

**INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES IN BANGLADESH & BILINGUALISM: A  
QUALITATIVE STUDY**

By

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A thesis submitted to the Department of English and Humanities in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
B. A in English

English and Humanities

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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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## **Approval**

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## Abstract

Bangladesh is a country of various cultures. People from different cultures reside in Bangladesh. Language is one of the integral parts of culture. Without language a person would be incomplete. There are around forty-two established languages in our motherland. Among these languages, thirty-six languages are spoken by ethnic minority groups who are also known as indigenous people. The other six languages are known as non-ethnic minority languages.

This study explores Bangladeshi Indigenous Language and Bilingualism. People who can speak more than one language equally are known as bilingual. Its nature is interrelated with various fields such as anthropology, psychology, linguistics, and the field of communication. As bilingualism is a major part of my thesis paper, I explored bilingual people and their languages. Indigenous people are counted as bilingual because they can speak in two languages, and in this case one is their mother tongue (L1) and another is Bangla (L2). My focus was on how bilingual people acquire two languages at the same time, how proficient they are between L1 and L2 and why they are detached from their mother tongue.

The qualitative method is considered to be the most suitable method for this study as I tried to understand the phenomena in details by providing a rich detail.

For this research, I interviewed nine indigenous people who belong to different indigenous tribes. Among my participants, some of them are Garo, Chakma, Marma, Hajong etc. Mostly are universities students, few of them are service holders.

The output I have finally gotten is that most of my participants are almost detached from their mother tongue because of pursuing education in Bangla and English. Yet, they have a desire to work on their mother tongue so that their mother tongue can be sustained, spread and known worldwide. Because their languages are not used much outside their communities, their languages

are not valued in different aspects of lives. Therefore, these languages may be extinct in the future unless proper steps are taken to revive these languages. They want the government of Bangladesh to take initiative to protect their local language otherwise the next indigenous generation will probably lose their ancestors' mother tongue.

*Dedicated to:*

My father, without him I could not have come across this journey.

My late mother, who had a wish to see me as a graduate,

My maternal aunt, who always gives me limitless courage and mental support.

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## **Indigenous Languages in Bangladesh and Bilingualism**

### **Indigenous Languages in Bangladesh and Bilingualism: A Qualitative study**

#### **Chapter: 1**

##### **Introduction:**

Language is an asset for a nation. As a nation, indigenous peoples are not exceptional. Their mother tongues are not only a way of communication but also a boundless and tricky knowledge system that expanded years over years. Bilingualism requires that an individual can speak two languages simultaneously. This is one of the most important facts of ELT. It helps to build up cognitive abilities in those people who are bilingual, making them more creative and fit for language adaptation. As per my thesis topic, I wanted to work with those bilingual people who live in Bangladesh. In Bangladesh bilingual people are mostly indigenous people who are from tribal areas. Such as Chakma, Garo, Santal, Khasia and so on. So, my main target of research is how bilingual people can make them capable of speaking in more than one language, what types of problems they must face as bilingual and what is the condition of their L1, learning L2 afterwards.

Everyone belonging to their sociocultural groups has their own mother tongue. Mother tongue is that language which a person learns to speak first in his/her lifetime. Approximately 6,500 languages and twenty-three mother tongues or L1 are spoken all over the world. It also carries robust emotional connectivity as it relates to the mother. Thomas and Collier note that (2002), mother tongue or L1 played a key role in the achievement of the highest level of bilingualism and related success in their school education all the achievements of their schools, their mother tongue played an important role. In the same context,

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limitations of L1 are the main forecaster for both the competence of students and acquiring L2 which is English in most cases (Kangas, 2004, p.3).

In Bangladesh's context, Bengali is our mother tongue and English is the second language. The neighboring country India has a variety of different languages such as Hindi, Bengali, Odessa, Panjabi, Tamil, Malayalam, Telugu and so on. The USA is the biggest example of vivid mother tongues. There are around 350 and 430 languages in the USA. Apart from English, there are Spanish, Chinese, Tagalog, Polish, Haitian Creole, Armenian and so many other languages are spoken.

However, in Bangladesh except Bengali there are also few languages which are called as indigenous languages. Indigenous community speaks in these languages. There are thirty-five indigenous languages. These are Chakma, Mandi, Santal, Mro, Patra, Rakhaine, Tripura, Lushai, Bhumji, Mei-tei Manipuri, Munda, Khumi and many other languages. In Rajshahi, Chittagong and its hill tracts, greater Mymensingh area, Sylhet, Barguna and Patuakhali are known as the living zone of indigenous people. According to many surveys, two or three million people speak in their local mother tongue.

### **1.1 Indigenous people and their languages:**

The majority of Garos live in the hill areas of Sylhet, Meghalaya and greater Mymensingh. Some of them also live in Sunamganj, Rangpur and Sripur as well. Their local mother tongue is known as 'Achik Kata'. Around 300,000 people speak the Chakma language in the Chattagram Hill Tracts. Furthermore, 2000,000 people of Arakan's local language are 'Magh'. Some indigenous people who live in Rangpur and Sylhet speak in 'Oraon'. The ratio of Oraon speakers is comparatively higher in Rangpur than Sylhet. A tribal nation named 'Khasia' mostly lives in hill

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areas of Sylhet and is spoken in ‘Oyar’. Sinteng and Lalang tribes also live in the same hill area. Moreover, 250 years ago the Manipur language was spoken in Srimangal. The most interesting fact is that this language is also used as a local language in Tejgaon, Dhaka. At present, in Habiganj, Maulvi Bazar, Sunamganj and Sylhet 50,000 people speak in Manipur.

Apart from all these, in Bangladesh around 15,000 to 20,000 people speak in ‘Munda’ language. In the northern area of Bangladesh, most people are Santal. ‘Hajang’ is spoken by North Mymensingh and Tangail’s people. Additionally, the Kachharis tribe speaks in their own native languages. The oldest tribes who live in the hills area of Chhattagram speak in Kuki, Tipra and Magh. About two thousand tribal people named Riyang and Murong native language is ‘Tipra’. Once tribal people who speak in Tipra used to live in Cumilla’s Lalmai hill areas. Moreover, nine thousand Bangladeshi people speak in ‘Malpahadi’. Some Sylheti people speak ‘Mikir’. An indigenous language named ‘Sadri’ is spoken by Mahato, Ganju, Malo, Kolkamar and some Oraon.

Though because of the state language Bangla, many indigenous people are about to forget their own mother tongue. Especially the new generation who have never been to their roots or mother lands, they are not that much connected with their mother tongue. Most of them are fluent in Bangla, probably have very less fluency in their mother tongue. One of the main reasons behind this is they have to use their state language Bangla in their educational institutions, workplaces and many kinds of formal events. So, they have to be fluent in Bangla otherwise they will fail to build up their future in this competitive society. According to Reza, Bangladeshi people fought for their own mother tongue, and they won. Sadly, they did not remember other people’s language ownership who is minority in the society (Chakma A. and Chakma P., 2014, p.85).

