

# An Analysis of Language Shift and Maintenance among Marma Community of Bangladesh

By

Abul Ehsan Mohammad Obaydur Rahman  
16177002

A thesis submitted to the Department of Brac Institute of Languages in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in TESOL

Brac Institute of Languages  
Brac University  
September 2019

© 2019. Abul Ehsan Mohammad Obaydur Rahman  
All rights reserved

## **Declaration**

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing degree at Brac University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

**Student's Full Name & Signature:**

---

**Abul Ehsan Mohammad Obaydur Rahman**  
16177002

## Approval

The thesis titled “An Analysis Of Language Shift And Maintenance Among Marma Community Of Bangladesh” submitted by

Abul Ehsan Mohammad Obaydur Rahman (16177002)

Of Fall, 2019 has been accepted as satisfactory in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts in TESOL on 12 September 2019.

### Examining Committee:

Supervisor:  
(Member)

---

Dr. Faheem Hasan Shahed  
Associate Professor, Brac Institute of Languages  
Brac University

Program Coordinator:  
(Member)

---

Dr. Faheem Hasan Shahed  
Associate Professor, Brac Institute of Languages  
Brac University

External Expert Examiner:  
(Member)

---

Harunur Rashid Khan  
Adjunct Faculty, Brac Institute of Languages  
Brac University

Departmental Head:  
(Chair)

---

Lady Syeda Sarwat Abed  
Senior Director, Brac Institute of Languages  
Brac University

## **Ethics Statement**

I declare that the thesis titled “An Analysis of Language Shift and Maintenance among Marma Community of Bangladesh” is submitted to the Brac Institute of Languages (BIL), Brac University, in partial fulfillment of the degree MA in TESOL. That no part of this dissertation copied or plagiarized from published or unpublished copied or unauthorized from other published work of other writers and that all materials, borrowed or reproduced from other published or unpublished sources have either been put under quotation or duly acknowledged with full reference in appropriate place(s). I understand that the program conferred on me may be cancelled/ withdrawn if subsequently discovered that this thesis is not my original work and that it contains materials copied, plagiarized or borrowed without proper acknowledgement.

## **Abstract**

In multi lingual environments, it is common for a language to Shift (LS), Maintain (LM) or Lose (LL). The study looked into the verbal repertoire in Marma community- the second largest ethnic minority group in CHT through examining the tendency of LS or LM where Bangla- the state language of the country is widely spoken. We focused on Bandarban where the Marma people live in highest density. We followed qualitative method; adopted an interpretivist approach, using ethnographic case studies taking a sample of twelve people/families with varied professional backgrounds and locations. These people are found mostly bilingual, fluent in Chittagonian—the lingua franca of the region. Although Marma are maintaining their language strictly but are inclined to mainstream Bangla-medium schools for their children to enjoy higher social status as they can smartly communicate in offices and other important places. They are highly fond of music and literature in their own language.

**Keywords:** Marma; Chittagong Hill Tracts; Ethnic minority group; Language Shift or Maintenance; Multilingual environment; Bandarban

## **Dedication**

To Adiba U Shing Nu Rahman, a member of ethnic Marma community and my loving wife who traveled all the way long with me and made my Thesis journey possible.

## **Acknowledgement**

All the praises are for Allah who created people and their languages; who blessed me with knowledge and wisdom and ability to mix with people from varied ethnicity of different status and ability. I must recall the people with respect who rendered their generous support and cooperation while carrying out the study in different parts of CHT. Even before I start my research work my research proposal was supported as worth studying by Dr. Faheem Hasan Shahed, my Supervisor and Coordinator of TESOL program, Brac Institute of Languages (BIL), Brac University as well as Dr. Sayeedur Rahman (former Academic Coordinator of TESOL program). I would like to owe my sincere gratitude to both of them the mentors and guides without whose continuous help I could have never been able to complete the study. They had been amazingly supportive and sympathetic mentors throughout my research journey and continuously inspired me to believe in my research ideas. I would always be grateful to them for being available with their advice, support and suggestions.

This project would have not been possible without the guidance and direct support of my better half Adiba U Shing Nu Rahman, BSS (Hons.), MSS (University of Chittagong) – a permanent resident of Bandarban and a member of ethnic Marma community. As we adopted an interpretivist approach using ethnographic case studies to gather necessary information, her support and assistance played a vitally important role. Without her valuable assistance, neither could I have got access to the people I needed to interact, nor could I have followed their linguistic trend so correctly and authentically. The limitation of my little knowledge in Marma language in preparing and completing this research work was easily overcome by her active support and participation. I am truly indebted to her.

I express my humble gratitude to Mr. Kya Hla Ching, the then Upazila Chairman, Thanchi Upazila; Mr. Mong Hnoi Ching, Ex-commissioner, Bandarban Municipality; Mr. Mong Prue, Headman, 361 Thaikkhong Mouza, Bolipara; Mr. Mong Yoi Ching, Karbari (Village Chieftain), Naikkhongpara, Bolipara. These gentlemen not only helped me with information related to my research work but also made my journey secured and comfortable. I owe my sincere gratitude and respect to all of them.

My special thanks to Mr. Motaleb, Trader, Bolibazar and Mr. Kajal, Driver, Thanchi, Bandarban. Both of them are equally fluent in Bangla and Marma languages. They not only provided us with logistic supports but also helped us in exploring necessary information regarding the research work.

I would like to acknowledge my gratitude to the villagers of Naikkhongpara and Dakchhoipara, of Bolipara Union; Shoppers and passersby of Bolibazar and Thanchi Bazar of Thanchi Upazila; Madhyampara, Balaghata, Kalaghata and Ujanipara of Bandarban Municipality who took part knowingly and/or unknowingly and allowed me to conduct my research and volunteered in collecting the required data cooperating enthusiastically.

May Allah bless them all!



# Table of Contents

<b>Declaration.....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Approval .....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Ethics Statement.....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>v</b>
<b>Dedication .....</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>Acknowledgement .....</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>Table of Contents .....</b>	<b>ix</b>
<b>List of Figures.....</b>	<b>xiv</b>
<b>List of Acronyms .....</b>	<b>xv</b>
<b>Chapter 1 Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Background and Context of the Study .....	3
1.2 Objectives and Purposes of the Study.....	5
1.3 Research Questions of the Study .....	5
1.4 Rationales for the Focus in the Study .....	5
1.5 Design of the Study.....	5
1.5.1 Method .....	5
1.5.2 Location .....	6
1.5.3 Size.....	9
1.6 Definition of Key Research Terms .....	9
1.6.1Lingua franca .....	9
1.6.2 Verbal repertoire .....	9
1.6.3 Ethnicity.....	9

1.6.4 Language Shift .....	10
1.6.5 Language Maintenance .....	10
1.6.6 Ethnography .....	10
1.6.7 Ethnolinguistic .....	10
1.6.8 Multilingualism.....	10
1.7 Overview of the Thesis .....	11
<b>Chapter 2 Literature Review .....</b>	<b>13</b>
2.1 Ethnicity.....	13
2.2 Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh.....	14
2.2.1 Area and physical features of CHT.....	14
2.2.2 Socio-economic background of CHT .....	14
2.2.3 The Great Migration .....	15
2.2.4 Ethnic Mosaic .....	16
2.2.4.1 The Tribes of the Chittagong Hill Tracts.....	16
2.2.5 Language and Religion .....	17
2.3 Marma.....	17
2.3.1 Population distribution of the tribes of CHT .....	19
2.4 Language Shift (LS) and Language Maintenance (LM).....	20
2.4.1 Consequences of Language Shift (LS) .....	21
2.4.2 Proof of not shifting .....	22
2.5 Resources that contribute to ethnic mother tongue maintenance.....	22
2.6 Almost no published study has focused on behaviors of Marma children .....	24
2.6.1 Textbooks in ethnic languages.....	24
2.6.2 Parent’s attitude towards Bangla .....	25

<b>Chapter 3 Methodology .....</b>	<b>26</b>
2.6.2 Research Design.....	26
2.6.2 Sampling .....	27
2.6.2 Setting .....	27
2.6.2 Instrument .....	27
2.6.2 Procedure .....	27
<b>Chapter 4 Case studies .....</b>	<b>28</b>
4.1 Case Study .....	29
4.1.1 Case Study-1 .....	29
4.1.2 Case Study-2 .....	31
4.1.3 Case Study-3 .....	32
4.1.4 Case Study-4 .....	33
4.1.5 Case Study-5 .....	34
4.1.6 Case Study-6 .....	35
4.1.7 Case Study-7 .....	36
4.1.8 Case Study-8 .....	37
4.1.9 Case Study-9 .....	38
4.1.10 Case Study-10 .....	39
4.1.11Case Study-11 .....	40
4.1.12 Case Study-12 .....	41
4.2 Cases Studied at a glance .....	42
4.3 Graphical presentation of the participant in the cases studied.....	43
<b>Chapter 5 Findings .....</b>	<b>46</b>
5.1 Findings based on Research Question 1 .....	46

5.1.1	Some codes they use from Bangla though they have in Marma language .....	46
5.1.2	Some codes they use from other languages picked through Bangla.....	47
5.1.2.1	English codes they use in their conversations.....	47
5.1.2.2	Arabic codes they use in their conversations.....	47
5.1.2.3	Farsi codes they use in their conversations.....	48
5.1.2.4	Japanese codes they use in their conversations.....	48
5.1.2.5	Codes they pick from Bangla but pronounce in their own way.....	48
5.1.2.6	Some words from Marma used by Bangalis while speaking in Bangla .....	48
5.2	Findings based on Research Question 2 .....	49
5.3	Findings based on Research Question 3 .....	49
5.4	Findings based on Research Question 4 .....	50
5.5	Findings particularly from cases studied .....	50
5.5.1	Findings from case study1 .....	50
5.5.2	Findings from case study2 .....	51
5.5.3	Findings from case study3 .....	51
5.5.4	Findings from case study4 .....	51
5.5.5	Findings from case study5 .....	52
5.5.6	Findings from case study6 .....	52
5.5.7	Findings from case study7 .....	52
5.5.8	Findings from case study8 .....	53
5.5.9	Findings from case study9 .....	53
5.5.10	Findings from case study10 .....	53
5.5.11	Findings from case study11 .....	53
5.5.12	Findings from case study12 .....	54

5.6 All the people living in Bandarban are found multilingual or at least bilingual....	54
5.6.1 Linguistic ability of different ethnic people living in Bandarban.....	54
5.6.1.1 Marma .....	55
5.6.1.2 Bangali .....	55
5.6.1.3 Chakma .....	55
5.6.1.4 Other tribes.....	55
5.7 Marma is a Lingua Franca among the tribes in Bandarban .....	56
5.8 Code mixing.....	56
<b>Chapter 6 Discussion and Conclusion.....</b>	<b>57</b>
6.1 Discussion .....	<b>5Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
6.1.1 Marmas are maintaining their language strictly and successfully .....	<b>5Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
6.1.2 Marmas are gaining Bangla but not losing Marma.....	58
6.1.3 Reading between the lines .....	58
6.1.4 Limitations .....	58
6.2 Conclusion .....	59
<b>References.....</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>Appendix A: The Tribes of the Chittagong Hill Tracts. ....</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>Appendix B: Population distribution of the tribes of CHT.....</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>Appendix C: Genealogical Chart of the Bohmong Dynasty .....</b>	<b>68</b>
<b>Appendix D: A business card mentioning ‘Marma compose’</b>	<b>6Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>

## List of Figures

Figure 1: Map of Bangladesh based on Language.....	2
Figure 2: Map of Chittagong Hill Tracts.....	7
Figure 3: Map of Bandarban.....	8
Figure 4: Gender Orientation of the Participating cases in the Study.....	43
Figure 5: Age group of the Participating cases in the Study.....	44
Figure 6: Settlement of the Participating cases in the Study.....	44
Figure 7: Religious identity of the Participating cases in the Study.....	45
Figure 8: Tendency of the Participating cases in the Study.....	45

## **List of Acronyms**

CHT	Chittagong Hill Tracts
CM	Code Mixing
CS	Code Switching
HQ	Head Quarters
LF	Lingua Franca
LL	Language Loss
LM	Language Maintenance
LS	Language Shift
L1	1 <sup>st</sup> Language
UP	Union Parishad (Union Council)

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

Bangladesh, though widely known as a homogeneous country, is the home of people with distinct diversities in terms of ethnicity, beliefs, cultures, customs and of course languages. 41 languages are spoken in Bangladesh as accounted by Ethnologue. All are living languages. Of these, 36 are indigenous and 5 are non-indigenous. Furthermore, 4 are institutional, 12 are developing, 16 are vigorous, and 9 are in trouble (Ethnologue- languages of the world). A good number of people from Ethnic Minority Groups are living in different parts of the country. They live mainly in North, North- West and South-Eastern districts of Bangladesh (Atlas of Bangladesh [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Atlas\\_of\\_Bangladesh](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Atlas_of_Bangladesh)).

Some of them are living for few centuries whereas the others have migrated from different parts of the Sub-continent and Myanmar in near decades (Haque, 2001. p 50; Chowdhury, 2001. p 82). The process of migration is still on. Various socio-political and economic factors drove them to different parts of Bangladesh. (Haque, 2001, p 50). The people came with their religious beliefs, cultures and heritages and of course languages. As these people are living in a mixed linguistic environment, it is natural that the languages will have certain impact on each other. Having been informed about the wide range of varieties of ethnic minority groups, this research paper intends to follow the trends and inclinations of the languages spoken particularly by Marma people who are living in 3 hill districts of CHT, mainly in Bandarban. Bangla, as the official language and the main medium of academic instruction of the country is very likely to have significant impact on the ethnic people and their languages. The research intends to observe and identify the core impacts among the languages. Whether or not the minority languages, particularly the language/s spoken by Marma people are more inclined to Language Shift (LS) or Language Maintenance (LM) in the background of vast Bangla speaking majority people.



