LIVES ON THE MOVE:
LANGUAGE SHIFT AND MIGRATION
EXPERIENCE OF THE GAROS IN DHAKA CITY

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Abstract

The paper explores the situation of Garo language through assessing its vitality and endangerment particularly among the urban migrants of Garo ethnic community. Linguists and anthropologists are concerned about the massive silencing of linguistic diversity on every continent. Language endangerment of minority ethnic groups in Bangladesh is an outcome of complex internal forces (e.g. community's negative attitude towards its own language) and external forces (e.g. economic, religious, cultural, or educational subjugation), while the internal pressures often have their source in external ones. Similarly, the Garo language is on the verge of extinction in the upcoming days primarily because the language-speakers are currently using the language in an increasingly reduced number of communicative domains, and also hesitant to pass it on from one generation to the next. Many of the Garo respondents of this research tend to abandon their language and culture in hopes of overcoming discrimination, to secure a livelihood, and enhance social mobility, or to assimilate with the global marketplace. Finally, the paper calls for recognizing the importance of documenting endangered languages of small ethnic communities and preserving various aspects of their languages and cultures for promoting and protecting linguistic diversity in Bangladesh.

1. Issues and Concerns

A language is endangered when it is on a path toward extinction. This paper came out of my M.Phil. thesis, which makes the point that the Garo language is under threat of being extinct in the upcoming days primarily because the language-speakers are currently using the language in an increasingly reduced number of communicative domains, and also hesitant

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to pass it on from one generation to the next (Ferdousi, 2021). This Garo language scenario largely reflects the global situation of the endangered languages which are mostly spoken by minorities and indigenous peoples. People learn and transmit their culture through language. Language reflects various aspects of community's life such as arts, beliefs, thoughts, emotions, values, ideas and others. Bangladesh as a country of cultural, ethnic and language diversities, has about 40 ethnic communities, which constitute a little more than 1 percent of its' total population (Shafie, 2000). Many of these ethnic communities have their own languages or dialects belonging to the 4 major language families of the world with or without own scripts. This linguistic diversity in Bangladesh is under threat of being replaced by dominant languages like Bangla and English. This paper explores the situation of Garo language through assessing its vitality and endangerment particularly among the urban migrants of Garo ethnic community. This paper sheds lights on the importance of documenting endangered languages of small ethnic communities and preserving various aspects of their languages and cultures for promoting and protecting linguistic diversity in Bangladesh.

Globally, it is estimated that between 6,000 and 7,000 languages are currently spoken worldwide, of which approximately half, if not more, will disappear by the end of this century because 50 percent of these languages are losing speakers (Jones, 2013; Quattrini, 2019). About 97 percent of the world's people speak about 4 percent of the world's languages; and conversely, about 96 percent of the world's languages are spoken by about 3 percent of the world's people (Jones, 2013). Linguists estimate that, in most world regions, about 90 percent of the languages may be replaced by dominant languages by the end of the 21st century. According to linguists and anthropologists, about 90 percent of all world languages will be extinct or moribund (spoken only by a few older people and unknown to children) within the next 100 years (Whaley, 2003). Scholars are concerned about the massive silencing of linguistic diversity on every continent (Connell, 1998; Ostler, 1999; Whalen & Simons, 2012). The languages of the small ethnic communities fall silent due to economic or cultural reasons, some because of wars and genocide, and others because of language planning, migration, education policy, and persecution

(Comrie, 2001; Wurm, 2001). This situation is especially acute when their speakers are among the most marginalized groups in society, as language endangerment is frequently driven by exclusion in many areas of the world.

The cultural and linguistic landscape of Bangladesh comprise over 45 small ethnic communities and approximately 30 spoken languages (Shafie & Kilby, 2003). Bangla and English as the dominant languages have gained an increasing hold and exert growing pressure on communities speaking minority and indigenous languages in Bangladesh. Language endangerment of minority ethnic groups in Bangladesh is an outcome of complex internal forces (e.g. community's negative attitude towards its own language) and external forces (e.g. economic, religious, cultural, or educational subjugation), while the internal pressures often have their source in external ones (Ferdousi, 2021). My M.Phil. research reveals that the Garos, like many other indigenous peoples, associate their disadvantaged social position with their culture and gradually come to believe that their languages are not worth retaining. Many of my Garo respondents of my M.Phil. research abandoned their language and culture in hopes of overcoming discrimination, to secure a livelihood, and enhance social mobility, or to assimilate to the global marketplace (Ferdousi, 2021).

The purpose of this paper is to offer a picture of some of the problematics surrounding linguistic shift and maintenance of the Garos for wider audience, readers and researchers. The Garos, a matrilineal small ethnic group of Bangladesh, are at the locus of this paper. The findings presented and conclusions drawn in this paper are the outcome of intensive fieldwork among the Garo living in Dhaka city. This paper is founded upon both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, where most of the sources of selection were done randomly from the Garo migrants in Dhaka city. The quantitative data are collected through using structured questionnaire and checklists, while for qualitative data focus group discussion (FGD), and key informant interview (KII) were followed using separate checklists. The survey adopted snowball-sampling in order to select the respondents for investigation to obtain the necessary data for profiling Garo language. An efficient use of triangulation of different techniques has been done to improve the quality of the data and reduce the chance of bias. These methods of data collection were aligned to different study objectives and situations.