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Even now these days many Tipras who live in the hill areas in Chattagram speak in Bangla. Some indigenous nations such as Pator, Hadi, Rajbangshi, and Koch speak in Bangla as well. Over all 300,000 plus people of tribal areas can speak Bangla fluently. Few subjects such as prosody, folklore, philology, phonology and idioms of the Chakma language are very much connected with Bangla. Though there is no written structure and shortage of students, any indigenous language cannot take place in the school's curriculum. Furthermore, indigenous people who are educated enough use Bangla for writing purposes. It is quite impossible to teach Roman script to any tribal nation except Magh and Chakma. It is because these two nations have their ownscripts.

Apart from these local languages, they have enriched literature in their own languages. They have poems, songs, fables and legends from their previous fugitive life. Their plays in local languages have similarities with '*Mymensingh Gitika*'. However, the Himalayan foothills people's spoken language Ballads are like the folk literature of Bangla. The aspects of linguistics are very close to the early stage of Bangla literature.

### **1.2 Indigenous Bilingualism:**

Bilingualism plays a bigger part in linguistics. Bilingualism means a person who has an ability to speak in more than one language. People can be bilingual in two ways. One is that he/she could acquire two languages at the same time in childhood. Another is that he/she can learn L2 after acquiring their first language. There are so many people who are bilingual by birth which means they grew up by acquiring two languages equally. For example, in the USA many immigrants' children usually acquire L1 and L2 at the same time. They learn their native language from their parents and other members of their family. On the other hand, they learn their L2 (English) in schools at the same time. Although all bilinguals are not immigrants in the USA. It is very common for Americans to use their native language at home and English at schools, offices or other state works. According to William Mackey, bilingualism cannot be a fact of any language, it is one of

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the features of the uses of its own. It is not only a trait of a code but also an implication. It cannot belong to a territory's language but also a remission for an individual. So we can say that bilingualism does not only directly affect an individual's cognitive perspective but also an individual's point of view (Wei, 2000, p.7).

In terms of indigenous people, they are also known as bilingual. Especially those who are not living in the hill tracts or unprivileged areas. They are bilingual because at home they usually speak in their mother tongue with their family members including their tribal nation's fellows. On the other hand, they speak in Bangla in their schools, colleges, universities and workplaces. Among all the indigenous nations, Khasias and Garos are bilingual. By birth they acquire two languages: Bangla and their local languages. Yet Santal and the Oraons do not know their own local languages. As a lingua franca they use Bangla. Even though indigenous people who can speak English fluently are known as multilingual or trilingual. Especially those who study in the universities they mainly know three languages: their mother tongue, Bangla and English.

However, as a researcher I wanted to include indigenous languages into my research to make sure that the resources I have used and participants I have taken interviews for my research all are related to that subject. People who have given interviews are all of them are indigenous language speakers. As indigenous languages represent indigenous culture, so that as a researcher I had to collect so much deeper information about my research topic through my participants, articles and other resources. Furthermore, I had to understand those communities' languages which I have worked for and had a great scope to make a good relationship with all of my participants so that I would be able to gain knowledge about other cultures as well. As my B.A major is in ELT, it is important to know about many other communities that speak different languages and have different dialects.

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### **Chapter: 2**

#### **Review of literature**

Nowadays loss of language or death of language become a very common thing in various regions in the entire world. So, Bangladesh is not exception. The disappearance of indigenous languages in Bangladesh is relatable to so many cultural and socio-political factors and it is the insensibility of policy and planning making of a language at the same time. Though it is an important fact that because of the domination of various languages over a language that is not much used in the many official works, this type of domination can bring an ultimatum for the languages of minority groups. For this paper, I collected some literature reviews from various sources. In these literature reviews many critics, educators, writers, and philosophers shared their thoughts regarding the loss of indigenous languages.

#### **Percentage of indigenous language speaker:**

According to Durnnian, 45 indigenous nations are living in Bangladesh. These indigenous people's national census is very disputable because of the racism issues which are the witness of past background history of our tribal nations based on the data of 2001. Thus Czermak, Delanghe and Weng claimed that the reason behind a state's cultural condition becoming breakable is the changes of political, economic and social (Cavallaro and Tania, 2009, p.195).

#### **UN's Contribution:**

According to Burman sighted in Persson (1998), an important document of the United Nations about indigenous people was published in 1957. In 1989 this document was published again and it was written about the securities issues and mixed statements of tribal, semi-tribal and indigenous people. Hence some countries all over the world approved these statements. For the next several years the UN published so many statements regarding indigenous people and these statements also

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portrayed the discriminations of indigenous people from what they have faced in their society, workplaces, colleagues and neighbors.

### **Proposal of NEPB:**

The National Education Policy of Bangladesh proposed a L1 related education curriculum which is for the Bangladeshi indigenous people. According to the present language studies of Bangladesh, this proposed policy will give a new view towards many languages of minority groups where it was more focused for the monolingual people in the past compared to the present (Rahman, 2011, p.9). Furthermore, According to Cavallard, there are many factors which take away minority groups from their own mother tongue. For some reason these minority groups must give priority to the majority's language. Though two languages should have equal priorities at the same time (McNeish and Borchgrevink, 2007, p.16).

### **Non-native Speaker's View:**

According to Jongman and Sereno, adult people who speak in non-native languages, it can be tough for them to learn the native language and its vowels and consonants. Even though the tone of a native speaker and a non-native speaker are not the same. A non-native speaker's tone of language reflects that he or she learnt that language very recently (Werker, Chen and Yeung, 2012, p.124). According to Barter, indigenous people live in rural and the education system they have is not up to the mark. The indigenous populations are poor and unprivileged compared to the majority group of a country. It is because of that, they do not get that chance to perceive a higher quality education. Though it does not mean these people do not have merits or they cannot be intellectual like other majority groups of people (Garza, 2006, p.46).



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### **Education Policies for Bilingual People:**

According to Hornberger, in many countries of Africa and Latin America they have chosen a particular system to accomplish a goal in a specific language which can bring changes in the position of the speaker. Hence, the education policies for bilingualism, the most common means of applying instructions created by a new system which also make an impact on both economic and social development on many tribal communities (Poulson, 2007, p.2).

### **Survey of USA's SIL:**

According to Crystal, the US Summer Institute of Linguistics did a survey in 1999 about languages. In that survey, they found that there is only one speaker left of fifty-one languages, there were one hundred speakers of five hundred languages and there are one thousand speakers of one thousand five hundred languages. Lastly, this survey wanted to present that there are five thousand languages that have less than one thousand speakers for each language. Even though more than 96% of languages all over the world are spoken by not more than 4% of the people of their own region (May,2013, pg.2).

### **Statement of GoB:**

According to Sultana, in Bangladesh there are around 45 languages; these are Santali, Chakma, Kuki, Munda, Khasia, Garo, Malpahad, Hajang and so on. All these 45 languages are used by different indigenous communities which is claimed by GoB (Government of Bangladesh)'s latest Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (Bhuiyan, 2006, pg.2). There is a study of Kelly and Karidakis, that documented the ratio of speakers who speak a language apart from English for so many years according to the demographic and it is proven that there is a common tendency towards their own language translation in English. On the other hand, the languages of indigenous people are vanishing from the language category (Islam, 2020, p.79). Additionally, according to Kosonen, Young, and Malone, they stated that the Government of Bangladesh ensured to fulfill the goals of

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education within 2015; still the indigenous languages are not included in the Bangladesh curriculum of education. Even though these indigenous languages are not nationally recognized in the education curriculum. According to Uddin, the majority of indigenous children are unfamiliar with their own culture, languages and practices only because of these language discriminations. The Bangladeshi education system does not give the proper recognition to their native languages so that they would not become able to hold their own culture strongly (Sultana, 2011, p.28).

