

**A Trilingual Juxtaposition: A Poststructuralist Approach to Exploring Language and
Identity in the Chakma Community of Bangladesh**

By

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

Brac Institute of Languages
Brac University
February 2023

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It is hereby declared that

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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.
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Abstract

In this dissertation, I have adopted a Poststructuralist approach to explore language and identity among the young members of the Chakma community, an ethnic minority community in Bangladesh, who have exposure to higher education, and hence are at the forefront of the processes of nationalization and globalization. The main objective of the study is to understand the ways Chakma, Bangla and English are perceived in isolation and in relation to one another, and how the multilingual contexts shape the positioning of their identities in a variety of social domains under the force of assimilation through nationalization and globalization. The study has required conducting in-depth interviews of 5 participants with the data thematically analyzed and discussed under the Poststructuralist theoretical framework encompassing Giles and Johnson's (1987) Ethnolinguistic theory, Bhabha's (1990; 1994) notions of cultural hybridity and ambivalence as well the agendas of nationalization in constructing a 'national' identity, Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas' (1996) ideas of linguistic imperialism, linguicide and linguicism. The research has outlined the fluid nature of identity shaped by language, and the socio-cultural entanglements associated with language, and the way identity is constantly under construction and deconstruction as people navigate through different facets of their identities in varying contexts.

Keywords: Language and identity, Chakma community, Linguicism and linguicide, Linguistic imperialism and globalization, nationalization and assimilation

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to anyone and everyone navigating through the struggles of finding their most authentic selves and expressing themselves to live harmoniously with authenticity.

Acknowledgement

I want to express my heartfelt gratitude towards my supervisor, Dr. Qumrul Hasan Chowdhury, for his immeasurable patience, consideration and guidance that has allowed me to complete this dissertation and make it meaningful Alhamdulillah. I am grateful to Hasna ma'am and Harun sir for their immense contribution to my growth as a learner, young professional and a person in general. I would also express my gratitude to Amin sir, Mahub sir, Mimi and Nava ma'am. I am also very thankful to Evita ma'am and Raisul sir for their support in this journey.

I relay my warmest regards to the participants who have taken their precious time out to help me conduct this research and made this possible Alhamdulillah.

My sincerest gratitude remains towards my family: Ammu, Abbu, Borapu, Subha, Spriha and Syfan for always being there for me and making this happen Alhamdulillah. I may have written this myself, but I could never have done any of it without you all.

Arna, no words can express how much you have done for me. Alhamdulillah YOU were there every step of the way, literally even.

Maimuna, thank you for being my soulmate, Tabina, for being my best friend, Prima for being precious and reminding me of my deadlines from Melbourne, Mashaekh for simply being bestie, Pinak for your constant support and becoming a friend from a colleague, Tahsin for choosing to be the person you are and being my friend.

Noman sir, like I always say: Cinderella has her fairy god-mother, I have you.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Research Background and Problem

Language and identity are inevitably intertwined as language is one of our primary forms of expression, and hence serves as one of the mechanisms through which we can demonstrate our identities. This has been the focus of research for quite some time now as researchers delve into the depths of language and identity construction with regards to different planes of identity and with different approaches (Bucholtz & Hall, 2010; Baxter, 2016, Block, 2010; Meads, 1934; Hall, 1992; Reyes, 2010; Lytra, 2016; Sultana, 2012) and still remains an area of interest with a lot more to explore and uncover. One of the most interesting frameworks to explore the issue involves staking a Poststructuralist approach, and I particularly find this interesting as it helps understand identity more holistically and as something that is always in the process of construction and deconstruction, hence never fixed; and this particularly helps us address the fluid nature of identity and the way different horizons of identity overlaps and is negotiated constantly (Hall 1992; Block, 2010; Meads, 1934; Baxter, 2016; Bucholtz & Hall, 2010, Norton, 2010). In terms of exploring different facets of identity, investigating the ways language affects the process of construction and navigation of ethnic identities, often in relation to a different national identity, also remains an interesting area for research (Reyes, 2010; Lytra, 2016; Lammy, 1979; Cargile et al., 1995; Sultana, 2012). This is particularly important because exploring the intertwined and fluid nature of language and identity also helps us understand a number of related real-world problems pertaining to language and ethnic identity in the space of a different national identity such as language loss and shift, linguicism, as well as language planning and policy as Lytra (2016) asserts the importance of these studies through here exploration of the flawed perceptions of ethnicity and how it affects the process of devising and implementing different policies. Moreover, language functioning as a 'social practice' and medium of expression rather than simply being a

linguistic system for communication, makes it vital for the space to express and negotiate a variety of identity positions to exist in a language learning classroom (Norton, 2010). Furthermore, in spaces where different ethnic communities coexist, specially in the presence of a dominant one, language becomes a crucial tool for interaction between out-groups, hence serving the role of both creating and mitigating ethnic conflict (Lamy, 1979; Cargile et al., 1995). In alignment with the problematization of the discourse on language and identity, and my personal interest discussed above, I have taken a Poststructuralist approach to explore language and ethnic identity among the young members of the Chakma community who are exposed to higher education in the country, and hence interacting with the public domain that serves as the facilitator of nationalization and globalization. My purpose is to explore the ways language impacts the process of constructing and deconstructing one's multi-faceted identity especially in terms of a separate ethnic and national identity that the said members of the Chakma community are having to constantly negotiate in the public domain. I want to understand the role of each language (Chakma, Bangla and English) in isolation and in relation to one another, and see how they influence their identities against the backdrop of a public domain that is increasingly pushing them towards nationalization and a globalized environment.

The Chakma community is the largest ethnic and linguistic minority community in Bangladesh and predominantly resides in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) area which holds a number of diverse ethnic communities with different languages, lifestyles and culture (Modal et al., 2009). The Language Movement in 1952 followed by the Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971 often creates a monolingual image of the nation which in reality consists of more than 30 speech communities; and while the government officially recognizes 27 different ethnic communities, many believe there are more (Faquire, 2010; N. Chakma & Maitrot, 2016). However, the state language is Bangla, which is thus used for almost every

purpose relating to official and formal communication as well communication outside of one's ethnic community. English, on the other hand, although not recognized as an official second language, remains significant for access to higher education and wider social domains in this globalized era. This problem arising from the juxtaposition of Bangla and English holding a visible importance over other ethnic languages guides the rationale of this dissertation where I take a Poststructuralist approach to explore the ways language is involved in construction and negotiation of identity among the young members of the Chakma community in an increasingly nationalizing and globalizing public domain.

1.2 Research Questions and Objectives

1.2.1 Research Questions

1. How do the young members of the Chakma community perceive English, Bangla and Chakma language in relation to one another?
2. How do their perceptions and navigations relating these three languages shape their identities in an increasingly nationalizing and globalizing environment?

1.2.2 Research Objectives

1. To understand the ways English, Bangla and Chakma language is perceived individually and in relation to one another by the young members of the Chakma community exposed to higher education in the country.
2. To examine how they negotiate their multilingual identity positions across a diverse range of domains
3. To explore the ways in which the navigation among these three languages shape their identity in an increasingly nationalizing and globalizing environment.

4. To investigate the cultural entanglements associated with Chakma language and community in different public domain shape their identity and impact the demonstration of their identity

1.3 Rationale

I have spent five years of my childhood in Chittagong where I had the opportunity to constantly be in touch with the diverse ethnic cultures in the Chittagong Hill Tracts: the different languages, clothes, accessories and food were particularly a fond part of my memory. However, growing up as we relocated back to Dhaka, I came to realize and observe the blatant absence of the ethnic cultures around my new surroundings, and with time I did gradually forget. It was during my undergraduate freshmen year that I again saw the lack of celebration of ethnic festivals, exposure to ethnic culture and language followed by the incident of one of my Chakma friends unable to attend Biju, one of the most important cultural festivals of the Chakma community, due to final exams being held on the next day. With my undergraduate major in Literature where I focused on comparative literature to explore the diverse narratives of different communities instead of particularly Anglophone ones, I also realized the lack of narratives on my own culture as well as the ethnic cultures in Bangladesh. As a mainstream Bengali person in Bangladesh, it is very easy for me to be unaware of the very different experiences of my peers belonging from a different ethnic community who are the same Bangladeshi as me. The presence of a problem was evident, and this guided me to build on my interests in language and identity to explore the case of the Chakma community.

From the plethora of previous studies conducted, it has been observed that a number of state policies especially pertaining to language and education have facilitated the marginalization of the ethnic communities; and one of its manifestations was observed through studies

reporting a trend showing a higher dropout rate of Chakma students in comparison to Bengali students (B. Chakma, 2010; Dewan, 2010, Mondal et al., 2009). Vijayakumar et al. (2013) investigated the use of native tongue as the medium of instruction and found that students performed better when this was the case. While the very recent introduction of Chakma textbooks in primary education has been a significant step forward, Bangla being the official national language is the medium of instruction for most schools even in the Chittagong Hill Tracts; and as Chakma students ultimately have to use Bangla for pursuing education beyond the primary level, they are faced with a great degree of difficulty (Tripura, 2010). The widespread use of Bangla pushes the member of ethnic minority communities to assimilate more towards Bangla language and culture making it very important to study the complex entanglement of language and ethnic identity in relation to national identity in their everyday lives as cases of psychological unrest between ethnic groups have been observed due to the ascribed superiority of one language over another (Roy, 2010; Afreen, 2020; Awal, 2019).

I have particularly chosen the Chakma community over the other ethnic communities for ease of access as they are the largest ethnic minority community in the nation, and despite that it had been very difficult to get a hold of participants attending university. I chose to work with students attending university as they have more experience of interacting with the public domains in different planes that puts them more at the forefront of nationalization and globalization.

1.4 Dissertation Format

The dissertation has been divided into 5 chapters. The first chapter provides an introduction that has looked at the research background and problem followed by the research questions, objectives and the rationale. The second chapter provides a review of literature that illustrates the theoretical framework used in this dissertation. This is followed by a review of studies on

language and identity, language and ethnic identity, then an overview of the Chakma community and studies on language and the identity of Chakma community. The third chapter discusses the methodology which includes research design, participants and sampling methods, process of data collection, data analysis, obstacles encountered and the ethical considerations. The fourth chapter simultaneously presents the findings and discusses them. The fifth chapter wraps up the dissertation with a conclusion discussion.

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a review of literature surrounding the language and identity in order to explore the topic in depth to offer a more lucid understanding of the issue as explored previously by notable scholars. The chapter looks at the theoretical framework used to analyze and discuss the research findings in this dissertation, and that includes the Poststructuralist approach, Ethnolinguistic theory by Giles and Johnson (1987), and discusses processes of nationalization and assimilation with regards to Bhabha's (1990) ideas of dissemination and Phillipson's (1992) ideas of linguistic imperialism. The chapter further explores previously conducted studies on language identity. This is followed by a review of studies focused on the Chakma community in Bangladesh in order to provide an overview of research conducted. While this contextualized the topic and focus of this research, it also helps identify a gap in the research especially in regards to studies done on the Chakma community, which helps to situate the necessity of this research within the given context.

