

First Generation's Language Attitudes in a Bilingual Context: A Study on the Bihari Community in Dhaka City

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Bihari Community; Bilingual Context; Dhaka City; First Generation; Language Attitudes

Abstract

This study investigated language attitudes of the first generation of the Urdu-speaking Bihari Community in Dhaka city. In this paper, the term 'first generation' refers to persons who immigrated to erstwhile East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) during the partition in 1947 and were born before the liberation war of 1971. Language attitude is defined in this research as an individual or communal expression toward Urdu and Bangla, as well as language choices and use by the first generation. The purpose of this research was to investigate language attitudes of the first generation towards their mother tongue, Urdu, and the language of the dominant community, Bangla, in a bilingual situation in the Bihari community of Dhaka, and the present condition of Urdu in Bangladesh. The primary goal was to determine if they were positive, negative, or neutral to their own language, Urdu and to the dominant Bengali language. This study adopted a mixed-methods approach, and the data were obtained through a questionnaire and interviews with some respondents of the Bihari community of Geneva camp, Dhaka. The findings highlight the impact of their language attitudes on their language use and choice in bilingual situations and reveal that the first generation has a more positive attitude toward Urdu than Bangla. This study may serve as a specimen for future academics to assess how the language of a community shifts and how language attitudes of that particular community change over time.

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1. Introduction

A 'Bihari' is an Indian citizen or permanent resident of the state of Bihar. However, in Bangladesh, 'Bihari' refers to Indian-Bangladeshi, non-local, non-Bangladeshi, Urdu-speaking people (Khan, 2014). According to Chowdhury (1992), the Bihari community is also called non-locals, non-Bangladeshi, stranded Pakistanis, or Urdu-speaking people. In 1946-47, during the Hindu-Muslim communal riot in Bihar of India, around one million Urdu-speaking Muslims from the Indian provinces of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan moved to East Pakistan, which eventually became Bangladesh in 1971. In early 1948, Pakistan's first Governor-General, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, declared in Dhaka that Urdu would be the sole state language of Pakistan, and that anyone who disagreed would be considered an enemy of Pakistan. East Pakistan's Urdu-speakers had accepted West Pakistan's authority and influence in order to protect their communities. The Bengali Language Movement was launched in 1952 to oppose Urdu as Pakistan's official language. Due to the opposition, Urdu-speakers were not looked upon positively by the Bengali people and became linguistically and culturally alienated from Bengali society within a little more than a decade (Muquim, 2023). Again, in 1971, after the "Operation Searchlight" genocide by the West Pakistani Military, the Bihari community was blamed, and many Biharis were killed after the independence of Bangladesh (Farzana, 2008). There have been many Bihari camps in this country since the partition. In Bangladesh, there are 116 Bihari Camps, and in Dhaka city alone, there are 32 (26 in Mirpur and 6 in Mohammadpur). Geneva Camp in Mohammadpur is the largest, with a population of approximately 25,000 people (Sholder, 2011). The Camp residents still remain socially isolated. This context demonstrates how important language is to their overall predicament. The research investigates whether language attitudes of the first generation at the Geneva Camp are changing or not.

Through language, any culture can be preserved and revitalized. Language serves as a means of communication that fosters national and societal integration. It affects language users' beliefs, opinions, expressions, and emotions regarding a given language and the speech community associated with that language. Occasionally, speakers of the dominant language attempt to subjugate speakers of minor languages by looking down upon them. Sometimes, disputes that arise among different communities are solely due to a language issue. The culturally dominant languages have a concomitant impact on minority languages (Clynes, 2012). In every society, differential power of particular social groups is reflected in language variation and attitudes toward those variations (Ryan, Giles & Sebastian, 1982). When members of a minority community are treated like second-class citizens by dominant elite class, frustration emerges (Rovira, 2015). In this context the members of the minor community have either negative or positive attitudes towards their native language or their adopted language. In the end, negative attitudes of speakers

towards a language threaten that language. This research investigates this matter within the Bihari community residing in Dhaka. Its objectives are to ascertain whether the declining number of Urdu speakers can be attributed to the attitudes of the first generation and to analyze how their perspectives on Bangla and Urdu influence their language and self-identities.

The aim of the present study was to ascertain language attitudes of first-generation individuals towards Urdu and Bangla, determine the underlying reasons for these attitudes, examine their language use, choice, and maintenance in a bilingual context, and assess the influence of the current state of Urdu in Bangladesh on their language attitudes.

The following research questions guided this study:

- i. What are the attitudes of the first generation to their native language and Bangla in the Bihari community in Dhaka?
- ii. How do their language attitudes affect their language choice or use and the maintenance of their community language?

2. Context of the Study

Bangla is the national and official language of Bangladesh which is highly regarded by the members of the various communities in Bangladesh since it is spoken by the majority of the country's population. Though there are numerous minority language communities like Chakma, Marma, Rakhine, and others, each has its own language utilized inside its own group. The Bihari community represents one of the linguistic minority groups within the socio-cultural landscape of Bangladesh. Macdonald (2021) uses the word 'Bihari' to refer to over 300,000 non-Bengali individuals, primarily Urdu-speaking citizens of Bangladesh, who moved to East Pakistan following the Partition of India in 1947. The terms "stranded Pakistani," "Muhajir," and "non-Bengali" are also used in the social and communal vernacular of Urdu speakers in Bangladesh (Siddiqi, 2013, p. 158). They are also referred to as "non-locals", "non-Bangladeshis", or "Urdu-speaking people" in various situations to separate them from the mainstream Bengalis (Haider, 2018, p. 29). Therefore, they seem to have different identity in Bangladesh. Thus, the study's context encompasses an exploration of the dynamics surrounding the minority language Urdu within the first generation of the Bihari community residing in the Geneva camp, Dhaka.

3. Literature Review

The study of language attitudes in a bilingual context, particularly within the Bihari community in Dhaka City, holds significance given the community's unique historical and cultural background. This section provides an overview of existing

studies on language attitudes of speakers of a minority community in a bilingual context.

Bilingualism simply means any individual's ability to use more than one language or "use of more than one language in a given society" (Bhatia, 2006, p. 5). Urdu is the mother tongue and Bangla is the second language to the Bihari community in Bangladesh. Therefore, they can be labelled as a bilingual community in this country, which is a significant threat in the form of a 'Trojan horse' that seems to be alluring at first but eventually results in the death of one of the languages (Wardhaugh, 2010, p. 96). The Biharis in Bangladesh have an unusual status that may be described as an 'artificial minority' (Farzana, 2009, p. 233) or as a 'linguistic diaspora' (Redclift, 2010, p. 312) due to these complications. Therefore, they belong to a bilingual language minority. In this minority bilingualism, the speakers of any minority language need to learn the majority language to gain full access to the resources of society like education, health, and employment (Miles, 1996). In such a situation, subtractive bilingualism often implies that one language is valued over the other in the society (Edwards, 2006). The concern of the study is to examine whether the situation involving the first generation of the Bihari community belongs to the subtractive bilingualism as well as minority bilingualism or not.