### **Statistics of the Bangladesh Bureau:**

There is a statistic given by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics in 1991, there are 46 different types of indigenous groups in our country, and they all are known as 'Adibashi'. These tribal groups are different from the majority because of their unique culture, languages and beliefs which are completely unavailable in the regular social life. Among the entire population, these indigenous nations contain 1.13%. According to Sarker, these indigenous people are the most unprivileged and the neediest people of the society. They do not have a good enough education, a healthy lifestyle, shelter, own properties, unemployment, and a combination of social and cultural shortage. Moreover, they are also neglected from mainstream society which makes an impact on the education of indigenous children because they feel discrimination in the educational institution (Davey and Sarker, 2009, p.3).

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### **Impact of indigenous people's lifestyle:**

According to Bhuiyan, indigenous people' lifestyles are not constant. They have to be distracted from their own culture and society to lead a better life. So they have to move from their motherlands and come to the area of the majority of people to improve their lifestyle. For that reason, their future descendants sadly stay away from their mother tongue. Even though the parents of the future generation do not encourage them to keep practicing their mother tongue. It is because their mother tongue is not used for any official purposes. So, they think practicing their mother tongue would be meaningless. On the other hand, Razaul and Faquire stated that one speech community indigenous people belong from. So, when they shift to another place for a better lifestyle, they use Bengali as their Lingua Franca to communicate. Of this, indigenous peoples become bilingual as they have to speak both L1 and L2 at the same time (Awal, 2019, p.319).

### **Health issues of Indigenous people:**

According to UNICEF indigenous people have a lot of health issues compared to the majority group. The main reason behind this is they have less education. It is because of this less education indigenous women do not know much about health care. For that reason, the Government of Bangladesh took initiative to provide the minimum education to the indigenous women so that they can know the basic care of their health. According to the study of Chakrabarty and Sarker, a smaller number of girls of many tribe nations such as Garo, Santal, Oraon, and Koch and so on do not have the right to go to high school. Less education, early marriage, family liabilities are the

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main reasons for not practicing their mother tongue. They do not have the support to continue their education and practice their own mother tongue (Chakma, 2014, p.110).

### **Solidarity and Equality:**

According to Balosa, to imply a pragmatic culture and human respectability every nation should deserve equal priority. Without maintaining solidarity, a country cannot be strong in terms of socio-economic development. So, giving priorities to all the cultures, all the languages including minorities should get equal priorities. He also claimed that any language cannot be disconnected from the speakers of that language. So that every language requires care to its speakers. Even though a language can be injured by its speakers because of subjugation and dishonoring (Sonntag, 2003, p.18).

### **Historical Incidents:**

Annamalai claimed that a few historical incidents have occurred previously for the use of mother tongue which included both advantages and disadvantages for the current system of practicing mother tongue. Additionally, many former British colonies obtained learning their mother tongue as a part of uneven development. For example, in India people thought that this British curriculum for mother tongue was belittled in front of power. But this combination of English with major Indian languages enraged people and a huge awakening occurred which resulted in modernization of all the languages of India. Furthermore, according to Kosonen , many countries such as Vietnam, China and Russia accepted the ideal of communism and gave instructions in their mother tongue to dismiss inequality and encourage the practice of comradeship and equality between different languages and groups. Yet this did not distribute all the necessary things required for education equally, but this played an important role in imposing rules, regulations and laws (Benson, 2005, p.3)

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### **Chapter: 3**

#### **Methodology**

As for my thesis my topic is “Bangladeshi Indigenous Language and Bilingualism”, so my focus was on how an indigenous person acquires L1 and L2 simultaneously. As there are two types of research method: qualitative and quantitative. So, I have chosen qualitative. It is because qualitative research method goes with my thesis topic, and it requires non numerical data such as an interview to understand participants' experience, concept and opinions. In chapter 1, I have explained why I have chosen that topic and what my focus is on research. In chapter 2, I have written some relatable literature reviews with subheadings. In these literature reviews, I have collected some statements of language experts and other researchers who have researched on bilingualism and indigenous languages. I have tried to understand their thoughts regarding these.

#### **Research Method:**

For this research I have used the qualitative research design and qualitative data which seems to be suitable for this study as I tried to understand why the indigenous languages are getting lost, why do indigenous people cannot save their mother tongue, how they acquire two languages at the same time and why they do not practice their mother tongue officially. Qualitative research method requires open-ended questions, and the participants can reveal themselves openly.

It is also known as categorical data. A researcher's purpose is to identify the main reason or object to do research and contrast those objects into research questions. The disclosure's purpose is its focus on study, participants and the location. Furthermore, qualitative research is applicable for

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identifying a research problem in which the researcher does not know what is going to shift and what things should be surveyed.

### **Purpose:**

Bangladeshi indigenous community getting far away from their own mother tongue only because of their state language. Not only this state language but also the lack of proper research regarding their mother tongue, they kind of lost to practicing their own mother tongue on a regular basis. Moreover, as a bilingual person they should be fluent in two of these languages. Sadly, they can read, write and speak Bangla but they cannot write and read their mother tongue properly though most of them can speak fluently. As a mother tongue, it should be practiced daily in my view. Apart from that, I would like to do research on why these indigenous people do not practice their mother tongue, what is the present condition of each indigenous language and how many indigenous people are active in practicing their mother tongue's language and literature.

### **Participants:**

Nine participants took part in this research, who are Bangladeshi belonging from the indigenous community and are studying in universities. I took interviews with these ten participants. Through these interviews, I have known about their languages, was informed about their L1, how much they practice besides Bangla and English. Moreover, I have known how they ever faced any kind of racism or discrimination for their indigenous language or being indigenous. How did they learn Bangla and English, do they know any other languages apart from Bangla, English and their local language, when they have learnt Bangla and English, what type of difficulties they have faced so far, how much they are fluent now than previous and so on things were my concern during the interview. Apart from taking interviews, I had to go through many research articles regarding

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the indigenous languages of Bangladesh. So, my nine participants all belong from various indigenous nations and various tribal areas from Bangladesh.

Their pseudonyms, ages, sexes, and nations are given below:

| Pseudonym              | Age | Sex | Nation  |
|------------------------|-----|-----|---------|
| Hemonto Chakma         | 23  | M   | Chakma  |
| Mimi Tripura           | 24  | F   | Tripura |
| LinkonTanchangya       | 26  | M   | Garo    |
| Nayantara Chakma       | 23  | F   | Chakma  |
| Rahul Hajong           | 25  | M   | Hajong  |
| Rajat Chakma           | 26  | M   | Chakma  |
| Joseph Martin<br>Manda | 28  | M   | Garo    |
| Dhrubo Prue            | 25  | M   | Marma   |
| Plabon Rakhine         | 22  | M   | Rakhine |

### **Instruments:**

For this thesis paper, I needed voice recordings of each interviewee. It is because it was a bit tougher for me to take the interview by meeting them in person. Upon their consent, I took their interviews and recorded that through voice recordings. Additionally, it proved easier for me when

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I was writing the cases during data analysis. The platform that I used to conduct the interviews is Zoom video conferencing platform.