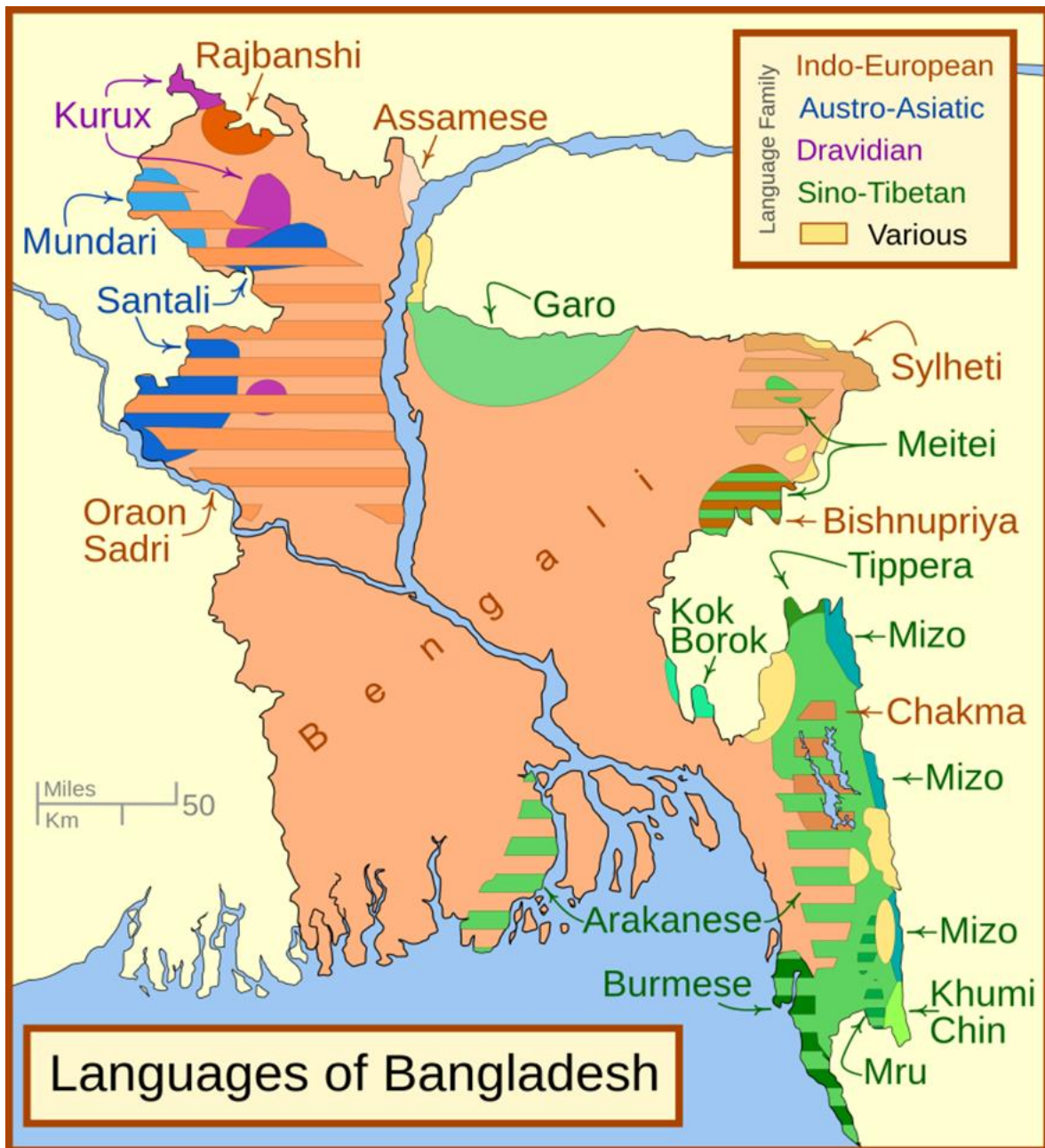


Figure 1: Map of Bangladesh based on Language

(Atlas of Bangladesh) [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Atlas\\_of\\_Bangladesh](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Atlas_of_Bangladesh)

### 1.1 Background and Context of the Study

Bangladesh appeared in the globe of the world as an independent country through a nine month long bloody Liberation War and the victory came on 16 December, 1971. Although it was the people of Bangladesh who had fought and contributed more to establish Pakistan based on ‘two nation theory’ and which came to reality on 14 August, 1947. But immediately

after the establishment of Pakistan, many issues cropped up between the two parts, i.e., the Bangla speaking East and the Urdu dominant West. Apart from political rights and economic disparity, culture and language of the two parts appeared as some decisive issues to be settled down. It was the Urdu speaking leaders who wanted to impose Urdu as the only state language of Pakistan, whereas the majority people's language was Bangla and they demanded to recognize Bangla too as a state language of the country. Conflict arose and consequently ended through a bloody episode. The demand was fulfilled but the wound created a nationalistic spirit based on Bangla and which got a perfect shape on 16 December, 1971. Such is the power of a language. Milam (2010) states:

“.....This combined with the language issue (which embodies national identity), and the form of nationalism that had grown up in Pakistan between 1947 and 1970, to create a political dynamic pointing toward separation of the two wings.” (Bangladesh and Pakistan p 21)

Hence, within the political boundary of independent Bangladesh, almost everybody speaks Bangla, but there are people whose mother tongues are not Bangla. Though they are microscopically minor (1.3%) in number in comparison to the majority Banglaspeaking people (Population census 1991). But unlike Pakistan, Bangladesh pays due attention and importance to these ethnic minority people and their languages and cultures.

There are 13 ethnic groups in CHT, they have their own language but they need to learn alongside Bangla for studying in the school and English as a subject in the Education system. It is an acting of simultaneous bilingualism (Lightbown&Spada, 2006, p.25) where they learn two languages at a time, both are for academic learning and success. Therefore, challenges of two languages come in front of them in their school life.

In this aforesaid context, we spotted light on the Marma people and their language which belong to Sino-Tibetan language family.

Like most of the ethnic minority people, Marma are living in different various zones of the country but unlike others, they are more or less equally present in all three hill districts i.e. Rangamati, Bandarban and Khagrachhari; although their density is highest in Bandarban district and they are unique in many ways.

- Bandarban is the home of as many as eleven ethnic minority groups ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tribal\\_people\\_in\\_Chittagong\\_Hill\\_Tracts](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tribal_people_in_Chittagong_Hill_Tracts)), though the Unrepresented Nations & Peoples Organization- UNPO claims that over 40 ethnic groups are unrecognized in recent census. (Chittagong Hill Tracts: Over 40 Ethnic Groups Unrecognized in Census Published by the Indigenous Portal on Feb 28, 2011 (<http://unpo.org/article/12323>))
- Unlike Bangla, most of the languages in Bandarban including Marma belong to Sino-Tibetan language family. Unlike Bangali people, ethnic minority people in Bandarban are Mongoloid. They practice different cultures, norms and values which are reflected in their languages.
- Geographically too, they are attached with hills unlike most of the plain-lands of Bangladesh.

Chittagong Hill Tracts, about one tenth the area of Bangladesh with so many languages where Bangla, more specifically the Chittagonian dialect is the Lingua Franca (LF) bears due importance to be studied in proper manner.

## **1.2 Objectives and Purposes of the Study**

Language is an important indicator and preserver of ethnicity. The maintenance of a language (LM), therefore, is not just a transfer of literacy skills to the next generation. It is rather a matter of transferring and instilling a love and admiration of one's mother tongue. In the era of globalization, people are exposed to several languages and cultures causing many languages extinct. The study aimed at examining the tendency and nature of Marma language to be extinct, to shift or maintain.

## **1.3 Research Questions of the Study**

1. Do the ethnic minority Marma people frequently use Bangla and/or Chittagonian codes while speaking in their mother tongue within their own community?

2. Do they use only Bangla and/or Chittagonian dialect while speaking within their own community?
3. Do the younger generations tend to use Bangla more comfortably than their mother tongue Marma while speaking within their families or communities?
4. Does their competency in Bangla language affect their social status?

## **1.4 Rationales for the Focus in the Study**

The study is expected to make a contribution to knowledge in various ways. It aims at increasing our understanding of the sociolinguistic aspects to address the challenges and realities the people may face. It aims to further our understanding of language shift or maintenance in our own motherland with our own people with different mother tongues.

## **1.5 Design of the study**

### **1.5.1 Method**

Since the study intended to recognize whether Marma language tends to be shifted or maintained; we underwent a qualitative approach: case study, informal interviewing, and observing people in informal settings, following open conversations in public places and so on.

Informal interviews and observations included 3 different generations to track the tendencies of the targeted people. Interviews were informal, and therefore not structured. These interviews took place only for the confirmation of the concepts gathered throughout the process.

### **1.5.2 Location**

The study took place in Bandarban (*Rwada Mro* in Marma language) as the density of Marma people is highest in this district. The study covered not only the municipal area of the district town but also few Upazilas (Sub districts) i.e. Bandarban Sadar and Thanchi Upazilas and remote rural areas like Naikkhongpara, Dakchhoipara and Bolibazar of Bolipara Union; Thanchi bazar of Thanchi Upazila of Bandarban district to have a better understanding over the issue.

# CHITTAGONG HILL TRACTS

Chittagong Hill Tracts Comprises Rangamati, Khagrachari, Bandarban Districts

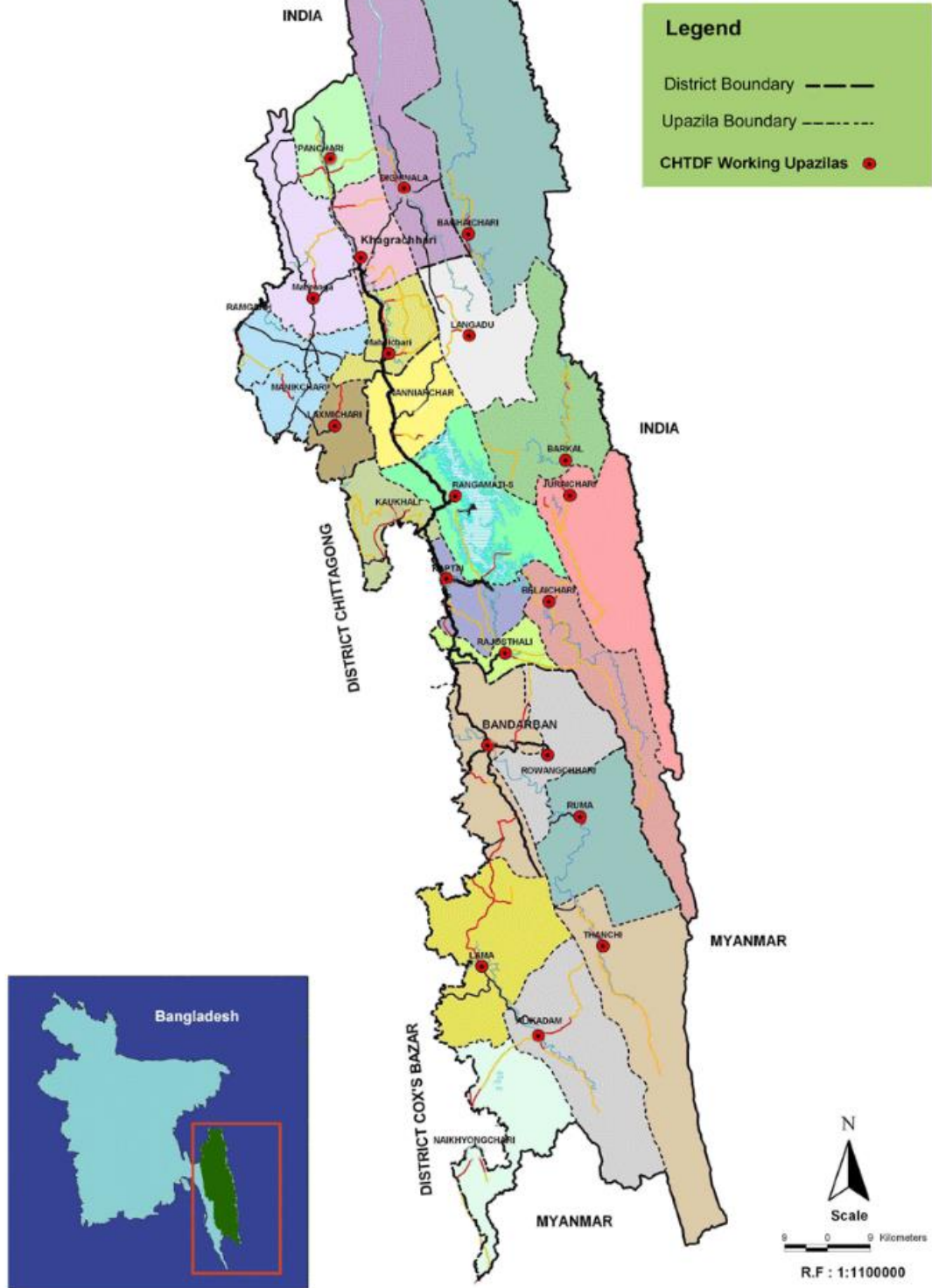


Figure 2: Map of Chittagong Hill Tracts

(Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs: Bangladesh National Portal)

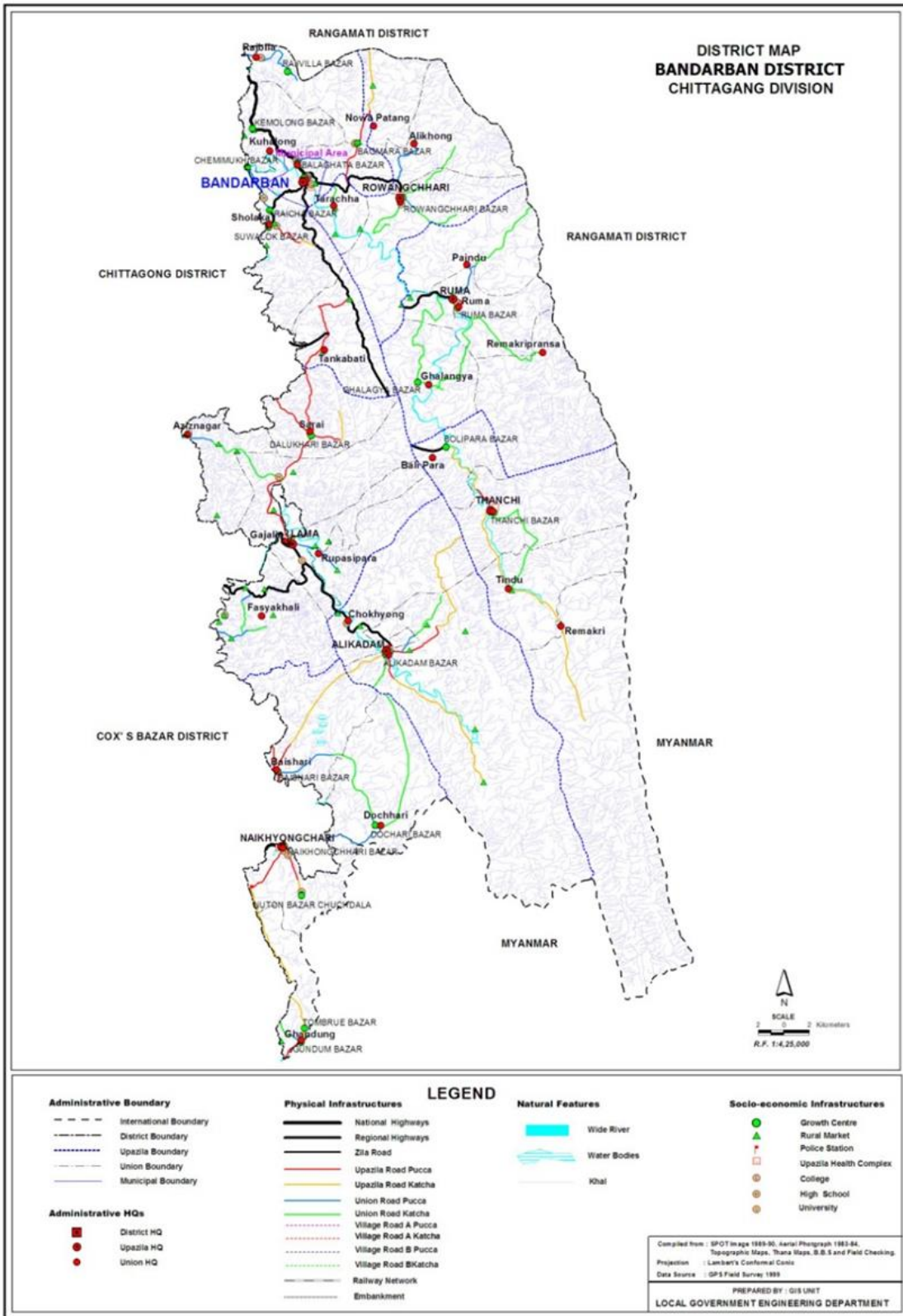


Figure 3: Map of Bandarban District  
 (Local Government Engineering Department)

### **1.5.3 Size**

The study took a sample of twelve people including their families with varied professional backgrounds and locations to ensure the maximum variability.