Dorian (2006) contends that the world's minority languages have no official standing; therefore, the speakers of minority communities either speak an additional language or adopt the assistance of bilingual intermediaries. The speakers of minority languages often shift from one language's habitual use to another (Weinreich, 2010) outside of their community. Members of the first generation of the Bihari community who belong inside the camp may use Bangla less than the inhabitants outside. This study examines how much language shifting is occurring by this first generation speaker inside and outside of the camp. Indeed, language shift always affects communities in contact with and under domination by a more powerful community (Wendel & Heinrich, 2012). Consequently, this study investigates whether or not there is a dominant-dominated relationship or power difference between Bangla and Urdu speakers in the society for language.

It has been reported that many people of the young generation of this community nowadays do not see any distinctions between Bengali and Biharis except for language and speak both Bengali and Urdu simultaneously, allowing them to blend into society (Rahaman, 2019). In contrast, the elder or first generation still continue to follow their ancestors' culture to conserve 'primordial consciousness' (Rahaman, Uddin, & Hossain, 2020, p. 891). Indeed, a language can be preserved and maintained, when it is highly esteemed and regarded by the minority group as an essential symbol of ethnic identity (Holme, 2013). However, the members of a subordinate group who value their language as an important symbol of their identity are inclined to maintaining their distinguishable language (Giles & Johnson, 1987). In contrast, others for whom the in-group language is not

so crucial for their identity do not maintain their own language. This paper illustrates how the speakers of the first generation of the Bihari community maintain Urdu in the bilingual context in Bangladesh.

Furthermore, the constitution of Bangladesh says in article 28(1) that the state shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, sex, caste, or place of birth. The significant missing word in the above article is “language”. Therefore, the Urdu-speaking linguistic minorities are not recognized by the constitution of Bangladesh as cited in Hussain (2008). To some extent, they are ethnically distinct because they speak a different language (Farzana, 2008). The members of the majority Bangladeshi community discriminate against inhabitants of the camps who speak Urdu, especially the Geneva Camp (Muquim, 2023). In general, if there is no equal importance of any minor language like the language of the mainstream in a society, the language attitudes of minor language users may be volatile.

Language choices are part of social identity (Wardhaugh, 2010) and language attitude is more than just expressing feelings towards any language; it also encompasses emotions and mental states. The predominant means of expressing emotions is through the utilization of language and language labels (Altarriba & Morier, 2006). Therefore, this study was designed to investigate language attitudes and language preferences of the first generation, as well as the reasons and circumstances that led to that decision, and to identify the variables that are accountable for that choice.

4. Methodology

4.1 Study Design

This investigation employs a mixed-methods approach and thematic analysis to assess the language attitudes of the first generation of the Bihari community. For the study, a survey was conducted in 2022.

4.2 Study Area and Samples

The study was conducted in Geneva Camp, Mohammadpur in Dhaka. The study's respondents were from three different localities- Babor Road, Humayun Road, and Gajanabi Road. The sample size was determined to be 50 in number. The study participants comprised individuals aged 45 to 65, encompassing both males and females, who willingly volunteered to participate in the research.

4.3 Sources of Data

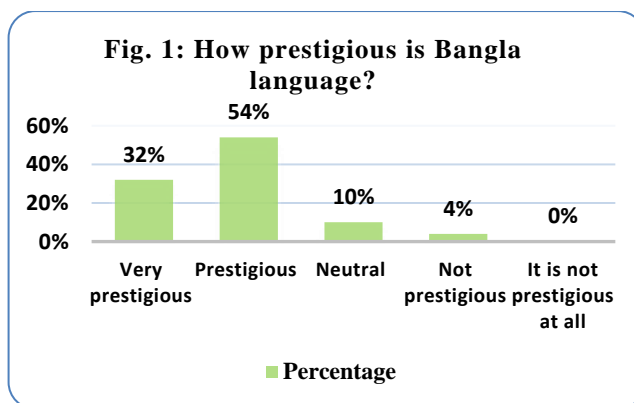
Primary data were obtained through asemi-structured interview and a structured questionnaire from the respondents. The authors captured photographs of aschool within the camp, a brochure written in Urdu, a handwritten Urdu script, and a booklet written in Urdu. In addition, the secondary data were collected from web sources and various academic journals and books. The participants gave their consent to use their artefacts for the purposes of conducting this research.

4.4 Questionnaire and Interview Checklist Preparation

The questionnaire was prepared carefully to obtain to-the-point answers. It includes 19 multiple-choice questions. A five-point scale technique was used to determine the level of language attitude in the survey for six questions. Scale contains five categories: a) Very prestigious, b) Prestigious, c) Neutral, d) Not prestigious, and e) It is not prestigious at all. Likewise, the categories for the other two questions were a) strongly disagree, b) disagree, c) neutral, d) strongly agree, and e) agree. To justify the level of four language skills, the options were a) High, b) Moderate, c) Low, and d) Not at all. There were three indicators for measuring language choice: a) Urdu, b) Bangla, and c) Both. The interview questions were designed to provide greater depth and a clear picture of the respondents' thoughts. All the questions in the questionnaire and interview checklist were set considering the purpose of the study.

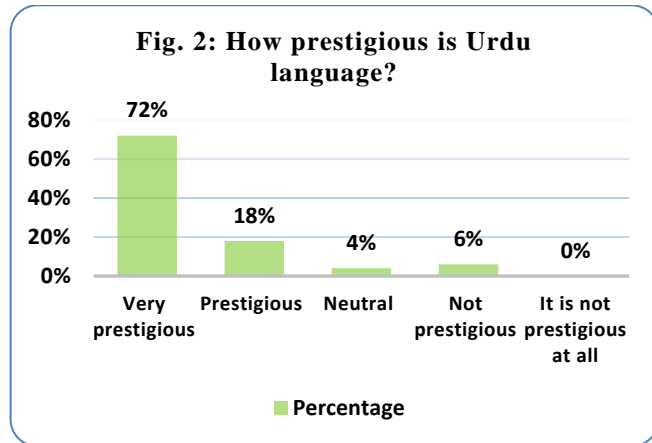
5. Findings and Discussion

The survey of this study aimed to determine how Urdu speakers in the camp felt about the position of Bangla and Urdu, the importance of these two languages to them, and to identify language skills, usages and thoughts of participants.