### **Research Questions:**

- I.** Why indigenous people cannot save their mother tongue? Why did they not feel interested in learning their mother tongue proficiently, which they did in terms of their second language?
- II.** Do they face any type of privilege to speak two languages simultaneously? If yes, what type of positive side effects do they get as a bilingual?
- III.** Do bilingual speakers think about the translation first when speaking one language to another?

## **Chapter: 4**

### **Result:**

As I have chosen qualitative research for my thesis purpose, because of that I had to collect every single detail about my topic from my participants. I had to listen to my participants' perspectives and experiences of being bilingual. This has also allowed me to explain and analyze their experiences and their way of thinking. In this result chapter, there are nine cases which are about their experiences of being bilingual, their perceptions and language acquisition. I have taken interviews with these nine participants. In my paper, I have tried to describe all of their experiences and obstacles they have faced so far as indigenous.



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### **Participant 1: Hemonto**

My first participant is Hemonto Chakma. He is 23 years and belongs to the Chakma tribe. Hemonto is a student in the Marketing department, at a well-known public university. His hometown is in Rangamati district. He completed his schooling from there and HSC.

completed in Dhaka. Chakma is his local language or mother tongue. He can speak his mother tongue fluently, but he cannot read and write this language. Though he is more fluent in Bangla and English he can read, write, and speak simultaneously. In the interview, I asked him why he is not proficient in reading and writing in his mother tongue. According to Hemonoto, he said he started his schooling by learning Bangla. As Bangla is their official language. All the official languages are conducted in Bangla language. Even though there is no subject regarding their mother tongue in their schools. Most of the schools of his area are in Bangla medium, few of them are English medium schools which have opened very recently. It is because of that there was no necessity to learn his mother tongue officially. He acquired his mother tongue Chakma after his birth, there was no official way to learn this language. On the other hand, he started to learn Bangla when he was only three years old. Before starting his schooling, he started to learn Bangla from his parents and grandparents. All the educational processes are conducted in Bangla in Hemonto's

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area. Due to this, learning Bangla is mandatory for everyone. Although Hemonto attempted to learn his mother tongue's alphabet and tried to learn how to read and write in this language, he could not accomplish it. Furthermore, his school was in Rangamati, so his school was sort of unprivileged. Normally educational institutions which are located in hill tracks do not get many facilities compared to the big town's educational institutions. So, the teachers at those schools are not qualified enough to teach pupils. School is a place where students get a chance to make their basic knowledge of any subject. Sadly, teachers of hill track areas do not get enough opportunities to develop their teaching skills. They do not get enough training; their basics are also not that strong, which has effects on their teaching. According to Hemonto, he claimed that in his school days he was not that proficient in English. The English teachers at his schools are not that expert in making their basics strong. He was very weak at English grammar. Not only him but also his fellow mates as well. It is because of the lack of teaching experience and knowledge their teachers could not teach them in an appropriate way. It is one of the biggest reasons why indigenous students are not advanced in their educational field.

Apart from all these, Hemonto also said that his vocabulary was very poor when he entered the University of Dhaka. At the very beginning, he could not understand his teacher's lectures because all these lectures are given in English. It is because of this, his results in the first few semesters were not up to the mark. He also added that, if he would have got chances to make his English basic strong then he would not have to face these types of problems. As he did not get many facilities to learn English properly, it made an effect in his university life.

Consequently, he also gets bullied sometimes by his friends and teachers because of being indigenous speaker. Hemonoto's one of his teachers scolded him for not being able to properly fluent in Bangla and English which sounds quite unfair. However, in the future Hemonto wants to

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learn his mother tongue accurately and he wants to spread his mother tongue worldwide so that the next generation can relate to this Chakma language.

After listening to all these from Hemonto, I understood that he did not get a privileged educational system in his school. Born as an indigenous, he had to give more effort to the two other languages (Bangla and English) which other non-indigenous people do not have to give. Not only he but also his ancestors faced these types of problems in their student life. The moral of this problem is being indigenous and live in the tribal area, their level of education is poor. It is because of that he and his teachers have weak basic in English and Bangla in some cases.

They are having a backward educational life compared to the majority people of Bangladesh.

### **Participant 2: Mimi**

My second participant was Mimi Tripura. She is 24 years old, and her community is Tripura. Currently she is studying at a top-ranked public university in the Philosophy department. Her mother tongue is 'Kokborok'. Mimi passed her SSC exam in her area, Rangamati and HSC was in Dhaka. Just like my first participant Hemonto, she also acquired Bangla when she started school at the age of four. Schools in her area are in Bangla medium. So, she needed for her to be proficient in Bangla. Apart from that, she is fluent in so many indigenous languages such as Mandi, Tripura, (L1), Tanchangya, Chakma and fluent in English and Hindi. She cannot write and read Kokborok or Tripura language as there were no subjects related to her mother tongue. It is because of this she never had to read or learn her L1 officially. In her area, all the schools are Bangla medium and few of them are English medium which has been founded very recently. All these schools follow the NCTB curriculum to conduct their syllabuses and take exams by following that curriculum. However, there is a major factor that

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Mimi mentioned so briefly, that is in her school, teachers who teach English are not that expert in their field. Maximum English teachers at her schools did not appropriately teach them English. As they are also not fluent in English. So that they cannot teach their students and cannot create a strong English base among them. Compared to the other places of the country, indigenous people are unprivileged in many ways. So, education is not different. Even though people who live in hill track areas do not even get their fundamental rights properly; education is included.

According to Mimi, sometimes their English and other subject's teachers used to speak during the classes in Chattagram's local language which is known as 'Chatgaiya' language. So, it can be one of the biggest reasons for not being fluent or lacking in English. Furthermore, Mimi said that at the very beginning of her university life she faced a lot of difficulties coping with the university education system. As all the subjects of her department must study in English, not being proficient in English was tough for her to study. She said that it took her one and a half years later to get used to this system and now she is more proficient than she was in the past. She says that she keeps herself interested in all English language related activities such as reading English newspapers, watching American or British series, listening to the BBC, and reading lots of English books, magazines, novels, and journals, which is contributing to her improved CGPA too.

Mimi has a wish to teach her mother tongue (Tripura) in the future. She wants to read her language literature. She wants to know what her mother language's literature is like. After teaching her own mother tongue, she wants to teach those to the next generation. So that she sees a way by this her mother tongue can be spread into the entire world.

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In terms of Mimi's case, it is quite similar to Hemonoto's case. It is because in her school days she was weak at English just like Hemonto. Her teachers are not that qualified to make her English basic strong. Mimi improved her English when she was in college. At her university, she did more improve in English. It is because in the university she got a way to practice English. According to Mimi, she used to read English newspapers, watched American or British series, listen to the BBC, and read lots of English books, magazines, novels, and journals. By doing all these, she got an opportunity to improve her English which she did not have in her school life. So, from her context, it is also proven that the educational system of hill track areas is not up to the mark.

