their companions in the movement. The protesting spirit and agitation of the activists are obvious in this slogan.

9. ছাত্রলীগের আস্তানা/ভেঙে দাও গুঁড়িয়ে দাও

The Sanctuary of Chatra League! Break Them, Smash Them

The directive act is used in this slogan. The protesters here expressed their reaction against the ill-treatment of Awami

League (AL) and BCL and asked the hearer to smash all the shelters of this group. Here, the directives are for the comrades against CL and AL. The resentment against the wrongdoers is noticeable in this slogan.

10. লাখো শহিদের রক্তে কেনা/দেশটা কারো বাপের না

Bangladesh is achieved at the sacrifice of millions of martyrs. /
Our motherland cannot be someone's inherited property.

In this slogan, a directly assertive point is used to inform. This is chanted when the movement got further development. The students have been tortured and shot to death. This discourse can be explained as Bangladesh is not someone's personal property rather, this is the hard-won achievement of the Bangladeshis. So, the protesters expressed their demands that in their country, the government cannot do whatever they like. This is a matter of liability. Hence, implicitly the protesters were saying that the government had to take responsibility for the happenings in the context.

11. আমার ভাই কবরে/খুনি কেন বাহিরে?

My brothers are in graves. /Why are the killer free?

Both assertive and directive points are used in the slogan. The protesters recited that after killing their comrades the murderers were roaming about free. Through an assertion, the then state of affairs is described in the first part of the slogan and in the second part, there is a demand for an answer from the government to say why the killers were free, which means why the murderers had not yet been punished. In the form of a question, a demand for justice is placed.

12. লেগেছে লেগেছে/রক্তে আগুন লেগেছে

Blood is ignited! Blood is ignited!

The assertive point is used here to express the agitation of the protesters. They assert that their blood was being burnt which indicates that they were in a full swing mood to protest and struggle for their rights.

Final Phase

Context of Final Phase

At this stage, protesters' nine-point demand was reduced to one point. They placed one point by chanting for the step down of the then-prime minister. On 3 August 2024, the protesters refused to join a meeting with Sheikh Hasina as they did not want to negotiate with the government, which is allegedly responsible for the death of their companions. The protesters announced a non-cooperation movement to be observed countrywide from August 4, creating a climactic situation. Eventually, students, including commoners, died because of the open firing of the police, and many got injured.

On 4 August 2024, the protesters asked for a 'Long March to Dhaka' disobeying the curfew imposed by the government. Later, they announced a one-point claim through slogans. On 5 August 2024, the people from outside Dhaka tried to get in very early in the morning. Police continued with shooting, harassing, and torturing at some points in Dhaka. However, later, the crowd started forwarding towards *Gono Bhaban* to seize it, and in such a situation, under pressure from the protesters and the army, Sheikh Hasina resigned from her post.

Slogans of the Final Phase

13. তোমার কোটা তুমি নাও/আমার ভাই ফিরিয়ে দাও

Take your Quota back. /Give my brothers back.

The use of directive points is observed here. Through the slogan, the protesters placed the demand to take away the Reformed Quota Act and return the martyred protesters. This slogan is structured placing two demands before the authority responsible for the murder of innocent people. When a good number of people were killed, the protesters refused to get reformation in Quota and wanted their dead companions to get back to life.

14. এক দুই তিন চার/শেখ হাসিনা গদি ছাড়

One two three four /Sheikh Hasina step down.

The directive speech act is used here to place a demand through this slogan. Here, rhythmically, the then-prime minister was asked to get down from power. This slogan was used in protest of inhumanity, but here, the context is not confined to ensuring the reformation of the quota; rather, this time, the movement took a broader turn, and at this point, the protesters were struggling for one clause: Sheikh Hasina's stepping down.

15. জ্বালো জ্বালো/আগুন জ্বালো

Lit the light. /Lit the light.

The directive point is used in the slogan. Addressing the people who were supporting the protest, the activists asked them to carry on the fiery protest by fighting against the evil power of the government.

16. Justice Justice /We Want Justice

This is an English slogan where the speakers used the directive act to demand justice. Here, they placed a demand for the punishment of all the people who were instrumental in the mass killing and all the evil activities during the time of movement.

17. এক দফা এক দাবি/হাসিনা কবে যাবি?

হাসিনা তুই এখন যাবি/এক দফা এক দাবি

One point one demand/When will Sheikh Hasina resign?

Step down, Hasina, immediately. /One point one demand

Directive points are used in this slogan. This slogan is chanted at the macro level since placing a one-point claim the protesters demand the stepping down of Sheikh Hasina. At first, they placed their demand before her to leave the power. Through a question she was asked when she would resign. So, indirectly the protesters asked Hasina to get down from the power and then they answered that she had to resign instantly. Interestingly, in a dramatic way, they placed their demands and fixed the moment for the fulfilment of their demand. This slogan belongs to the last phase of the movement and as such, the movement was at its culmination. At this stage, the demands of the protesters

narrowed down and took a unique turn in the form of just one point. Hence, they raised their voice for the resignation of Sheikh Hasina, which can be considered as a demand encompassing all the demands placed before.