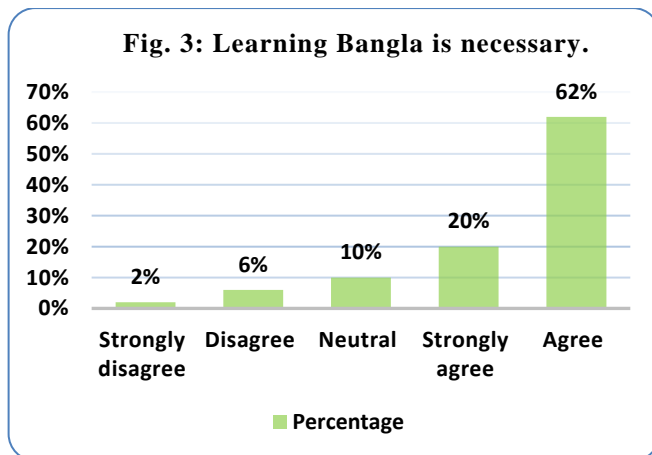


In **Figure 1**, among the total respondents, 54% of the respondents think that Bangla is a prestigious language, whereas 32% of respondents see it as very prestigious in this country. It is not prestigious to only 4% of respondents; 10% of

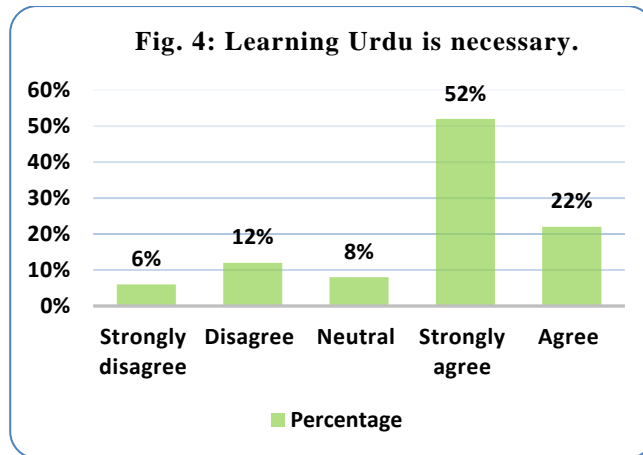
total respondents are unsure and remain neutral. Besides, the value is 0% for the option that is not prestigious.



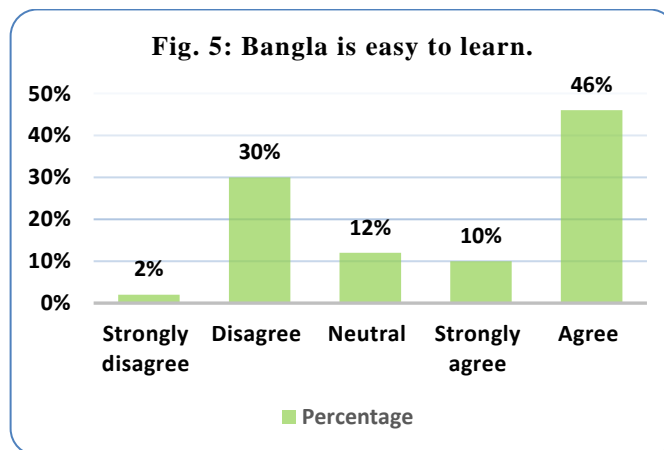
Urdu is the mother tongue of the Bihari community. The status of Urdu to the first generation of the Bihari community in the Geneva camp is different. Most respondents think Urdu is the way of expressing their identity, and it is attached to emotion and sentiment. [Figure 2](#) shows that 72% of respondents believe Urdu is very prestigious, and only 18% of the respondents think Urdu is prestigious. However, 4% of the respondents remained neutral. It is important to note that no one selected the option that Urdu is not prestigious.



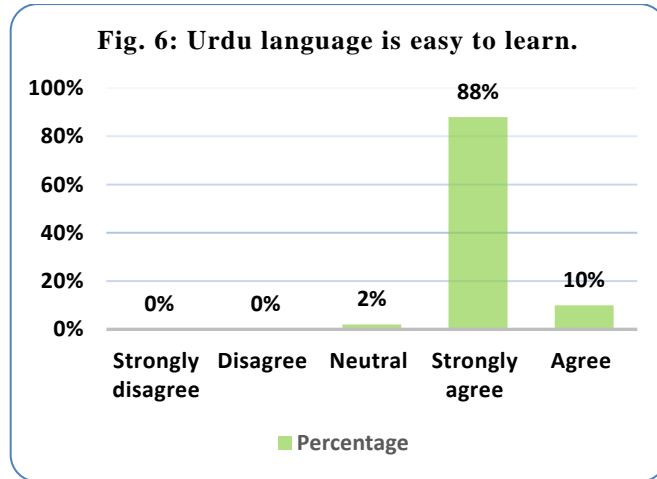
In the questionnaire, the third question was whether learning Bangla is essential or not. Here, 62% of respondents agreed that learning Bangla is necessary. Again, 20% of respondents strongly agreed, only 2% strongly disagreed, and 10% remained neutral, but to 6% of respondents, Bangla is unnecessary for them to learn.



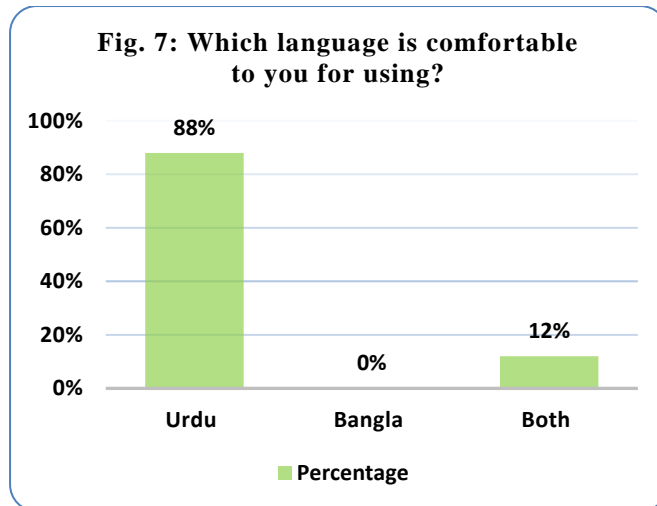
Language can be the foundation of any country, civilization or culture only when its users have good feelings for their language. Language users' perceptions are occasionally altered by negative language attitudes that impact the necessity of learning that language. Figure 4 shows that 52% of respondents strongly asserted that learning Urdu is necessary, and 22% agreed with the statement. Besides, 6% of respondents strongly disagreed, 8% of respondents were neutral, another 12% of respondents disagreed that learning Urdu is necessary.