The study applied multiple methods of data collection over a span of 6-months through in-depth informal interviews and non-participant social gathering observations.

## **1.6 Definitions of Key Research Terms**

Relevant key research terms are defined below for further clarification:

### **1.6.1 Lingua Franca**

A lingua franca—also known as a bridge language, common language, trade language, auxiliary language, vehicular language, or link language—is a language or dialect systematically used to make communication possible between people who do not share a native language or dialect, particularly when it is a third language that is distinct from both of the speakers' native languages.

### **1.6.2 Verbal Repertoire**

The linguistic repertoire of one individual speaker is determined by the language varieties that he or she knows and uses within his or her speech community (active and passive knowledge). A speaker's verbal repertoire defines his or her individual communicative competence.

### **1.6.3 Ethnicity**

Ethnicity is termed as the culture of people in a given geographic region, including their language, heritage, religion and customs. To be a member of an ethnic group is to conform to some or all of those practices.

### **1.6.4 Language Shift**

Language shift, also known as language transfer or language replacement or language assimilation, is the process whereby a community of speakers of a language shifts to speaking a completely different language, usually over an extended period of time.

### **1.6.5 Language Maintenance**

Language maintenance denotes the continuing use of a language in the face of competition from a regionally and socially more powerful language.

### **1.6.6 Ethnography**

Ethnography is the scientific description of peoples and cultures with their customs, habits, and mutual differences. Ethnography is the systematic study of people and cultures. It is designed to explore cultural phenomena where the researcher observes society from the point of view of the subject of the study. Ethnography is a means to represent graphically and in writing the culture of a group.

### **1.6.7 Ethnolinguistic**

Ethnolinguistic refers to a field of linguistic that studies the relationship between Languages and culture and the way different ethnic groups perceive the world.

### **1.6.8 Multilingualism**

Multilingualism is the use of more than one language, either by an individual speaker or by a community of speakers. It is believed that multilingual speakers outnumber monolingual speakers in the world's population. More than half of all Europeans claim to speak at least one language other than their mother tongue; but many read and write in one language. Always useful to traders, multilingualism is advantageous for people wanting to participate in globalization and cultural openness. Owing to the ease of access to information facilitated by the Internet, individuals' exposure to multiple languages is becoming increasingly possible. People who speak several languages are also called polyglots.

## **1.7 Overview of the Thesis**

The study consists of six chapters. References and appendices are added at the end:



**Chapter 1-** Introduction: This introductory chapter introduces the background and context in which the research has been conducted. It also explains the objective of the study, location and size, method and rationale and research questions of the study.

**Chapter 2-** Literature Review: A review of previous and recent studies has been examined in this chapter.

**Chapter 3-** Methodology: This Chapter sketches the design of the investigation, mode of data collection, participants and their setups and the way of analyzing data collected to recognize the key results.

**Chapter 4-** Case Studies: This chapter narrates the cases studied closely to have a firsthand experience in a genuine setup for getting the possible answers of the research questions. Each and every case studied was distinct in nature and are lodged in this chapter in a brief manner.

**Chapter 5 –** Findings: This chapter focuses on the major discoveries from all research questions which came through analyzing data found through cases studied, interviewing informally and observing people in informal settings like following open conversations in public places and so on.

**Chapter 6-** Discussion and Conclusion: This chapter deals with the analysis of the collected data. Major findings from the collected data are analyzed in short. This chapter indicates areas of further research and limitations. The current study also includes the references and appendices, which contain formal documents.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

#### **Introduction**

Language means much more than words or the ability to communicate with other individuals. It is the defining force behind national identities and the driving force behind ethnic solidarity. Portes and Rumbaut state: "Through use of the same language, individuals learn to identify each other as members of the same bounded cultural community. Common inflections and a common accent in the same language tightens this sense of 'we-ness' and links it firmly to a common historical past" (2001 p 113). Language shift (LS) therefore, does not lead merely to language loss (LL) rather causes extinction of a linguistic group or a nation. To discuss the issues in depth we need to talk about ethnicity in the context of Chittagong Hill Tracts-CHT; Marma ethnic group, the indicators of language shift or maintenance and to match the factors with the prevailing linguistic situations.

#### **2.1 Ethnicity**

Ethnicity is termed as the culture of people in a given geographic region, including their language, heritage, religion and customs. To be a member of an ethnic group is to conform to some or all of those practices. Glazer and Moynihan (1975:5) suggest that "the steady expansion of the term 'ethnic group' from minority and marginal subgroups at the edges of society-groups expected to assimilate, to disappear, to continue as survivors, exotic or troublesome-to major elements of a society". Talcott Parsons (1975) mentions "the organization of plural persons into distinctive groups ... and solidity and loyalty of individual members to such groups". He defines ethnicity as "diffusely solidary collectivity (ibid, 1975)". According to Anthony Giddens (1994: 252-53) as cited by "ethnicity refers to cultural practices and outlooks that distinguish a given community of people. Members of ethnic groups see themselves as culturally distinct from other groupings in a society, and are seen by those others to be so". Different language, history or ancestry (real or imagined), religion, caste and styles of dress or adornment, are usually considered as the basic characteristics of an ethnic group.

Hence, we focus on ethnic minority groups who live in CHT areas of Bangladesh and shed light specifically on Marmas.

## **2.2 Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh**

The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), comprising three hill districts of Rangamati, Khagrachhari and Bandarban, is geographically an isolated region of Bangladesh and homes as many as 13 ethnic minority groups along with Plain lander Bangalis.

### **2.2.1 Area and physical features of CHT**

CHT It is surrounded by the Indian state of Tripura in the north, Mizoram and Lushai Hills in the east, Chittagong district in the west and Myanmar in the south. With 13,181 square kilometres of surface area, the Hill Tracts constitutes 10% of the total area of Bangladesh. The area comprises seven main valleys formed by the Feni, Karnafuli, Chengi, Myani, Kassalong, Sangu and Matamuhuri rivers and their tributaries. Full of hills, ravines and cliffs covered with dense vegetation, the area is in sharp contrast to the rest of the country, which is mostly a plain of alluvial soil. Haque (2001; p 47)

### **2.2.2 Socio-economic background of CHT**

The inhabitants of the CHT are of Sino-Tibetan descent belonging to the Mongolian group and closely resemble the people of north-east India, Myanmar and Thailand rather than the people of the vast alluvial plains of Bangladesh. They are generally wheat coloured, sometimes brownish in complexion and have straight black hair and strongly build. Unlike the Mongoloids, they possess straight noses. Their cheek bones are not very prominent and eyes are not so narrow. (Haque, 2001; p 49-50)

Ninety per cent of the people in the hill tracts are dependent upon subsistent agriculture. The majority of them are involved with shifting cultivation, which is locally known as *jhum* cultivation. The process is to clear and burn the surface vegetation before planting mixed crops i.e. rice, millet, sesame, maize, vegetable and cotton. The mixed nature of cropping ensures a steady supply of food throughout the year as stated by Haque, 2001; p. 53.

### **2.2.3 The Great Migration**

The earliest people to move into the Hill Tracts were the Kuki group- that is Lushai, Pankhu, Mro, Kyang, Khumi and Bawms. A second migration was made by the Tripura group formed by Murung and Tripura. The last group was of Arakan origin: Ryang, Chakma and Marma. (Haque, 2001; p 50)

By the end of the eighteenth century, as a result of Burmese invasions, two-thirds of the population of Arakan fled to the Chittagong Hill Tracts. The hills were originally occupied by the Kuki group. Comparatively the Chakmas and Marmas came in recent times. As Haque states (2001, p 50):

“The Chakmas were ousted by the Marmas from Arakan and entered into the Chittagong Hills. The Kuki tribes yielded to the Chakmas and went to the northeast. The Chakmas finally settled in the central and north-eastern parts of the hills while their former territory was occupied by the Marmas, who also had their origin in Arakan.”

### **2.2.4 Ethnic Mosaic**

CHT though comprises only one tenth the total land surface of the country but is very colourful not only because of its flora and fauna but also for the people with diverse ethnicity. The region contains a mixed population of different ethnic and linguistic groups. About half of the total population belongs to different mongoloid ethnic groups and the rest are mainstream Bangla speaking plain landers. As Chowdhury (2001, p 82) states:

“All the tribal or ethnic groups of the CHT are descendants of people who had migrated to the region from different hilly areas of Myanmar or hilly provinces of north-east India in the past. The CHT is at present inhabited by 13 tribal or ethnic groups.”

### 2.2.4.1 The Tribes of Chittagong Hill Tracts

Sl. #	Main Name	Alternative Name	Groups
1	Chakma	Thek, Tui-thek	Arakanese
2	Marma	Magh, Mogh, Maramgri	Bhyya
3	Tripura	Tipra	Tripura
4	Tanchangya		
5	Riang		
6	Muring	Murang, Mrung	
7	Lushai		Kuki
8	Pankhu	Panko, Pankho, Pakhin	
9	Bawm	Bonjugi, Bom, Banjogi	Mizo
10	Chak		
11	Khumia	Kumi	
12	Mro	Mrung, Mru	
13	Kyang	Khayengs, Khanegas, Sho, Khuan	

Source: M.R. Shelley (ed.), *The Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh: 'The Untold Story'*

(Dhaka: Centre for Development Research, 1992), pp 44-45

### 2.2.5 Language and Religion

Each tribe living in CHT speaks its own language. The Chakmas speak a mixed language of Bangla (Chittagonian dialect), Pali and Sanskrit written in the corrupt Burmese script. They are nominally Buddhists and adhere to 'Theravada' form of Buddhism practiced in Arakan and other parts of Myanmar and have Hindu and Buddhist personal names. Marmas are also Buddhists and speak Arakanese, a Burmese dialect. The Tripuras are mostly Hindus though a large portion of them have converted to Christianity in recent decades and speak a Tibeto-Burmese language without a script. The rest of the tribal groups speak a mixed language of

Assamese and Burmese origin. Among them, the Lushais, Pankhus and Bawms are Christians and the rest are animists. (Haque, 2001; p. 51). By dint of Continuous Missionary activities since the CHT was ceded to the British East India Company, a number of ethnic groups have lost their religious beliefs partly or fully and converted to Christianity. And the process has multiplied many folds in recent decades.

### **2.3. Marma**

The Marmas are the 2nd largest ethnic minority group of CHT, Bangladesh. The 1991 Census puts the total number of Marma in CHT as 1,42,334. They have been Theravadan Buddhists, like the Burmese, Thai, and Sri Lankan, for many centuries. The Marma in the southern CHT, including all of Bandarban, traditionally owe loyalty to the Bohmong Chief-- *Bohmongri*, who traces his lineage from Burmese generals (Prue, U Tun.1994 as in *Poingjra*; p 28 and Appendix-1)

The Marmas have their own script and speak a language which is almost identical to that of the Rakhine or Rakhaing of Cox's Bazar and Patuakhali districts in Bangladesh and Arakan state in Myanmar. Lexical similarity among Rakhain and Marma varieties in both Myanmar and Bangladesh is over 85 per cent and 91 per cent with standard Burmese (<https://www.ethnologue.com/language/rki>).

The Marma language is soft and poetic and even people who do not understand Marma love to hear Marma songs. The Marma started out with a disadvantage with the medium of instruction in schools being in the Bangla language. Introduction of primary education in the Marma language was believed to be a necessary step for the progress of education among the Marma. Textbooks up to class three have already been printed in major ethnic languages including Marma and are distributed among the students since 2017 (UNPO February 27, 2019; *CHT: Introduction of Textbooks in Indigenous Languages Reduces School Dropouts in the Region*).

Pre-primary classes in Marma language has been in action for few years under the umbrella of 'Para School' where Marma teachers- especially lady teachers are teaching them in their own settlements using adequate teaching aids in a joyful manner. Since the classes are full of activities and conducted in their own language, the preliminary school-phobia is eliminated

which makes them more confident than before in formal primary school setup. They have a beautiful language which deserves official recognition.

The Marmas are great lovers of music and drama. Before the advent of cinema and television, throngs of Marma youth in their best attire would pass the better part of a night watching folk dances and operatic performances. The Marmas are very fond of fairs. They have the particular knack of converting even their religious festivals into occasions of fun and gaiety. Traditionally, both men and women are fond of smoking pipes and cigars, all locally made. Rice beer or distilled rice spirits are very popular among the men. Among the Marma, there are both Swidden agriculturists and sedentary rice farmers. Many Marma are traders, service-people and professionals such as doctors, engineers, etc.<sup>1</sup>

Although The Marmas are the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest ethnic Minority group in CHT but are distributed all over the 3 districts. The density of Marma people is highest in Bandarban, but 2 out of 3 Circle Chiefs (Rajas) are from Marma community. It can be mentioned that CHT is divided into 3 Circles: 1. Mong Circle in Khagrachhari

2. Chakma Circle in Rangamati and

3. Boh Mong Circle in Bandarban

Circle Chiefs of Mong Circle and Boh Mong Circle are headed by Marma Chiefs.

