

# The Endangerment of Small, Indigenous Languages: Lessons from Malaysia

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## Abstract

In this article, I take the case of Malaysia's indigenous language endangerment into consideration. Because of Malaysia's geopolitical similarities to that of Bangladesh, I believe the study will have significant ramifications for our indigenous languages. In undertaking the study of Malaysia's indigenous languages, I take into account the state of Remun, a relatively small language spoken in the Malaysian state of Sarawak. I begin my study by measuring the level of Remun's endangerment after which I analyze the underlying socio-political factors that in many cases pervade Bangladesh's situations. In methodology, I use both qualitative and quantitative data. I conclude my study by suggesting some measures that may prove to be effective in protecting the indigenous languages across the world in general and in Bangladesh in particular.

## Introduction

Harubaru to	When distant minds
Kokoro tsudoite	come together
Hana sakaru	cherries blossom. (Cited in Salverda, 2002)

The *haiku* inscription from Japan quoted above illustrates the importance of diversity in creating knowledge. We need this diversity at every level, starting from language to culture. Where language diversity is concerned, we find that it is coming under increasing pressure. This pressure comes, on the one hand, from nation states that often identify themselves with the language of the majority and the powerful. On the other hand, it comes from the onslaught of

globalization that involves the hegemony of one language over other ones. The presence of such adverse forces on language diversity is not a recent phenomenon. We find numerous instances of language loss in recorded history. In the Roman Empire, for example, Latin replaced, among others, Etruscan of pre-Roman Italy (Ridgway 1994; Swadesh 1994, quoted in Tsunoda 2005:4). Similarly, in modern history, European colonization exerted the most damaging impact on language diversity (Tsunoda 2005). A combination of this historical and contemporary pressure on language diversity has now left us with only about 6,912 languages. If this trend of language loss goes unchecked, we are likely to lose half of our total living languages in the present century alone (Krauss 1992 cited in Hinton 2001). Can we afford to lose so many languages (and at this pace)? Standing at this juncture of linguistic history, it is crucial for us to understand the conditions in which we lose our languages and then take steps to reverse the situation. In this context, I will take Malaysia's case into consideration. In doing so, I will look into the conditions of Remun, a small indigenous language of Malaysia. I believe that the politico-economic structures that underlie Remun and the kind of measures appropriate for its revival may also apply to many of Bangladesh's indigenous languages.

### **Ethnographic Background of Malaysia**

Malaysia is a multiethnic, multilingual country with about twenty million people. Of them, Malays account for 50.4%, Chinese 23.7%, indigenous ethnic groups (except Malay) 11%, Indians 7.1%, and the rest 7.8%. The country comprises two areas—Peninsular Malaysia and Sabah and Sarawak. While ethnic Malays make up a majority of the population in West Malaysia, divergent Dayak ethnic groups (namely, Iban, Kelabit, Bukar-Sadong, etc.) and Chinese constitute a sizable portion of the population of East Malaysia.

The estimated number of languages in Malaysia is 141 (Ethnologue.com). Of them, Sarawak has forty-seven languages of which one is extinct. The National Language Policy of Malaysia recognizes Malay as the country's national language. The policy also allows education in the learner's mother tongue which is officially known as POL (Pupil's Own Language) scheme. English is offered as a compulsory language in the school and university curricula.

## The Remun Ethnolinguistic Group

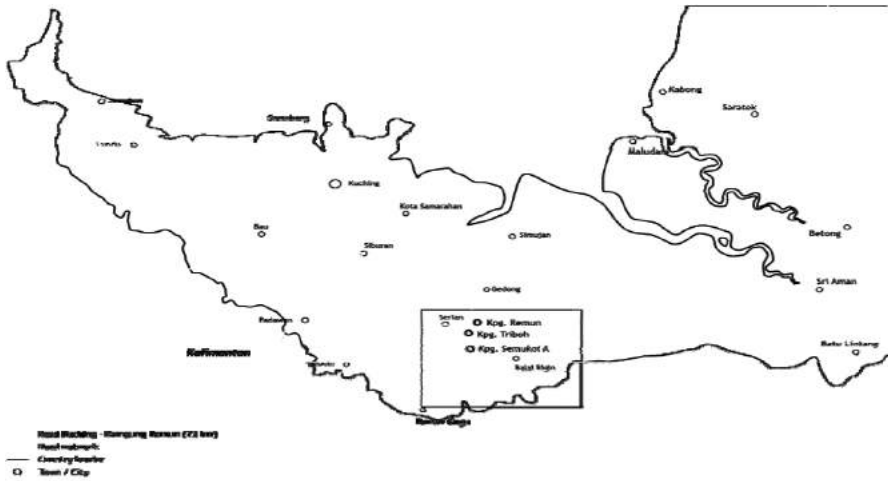
Like other languages in Sarawak, Remun belongs to the Austronesian language stock. It is spoken by the ethnic group known as Remun. In early colonial times, Remuns were officially classified as Milikin (Sarawak Government Census 1961). They live in a broad cluster of villages in Serian district, located in Sarawak's Samarahan Division. The villages are spread along the Krang river and its tributaries between Serian and Balai Ringin. They now number around 7000 and inhabit twenty two villages\*. (I collected the information from the headmen of the Remun villages I covered in my study.) Surrounding Remuns live the bigger ethnolinguistic group called Iban. Present-day Remun settlements reflect a heavy mix of Ibans from other areas who have married into Remun communities.