2.1.1 Language and Identity

Language being our primary medium of expression is inseparable from identity, and this has called for a great degree of research on language and its relationship with constructing

identity. Although this area of research has been given a significant extent of attention for decades, it was quite recently that researchers focused on developing firm theoretical frameworks for exploring identity construction in regards to language (Bucholtz & Hall, 2010; Baxter, 2016, Block, 2010; Meads, 1934). While researchers have developed more well-rounded frameworks to target the specific aspects of identity being explored such as gender, social status, ethnicity, race and others, one of the most important and widely-used frameworks in exploring this area in the realms of Sociolinguistics takes a Poststructuralist approach from which many of the newer frameworks have developed (Block, 2010; Mead, 1934; Bucholtz & Hall, 2010; Baxter, 2016). In this dissertation, the theoretical framework involves using Block's (2010) Poststructuralist narrative analysis and the Ethnolinguistic theory by Giles and Johnson (1987) to explore the ways the Chakma community perceive and position themselves in the multilingual context of Bangladesh, followed by the use of Bhabha's (1990) ideas of nationalization and Phillipson's (1992) ideas of linguistic imperialism to view their identity in the context of the increasing nationalization and assimilation leading towards homogeneity.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 The Poststructuralist Approach

The Poststructuralist approach looks at language and meaning in reference to context and recognizes its varying nature dependent on the varying contexts; and is a response to the structuralist ideas that associated language with fixed meanings and does not account for discursive construction of meaning (Baxter, 2016). Poststructuralism “builds on the insights of structuralism [but] holds all meaning to be fluid rather than universal and predictable” (Barker, 2010, p. 1). With regards to the concerns of constructing cultural identity, Hall (1992) asserts cultural identity to be in a continuous process of constant negotiation as it is

unfixed and being constructed within the bounds of the differences and similarities. Hall (1992) adds that the constant process of switching from one language to the other and the positionality associated with this shift is deeply involved in the process of cultural identity construction, which includes the spheres of race, gender, ethnicity and others. This is particularly important for exploring the ways language is intertwined in the process of negotiating one's cultural identity for members of ethnic minority communities such as the Chakma community in Bangladesh, who are constantly having to negotiate their linguistic identity through Chakma, Bangla and often English.

Block (2010) asserts identity to be “the socio-culturally constructed ongoing narratives” that involves one's shared beliefs, morals and interactions. He further outlines that identities are inseparable from demographic categories such as race, ethnicity, gender and other factors, and this makes this approach apt for exploring the issue at hand (Block, 2010). In his chapter titled “Researching Language and Identity”, Block (2010) discusses narrative analysis and provides an account of his previous studies as a sample study, where he demonstrates that although narrative analysis is not without problems, it is still useful in identity research as it helps highlight the way people position themselves against the backdrop of their socio-cultural contexts. Moreover, Block (2013) also asserts the benefits of taking a psychological approach in addition to the narrative analysis in order to account for the individual's identification processes as much of the research has focused on the social aspects that has left the individual's agency unaccounted for.

2.2.1.1 Giles and Johnson's (1987) Ethnolinguistic Theory

As the dissertation explores the identity construction with regards to language in ethnic communities using a Poststructuralist approach, using the Ethnolinguistic theory by Giles and Johnson (1987) to discuss the findings and thematically analyze them would be beneficial in

trying to achieve a better understanding of the ways people belonging from ethnic communities position and identify themselves in the broader social context. The theory was initially developed to explore language maintenance by understanding the use of different language strategies by ethnic communities in different contexts to create desired distance that represents the way they affiliate in each context (Giles & Johnson, 1987). The theory is heavily based on Tajfel and Turner's (1979) Social Identity Theory, and asserts that people strongly identify with certain social groups while making "insecure social comparisons between the positions of their group socially and that of the other group" (Giles & Johnson, 1987, p. 71). The most important aspect of the theory comes into play with the term 'ethnolinguistic vitality' that is used to take account of three factors that affect the people's identification processes: status factors, demographic factors and institutional support (Giles & Johnson, 1987). The theory's adherence to a psychological ground by relying on the Social Identity Theory helps account for the necessary addition of a psychological approach to a Poststructuralist analysis as suggested by Block (2013).

2.2.2 Nationalization and Assimilation: Bhaba, Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas

Apart from the primary theoretical framework used to analyze the findings, the paper also heavily refers to the ideas of Bhabha (1990) and Phillipson (1992) in discussing the findings to situate them in the broader national and social context. Bhabha (1990) explains the process of constructing a sense of national identity through narratives of the past which often are not regarded in the people's present everyday lives. He asserts that the identification through nation or the sense of 'nationness' is a "form of social and textual affiliation" that entraps 'the people' and 'the nation' as "subjects and objects of a range of social and literary narratives" (Bhabha, 1990, p. 292). This helps understand the processes of nationalization and homogenization in modern nation-states, which ultimately moves towards wiping out the cultural diversity and identities of the ethnic minority communities in a nation. Moreover,

Bhabha (1994) also discusses cultural hybridity that he conceptualized as the phenomenon of the colonized communities adopting cultural practices of the colonizers resulting in a hybrid culture containing aspects of both the original culture and that of the colonizers' culture. Bhabha (1994) also conceptualizes the state of 'ambivalence' which refers to a sense of contradicting feelings with regards to the cultural hybridity, an embedded sense of superiority of the colonizers simultaneously existing with negative sentiments towards the colonizers. I have found these two concepts crucial in interpreting and analyzing the findings to discuss them. Bhabha's views of postcolonial resistance being less aggressive and leaning towards cultural aspects and identification rather than colonial violence, make it more applicable for exploring the invasion of the dominant national culture into the cultural practices and language of the ethnic minority communities. Phillipson's (1992) ideas on linguistic imperialism, on the other hand, helps highlight the ways language functions in the process of assimilation and homogenization as it discusses the power of one language over the other. Phillipson (1992) outlines the way English and other colonial languages have encroached linguistic communities across the world for centuries that has currently resulted in the linguistic hegemony at play in the neo-colonial or globalized world. Moreover, his ideas reflect the ways a national language can similarly affect the other languages spoken by communities within the nation that often leads to linguicism, which he explains to be discrimination based on language use (Phillipson, 1992). Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (1996) discuss linguisticicide and language death by drawing an analogy with genocide and natural death to illustrate the processes of languages being lost over time; and this 'loss' or 'death' pertains to the language and not the people as the people assimilate into the dominating culture and linguistic practices which facilitates the loss of the particular language in question. Hence, exploring the processes of assimilation and its impact on

different communities with regards to their language is one of the important aspects to explore in sociolinguistic studies focusing on language and identity.

2.3 Previous Sociolinguistic Studies Exploring Language and Identity

2.3.1 Studies on Language and Identity Construction

The growing interest in trying to understand language and identity has resulted in a vast plethora of research that has attempted to explore the issue from a variety of different perspectives and approaches. Norton (2010) in her chapter “Language and Identity” in *Sociolinguistics and Language Education* discusses language and identity beginning with the Poststructuralist theory of language and how it encompasses contextual and varying meaning unlike the structuralist idea of fixed meanings of signifiers and signifieds. She illustrates the importance of Poststructuralist thought that views linguistic communities as ‘heterogeneous and conflicted’, and understands identity to be negotiated with regards to larger social realms (Norton, 2010). She then discusses the common research methods associated with identity research, which is mostly qualitative, and asserts the rejection of a research being purely objective or unbiased in any way (Norton, 2010). She refers to Foucault, Cummings, Fairclough and Pennycook in discussing the discursive formation of identity and role of power relations (Norton, 2010). The focus of the chapter remains on presenting key research findings of studies on language, identity and ‘investment’ by Norton and many others: this involves exploring the role of ‘investment’ in the language in contrast to motivation (Norton, 2010). Moreover, Norton (2010) also discusses the negotiation of different categories of identity (e.g., race, gender, ethnicity) in a language learning classroom, as well as the studies concerning identity in regards to literacy and resistance. Norton (2010) concludes by highlighting the necessity to view language as a “social practice” rather than only a linguistic

system, and the ways teachers can provide learners multiple identity positions to engage with language practices.

Elsewhere, Baxter (2016) explores the philosophical origins of poststructuralism in postmodernism, language and meaning construction, and lastly the discursive process of identity construction. Baxter (2016) argues that postmodernism is a philosophical stance that views knowledge on something that is socially constructed, contextual, unfixed and perspectival. In this regard, he refers to Foucault (1980) to discuss the discursive construction of identity and the role of power relations (Baxter, 2016). In his discussions on language and the construction of meaning, Baxter (2016) looks back at the core ideas of structuralism in reference to Saussure (1974) to highlight the ways Structuralism called for fixed meanings and ignored the contextual construction of meaning. This is later contrasted with Derrida's (1987) idea of difference, deferral and deconstructive criticism, as well as Foucault's (1984) ideas on discursive meaning construction, to show the Poststructuralist view of making meaning through context (Baxter, 2016). In discussing the discursive construction of identities, Baxter (2016) asserts the Poststructuralist thought opposing essentialism to highlight how people conform to socially approved discourses as reflected in their speech and behavior in order to not be stigmatized or outcasted. As Baxter (2016) touches on numerous studies on aspects of identity and language, he explores the perspectives of Performativity, Positioning, Feminist Poststructuralism and Enunciating pragmatics. He concludes by highlighting the significance of Poststructuralist discourse analysis in response to critical discourse analysis. These concepts become crucial when trying to explore the ways language is connected to the expression of ethnic identity as it offers to address the unfixed and constantly fluxing nature of identity construction.

While the Poststructuralist approach became very helpful for exploring language and identity, there was still a lack of a strong theoretical framework to particularly analyze issues

pertaining to the topic; and in response, Bucholtz and Hall (2010) propose a framework consisting of five different principles to study language and identity. In doing so, they adhere to a less constructed definition of identity by defining it as “the social positioning of the self and other” (Bucholtz & Hall, 2010, p.18). Firstly, they discuss the Emergence Principle that considers the social sphere in identity formation instead of solely looking at language as a door to the individual psyche; and thereby including language in social actions in identity construction besides the “psychological mechanism of self-classification” (Bucholtz & Hall, 2010, p.20). Second, they propose the Positionality Principle that tries to address viewing identity as a collection of broad social categories, by taking into account the different positions assumed by the analyst and the speakers in different contexts (Bucholtz & Hall, 2010). Third, the Indexicality Principle that uses the mechanism of identity construction through indexicality and “relies heavily on ideological structures, for associations between language and identity are rooted in cultural beliefs and values” (Bucholtz & Hall, 2010, p. 21). The fourth is the Relationality Principle that views “identity a relational phenomenon” as identities are constructed in relation to multiple social factors; and under this principle they discuss the concepts of ‘adequation and distinction’, ‘authentication and denaturalization’, and ‘authorization and legitimization’ (Bucholtz & Hall, 2010). Lastly, the Partialness Principle which draws from the decades long research output of feminist theory and cultural anthropology to acknowledge the constantly shifting nature of identity through interactional negotiations and contestation (Bucholtz & Hall, 2010).

In exploring language and its relationship with identity, especially from a Poststructuralist approach, it becomes crucial to look at the ways narratives and discourse shape one’s identity. Schiffrin (1996) illustrates the role of narrative in identity construction by analyzing two stories narrated by Jewish-American women that entail their experiences of family trouble. While one story revolves around a forbidden inter-marriage, the other is about conflict with

family in regards to acceptable and unacceptable forms of address (Schiffrin, 1996). Because sociolinguistic studies have always relied heavily on oral narratives and as we communicate our identities and experiences through narratives, the author analyzes the two narratives to reveal the narrators' "agentive and epistemic selves" and explore the ways they construct their identity with regards to their positions in their families (Schiffrin, 1996, p. 167). She identifies narratives holding the capacity for subjunctivization that brings one's presuppositions to light and accommodates diverse perspectives: this means by story-telling people can represent themselves "against a backdrop of cultural expectations", which in turn sheds light on the processes of constructing identity in relation to social and cultural contexts (Schiffrin, 1996, p. 170).