2. The Background: Place and People

2.1. Cultural and Linguistic Diversity in Bangladesh

Bangladesh has a diverse make-up of cultural variations. Although it appears to be mainly inhabited by the Bangalees, peoples having many other languages, religions and cultures live in Bangladesh. This cultural diversity of Bangladesh can be 'a source of exchange, innovation and creativity', and according to UNESCO's Universal Declaration "cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature" (UNESCO, 2002). Before going into the discussion on cultural landscape and diversity of Bangladesh, I would like to shed light on the idea and meaning of ethnic and indigenous groups in anthropology.

The word 'ethnic' comes from the Greek 'ethnos', which means 'nation', 'people' and by the word 'group' we mean 'social cluster' (Fenton, 1999, 2013; Fenton & May, 2002; Phinney, 1989). However, Liddell and Scott's Greek–English Lexicon (1897), refer to a number of meanings of the term "ethnos" depending on different contexts as well as at different periods of ancient Greek history, and these meanings are: "[n]umber of people living together, body of men; particular tribes; of animals, flocks; (after Homer) nation, people; (later) foreign, barbarous nations; non-Athenians, (biblical Greek) non-Jews, Gentiles, class of men, caste, tribe" (Liddell & Scott, 1897 cf. Fenton, 2013: 14-15). So, different types of human groups or social clusters are called ethnic groups. Each and every human being on earth is a member of some ethnic group. Each ethnic group is different from the other. The border line of differences is always maintained by the ethnic groups. So, in order to identify an ethnic group, we must know the ways of maintaining the boundaries and acquiring membership of the group. Membership of an ethnic group is acquired through maintaining some specific social rules. And the identity and boundaries of various ethnic groups become clear to us distinctively by observing the social procedures of the execution of these rules. Ethnic group membership is not subjected to anyone's wish or will. All the ethnic groups, be that Chakma, Marma, Santal, Garo or Bangali, maintain their separate social identity and boundaries to determining their membership. We become members of any ethnic group by birth and also have distinctive identities from the members of other ethnic groups (Barth, 1969; Eriksen, 2002; Phinney, 1996). The ethnic groups maintain the uniqueness of their identity through retaining the social boundaries. According to Barth, ethnic group has three general characteristics:

1) **Ethnic membership and social recognition of identity**: An ethnic group confers or attributes certain identity on to its members. This means, every human being grows up with the identity of his ethnic group since his or her childhood. This means that any ethnic group and its members have greater social recognition.

2) **Consciousness and sense of belonging to the ethnic group:** The members of an ethnic group are conscious and aware of their ethnic identity. This means that perception of self and collective sense of belonging to an ethnic identity exist among all members of the same group.

3) **A common field of social activities and interactions**: Members of the same ethnic group have adequate resemblance or similarity in their lifestyle or cultural activities. Usually, they speak and exchange their thoughts in the same language. Their livelihood strategies and their cultural values and ideals are almost similar. This means that all the members of an ethnic group know about different tangible and intangible elements of their culture and practice them accordingly (Barth, 1969, 1981, 2012).

On the basis of these three general characteristics, we can distinguish different ethnic groups. It is also important to note that ethnic groups, language groups, religious groups or religious community, groups of professionals, and human race are not the same. However, it is commonly assumed that there are more than 45 ethnic groups in Bangladesh (Rashid & Shafie, 2013; Shafie & Kilby, 2003). Apart from the Bangalee, the overwhelming majority ethnic group, there are many other ethnic groups in Bangladesh who have different languages, religions, and cultures. Based on population size compared to the Bangalee, other ethnic groups are called "small ethnic group" or "minority ethnic groups" or "ethnic minorities" in Bangladesh. Recently, for the preservation and development of cultural traditions of these ethnic groups, the Parliament of Bangladesh has enacted a law known as "Ethnic Minority Cultural Institutions Law 2010" in April 2010. The law defines the non-Bangalee and traditional ethnic groups living in Bangladesh as the "ethnic minorities".

2.2. Situating the Garos in Bangladesh

This research addresses issues of ethnic identity and language shift among the city dwelling Garos of Bangladesh. The Garos are among the

peripheral (minority) communities living in Dhaka and have no choice but to lose their language, culture and identity. The Garo are a distinct ethnic community, more known to the outside world for their matrilineal social organization, especially kinship system. Their present population around the world is approximately half a million. Most of them live in the northeast India, mainly in the Garo Hills region. Garo Hills located in the western part of the Indian state of Meghalaya and western portion of the Shillong plateau that divides Assam from Bengal (Burling, 1997). In India their habitat also extends to the adjoining areas of Khasi Hills, Assam, Nagaland, Tripura and West Bengal. In Assam the Garo are located in a few districts of Brahmaputra valley including Karbi Anglong district. But their major concentration is in the southern fringe of the district of Goalpara and Kamrup. In Nagaland, some of the Garo live in Chumkudina area of Kohima District. In Tripura they settled down in the South Tripura, while in West Bengal they settled in the district of Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar.

About one-fifth of the total Garo population lives in Bangladesh. In Bangladesh most of the Garo are concentrated in the bordering areas of Mymensingh, Sherpur, and Jamalpur and Netrokona district. In Mymensingh, they are located in Bhaluka, Phulbaria, Muktagacha, Phulpur, Haluaghat, and Dhobaura. In Sherpur, they live in all upazilas (sub-district): Jhenaigati, Sribordi, Nalitabari, Nokla and Sherpur Sadar. In Netrokona, they are found in Durgapur, Kalmakanda, and Purbodhala. A large number of them live in Madhupur forest areas of present Tangail district. Few Garo also live in Sreepur upazila of Gazipur District. About 5000 Garo are now living in Dhaka, mainly for the purpose of service and education. About one thousand Garo are living in Chittagong, the second largest city of Bangladesh, for the same purpose. Some of the Garo are also found living in the districts of Sylhet, Moulvibazaar and Sunamganj.