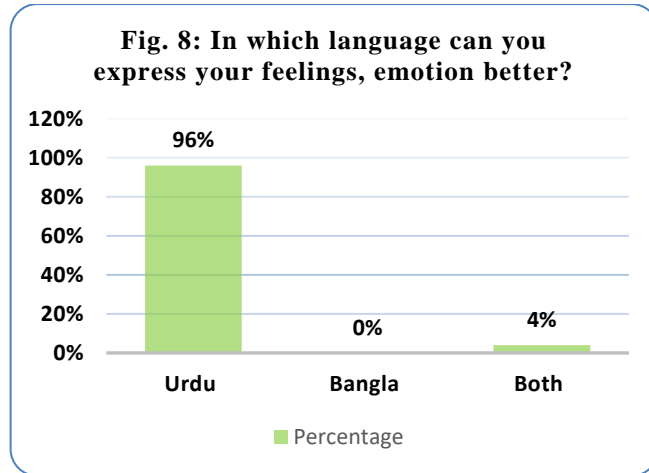
Bangla is the second and the official language of the Biharis. The respondents were asked whether the Bangla language is easy to learn. Figure 5 shows that 46% of the respondents agreed, and 10% strongly agreed. Again, 30% of the respondents disagreed, and 12% remained neutral. Among the total respondents, only 2% of the respondents strongly disagreed.



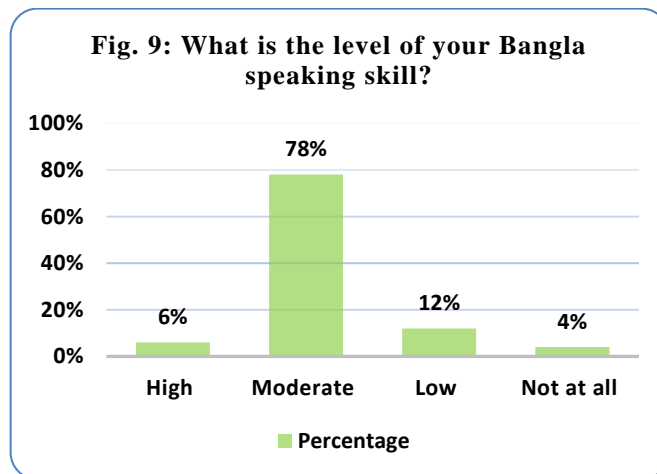
In a bilingual situation, two languages are used in different contexts. Naturally, the mother tongue related to language acquisition is easier for any community member to learn than the other language. This question was about whether the process of learning Urdu is easy or not. More than half of the total respondents (88%) strongly agreed, 10% agreed, only 2% remained neutral, and none answered for the other two options.



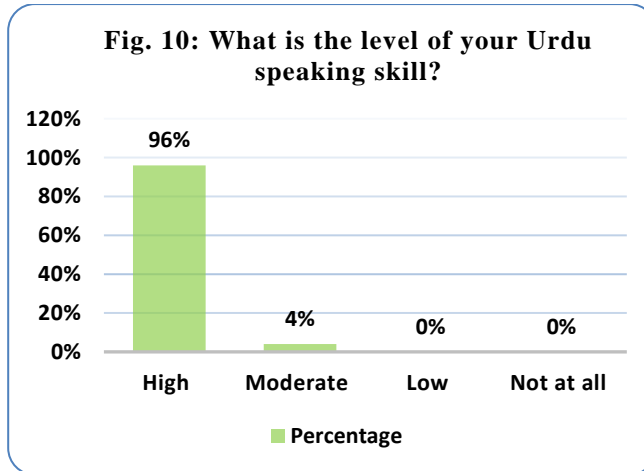
When the respondents were asked to answer which language is comfortable to them for using, 88% of respondents selected the option Urdu, 12% selected Urdu and Bangla. No one selected the option Bangla. Therefore, Bangla is not as comfortable as Urdu for any of the respondents of the study.



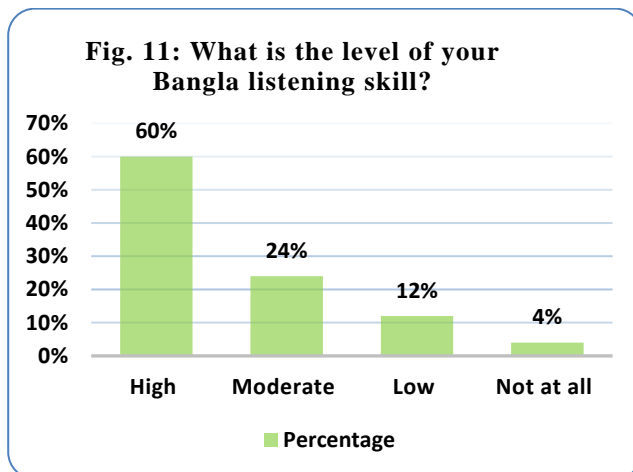
Language is the means of expressing inner words, thoughts, ideas, feelings and emotions. The respondents of this study were asked in which language they could express their feelings and emotions better between Bangla and Urdu. **Figure 8** shows that nearly 96% of respondents answered Urdu, whereas only 4% answered both Bangla and Urdu. It is a matter of consideration that none can express their feeling and emotions better in Bangla.



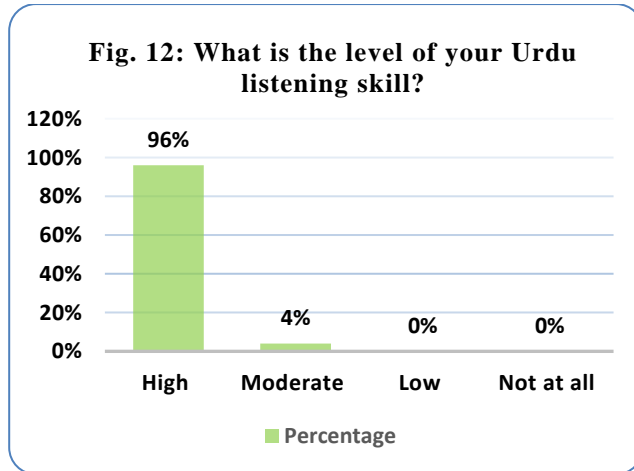
This question was set to identify the level of the Bangla speaking skills of the Bihari community. **Figure 9** shows that most of the respondents have a moderate level of English proficiency (78%). Besides that, 12% of respondents have lower level in the Bangla-speaking ranking, and 4% cannot speak Bangla. Here, only 6% of respondents are on the scale of higher levels.