**Table 1: Remun Villages (2007)**

No.	Village	No.	Village
1	Remun (First Remun Settlement) **	12	Junggu Mawang
2	Lebor	13	Linsat
3	Triboh **	14	Tepin
4	Belimbin	15	Batu Kudi
5	Entayan Kerupok	16	Tanah Mawang
6	Entayan Liun	17	Krangan Trusan
7	Entayan Sarawak	18	Krangan Engkatak
8	Entayan Kersik	19	Krangan Tekalung
9	Semukoi A **	20	Menyang
10	Semukoi B	21	Bayor
11	Meboi	22	Sepan

\* I did not find the Remun ethnolinguistic group identified in Sarawak's last population census of 2000 (Anggaran Penduduk 2006)

\*\* Villages Considered in the Study



**Map:** Remun Villages in Sarawak, Malaysia

## Review of Literature

Sarawak's indigenous languages have so far received little scholarly attention. Language research in Malaysia has focused predominantly on Bahasa Malaysia, the national language of the country. One of the reasons for absence of research on Sarawak's languages lies in its reliance on researchers coming from outside Malaysia. In accounting for the lack of research on Sarawak's small languages, Omar (2003) notes, "Such research [requiring one to go to Sarawak] not only requires one to go geographically upstream but also to start from the hitherto unknown". However, Iban presents an exception in this regard. Among others, Omar (1981) has described the language in terms of its phonology, morphology, and syntax. In comparison, research on the indigenous languages from other parts of Malaysia is not as scarce. For example, a number of indigenous languages in Western Malaysia have received considerable attention. (Ghazali 2004) Besides, the Kadazandusun languages of Sabah have also received a wide attention.

Though language research in Sarawak is generally rare, it is possible to find evidence of research on Remun. One such research project was carried out by Cullip (2000) who concluded that the language was well-maintained when it came to the oldest Remun village of Kampong (village) Remun. As far as other Remun villages are concerned, he notes that the language is shifting toward Iban. In this regard, I should like to mention that Cullip's study is based on his survey of only one Remun village called Kampong (village) Remun. Remun's purported shift to Iban in other villages comes from the cursory observations he made during his stay in the area.

## Methodolgy

My primary goal in the research project was to measure the extent to which Remun is threatened with extinction. In carrying it out, I tried to identify the reasons that were responsible for the language's endangerment. This essay will also include discussion of the socio-political implications of Remun's endangerment. Overall, it attempts to answer the following questions:

- a) Is the Remun language endangered? If yes, to what extent?
- b) If the language is endangered, why is this so?
- c) What lessons can we learn from Remun's fate?

In carrying out the research, I found that it was difficult to adopt a succinct and generalizable model to measure Remun's endangerment. No doubt, the reason was in the complexities of the dynamic relationship between language and society. Keeping such complexities in mind, I applied a model that took note of the shortcomings of earlier models of language endangerment. The model was proposed by the UNESCO Experts Meeting on Safeguarding Endangered Languages (March 2003) (Brenzinger et al. 2003). Though the model lacked total accuracy, its quantitative nature had the advantage of precisely determining the level of a language's endangerment. The model had already been tested (Lewis, 2005) to measure the vitality of 100 languages of the world and was found to be 'reasonable' and 'feasible'.

The model used the following nine factors to measure language endangerment:

1. Intergenerational language transmission;
2. Absolute numbers of speakers;
3. Proportion of speakers within the total population;
4. Loss of existing language domains;
5. Response to new domains and media;
6. Materials for language education and literacy;
7. Governmental and institutional language attitudes and policies;
8. Community members' attitudes towards their own language;
9. Amount and quality of documentation.

As per the framework (see Appendix-2 for its detailed description) a score (from 0 to 5) was assigned to each of the factors. The combined scores would then provide a measure of the level of endangerment. It should be noted that no single

factor should be considered in isolation since a language that is relatively secure in terms of one factor may require attention due to other factors. In order to complement the quantitative nature of the framework, I also used qualitative data which provided us with a balanced picture of Remun.