The Garos use the term Mandi to refer to themselves. The Garos are one of the classic examples of matrilineal people in the subcontinent. Their matrilineality is illustrated by an apparently rigid kinship system where descent and inheritance reckon through the female line. They are divided into different exogamous kinship groups and sub-groups and are geographically sparse to many places of Bangladesh and India. Despite obvious differences that exist between these groups, they follow almost similar kinship system. Every Garo individual belongs to the lineage group

of their mother: they take their mother's family name and are not allowed to marry within their own group. Inheritance follows the matrilineal line of descent and men do not inherit property, either movable or immovable, from their parents. It all goes to the women. Indeed, kinship is the main organizing principle of Garo social organization and it determines the role of women and men in society. As they are surrounded by patrilineal Bangalee neighbors, the uniqueness of a matrilineal kinship system sets them apart from other communities.

Their mother tongue is Garo, which belongs to the Bodo group of Tibeto-Burman stock. The Bodo languages are mostly spoken in the north–east India, some close to the northern and eastern boarder of Bangladesh. Of them Garo, Kok Borak, Kucchari are spoken primarily in the hill areas (Burling, 1997). "Their language still retains some similarity with Tibetan: and some of their ideas, such as sentimental value they attach to gongs, are identical with those prevailing Tibetan villages" (ibid: 6). Bangladeshi Garo are now bilingual; they speak both Garo Language (*Abeng*) and Bangla. Over the course of many centuries, as the Bangla and Assamese languages have expanded, the area occupied by the Bodo speakers has probably shrunk. In Bangladesh nearly 130 million people speak in Bangla. Influence of Bangla is evident in the day-to-day affairs of the Garo. Bangla words have penetrated to all dialects of the Garo, and they use thousands of them. Without these borrowed words Garos would find it impossible to talk about some topics. According to Burling, the Garo speakers feel free to use thousands of Bangla words, and they easily embed them in Garo sentences. At present, they cannot really speak their own language without the help of Bangla words (Burling, 1997).

Most of the Garo people are bi-lingual because they speak Bangla (the national language of Bangladesh) in addition to *Achchik Katha*, their own indigenous language (mother tongue)- (Bal, 2007). From their childhood, Garo children are habituated to speak both Garo and Bangla and write in Bangla only because in Bangladesh their alphabets are not practiced. They usually speak Garo language although they talk in Bangla language while interacting with the Bangalees. Garo language has different dialects: A·being or Am·being, Matabeng, Atong, Me·gam, Matchi, Dual [Matchi-Dual] Ruga, Chibok, Chisak, Gara, Gan·ching [Gara-Gan·ching] A·we etc. In Bangladesh A·being is the usual dialect, but in India A·chik is used more. A we has become the standard dialect of the Garos. The Garo

language has some similarities with Boro-Kachari, Rava, Dimasa and Kok-Borok languages. Garo literature was mainly transferred from generation to generation and one place to another orally.

3. Conceptual and Theoretical Issues

Languages are repositories of history, languages express identity, languages contribute to the sum of human knowledge and of course, languages are interesting in themselves (Crystal, 2000). According to Dorian (1999), the loss of an ethnic language is far less easily recoverable than other identity markers and its cultural content is never fully recoverable (Dorian, 1999). Close and systematic attention to the relationship between language, identity and ethnicity sheds light on processes of cultural change and continuity (Fishman *et al.*, 2013). During the last five hundred years, particularly in the 20th century, globalization, migration and economy have largely changed the landscape of global linguistic diversity and equilibrium.

Language and ethnic identity are related reciprocally and language is also used as the marker as well as the storehouse of different ethnic identities. On the one hand, language usage influences the formation of ethnic identity at the same time ethnic identity also influences the language attitudes, usage and speech accommodation in several contexts. Giles et al argued that language is a highly structured and sophisticated but flexible, subtle process which capitalizes on man's most significant resources including thought, symbolism and emotion (Giles *et al.*, 1977). The interrelationship between language and ethnic identity is well acknowledged and studied in various disciplines and research. Language is one of the major factors used to categorize people (Giles & Johnson, 1981) and language use also plays a major role in the development of social identity in general (Eastman, 1985) and ethnic identity in particular (ibid). Ethnic identity is ''that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his [or her] knowledge of his [or her] membership in a social group, together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership'' (Tajfel, 1981: 255).