### **Participant 3: Dhrubo**

Dhrubo Prue is a 25 years old guy who belongs to the Marma indigenous community. He recently completed his undergraduate, currently doing M.A. Marma is his local language. Among all my thesis participants, Dhrubo is exceptional because he is a multilingual speaker. Apart from being fluent in L1, he can speak English, Bangla, French, Urdu and Hindi. He can read and write in his mother tongue. According to him, he would rate himself 6 out of 10 in reading and writing in his mother tongue. Moreover, he acquired Bangla and Marma at the same time. Though Bangla is his L2, he still did not attend any official course to learn Bangla. He was a student at a Bangla medium school in his area. In this interview, I wanted to know about the condition of the schools in his area. He said regarding this that schools which are in very rural areas are not that prominent. They do not even keep Bangla medium in their schools. They do teach their mother tongue at a very beginner level. Areas which are quite developed, schools of these areas most of them are Bangla medium and very less amount of are in English medium which was founded in very recent time. Though these English medium schools are not up to the mark in his area. Students who want

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to learn English can learn from various sources. Schools do not play any vital role in that case. He did have any subject related to his L1 in his school days. So, it can be a reason he is not proficient in reading and writing in his mother tongue. Though recently he came to know that a textbook of his mother tongue has been published by the government and it is distributed among the students of his area. However, when Dhrubo was in Class I or II, from that time he started reading and writing Bangla officially for his school. He started to learn Bangla for the first time by reading textbooks. Besides he did practice Bangla with his friends which helped him to become more fluent in Bangla. That is how he learnt Bangla. In that interview, he shared with me what types of difficulties he has faced by learning Bangla. One of the incidents he shared was that at the very beginning his pronunciation was not that accurate. So, his friends whose L1 is Bangla, mocked him because of the wrong pronunciations.

Moreover, he stated that he was comparatively privileged because his family members, especially his father, are good at Bangla speaking and his pronunciation is very accurate. Through him Dhrubo got the chance to correct his failings in Bangla. He also witnessed many cases of his friends who struggled a lot to speak in Bangla. According to Dhrubo, learning Bangla was very hard for some of his friends. It is because they did not understand the meaning, they made mistakes on sentence making and they did not even know many words. Compared to his friends, Dhrubo was more privileged than the others. So it was a big advantage for him. As he cannot read his L1, for that reason he could not ever read any story books or novels which are written in his mother tongue Marma. Though he often read English and Bangla literature. In his high school days, as it was in Bandarban so many people of that area speak in Chatgaiya dialect. Even when his friends did gossip or chit chat, they used this dialect. It is because of that Dhrubo had to learn the Chatgaiya dialect. To learn that he faced a lot of difficulties as it was not that easy to learn. Chatgaiya dialects

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are far different from Bangla. So, he faced a problem when he learnt it. Dhrubo never faced any types of obstacles in his university days, but he thinks that he could do better if his L1 would be Bangla. In terms of public speaking, he thinks that way. English teachers at his schools could not teach them in an appropriate manner. He hardly learnt a few things of English from his school. Even his English teachers at his schools used to speak in Chatgaiya dialect when they took classes. In his college, he has learnt English appropriately. Before that he was very poor at English as he did not get a proper guide to learn this language. His English fluency was exaggerated after college.

According to Dhrubo, his mother tongue has its own alphabet which is 28 in quantity. In the interview, the interviewer asked him whether he has any interest in working on his mother tongue in the future or not. He replied that it is not precisely mother tongue, but he is already involved with such an organization which is built by indigenous youths. This organization works for skill development.

Dhrubo Prue is exceptional among my participants because he knows many languages apart from Bangla and English. Moreover, he can read and write his mother tongue (Marma) which my other participants cannot. Another fact about him is he acquired Marma and Bangla at the same time. Very few indigenous or semi-tribal people can acquire their L1 and L2 at the same time. He learned all these languages with his interest and effort. Not only English but also French and Urdu he learned from his interest. Just like other participants, Dhurbo did not have that opportunity to learn English from his teachers because just like other participant's schools, his school was not that well to provide a good education system. He improved his English after being admitted for undergraduate study. Sadly, most of the indigenous people could not get a strong basic of English which take them backward compared to other majority people.

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### Participant 4: Nayantara

Nayantara Chakma is a 23-year-old girl studying at a private university in Dhaka. She belongs to the Chakama community. Her mother tongue's name is 'Changma' or 'Sangma'. In Bangla it is pronounced as 'Changma', but locally it is pronounced 'Sangma'. Nayantara is very fluent in her L1, and she can express her emotions in L1 better than any other language. Apart from her L1, she is fluent in English, Bangla, and Hindi. Though she cannot read and write her mother tongue accurately. Basically, her mother tongue is listening and speaking based. By these two skills, indigenous people mainly acquire their L1. According to Nayantara, her mother tongue has its own alphabet, but these are not used regularly. Moreover, these alphabets are not necessary for higher education. It is because people who are from Chakma tribes think like this, that is why they cannot read and write in their mother tongue. It is one of the reasons that Nayantara could not read and write in her mother tongue. She does not even know how many alphabets are in her mother tongue. After her birth, she first acquired her mother tongue Changma and later she learned Bangla. Nayantara completed her school in Dhaka. She was in the English version. Though she spent a few years of her life in Rangamati. In the remote areas of her hometown, the maximum number of schools are in Bangla medium. In the town areas of her district, there have some English medium schools which follow the British curriculum to conduct their schools.

However, when Nayantara started learning Bangla she faced some problems. Especially since she could not get the pronunciation at the very beginning. As Bangla is not her L1 and pronunciations of Bangla words are not as similar as Changma. For example, in her mother tongue, it has 'ছ' and 'স'. On the other hand, Bangla language has 'চ', 'ষ', 'শ', 'ষ'. It is because of that there is a difference between these two languages in terms of pronunciation. So that is how Nayantara found



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difficulties when she started to learn Bangla. Bangla is the state language of the entire country including tribal areas. So, in her schools, there were no subjects or any courses regarding learning their mother tongue. It is because all the educational and official purposes are accomplished in Bangla. So, everybody focuses on learning Bangla. Even people from her area do not feel the necessity to learn their mother tongue in a very systematic way. As they think that their L1 would not get used for any official purposes, it will be useless to learn the L1 officially. In this interview, the interviewer wanted to know that if she has ever felt any kind of discrimination because of being an indigenous girl. She answered that she never has faced this type of discrimination, but she often must listen to many questions regarding their culture, food, language and vice versa. Nayantara has never read any story books which are written in her mother tongue. But she read some books that were written in the Changma language, but the letters were Bangla. She read some poems and short stories in that language which were typed in Bangla language. She also claimed that English teachers in her area did not pursue that kind of higher education, but they are improving themselves in recent days. In remote areas, teachers do not have the kind of facilities to practice English when they were young because they were very unprivileged at that time. So, at present teachers are doing much better compared to that period. At that time, English teachers used to teach their pupils the way they have been taught. Though in city areas, teachers who teach English in a very professional manner.

Furthermore, Nayantara's background was English version, so she did not have to face any types of difficulties compared to the Bangla medium's students; when she started her university education as it is completely in English. As the practice was less, because of that she had to think more when she had to speak in English. So, she thinks it is a problem because of less practice. Nayantara has some plans to work on her mother tongue in the future. She wants to go to remote

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areas of her district and wants to work for unprivileged students who have bright futures but are not getting proper facilities, they might get distracted from their education. So Nayantara wants to work for those pupils to help them to accomplish their goals.