**Data Elicitation**

I used structured interviews and participant observations in eliciting data for my research. The structured interviews contained 27 questions written in both English and Bahasa Malaysia (see Appendix-1). Questions were divided into four major sections. The first section elicited the respondents' demographic and language proficiency information. The second section dealt with the language use of respondents in a variety of domains like home, school, work place, etc. The third section concerned respondents' attitudes to their language and language use. And the final section asked questions regarding respondents' level of awareness about their language's endangerment.

I selected 37 respondents from three Remun villages, namely Remun, Triboh, and Semukoi-A. Each village represented 12 to 13 respondents. In selecting respondents, I made sure that a cross-section of respondents was represented in terms of sex, educational levels, and marital status. When age was concerned, I preferred younger respondents to older ones. In administering questionnaires, I took help of some Remun native speakers who also had a basic proficiency in English. The questionnaires administered in May and June 2007. I stayed with three Remun families during my research and was able to mix closely with the Remun people and observe their language use and their attitude to language.

A profile of respondents is given in Table-2 below:

<b>Table-2: Social Profile of Respondents</b>			
<b>Age</b>	<b>15-30</b>	<b>31-45</b>	
n=34	18	16	
%	53	47	
<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Public/Private Service</b>	<b>Self-employed</b>	<b>Unemployed</b>
n=34	11	11	12
%	32	32	36

Male/Female	M	F
n=34	20	14
%	59	41

Marital Status	Married	Endogamous	Exogamous	Single
n=34	17	6	11	17
%	50	35	65	50

Education	Primary	Secondary	Post Secondary
n=34	3	23	8
%	9	67	24

### Analysis and Discussion

In what follows, I present the findings of my research and analyze their significance from the perspective of language endangerment. The findings are based on the evaluation framework mentioned above.

**Table-3: Languages Remuns Can Speak (Kpg, Remun+Triboh+Semukoi)**

Languages	R	I	B	SM	M	E	C	L
All age groups (n=34)	33	13	16	7	30	20	1	1
%	97	38	47	21	88	59	3	3
Age: (15-30)	17	7	5	3	15	5	0	1
% (out of the above age group)	94	39	28	17	83	28	0	6
Age: 31-60	16	6	11	4	15	15	1	0
% (out of the above age group)	100	37	69	25	94	94	6	0

### Intergenerational Language Transmission and Proportion of Speakers

Remun settlements are closely surrounded by a variety of demographically more dominant ethnic groups such as Iban, Bidayuh, and Malay. Moreover, English and Chinese, due to their commercial significance, have considerable influence in the area. Consequently, Remuns are prone to being multilinguals and their language choice at any given moment is constrained by such factors as place, interlocutor, and situation. Though it is necessary for Remuns to be multilingual,

it is imperative to examine if such a situation hinders their mother tongue transmission to the younger generation. Table-3 below lists the languages the respondents report they can speak.

<b>Table-4: Languages Remun Children Mostly Use</b>					
<b>Languages</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>I</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>B</b>
n=18	14	10	11	2	2
%	78	56	61	11	11

Kpg.=Kampung (Village), R=Remun, I=Iban, B=Bidayuh, SM=Sarawak Malay, M=Bahasa Malaysia, E=English, C=Chinese, L=Lahanan

As indicated in Table-3 above, while all the respondents of the 31-60 age group are able to use their mother tongue, all their younger counterparts of the 15-30 age group are not capable of speaking the language. This is sign of discontinuity in intergenerational transmission of Remun. In addition, we will find later that those who speak Remun cannot do so in all domains. Thus in view of Factor-1, we can assign the score 4 that indicates that 'the language is used by some children in all domains; it is used by all children in limited domains'. On the other hand, based on Factor-3 that looks into the proportion of speakers within the total reference group, we can also assign the score 4 to the language. The score corresponds to the category of 'unsafe' that states 'Nearly all speak the language'.

### **Absolute Numbers of Speakers**

Though absolute population numbers alone are not enough for a clear indication of the relative endangerment of a language, a smaller group is likely to be under greater pressure than a larger group. In terms of numerical strength, Remun seems to be in a weaker position than 10 other Sarawakian languages that have more than 10,000 speakers. On the other hand, the language appears to be in a more advantageous position than 16 other Sarawakian languages that have 400 speakers on average. However, as numerical strength is relative, I am not able to assign any score to the language based on the factor.