### **2.3.1 Population distribution of the tribes of CHT (population Census of 1991)**

Name of tribe	Rangamati	Bandarban	Khagrachhari	Total
Bawm	6,429	549		6,978
Chak	1,681	319		2,000
Chakma	4,163	1,57,385	77,869	2,39,417

---

<sup>1</sup> (Source: Tribal Peoples Development Plan (May 2017); Second Rural Transport Improvement Project (RTIP-II) Page-9, Local Government Engineering Department)

Khumi	1,150	91		1,241
Khyang	1,425	525		1,950
Lushai	226	436		662
Marma	59,288	40,868	42,178	1,42,334
Mro/Muro		126		126
Murang	21,963	38	40	22,041
Pankhu	99	3,128		3,227
Rakhain		70		70
Tanchangya	5,493	1,3718		19,211
Tripura	8187	5865	47077	61,129
Santal			253	253
Others	229	174	102	505
Total	1,10,333	2,23,292	1,67,519	5,01,144

*Source: Population Census of 1991, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics*

## **2.4. Language Shift (LS) and Language Maintenance (LM)**

Language shift refers to “the gradual displacement of one language by another in the lives of the community members” manifested as loss in number of speakers, level of proficiency, or range of functional use of the language." (Hornberger. 2010)

Patrick Heinrich (2015) opines:

In the most general terms, language shift denotes changing collective language choices as a result of the unsettling of language ecologies due to transformations of the political, economic and social ecology of their communities. Since language shift is the effect of one language becoming preferred to another one, language shift inevitably involves two languages, the retreating and the replacing language. (Heinrich, P. 2015 p 613)

The contrasting term has traditionally been language maintenance, which denotes the continuing use of a language in the face of competition from a regionally and socially more powerful or numerically stronger language. (Hornberger. 2010)



Lukas D. Tsitsipis (2004) narrates:

...we consider the language or languages of a community as undergoing shift when the codes under scrutiny are being either progressively or more suddenly replaced by other languages in speakers' repertoires, with structural consequences for the receding codes, and sociocultural repercussions for the communities involved. Conscious efforts centered around various attempts to reverse the shift and retain or regain the structural and functional integrity of a threatened language fall within the social dynamic that is called language maintenance. Shift and maintenance are two poles in a complex dialectic since any social or intellectual movement voicing an advocacy for maintenance would be meaningless without the existence of historical contingencies that threaten to push languages in the direction of shift.

So, language maintenance (LM) denotes the continuing use of a language in the face of competition from a regionally and socially more powerful language.

#### **2.4.1 Consequences of Language Shift (LS)**

If language maintenance does not occur, there can be several results. One is language death; speakers become bilingual, younger speakers become dominant in another language, and the language is said to die. The speakers or the community does not die; of course, they just become a subset of speakers of another language. The end result is language shift for the population, and if the language isn't spoken elsewhere, it dies. (Schiffman 1998)

#### **2.4.2 Proof of not shifting**

In the context of English speaking American Societies, by drawing on CILS data (Alba 2004; Portes and Hao 1998; Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Portes and Schauffler 1994), and examining the linguistic adaptation among the children of immigrants, researchers have come up with a list of common conclusions.

Although bilingualism is common among second-generation children: knowledge of English is near universal among the second generation; the use and preference for English increases overtime; as use and preference for English increases, a

simultaneous loss of fluency in parental language also occurs; third and higher generations will be predominantly English monolinguals; and social, familial, and other contextual factors play an important role in determining the immigrant children's bilingual fluency and language maintenance.

Although the context of USA and that of Bangladesh, more specifically CHT, is totally different and so is about the immigrants in USA and the ethnic people of Bangladesh; but the indicators mentioned above may function as a checklist by replacing English with Bangla and the US immigrants with ethnic minority people of Bangladesh. We can get a guideline from the CILS data since no such research of this kind was conducted in CHT before except a study (Chakma Language: Survival from being extinct in Bangladesh) by Sujana Chakma (2014) of Brac University.

## **2.5 Resources that contribute to ethnic mother tongue maintenance**

Again, by replacing English with Bangla, we may get some hints about the resources that may contribute to ethnic mother tongue maintenance. Fishman (1985a) identifies four community resources that contribute to ethnic mother tongue maintenance:

- (1) Ethnic mother tongue (EMT) press;
- (2) Non-English radio and television broadcasting;
- (3) Non-English EMT schools; and
- (4) Local religious units (LRUs)

Among these resources, local religious units could be extremely important “ethnic mother tongue defenders and maintainers” as they tend to encourage maintenance of traditional values and behaviors. Although these resources and institutions can be important maintainers of language, they cannot do it alone. He states that these institutions:

“... may contribute to language sophistication and even in small part of the total language maintenance effort, but they can do so only if family and community processes are strongly oriented in that very direction and only if, as a result of such an orientation, the sociocultural/interactional boundaries on which language maintenance depends are adequately maintained” (ibid.1985a:68).

In case of Marma people, we find them maintaining their language in all sectors. They are conscious about using their mother tongue Marma within their families and communities. Although they do not have their Radio- television broadcasting facilities but their Youtubers are making programmes in their own mother tongue. Stage performances which include music, drama, folk song, humorous jokes and poem recitation are all staged in their own mother tongue. The anchors or presenters of the programs speak all through in Marma language alone. They have publications too in their mother tongue. Books and periodicals are often published in Marma language. In their local religious units i.e. *Kyangs*, Marma is the only language spoken by both the religious leaders and the devotees.

## **2.6 Almost no published study has focused on the attitudes and behaviors of Marma children**

Qualitative studies on ethnic minority people attitudes and behavior toward language maintenance have been scarce compared to studies on other aspects. Only a few researchers found working with the issues related to Chakmas and their language. Almost no published study has focused on the attitudes and behaviors of Marma children toward learning and preserving their mother tongue. Fortunately, the government's attitude to maintain ethnic languages is quite optimistic.

### **2.6.1 Textbooks in ethnic languages**

Following a government decision in 2017, the National Curriculum and Textbook Board took the long overdue decision to publish primary school textbooks in ethnic languages – mainly Chakma, Marma and Tripura – to facilitate learning in ethnic minority communities.<sup>2</sup>

As a result, the introduction of textbooks in ethnic languages was welcomed as a step in the right direction by all quarters. According to the District Primary Education Office, 1,22,034 ethnic language textbooks have been distributed in Rangamati from 2017, and 723 teachers have been trained to teach in these mother tongues so far.

---

<sup>2</sup>UNPO February 27, 2019; CHT: Introduction of Textbooks in Indigenous Languages Reduces School Dropouts in the Region

Rangamati school teachers Jonaki Tripura and DeepushringLepcha both believe that after the introduction of the textbooks, the rate of dropouts amongst tribal children have fallen significantly. For 2019, a list of 874 teachers has already been submitted to the District Council for more of these training programmes.<sup>3</sup>“Most of my students are happy with the books being in their mother tongue,” shares Shwe Ma Key, a teacher of ‘*Para School*’ at Naikkhongpara “and being able to use the language they speak at home in their daily lives at school as well, not just in speaking but in learning, also gives them the confidence to do better in their exams”, adds Shwe Ma Key.

### **2.6.2 Parent’s attitude towards Bangla**

Despite government’s initiative to introduce teaching in ethnic languages, parents are more conscious teaching Bangla to their children so that they face lesser obstacles with the surroundings and with the majority of the people. Besides Bangla they are also emphasizing on learning English. Although they are using their own languages in everyday purpose in terms of communicating but they are prioritizing most to both Bangla and English (Kamal, Sikder and Nasreen, 2004, p. 9) as mentioned by Chakma, Sujana. (2014).

---

<sup>3</sup>(UNPO February 27, 2019; CHT: Introduction of Textbooks in Indigenous Languages Reduces School Dropouts in the Region)

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

#### **Introduction**

The aim of this research was to identify the tendency of Marma people if they shift from their mother tongue to Bangla- the state language of the country, or they maintain. To do so, the researcher underwent a qualitative method of research, adopted an interpretivist approach, using ethnographic case studies to gather necessary information and generate a rich description on the issues. As case study data may come from a variety of sources, case studies are often, but not necessarily, based on different methods (mixed methods) and, as a consequence, different data sources. (Meyer 2013). Yin (2012: 10) lists the following six common data sources: direct observations, interviews, archival records, documents, participant observation, and physical artifacts. For Translation and Interpreting Studies, additional sources may include source and target texts or transcriptions of authentic discourse (Meyer 1998).

#### **3.1 Research design**

Since we intended to follow the trend of Marma people and the pattern of their speaking habit; we observed them directly in public places i.e. in marketplaces, public transports, playgrounds, restaurants and so on. While studied the cases, we indeed did not study the particular case alone, rather followed the tendency of the whole family – from toddler to the most senior member. Moreover, we asked them questions through informal conversations for further clarifications. We investigated archival records and documents too to support our stance.

#### **3.2 Sampling**

Although we studied 12 cases of varied age groups, but indeed it included their whole family in most cases. The number of people cannot be mentioned specifically, those who were observed directly in public places i.e. public transports, bazaars, play grounds, public meetings and so on.

### **3.3 Setting**

The study took place in Bandarban (*Rwada Mro* in Marma language) as the density of Marma people is highest in this district. The study covered not only the municipal area of the district town but also few Upazilas (Sub districts) i.e. Bandarban Sadar and Thanchi Upazilas and remote rural areas like Naikkhongpara, Dakchhoipara and Bolibazar of Bolipara Union; Thanchi bazar and Tindu of Thanchi Upazila of Bandarban district.

### **3.4 Instrument**

To get the answers of research questions, we visited the areas intensively, took field notes; visited families and stayed with them for few days after creating some rapport with them, asked them questions through informal conversations, talked to senior citizens and mixed (sometimes played) with children.

### **3.5 Procedure**

Cases were studied carefully, which provided us with substantial amount of information. Through asking them questions through informal chit chats, many points were revealed which could not come out in any other way. Again, while observing the people around, they were totally unaware about being observed. We therefore got an actual scenario and beyond. We noted down the points immediately after the observations were over, extracted the answers of our research questions.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Case Studies**

#### **Introduction**

The research followed a qualitative method. We adopted an interpretivist approach, using ethnographic case studies to gather necessary information and generate a rich description on the issues we are concerned in the study. A case study is not a specific method rather a research strategy (Yin 1981). As cited by Meyer (2013):

Case studies investigate properties, actions, attitudes, and social structures of individuals, groups, or institutions by applying one or more methods, such as participant observation, interviews, and analysis of documents (Thomas 2010). Furthermore, case study research is characterized as an approach “that facilitates exploration of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources” (Baxter and Jack 2008: 544).

The philosophical background is a qualitative, constructivist paradigm, based on the claim that reality is socially constructed and can best be understood by exploring the tacit, i.e., experience based, knowledge of individuals. Therefore, immersion and empathy are necessary conditions for case study research (Hammersley and Gomm 2000: 1; Stake 2000: 21; Baxter and Jack 2008: 545).

Case studies do not have to be limited to individual cases. Rather, they may focus on a number of instances of a single case or even on different, though inter-related cases. Furthermore, cases can be studied over time, or in relation to a specific historical moment- i.e., researchers may focus on developmental aspects in longitudinal projects- or they may be interested in the “here and now” of a specific social phenomenon. Case studies aim at exploring a certain phenomenon or issue in depth. This leads researchers to limit the number and size of the cases under investigation. Another limitation is that case study research focuses on naturally occurring data, and therefore control of variables is not a major concern. The generalizability of results and observations is limited, and the primary goal is to develop

an understanding of the case, and not the testing of theory-driven claims. As case study data may come from a variety of sources, case studies are often, but not necessarily, based on different methods (mixed methods) and, as a consequence, different data sources. (Meyer 2013)

Yin (2012: 10) lists the following six common data sources: direct observations, interviews, archival records, documents, participant observation, and physical artifacts. For Translation and Interpreting Studies, additional sources may include source and target texts or transcriptions of authentic discourse (Meyer 1998).

In the light of above mentioned descriptions, I have compiled my case studies as regards informal observation of the respondents' lifestyle and activities. I also got engaged in relevant conversations with them regarding some issues I needed to clarify.

## **4.1 Case Study**

### **4.1.1 Case Study- 1**

Name : Mr. U Sa Ching \*

Occupation : NGO Worker

Age : 29

Area of work : Bandarban

Ethnic identity : Marma

Religious Belief : Buddhism

Mr. U Sa Ching\* had studied till SSC. He hailed from Bolipara- a remote place of Thanchi Upazila. This locality is one of the least densely populated areas of Bangladesh. He was lucky enough to have a school nearby but most of his school teachers were Bangali and the teachers from his community were not considered qualified to him. This was a constraint for him in continuing his study because he had difficulties in understanding Bangla. He got demotivated and didn't continue his study after the SSC examination.

He moved to Bandarban town- HQ of Bandarban Hill District, in search of work. He did few odd jobs before getting opportunity to work for an NGO. He got married and eventually had



two children. After his first child was born, he suffered financially but didn't go back to Bolipara for one reason – he wanted his son to be educated in Bangla and live in a Bangla speaking environment so that the son can live life in the mainstream world. He had to let go of his desire to live with his parents in Thanchi because he wanted to admit his son in a mainstream Bangla School. He understands how important it is to know Bangla to strive in future, particularly in Academics. And his decision proved to be a wise one because his son now speaks fluently in Bangla. He understands and follows the instructions of his Bangali teachers and does not struggle with his study. He is also learning English in School. He communicates in Bangla with his friends, teachers, and neighbours. U Sa Ching\* feels that only because they live in a Bangla speaking environment, his son was able to pick up the language at a very early age. He also feels that living in town gave his son the opportunity to have better teachers which U Sa Ching\* was deprived of.

Although U Sa Ching\* is very passionate about his son's ability to converse in Bangla, he always speaks with them in Marma language. U and his wife speak with the boy in Marma. Marma is the boy's mother tongue. The dream U has for his children to succeed in mainland didn't take away his pride for his tradition, culture or language. He follows his religion; his children are always in touch with the people from their community. U Sa Ching and his wife teach the kids the traditions they have. They make sure that their language is not lost or overshadowed by Bangla. This is because of their concern towards maintenance of their language in their next generation.

#### **4.1.2 Case Study- 2**

Name : Mr. Mong Hnoi Ching\*

Occupation : Farmer

Age : 32

Area of work : Tindu, Thanchi, Bandarban

Ethnic identity : Marma

Religious Belief : Buddhism

Mr. Mong is 32 years old. He is from Tindu of Thanchi Upazila, Bandarban. Mr. Mong is not educated; he never went to school. He lives in one of the farthest and remotest corner of Bangladesh. He is basically a farmer and occasionally a dacoit (Self-confessed). Mong was

caught once while he was involved in a case of robbery and as a result he had to spend a few months in jail but due to lack of strong witnesses got released.

Mong speaks Marma and Murong languages fluently and can manage conversation in little Chittagonian dialect as lingua franca. He does not get to meet people from mainland much. Whoever he gets to meet occasionally, are people from Chittagong with strong Chittagonian dialect. Mong does not have anyone in his family who has received any sort of education. He does not have the opportunity to interact with Standard Bangla speaking people. Even the information about him was collected in Marma and Chittagonian dialect.

Bangla has no impact over Mong's language in this particular case. This can be categorized as Language maintenance though not consciously but because of the situations, circumstances, locations etc.