Nayantara is quite privileged compared to the others. Because her school was in the capital. Moreover, she was in English version. So she did not face difficulties to learn English which have faced other participants. Though she faced problems learning Bangla at the very beginning. Her case is exceptional in that sense because she had a privileged education system. It is very pathetic that all the indigenous students do not get equal quality education. Like Nayantara not all of them have a strong financial condition to get education in a quality educational institution. So, their education also depended on their financial ability.

### **Participant5: Rahul**

Rahul Hajong is 25 years old. Hajong is the tribal community to which he belongs from. According to Rahul, Hajong came to Bangladesh a very long time ago. They migrated from Tibet and started living in the Brahmaputra Valley. Later they spread into many places in Bangladesh. The majority of the Hajong nation lives in 'Garo Pahar' which is in Netrokona. Rahul can speak fluently in the Hajong language. Though there are no alphabets in the Hajong language. It is because of that Rahul could not officially learn his L1.

Apart from this, he is fluent in Bangla. But he is not fluent in English. It can be a questionable matter that as a university student because he is not fluent yet in English. It is because he came from a very rural area of Netrokona, their education system is very unprivileged. Furthermore, just like my other thesis participants' area's educational condition, Rahul's area's teachers are also not that expert in teaching pupils English in an appropriate manner. Consequently, there are no alphabets of their mother tongue; still he acquired his mother tongue before acquiring Bangla. The

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schools in this area are mostly in Bangla medium. When Rahul started to learn Bangla, he did not understand the meaning of many Bangla words at the very beginning. Even though he could not understand his teacher's lectures during his school days because of not knowing the meanings of Bangla words. Moreover, when he started his university life, he realized his accent is quite different from native Bangla speakers. Especially 'Slip of tongue' was a common mistake of his at that time. However, at the end of the interview Rahul stated that he has a wish regarding his L1. That is, many people are unfamiliar with their mother tongue Hajong. There are many hidden gems in their L1, which are losing day by day. He wants to take care of these gems not to vanish. He also wants to spread it all over the world. So that people from anywhere can know that 'Hajong' named a language does exist in the world.

After listening all these from Rahul, I came to understand that many indigenous nations of Bangladesh do not have own letters in their mother tongue. Rahul's mother tongue is not exceptional. As he mentioned that there are no alphabets in Hajong language. In my point of view, I think not having alphabets is one of the reasons for not saving their mother tongue. It is because the alphabet is the root of a language. Without this a language cannot be expanded. From the alphabet reading, writing, literature comes. Literature is a weapon to save a language in history. As they do not have their alphabet, because of this they could not read and write in their language. So, without alphabets a language cannot be enriched.

### **Participant 6: Plabon**

My other thesis participant is Plabon Rakhine. He is 22 years old, and he belongs to the Rakhine tribe. Rakhine is also his L1. He is fluent in his mother tongue. Apart from being fluent in Bangla and English, he can also speak in their local language which is Chakma as well as in the Chittagong dialect. He cannot read or write in his mother tongue. Their language has a script of

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their own. He completed his studies at a Bangla Medium school. According to him, most of the schools in his area are Bangla Medium. A couple of English Medium schools are there as well. He learned his mother tongue first, but he acquired Bangla before entering his school. He passed SSC from his area and HSC from Dhaka. He mentioned not having to read any materials regarding their mother tongue. He officially learned Bangla from the age of 3. He specifically pointed to not getting good grades in Bangla since he was not that fluent until college. He acquired Bangla from his family as well as from school. Though he gained full fluency in Bangla from School, his family members were the first to introduce him to an entirely new language. He faced discrimination when he spoke in his mother tongue in public places. People gave him some specific expressions which eventually resulted in him not speaking in his language much. He is trying to learn the script of the Rakhine tribe so that he can truly be proficient in his mother tongue. He could not read any story books or novels since he is still learning how to read in his language. Since he was already fluent in his mother tongue, speaking in Bangla all the time did not create obstacles for him. He also said that his English teachers could not teach them accurately because even their basics were not that strong. Schools in his area follow the curriculum of NCTB. His mother tongue contains its own alphabet. He faced some problems while reading in first year since all the higher education materials are in English. But after the first year, he adapted with those changes. He wishes to learn his mother tongue and write some books in it. He is in a good and knowledgeable position which inspires him to write books in his mother tongue. He wants to inspire and encourage others to read, write and create content such as holding a conference, creating awareness about Rakhine language etc. in his mother tongue. Discrimination is a common matter for indigenous people. Belong to a minority group, indigenous people face discrimination against majority people. Just like Plabon, many indigenous people face

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bully because of their Bangla accent. Their Bangla accent is not the same as native speakers, which is quite normal. The majority group of people are not cooperative in this case, rather they make fun of their Bangla accent. This is very injustice towards non-native speakers. People should be cooperative with them so that they can get an opportunity to overcome their problems regarding their second language.

### **Participant 7: Joseph**

Joseph Martin Manda is a Garo indigenous guy. He is 28 years old and recently completed his MSC from a renowned public university in Dhaka. Joseph's hometown is in Durgapur, Netrokona. His L1 name is 'Mandi' but this language is also known as 'Garo'. However, he is fluent in his mother tongue Garo and apart from this he is fluent in English and Bangla. He acquired Bangla and his mother tongue at the same time. Though he also added that he knows some areas where people could not adapt to the Bangla language yet. Areas matter in terms of learning Bangla according to Joseph. He studied in a Bangla medium school in his area. Schools in his area are mostly Bangla medium. Furthermore, he claimed that he can read and write in his mother tongue, which I have found quite interesting and exceptional among all my thesis participants. He moved to Dhaka to complete his HSC.

In his school days, he did not have to read any subject regarding the Garo language. But the church or the local culture academy in his area provided local language books. So, he read these books in his childhood. As he acquired Bangla in his childhood so that he did not have to attend any official language course for learning Bangla. Furthermore, Joseph's parents and grandparents are very fluent in Bangla. From them he also learnt his L2. Besides, his Bangla-speaking friends, teachers and neighbors also helped him to learn Bangla. When he started to speak Bangla officially, he faced a bit of difficulty because this language is not his mother tongue. Mispronunciation,

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choosing the wrong words when speaking, and lack of knowing vocabulary were the major problems of his when he officially started speaking Bangla. However, Joseph thinks of himself as very fortunate that he never has faced any types of discrimination in his educational life. His teachers and friends were very cooperative. Furthermore, I found him a bit more of an exception than my other participants because he has read many books which are written in their native language. Which I did not find in my other participants. Though at the beginning of his university life, he faced difficulties because his background was Bangla medium, and his university curriculum was fully in English. It is because of that he could not cope with this ambiance at first. After a few semesters it became normal to him. Additionally, Joseph spoke about his English teachers in his schools. He stated that his basics of English has built up around 40-60% in his school. It is because those English teachers were not that professional. They have some lacking in terms of teaching English. However, English alphabets are used to write in their language as they do not have their own alphabets. Though Garo educators are working on their alphabets now. Joseph has a desire to work on his own mother tongue in the future. Such as he wants to work for his cultural academy which works for their culture. In his point of view, many people are still working on their culture, but these are very limited. He wishes to work on this side more, so that people from worldwide will be familiar with his culture.

In Joseph's case, he was weak at Bangla apart from English. As he spent his childhood in Rangamati where he did not have to communicate in Bangla with his native people. From this perspective, he did not know the proper uses of Bangla, did not know the proper meaning of words these things occurred miscommunication with other people. So, it is very important to be fluent in the second language because second language use in every official work of Bangladesh. Beside learning English, it is equally important to learn Bangla properly.