Another important and relevant approach to understanding language and construction of identity especially with regards to ethnicity, involves taking an ethnographic and anthropological approach. Reyes (2010) explores identity construction with regards to ethnicity and how it plays out in an educational setting. She begins by trying to define ethnicity and explains how it is 'indefinable' as it does not constitute to any fixed meaning or anything tangible; and hence illustrates in a detailed account of how other esteemed researchers in the field have defined ethnicity (Reyes, 2010). In discussing the methodological approaches to studying language and ethnicity, Reyes (2010) explains the importance of collecting and analyzing communication as ethnicity is ultimately a social construct. She discusses the role of quantitative studies besides qualitative analysis, the distinctiveness-centered model that looks at speech varieties and ethnicity, and ethnographic approaches, while presenting the two as not mutually exclusive to one another. The case of ethnicity and language in the context of the United States is explored in detail as Reyes (2010) provides an account of multiple studies conducted on this issue in regards to most of the ethnic communities in the states including the African-Americans, Latinos,

Asian-Americans, and European Americans. The chapter also illustrates the relationship of language and ethnicity in the educational setting and goes over the Difference Model and Emergence Model while separately looking at mainstream education and language education (Reyes, 2010).

One of the most prevalent views of the processes of constructing identity involve categorization through similarities and differences between ‘we’ and ‘them’ (Said, 1978; Bhabha, 1990; Giles & Johnson, 1987; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Lytra (2016) explores the relationship of language and ethnic identity formation as well as how language can shape categorization and boundaries in her studies focusing on Turkish and Greek speakers in Athens. The author discusses the perceptions related to ‘ethnicity’ and the prevalent discourse viewing ethnic groups as “internally consistent with clearly defined boundaries delineated by language, culture, heredity, and other attributes”, which often takes an essentialist approach (Lytra, 2016, p.133). She demonstrates the faulty nature of this perception by discussing studies and history of the Turkish language and Turkish nationalism before moving to explore a few key concepts such as code-switching between in and out-groups, translanguaging, followed by Poststructuralist and discursive views of identity formation (Lytra, 2016). Lytra (2016) concludes by outlining key areas of investigations including language policy and planning, national identity, immigrant and transnational communities, and so on.

Identification through in-group and out-group categorizations as discussed above also led to the development of a key theoretical framework for exploring language and identity: ethnolinguistic theory by Giles and Johnson (1987). In studying ethnic identity and language, Lamy (1979) takes an ethnolinguistic approach to explore bilingualism and the constructs of identity. He outlines a number of studies that have reported participants claiming they feel different when they use each language, and even finds that some speakers have difficulty recognizing colors that are not distinguished in their native tongue (Lamy, 1979). In his own

study, Lamy (1979) finds that bilingualism facilitates the interaction between different out-groups, and fluent speakers can often be mistakenly perceived as a member of an in-group: this adds more dimensions to their identity and the ways they perceive and position themselves compared to monolingual people. In another important study, Cargile et al. (1995) explores language and conflict in the light of ethnolinguistic theory. They highlight the case of Soviet Russia, Germany and other nations to illustrate the relationship between language and ethnic identity, and the ways language creates and mitigates conflict (Cargile et al., 1995).

2.3.2 Language and Identity with Regards to the Chakma Community

2.3.2.1 Languages and Bangladesh

Bangladesh is often thought to be a monolingual country due to its liberation in 1971 being closely related to the struggle for liberty to use Bangla as well as the Language Movement in 1952, as well as the name of the country which is named after the language Bangla itself. However, Bangladesh is a multilingual country albeit the significant dominance of Bangla, the national and official language, spoken by the vast majority of the people: there are over 30 speech communities in the country scattered across different districts and these languages are mostly spoken by the number of diverse ethnic minorities (Faquire, 2010). While the government officially recognizes 27 different ethnic minority communities, many human rights organizations claim there are over 45 ethnic groups (N. Chakma & Maitrot, 2016). The Chittagong Hill Tracts, located in the southeast and sharing borders near Myanmar and India, consists of a large number of ethnic groups speaking “Tibeto-Burman languages including Marma, Tripura (Kokborok), Chak, Pankho, Mru, Murung, Bawm, Lushei, Kyang and Khumi, and two Indic languages, Tanchungya and Chakma”, and they account for almost half the population in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, with the other half being Bengali (Faquire, 2010,

p.70). Among the ethnic groups, the Chakma community is the largest in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (N. Chakma & Maitrot, 2016).

2.3.2.2 Chakma Community in Bangladesh: Marginalization and State Policies

The Chittagong Hill Tracts harbors a unique demography of diverse ethnic groups with their own unique family structures and lifestyle. Mondal et al. (2009) in their study looked at over 200 Chakma households and interviewed the head of the households to consider factors such as education, occupation, monthly income and distance of educational hubs from home, to understand the family structure, economic security and educational status among the indigenous people in CHT and how they affect the rate of dropout from primary education. The study has found that the average family size in Chakma households is similar to the national average; however, the monthly income is 2.75 times lower (Mondal et. al, 2009). The results demonstrate that there is at least a single child dropping out of primary education in around 48% of Chaka families (Mondal et. al, 2009). The research has further identified that the distance of educational institutions from home surprisingly does not affect the rate of dropout, but is the socio-economic status that stands as one of the most significant factors (Mondal et. al, 2009).

In another study, N. Chakma and Maitrot (2016) explores the positioning of indigenous identity in the national plane with regards to primarily land and poverty, as well as national policies affecting education and cultural identities. The study draws from data from the World Bank and others to highlight the economic development of Bangladesh that is only “partly shared with ethnic minorities” (N. Chakma & Maitrot, 2016, p. 2). The authors identify dispossession of lands to be one of the leading factors increasing the levels of poverty; and provide a detailed historical account of colonial, postcolonial and national policies and practices that have led to this (N. Chakma & Maitrot, 2016). Poverty resulting in

socio-economic barriers have led to limited access to social services such as health care and education, showing higher levels of illiteracy than the national average (N. Chakma & Maitrot, 2016). With regards to the discourse surrounding the identity of the ethnic minority communities, the authors raise an interesting and important question: what to actually call them? Should they be called hilly people, tribal, upajati, Jumma people or indigenous? According to N. Chakma & Maitrot (2016), the ethnic minority communities did not strongly identify as 'indigenous' until the UN declaration of the International Year of the Indigenous Peoples in 1992. This opens the door to explore the expression of their socio-political expressions of identity.

Despite being the largest of ethnic communities in Bangladesh, the Chakma community is still marginalized as they are still demographically considered a minority, and Karim (1998) explores the marginalization of the Adivasi community in reference to detailed accounts of colonial history and postcolonial politics and practices in Bangladesh. The author uses Bhabha's idea of pedagogical address of the state to outline the different ways the nation-state has framed a narrative relying on the national identity as Muslim Bengali that has outcasted the Adivasi community from the national identity, and presented as 'willed ignorance', as part of this ethno-linguistic homogenization agenda (Karim, 1998). The article further draws on Foucault's reading of silence and invisibility to further highlight the state's portrayal of the "Adivasi as a subject of willed-ignorance" (Karim, 1998). In exploring these issues of cultural and national identity, the author also looks at the discourse surrounding the subaltern Adivasi women in the national imagination with reference to the disappearance of Kalpana Chakma, a female Adivasi human rights activists in the Chittagong Hill Tracts who was allegedly abducted by the military (Karim, 1998).

Moreover, Bhumitra Chakma (2010) also argues that the marginalization of the ethnic minorities arises from the combined forces of nation-building bureaucratic visions, the

indigenous community's struggle for autonomy, and national security agenda followed by military pursuit. B. Chakma (2010) begins with a background overview of the demography, geography and lifestyle of the indigenous people in the CHT, and follows up with criticism of the postcolonial and the now national policies that facilitate the marginalization. The research outlines the exclusionary nature of the Bangladeshi constitution that bases its idea of nationalism in its roots of Bengali language and culture that automatically excludes the non-Bengali ethnic minorities from the national imagination (B. Chakma, 2010). The constitution that regarded the citizens as Bengali instead of Bangladeshi, as well as the then Prime Minister's disregard to the cultural identity of the ethnic minority communities and agendas for forced assimilation, are significant causes of both the conflict between the state and the indigenous people, as well as their marginalization (B. Chakma, 2010). In the account explaining their struggle for autonomy, a shift in their identity construction can be observed if we compare the past resistance to homogenization, and the current increasing assimilation.

2.3.2.3 Language and Education

Studies on the ethnic communities of Bangladesh, specially the Chakma community, has shown interest in identity constructions with regards to language as well as with regards to many of the state's nationalization policies, and socio-demographic conditions (Sultana, 2021; Chakma & Maitrot, 2016; Modal et. al, 2009). With regards to the national policies in education, a number of concerns has been raised as studies explore the ways the mandatory use of Bangla in the national curriculum affects students from ethnic minorities. With formal education often being the first encounter of Adivasi children with Bangla, scholars Vijayakuma, Pearce and Nahar compare the bilingual and bicultural curriculum of the Shishu Khamatayan Project (SKP) with the national curriculum; and the study involved observing classrooms, one-to-one assessments and focused group discussions to investigate their views on language and primary education. The authors provide an overview of the geography and

demographics of the CHT and contextualize the marginalization of the ethnic minorities in an already poor country such as Bangladesh; they then demonstrate how this has led to the “some of the lowest adult literacy rates” (Vijayakumar et. al, 2013, p. 137). SKP’s curriculum focuses more on the holistic development of children and is based on their L1 with gradual interaction with Bangla: the educational project offers L1 in Chakma, Marma and Tripura language (Vijayakumar et. al, 2013). The study found that the students from the SKP L1-based curriculum outperformed the students from national language based curriculum in all aspects except letter recognition and writing (Vijayakumar et. al, 2013). The authors identify the cause to be the lack of indigenous language in their print surroundings as it was observed that among the Chakma, Marma and Tripura students, the Tripura students were significantly better at letter recognition and writing than the Chakma and Marma students as the Tripura language uses the roman alphabets that is more available in print around them, unlike the Chakma and Marma alphabets (Vijayakumar et. al, 2013).

Moreover, Dewan (2010) in her article explores the use of first language and education among the Chakma community. Being critical of the larger organizations and institutions that have been only setting up facades instead of actually working on substantial and sustainable development, she points out the fallacies in the national initiatives to accommodate the ethnic minority communities (Dewan, 2010). In a similar paper investigating language and education, Tripura (2010) in reference to the constitution and a number of language related policies and planning, argues the importance of using mother tongue in classrooms for the children from ethnic communities while illustrating the statistics of a high drop-out rate of the indigenous children along with his own experience of taking seven years to finally understand class content in Bangla. With these struggles at hand, Roy (2010) in her research has observed the increasing tendency of members of indigenous communities to abandon their own language and culture to assimilate as they are forced to choose between alienation

and assimilation; and she has observed the case is more prevalent in middle-class members of the communities.

2.3.2.4 Language and Assimilation

The process of nationalization and its induced assimilation not only disrupts the education of ethnic students as discussed above, but it can also lead to language loss and a shift in the overall linguistic demography of the nation. Amena Mohsin (2010) in her article exploring language, identity and the state, highlights the hypocrisy in the Bangladeshi linguistic-nationalist paradigm by pointing out the zeal for mother tongue that led to the Language Movement in 1952 and the current hegemonic language policies and planning that renders the mother tongue of many ethnic communities mute. She further illustrates how many members of the ethnic community also fought for the Liberation War of Bangladesh yet they are absent in the imagined national identity, even in the national anthem that speaks for the love for Bangla (Mohsin, 2010). The article also touches upon the establishment of the Bangla Academy to promote Bangla language and culture, while her interview with the Chakma chief reveals their sentiment regarding the need to promote and protect the ethnic languages (Mohsin, 2010). Lastly, Mohsin (2010) finds that language is inevitably connected in the economic marginalization of the ethnic communities, as well as their difficulty to assimilate into the larger social spheres followed by the state's inability and refusal to accommodate them.