### **4.1.3 Case Study-3**

Name : Ms. Hla Sing Nue\*  
Occupation : Entrepreneur (Shopkeeper)  
Age : 22  
Area of work : Ujanipara, Bandarban  
Ethnic identity : Marma  
Religious Belief : Buddhism

Ms. Hla Sing Nue\* is an entrepreneur from Bandarban. She hailed from Sittwe, Myanmar and settled at Ujanipara with her in laws through marrying a Marma boy from Bandarban for about 3 years. Her in laws' family are engaged in selling various Burmese products like clothing, dry or processed foods, show-pieces and so on. She managed to collect a National Identity Card (NID) from local authority. Not only that, she is conscious enough to collect a 'Permanent Resident Certificate' from the Chief of Boh Mong Circle (Boh Mong Raja). She also has her documents in favour of her Burmese nationality. In Sittwe (Akyab), she studied in Rakhine Language schools. The language is very close to Marma language. Lexical similarity among Rakhain and Marma varieties in both Myanmar and Bangladesh is over 85 per cent and 91 per cent with standard Burmese (<https://www.ethnologue.com/language/rki>).

In Bandarban, Hla mainly interacts with Marma and other tribal people. But as a shopkeeper in a place like Bandarban town, where majority people are Bangali, she is in exposure of Bangla speaking environment too. Though, in her neighbourhood in Sittwe, a good number of Rohingya people lived who speak a language almost similar to Chittagonian but they spoke the language mainly within their families and communities. Still, the proximity of the two communities and living for centuries made the two languages mutually intelligible at some extent to them. Now, her husband Mr. Shakya Ching\* is teaching her the Bangla Numerals for dealing with the Bangla speaking people. She also is learning to write the numeric signs in Bangla as local vendors and buyers deal with numeric symbols written in Bangla.

In this particular case, we find that, Hla is learning Bangla numeric signs for business purpose only which can be considered as a skill. She also is learning Bangla words to identify the products she is selling. But she is not shifting totally to Bangla. She speaks in Marma- her mother tongue with everybody other than Bangali people. This particular case also shows that the migration into Bangladesh is still on.

#### **4.1.4 Case study-4**

Name : Ms. Domya U\*  
Occupation : Student  
Age : 10  
Area of work : Naikkhongpara, Bolipara, Bandarban  
Ethnic identity : Marma  
Religious Belief : Buddhism

Ms. Domya U\* is studying in Naikkhongpara Government Primary School. She really is lucky as her school is situated just beside her home. She is studying in class four. As a new generation tribal student, she was fortunate enough to attend the '*Para School*' before she got herself enrolled in this school. *Para Schools* are a kind of informal pre-primary schools well equipped with amusing teaching aids and materials. The best thing is this; the medium of instruction in these schools is their own mother tongue. The teacher too was from her own neighborhood (Indeed her own aunt- sister of her father). So, she studied in a fearless environment with a lot of fun. She hardly found a difference between her home and her

School. In primary school too, almost all the teachers are from her community and they teach mainly in their own mother tongue though the textbooks are written in Bangla. But they are happy as they enjoy the opportunity to ask questions in their own mother tongue if any difficulties they face in getting lessons clear. They too realize the necessity of learning Bangla as they have to sit for exams in Bangla and the higher studies in Bangladesh are largely offered in Bangla. Her parents want her to send to Bandarban town for high school education. Most of the teachers there are *Bangali* and the medium of instruction too is Bangla.

Domya U\* speaks Bangla fluently. Moreover, when she does not find an appropriate name or word for something in her own mother tongue, she uses Bangla words- learnt in textbooks to express her expressions. She always speaks in her mother tongue with her family and the people of her community.

#### **4.1.5 Case study-5**

Name : Ms. Sadia Sanjana Mim\*

Occupation : Student

Age : 10

Area of work : Kalaghata, Bandarban

Ethnic identity : Mixed

Religious Belief : Islam

Ms. Sadia Sanjana Mim lives with her parent in an official bungalow within the boundary of Bandarban *Shishu Paribar*, an orphanage run by government where orphan boys from different tribes are living and studying. Her father is a Bangali and mother is a Marma lady. Both her parent are working there as officers. In their residence her mother, aunt and the lady who helps them in their everyday chore speak in Marma language. Her mother speaks in Bangla with them when Sadia's father is present in the conversation as he does not understand Marma much. Otherwise her mother speaks both Bangla and Marma with her children. On the other hand, her father speaks in Bangla with his family members. Sadia studies in Bandarban Cantonment Public School where medium of instruction is Bangla and most of the faculties are Bangali. Her classroom is a mosaic of different ethnic people. Apart

from Bangali and Marma students, there are students from Chakma, Bawm, Tripura, Murong and Chak communities. With her Bangali, Chakma and Tripura classmates she speaks in Bangla including Chittagonian; whereas with Marma and other classmates she speaks both Bangla and Marma. At *Shishu Paribar* playground, she plays with children of her parent's colleagues from different ethnic groups. They speak both Bangla and Marma spontaneously. She indeed speaks both the languages with native like fluency and accuracy. So does her friends and playmates. In this case, Sadia and her friends appear to be multilingual persons. They use Bangla words even while speaking in Marma and vice versa. Sadia is equally fluent in both her mother tongue and father tongue.

#### **4.1.6 Case study-6**

Name : Mr. Mong Sa Nue\*  
Occupation : Retired Govt. Officer  
Age : 68  
Area of work : Balaghata, Bandarban  
Ethnic identity : Marma  
Religious Belief : Buddhism

Mr. Mong Sa Nue\*, a retired officer worked at different parts of the country including CHT. His wife Mrs. Melung Ching\* also retired as a Head teacher of a local school. They live in Balaghata by the river Shangu. Their five storied building is packed with their children and grandchildren. This elderly couple is blessed with 3 sons and 2 daughters. All of them are well-educated, married and settled in Bandarban town (except a daughter). We met them at their Balaghata residence on *Sangrai*- the Marma New year eve. We found all their children including one of their daughters who had been living in Australia. We met the whole family in the same place including a dozen of their grandchildren. With us, they spoke in Bangla but the family always speaks in Marma among themselves. True, that we found them using Bangla and English words while speaking in Marma.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Mong\* speak standard Bangla. In front of us, they talked to their children and grandchildren in Bangla- so that we could understand what they were telling. But the moment they left us, started speaking in their own mother tongue. While in market places they speak Chittagonian with local Bangali traders. Their grandchildren living in Australia

too were found speaking in Marma language but not Bangla. The sibling speaks in English only between themselves but not with others. They are maintaining their language carefully, no matter which part of the globe they live in.

#### **4.1.7 Case study-7**

Name : Ms. U Sain Easter\*  
Occupation : Student  
Age : 20  
Area of work : Madhyam Para, Bandarban  
Ethnic identity : Mixed  
Religious Belief : Christianity

Ms. U Sain Ester\* lives in Madhyam Para with her parent and grandparent. She studies Sociology in the University of Chittagong. Her father is a Marma and mother is a Bawm. Her grandfather Mong Sa Nu Moses\* was one of the first converts among Marma People who got converted into Christianity from Buddhism at young age. Her father David U May Prue\* married a Bawm lady from Laimi Para- a Bawm village, about 60 kilometers from Bandarban town. In their residence in Madhyam Para, everybody speaks in Marma language. Her mother speaks in Bawm language sometimes with them. Since both the languages belong to Sino-Tibetan language family, so are largely mutually intelligible. Her relatives from father's side speak in Marma and those of mother's side speak in Bawm. All the members of her family are quite comfortable with Bangla including Chittagonian dialect.

In Bandarban, she studied in government schools where medium of instruction is Bangla and most of the faculties are Bangali. In her university too, the teachers conduct classes mostly in Bangla. So, she speaks Bangla like native Bangla speakers with little distorted pronunciation. While speaking in Marma, she picks words from Bangla, English and Bawm.

#### **4.1.8 Case study-8**

Name : Ms. Yaing Nue\*  
Occupation : Student

Age : 15

Area of work : Thanchi, Bandarban

Ethnic identity : Marma

Religious Belief : Buddhism

Ms. Yaing Nue\* lives in a village near Thanchi Bazar with her parent and grandparent. The locality is one of the remotest though linked with the local market. Her grandparents settled in this part of Thanchi from Rakhain province of Myanmar. They cannot speak in Bangla except a little Chittagonian to converse with Bangali traders. Her parents can speak fairly well in Chittagonian but not in standard Bangla. She studies in a local high school in class nine. In her village they live mainly with Marma but her village is surrounded by Murong and Bangali settlements. They are free to speak in their own mother tongue- Marma as Murongs too in their locality can speak in Marma. Furthermore, many of her friends from Bangali community can speak in Marma language though their mother tongue is Bangla.

Only in schools, she learns her lessons in Bangla- the medium of instruction. In her school, there are teachers from Bangali, Chakma and Marma communities. All they are good in Bangla. In her early years of schooling, it was a little difficult for her to learn lessons in Bangla, but teachers from her own community made it easy for her. Gradually, she became quite fluent in Bangla. Even, she uses Bangla words while speaking in her mother tongue and not getting an appropriate word or phrase.

#### **4.1.9 Case study-9**

Name : Mr. U Kya Ching\*

Occupation : Medical Doctor

Age : 32

Area of work : Ujanipara, Bandarban

Ethnic identity : Marma

Religious Belief : Buddhism

Mr. U Kya Ching\* lives in Ujanipara, an old settlement of Bandarban town. He is a Medical doctor and works in a project funded by UNDP. They have a big family. His wife and a son

live together in a 4 storied building with his parent and grandparent. His 2 other brothers also live in the same building. Dr. Ching\* and his family speak in Marma at home and with his friends and relatives. With Bangali people, he speaks in Bangla. At office, with colleagues from different nations, he speaks in English. His son U Mong Sing\* is only five years old. U Mong goes to school to attend his Nursery classes which is Run by Bangladesh Army. Naturally, they speak with the boy in their own mother tongue but they do feel the importance of Bangla and English as well. At the very beginning of his schooling, they kept the point in their minds. The boy was found playing with his friends from both Bangali and Marma community.

The most interesting thing we observed was that, they were spontaneously speaking in Bangla and Marma irrespective of their ethnic identity. U Mong\* and his friend Fahim\* from Bangali community were found speaking in both the languages unconsciously while playing and speaking.

#### **4.1.10 Case Study-10**

Name : Mr. Mong May\*  
Occupation : Trainee Monk  
Age : 12  
Area of work : Naikkhongpara, Bandarban  
Ethnic identity : Marma  
Religious Belief : Buddhism

Mr. Mong May\* resides in the Buddhist Temple situated at a corner of his own locality, Naikkhongpara of Bolipara Union under Thanchhi Upazila (sub-district) of Bandarban district. His parent decided to bring him up as a religious scholar in Buddhism who will serve the purposes of their religion. As a part of that, they sent him to the temple to get the lessons on their religious beliefs, cultures and scriptures. There are seven more boys (trainee monks) like him. They are of his same age and locality. They are very good friends of one another. They learn the lessons together, play together, dine together and sleep together. Seldom have they gone for shopping, but very often they go for collecting alms (*swine* in their religious term) at their locality. Otherwise, they are restricted to go out of the temple yard frequently.



The temple area is not so big but spacious enough to play inside. Moreover, their mates from the settlement also join them while playing as the temple is adjacent to their locality. Devotees visit the temple frequently but they are mainly from the adjacent village and all of them are Marma speaking people.

'*Vante*'- the head of the temple teach them some *Pali* – the language related to their religious scriptures. As the '*Vante*' too is from his own community, he teaches them everything in Marma language. Neither the '*Vante*' nor the trainees speak Bangla. They know some Chittagonian in broken form only to communicate with the outsiders or visitors.

#### **4.1.11 Case study-11**

Name : Mr. Ba Shwe Ching\*  
Occupation : Headman  
Age : 61  
Area of work : Dakchhoipara, Bolipara, Bandarban  
Ethnic identity : Marma  
Religious Belief : Buddhism

Mr. Ba Shwe Ching\* lives in Dakchhoipara of Bolipara UP under Thanchhi Upazila. He is appointed as the Headman of his Mouza by the Circle Chief of Boh Mong Circle (Boh Mong Raja). Apart from collecting revenue on behalf of Circle Chief, a Headman also is authorized to settle local issues within his jurisdiction. So, he possesses some limited power to practice over the people of his area. His father too was the Headman of that Mouza.

In his Mouza, there are people from Marma, Chakma, Tripura, Murong, Bawm, Khumi and of course Bangali community.

He went to college but could not complete his study due to his duties and responsibilities at his Mouza as Headman. But he is educated and can communicate in standard Bangla. He takes part in various meetings with different government and non-government agencies on regular basis. He converse in Bangla in meetings where there are participants from Bangali and Chakma communities. Needless to say that most of the government officers in his locality are from Bangali or Chakma communities. While sitting with the people of

communities other than Bangali and Chakma, he speaks in his own mother tongue- Marma. It is found that, ethnic groups other than Marma speak in Marma with headman though they have their own mother tongues. It may be surprising to observe that many from Bangali community too are speaking in Marma fluently who have been living in that area for many decades. Mr. Ba Shwe Ching\* speaks standard Bangla, Chittagonian and his mother tongue- Marma.

#### 4.1.12 Case Study-12

Name : Mrs. Sain Sain\*  
Occupation : Housewife  
Age : 19  
Area of work : Baruartek, Kalaghata, Bandarban  
Ethnic identity : Marma  
Religious Belief : Buddhism

Mrs. Sain Sain\* hailed from Khagrachhari. Her parents live in Mohalchhari of Khagrachhari district. In their neighborhood Marma, Bangali and Chakma are living side by side. She studied in local schools with Bangali, Chakma and other communities. Typically, most of her teachers were Bangali. Some Chakma and Marma teachers also taught her in schools. She always speaks in her mother tongue –Marma within her family and with her relatives and friends. Most of her non-Marma friends speak in Chittagonian- a distant dialect of Bangla. She is also comfortable to speak in Chakma language with Chakma people. In Mohalchhari too, traders are mostly Bangali and she speaks in Bangla with them.

She got married to a Marma boy from his locality and later shifted to Baruartek, an outskirts of Bandarban town. In Bandarban, she lives with a huge Bangla speaking Buddhists (*Baruas*) and Muslims in that locality. Bangali Buddhists recognize themselves as *Baruas*. As these Baruas first settled in that locality, the locality is called Baruartek. Marma and non-Marma population is about fifty-fifty in Baruartek. She does not face any trouble to communicate with the people at her new settlement.