The identification of ethnic minority groups includes many different markers of identity, of which language is an important but not the only one and language is explicitly mentioned in most academic works related to ethnic identity (Schmidt, 2008). Research also indicates that ethnic group

members identify more closely with those who share their language than with those who share their cultural background (Giles *et al.*, 1977; Gudykunst & Schmidt, 1987). Close and systematic attention to the relationship between language and ethnicity illuminates processes of cultural change and continuity (Fishman *et al.*, 2013). Obeng and Adegbija observed the relationship between language and ethnicity in Sub-Saharan Africa and argued that language is seen as the storehouse of ethnicity (Obeng & Adegbija, 1999). Each ethnic group expresses and identifies itself by the language it speaks, and its cultural paraphernalia is shaped by its language. Sameness of language and ethnicity creates a bond of acceptance and provides a basis for togetherness, for identity, for separateness, for solidarity, and for brotherhood and kinship. Across the world each language carries a strong and distinct ethnic baggage as well as strong emotional attachment to identity. Fishman et al opine that just as commonly, language is part of the authentic 'doing' constellation and the authentic "knowing" constellation that are recurrently assumed to be dimensions of ethnicity (Fishman *et al.*, 2013). Giles et al tried to conceptualize the relationship between identity and language that in-group speech can serve as a symbol of ethnic identity and cultural solidarity; language is often the major embodiment of this ethnicity (Giles *et al.*, 1977). It is used to reminder the group about its cultural heritages, for transmitting group feelings and for excluding members of the outgroup from id internal transaction. Feeling of in-group solidarity can be socialized at a very early age. And dominant groups try to manipulate language in many ways and keep the subordinate position of the subordinate groups.

Language is interrelated with culture, power and identity. Language, religions and knowledge diversities and the environment diversities have been intimately interconnected throughout human history (Maiero & Shen, 2004). "[E]very language is a living museum, a monument to every culture it has been vehicle to" (Nettle & Romaine, 2000: 14). The issues of language shift and maintenance have remained at the focus of investigations of linguists, sociologists, geneticists and anthropologists for long time. Linguists, along with other scientists, believe that languages evolve over time, which is necessary for human evolution as well. Scholars of linguistics consider languages as part of total ecosystem and term the diversity as 'biolinguistic diversity' (Nettle & Romaine, 2000). Crystal (2000) puts forward a couple of arguments signifying the

importance of language diversity: (1) Linguistic, cultural and biological diversity are inseparable; (2) Language is an index, symbol and marker of identity; (3) Languages are repositories of history, and means to reach the archive of knowledge, ideas and beliefs; (4) Different languages are ways of expressing different visions and purposes of life, and thereby contribute to the sum of human knowledge; and (5) language itself is important, because it is composed of sounds, grammar and vocabulary that reveal something different about linguistic organization and structure (Crystal, 2000 cf. Baker, 2011: 51-52). Knowledge is passed on to future generations through written and oral dialogues, and therefore language creates a platform of awareness and education of upcoming generations. The linguistic diversity is an essential component of cultural diversity and by losing a language, we lose knowledge of that language and culture (Crystal, 2000).
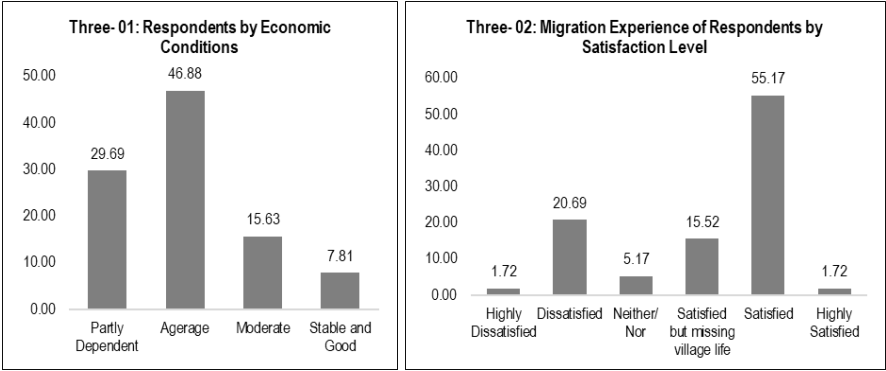
The socio-economic and political factors play a major role in language shift. A high degree of language shift may occur in the areas of high cultural mobility and social instability. The minority languages are at high risk of language shift and extinction. Language shift is faster in urban areas than in rural as the insularity and rigidity of rural life reduce the acceptability of change (Fishman, 1976: 315). Societal bilingualism as a prerequisite for language shift because it is the outcome of the dynamics of language contact (Fasold, 1991). The language contact-induced changes can lead to linguistic homogeneity on one hand and language attrition on the other. The Garo language, like the other minority languages of Bangladesh, is also subject to such linguistic hegemony of Bangla language as the language of the overwhelming majority.

4. The Garo Migrants: Social and Economic Life

The study focuses on migrant Garos in Dhaka city from different parts of the country. Migration of Garos from the different parts of the country to the city areas started during early 1960s during Pakistan period. Various factors instigate this migration like losing land due to illiteracy, ignorance of government, environmental hostility and poor settlement and various discriminatory acts. the respondents of the study chose the Dhaka city as their place of destination for several reasons. Economic security, better job and better education, better facilities etc. allured and made this community to migrate to Dhaka city. There are migrant Garos in Gulshan (Kalachandpur), Badda, Farmgate, Gazipur and many other places of greater Dhaka. The respondents gave and shared different views and

experience about their Dhaka city life. 55.17 percent of the respondents expressed satisfaction and they think that after migration they have far better facilities and they are solvent. Again, 20.69 percent are dissatisfied and feel meaningless to come to Dhaka and also feel existential crises. Realization comes among them that there will be no race over the globe named Garo as they do not have language, own place of living, no union or place to set their opinion regarding crises of the Garo people. However, the Garos in the Dhaka city are doing several paid jobs. Occupational engagement of 29.69 percent of the respondents are private service where only 1.56 percent doing public service. 39.06 percent of the Garo respondents are students at higher educational institutions. Apart from that, many Garo women are also working in the beautification parlours of Dhaka city. About 15.63 percent said that their economic conditions are moderate means above the average conditions and below the well-off condition and they are living happily in the Dhaka city. Majority 46.88 percent said that their economic condition is average means just leading life in the city area.