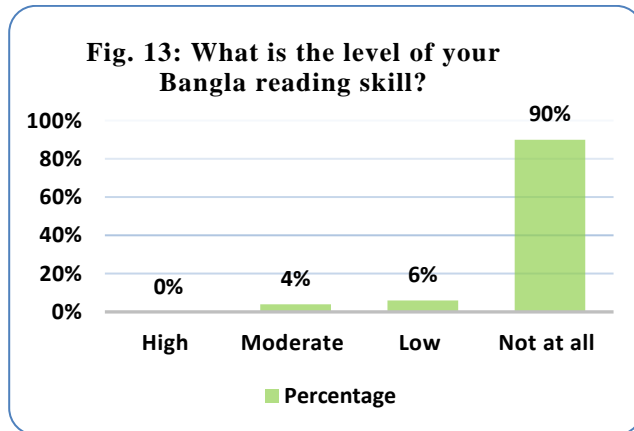
To measure the level of Urdu speaking skills, this question was selected. [Figure 10](#) shows that most of the respondents (96%) belong to the higher category of Urdu speakers. The first-generation members of the Bihari community are very fluent in Urdu. In the moderate level category, there are only 4% of the respondents, but 0% selected the options “Low” and “Not at all”. Indeed, it is a very positive sign to keep a language alive.



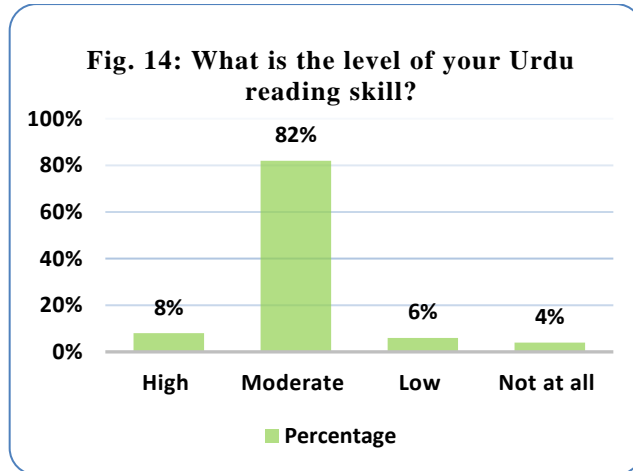
One of the fundamental language abilities is listening. The process of absorbing, generating meaning from, and responding to spoken words is known as listening. The Biharis in Bangladesh live in a multilingual environment; therefore, learning Bangla and Urdu is essential. The ability to listen assists the listener in comprehending the meaning of any input from the speaker. [Figure 11](#) depicts the results of the respondents' Bangla listening ability. 60% of respondents reported to have a higher degree of understanding, 24% have a moderate level, 12% have a poor level, and only 4% do not comprehend Bangla when they listen.



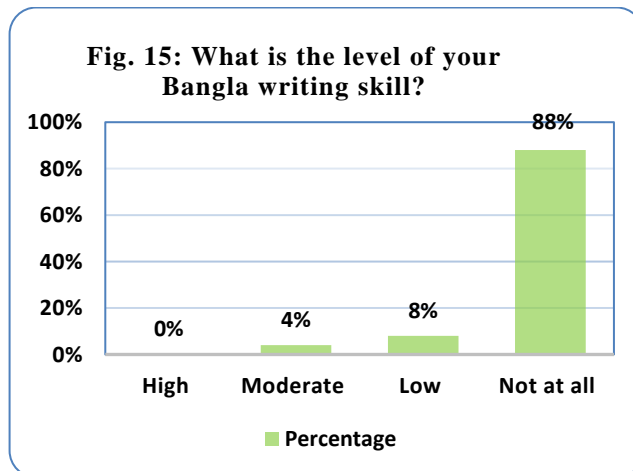
Listening is the ability to hear and understand information in the communication process correctly. To measure the level of the respondents' Urdu listening skill, they were asked to select the option among "High", "Moderate", "Low", "Not at all". Figure 12 shows that 96% respondents chose the high category, 4% selected the moderate. None of them selected the low and the not at all options.



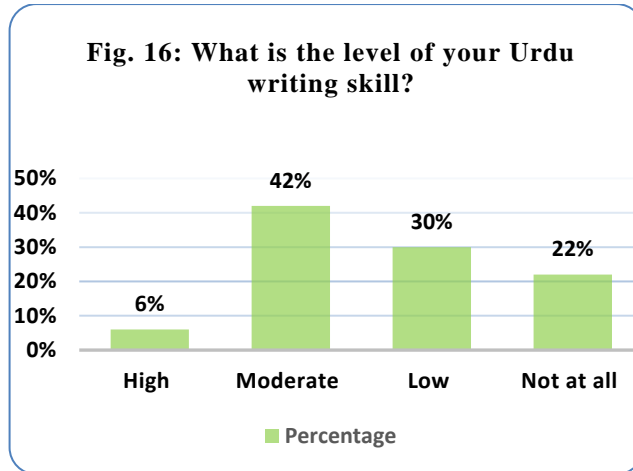
Reading skill measures the literacy rate. The respondents migrated to Bangladesh at their younger or middle age but did not get a proper opportunity to get an education in Bangla. Therefore, the level of their Bangla reading skills is not very higher. Nearly all of them (90%) are unable to read Bangla. Some of them learned it from Bengalis; for that reason, only 4% of respondents are at a moderate level, and 6% are at a lower level.



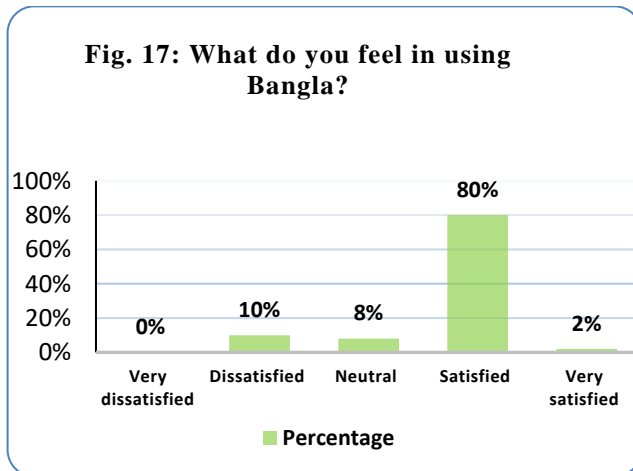
Though Urdu is the Bihari's mother tongue, the first generation's reading skill level is not very satisfactory. To identify the Urdu reading level of the respondents, this question was set, and [Figure 15](#) shows that 82% of respondents have a moderate level, 8% have a higher level, 6% are in a lower position, and 4% are in the not at all position.



Communication is transferred more frequently through writing than any other kind of media. Although most of the Bihari community's first generation can speak Bangla, they are illiterate in writing. According to [Figure 15](#), more than half of the respondents (88%) cannot write in Bangla at all. 8% have a lower level, 4% have a moderate level, and none has a higher level.