18. জেগেছে জেগেছে/ছাত্রসমাজ জেগেছে

The students of the society /Got awake, got awake.

The assertive point is in use in this slogan. The activists mentioned here about their reaction to the injustice. The students became alert and were ready to move further in the protest. This slogan states the condition of the protesters explicitly but implicitly the slogan indicates their uplifting consciousness of the injustice. It is relevant here to mention Reboul (1979), who says 'True slogans are those that succeed best in concealing their real nature' (p.296). So, the real feature of the slogan here is identified through pragmatic analysis.

19. দিয়েছি তো রক্ত/আরও দেবো রক্ত

রক্তের বন্যায়/ভেসে যাবে অন্যায়

We have already bled. /If needed, we will bleed further.

All the injustice will be/ Washed away by profuse bleeding.

Here, assertive, commissive, and directive acts are used in the slogan. At first, using assertive and commissive acts, the protesters stated that they sacrificed and experienced bleeding while protesting. They were even ready to sacrifice further, so they promised to go with the same experience in time of need. At last, using the directive act, they hoped that through their blood, all the impurities of the society would be removed. So, the protesters here expressed the state of protest, sacrifice, and the injustice (done towards them), then they promised to protest further, and at last, they hoped the country would be free from all the injustice.

20. ছি ছি হাসিনা/লজ্জায় বাঁচি না

Shame! Shame! Hasina /We can't tolerate this shame.

The activists used the declarative act to express their deep hatred, and since ‘to hate’ is a stative verb, the task is accomplished simply by uttering the words. The protesters expressed their reaction to the heinous deeds of genocide by the government, and as such, they directly chanted the slogan, expressing their abhorrence for Sheikh Hasina. Boldly, the protesters articulate this highly emotive slogan against Sheikh Hasina, the former Prime minister of Bangladesh, expressing their abhorrence, disappointment, and disgust.

21. তুমি কে? আমি কে? বাংলাদেশ! বাংলাদেশ!

Who are you? Who am I? / Bangladesh! Bangladesh!

Here directive and assertive points are used to give the motto of the movement a broader shape. The slogan starts with questions, ‘Who are you? Who am I?’ and then the speakers themselves replied ‘Bangladesh!’, ‘Bangladesh!’. So, at first, the directive point and then the assertive point are used. At the beginning of the movement, out of agitation for the humiliation of the students by Sheikh Hasina, the ADSM group chanted, “Who are you? Who am I? / Traitors! Traitors!”. This slogan was suttered by a limited portion of the citizens of Bangladesh in the protest. However, eventually, this tension spread and took a broader shape and in the end, transformed to “Who are you? Who am I? / Bangladesh! Bangladesh!”. Surprisingly, an ironic expression has gone through a process of paradigm shift and reached a macro level from a micro level, involving people from all walks of life singing in the same tune for justice and ensuring the stepping down of the government.

Conclusion

Slogans have the potential to strike a moment to encourage a social movement. According to Ford (2019), a significant role of slogans is that they can be influential to the extent of starting a mass movement for restructuring or rebellion in a society. All the illocutionary speech acts are utilized in the discourse of the

slogans of the Quota Movement 2024. The use of speech acts is explicitly noticeable in the slogans which were repeatedly recited during the time of the July-August movement. With the development of the movement, the slogans had dynamic roles to play, through asserting the state of affairs, expressing mood or reaction, giving directives, promising to take initiative and acting to encourage the activists and inform the people of the country and the external world. The ADSM group for quota reformation in 2024 sang a series of slogans. Initially, the protesters just raised their voices on the quota issue with the slogan ‘Quota or Merit? /Merit! Merit!’ through non-violence and later, the reaction of the ruling party and the consequential feedback from the protesters created a scope for further development of slogans. Literally, the initial significant slogan creates the context for the generation of a series of slogans, firstly for one particular cause and eventually for a good number of humanitarian causes and at last, it is reduced to one single cause again. The development of one point to nine points was just the demands of the situation and finally reduction from nine points to one point hit the end of the struggle. Hence, with the dynamism of the movement, the slogans get vitality and portray the picture of a paradigm shift in Bangladesh’s social context.

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Research Rational
Research Questions
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Rockey, R. (2008). *An observational study of pre-service teachers' classroom management strategies*. (Publication No. 3303545) [Doctoral dissertation, Indiana University of Pennsylvania]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.

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Gerena, C. (2015). *Positive Thinking in Dance: The Benefits of Positive Self-Talk Practice in Conjunction with Somatic Exercises for Collegiate Dancers* [Master's thesis, University of California Irvine]. University of California, eScholarship. <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/1t39b6g3>

Personal Communications

Personal communications such as Emails, lectures, or conversations should be cited as personal communications in the text only (not in the reference list) in the following format:

R. J. Smith (personal communication, August 15, 2015)



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