> *Momota Chivan is about 70 years old and lives with her daughter. She is a converted Christian. He is a nurse and had training at Bogra. At the time of training she had faced difficulty with Garo but now it's not a crisis to her. She feels comfort to say that she is a Garo. She shared that migration from their original land to the city has changed their life especially their economic life. She worked as nurse that made a great contribution to the family where they had to lead a miserable life in their previous land because their sources of income were constrained by several new technologies and crops to which their access was limited due to financial problem on the one hand, and on the other hand different barriers and restrictions on land and cultivation from the government narrowed their options. As a result, she with family migrated to the city and managed to live well. She also remembered that though she had hard times when she migrated but now, they have a good economic life.*

Three- 01: Respondents by Economic Conditions

Three- 02: Migration Experience of Respondents by Satisfaction Level

*Another respondent named Shaior Baji came to Dhaka to have economic
solvency and he studied up to class eight at village. This family has
diasporic tension as we see his parents were in India and left the country
at the time of Liberation war and then again came back after war. His
economic condition is not satisfactory as he finds life is very expensive in
Dhaka.*

The social and economic life of migrated Garos in Dhaka city is
composed of mixed experiences. Some finds it that migration has made
their life easy in contrast to earlier life where at the same time some finds
it more difficult to live in the city as it is expensive, unfamiliar, unhealthy,
uncomfortable, different economy oriented and as they are not accustomed
with it. In consequence for some it results in existential crises and
diasporic tensions. Though several factors work behind it such as
education, market demand, ethnicity, language competency etc where
priority goes to the mainstream population instead ethnic minorities.
Therefore, economic conditions, which depends on various variables, of
migrated Garos are varied.

5. Garo Experience of Language Barrier

The term language barrier is used to imply all the problems faced by
an individual as he tries to communicate with a group of people who speak
a different language other than his own. Well, we all are well
acknowledged that language is one of the main mediums of
communication and in this globalized world some languages always
dominate and take control the market where other languages are
subordinate and dominated. In this regard, it is known that the migrated
Garo people are surrounded by the overwhelming presence of the
Bangalee people, having different language and culture. Garo people have
their own language named Achik but nearly to be lost with the phase of
time and most of the Garo children are bilingual. We know Garos migrate
to the urban areas to make their livelihood as a result they come into
contact with the Bengalese and need Bangla for communication in all kind
spheres in city like job sectors, educational institutions, usual everyday
conversation etc. as a result they have little scope to practice their mother
tongue in the city areas and they usually use their own mother tongue with
other Garos. So, the researcher wanted to know whether Bangla language
causes as barrier to them and found that about 31 percent are encountering
some or less difficulties to communicate in Bangla language. 9 percent are

facing strongly difficulty, and even not possible to communicate but it is noteworthy that 60 percent are not facing difficulty at all. As some respondents respond the following ways-

Kriti Rema says, "I am happy to say I am Garo" but to her Bangla is not a barrier now. She did not find barrier whereas she has got lots of help from the people as she came to Dhaka by the help of Squire Program. She is happy here.

Another informant named Sujon Remon is from Pirojpur, Jamalpur. He is 35 years old. He lives at Kalachandpur in Dhaka and works in a private farm. He is a proud Garo as he says "I am Bangladeshi by birth and I am representing Garo indigenous community". After SSC he has left for Dhaka and completed his MA degree from here. He is very clear in one stand that their mother tongue is Achik where Bangla is in second position and English is most important. In that case multilingual effect is pretty clear for Garo people. Multi lingual condition is most difficult for common Garo. He again says it is must for common Garo people because they face difficulty even in workplace. As he says that after migration there are several threats to forget language of their own: (1) Because of less use in Dhaka city; (2) he says other than these three languages Dhaka is suffering from banglish and banggaro language which is also much threatening for all.

Nirom Chism is from Mymansingh, now he is at Kalachandpur, Gulshan Dhaka. He is a converted Christian and works at American Embassy. He has completed education at village and found Bangla as barrier because in his childhood he had found it difficult to learn it as his mother tongue is Achik.

The Majority of the respondents do not feel barrier in regard of language during communication with the Bengalee people in Bangla. But this figure signifies that the majority of the respondents are well adapted and accustomed to the Bangla language though it can be also signified that they are bound to be well adapted. So, there has little or nothing to be appreciating from that statistics because it reminds or signals that in other way is threatening to the Garo language as they are gradually being adapted to Bangla. They are being forced directly and indirectly to be adjusted with the mainstream language for their survival and they are well