## 4.2 Cases studied at a glance

Sl. #	Name*	Age	Gender	Occupation	Area	Ethnic Identity	Religious Belief	Prone to shift	Prone to maintain
1	Mr. U Sa Ching	26	Male	NGO Worker	Bolipara, Bandarban	Marma	Buddhism	×	√
2	Mr. Mong Noi Ching	34	Male	Farmer	Thanchi, Bandarban	Marma	Buddhism	×	√
3	Ms. Hla Sing Nue	22	Female	Shop keeper	Ujanipara, Bandarban	Marma	Buddhism	×	√
4	Ms. Domya U	10	Female	student	Naikkhongpara, Bolipara, Bandarban	Marma	Buddhism	×	√
5	Ms.Sadia Sanjana Mim	11	Female	student	Kalaghata, Bandarban	Mixed	Islam	×	√
6	Mr. Mong Sa nue	65	Male	Retired Govt. Officer	Balaghata, Bandarban	Marma	Buddhism	×	√
7	Mrs. U Sain Easter	20	Female	student	Madhyam Para,B.ban	Mixed	Christia-nity	×	√
8	Mrs. Yaing Nu	15	Female	Student	Thanchi, Bandarban	Marma	Buddhism	×	√
9	MsUkya Ching	32	Female	Doctor	Ujanipara, Bandarban	Marma	Buddhism	×	√
10	Mr. Mong May	12	Male	Trainee Monk	Naikkhongpara, Bolipara, Bandarban	Marma	Buddhism	×	√
11	Mr. Ba Shwe Ching	61	Male	Head-man	Dakchhoi Para, Bandarban	Marma	Buddhism	×	√
12	Mrs. Sain Sain	19	Female	House wife	Baruartek, Bandarban	Marma	Buddhism	×	√

### 4.3 Graphical presentation of the participants took part in the cases studied

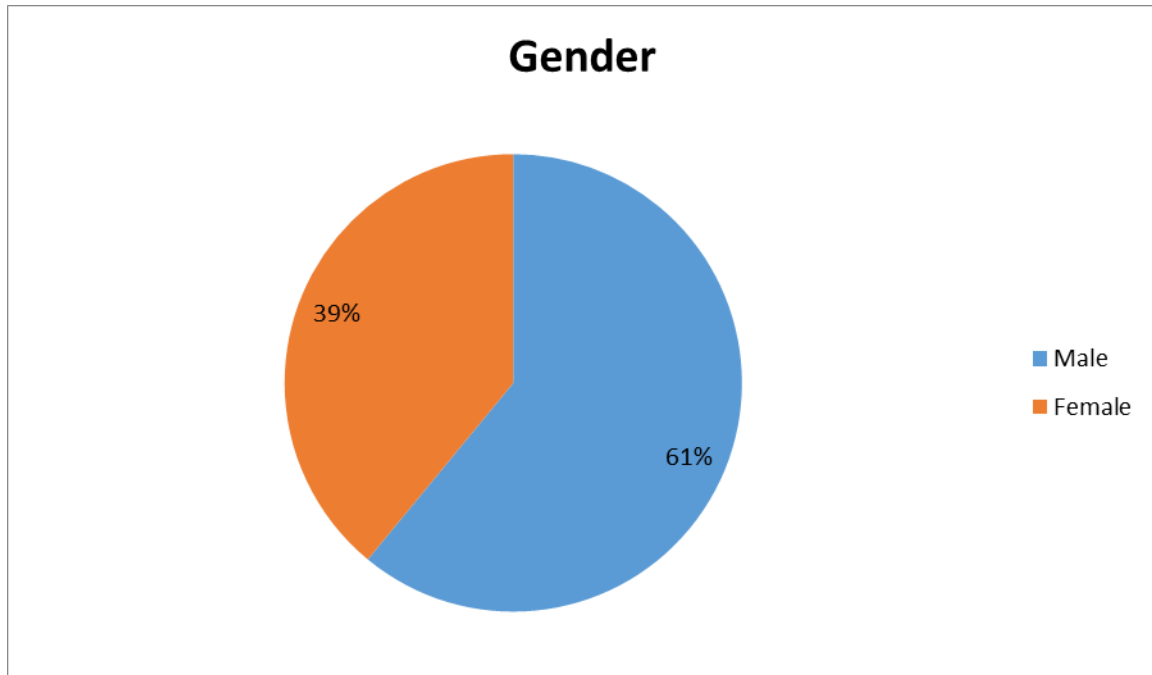


Figure 4: Gender Orientation of the Participating cases in the Study

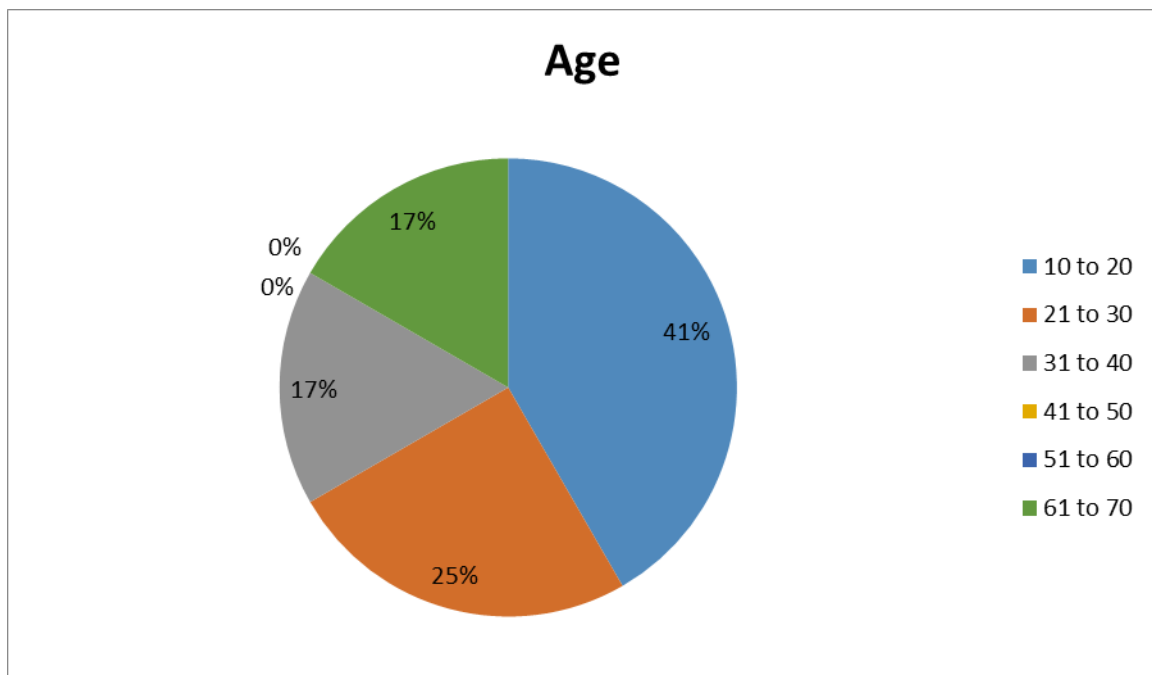
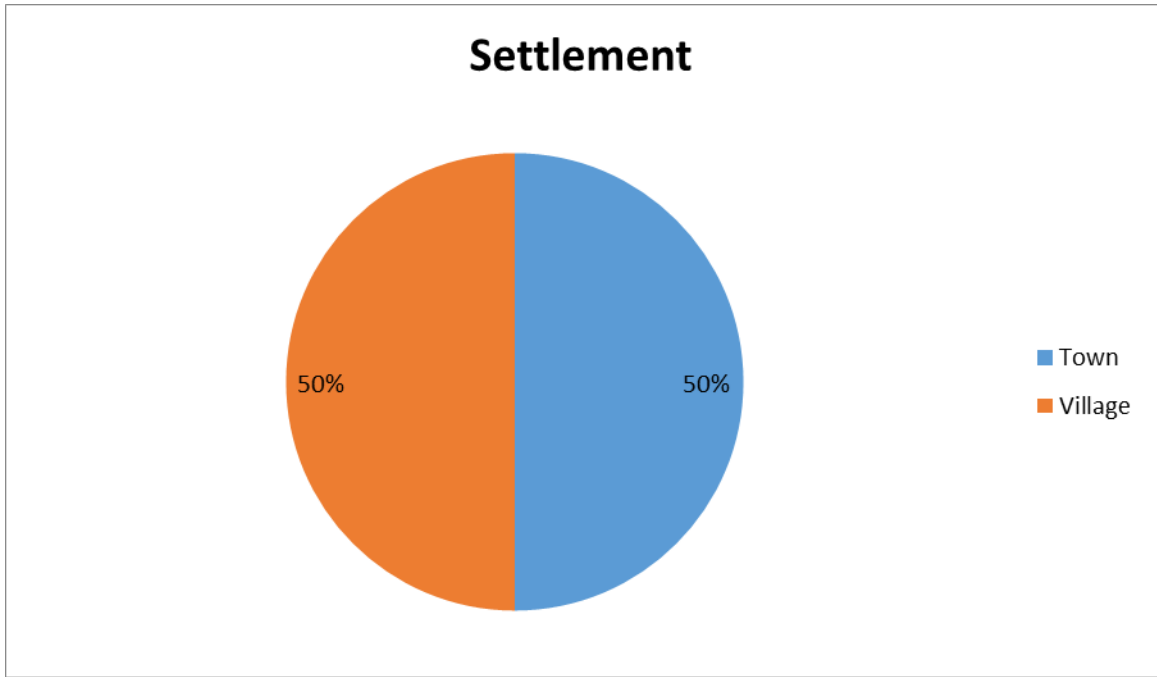
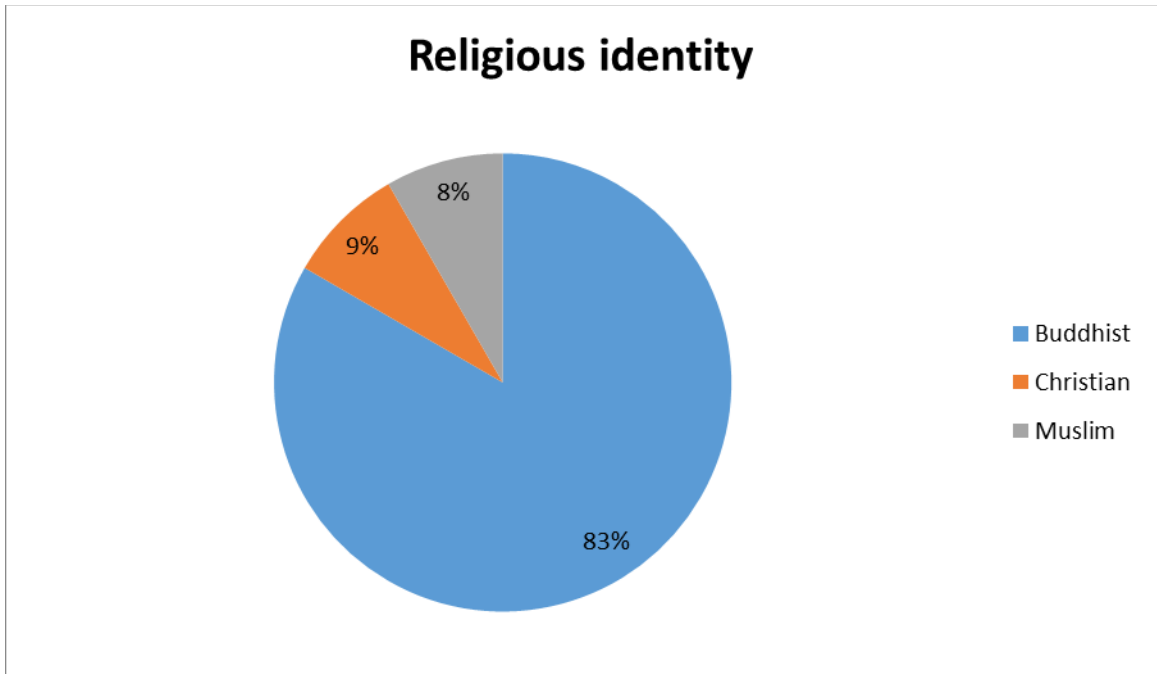


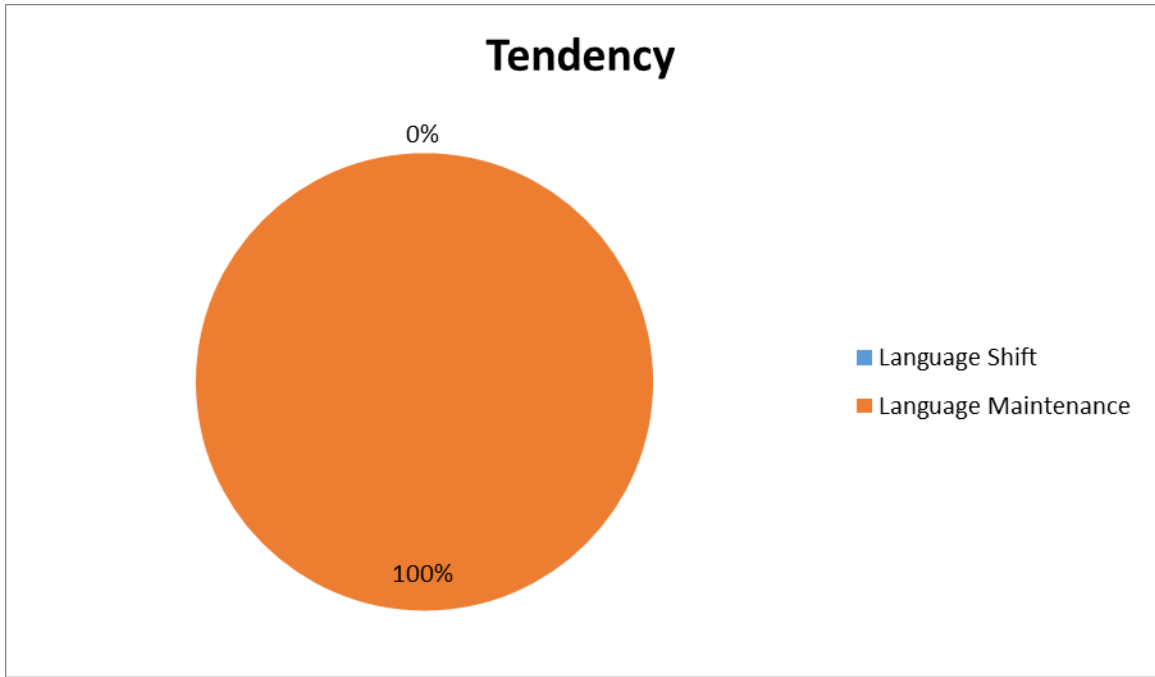
Figure 5: Age group of the Participating cases in the Study



*Figure 6: Settlement of the Participating cases in the Study*



*Figure 7: Religious identity of the Participating cases in the Study*



*Figure 8: Tendency of the Participating cases in the Study*

## Chapter 5

### Findings

#### Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the findings based on the four research questions of the study. It focuses on the major discoveries from all research questions which came through analyzing data found through cases studied, conversing informally and observing people in informal settings.

#### **5.1 Findings based on Research Question 1 (Do the ethnic minority Marma people frequently use Bangla and/or Chittagonian codes while speaking in their mother tongue within their own community?)**

The aim of the research question 1 was to discover if any Bangla or Chittagonian code had been frequently used by Marma people while speaking among them in their own mother tongue. The answer we found was, YES but only a few by the people who are either living in town or educated in Bangla medium schools. They use English codes as well. Some Arabic, Farsi and codes from other languages too they pick from Bangla and or Chittagonian dialects.