Another article by Islam (2012) explores the indigenous communities' compromise of their cultural identity for their national identity with the increasing nationalization and use of Bangla over other languages. The author begins with a background overview of the ethnic communities in the CHT as he discusses the history, ethnic origin, geography and demography (Islam, 2012). He identifies the gradual changes in indigenous languages as only

Chakma and Marma languages retain their own alphabets with 12 others shifting to the use of Roman alphabets: the lack of schooling in their primary language further creates conflict in retaining their cultural identity in the broader nationalist agenda (Islam, 2012). In reference to the constitution and other institutional policies that promote the national language such as the establishment of the Bangla Academy, Islam (2012) highlights the overarching dominance of the national culture and mainstream community that makes the ethnic communities having to view their culture from the perspective of another language in the educational and broader social setting, which is often alienating. The author asserts the necessity of more inclusive language planning by promoting linguistic pluralism and vernacularization besides adequate and authentic media representation (Islam, 2012).

Looking at studies more concerned with identity among the members of the Chakma community, Afreen (2020) in her study uses a mixed-methods approach to explore the use of different languages and preference of use by the Chakma people in various domains of their life such as family, friends, religion, neighbors, education, transaction and government. Based on their use of language across these different domains, the study tries to investigate if a language shift is taking place in the Chakma community. The author explores the sense of cultural identity held by the communities in the past with reference to M. N. Larma's speech at the parliament, and shows the shift to varying degrees of assimilation based on need, such as education as the materials and medium of instruction is mostly either in Bangla or English, which also uplift Bengali culture (Afreen, 2020). Using statistical software SPSS, the study has found that Chakma people mostly use Chakma language in the domain of home and religion but switch code to Bangla as a lingua franca when communicating with members of other ethnic communities (Afreen, 2020). This also applies for the domain of neighbors as it depends on who the neighbors are; however, for education, most transactions and government related tasks, they are required to use more Bangla than Chakma (Afreen, 2020). The study

concludes by indicating that a language shift has not yet taken place but is highly likely to happen within the next generations.

Furthermore, Awal (2019) makes a sociolinguistic study to investigate linguistic and language loss among the indigenous languages in Bangladesh. The study looks at the relationship between language and power, and claims that the opportunities and access to social domains associated with Bangla and English over indigenous languages are significant factors behind the gradual language loss as the people slowly start viewing their own language as less useful and less important (Awal, 2019). Moreover, increasing globalization and nationalization is seen to fuel this process of language loss and linguistic (Awal, 2019). The article also looks at the psychological unrest between ethnic groups and the non-ethnic metro-language speakers as the view of one language being better than the other puts the ethnic communities in an inferior position (Awal, 2019). The author further touches up on the role of the media in perpetuating this view both in terms of language and culture which in turn shifts the view on the overall identity of the ethnic communities: the media could instead be used as a medium of mitigating the issue by properly representing the ethnic culture and languages and creating space for them (Awal, 2019). The author concludes by suggesting government initiatives to save the indigenous languages, focusing on the role of media, academia, literature and lexicography amongst others (Awal, 2019)

2.3.2.5 Language, Perception and Identity: Self and the Other

Taking an indigenous psychology approach and grounded theory, Mozumder and Haque (2015) have interviewed 12 Chakma and 14 Bengali participants to get insights into possible stereotyping and their perceptions of each other. The findings, organized in eight broad themes, show that most of the high-prejudice participants held dehumanizing views of the other group, and some of them even caused reciprocal harming (Mozumder & Haque, 2015).

Apart from the very noticeable ethnocentrism, the research also found dissatisfaction and lack of trust with the current administrative body who each party believes favors the opposite, leading the authors to suggest building trust as an immediate initiative by the government (Mozumder & Haque, 2015).

In an interesting study investigating identity and perception of children, both Bengali and Chakma, of their 'self and the other' through their artworks, Chowdhury (2015) found that children perceive the difference mostly through differences in physical appearance especially the eyes, nose and facial shape. However, one aspect of less visible categories of differences was observed in some of the Bengali children's perception of Chakma clothing to be less conservative: this ties back to the religious discourse peached, one of the many aspects of the dominant Muslim-Bengali cultural narrative promoted by the state to adhere to a homogenous national identity (Chowdhury, 2015).

2.3.2.6 Language and Identity: Negotiation and Expression

An important aspect of this research involves attempting to understand the ways identity is shaped in the process of negotiating among the three languages and expressing oneself with the three languages. Sultana (2012) problematizes the prevalent discourse on the negative impact of globalization and other languages on Bangla language and culture by exploring the ways the youth negotiate their identity in regards to the interplay of these languages and global cultures. Sultana (2012) begins by elaborating on the ongoing discourse and nation-wide government initiatives to promote and protect Bangla language and culture from invasion of English language and Western culture, especially in the regards to the youth who are increasingly using English with Bangla and adopting western cultures. The article addresses the concerns of globalization and English as agents of colonization and neo-colonization that are threatening Bangla language and culture, and problematizes this by

illustrating the influence of other languages and cultures on the youth such as Hindi, Chinese, Korean and Japanese among others (Sultana, 2012). To dive further into exploring the issue, Sultana (2012) discusses the way Bangla as a national language is threatening the indigenous languages and culture, which has resulted in the perception of Bangladesh as a monolingual Bengali nation: this further prevents recognizing the indigenous languages. She also asserts that the educational curriculum being in Bangla or English, and not in any other language, has impacted the already low literacy rates of indigenous children (Sultana, 2012).

Moreover, it is also crucial to explore how different languages are perceived by the community in question in order to understand the ways language is vital to the construction of identity. In another article, Sultana (2021) explores the language preference and perception of language among the youths of Bangladeshi indigenous communities with regards to English, Bangla and their mother tongues. The study involved ethnographic fieldwork and interviewing two Chakma students currently attending university. The author contextualizes the impact of linguistic imperialism and nationalist agenda that results in “55% of indigenous children aged 6-10” not being enrolled in schools along with a dropout rate of 60% (Sultana, 2021). The study has found that there is a general lack of importance associated with the Chakma language with more frequent use of Bengali and English which grants them access to a wider range of the social domains; and this has further assimilated the participants into the mainstream national culture over their indigenous ones (Sultana, 2021). Interestingly, the author has also identified the interaction of other languages such as Japanese, Korean, Chinese and Hindi, associated with entertainment, in their domain of language ecology (Sultana, 2021). By the end of the research it was evident that theta associated Chakma language with inferiority and less opportunities; however, at the same time they have expressed their sense of disconnection with the national identity regardless of their degree of assimilation as they cannot relate with the ‘proud Bengali history’ of the language movement

and other forms of narrative associated with the Bengali or rather the Bangladeshi identity (Sultana, 2021). The findings of the study further indicate the author's concerns related to language-based inequalities and language death.

Conclusion and reflection: With regards to the review of the literature above, it is observable that the relationship of language and identity has been explored in varying depths by scholars for decades and is still of interest to many. While a significant amount of research has been done on the Chakma community in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), most of the studies relating to language and identity have explored the issues surrounding language and education in accordance to the state policies and planning while some explored the issues of identity through perception of in-groups and out-groups along with the inclusion of the youth. With regards to reviewed literature above, in the context of sociolinguistic studies focusing on the Chakma community in CHT, a gap can be observed in exploring the ways language affects identity, specifically cultural identity. The gap becomes more evident when we consider the youth who are at the forefront of globalization and experiencing the pressures of national homogenization as well as the global influences. Moreover, within the youth, there are those who are attending higher education institutions and hence having to explore and negotiate their identities in larger social sphere; and among them there are those who are deeply connected with their cultural roots while there are others who have been based in the capital or outside of CHT for longer periods of time. A comparative analysis between these two categories of students can provide insights into the ways assimilation is in progress and has progressed. Lastly, this further helps explore the way language use impacts cultural identity and its expression.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a detailed overview of the methodology employed in conducting the research by outlining the research design in relevance to the research questions. The chapter describes the processes involved in data collection such as the research instruments used, as well as the process involved in selecting the participants. Moreover, a detailed account of the methods used to analyze the data is also provided before the chapter is concluded by discussing the obstacles faced during the research and any ethical considerations involved.

3.2 Research Design

The study aims to investigate language and identity with regards to the Chakma community in Bangladesh where most of the members generally grow up with Chakma as their first language and gradually get introduced to Bangla, and English as needed, in formal education settings. The purpose of this research is to explore the ways Chakma students in the higher educational setting construct and negotiate their identities with regards to the Chakma, Bangla and English language. I intend to explore the ways language impacts their construction and demonstration of their identities by looking at the different and similar themes emerging from their perception and use of each language individually and in relation to one another. In the light of exploring the influence of language on identity construction, negotiation and perception set in an every-day life setting aimed at indigenous students pursuing university-level education, and the reviewed literature, this study is based on the following research questions:

1. How do the young members of the Chakma community perceive English, Bangla and Chakma language in relation to one another?

2. How does this navigation and negotiation among these three languages impact their identity in an increasingly nationalizing and globalizing environment?

In accordance with the research questions, the study has taken a qualitative approach to address the questions interpretatively through inductive and deductive analysis. The research has opted out of a quantitative and mixed-method approach as the research questions require an interpretive framework for analysis and involves looking at people's subjective experiences and perspectives through open-ended responses rather than straightforward close-ended responses as the issue is not quantifiable. Moreover, a qualitative approach is more appropriate as the research is conducted in a natural setting and by physically interacting at the research sites and gathering data by directly conversing with the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Furthermore, the research is context-dependent and the design takes an emergent approach to take into consideration any potential changes dependent on the context as the research purpose involves a focus on "learning the meaning that the participants hold about the problem or issue, not the meaning that the researchers bring to the research or writers from the literature" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 82). In addition, this qualitative study also calls for a narrative approach as the study explores different stories of the participants that have guided the development of their perspectives regarding their identity. Creswell and Poth (2018) cite Clandinin (2013) to express the focus of a narrative analysis, which is to not only valorize "individuals' experience, but also [as] an exploration of the social, cultural, familial, linguistic and institutional narratives within which the individual experiences were, and are, constituted, shaped, expressed and enacted" (p. 112).

3.3 Data Collection

3.3.1 Instruments

The research instruments used in this study included a semi-structured interview schedule consisting of mostly open-ended questions that draw out the participants' perspectives, experiences and narratives in relation to their identity with regards to language (see Appendix A). The online interviews were held using a mobile device and Google Meet with another mobile device to record the audio, and the offline interviews were recorded using a mobile device taken to the interview location. It was necessary to conduct a few interviews online as some of the participants were not currently in Dhaka, where I am based; and at the time of data collection it was difficult to commute as the political instability led to strikes and protests all over the capital on weekdays.

3.3.2 Data collection process

The data was collected by conducting in-depth semi-structured interviews with the participants with the interviews lasting from 45-75 minutes. The questions were structured to bring out their narratives and perspectives that are unique to them as indigenous students attending higher education institutions. The online interview was held over Google meet, and the offline interviews at different locations such as university campus or cafes as convenient for the participants. The recorded audio was transcribed into text in the original language of the interview which included a mix of Bangla and English depending on the participants' comfort zone.