acknowledged for their competent ability. In the struggle of life and livelihood they are choosing and adapting Bangla language; as a result in near future it may happen that the small number of Garos who shared about their difficulties would not face anymore as they will try to adapt for their existence. And the adult Garos of first generation faces difficulties, the new second generation does not feel any barrier as they are growing up among Bangalee culture and they are taught that culture to be fit in context of reality. So not facing any barrier or small barrier can result loss of a language in the long run.
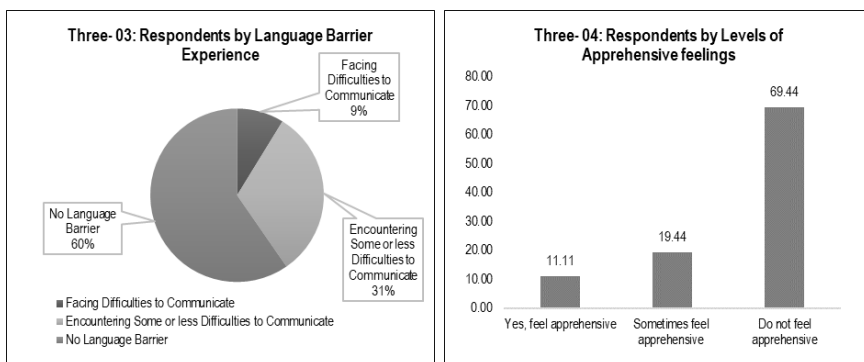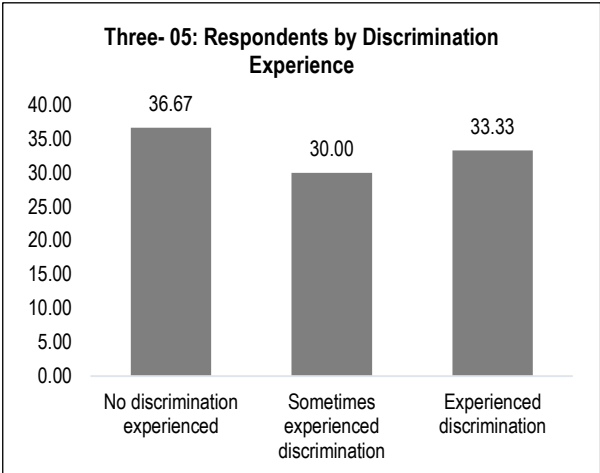

Tobo skitnus kengus thought that it is very effective way to be knowledgeable. But for survival this clearly is burden. Regarding Sujon they are scared to lose their mother tongue and because of language capital situation they are losing it. According to him, because of less use of Achik for long time over the day and because of no written condition the language is in threat. He says Garo has no alphabet so if we want to write Garo, we use Bangla or English. So, they are interested to revive their language. To bring out my insight and existence and make it permanent we need to get back our alphabet. He feels alarming that as only at home they are using Garo language so migration caused huge damage and the young generation will face it terribly.

He has informed that some organizations are now working to save the existence and revive the language. They arrange cultural program like Wangala and they practice Chu drinking. According to his observation as Chakma people got their language back and their language is computerized so why not Garo. He is positive thinker and he says that now a days Wangala is been celebrated with enthusiasm even among the others and government, media, TV channels are also highlighting this program to protect the community's identity. Through Garo song people of different ages are also trying to survive the culture and its literature.

6. Experience of Discrimination Due to Language Barrier

Several languages can exist but their position is subordinate to the main language. This subordinate position of a particular language creates discrimination for the speakers of that language regarding the field of education, professions, daily interaction etc. So, language not always works as the medium of accessibility to several fields rather sometimes for someone works as

Three- 05: Respondents by Discrimination Experience

No discrimination experienced	Sometimes experienced discrimination	Experienced discrimination
36.67	30.00	33.33

barrier. The case is not different in context of Garos living in Dhaka city. due to their identity and accent of Bangla they experience different discrimination in the job sectors, educational sectors as well as in day-to-day life. It is reported that 33.33 percent experienced discrimination in their job sectors and 30.00 percent sometimes experienced discrimination in their job sectors. They told that first of all they do have face discrimination in getting jobs as majority of them are not higher educated and get low ranked jobs. On the other hand, wherever their job sectors or whatever jobs they do in everywhere they experience discrimination. They encounter verbal scolding from their Bangalee counterparts for their accent of Bangla as well as for their skin color and physical structure that's different from the mainstream Bangalee. On the other hand, about 37 percent respondents shared that they did not encounter any discriminatory behavior from their Bangalee colleagues in job and educational institutions rather experience good working environment and support. There are several ways by which they experience discrimination. They are mocked and teased by their friends, classmates, teachers for their language, pronunciation, facial structure etc. They are also told backward, underdeveloped, rural etc. They face verbal abuse and ignorance from their colleagues and mates too. A few of the respondents of this study are cited below.

Rebecca Pathang is 45 years old. She is from Halwa ghat. Because of language barrier she did not want to continue the study at her childhood. Now she works at Dhaka and happy with work. She did not face difficulty regarding identity. A new strain came as Bangla and Garo are mixed with each other and surviving in Dhaka. Another respondent named Rupanjala Kritirama says, "our face cutting is the mirror" so she finds some people who look   at them and laugh that sometimes makes her feel alienated in Dhaka.

Shaior Baji another respondent is from Mymensingh, now he is at Kalachandpur, Gulshan Dhaka. He is a converted Christian and works at American Embassy. He has completed education at village and found Bangla as barrier because in his childhood he had found it difficult to learn it as his mother tongue is Achik. He is much conscious about the language of next generation. so, he speaks in Garo language at home with his children. In answer to his identity and existential crises he says his face cutting and nose makes him different than others but he does not feel alienated. He is proud to say that he is Garo.