##### **5.1.1 Some codes they use from Bangla though they have words in Marma language:**

*Chair* in place of *Kadlain* Marma

*Lebu* (lemon) for *Saifraansih*

*Alu*(potato) for *Mrosih*

*Fan* for *Daiyar*

*Haatpakha*(hand fan) for *Iyar*

*Bodnaa*(a kind of water pot used in toilets) for *Riboo*

*Jwar* (fever) for *Fyaray*

*Gari* for car

*Raja* (King) for *Maang*

*Vante* (head teacher of a temple) for *Fong gree*

*Bagan* (garden) and so on.

### **5.1.2 Some codes they use from other languages picked through Bangla:**

They picked some terms from Bangla but are not Bangla by origin. Some are English, Arabic, Farsi, Japanese etc. but they use these codes as Bangla. Bangali people also use these codes or terms as Bangla not as foreign words.

#### **5.1.2.1 English codes they use in their conversations:**

Light, fan, switch, court, copy, Jug, mug, table, chair, hospital, doctor, nurse, headman, advocate, summon, mutation and so on.

#### **5.1.2.2 Arabic codes they use in their conversations:**

*Adalat* for a place of ensuring justice

*Wakil* for advocate

*Ojon* for weighing

*Gosol* for bathing etc.

#### **5.1.2.3 Farsi codes they use in their conversations:**

*Mouza* for an administrative area under a headman

*Roti* for flat round bread

*Naamjari* for mutation

*Rasta* for road

*Karbari* for village chieftain (*Rwajain Marma*)



*Kagaz* for paper or documents

*Imandar* for trustworthy

#### **5.1.2.4 Japanese code they use in their conversations:**

*Rikshaw*

#### **5.1.2.5 Codes they pick from Bangla but pronounce in their own way:**

*Dator* for doctor

*Hayrma* for headman

*Cherma* for chairman

*Tinga* for Taka

*Glaw* for glass

#### **5.1.2.6 Some words from Marma language used by Bangalis while speaking in Bangla:**

Contrarily, some words from Marma language is used by Bangali people like:

*Swine* for food offered in front of Buddha's statue as offerings

*Kyang* for Buddhist temple

*Pung* for invitation (especially for inviting Buddhist religious leaders)

*Bohmong Gree* for Circle chief of Bohmong Circle and so on.

## **5.2 Findings based on Research Question 2 (Do they use only Bangla and/or Chittagonian dialect while speaking within their own community?)**

The intention of the research question 2 was to discover if the ethnic Marma people at all had been speaking only Bangla or Chittagonian while speaking among themselves in their own community.

The answer we found was NO. Other than quoting a Bangla dialogue or an official circular, they do not use Bangla at all while speaking in their own community.

### **5.3 Findings based on Research Question 3 (Do the younger generations tend to use Bangla more comfortably than their mother tongue Marma while speaking within their families or communities?)**

The purpose of the research question 3 was to identify whether the younger generations had been inclined to use Bangla more comfortably while speaking in their families or communities. The response was found to be- NO. Except a few codes picked from Bangla, they do not even bother about Bangla. They are comfortable with their own mother tongue- Marma; regardless of their residing in towns or in villages; young or old. Contrarily, they were found speaking in Marma, even in a mixed environment where there are people from other ethnic communities including Bangali. Furthermore, they were found using the names of different places in their own language, other than Bangla. For example: in place of Bandarban- the official name of the district town, they call it *Rwada Mro* in Marma language.

### **5.4 Findings based on Research Question 4 (Does their competency in Bangla language affect their social status?)**

The objective of the research question 4 was to determine whether their competency in Bangla language had been affecting their social status or not. The reply was YES. Since Bangla is the official language and is used in all sectors i.e. administration, legislative, business and commerce, education; the persons who are well-conversant in speaking and writing Bangla enjoy higher status in their societies. We therefore, detected that the ethnic Marma people are sending their children to schools in town where there are more teachers and students from Bangali community for better exposure in the language. Even after the initiative taken by the government to introduce primary education for ethnic minority communities in their mother tongues, parents are interested to send their children in mainstream Bangla medium schools.

## **5.5 Findings from the cases studied**

Through case studies, we revealed some important points which helped us looking into the issues in a wider perspective.

### **5.5.1 Findings from case study 1**

In case study 1, we found Mr. U Sa Ching\* (29) struggled during his schooldays for lack of Bangla competency and rented a house in Bandarban town for the sake of his children's education. He realizes the importance of Bangla for better education and better living; at the same time, he is aware of his own language and culture. Very often they visit their social and religious gatherings where they speak only in Marma.

The whole family speaks Marma, Bangla in standard form and Chittagonian dialect.

### **5.5.2 Findings from case study 2**

Mr. Mong Hnoi Ching\* (32) in case study 2, lives in a secluded, distant location from Bangali settlements and is completely unable to speak in Bangla. He speaks mainly in Marma and Murung languages. His Chittagonian too is in broken form. He can easily lead his life without speaking Bangla at his locality.

### **5.5.3 Findings from case study 3**

In case study 3, Ms. Hla Sing Nue\* (22) who was migrated from Myanmar in recent years is a shop keeper in Bandarban town. She speaks mainly in her mother tongue Marma. Her knowledge in Rohingya language which is close to Chittagonian dialect enables her to communicate with local Bangali people. But she needed to learn Bangla numeric symbols for better communication.

Ms. Hla Sing Nue\* migrated to Bandarban (Bangladesh) from Arakan (Myanmar) without any legal documents but unlike Rohingyas she did not face any trouble to get her Bangladeshi NID. Not only that, she acquired her Permanent Residency Certificate from the office of

Bohmong Gree- the Chief of Bohmong Circle. Needless to say that, all the Marma people migrated to Bangladesh in the same way; earlier or later.

#### **5.5.4 Findings from case study 4**

Although Ms. Domya U\* (10) lives in a remote village but was fortunate enough to get her Pre-primary education in *Para School* in her own language. Later she got enrolled in Government Primary School in her own settlement where she came in exposure with Bangla speaking teachers. Eventually, she was introduced with Bangla language; both in written and verbal form. She along with her parent realizes the importance of Bangla; at the same time they are restrictive about their own mother tongue.

#### **5.5.5 Findings from case study 5**

In case study 5, we observe Ms. Sadia Sanjana Mim\* (10) with mixed ethnicity, whose father is a Bangali and mother is a Marma lives in a mixed environment speaks both in Bangla and Marma with native like fluency and accuracy. Her friends too in school and playgrounds speak both the languages spontaneously.

#### **5.5.6 Findings from case study 6**

Mr. Mong Sa Nue\* (68), a well-educated retired person, served in different parts of the country as a government officer. During his tenure in office, he lived in different parts of the country along with his family. His children studied in government schools and colleges with Bangali students. Naturally, they are native like competent in Bangla; But, in case study 6, we find them speaking in Marma in their family. Even their grand children living in Australia speak Marma with their family members and community people without any flaw. So deeply they maintain their language.

#### **5.5.7 Findings from case study 7**

Ms. U Sain Easter\* (20), a university student with mixed ethnic background (Marma and Bawm) is found speaking Marma with her parents and community people. Her Bangla too is

very lucid and standard. She mixes with her relatives both from Marma and Bawm ethnic community as well as with Bangali friends and neighbours without any difficulty.

### **5.5.8 Findings from case study 8**

Ms. Yaing Nue\* (15), in case study 8, was found speaking in Marma with her friends irrespective of ethnicity. It was surprising to see Bangali children too along with Murong boys (her classmates) speaking in Marma fluently. Yaing Nue\* speaks standard Bangla but only when in need.

**5.5.9 Findings from case study 9** Mr. U Kya Ching\* (32) and his family was observed closely in case study 9. Mr. U Kya, a medical doctor by profession who works in a UN agency in a multi-cultural environment was found speaking in Marma with his family and relatives, in Bangla with Bangali colleagues and friends and in English with foreign colleagues. He realizes the importance of Bangla and English but is aware of his mother tongue to be spoken by his son- U Mong\* (5). U Mong was found speaking in Marma and Bangla with his friend Fahim\* from Bangali community- Fahim too responds in both the languages.

### **5.5.10 Findings from case study 10**

Mr. Mong May\*(12), a trainee monk along with his 7 fellows live and study in a rural Buddhist temple situated at a corner of his own village. All of them are from Marma community including the *Vante*-- their teacher. They study religious scriptures in Pali and speak always in Marma. They don't know how to speak standard Bangla but can barely communicate in Chittagonian. Their life is not troubled even if they don't speak in Chittagonian. Marma is so widely spoken in the marketplaces along with the localities they move around that they find Bangla speaking people as foreigners.

### **5.5.11 Findings from case study 11**

Mr. Ba Shwe Ching\* (61), an educated person and the headman of a distant Mouza was observed for longtime and was found speaking in Marma with almost everybody other than

Bangali and Chakma people. He speaks in Bangla, both in standard form and in Chittagonian dialect with Bangali and Chakma people. It was observed that only Chakmas who settled in that part of Bandarban cannot speak in Marma but most other tribes communicate in Marma language with Ba Shwe Ching\*, the headman. Many Bangali people also were found speaking in Marma with him.

### **5.5.12 Findings from case study 12**

Mrs. Sain Sain\* (19), a Marma housewife, originally from Khagrachhari and settled later in Bandarban speaks Marma, Standard Bangla, Chittagonian and Chakma as well. At her parents' place in Khagrachhari, she lived in a Marma village where almost everybody was from her own community and spoke in Marma. At her in laws place too, Marma is widely spoken everywhere. In case study 12, we find the tendency of Marma people maintaining their language strictly; no matter they are living in which part of the country.

## **5.6 All the people living in Bandarban are found multilingual or at least bilingual**

It is clearly evident that the people living in Bandarban are found multi lingual or at least bilingual irrespective of their ethnicity. Apart from their own languages they speak Bangla and or Chittagonian; some speak in a language of other influential tribe's language too. Bangali people too are prone to adopt skill in an influential tribal language and some are native like fluent in tribal languages.

### **5.6.1 Linguistic ability of different ethnic people living in Bandarban**

#### **5.6.1.1 Marma:**

Marma people in Bandarban always speak in their own mother tongue- Marma within their families and communities irrespective of their age, social status or religious beliefs. They were never found speaking in any other language but Marma within themselves. Other than Marma, they can converse at least in Chittagonian. Many of them, especially educated people

can converse in standard Bangla also. We found many among educated people who can speak in English too.

### **5.6.1.2 Bangali:**

Ethnic Bangali people, the mainstream population of the country living in Bandarban, needless to say speak in Bangla both in Standard and in local Chittagonian dialect. As most of the Bangali people living in Bandarban are from neighboring districts, i.e. Chittagong and Cox's Bazar; and constitutes the biggest part of traders and professionals, the presence of Chittagonian is clearly prominent in all over the region. It was amazing to see Bangali people living in the district for decades (some for centuries) are speaking fluently in Marma language.

### **5.6.1.3 Chakma:**

Chakmas are the largest ethnic minority community of CHT region, but they have settled in this part of CHT, i.e. Bandarban relatively in recent years. Naturally, they speak in Chakma, a language close to Chittagonian. Educated Chakma people speak Standard Bangla too. One should not be surprised to see that none of them were found speaking in Marma.

### **5.6.1.4 Other tribes:**

While observing public places, it was clearly noticeable that the people from other ethnic minorities than Marma (i.e. Murung, Khumi, Chak) speak in Marma too, although they have their own mother tongues and they speak those within their families and communities.

## **5.7 Marma is a Lingua Franca among the tribes in Bandarban**

It has been concluded by the researcher that, apart from Chittagonian Bangla, Marma language also is widely spoken and understood by most of the ethnic communities in Bandarban hill district.

So, we therefore, may consider Marma language a lingua franca in the context of multilingual environment of Bandarban.

## **5.8 Code mixing**

In a multilingual environment like Bandarban, it is natural that some codes from languages (i.e. Bangla, Chittagonian, Marma etc.) spoken in the area may mix. But, it is marked that only a few codes were found mixed and those are mainly related to terms and expressions.



## **Chapter-6**

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

#### **Introduction**

This is perhaps the first ever attempt to address the status of Marma people and their language in a multilingual environment with strong presence of Bangla- the state language and the language of majority people of the country. Only a few studies were visible regarding Chakma, Garo, and Santal communities and their languages but the researcher did not find a single study published on the issues of Marma community, though they constitute the second largest ethnic community in CHT and the only community who are more or less equally present in all over the three districts of CHT (*Population Census of 1991, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics*). Hence, the major issues of Language Shift and Maintenance among Marma community of Bangladesh have been analyzed and some unique points came out through the research.

#### **6.1 Discussion**

##### **6.1.1 Marmas are not shifting rather maintaining their language strictly and successfully**

One cannot talk about languages without talking about their speakers. Languages don't just 'die' abstractly- language death occurs when the last speaker of that language dies. And more and more minority language communities, it seems, are choosing to express themselves instead through a majority language – that is, a language of greater power, prestige, influence and/or communicative reach. Thus, language decline and language death always occur in bilingual or multilingual contexts, in which a majority language comes to replace the range and functions of a minority language. Despite the prevalence of many factors to LS, Marmas are not shifting rather maintaining their language strictly. They value their language as much as they value their ethnic identity.

##### **6.1.2 Marmas are gaining Bangla but not losing Marma**

One point is crystal clear through the study is that; the Marma community recognizes the necessity of learning Bangla, a language of greater power, prestige, influence and communicative reach, but they are equally sincere about their mother tongue- Marma. In familial and social levels, they never compromise about their language.

### **6.1.3 Reading between the lines**

Although Marmas are maintaining their language successfully in verbal form through everyday use, but it was also evident that all the literate ones from the younger generations cannot read or write Marma in written form. Though awareness on the issue is noticeable and most of the printing related farms in Bandarban offer composing texts in Marma language; but the literacy rate in Marma is still quite inadequate. The presence of banners and posters in Marma language is frequently visible, but how many of the Marmas can read them can be another topic of study (most of the Bangla literate Marma children could not read the texts while asked by the researcher). The recent initiatives taken by the government of introducing primary education in their mother tongues using textbooks written in their own languages may contribute improve the situation. But the tragedy is that, most of the Marma teachers too are not capable to read or write in Marma alphabet, let alone teaching those to students.

### **6.1.4 Limitations**

Although the research work was conducted through interpretivist approach with utmost sincerity and dedication, and a Marma- Bangla bilingual assistant from ethnic Marma community was present with the researcher round the clock, it might be more explanatory if was done directly by a Marma. As the Marma language bears only monosyllabic words, it is easier to follow the words including codes from other languages, but still the researcher's knowledge of Marma was not ample enough to conduct such a study.