3.3.3 Participants and sampling

The study undertook interviewing five participants, who are all attending different stages of university education. three of the participants are pursuing their university education in

Dhaka, while two of them in Chittagong. Four of the participants were female and one of them was a male, studying in a university in Chittagong. In order to explore the way language affects their identity and cultural expression in an increasingly nationalization and globalization environment, the participants were selected through purposive sampling as in order to draw a comparative analysis between those who grew up in Dhaka, the hub of nationalization, and those in the Chittagong Hill Tracts with more proximity to their mother tongue. One of the female participants was from the Bawm community, and this was to confirm the degree of similarity of the experiences and narratives of the Chakma students with other indigenous students. The participants were accessed through my personal and peer networks as well through snowball sampling.

Name	Ethnic Community	Gender	Current Educational Level	Background	Languages spoken	MOI in School
Amina	Chakma	Female	UG graduate	CHT until grade 3, then moved to Dhaka, currently in CHT	Chakma, Bangla, English, Hindi	English and Bangla
Shimul	Chakma	Female	PG	Various areas, currently in Dhaka	Chakma, Bangla, English	Bangla
Nayan	Chakma	Male	UG Sophomore	CHT until grade 3, then moved to Chittagong city, currently in Chittagong city.	Chakma, Bangla, English, Little bit of Japanese	Chakma until grade 3 Bangla in Chittagong city
Priti	Chakma	Female	UG Junior	Dhaka until	Chakma,	Bangla and

				grade 3, moved to CHT after	Bangla, English	English in Dhaka Mix of Bangla and Chakma in CHT
Nirmala	Bawm	Female	UG Senior	CHT until grade 3, moved to Dhaka since	Bawm, Bangla, English, French, Korean	Bangla in CHT English in Dhaka

3.4 Data Analysis

The transcribed interview data was sorted and coded thematically with certain sentences highlighted to be used as quotations that express important aspects of their perspectives and narratives. The data was then analyzed thematically and narratively with regards to the theoretical framework guiding a Poststructuralist approach to explore language and identity construction (Hall, 1992; Barker, 2010; Block, 2010; Baxter, 2016). The first broader theme explores attitudes and identity with regards to language and involves looking at Chakma, Bangla and English separately and then together in relation to one another. The second larger theme explores language and identity in the public domain with cultural entanglements; and this involves looking at schooling, exposure and representation in education and media, and Biju which is one of the most important cultural festivals for the Chakma community. Moreover, with regards to discussing the ways their language and identity are being negotiated in an increasingly nationalizing and globalizing environment, the data is analyzed in reference to Phillipson's (1992) ideas of linguistic imperialism, Phillipson and

Skuttnab-Kangas' (1996) linguistic imperialism and linguicism, Bhabha's (1990) ideas identity construction through nationalization and homogenization, and cultural hybridity.

3.5 Obstacles encountered

During the data collection, I had to face a number of obstacles including technical difficulties with audio recording and network issues during the online interview, as well as more challenging ones. Firstly, it was quite difficult to find university students from the indigenous community in my personal and peer networks, especially those who would be interested to take their time out to participate in the interviews. For this I had to look into my personal network and peer networks and snowball from there on, and this required a considerable amount of time in just finding interested participants who would volunteer their time for this research. Second, it was very difficult for me personally to ask some of the questions as I was constantly worried about unintentionally coming off as insensitive despite my utmost politeness. Initially I did not think this would be a problem or I would feel any hesitation, however, after the completion of the first interview with someone from my personal network where the participant shared a lot of personal experiences and thoughts, I became very aware of the power relations that existed, maybe not between us, but between me as a Bengali and the other participants as people from ethnic communities. I came to realize that I have never once had to think about using my mother tongue outside, and I never had to go through certain thought processes as any person from an ethnic community would experience. I could not relate to them from personal experience, which made me starkly aware of the dynamics. However, I was able to conduct the interviews smoothly and built new networks with them by always checking in if they are comfortable and sharing my experiences and views when they asked me questions; but the factor that helped the most was probably that we belong from a similar age group.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

In consideration of ethical issues surrounding privacy, the identities of the participants as well as their institutions have been kept anonymous. Pseudonyms have been assigned to distinguish and discuss the findings. Moreover, one of the participants did not consent to the interview being audio recorded and hence, the interview was not recorded but notes were taken instead. For the online interview, video was turned off to respect the participant's comfort zone. In accordance with Creswell and Poth (2018), ethical considerations regarding transparency were strictly maintained: the participants were made aware of the purpose of the research, how the data would be used and that their participation is completely voluntary and they can opt out anytime if they wanted to. As the participants preferred to provide oral consent rather than a written one, their audio-recorded verbal consent to participate was also ensured. In terms of collecting the data and presenting it, I made sure to present it as it is and not present what would seem favorable for addressing my research questions: this is evident in the 'Findings and Discussion' chapter that shows both the contradicting and similar experiences of the participants in different cases. Moreover, as the interviews were lengthy and a lot of information was exchanged, it was made certain no sensitive information was shared in the research that could potentially harm the participant, and composite stories and identities were used so that the participants cannot be identified.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will present the findings from the data collected for this research and analyze the said findings for discussion. The findings are presented and discussed thematically and divided into two sections to broader sections: The first section explores their linguistic repertoire and their attitudes to the Chakma, Bangla and English with regards to their identity followed by a brief discussion. The second one explores their interactions and experiences in demonstrating their identity in the public spheres by covering their schooling experiences, and linguistic exposure and representation of Chakma language and culture through education and media followed by another brief discussion.

4.2 Language, Attitudes and Identity

4.2.1 Linguistic Repertoire

All five participants have reported to be fluent in their mother tongue, Chakma (Bawm for the one participant from the Bawm community). However, all of them are only fluent in terms of oral communication and not writing or reading. One of the participants, Nayan, who moved to Chittagong city from the remote areas of CHT after completing grade 3, is the only person who can somewhat write his name in Chakma. All of them have learnt their mother tongue ‘from home’ or ‘from their mothers’ while they learnt Bangla and English at school. They can all read and write in Bangla and English despite certain difficulties and lapses here and there. Some of them have expressed and/or demonstrated an interest in learning other languages such as French, German, Hindi, Japanese and Korean.

From the above reported findings, it becomes clear that they learn their mother tongue at home in the form of language acquisition, similar to how I would say I have learnt Bangla.

However, it is interesting to highlight that none of them were taught Chakma at their schools. In reference to the detailed participant profile, while teachers did conduct classes in Chakma or a mix of Chakma with Bangla from time to time in certain cases, the participants did not get the opportunity to study their mother tongue at schools unlike most Bengali students who have the opportunity to study Bangla at schools alongside acquiring it from their surroundings. This can be one of the reasons behind the lack of practice of written Chakma amongst the participants as they do not get the opportunity to use the language beyond the home and community which usually do not require written communication in daily circumstances.

4.2. 2 Chakma:

With regards to the limited scope to use their native tongue, the participants all reported that they only use their mother tongue at home with their families or with friends from their community. Which is why when asked which language out of the three is the most important to them, all of them asserted it was their native tongue. The Chakma participants also reported being the most comfortable in expressing themselves in Chakma, with one saying “it comes naturally to me”. This particular choice of expression indicates her attitude towards Chakma being more strongly connected to her identity than Bangla and English which do not come ‘naturally’ to her. Siristy, when answering how she learnt Chakma, said “it’s not something that I had to learn, it’s my mother tongue”. This shows her perception of Chakma as something that is natural to her and her identity, similar to the other participants, while also asserting the degree of distance she has with Bangla and English despite her regular usage and fluency of the two languages. Nayan also says that “no matter how fluent you may be in other languages and how much you may have to use that more than your native tongue, everyone always has a unique attachment to their mother tongue”. This also leads us towards the same direction of understanding Chakma to be very strongly tied to their identities. The

way they perceive Chakma as innate while viewing Bangla and English as something imposed or simply ‘not innate’ demonstrates their attitude and identification with Chakma language.

One of the Chakma participants expressed that she feels the most comfortable in expressing herself in English while writing because “it feels as if the words just flow like water”, and the participant from the Bawm community has also expressed that she is the most comfortable speaking and writing English. Having grown up in Dhaka during her childhood before moving to CHT, the Chakma participant in question said that initially her Chakma accent was terrible as she was the only Chakma person in her school in Dhaka and rarely ever used Chakma outside of the house; and she often was mocked at school in CHT by her Chakma peers. Due to her negative experiences surrounding the use of Chakma, and associated of her identity in Dhaka than CHT, Priti did not feel that degree of attachment towards Chakma language until she entered university and started to realize that this was part of her identity and she was very much responsible for upholding her identity and culture to the wider world. The person from the Bawm community asserts how she does not take pride in the fact that she is more fluent and comfortable in expressing herself in English despite this being viewed as “something to take credit for” by people around her. She further explains how her distance from her language, had distanced her from her roots and culture since she moved to Dhaka to pursue a ‘better quality education’ at an esteemed English Medium School in Dhaka. Interestingly, both the participants who have expressed a degree of affinity towards English were more affiliated with Dhaka than CHT.

Regardless, their attitude towards their native language seems to be one of attachment and sentiment as well as their sense of community and identity as this is the medium of communication with their families and loved ones. All of them have expressed concern in terms of the gradual loss of the language and also expressed their desires to want to do

something to address this. While they do speak of the necessity of more research and more involvement from the government in terms of preserving the language, some of them lamented their community's lack of strong initiative while explaining how this is the most crucial step in preserving the language. They further lamented the busy urban life in this fast paced age of capitalism where they do not find the time to work on these issues. Priti mentioned "if you have the luxury of time and stable finances without having to worry about a career, then maybe you can focus deeply on these issues". Similarly, Shimul, who majors in Sociology, explained that in the age of globalization Chakma has no economic or business value and only remains as a tradition. This reflects one of the dire impacts of an increasingly nationalizing and globalizing environment where people from linguistic and ethnic minority communities are being pushed by the demands of competition and livelihood to leave behind their indigenous languages in the broader social spheres. Overall, Chakma language appears to be one tied to their culture and heritage guiding their sense of identity rather than a language considered instrumental.

4.2.3 Bangla:

All the participants have reported speaking Bangla fluently even though Bangla is the language they are most comfortable with. Amina expressed that despite the similarity between Bangla and Chakma, there are certain phonetic differences: some sounds are missing in Chakma but are present in Bangla. For Amina this posed quite the difficulty when she was learning Bangla in school as some words were difficult to pronounce for her. Nayan also expressed a similar experience of difficulty in terms of the linguistic similarity and difference of the two languages as he needs to use it simultaneously. He explained that in Chakma, when speaking to someone, 'tui' is used to refer to one person, and 'tumi' is used to refer to multiple people. Here 'tui' and 'tumi' do not carry any symbol of respect in terms of addressing the audience; rather they carry meaning in terms of describing the number of

people the speech is directed to. However, in Bangla, ‘tui’ is used for close friends or people younger than oneself or people somehow considered inferior, while ‘tumi’ is used with people one shares a more casual and semi-formal relationship with, and ‘apni’ is used to address someone superior. Nayan then expressed how this caused misunderstandings when Chakma students would refer to their teacher as ‘tui’ because they are talking to one person and this is concordant to their mother tongue, but it is offensive to the teacher with regards to Bangla. He asserted that he faces a language barrier for these reasons. This shows that the juxtaposition of similarities and differences of the linguistic systems surrounding Bangla and Chakma creates a number of difficulties in communication and can result in miscommunication, and hence understandably makes Bangla less comfortable for use. Nirmala also mentioned that she used to neglect Bangla growing up not because it is not her mother tongue, but because the language was very difficult for her to grasp and work with.