The experience of discrimination due to language by the Garos in the Dhaka city is varied. Though majority of the respondents shared that they face discrimination but about 37 percent shared that they do not face any difficulties. That's why there is little scope to say that they are leading a happy and peaceful life in their city life in search of what they migrated here. Though they are earning from different income sources but they do not get a healthy environment of living that will be comprised of good mental, physical, social, economic and political life. They are always in constant tensions of being mocked and teased that is hampering their normal way of life that they deserve and sought from their early migration period and resulting to their identity crisis as well as existential crisis.

Features of Treatment in Public Interactions	Prevalence or Intensity
o Mocked and teased by friends and classmates at school.	Very high
o Teased by friends and teachers at school.	High
o Mocked for our language	Moderate
o Mocked for our Bangla accent and pronunciation	Very high
o Mocking by making physical or facial gestures	High

o Making comments on different facial construction and appearance	Very high
o Staring weirdly or giving strange look	Very high
o Become subject to bullying and teasing	High
o Being neglected and ignored by friends and colleagues	High
o Becoming subject to verbal abuse	High
o Always told or being referred to as backward or underdeveloped	High

7. Assessing Garo Language Shift and Maintenance

Language shift also known as language assimilation is the process where a speech community shifts to a different language, usually over an extend period of time. Languages which are perceived to be higher status stabilize of spread at the expense of other language that are perceived by their own speakers to be lower status. In this study, the present condition or use of Garo language is at the focus. The study pursues to observe how often the language is being used or not. However, on the other hand, language maintenance is a situation in which a group of speech community or speakers continue to use their language in some or all spheres of life in competition with the dominant or majority language to sustain their own language. The present condition of the Garo language is at the bank of being extinct if the present condition of use continues. The study has shown that about 44 per cent respondents reckon that their language is in adequate use in their family and outside. They shared though they are incapable of using their mother language in their work places and at the same time their children cannot use it in their educational institutions but they regularly use their mother language at their home among themselves. They teach their children their mother tongue from the very beginning that they do not forget their mother tongue to maintain their identity. 23 percent respondents consider that to some degree their language is maintained but it is not adequate that can result in the loss of language in the long run. A major portion of the respondents that stands above 30 percent opine that they have no idea about their language so they do not know or not sure about the maintenance and use of their language. This indicates that a large number Dhaka dwelling Garos are not well aware about their own language. It is alarming for a language. The reasons

behind that are varied such as the respondents responded in multiple ways that about 34 percent respondents think cultural assimilation into dominated Bangalee language is the main reason for their language shift. Above 28 percent seem that there is very little scope to use Garo language living and doing their everything in Bangalee community. For surviving and making impression they always struggle about language. Above 15 percent respondents think that medium of learning is affecting their language as they are forced to learn in Bangla which is not their mother tongue. Above 13 percent respondents think that only for the employment purpose they have to learn and practice Bangla as it is official language. Above 9 percent respondents reckon that for communication purpose they are to use Bangla and their communication majorly occur with the Bangalee community so they have no other way without using Bangla. Above 7 percent respondents blame parents' unconsciousness for language shift because many parents do not teach their children Garo language. The following case of Hesting Rema provides further insights into the reasons of language shift.
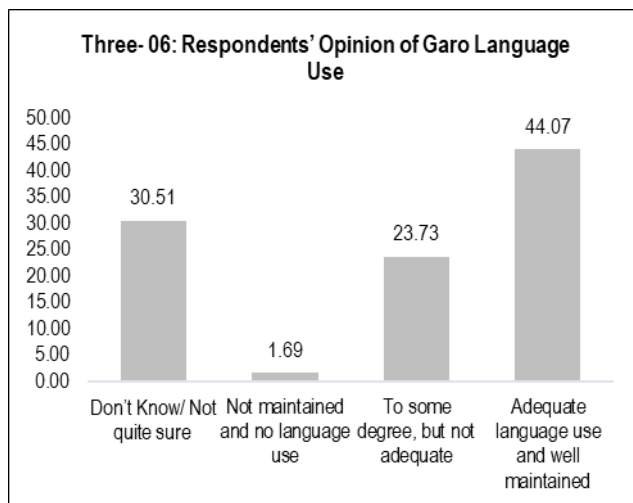

Hesting Rema is 42 years old. He is from Netrokona. He is proud Garo. He has interest about Garo literature. He is a singer he has got the information that one of his uncle Daniel Ruram is trying to get alphabet back and he claims they could get back their relatives. Salina Hossain also worked for them. Prosanto Tripura has worked for them. He is confident that they can revive the language and next generation will learn and write in Achik. Even the common people of the country seem happy about the news. This can be the beginning of some positive growth.

Government may use the clue to have vast research. As in India four skills are used in Garo language so it is not impossible to do the same in our country. As minority threat and language loss has been seen in many countries of the world so he feels still we have time to become conscious about this issue. Garo song and literature are practiced by different clubs like Gashu and Arere and Raray is a band who sings Garo song and Fahmida Nabi is also joining to upgrade the clubs as to save mother tongue of this minority group. He thinks originality of Garo culture is in threat so to save culture and original identity they must be united.

Sohel Nabal argued that Regarding Chu drinking he is different as they are Catholic Baptists so Chu drinking is prohibited. So, a mixture of Garo and Christian culture creates a new stream. So, they are chronologically causing cultural deviation in Dhaka. In Dhaka he thinks he is losing language as in working place and outside of the house they cannot use Garo language so, to his it is a kind of crises where is a chance to loss language soon. So, he thinks that they will have to work together to solve the crises of language loss. He believes because of Bangla the Garo are forgetting Achik. He believes the next generation of Garo in Dhaka are mostly destroyed so they need to bring back their culture back and he is teaching Garo song to his son.