Loss of Existing Language Domains

**Table-5: Language Use in the Home Domain**

Languages	R %	I %	M %	B %	E %	L %
Spouse	53	47	29	18	41	0
Children	47	47	6	18	24	0
Siblings	91	21	6	3	3	0
Parents	94	9	3	6	0	3
Grandparents	94	15	0	9	0	3

**Language Use in the Home Domain**

The home is the heart of family life and the domain where a language will survive, no matter what happens in the outside world. When a language encounters adversarial situations in a country, the home becomes often the last place where speakers can put up effective resistance. As far as the use of Remun in the home domain is concerned, Table-5 shows that a significant portion of respondents (53%) do not speak Remun to their children. Moreover, a good number of respondents (47%) do not speak Remun to their spouses. However, the use of the language largely increases significantly with siblings and reaches its highest level with parents and grandparents. As for other languages, Iban plays a significant role in Remun households. In particular, its use with the spouse (47%) is quite notable.

**Language Use in the Non-home Domain**

Remuns, like other ethnic communities, no longer confine their lives to households and forests. Because of changes in the way they live, Remuns are increasingly coming into contact with speakers of other languages.

**Table-6: Language Use in the Non-home Domain**

Languages	R %	I %	M %	B %	E %	SM %
Friends	82	62	71	41	26	18
Workplace	13	25	88		56	13
School	33	93	100	47	0	20
Supermarket	0	18	94	24	26	12

To account for the Remuns' language choice in the non-home domain, Table-6 provides a list of domains for reported language use. The data of Remun's use in external domains clearly show the polyglossic nature of their communication. Their highest use of mother-tongue is found in their interaction with friends. However, such use is relatively negligible in the workplace. In supermarkets, they don't use their mother-tongue at all. As far as the use of other languages is concerned, Iban and Bahasa Malaysia fare significantly in their schools whereas Bahasa Malaysia and English are largely used in the workplace and supermarkets. Based on Factor-4, we may assign at best score 3 to Remun that corresponds to 'dwindling domains' as per our framework.

### **Response to New Domains and Media**

Remun has, as my observations suggest, practically little chance of responding to new domains and media. The language is not used in any domains that connect the Remuns to the outside world. It is used neither in the media nor in education. Nor is there any effort on part of the Malaysian government or the local community to extend the use of the language in such domains. Rather, signs of its diminishing domains are clear from Table-7. It shows that a good number of words used in everyday affairs are giving way to such dominant languages as Bahasa Malaysia and Iban. Such words include, among others, 'dress', 'food', 'eat', 'see', 'friend', 'later', 'quick', 'stupid', 'trousers', etc. In addition, Remun idioms are also being replaced by simpler and literal expressions (given below), a clear symptom of language decay. Based on Factor-5, we can assign Zero (0) to the language to record how 'the language is not used in any new domains'.

### **Materials for Language Education and Literacy**

Remun is yet to have a written form. As Iban has a written form and a tradition of being used in school and public places, Remuns often adopt the Iban alphabet in writing their language. In view of the absence of Remun orthography, I assign the score zero (0) to the language on Factor-6 that assesses the existence of materials available for language education and literacy.

### **Governmental and Institutional Language Attitudes and Policies**

In Malaysia, governmental and institutional language attitudes to indigenous languages including Remun, appear to be neither protective nor, at least apparently, repressive. In colonial time, while English was taught to the elites, Malay was offered to the masses (Pennycook 1998).

**Table-7: Some Lexical Differences in the Use of Remun between the Younger and Older Generations**

<b>Older Generation</b>	<b>Younger Generation</b>	<b>Languages the Words Borrowed From</b>
Kelatang (Dress)	Baju	Bahasa Malaysia
Ngatong (Later)	Nanti	Bahasa Malaysia
Ngilau (See)	Meda	Iban main
Kayu (Food)	Lauk	Bahasa Malaysia/Iban Main
Tegeran lengan (Eat)	Makai	Iban main
Ngitung atap/rasau (Sleep)	Tidur	Bahasa Malaysia
Besulu (Lover/Friend)	Beciuta	Bahasa Malaysia
Reti (Meaning)	Maksud	Bahasa Malaysia
Pangin (Room)	Bilik	Bahasa Malaysia
Lebulan (Stupid)	Bodoh	Bahasa Malaysia
Entau Medak (I Don't Know)	Enda Nemu	Iban Main
anteh (Quick)	Cepat	Bahasa Malaysia
Tanchut (Trousers)	Tanchut (Trousers)	Bahasa Malaysia