Despite the lack of comfort in using Bangla, the participants have all expressed their views of seeing Bangla as ‘important’. Amina said she finds Bangla to be the most important because:

Even though English is useful for many things, nothing can be done in the country without Bangla ... I think it is very important because everything is in Bangla and we are taught and encouraged to speak Bangla from an early age

It is interesting to note that Bangla is deemed important enough for Chakma families to encourage children to start speaking Bangla from an earlier age, similar to the way English is encouraged to be spoken by mainstream Bengali families. This paired with the fact that the participants have expressed how written Chakma is not practiced as much anymore highlights the impact of widespread nationalization that is chipping away at indigenous languages and making its way into the priorities of ethnic cultures and languages. Similarly, despite clearly distinguishing Bangla as “not [her] mother tongue”, Shimul explains how Bangla is very

important for schooling and jobs. Priti also responded saying Bangla is needed everywhere else besides her home. She further adds “If you don’t know Bangla and English, you don’t have a career, your education is over, I’d say your entire life is over”. This appeared to me as a very strong perception of Bangla being a language of power and access especially in the confines of the nation. Associating the knowledge and ability to use Bangla with one’s entire life speaks volumes of the way one language being more powerful and important over another is a reality for the Chakma community in Bangladesh.

When asked if Bangla appears to be predatory to them considering the gradual loss of Chakma language and more focus on Bangla, 3 participants said they do not think Bangla is particularly predatory while two said they think it is somewhat predatory. Nirmala after doing a mandatory course on Bangla has come to see the beauty of the language, its literature and its diversity. She explains that she does not think Bangla is predatory because “in Bangladesh the people of the country have the right to express their language in public, in institutions right?” While Nirmala’s argument is valid, it is important to highlight her use of the term ‘people of the country’ that gives off the sense that the people of the country encompasses only Bangla speaking members. This further sheds light on the intricate ways nationalization has seeped into the fluid nature of identity and the perspectives held by people from the indigenous communities who move more towards assimilation. In response to Nirmala’s response, I had asked her what she thinks about the case of the indigenous people who do not speak Bangla, and she responded that it is a matter of having the opportunity to preserve it and that the communities themselves should take initiative to do so. I found the response somewhat sparse in terms of addressing the question as it does not discuss the rights of the non-Bengali citizens to express themselves like the Bengali citizens, ‘people of the country’, have the right to express themselves. It appears that there is a subconscious notion of identifying the people of the country with Bangla speakers only while becoming less aware of

the hegemonic invasion and impact of nationalization as the process of prioritizing Bangla over Chakma seems increasingly normal. Nayan also found Bangla to be not predatory and that the issue is that they need to face certain difficulties when enrolling into schools and colleges. Shimul, being a sociology major, had a somewhat nonchalant attitude and explained from the perspectives of globalization that this is a normal process as Chakma does not have much value in the national context. Despite understanding the hegemonic process at play it appears that there is a form of acceptance that exists which makes the process more normal than not. Although Amina thought Bangla to be somewhat predatory, she also explains that:

It is also natural as the majority speak Bangla. It is to the extent that a lot of us do not speak proper Chakma but a mix of Chakma and Bangla. However, it is a matter of the majority being in the position to rule. For a different perspective, think about the other ethnic communities in comparison to the Chakma community

While Amina demonstrated a strong understanding of the language's predation and facilitation of language loss of indigenous languages in one way or another, she also held a similar form of acceptance of this as normal. Her offering to view the issue from the perspective of the other ethnic minority communities in relation to Chakma community and language not only shows her acute awareness of the processes but also how the perception of the majority group being dominant becomes an established reality for the others. However, Priti found Bangla to be somewhat predatory as she said "no one will spend time learning or focusing on Chakma language if there is no job or financial security offered by it" unlike Bangla without which she would consider one's life 'done or'. She expressed a clear and strong view of the current importance of Bangla and its use as the national language used in all spheres being a major reason that hampers the use of Chakma as it cannot offer the same opportunities and access as Bangla. Overall, Bangla seems to be the language instrumental to

communication and access to all kinds of services within the nation and larger society to the extent that it is imperative for survival in the national space.

4.2.4 English

Although English is not officially recognized as a second language in Bangladesh, its ‘overpowering’ influence and usage in all sectors such as education, media, official and business communication is progressively pushing it closer to a second language than a foreign language (Ara, 2020). Hasan (2022) also explores the use of English as a medium of instruction in higher education institutions, especially private universities, that adds another layer to the language’s increasing importance. Accordingly, all the participants have reported speaking English with varying fluency. Nirmala, who has received English-medium education since she shifted from CHT to Dhaka after Grade 3, speaks English fluently and is the most comfortable in it. Priti is more comfortable with writing English than speaking it as she said she gets less opportunity to do so. Amina, who has majored in ELT in Dhaka, is somewhat fluent in English but has reported to have been facing difficulty as she is not getting the opportunity to speak or use English as often now that she is back in CHT. Shimul also expressed a similar view saying “I can speak if I need to, but it gets difficult without constant practice” and Nayan said he is still a little weak in English and is currently focusing on his proficiency. From their responses, it appears that English being their third language remains at some distance both in terms of comfort, fluency and usage.

In terms of what they feel about the language itself, the participants have all expressed their views associating English as a language they deem necessary for higher education and entertainment. Shimul explains that ‘just like there is no value of Chakma in the national context, there is no value of Bangla in the international context’. Nayan explains that he feels the language is important because “there should be a common language for everyone to

understand one another across the globe”. Priti also shares a similar view by asserting the importance of English in terms of access to higher education and better career prospects. While Amina also admits English is necessary for the above mentioned reasons in this globalized era, with regards to her personal experience she says that she only ever used English for her education at university, “not for anything else” and also for subtitles to media entertainment from different languages. This probed questions at how much English is actually used instead of the prospect of its use. From their collective responses on their lack of opportunity to use English in CHT and outside of university, it is evident that English is not used to the degree that it holds importance.

4.2.5 Navigating through Chakma, Bangla and English

Looking into their attitudes towards each language and how that shapes their identity directs us to explore how they navigate through the three languages in constructing their identities. When asked if they feel different when speaking each language, most of them have asserted that they feel a lot more expressive, loud and cheerful when speaking Chakma than English and Bangla. Amina said “I am more talkative and loud”. Shimul said “I speak a lot more casually and loudly I guess, and I’m a little less loud in Bangla and somewhat formal, and it’s more so for English”. Their awareness of differentiating the three languages reflects their conscious and subconscious patterns of identifying with one language more than the other: they seem to identify more closely with Chakma than Bangla and English. “My Chakma is like your Bangla; my Bangla is like your English. My English is like your Japanese” said Nayan when trying to outline how he feels about the languages. I found Nayan’s analogy to be quite insightful as it reflects not only how the three languages are at play differently for him and me, but also the way it demonstrates Nayan differentiates himself from me, Chakma from Bengali, which demonstrates his identity as he perceives himself through the differences. In addition, I found Priti’s response very intriguing too as she said:

If I speak from my experience, I feel like there are three people living together in my brain. I sound so different in each language that sometimes when I notice, it baffles me. The brain is weird, like I am speaking on the phone with a friend in Bangla and responding to my mother in Chakma and writing something on my laptop in English all at the same time. It happens naturally, I am not always consciously thinking and doing it.

Their individual responses show how language remains a crucial aspect of identity construction as they navigate their identities in different spaces and contexts through language.

4.2.6 Discussion

The responses of the participants show that Chakma as a language only exists in the domain of their families and community with no usage of the language outside of it to the extent that Chakma is being learnt at home with little to no opportunity to learn the language formally at schools. This has led to the participants unable to practice or learn the written version of the language with none of them now able to read or write the language. Their responses demonstrate their understanding of the language as something that is not 'useful' for more practical purposes such as jobs and careers; however, their attitude towards the language is not one of less importance. Rather, they perceive Chakma to be very important to them not only because they are mostly more comfortable speaking it, but also because this is what connects them to their family and roots, their primary sense of identity. They have, on numerous occasions, expressed Chakma to be 'theirs', to be their mother tongue, as something innate and natural to them; and hence, clearly demonstrating their sense of ownership and affiliation with Chakma language symbolizing their 'self' in contrast to Bangla and English, the 'Other' (Giles & Johnson, 1987). Seigel (2018) suggest that

language can be an ethnic identifier and works by either solidifying their ethnic identity, or as an incomplete form of ethnic identifier in cases of ethnic language coming to a gradual loss, or language is rejected as an ethnic identifier in communities who choose to identify their ethnicity with something other than their ancestral language. Seigel (2018) also explains that for many ethnic communities, their language is what sets them apart from other communities and helps them identify with their communities. From the participants' responses, it is observable that their language is a crucial aspect of their identification as a Chakma person or as Bawm person, who is Bawm and speaks Bawm, not Chakma. Thus demonstrating the importance of differentiating in constructing and navigating fluid facets of their identities from their ethnic identities (Giles & Johnson, 1987). Their attitude towards their ethnic language or mother tongue being something natural rather than something learnt, especially their schooling experience where they have to learn Bangla and English and not Chakma which also strengthens this perception, demonstrates how closely they identify with Chakma than the other two. 'Chakma' is natural and their own to them while Bangla is something they are adopting to sustain themselves as it seems.

Bangla is a language they view as one of need and importance as it provides them access to all the social and local facilities available. Again this helps highlight the decreasing ethnolinguistic vitality of Chakma in contrast to Bangla which is promoted by the state institutions and has a higher social need; and this along with the Chakma community being an ethnic minority community demographically also places Chakma on a downward slide of decreasing ethnolinguistic vitality in all three determining factors: social, demographic and institutional (Giles & Johnson, 1987). The participants have reported to speak Bangla fluently while some struggle here and there, but they have also mentioned struggling with communicating with Bangla at times due to the similarities of vocabulary between the languages but the differences in using the, as well as due to the phonetic differences. It

appears that communication, rather than fluency itself, is an area of difficulty. Regardless, it is notable that none of the participants have expressed any sense of attachment to the language and have not predominantly identified as 'Bengali' simultaneously with being 'Chakma' and hence Bangla appears to be not a language of affiliation (Rampton, 1995). Moreover, they have reported. The participants' strong association of Bangla as a language absolutely necessary to function and survive, so much so that Priti considers life to be 'over' in the case of not knowing Bangla, reflects how Bangla holds more power and provides greater access to society, education, career and other fields of services and facilities. This also highlights the state of ambivalence they find themselves in as they do view Bangla (the dominant language) as more useful and important while they also realize that this very significance of Bangla in one or another has encroached on Chakma language and culture to the degree that authentic Chakma is not as commonly spoken as in the past due to the constant influx of Bangla mixing in with the Chakma creating a form of 'hybridity' in both the linguistic and cultural planes (Bhabha, 1994). This further demonstrates the linguisticism at play as Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (2001) conceptualize it as a discrimination based on language and the processes behind it. The discrimination is observable when we think about how the facilities and services only become accessible with speaking Bangla and not Chakma. Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson (2001) explain how the dominant language is promoted by glorifying it while stigmatizing the other languages, and those who are willing to submit to this assimilation are rewarded as they are made to believe "they have made the right choice"; and highlights how this is a more effective and less-expensive way to facilitate assimilation (p.5480). This process is applicable to the case of the indigenous participants who all view Bangla as essential for their life: education and securing a job. Most of the participants have a history of moving out of CHT to more Bangla dominant localities to attain better education and as Amina mentioned, they were encouraged to learn Bangla from an

earlier age to be more fluent. Here knowing and using Bangla is providing them with a rewarding experience as it is providing them access to wider social domains and almost all sorts of facilities the nation provides, and hence, focusing more on Bangla appears to be the right decision in terms of practicality (Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 2001). Consequently, this moves them towards assimilating to Bangla while taking the focus off of the Chakma language to the extent that most of the Chakma people are unable to read or write Chakma, and as Shimul and Amina mentioned, most of them do not speak authentic Chakma and speak a mix of Chakma and Bangla, while there are words used by their older family members that neither of them understand. This highlights how over time the language loss is taking place and leading to an intergenerational decline as they conform more to assimilation due to practical reasons pertaining to accessibility. Another layer to the problem of linguistic imperialism becomes observable when English is taken into consideration as the space for English creates a gateway for linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1992; Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 1996).