However, an immense influence comes from the globalization where international markets are gaining control of everything for this reason the market which is formed by the native products of the Garo are losing their demands and they are becoming unemployed in a great number and they are making move toward the city for employment. As a result, they are being assimilated with the Bangalee culture and there is no way not to be assimilated as Bangla is used everywhere. On the other hand, In Bangladesh, there has no separate language for the ethnic groups rather they are bound to take education in Bangla. Medium of learning plays a vital role in learning and surviving one particular language but the Garo is derived from this opportunity and in consequence they give priority in learning Bangla thinking future market and as education is one of the best bridges to get a good job which may on the other hand secure future. But it is ubiquitously acknowledged that if the same condition continues at one point it will increase and for sure it will create threat to the existence of the language itself.

Three- 07: Respondents' Opinion by Reasons of Garo Language Shift.
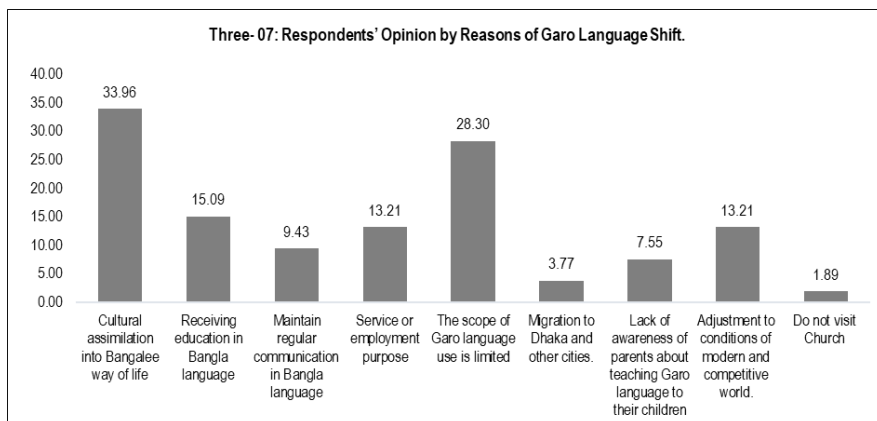
8. Suggestions

While the respondents feel that their mother tongue is on the brink of extinction, responses from the respondents about the ways of reviving their language are multiple. Above 40 per cent of the respondents think establishing Garo cultural organization will contribute to the revival of the language (Ferdousi, 2021). The organization will do several awareness raising activities as well as will demand education in their own language and establishment of educational institutions and curriculum in their own language. They think preservation of the cultural activities are most important in reviving the language as it will promote all other things. Such as organizing several cultural activities in their own language without using Bangla or mixing with Bangla. Some respondents have also shared that they have cultural organization but it works occasionally and they hope if it works relentlessly, it will bring a good result. But it is a matter of sorrow that above 32 per cent respondents do not know and have no idea in what ways their language can be revived and promoted. It signifies that they are not aware of their language and possess no idea in term of revitalization and it does not become a concern for them that their language is being extinct that means they are totally indifferent about their language. Above 20 percent assume that promoting different cultural, musical and dance programs may help in reviving the language. They propose that where nowadays many programs are held in Bangla or Garo and Bangla mixed, it can be organized just in Garo language which will create a feeling for the own mother language. Because we know that cultural programs both impact visually and mentally our mind. About 18 per cent respondents think that the most important thing in the process of

revitalization of their language is awareness among the people especially among the family member mention-ably the senior members. If each and every family is aware about their language and its revival and practice it in the family level then it will revive gradually and for that reason awareness is most important. Respondents shared that there are many families that do not use Garo language even in the family gossiping and talking that is the major barrier in the revival. But at the same time there are many families who teach their children Garo from the very beginning and practice it at least in the family level which is important for revival. Some think that international organization can help in this process that deal with the international heritage or international language like SIL. So, they seek cooperation from the international organization for the revival of their language but the percentage is very little. Above 3 percent suggested that establishing Sunday Garo school will be a helping hand in the revival process. Beside the formal education in Bangla, they will learn their mother language by such school practice. About 11 percent respondents consider that they should have indigenous development organization that will deal with the preservation of indigenous rights and will represent to the government, and thereby, can contribute a lot.

Conclusion

Garo axiomatic identity is expressed in the use of their own language. But the scope of their language use is gradually shrinking owing to multifarious factors including economic and socio-political conditions. The management of the relationships across the different languages is a broad and complex field particularly in bilingual and multilingual social conditions. However, this critical field of investigation "includes the study of the nature of the individual plurilingual's knowledge and use of two (or more) languages as well as the broader social and cultural consequences of the widespread use of more than one language in a given society" (Veltman, 2014: 3). This gives rise to issues, for instances, language maintenance and language shift, language planning, language policy etc. In the case of language shift, code-switching may involve more complex structural integration of the different languages, leading to an eventual base or matrix language turnover (Myers-Scotton, 2002; Veltman, 2014). It is no way acceptable to let a language be extinct since it carries the cultural wealth of the world history as well as it is related to the identity of a community since it is one of the best indicatives of a community so

losing a language is on irreplaceable loss. However, from the above discussion we have observed that Garo language is on the edge of extinction at least in context of the Garo living in the city areas, which may be still rescued taking proper measures and following the respondents' suggestions of reviving and promoting their language.

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