After the independence of Malaysia in 1957, English gradually gave way to Malay as a medium of instruction. However, questions of educating children through their respective mother tongues arose from time to time, leading to the development of some policy documents. For example, the Cheesman Plan in 1946 stipulated "the provision of free primary education through the use of the mother tongue" (Puteh 2006). But no policies could be implemented due to the lack of power to enforce it. Then a number of education policies were adopted without any noticeable impact on the children's mother tongue use in school. At present, Malay is the national as well as an official language of Malaysia. Officially, other languages can also be used as a medium of instruction. This can be done in national schools through POL (Pupils' Own Language) in classes. However, in reality, the impact of such official provisions is restricted mainly to Chinese and Tamil. That the government has been gradually withdrawing its support from indigenous languages is clear from the information the Borneo Literature Bureau that collected the indigene's oral traditions into the Sarawak branch of the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka that promotes only Malay (Omar 2006: 113). Based on historical as well as

contemporary government policies regarding minority indigenous languages, Remun, can receive score-3, that characterizes government attitude as 'passive assimilation'.

### **Community Members' Attitudes towards Their Own Language**

In my research, I did not attempt a comprehensive assessment of Remuns' attitude toward their language. My analysis of their attitude to their language was restricted merely to livelihood and education. Respondents were asked four questions concerning their attitudes. The first question inquired about the languages they considered most important in their livelihoods. Regarding the language important for livelihood, English obtained the highest position. It was immediately followed by Malay and Iban. As for languages Remuns wanted their children to be taught in school, English was also the most preferred (88%) language.

**Table-8: Languages Most Important for Livelihood**

Languages	R	I	M	E	C	B
n=34	7	8	14	22	1	2
%	21	24	41	65	3	6

**Table-9: Languages Children Should be Taught in School**

Languages	R	I	M	E	C	B
n=34	7	9	14	30	1	1
%	21	26	41	88	3	3

R=Remun, I=Iban, M=Bahasa Malaysia, E=English, C=Chinese, B=Bidayuh

**Table-10: Remuns' Perceptions of Language Endangerment**

**Do You Think Your Native Language is Under Threat?**

	Yes	No
All Age n=34	19	15
%	56	44
15-30	8	10
%	44	56
31-60	11	5
%	69	31

<b>Table-11: Perceptions about Remun's Potential for Survival</b>		
<b>Do You Think Your Next Generation Will Speak Remun?</b>		
	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
All Age n=34	26	8
%	76	24
15-30	13	5
% (out of the above age group)	72	28
31-60	13	3
% (out of the above age group)	81	19

With reference to the question that asked whether Remun was under threat, a good number of respondents (56%) answered in the affirmative. Most (76%) were optimistic about the potential for their language's survival. Notably, all Remuns were in favor of supporting their language. In consideration of this, I assign score-5 to the language that corresponds to 'equal support' based on Factor-8.

### **Amount and Quality of Documentation**

Remun is yet to be alphabetized, indicating an absence of a corpus. However, few studies have recorded scores of characteristic Remun words (Ray 1913). The language has also not been recorded electronically. In the light of amount and quality of documentation of Remun, I can assign it at best the score one (1) that corresponds to 'inadequate' documentation of the language.

### **Determining the Level of Endangerment of Remun**

Table-12 below shows the overall level of Remun's endangerment in the light of the factors under consideration. As we know, the number in each factor ranged from 0 to 5 and is related to different levels of language endangerment. As Table-13 shows, Remun falls between the categories of 'definitely endangered' and 'severely endangered'

**Table-12: Overall Level of Endangerment of Remun**

Factor	Grade	Median Grade
Factor-1	4	<b>2.5</b>
Factor-3	4	
Factor-4	3	
Factor-5	0	
Factor-6	0	
Factor-7	3	
Factor-8	5	
Factor-9	1	

**Table-13: Overall Measurement of Language Endangerment**

Degree of Endangerment	Grade
Safe	5
Unsafe	4
Definitely Endangered	3
Severely Endangered	2
Critically Endangered	1
Extinct	0

In measuring Remun's level of endangerment, I do not claim complete accuracy. Nonetheless, the quantitative nature of the research merits attention in that it allows us to get a clear idea about the extent of Remun's endangerment.

### **Implications**

The findings suggest that Remun is not totally free from the threat of extinction. This conclusion is supported by the fact that almost all Remun children are incapable of speaking it and only forty–seven percent parents speak it to their children. The picture will be grimmer if we project the next generation's use of the language. In this regard, I analyze below in detail how Remun fares in the prevailing regional, national and global power structures.

To begin with, Remun is marginalized as it lies at the bottom of the regional, national, and global power structure. The national language's hegemony

is reflected in its increasing use by Remuns (e.g. 100% in school and 94% in supermarket). English's dominance is clear from its use as a high lingua-franca (e.g. used by 56% in the workplace) and as a language of the household (e.g. used by 41% with spouse).