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### **Participant 8: Linkon**

Linkon Tanchangya is a 26-year-old man and belongs to the Tanchangya tribal nation. Tanchangya is also their mother tongue's name. Apart from this he can speak in Bangla and English but not fluently. Furthermore, he can only speak his mother tongue, but he cannot read and write this language. For the same reasons as my other participants, he could get any subject regarding his mother tongue in his school days. That is why he did not learn Tanchangya officially. He first learnt Bangla in his school. As it is a state and their second language, he learnt it officially in his school. He passed his SSC from a Bangla medium school. According to Linkon, most of the schools, especially in remote areas, are in Bangla medium. Though a couple of schools are in English medium which were founded in a very recent time.

However, as Bangla is not their first language, because of these many words are unknown to him. At the very beginning, when he started to learn Bangla, he used to convert some particular words to know the meaning in his native language. By using this method, it was easier for him to memorize Bangla words. Linkon learned Bangla from his primary school teachers. In high school he mainly became fluent in Bangla. In his primary school days, he was not that fluent in Bangla. Another saddest part Linkon talked about is people who are not from tribal groups, used to mock their mother tongue and which is quite insulting. Moreover, he has faced discrimination in educational institutions. Linkon did not face the difficulties of learning Bangla but as he belongs to the Tanchangya nation he faced some problems regarding pronunciation. For example, most of the times the Tanchangya people mess up with the Bangla word 'ত' and 'ছ'. It is because their local pronunciation is quite different from this. His English basics became strong

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in his college life because English teachers in his school are not that proficient in English. So that they could not appropriately teach their students.

However, Linkon wants the future generations of Tanchangya to know more about their mother tongue. For this, he thinks that the government should take the initiative on providing textbooks on every indigenous language's mother tongue. So that the next generation would not be detached from their ancestor's valuable mother tongue.

The saddest part in Linkon's case was that he had to face discrimination in his educational institutions. His fellow mates made fun of his Bangla accent and pronunciation which was not supposed to be done with him. Being an indigenous he does not deserve to be mocked because of his wrong pronunciation and poor vocabularies as Bangla is not his first language. People who are not from indigenous group should be helpful towards them. So that they would be able to be fluent in their L2.

### **Participant no. 9: Rajat**

Rajat Chakma is 26 years old. He belongs to the Chakma tribe and his mother tongue is Chakma. He can fluently speak in Chakma although he does not know how to read or write in Chakma. Apart from his mother tongue, he is completely proficient in Bangladesh and English. He has been in touch with Bangla since his childhood. He learnt Bangla when he first entered his school. He completed his education at a Bangla medium school. He also mentioned that earlier there used to be only Bangla Medium Schools in his area. Recently, some English Medium schools have been



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established. He pointed out that there were no subjects related to the Chakma language during his school time. Recently, there have been some efforts to introduce the Chakma language to students in primary school.

He faced problems in the beginning since Bangla was a new language for him. He was a victim of discrimination. His friends mocked him for his different pronunciation. His English teachers were not that fluent in English. He learnt English properly from his uncles who used to read in a public university. The schools in his area follow the NCTB curriculum. His mother tongue contains alphabets of its own. To gain fluency in English, he had to practice a lot. According to him, NCTB curriculum includes reading and writing in five indigenous languages. Even though the government took initiatives for this, it didn't come to much help. He wishes to introduce more books, contents, and materials in Chakma. He loves his mother tongue and wishes to work for its wellbeing.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Discussion**

#### **Similarities:**

Among my entire participants, I have found some similarities. The main similarity is all of them are one kind of trilingual because the majority of them are fluent in their mother tongue, Bangla and English. Few of them also know more than three languages such as Urdu, Hindi and French. Another similar factor is that all of them except one (Nayanatara) belong to remote hill areas. Because of that they did not get a basic knowledge of English which created a negative impact in their university lives. Nayanatara's case is quite different because she completed her schooling at a well-reputed school in Dhaka and which is exceptional from my other participants. However,

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my other participants did not get a basic knowledge of English because their English teachers are not experts in teaching. It is because in their teacher's time their educational system was more terrible in the overall hill areas.

Hornberger stated in Poulson (2007) that in the African and Latin American countries, they follow a specific way to fulfill their goals in a particular language which can give a change in the speaker's position. Furthermore, the educational policies for bilingual people apply instructions create a new system which creates an impact in economic and socio development among the tribal communities. In that case, the education policy of Bangladesh can make a particular system for indigenous pupils to give them a strong basic Bangla and English languages. Without these two languages, anyone cannot do any types of jobs in Bangladeshi perspectives. As the majority of indigenous are weak in these two languages, so Bangladesh education policy must take initiatives regarding this matter.

### **Detachment:**

The most important and common at the same time similarity is all of them cannot read and write in their mother tongue or L1. And I found a common reason behind it is that they got detached from their mother tongue at a very young age. It is because from generation to generation it became habituated that their mother tongue is not their official or state language. That is why they do not even learn how to write their own language's letters and how to read. Furthermore, in my literature review part, I have written about the statement of Jongman and Sereno. According to them, people who speak non-native languages might find it tough for them to learn their native languages grammar, vowels, and consonants. They stated it because a child or a young learner can easily acquire language which an adult learner cannot. So, people who cannot speak in their native language, she/he has detachment from his/her L1.

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Cavallard sighted in McNeish and Borchgrevink (2007) that there are so many reasons which creates detachment between mother tongue and indigenous people. It is because of these reasons indigenous or minority groups of people are bound to give more priority to their L2. Though they also deserve equal right to give priority to their mother tongue as their L2.

### **Discrimination since the Colonial Era:**

Colonialism and colonial practices are one of the biggest reasons behind this. It is because in the colonial period, the indigenous people started losing their heritage, culture, arts, places and so on. So, language is not excluded among these. Yet the rules of grasp, ceasing indigenous people's lands and discriminations in-laws, actions, classes and many more things. It is because of these reasons indigenous people's rights, culture, language and so on faced threats from generation to generation.

According to the declaration of the United Nations, the term 'indigenous' is considered as a fundamental creation and self-identification as well. That declaration indicates their fundamental rights to make their own identities and communities to spread their tradition and heritage. The repudiation of indigenous people's right needs development and priority at the same time. On the other hand, their economic and socio-political condition is not strong enough. They lack social-service access. So, among all these matters, not getting fundamental rights is the major fact of being discriminated against in society. Not only in Bangladesh but also there are so many countries' indigenous people are neglected from their deserved fundamental rights.

### **Influence of Socio-politics and Culture:**

Some of the indigenous languages of Bangladesh have been extinct and the extinction is entirely related to different socio-political and cultural reasons. Another major reason is the lack of responsibility and sensibility in the management of planning language and making of different policies. So, it is kind of proven that because of the dominance of one most usable language over

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another variety of languages can be a reason for another's mother tongue loss. If we have a look at our history, there are so many incidents where the dominant group provoked the inferior group to lose their language, heritage, culture and so on. This study elaboration on the historical and political reasons for the disappearance of language, language-related imperialism and physiological position of the native speakers of indigenous languages about their mother tongue. It also includes language related rights both national and international in this region. Losing own mother tongue is very much connected with the loss of own culture, indigenous and tribal heritage. Indigenous languages are a way of communicating as well as an arrangement of knowledge and information which have developed over time. Indigenous people get their identity from their native language. These languages also preserve the culture, worldwide opinions, views, and a way of expressing one's determination. That concludes if indigenous languages are under threat, then it may also mean danger for the indigenous people.

