

THE STRUGGLE OF PRESERVATION ON ROHINGYA LANGUAGE AS THE IMPACT OF MARGINALIZATION BY MYANMAR POLICY

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ABSTRACT

People Rohingya have their own language, they speak an Indo-European language of the Southeastern Bengali branch, called Ruáingga or Rohingya. Under Myanmar Policy their right to speak Rohingya is under threat. The policy of Anti-Rohingya law does not just risk their lives but also their language, and indeed this policy violates human rights. This study focuses on how the Myanmar government creates policies about the Rohingya language and what news talks about Rohingya language preservation on YouTube and how people respond to it. To answer this question, the researcher uses a qualitative method with a netnography approach. Policy-making guidelines will be studied and the people's sentiment about language preservation will be documented and analyzed using the Python program and NVIVO 14. From news that appeared in YouTube, the researcher found that Rohingya refugees managed to keep Rohingya language alive through teaching, and digitalised Rohingya script and the responses are variatives.

Keywords: Language right, Rohingya Language, Language preservation, language policy

INTRODUCTION

Rohingya people faced long history of annexation and discrimination by Myanmar government since the beginning of Independence Day, 1948. When Dutch ended their colonization on the whole region of Burma, they left the big problematic racial issue about who the right people belong to Myanmar nation. Meanwhile, Rohingya people are depicted as 'alien' to nation because their skin color, language, and religion are different from the rest people of Burma. As a result, there were widespread belief among Burmese that they are immigrant from Bangladesh, and do not have right to live in Myanmar. These ideas are echoed by Myanmar military and believed by extremist Buddhists (Ibrahim, 2016).

Some scholars are agreed that the Rohingyas discrimination propaganda is supported by military regime, such as Kingston & Seibert Hanson,(2022); Ullah

& Chatteraj, (2023). That discrimination leads to violate other Rohingya's right to speak their own language. They speak an Indo-European language of the Southeastern Bengali branch, called Rungga or Rohingya (Kingston & Seibert Hanson, 2022). According to UNESCO Rohingya language includes in the list of potentially vulnerable language to endangered (UNESCO, 2024).

From that matter, Rohingya people need an action to maintain their language in order to keep it far from forgotten. Based on Ethnologue data, today there are 3.405 endangered languages and the number changes constantly (Ethnologue, 2024). Many languages die due to speakers condition and habits change and the common scene there was language contact and conflict that may some languages replace other languages (Sumarsono, 2011). Kloss began to classify the die of language into three types, 1) Language death without any language shift factor or due to the language has lost its speakers; 2) Language death caused by language shift that the majority of speakers tend to speak other language; 3) The change of language status among language community speaker.

According to David Crystal (2000) the number of endangered language has risen along with the establishment of lingua franca to many nations since twenty centuries ago and then put the minority languages in highly pressure. Some languages remained strong but others died. In Indonesia, a nation with thousand islands, has around 700 languages and sadly around 506 languages are labelled as endangered, 14 extinct languages (Ethnologue, 2024). This lost began from post Dutch colonialization (Collins, 2022). In other hand, in Myanmar Ethnologue reveals that it has around 115 languages and 1 extinct language, Rohingya language includes in stable language or it can be said that in spite of not included in formal or institutional languages but it still has more 1 million speakers in their community.

The stable Rohingya language bullied by Myanmar government, in the 1960s the minority language restricted and forbidden taught in school and Rohingya kids forced to study in Burmese even though they don't understand (Kingston & Seibert Hanson, 2022). Human Right Council (2018) reports that Rohingya Students are separated from other students, ignored by teachers, and unable to communicate with educators properly. Over the past decade there were uprising protest among ethnic nationality parties in parliament to bring minority language in part of school curriculum. As a result ethnic language begun to introduce in state school curricular but no include Rohingya language (South & Lall, 2016).

Language preservation is indeed the key to maintain Rohingya language in stable state thanks to over 1 million Rohingya still love and keep their language to flourish. The study about how Rohingya maintain their language while in the middle of diaspora can be found in Alsahafi (2022), he studied Rohingya-speaking refugee who work and live in Saudi Arabia. In his finding, the majority of Rohingya parents aware the declining number of refugees who speak Rohingya, therefore they tend to keep their language as communication while speak with relative and sometimes used bilingual Arabic and Rohingya. This positive attitude towards Rohingya language can be found in Teenagers

Refugee who take shelter in Indonesia. Nasution (2020) reports in his study about how Rohingya Teenager refugees behave about their language in the middle of Indonesian speakers, in her finding the majority of Rohingya refugees have positive attitude in home domain while in other domains such as, religion, friendship not all teens-refugees speaks Rohingya.

Monolingual Policy in Myanmar

When Myanmar got its independence, language become political issue between Burman and ethnic leaders. According to Yin Hlaing (2007), when Burman nationalist considered Burman language as official language none of the minority leaders against it. This undisputed policy comes from the reality that the colonial language, English, is harder than Burman language to learn and most ordinary people in the ethnic minority did not speak English.

This positive resolution comes with consequences, Yin Hlaing (2007) reported that minority languages face different status, the national language, Burman language was taught in any level of school. Public school in minority area only taught the languages of major ethnic groups such as Shan, Karen, Chin, Kayah, and Mon. The languages of smaller ethnic groups were taught only in Buddhist monasteries and Christian churches. South & Lall (2016) replied on this choice of education that Rohingya language is not included in part of language minority that should be have right to access of learning.