Moreover, there are also other factors that have led to Remun's gradual loss of ground. First, Remuns developed over time a negative attitude to their language. This may have happened due to its inadequate use. In support of this conclusion, I can attest that Remun is hardly used in such places as school (33%), workplace (13%), and supermarket (0%). Besides, the absence of a Remun script may have also contributed to the development of such an attitude. Perhaps this absence accounts for some Remun's preference for English in schools.

Moreover, Remuns' migration to big cities also contribute to its decay (e.g. 15% identified it as a reason for language loss). Their migration can be attributed to population increase and job opportunities in urban areas. Besides, Remun's absence in the school has played a part in its marginalization (e.g. 10% of the respondents suggested so). Though the Malaysian language education policy allows teaching of students' mother tongues through a policy termed as POL (Pupils' Own Language), it hardly addresses a politically weak language like Remun.

As for measures to be taken for the revitalization of the language, Remuns suggest that they should speak it to the young. Remuns' intention to revive their own language bodes well as a language cannot live unless its speakers choose to speak it (Bradley 2002). In fact, there are no instances of successful language maintenance without participation of the concerned speech community. Successful stories in this respect concern languages like Maori, Hawaiian, Navajo, Lardil Thuaka etc. (Ash et al 2001). Malaysian examples in this regard include the Kadazandusun and the Iranun languages in Sabah, the Iban in Sarawak, and the Semai in Peninsular Malaysia (Smith 2003).

### **Lessons for Bangladesh**

The socio-political circumstances that underlie Remun may be related to Bangladesh's indigenous languages in many ways. Like Remun, we can locate our indigenous languages at the bottom of the linguistic power structure. However, while Malaysia's official language policy (POL) allows teaching pupils through their mother tongues, Bangladesh's indigenous languages have a less advantageous position as we have no provision for minority language use in our language

policy. In this regard, we may point out that the indigenous peoples of Bangladesh are not yet recognized by its constitution.

In determining whether the factors that expedite Remun's marginalization apply to Bangladesh's indigenous languages, we may take special note of migration, and attitude to language that usually play critical roles in the fate of a language. As far as migration is concerned, Bangladeshi indigenous peoples are likely to show the same trend of moving to cities. After all, both Bangladesh and Malaysia are located in the periphery of a capitalist world system that concentrates development plans in city centers. This may make a language less useful for livelihood than another one which in turn breeds a negative attitude to language.

The case of Remun's migration to cities brings the whole issue of development into question. It indicates that nation states hardly take indigenous peoples into consideration in chalking out development plans. First, they plan development by leaving out indigenous peoples from their policies. Second, even when they include them, they impose their notion of development on indigenous peoples (i.e. Bangladesh's Kaptai Dam) irrespective of their way of life. This calls for an alternative approach to address the case of indigenous peoples in Bangladesh. Moreover, Malaysia's official inclusion of pupils' mother tongues in school has positive implications for reform of Bangladesh's language education policy.

Regarding some (proactive) measures needed to protect Bangladesh's indigenous languages, the example of Remun can offer some directions. In order to revitalize their language, a significant step that they suggested was to speak it to the young generation. Besides, they expressed their desire to document their language and to include it in school curricula. This also suggests that ultimately a community can play the most crucial role in saving its language. Overall, the measures as suggested appear to be vital in ensuring intergenerational transmission of a language and should apply to the Bangladeshi context as well.

## **Conclusion**

The fact that Remun are showing signs of language loss is indicative of their potential dispossession of many other aspects of their lives such as their culture and knowledge system. No doubt, language endangerment is symptomatic of a flawed politico-economic structure. People never stop using their language voluntarily; they do it only in adversarial socio-political conditions. The Remun language serves as a clear example in this connection.



The fate of Remun indicates that indigenous languages across the world are coming under threat from both global and national languages. As a global language, English often fails to stand up to its (self-legitimizing) promise in cohabiting with other languages and continues to displace them. On the other hand, national languages often take the bulk of resources of nation states, pushing indigenous languages toward extinction. This happens because nation states often subscribe to the old paradigm of declaring one language national which can protect only 287 languages of the world at best. Consequently, it often becomes difficult for indigenous languages to put up with the hegemonies of global and national forces.

However, while the danger facing small languages are many, efforts to resist them are not also rare. Remuns' determination to take their language's fate in their own hands is noteworthy. Such examples abound. We have successful stories of language revival in the cases of Maori, Hebrew and the Kadazandusun languages. No doubt, there exist many more such stories in the world. However, it may be noted that strategies to revitalize languages will vary. But surely, certain strategies apply to all languages, such as the determination of the language group to speak their language and to pass it onto the next generation, etc. Indigenous peoples of the world, irrespective of their contexts, can make use of these principles in their attempt to revitalize and revive their language and culture.