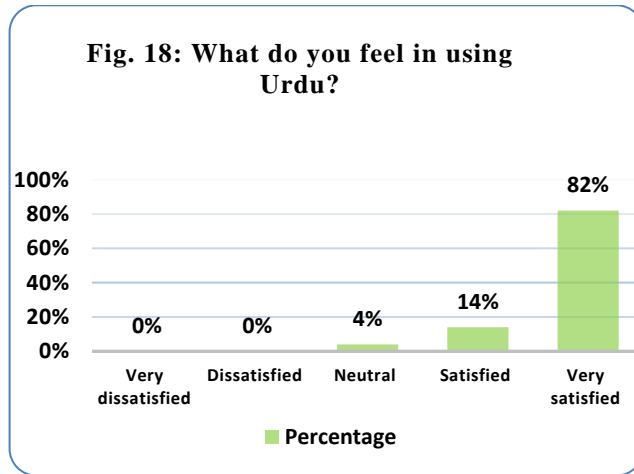


Writing is a form of human communication that expresses words and uses signs and symbols to convey emotions. It is the ability to communicate ideas, emotions, and feelings to others. The study results were significantly better for Urdu than for Bangla when the respondents were asked to indicate their writing skills in Urdu. Moreover, 30% of respondents had low writing abilities, compared to 42% with moderate level. 6% of the respondents are in higher positions, even though 22% cannot write in Bangla.

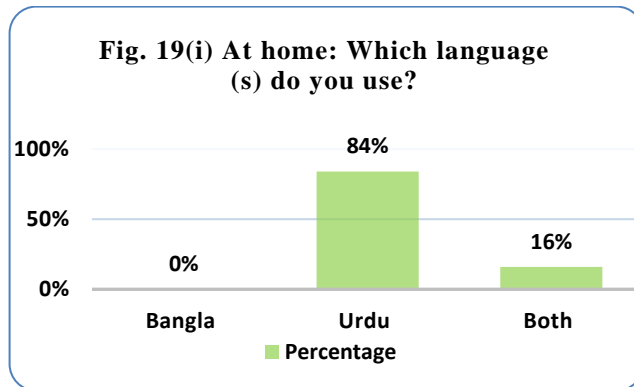


The utilization of a second or foreign language within a dominant environment by individuals belonging to a minority community is influenced by multiple aspects. Different aspects of human beings, like emotion, feeling, mood, or attitude, might shape their behavior and have an impact on language learning. When the respondents were asked to talk about their feelings towards Bangla, 80% answered that they were satisfied with Bangla, whereas only 2% were very satisfied. Besides,

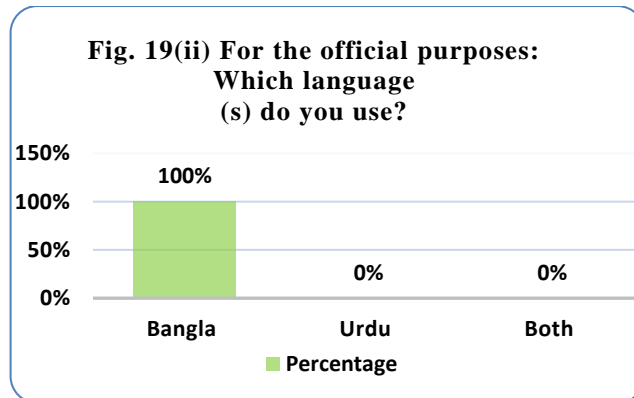
8% remained neutral, but 10% of respondents were dissatisfied with this language. None of them appeared to be really unsatisfied, according to the Figure 17.



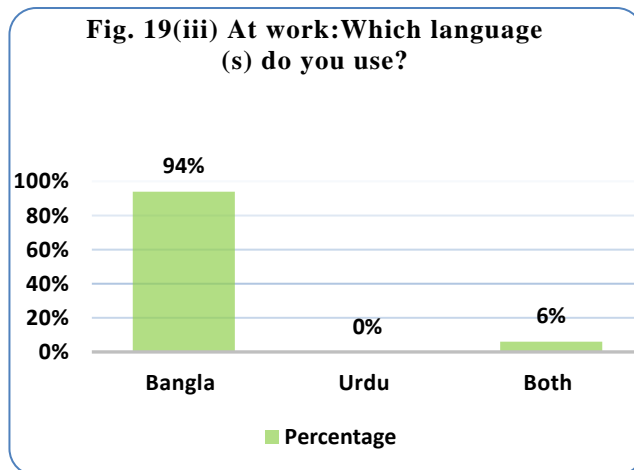
Feelings are the conception of the emotions that are interlinked to language. Basically, the emotions and thinking of human beings are significantly influenced by their mother tongue. When the respondents were questioned about what they felt in using Urdu, 82% answered that they were very satisfied, 14% were satisfied, and only 4% remained neutral. Nobody chose the options of ‘very dissatisfied’ and ‘dissatisfied’. Figure 18 shows that they nurture a sense of pride when communicating in Urdu.



A language uses signs to convey ideas, people, places, and events. Most of the first-generation members in the Bihari community remain inside the home and usually use Urdu. 84% of the total respondents in this study use Urdu entirely at home, whereas none uses exclusively Bangla. In addition, 16% of respondents speak both Bangla and Urdu.



Bangla is the official language of Bangladesh. The Urdu-speaking people are entirely dependent on Bangla for different official purposes such as jobs, education, bank, business and so on. The data in [Figure 19 \(ii\)](#) shows that 100% of respondents use only Bangla for the official use.



In the interview, many participants of this study expressed that due to their origin, the Urdu speakers experience social estrangement, which includes harassment, bullying, and discrimination. Correspondingly, many Biharis try to conceal their identities by speaking only Bangla in public, although their camp address is listed on their national identification cards. The first-generation respondents also claimed that they were frequently rejected by employers, especially for government employment, or asked to pay more bribes than usual. They also highlighted that language is a significant factor for them in the job market or in the workplace. Therefore, most Urdu speakers start businesses like food-hotel, clothing, saloons, etc. At work, 94% of respondents speak Bangla, 6% of respondents use both Bangla and Urdu, but none can use Urdu entirely.