The participants' responses all indicate that they perceive English as a language granting them greater access by allowing one to participate in global communication. Their attitude towards English is one of great importance as they express their views on English being extremely important but it appears that they have little to no use of English outside of the higher education classroom and media entertainment, both to a certain degree. Bengali people also value English more and associate it with a lot of potential regardless of how much the language actually serves them. The indigenous participants, unlike the Bengali people, take up English as a third language for the same reasons despite how little it actually serves them. Shimul, Nayan, and Priti expressed the importance of English in the era of globalization where it is the most valued as the common language for global communication unlike Bangla, let alone Chakma, that has no value in the international scope. This reflects linguistic

imperialism at play as it continues to encroach on linguistic communities reflecting its neo-colonial agenda in an increasingly globalized world (Phillipson, 1992). English as a language is being viewed with more importance and value, as 'superior' to Chakma due to its perceived instrumental use and its ascribed 'significance'. This also facilitates the association of Chakma as less valuable as a language that Sultana (2021) has reported to have found in her study.

Being at a complex trilingual junction, the participants often navigate through the interaction and use of these three languages as they construct and deconstruct their identities. While they primarily identify with Chakma and do so very strongly, they demonstrate the fluidity of identity as they express how they assume different tones and feel different in each language and that happens mostly unconsciously. Priti best explained the case by outlining her use of three languages simultaneously as she multi-tasks on three different social domains: family, peers and education. This shows that they do not assume their identity solely based on binary opposition but are constantly navigating through the complex interactions of three languages existing in their lives at the same time in the same space. Moreover, Nayan also mentioned that they constantly switch codes and oftentimes end up speaking in one language instead of the one they intended to speak in, mostly interchanging Bangla and Chakma. They use all three languages in different spaces as required and in a mix that suits and serves their purposes. This hybrid nature of their identity as Bhabha (1994) would explain is a natural process between the dominant culture and the less dominant ones as they impose their 'superior' views on the less dominant communities.

4.3 Language and Identity: Self and Other in the Public Sphere: Cultural Entanglements in Representation at the forefront of Nationalization and Globalization

In this section, I explore the other larger theme addressing my second research question that involves looking at the way navigation between the three languages with regards to cultural entanglements at the broader national and global scope impact the process of identity construction and demonstration. I first present the findings thematically as I interpret them before discussing them comprehensively.

4.3.1 Schooling and the Public Sphere

School is often the first interaction of a child in the public sphere, with the social world outside their family, and in the case of indigenous children, school is often their first point of contact with the national language and culture that is different from the one at home. This can often result in some degree of difficulty and challenges for the indigenous students as Amina confirms by saying she faced quite the difficulty as a child when she went to school and started to learn Bangla and English as it was not practiced at home while she spoke Chakma at home instead. Her school also strictly prohibited speaking in Chakma in class which caused another degree of discomfort. As mentioned previously by her, the lack of certain Bangla phonetic components in Chakma made it hard for her to pronounce a range of different Bangla words. Nayan also shared the different challenges Chakma students face in a Bangla medium classroom (the issue of tui-tumi-apni for instance) that often makes other students make fun of them. He further explained that for the Bengali students, “Bangla is something they come to school knowing, but we go to school to learn Bangla”. Priti, who studied in Dhaka until Grade 3, also explained how she was the only Chakma student in her class and it alienated her from the class. She also faced difficulty in mastering Bangla.

Other than the difficulties surrounding learning the language, the participants have reported a number of issues they face being indigenous students as they navigate their identities in the public domains. Amina explained that during her school years, she was often faced with “weird” and insensitive questions by her Bengali peers who asked her if she ate frogs, if they don’t wear clothes at home, and so on. “I felt like an alien sometimes when I had to hear these things”. She further reported that when she started her undergraduate journey in Dhaka, she was confused and a little lost like every other freshman. “I did not see many people who looked like me. Once my mother and I were standing by the road discussing something, we saw another student who looked like us and my mother approached her and started talking to her in Chakma but she wasn’t understanding anything. It was then I realized she was probably a foreigner and spoke to her in English.” In addition, she discussed how she is always approached by people in the public buses and they speak to her in English thinking she is a foreigner. Regarding this she said “this infuriates me because it is a matter of common sense. How often do you see foreigners riding our overcrowded dirty local buses? Japanese Korean people look like us, yes, but the country has Chakma people too who like this.”

Similarly, Nirmala discussed how she noticed that everywhere, “in a classroom full of students, we obviously are the minority. Wherever we go, even if we are hanging out with our friend circle, I’ve noticed that I am the minority. Always ... No one speaks my language and they will not understand my language and we are always speaking in English or Bangla”. She further adds “As indigenous and marginalized students, we often feel embarrassed to speak our own language. It is true and I have also observed this in others. There is the issue of bullying and mockery, and our society is full of racist people ... coming in contact with racist slurs such as ‘small-eyed’ people, ‘Chengis Khan’, ‘Ching-chong’ makes indigenous people more compelled not to use their own language in public spaces”. Moreover, Sirsty touched on

similar experiences saying she experiences a form of ‘identity-crisis’ trying to balance both languages.

It’s like an ‘identity crisis’ when you try to manage and balance both: Bangla outside and Chakma at home. I interacted with both Bengali and Chakma people, it was difficult as a child but I have learnt to manage growing up. This is much harder for students from remote areas who move to Dhaka after let's say SSC or HSC. They get mocked for their accent and other things which further frustrates them.

Nayan addressed another concern: he explained how he feels he is behind a lot of his Bengali peers in terms of many things due to language barriers. He explained that in 2019 he first got to know about Ayman Sadik in a Red Crescent camp. “All that I knew was that there is a platform named 10 Minutes School¹. But I realized that my Bengali peers had known about him and the platform in a lot more detail from earlier. It’s like one of the examples of how I feel we lag behind due to language barriers.”

With regards to the public sphere, Priti discussed how she did not feel a part of her community as she found it very difficult to adjust to the culture after she shifted to CHT from Dhaka. However, as an adult, she realized that speaking her language and representing it in the university is part of what gives her her identity and she feels it is also a part of her responsibility towards her identity and community. “There are a lot of people here: Cambodian, Vietnamese, Indian, Sri-Lankan, and more. Everyone upholds their identity and I realized I must too.”

¹10 Minutes School is an online educational platform offering courses on a variety of topics and skill development.

4.3.2 Linguistic Exposure and Identity: Education and Media

4.3.2.1 Education

When discussing the different cases of linguicism and related issues the participants faced in the public spheres, one of the common reasons they pointed out was a lack of awareness and ignorance of most people regarding the different ethnic languages and cultures. When asked about their exposure to Chakma language and culture in the educational curriculum and setting, Amina responded saying she read a small chapter back in her school days about ethnic communities but it was sparse with not much information. She further added that during her university she also did not come across content related to ethnic language and literature. “It’s like studying western literature in our undergraduate program”. Shimul also reported saying she does not recall learning much about her culture through her textbooks. Nirmala reported that she herself also experienced the same, and that “there are no schools in Bangladesh where indigenous languages are being taught. So we don’t get the chance as indigenous students to learn our own language or get connected to how we should be speaking our own literature.” Priti and Shimul mentioned that there are a number of different folklore and oral literature that they cannot preserve due to the written version of the language not being practiced and preserved too well. This also is erasing their narratives and history from the wider world. Priti also points out that the lack of exposure to the language is obvious because “why else do we Chakma students not know our own language that well? It’s because at the end of the day you will need Bangla and English. It’s good that some books are now available in Chakma up to primary level but even if you learn Chakma you will need Bangla and English for jobs and higher education.”

Nayan recalled that he came across some misinformation being presented in some materials where the main food of Chakma people was said to be rice and wine. “Wine was never our

main food; it is something that got integrated into our consumption habits with time but was never a part of our authentic culture”. Speaking of food, he also brought up how there is a sense of double standards as their food is presented as smelly and unappetizing: “It surprises me how Bengali people love Shutki (dried fish) and don’t find it smelly but they feel disgusted by us consuming Napti.” He pointed out that he feels there is a sense of ‘wanting to learn’ on the surface of everything but not much is being effectively conveyed. To illustrate he said “I hope you don’t take this otherwise, but I’ve noticed that when our honorable ministers go abroad, they are only ever talking about Bengali people and culture. If you do not uphold the entire nation and all its people, and only talk about yourself, doesn’t it look a bit weird?”.

4.3.2.2 Media

When asked if they feel there is a lack of media representation of Chakma culture, Amina asserted that “the media only shows what will bring them profit, what people are interested in, and people are not very interested in this”. Nayan discusses that the media mostly portrays the issue through the lens of tourism. He also mentioned that the media often does not cover the communicable violence let alone the actual cultural landscape of CHT, specially the remote areas. He explained that the military jurisdiction over the areas also restrict access and so even if someone wants to explore or cover the issues or cultural aspects, it becomes quite difficult. Moving from a lack of representation to misrepresentation, Shimul elaborated on the issue by explaining that they promote stereotypes and often exoticize the community and over accentuate them to make it look like a ‘fantasy’. Moreover, she adds that whenever Biju comes up, BTV or other local TV channels would just stream “people dancing and signing with bottles and blah blah, they show how the people are living in houses on bamboo lofts in the hills, I mean all sorts of typical and stereotypical stuff ... they do not show what is currently happening or the actual reality. Biju’s here, so they’ll just put on the songs and

dances, that's it." She also explains that because this is what people see, this is what they know or perceive and continue stereotyping indigenous people.

4.3.3 Biju in Dhaka and CHT

Amina, Priti and Shimul who have spent and are spending varying degrees of time in Dhaka all reported saying they are usually unable to celebrate Biju in Dhaka. Amina recounted how her semester finals were always in mid-April and the only holiday was 14th April with an exam on the 15th. "There's no way anyone would skip an exam to attend Biju" said Amina. She mentioned that schools in CHT allow a week-long holiday for celebration unlike Dhaka. She further points out that the government only recognizes Buddha Purnima, not Biju. Shimul and Nayan also shared similar experiences of having exams during that time. Priti who had lived in Dhaka until grade 3 said she never knew what Biju really was until she moved to CHT. Being more used to Dhaka and its culture of 'family units', Priti had a hard time adjusting in CHT where the culture was more communal. "Biju is celebrated with the entire community together, not with just the family and neighbors. One of the traditions of Biju is that you cannot refuse anyone who comes to your house during the period, no matter who that is, and I was not used to this at all."

Nayan said "Language and culture complement one another. We will only be able to relay our culture to the younger generations, if we are unable to protect and preserve our language properly." When talking about Biju, he explained that due to the gradual distance with the language and culture and a lack of accommodation from the state, a lot of 'oposhanskriti' or corruptions in the cultural and traditional practices are being observed. "We are having to celebrate the main event, 'Mul Biju' on the 14th but it is actually supposed to be on the 13th".