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**Appendix-1**  
**Borang soal selidik temuramah**  
*Interview Questionnaire*

1. Nama:  
*Name:*
2. Umur:  
*Age:*
3. Tempat lahir:  
*Place of Birth:*
4. Place you are now living at:
5. Status pekerjaan : Kakitangan kerajaan.swasta [ ] Berkerja sendiri [ ]  
Employment Status: Employed [ ] *Self-employed* [ ]  
Tidak berkerja  
*Unemployed* [ ]
6. Jantina: Lelaki [ ] Perempuan [ ]  
*Sex: Male* [ ] *Female* [ ]
7. Status perkahwinan: Berkhawin [ ] Bujang [ ] Widow [ ]  
*Marital Status: Married* [ ] *Single* [ ]
8. Nama bahasa ibunda anda:  
*Name of your native language:*
9. The ethnic community you are married into:
10. What language do you use to communicate with your spouse?
11. What language do your children mostly use?
12. Bilangan tahun anda bersekolah:  
*Number of Years in School:*
13. Anda boleh bertutur dalam bahasa:  
Jika lebih daripada satu bahasa, nyatakan bahasa-bahasa tersebut.  
*Which language(s) can you speak:*

14. Anda paling fasih dalam bahasa:

*Which language are you most proficient in:*

15. Di sekolah, anda diajar dalam bahasa:

Jika lebih daripada satu bahasa, nyatakan bahasa-bahasa tersebut.

*Which language(s) were you taught in school:*

16. Bahasa apakah yang anda tuturkan di rumah ketika bercakap:

Jika lebih daripada satu bahasa, nyatakan bahasa-bahasa tersebut.

*What language(s) do you speak at home:*

Dengan ibu bapa anda:

To your parents:

Dengan anak-anak anda:

*To your children:*

Dengan adik-beradik anda:

*To your brothers and sisters:*

Dengan rakan-rakan anda:

*To your friends:*

Dengan datuk dan nenek anda:

*To your grandparents:*

17. Bahasa yang paling kerap anda gunakan di pejabat:

*Which language do you mostly use at your workplace:*

18. Ketika bertutur, adakah anda menggunakan dua atau lebih bahasa yang lain?

*Do you mix up two or more languages in your speech?*

Ya [ ] Tidak [ ]

Yes [ ] No [ ]

19. Jika anda menggunakan bahasa campur, apakah bahasa yang paling utama/dominan dan apakah bahasa-bahasa lain yang anda gunakan? If you mix up then what is the main language you use and what are the other languages?

Bahasa utama/dominan:

*Main language:*

Bahasa-bahasa lain:

*Other language(s):*

20. Pada pandangan anda, bahasa apakah yang paling penting dalam kehidupan anda?

*Which language do you think is most important for your livelihood:*

21. Pada pandangan anda, kanak-kanak patut diajar dalam bahasa:  
*Which language(s) do you think should children be taught:*
22. Pada pandangan anda, adakah generasi seterusnya akan bertutur dalam bahasa ibunda anda/mereka sendiri  
*Do you think your next generation will speak your native language?*
- Ya [  ] Tidak [  ]  
Yes [  ] No [  ]
23. Pada pandangan anda, adakah bahasa ibunda anda mengalami ancaman kepupusan?  
*Do you think your native language is under threat?*
- Ya [  ] Tidak [  ]  
Yes [  ] No [  ]
24. What factors do you think are responsible for this threat?
25. Pada pandangan anda, apakah langkah/cara yang boleh dilakukan oleh komuniti/masyarakat anda bagi menyelamatkan bahasa tersebut?  
*What do you think your community can do to save your language?*
26. Pada pandangan anda, apakah yang patut dilakukan oleh pihak kerajaan bagi menyelamatkan bahasa ibunda anda?  
*What do you think your government should do to save your native language?*
27. Do you think your Remun language is different from the younger/older generation? How is it different? Give some Examples.

**Terima kasih atas kerjasama yang pihak anda berikan.**

*Thank you for your cooperation*

## **Appendix-2: Evaluation Framework**

<b>Factor 1: Intergenerational Language Transmission Scale</b>		
<b>Degree of Endangerment</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Speaker Population</b>
<i>Safe</i>	5	The language is used by all ages, from children up.
<i>Unsafe</i>	4	The language is used by some children in all domains; it is used by all children in limited domains.
<i>Definitively endangered</i>	3	The language is used mostly by the parental generation and up.
<i>Severely endangered</i>	2	The language is used mostly by the grandparental generation and up.
<i>Critically endangered</i>	1	The language is used mostly by very few speakers, of great-grandparental generation.
<i>Extinct</i>	0	There exists no speaker.