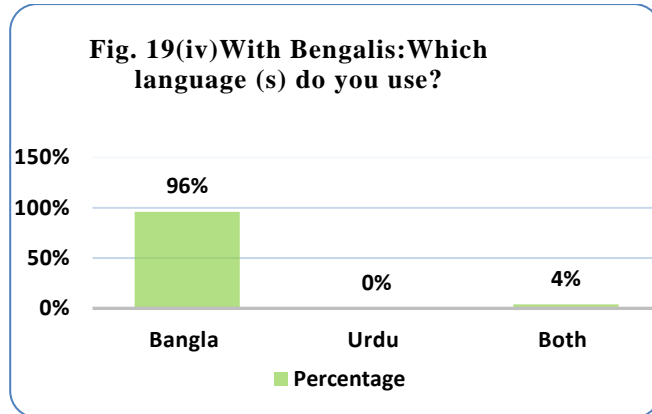
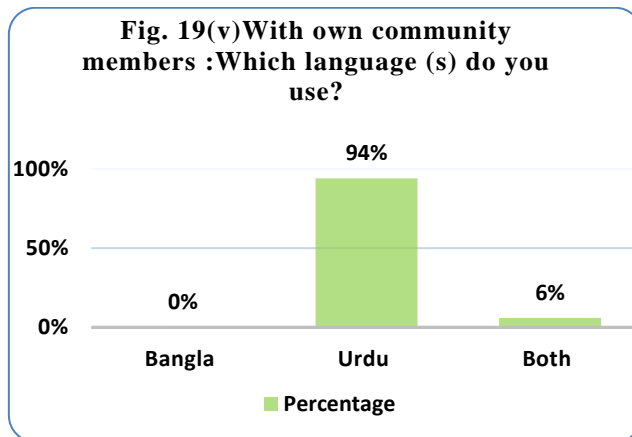


Figure 19 (iv) shows that respondents prefer Bangla for communicating with the Bengali community. More specifically, 96% of the participants used Bangla; 4% of the respondents reported to use both Urdu and Bangla, indicating a bilingual proficiency; significantly, none of the participants spoke Urdu solely when interacting with the Bengali people. This data highlights the widespread use of Bangla and the minimal use of both Urdu and Bangla among the surveyed respondents while communicating with the Bengali individuals.



Most respondents are older persons who have lived in this country for more than 60 years. The members of the modern generation are embarrassed to speak Urdu in public or even in their community. Still, members of the first generation, the elders, strive to preserve their ethnicity. They feel at ease speaking Urdu. 94% of the respondents used Urdu with their community members, and 6% used Urdu and Bangla together. But they do not use only Bangla in the community.

A minority language's ability to survive or disappear depends on attitudes. The attitudes of the speakers matter more than the attitudes of the linguists (Schaengold, 2004). The usage, maintenance, and choices made by the first generation of the

Urdu-speaking community in the Geneva Camp are examined in the following section. It is also crucial to look into how the Urdu language is now used in the camp and how it affects the community members included in this *section*.

5.1 Language Usage of the First Generation

During the interview, it was observed that the majority of first-generation individuals residing in the Geneva Camp prefer to stay at home and primarily communicate in Urdu. Moreover, they sometimes use it outside their homes or with other Bengali users. They have a high level of emotional sensitivity towards their mother tongue. Instead of being forced to speak Bangla, they feel more at ease speaking Urdu. However, nowhere is written in the constitution of Bangladesh that Biharis are not allowed to use their mother tongue in this country. Yet, the elders do not use it with the other communities. Noori (53) said, “Many Biharis are now marrying Bengalis, and many Bengalis are marrying our daughters. The situation was different earlier. Now everything has been changed. This generation is overlooking our own culture and language.” Although some older individuals can write and read Urdu, most young people cannot. Due to their forced residence in this nation, older people speak Bangla. Thus, instrumental motivation has an impact on them.



5.2 Language Choice of the First Generation

Even though Aysha (48), Hosne Ara (52), Ansar (55), and Tara Begum (59) have claimed that they are Pakistanis, other respondents such as Mostaq (62) and Roksana (60) believe that they are Indians instead. They consider Urdu their native language and, hence, choose to communicate with others in that language. The Biharis of the first generation generally like to listen to Urdu music. The 65-year-old Urdu Qawwali singer Bakshi said, “It is my responsibility to shape my child into whom he or she really is. I cannot let them abandon their culture and identity for the sake of modernity.” He has made it clear that he does not want his children to pursue careers in either the public or private sectors. Instead, they are required to manage their traditional businesses. Zilani (60) said, “Among us, those who have money live outside the camp, and identity is insignificant to them. We, impoverished individuals in the camp, have fewer options and even fewer possibilities.”

Only school in the entire camp
PHOTO: Dilara Dilshad

5.3 Language Maintenance by the First Generation

Some households were found to be particularly conservative and religious at the time of the survey. These families’ adults are keenly cognizant of their language and culture. They also adapt their words to the circumstance, but their attitudes are different. The majority of older respondents who arrived in Bangladesh at the time

of India and Pakistan's partition greatly valued and saw Urdu as a crucial marker of their ethnic identity. In essence, the majority of older Bihari housewives who do not have jobs are monolingual in the sense that they speak Urdu most of the time. Ushama (59), one of the respondents, said, "People residing in the camp adhere to Bihar's strict cultural practices. They do not wish to break through their cultural barrier". Like her, Tarana (55) and Halima (48), never use Bangla voluntarily. In contrast, other respondents, including Jamila (49) and Sayana (50), are interested in using Bangla, and the majority of respondents in the older group concur that Bangla is vital. In this society, the older generation is additively multilingual. Primordial consciousness is a sensation rooted in the human psyche modified by socio-cultural connection. This sensation endures across time because of its "ineffable affective significance" (Scott, 1990, p. 148) and is fueled by a group's particular past, giving it a historical component. The Bihari community's first generation still practices their ancestors' traditions with the approach of primordial consciousness.

5.4 The Present Condition of Urdu in Bangladesh

According to UNESCO's Ad Hoc Expert Committee, "endangered language" refers to a language that has not been eradicated but is threatened to become so (2003). The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) identified four categories of languages that are considered to be in a state of danger:

Vulnerable is not used by the children outside the home; endangered, which the children are not using at all; severely endangered, which is spoken only by the old generation; and critically endangered, which is spoken by only a few of the old people. (p. 9)

According to this categorization, Urdu is considered a "vulnerable" language in Dhaka. Most respondents responded that Urdu is not being used by the community members in an equitable manner both within and outside the home. Akbar, a 61-year-old respondent, claims, "If we communicate in Urdu outside of this camp, the members of the Bengali community see us with narrow eyes. Some Bengalis are under the impression that every Bihari conspired against the people of Bangladesh in 1971."

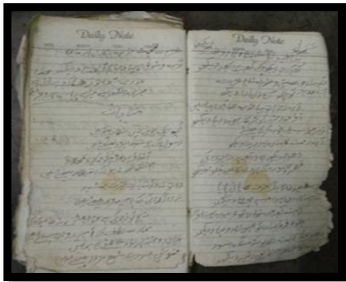
Therefore, this negative attitude of Bengalis towards the Bihari minority has a detrimental impact on the effective use of Urdu. A language has little chance of survival if the speech community is tiny, and the community is inflexible about assimilation with other communities in terms of marriage, profession, and so on, and remains confined to its own community. Otherwise, it is pretty challenging to preserve the language. It then depends on the future generations, their upbringing, their attitudes



A leaflet in Urdu found from one of the respondents
PHOTO: Dilara Dilshad

towards their culture and language, and so on. It requires much effort, such as creating literature and other publications in that particular language, creating awareness among all the community members, and so on.