### **Linguicism:**

It is a belief that refers to discriminatory behavior towards inferior groups of people based on their mother tongue. According to Phillipson, though linguicism is based on someone's first language, it also indicates racism and sexism too. But this term mainly focuses on the language and its structure. Furthermore, it affected the power and resources by the allocation of inequalities. For example, in a school in a multicultural country a teacher is continuously using most of the people's language. He/she does not focus on an inferior group of students who do not clearly understand what their teacher is saying. By giving lectures on most people's language, that teacher has done linguicism towards that inferior group of students (Awal, 2019, p.319).

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### **PIU:**

The Department of Public Information of UN claimed about indigenous language that, now these days there are around 6,700 languages spoken by only 3% of the indigenous population. Moreover, there are 6% of tribal nations in the world and they speak approximately 40,000 languages. All the indigenous languages around the whole world are not only a medium of speaking but also one of the most major ways of communication to express and share one's own knowledge and ideas. There can be so many factors about indigenous languages losing their existence. Nevertheless, these factors depend on place to place and time as well. According to Syfin, "With the changes of the political groups, a country's development, engineering of politics, geography, discriminations towards nation can hamper progress" (Awal, 2019, p.319). One of the biggest reasons is 'Cultural reason'. It is because of this the indigenous people have to move from their mother tongue. A condition for them is applicable for this is who knows better state or official language he will get the opportunities. For example, in Bangladesh 'Bengali' is the national and state language. Even though in the corporate sectors it is necessary to know the official and state language. Because of that indigenous people of our country must give more importance to this language than their L1. Though most indigenous language speakers have a hidden desire to take their mother tongue in a very prestigious position. Which comes from their love for their mother tongue.

### **Competitive life:**

The main reason for losing their mother tongue is leading a competitive life where indigenous people have to give more focus on Bangla and English. That is why from their childhood they have to give importance to learning these two languages and they got detached from their own mother tongue. Which I have also noticed in most of my interviewees. Even though the harsh reality is the

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indigenous parents also do not encourage their children to keep practicing their own mother tongue. Rather they tell their children to practice more Bangla and English to achieve a better position in the future. Another thing is that most indigenous people think that they are isolated from most people of our country. As they face racism often because of that they feel like that way. They feel isolated because of their mother tongue. To be confined to the majority of people, they want to become more fluent in Bangla. So that they do not have to face any discrimination or racism. Furthermore, most of the indigenous languages do not have their own alphabets so use Bangla as their 'Lingua Franca'. So, these are the major reasons I have found so far throughout my research.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Conclusion**

To conclude, in this paper I have tried to cover all the aspects of indigenous bilingual people of Bangladesh. Bilingualism is one of the most discussed topics in linguistics. So, I wanted to choose this topic and would like to work with my own country's people, who are bilingual at the same time. In this paper, I wanted to give focus on how bilingual people deal in terms of speaking two languages simultaneously. It is because most of the indigenous people of our country must be fluent in Bangla as it is our state language. Furthermore, these indigenous people take education by following the NCTB curriculum. The whole country's schooling system is conducted by following the NCTB especially all the Bangla medium schools. So, the schools in tribal areas of our country must follow this curriculum just like other districts' schools. Throughout my research, I have found that most of my participants can only speak in their native

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languages. But they did not learn their mother tongue officially. If someone must be proficient in any language, then that person has to accomplish four basic skills: reading, writing, speaking and listening. Among my thesis participants, I have noticed that they can only speak. Though few of them can read their mother tongue. The main reason behind losing their own mother tongue's existence is to build up careers. As a minority group, sometimes they feel an inferiority complex not being part of a majority group. The saddest part is that the majority group of people could not accept them as one of their own motherland's people. The majority of people in our country think that they are not typical Bangladeshi just like other people. It is because of getting this type of behavior many people think of themselves as an outsider to this country. From this point of view, they try hard to be a part of this country and the country's people and work on their L2 more. So that their own mother tongue could not get that focus to practice. Generation to generation, having practiced more the L2 has become a tradition in their nation. It is because no one wants to lead a backward lifestyle. Human beings are the best creation of the Almighty. The Almighty gives the best characteristics to humans which did not give to the other creatures. Every human is capable enough to accomplish any tough job. Being indigenous cannot be a solid reason for not getting equal opportunities just like the other majority group of people. Not being fluent in the state language, many indigenous young people are facing unemployment. It is because of racism and discrimination, this country is losing many talented indigenous young people, who have the same talent just like most young people. Apart from losing their mother tongue, they do not even get their fundamental rights properly. The conditions of the lifestyles of hill tracks are horrific. Most of the people are leading an unhygienic lifestyle. There are two reasons behind this condition. One is they do not have proper education on how to lead a healthy life. Another is the government of Bangladesh is not that concerned enough towards these

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indigenous people. Even so they also get affected by many harmful diseases and cannot get essential treatments as they do not even have enough medical services.

So, in my point of view, I think that the government of Bangladesh should be concerned about the native languages of indigenous people. It is because the present generation of indigenous tribes are about to forget their own mother tongue. So, the condition of the next generation will be more terrible. Probably they would not be able to speak in their ancestor's mother tongue. It is because of that the government should provide some textbooks in their mother tongue. And make it mandatory for all the indigenous people. So that they will get a chance to practice their own mother tongue and will not forget it so easily. Every person should keep in their mind that the value of every person's mother tongue is irreplaceable.



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### Appendix

1. Which community do you belong to?
2. Where is your ancestor's home?
3. What is the name of your mother tongue?
4. Are you fluent in your mother tongue?
5. Apart from your mother tongue, which languages are you fluent in?
6. Can you read and write in your mother tongue accurately? Why are you not fluent in reading and writing in your mother tongue?
7. Did you acquire your mother tongue and Bengali at the same time?
8. Were you in Bengali medium? How many mediums are there in your area's school?
9. From where have you passed your SSC and HSC examinations? Did you have to read any subject regarding your mother tongue?
10. When did you start to learn Bengali?
11. Have you ever faced any types of difficulties when you learn Bengali? From whom you have learned it?
12. Have you ever felt discriminated against in your educational institutions as an indigenous language speaker? If yes, then what types of discrimination was it?
13. Do you read novels or any kinds of story books which are written in your mother tongue?
14. In your university, if you ever feel problems speaking Bengali with people as Bengali is your second language?
15. In your school days, the teachers at your school gave a lot of focus on teaching English. Do they teach English to their pupils in a proper way?
16. Do the schools and colleges of your region follow the NCTB curriculum to conduct their institutions or do they have their own curriculum?

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17. Does your mother tongue have its own alphabet? How many alphabets does it have?
18. What types of problems have you faced so far, when you have to switch your education to English and Bengali?
19. Was it so tough for you to focus more on these two languages without reading your mother tongue?
20. Do you have any interest in working on your own mother tongue in the future? If yes, then what types of initiatives do you want to take to accomplish that?