### **6.1.4 Conclusion**

The gain of a second language is a wonderful thing, but it should not happen at the expense of the loss of one's first language (L1), which connects us to a part of our identity that can't be replaced. Research has shown the possibility of acquiring two or more languages

simultaneously as well as the cognitive benefits of multilingualism. Multiculturalism and multilingualism are achievable, and several countries and even indigenous communities can attest to that (Bolger, P & Zapta, G, 2011). But parents and educators must be well prepared to deal with bilingual students and to recognize and value the importance of maintaining their cultural and language heritage which enriches not only the student, but the school community and the society as a whole. The loss of the L1 costs a great deal to children and their families, but also to the community as a whole and ultimately to the entire nation (ibid). Parents can help their children maintain their L1 and culture at home while, at the same time, incorporate the elements of the new language and culture into their life. They should also consider reading to their children in their L1 from an early age. Literacy skills development in the native language should start early and at home. All this takes strength and it can be challenging, but it is also worth the effort. It is clearly evident that Marmas have not been shifting rather maintaining their language effectively. At the same time, this is also marked that, most of the Marma people cannot read or write Marma scripts. Recent initiatives taken by the government to introduce primary education in ethnic minority peoples' languages may improve the scenario to a great extent. Training teachers from ethnic minority communities is ongoing. We hope this study will offer a range of knowledge to empower the authorities concerned both at national and local government levels as well as parents and teachers to foster a congenial coexistence despite differences among us that we are proud of.

## References

- Alba, Richard. (2004). *Language Assimilation Today: Bilingualism Persists More Than in the Past, but English Still Dominates*. Retrieved from [http://mumford.albany.edu/children/reports/language\\_assimilation/language\\_assimilation\\_brief.pdf](http://mumford.albany.edu/children/reports/language_assimilation/language_assimilation_brief.pdf).
- Bolger, P. & Zapata, G. (2011). Psycholinguistic approaches to language processing in heritage speakers. *Heritage Language Journal*. 8 (1). Retrieved from <https://languagekids.com/why-it-is-important-for-children-to-learn-and-maintain-their-first-or-native-language/>
- Chakma, S. (2014). *Chakma Language: Survival from being extinct in Bangladesh*. Brac University.
- Choudhury, S. (Eds.). (2001). *Chittagong Hill Tracts and environment at a glance in Chittagong Hill Tracts State of Environment* edited by Quamrul Islam Chowdhury Published by Forum of Environmental Journalists of Bangladesh (FEJB), Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF) and UNDP
- Ethnologue- languages of the world (n.d.). Retrieved from: <https://www.ethnologue.com/language/rki>
- Fishman, Joshua. (1985a). *Ethnicity in Action: The Community Resources of Ethnic Language in the United States*. Binghamton, New York: Bilingual Press.
- Giddens A. (1994). *Sociology*, Polity Press, Cambridge, pp. 252-53.
- Giddens, A. (2005). *Modernity and Self-Identity Revisited*. ESRC Identities and Social Action Programme Launch (April 2005, Kings College, Cambridge).
- Glazer, Nathan and Moynihan, Daniel P., (1975). *Ethnicity Theory and Experience*, Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, p.5.

Haque, M. (2001). *Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh: physical environment* edited by Quamrul Islam Chowdhury Published by Forum of Environmental Journalists of Bangladesh (FEJB), Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF) and UNDP

Harold S. (1998). *Language Shift*. Retrieved from

<https://www.sas.upenn.edu/~haroldfs/messeas/maltamil/node2.html>

Heinrich, P. (2015). *Introduction: Language shift in modern nation states in Language shift* (pp 613-627) Universita Ca' Foscari Venezia, London: Routledge

Hornberger, Nancy H. & Sandra, L. M. (2010). *Sociolinguistics and Language Education*. London: St. Nicholas House, 31-34 High Street, Bristol BSI 2AW.

Kamal, M., Sikder, S. & Nasreen, Z. (2004 a). *Feasibility Study of Bilingual education Project for Garo, santal, and Chakma Communities*. Research Development Collective. Dhaka, Bangladesh.

Lightbown, P., Spada, N. M. (2006). Explaining second language learning. In *How languages are learned* (3rd ed., pp. 47-48). Oxford University Press.

Linguistic Repertoire and Communicative Competence – ELLO Retrieved from

[www.ello.uos.de/field.php/.../Linguisticrepertoireandcommunicativecompetence](http://www.ello.uos.de/field.php/.../Linguisticrepertoireandcommunicativecompetence)

Lukas D. T. (1998). *A Linguistic Anthropology of Praxis and Language Shift: Arvanitika (Albanian) and Greek in Contact*, Oxford: Clarendon Press).

Encyclopedia of Life Support Systems (EOLSS) Retrieved from <http://www.eolss.net>

Lukas D. T. (2004). A phenomenological view of Language Shift, *Collegium antropologicum* 28 Suppl 1(p55-62)

Luo, Shioh-Huey and Richard L. Wiseman. (2000). Ethnic Language Maintenance among Chinese Immigrant Children in the United States. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 24:307-324.

May, Stephen (2012) *Language and Minority Rights Ethnicity, Nationalism and the Politics of Language*-Second Edition by Routledge 711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

- Milam, W. B. (2010). *Bangladesh and Pakistan Flirting with Failure in South Asia*. The University Press Limited, Dhaka, Bangladesh
- Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs: Bangladesh National Portal Retrieved from <https://mochta.gov.bd/>
- Moeini M., Maryam, (2014). *Ethnic Language Maintenance: A Case Study of Second-Generation Iranian Americans in the Northeastern States*, CUNY Academic Works. Retrieved from [http://academicworks.cuny.edu/gc\\_etds/258](http://academicworks.cuny.edu/gc_etds/258)
- Octu, B. (2010). Heritage Language Maintenance and Cultural Identity Formation: The Case of a Turkish Saturday School in New York City. *Heritage Language Journal* 7(2):112-137
- Parsons, T. (1975) *Some Theoretical Considerations On the Nature and Trends of Change in Ethnicity*, in Glazer, Nathan and Moynihan, Daniel P., pp. 29-52.
- Population Census of 1991, *Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics*
- Portes, A., Rubén G. R. (2001). *Legacies: the Story of the Immigrant Second Generation*. California: University of California Press.
- Portes, A., Rubén G.R.(2005). *Introduction: The Second Generation and the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study*. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28(6):983-99.
- Portes, A., Lingxin H. (1998). *E Pluribus Unum: Bilingualism and Loss of Language in the Second Generation*. *Sociology of Education* 71(4):269-94.
- Portes, A., Richard S. (1994). *Language and the Second Generation: Bilingualism Yesterday and Today*. *International Migration Review* 28(4):640-61.
- Prue, U T. (1994) *A Brief History of Bohmong Dynasty in Poingjra*, edited by S. A. Prue, Tribal Cultural Institute, Bandarban Hill District ;P 28
- Reyes, A.(2010) *Language and Ethnicity* page 398-NEW PERSPECTIVES ON LANGUAGE AND EDUCATION Series Editor: Professor Viv Edwards Sociolinguistics and Language Education, Edited by Nancy H. Hornberger and Sandra Lee McKay MULTILINGUAL MATTERS Bristol • Buffalo • Toronto

Shelley, M.R.(2001) (ed.), *The Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh: 'The Untold Story'*  
Dhaka: Centre for Development Research, pp 44-45

Sridhar, K. K. (1996). *Societal multilingualism*. In S. L. McKay & N. H. Hornberger (Eds.),  
*Sociolinguistics and language teaching* (pp. 47–70). Cambridge, England: Cambridge  
University Press.

The Indigenous Portal (2011). *Chittagong Hill Tracts: Over 40 Ethnic Groups Unrecognized  
in Census* Published by the Indigenous Portal on Feb 28, 2011 Retrieved from:  
<http://unpo.org/article/12323>

Tribal Peoples Development Plan (2017) *.Second Rural Transport Improvement Project  
(RTIP-II)* Page-9 Local Government Engineering Department

UNPO ( 2019). *CHT: Introduction of Textbooks in Indigenous Languages Reduces School  
Dropouts in the Region*.

Veltman, C. (1983). *Language Shift in the United States*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Wikipedia (n.d.). *Tribal people in Chittagong Hill Tracts*. Retrieved from  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tribal\\_people\\_in\\_Chittagong\\_Hill\\_Tracts](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tribal_people_in_Chittagong_Hill_Tracts)

Wikipedia (n.d.). *Indigenous peoples in Bangladesh*. Retrieved from  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indigenous\\_peoples\\_in\\_Bangladesh](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indigenous_peoples_in_Bangladesh)

Wikipedia (n.d.). *Atlas of Bangladesh*. Retrieved from  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Atlas\\_of\\_Bangladesh](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Atlas_of_Bangladesh)

## Appendix A: The Tribes of the Chittagong Hill Tracts

Sl. #	Main Name	Alternative Name	Groups
1	Chakma	Thek, Tui-thek	Arakanese
2	Marma	Magh, Mogh, Maramgri	Bhyya
3	Tripura	Tipra	Tripura
4	Tanchangya		
5	Riang		
6	Muring	Murang, Mrung	
7	Lushai		Kuki
8	Pankhu	Panko, Pankho, Pakhin	
9	Bawm	Bonjugi, Bom, Banjogi	Mizo
10	Chak		
11	Khumia	Kumi	
12	Mro	Mrung, Mru	
13	Kyang	Khayengs, Khanegas, Sho, Khuan	

*Source: M.R. Shelley (ed.), The Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh: 'The Untold Story' (Dhaka: Centre for Development Research, 1992), pp 44-45*

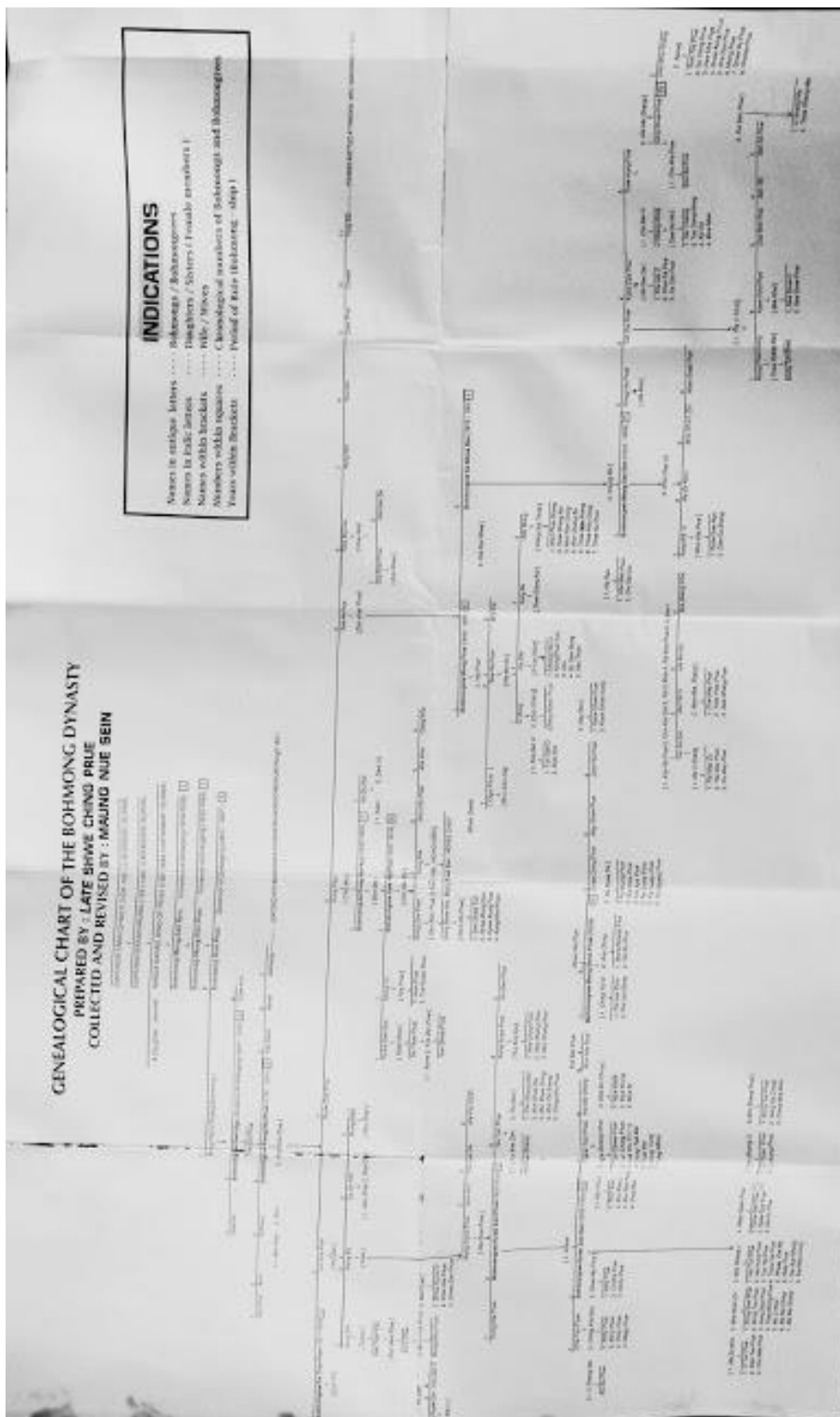


**Appendix B: Population distribution of the tribes of CHT:** (population Census of 1991)

Name of tribe	Rangamati	Bandarban	Khagrachhari	Total
Bawm	6,429	549		6,978
Chak	1,681	319		2,000
Chakma	1,57,385	4,163	77,869	2,39,417
Khumi	1,150	91		1,241
Khyang	1,425	525		1,950
Lushai	226	436		662
Marma	59,288	40,868	42,178	1,42,334
Mro/Muro		126		126
Murang	21,963	38	40	22,041
Pankhu	99	3,128		3,227
Rakhain		70		70
Tanchangya	5,493	1,3718		19,211
Tripura	8187	5865	47077	61,129
Santal			253	253
Others	229	174	102	505
Total	1,10,333	2,23,292	1,67,519	5,01,144

*Source: Population Census of 1991, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics*

# Appendix C: genealogical chart of the Bohmong dynasty)



## Appendix D: A business card mentioning ‘Marma compose’



Created all solution

সার্টিংনু মারমা  
প্রোগ্রামার

**রাদানা কম্পিউটার প্রিন্টার্স**  
**Radana Computer Printers**

ত্রিপুরা শপিং কমপ্লেক্স, ডিসি কোর্টের সামনে,  
বান্দরবান বাজার, বান্দরবান পার্বত্য জেলা।  
মোবাইল :- ০১৮১৩-৫৩৫৫১৮, ০১৫৫৬-৫৩৬২০১



**সেবাসমূহ:**

- ভিজিটিং কার্ড ■ বিয়ের কার্ড
- লিফলেট ■ পোস্টার ■ ব্যানার
- সাইনবোর্ড ■ আইডি কার্ড
- লাইটবক্স ■ স্টীকার ■ ম্যাগাজিন
- শপিং ব্যাগ ■ ক্যাশ মেমো
- ভাউচার ■ মারমা কম্পোজ

সহ ইত্যাদি যাবতীয় প্রিন্টিং  
কাজের অর্ডার নেওয়া হয়।

**bkas**  
০১৮১৩ ৫৩৫৫১৮

E-mail: radanacomputer2000@gmail.com