Method

This study uses qualitative method with netnography approach. The Researcher will focus on YouTube videos related to Rohingya Language Preservation and the response from subscriber and viewer in comment section about Rohingya Language. First the researcher selected four videos which has more comment about Rohingya language, those videos are: Preserving Rohingya Heritage: Fight to Pass on the Language, Rohingya Zuban Unicode Read and Write, Teacher's fight to Keep Rohingya Language Alive, and Tun Khin on Turning Rohingya Dialect into Digitized Language. Then, to get text data from YouTube comments, researchers will use Python code crawling in Google Colabs.

After data were gathered then we will analyze videos using content analysis, and sentiment analysis for comments data. After crawling data succeeded, then we will import it to spreadsheet and begin to analyses sentiment from every comment in NVIVO14 software.

Findings and Discussion

In the first finding we will highlight Preserving Rohingya Heritage: Fight to Pass on the Language. This video talks about how one man standing to teach children Rohingya language and preserving Hanifi Rohingya Script in India Refugee Camp. In his story, at 2023 there was fire accident and burnt houses and many refugees' belongings including Rohingya Alphabet Books. In order to ensure the Rohingya Language ongoing, Ismail, the Rohingya language teacher, copies some lost books from digital file. The teacher mainly teaches children how to read and write with Hanifi Rohingya Script. Hanifi script was

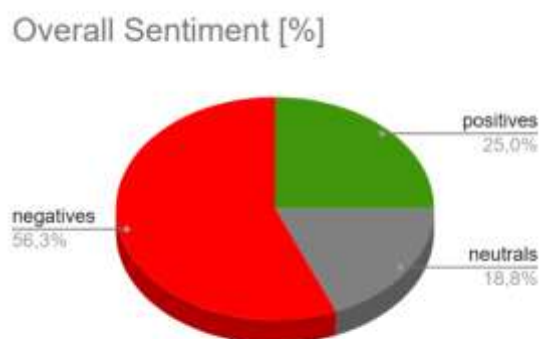
introduced to Rohingya speaking language in the 1980s by Maulana Muhammad Hanifi, and this alphabetic script is modelled upon Arabic Script written from right to left and the way consonant letter writing is connected to other in form of a word (Pandey, 2015).

This video has varieties of respond if look at the table.1 it has 16 comments and half of the total respond it has negative respond 56% are negatives and 25% positives and the rest are neutrals. If we analyze and count the frequent words using Nvivo 14 the frequent words pop up in the comment is 'Myanmar' and frequently cooccurrence with the word 'send back'.

Table.1 Total Sentiment Video Preserving Rohingya Heritage: Fight to Pass on the Language

Sentiment Total	
positives	4
neutrals	3
negatives	9
Sum	16

Chart.1 Total Sentiment Video Preserving Rohingya Heritage: Fight to Pass on the Language



In other hand, when the same group of teaching activities in India refugee camp reported by Aljazeera News and posted video on YouTube under title Teacher's fight to Keep Rohingya Language Alive it got more positive feedbacks rather than negative it can be seen in chart.2 below. In this video, Ismail tells same story at the first video about how he struggles to teach Rohingya children to read and speak Rohingya language in India refugee camp. It gets more positive comments around 41% positive responds in total. Compared to first video the word 'rohingya' is more frequent word used in comment then the first video the comparison can be seen in figure.1.

Coding	Percentage coverage
Positive	41.30%
Negative	32.79%
Moderately positive	28.06%
Moderately negative	26.04%
Very positive	12.27%
Neutral	8.65%
Very negative	6.78%

In wordcloud.1 the word ‘myanmar’ consider the most frequent used alongside the verb word ‘send back’ or ‘back’. Meanwhile the wordclod.2 the word ‘rohingya’ and ‘arabic’ is in the top list word frequent used and the verb most used is ‘love’. The word frequency query result can be seen in table.2.

Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage (%)
arabic	6	16	2.79
rohingya	8	14	2.44

alphabet	8	13	2.27
language	8	13	2.27
india	5	9	1.57
script	6	8	1.40
english	7	7	1.22
urdu	4	7	1.22
love	4	6	1.05

About 6 years ago there was effort to digitalized Rohingya alphabet in order to ease online communication. That movement advocated by Tun Khin when he interviewed in Aljazeera news at 2018. He emphasized on the important of digitalized script for the future generation. At the same year, Unicode updated it's version to support lesser-used language and unique written symbol including Rohingya script (Unicode, 2018) and the proposal was sent to Unicode three years before by Pandey (2015). This digitalized script was taught by another YouTube channel like Rohingya Vision, at 2019 Rohingya vision uploaded a tutorial how to activated and used Rohingya script for online communication. This got 42 thousand viewers and 96 comments, and the majority comment is positive and the most frequent word is 'thank'.



Wordcloud.3 video Rohingya Zuban Unicode Read and Write

Conclusion

Discrimination Myanmar policy against Rohingya right to get and speaks their own language motivated Rohingya people to do their part to preserve their own language. The diaspora condition where they have to live under foreign government protection is not their reason to forget their language. They still strive to teach and produce digital Unicode in spite of the negative comment from the netizen.

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