4.3.4 Discussion

The experiences and perspectives shared by the participants in their responses demonstrate the ways their identities shift with the different forces of assimilation acting on them from their surrounding social environment. Amina's experience of early schooling where no Chakma was allowed reflects the institutional focus on Bangla as well as stigmatizing the Chakma language. Their collective responses show their sense of alienation from their peers and wider social environment as they are 'always the minority in any given situation' as Nirmala outlined. This reflected a sense of awareness of being different from the others. As observed from their responses, the difference did not produce much positive experiences, rather it was the root of a number of negative experiences in the wider social domains. All of them have encountered bullying, mockery and faced insensitive and offensive questions to varying degrees in their educational setting. As Amina pointed out, the lack of a few phonetic elements in Chakma compared to Bangla makes it difficult to speak in Bangla sometimes and they have a different accent than the other Bengali students, and they are usually mocked and laughed at for this. As Nirmala pointed out, this makes them more inclined to assimilate and not use their mother tongue. The pressure of being different and not in a good way further pushes them towards assimilation which is more rewarding as Skutnabb-Kangas (2001) would put it. The bullying and mockery can be viewed as micro-aggressions stemming from linguisticism and it is important to look into what is causing this and how it impacts their identity with regards to the shift in languages. In order to explore the linguisticism and nationalizing agendas at play in facilitating the assimilation, this research explored the case of education and media among many other institutions affecting the issue. From the responses it appeared that there is a general lack of representation and exposure to Chakma language and culture in the educational setting as well as media. The participants discussed how they had little to no exposure to their own culture or language in the classroom or materials. The lack

of information creates ignorance that may be the cause of the aforementioned negative social experiences as the participants have expressed that their Bengali peers do so because they do not know any better. Bhabha (1990) discusses the way nationalization takes place is by identification through a sense of nationalism and by trapping the people of a nation in certain narratives. The narratives in question exclude the ethnic communities and thus giving them little space to demonstrate their ethnic identities as strongly in more public domains. This is so severe that some of the participants have brought up being taken as a foreigner by other people: the first assumption by seeing them is not that they could be one of the many ethnic communities in the nation, but a foreigner, something they are more used to viewing through international media. In addition to the deficient representation, there is the case of misrepresentation and subtle perpetuation of false information and narratives through the media that exoticizes the community and stigmatizes them too. This further enrages the community and distances them as Shimul outlined, while also pushing them more towards assimilating to avoid being associated with that narrative. This is where a sense of ambivalence develops as they navigate through their hybridized identities (Bhabha, 1994). Another one of the nationalizing agendas facilitated by educational institutions and the media revolve around Biju. The participants have shared their experiences of not being able to attend Biju as exams are always held in mid-April and the only holiday they get is for Bengali New Year. Neither the state nor the educational institutions recognize Biju, one of the most important festivals for the Chakma community who are the largest ethnic minority community in Bangladesh. Nayan outlined that they now need to celebrate the festival on the 14th instead of the 13th of April as they do not get any holiday, and paired with the gradual language loss, it is becoming more and more difficult for them to preserve and hold onto their ethnic identity. The media does not extensively cover Biju and portrays a stereotypical representation of the festival as explained by Shimul. This further sheds light on the ways the

national narrative, surrounding our daily lives and constructing our identities, excludes the ethnic communities from the national imagination as they are not associated with the 'textual affiliation' instrumental to create the sense of 'nationness' that guides our sense of identity and national identity (Bhabha, 1990).

4.4 Conclusion

The findings presented and discussed in the chapter highlight the participants' affiliation with Chakma language that heavily influences the construction of their ethnic identity as well as their identity as an individual. Their strong identification with and ownership of Chakma over Bangla even though they are just as Bangladeshi as the mainstream Bengali people expresses the demonstration of both the fluid nature of identity itself as well as their ethnic identity through differentiating from in-group and out-group (Giles & Johnson, 1987). The increasing instrumentalization of Bangla and English that are hence deemed more useful and important due to the access they provide to larger social and public domains and all forms of associated facilities, create a sense of ambivalence where Bangla is deemed superior and simultaneously there is a degree of lack of affiliation and understanding of the negative impact language's instrumental value on the Chakma language as it further decreases the space for expressing and demonstrating their ethnic culture and language (Bhabha, 1994). Moreover, the push towards assimilation through naturalization that promotes Bangla language and culture in all aspects further strengthens the idea of a national identity that is homogenous and excludes the different facets of diverse ethnic identities (Bhabha, 1990). The study has found that nationalizing agendas put into action through policies, education and media that involve a lack of exposure and representation in addition to a degree of misrepresentation further fuels the process of assimilation as the dominant linguistic and cultural community remain uninformed. Furthermore, in addition to the ignorance bred by these processes, it also gives rise to linguisticism and linguicide as observed from the participants' experiences of being

mocked, bullied and facing a number of awkward situations when interacting with the broader social and public domains (Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1996). Another layer to the problem is added as we step from pressure to assimilate through nationalization, and look at the neo-colonial forces enabled through globalization. English as a language has been observed to be perceived as very important regardless of the degree of actual use it has in their lives. The participants have noted the necessity of English in granting access to global communication and have also mentioned their difficulties with the language as it a third language on the pile of their linguistic repertoire, hence showcasing the impacts of linguistic imperialism still at play today (Phillipson, 1992).

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Language serving as one of the most important outlets of our expressions is vital to the demonstration of our identities in any context. An essential facet of one's identity in relation to language is one's ethnic identity, and this is more so the case when the ethnic identity is different from the national or mainstream one. With Bangladesh having a diverse multilingual landscape, the linguistic and ethnic identities of ethnic minority communities require exploration as they are not only faced with the challenge of negotiating their ethnic identity with the national identity, but also that with the global one. The study has explored the issue through a Poststructuralist approach to find the fluidity of identity and the ways it is under the constant process of construction and deconstruction in the light of changing contexts. Investigating the perceptions of the three languages, the study has found the increasing prioritization of Bangla and English over Chakma followed by the reduced space to express their ethnic language and culture under the broader umbrella of national identity looming over their ethnic identities.

5.1 Limitations and Future Directions

The dissertation has only interviewed five participants all of whom are at varying levels of university education; and the study has had limited focus on cultural identity. For future research to enrich the domain of knowledge in the subject matter, more focus can be placed on the demographics: for instance, interviewing older generations and younger ones to explore intergenerational changes. While the research involved conducting in-depth interviews, due to time constraints I was unable to substantiate the interview accounts with everyday observations of local practices. Hence, an ethnographic approach in addition to the interviews could be helpful for future studies. Furthermore, the study is limited mostly to the

Chakma community, issues surrounding language and identity can also be explored with regards to the other ethnic minority communities facing a degree of double-marginalization.

5.2 Concluding Thoughts and Implications

Having taken a Poststructuralist approach and analyzing the data, the study has found the process of identity construction to be continuous and unfixed. In an attempt to investigate the perceptions of the participants regarding the three languages individually, and in relation to one another, it has been found that Chakma as a language is viewed as something connecting them to their families and community. However, Bangla and English receive more priority and importance due to their 'practical' use over Chakma. The study has found that the Chakma language is undergoing decline over generations and in general due to the increasing instrumental and social value ascribed to Bangla and English. Chakma remains behind the list of priorities holding on to the linguisticism and linguisticide (Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 1996) as a language upholding tradition and connecting people with their families- so much so that most of the Chakma people no longer practice written Chakma and cannot read or write either. Bangla on the other hand receives greater importance as it is the national language and is required for any and every form of communication outside of one's household. Likewise, English is also given more priority as it is seen as more 'important' and necessary regardless of the degree of necessity and use of English in their daily lives. In response to these perceptions uncovered, it was also found that the nationalization processes promoting Bangla language and culture, and the neocolonial and imperialist influence of English encroaches on the expression of their ethnic identities in wider social domains primarily through the lack of authentic representation and exposure to ethnic language and cultures in education and media. The issues surrounding representation and exposure as part of the nationalizing agendas pushing towards an assimilated national identity further shrinks the space to express their linguistic, ethnic and cultural identities in the broader social and

public domains leading them to a state of ambivalence where they neither can fully conform to the national identity nor can they fully retain their unique ethnic identity resulting in a culturally hybrid identity guided by their multilingual context (Bhabha, 1990; 1994). This exploration not only contributes by adding to the existing literature and paving way for further research, but also helps shed light on the much needed intervention in language planning and policy as well as the importance of developing an inclusive curriculum that creates the space for multiple identity positions of different ethnic citizens by demonstrating the complex relationship of language and identity for the ethnic minority communities, and the influence of language in making the classroom or any public space linguistically and culturally inclusive. More than that, it helps understand the role of media and education in representation, and the necessity of initiating the communication of authentic information that would raise awareness among the people of the dominant culture and facilitate an inclusive environment for the ethnic minority communities to freely demonstrate their very different yet intertwined identity positions.

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Appendix A**Interview Schedule**

1. Where did you grow up most of your life?
2. What were your schools like?
3. Which language was the medium of instruction in your classes?
4. How many languages do you speak? How did you learn each?
5. Which one are you most comfortable using? Why is that?
6. Which language would you say is the most important for you?
7. When listening to music or watching drama or any other form of media entertainment, which language do you come in more contact with usually? Which one would you prefer?
8. What do you feel about Bangla as a language?
9. What about Chakma language?
10. What about English?
11. How would you compare each language depending on how you use and feel about them?
12. Could you tell me a little bit about different cultural festivals or traditions in the Chakma community? Do you always celebrate them? How? Do you enjoy it?
13. What is 14th April to you? How do you usually celebrate it?
14. If applicable: How are the festivals/ celebrations different in CHT than Dhaka?
15. Do you feel there is a lack of media coverage on ethnic cultures? What do you feel about it?
16. Do you think there is a lack of exposure to the Chakma language in textbooks? What do you feel about that?

- a. In case they feel there is a lack: How do you think that affects education or identity in the classroom in general?
 - b. What do you think can be done considering Bangla and English also need to be taught? (if they believe both languages are necessary)
17. How often were you exposed to Chakma/ other indigenous literature in classrooms? What do you feel about that? Do you think that can affect the way young learners learn to perceive themselves?
18. Do you think that it is perhaps difficult to use the Chakma language in more broader social settings such as university social circles or programs?
- a. Does that somehow hinder the way you want to express yourself and culture?
19. Do you feel that using one language over the other, in any given scenario, affects the way you express yourself? Does one language make you feel more at home than the other?
20. Does the language you choose to use affect the way you view yourself?
21. Would you say you consciously switch from one language to another depending on different settings? If so, could you perhaps give a few examples?
22. Does it ever feel like you are having trouble or discomfort expressing something about yourself when you are using Bangla or English? For example, sometimes we cannot find the right word for something in English when trying to explain something in the classroom because it does not translate well perhaps?
23. How would you describe the overall multilingual situation of Bangladesh?
- a. Does Bangla/ English seem to be predatory in your opinion? Why/ Why not?
24. Do you think you want to teach your children all three languages?
- a. How would you teach Chakma/ English/ Bangla?

Research Participant Consent Form

I confirm that I have agreed to participate in the research study by Halima Hasin Tofa of the Brac Institute of Languages, Brac University. I confirm that I am aware of the research methods and objectives. I understand that:

- My participation is completely voluntary and I can withdraw my participation at any point
- I can ask reasonable questions about the research methods and objectives
- My identity remains anonymous throughout the study
- The interviews I am participating in will be audio-recorded and transcribed to be used for the research