<b>Factor 3: Proportion of Speakers Within the Total Reference Group</b>		
<b>Degree of Endangerment</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Proportion of Speakers Within the Total Reference Population</b>
<i>Safe</i>	5	All speak the language.
<i>Unsafe</i>	4	Nearly all speak the language.
<i>Definitively endangered</i>	3	A majority speak the language
<i>Severely endangered</i>	2	A minority speak the language
<i>Critically endangered</i>	1	Very few speak the language.
<i>Extinct</i>	0	None speak the language.

**Factor 4: Loss of Existing Language Domains**

<b>Degree of Endangerment</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Domains and Functions</b>
<i>Universal use</i>	5	The language is used in all domains and for all functions.
<i>Multilingual parity</i>	4	Two or more languages may be used in most social domains and for most functions.
<i>Dwindling domains</i>	3	The language is in home domains and for many functions, but the dominant language begins to penetrate even home domains.
<i>Limited or formal domains</i>	2	The language is used in limited social domains and for several functions.
<i>Highly limited domains</i>	1	The language is used only in a very restricted domains and for a very few functions.
<i>Extinct</i>	0	The language is not used in any domain and for any function.

**Factor 5: Response to New Domains and Media**

<b>Degree of Endangerment</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>New Domains and Media Accepted by the Endangered Language</b>
<i>Dynamic</i>	5	The language is used in all new domains.
<i>Robust/active</i>	4	The language is used in most new domains.
<i>Receptive</i>	3	The language is used in many domains.
<i>Coping</i>	2	The language is used in some new domains.
<i>Minimal</i>	1	The language is used only in a few new domains.
<i>Inactive</i>	0	The language is not used in any new domains.



**Factor 6: Materials for Language Education and Literacy**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Accessibility of Written Materials</b>
5	There is an established orthography, literacy tradition with grammars, dictionaries, texts, literature, and everyday media. Writing in the language is used in administration and education.
4	Written materials exist, and at school, children are developing literacy in the language. Writing in the language is not used in administration.
3	Written materials exist and children may be exposed to the written form at school. Literacy is not promoted through print media.
2	Written materials exist, but they may only be useful for some members of the community; and for others, they may have a symbolic significance. Literacy education in the language is not a part of the school curriculum.
1	A practical orthography is known to the community and some material is being written.
0	No orthography is available to the community.

**Factor 7: Governmental and Institutional Language Attitudes and Policies**

<b>Degree of Support</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Official Attitudes Toward Language</b>
<i>Equal support</i>	5	All languages are protected.
<i>Differentiated Support</i>		4 Minority languages are protected primarily as the language of the private domains. The use of the language is prestigious.
<i>Passive Assimilation</i>	3	No explicit policy exists for minority languages; the dominant language prevails in the public domain.
<i>Active Assimilation</i>	2	Government encourages assimilation to the dominant language. There is no protection for minority languages.
<i>Forced Assimilation</i>	1	The dominant language is the sole official language, while non-dominant languages are neither recognized or protected.
<i>Prohibition</i>	0	Minority languages are prohibited.

<b>Factor 8: Community Members' Attitudes toward Their Own Language</b>	
<b>Grade</b>	<b>Community Members' Attitudes toward Language</b>
5	All members value their language and wish to see it promoted.
4	Most members support language maintenance.
3	Many members support language maintenance; others are indifferent or may even support language loss.
2	Some members support language maintenance; others are indifferent or may even support language loss.
1	Only a few members support language maintenance; others are indifferent or may even support language loss.
0	No one cares if the language is lost; all prefer to use a dominant language.

<b>Factor 9: Amount and Quality of Documentation</b>		
<b>Nature of Documentation</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Language Documentation</b>
<i>Superlative</i>	5	There are comprehensive grammars and dictionaries, extensive texts; constant flow of language materials. Abundant annotated highquality audio and video recordings exist.
<i>Good</i>	4	There is one good grammar and a number of adequate grammars, dictionaries, texts, literature, and occasionally-updated everyday media; adequate annotated high-quality audio and video recordings.
<i>Fair</i>	3	There may be an adequate grammar or sufficient amount of grammars, dictionaries, and texts, but no everyday media; audio and video recordings may exist in varying quality or degree of annotation.
<i>Fragmentary</i>	2	There are some grammatical sketches, word-lists, and texts useful for limited linguistic research but with inadequate coverage. Audio and video recordings may exist in varying quality, with or without any annotation.
<i>Inadequate</i>	1	Only a few grammatical sketches, short wordlists, and fragmentary texts. Audio and video recordings do not exist, are of unusable quality, or are completely un-annotated.
<i>Undocumented</i>	0	No material exists.