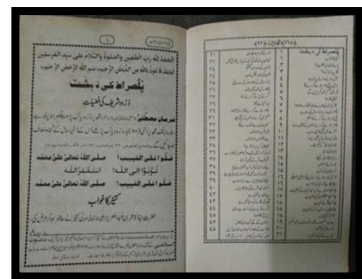
Most first-generation Biharis are very committed to their native culture and language. Some dislike inter-marriages and favor intra-marriages, and they resist their children participating in Bengali cultural events. In the interview, respondents are asked what they feel about their language, whether they recognize the significance of language preservation, and if they would take action to rescue their language since the survival of a language is essential for maintaining the continuity of one's culture for future generations.



A handwritten Urdu script from one of the respondents
PHOTO: Dilara Dilshad

The most common answer was that they loved their language and thought it was essential to keep it alive. Aside from this, there are three other kinds of solutions. One, they would teach their children Urdu, whether they use it or not, because it is a sign of their culture. Two, they would teach their children Urdu because there is nothing wrong with knowing more than one language. Third, it is up to the next generation to learn and use it or not; if modernization requires a language other than Urdu, the children will be interested in that language. Most of them think that at the present condition of Bangladesh, they need Bangla to get better jobs, financial, political, and educational support, and to cope with the majority of society. Though some old community members can write Urdu, the majority cannot. A language cannot stay in good standing without the practice of one of its primary abilities, such as writing. These responses led to the conclusion that Urdu in Dhaka city is in grave danger and may become extinct in the near future.

Indeed, there is only one school in the entire camp where Urdu is taught as a subject. The Urdu speaker gets scope to learn the Urdu language from here. Teachers use Urdu as the means of communication and teaching. Very few religious books and materials are available to the respondents, which are not enough sources to learn Urdu properly for the young or future generation. Most of the first-generation members cannot write Urdu, which bears a negative sign for the next generation to sustain the Urdu language.



Booklet in Urdu language
PHOTO: Dilara Dilshad

5. Recommendations

Every country has a constitution and language-related legislation controlling its official language and other language-related concerns. If it is not included in these principles, maintaining a minority language becomes very difficult. Therefore, in addition to the constitution, further language-related legislation can be enacted at the national, regional, or municipal levels in Bangladesh. As with the majority community, this law can address the Bihari community's language-related concerns, such as language rights, language education, and language preservation activities. Constitutional and legislative provisions can support efforts to preserve and promote this language as part of a nation's cultural heritage.

Encouraging minority languages in educational settings is crucial for language revitalization. When educational institutions offer instruction in the minority language and encourage students to use it in the classroom, it helps pass the language on to younger or future generations. Multilingual education (MLE) programs can be set up in Bangladesh for minor languages like Urdu. Considering their financial state, free education for the children can be provided. In some cases, international organizations, such as the United Nations and UNHCR and others can advocate to arrange these in this country.

The Bengali community in Bangladesh should consider the Bihari positively. Now, most of the members of the Bihari community are Bangladeshi citizens. Therefore, they are entitled to have equal rights to get jobs and work opportunities like any other Bangladeshi Bengali. Again, motivation and support among the minority language community like Bihari are crucial. When they are denied numerous possibilities for their language, Urdu, negative attitudes towards their language constantly come to the surface. However, to safeguard the language, this issue might be considered immediately. Members of the first generation, community organizations and leaders can promote the use of Urdu in various institutional contexts and provide resources for language learning, development and maintenance.

In brief, for a minority language to survive, it must be used consistently in various institutional contexts, such as government, education, and public services. When people routinely speak in these circumstances in their native tongue, it helps to maintain the language's usefulness and relevance in contemporary culture. The Bihari community should use their original language consistently in a variety of institutional settings both within and outside the family. Otherwise, Urdu can be an endangered or dead language in a short period.

6. Conclusion

The language attitudes of the first generation of the Bihari community in Bangladesh were investigated in this study. The results of the study show that the members of

the first generation have a positive attitude toward Urdu, although they do not have an entirely negative attitude toward Bangla. They have a strong emotional connection to Urdu and believe that their true identity is not Bengali. Different social issues are controlling their language habits that are highlighted in the discussion part of the study. The speakers of Urdu are gradually adopting Bangla on a daily basis which might lead to a language shift in the near future. History plays a vital role here. The Liberation War of Bangladesh in 1971 is considered to have had a contentious or controversial participation from the Biharis. Many of these Biharis were refused entry into their promised homeland, Pakistan, by the Pakistani government after the war. Again, Bangladesh's poor foreign policy failed to address this issue. As a result, a sizable portion of the Biharis began settling in various regions of Bangladesh, like the Geneva camp of Dhaka. Even though the Pakistani government has rejected them, many mainstream Biharis, primarily first-generation individuals, nevertheless claim Pakistan as their country of origin instead of Bangladesh. Indeed, the Biharis belong to the largest religious group in Bangladesh. As the language is different, they are not accepted positively, which affects their language attitude.

A community may be sustained by its language. The language attitudes of the first generation of the Bihari community in the camp are influenced by prejudice and humiliation. Even though the members of the first generation encounter prejudice, they also have a strong sense of cultural identity that they want to protect and transmit to subsequent generations. Most of this generation has a more favorable opinion and positive attitude towards Urdu than Bangla. Actually, when the people of the majority ignore the speakers of any language, the minority community will lessen the use of that language. This study suggests the attitude of both the majority and minority groups towards each other's languages should be the same within a country. The native Bengalis should not have a negative attitude towards them. The Bihari community's use of two languages in bilingual contexts is not a problem since the minority language is still spoken. The Biharis do not have enough opportunities to study their language. They lack proper support in the form of sufficient institutions, books, materials, and so on. The findings of this study underscore the importance of, on the part of decision-makers and stakeholders, formulating and implementing plans to conserve any minority language like Urdu. This study, it is hoped, will encourage future researchers to investigate language attitudes of the younger generation of the Bihari community and the socio-cultural factors underlying their language usage to facilitate the revitalization of Urdu in the Bihari community in Bangladesh.

Conflict of interest

There is no potential conflict of interest regarding the publication of this work, as declared by the authors. In addition, the authors have witnessed all ethical concerns, including plagiarism, informed consent, misconduct, data fabrication and/or falsification, double publishing and/or submission, and redundancy.

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