

# A Survey on Hakha Lai Acquisition and Attitudes

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## The Chin Community of Southern Indianapolis

❖ There are approximately 20,000 Burmese refugees living in Southern Indianapolis<sup>1</sup>

❖ Community members are multilingual and speak up to 20 related Kuki-Chin languages. Hakha Lai<sup>2</sup> (Hakha Chin) is the language of wider communication

❖ Parents are worried that children are not acquiring Hakha Lai and are instead acquiring only English and their home language

❖ This has the potential effect of disrupting the shared community language and leading to a loss of identity

❖ Previous projects done in collaboration with the community include the Common Voice Project, a translation internship, published linguistics articles, and a field methods course at Indiana University



Burma/Myanmar



Languages of Chin State

## The Survey

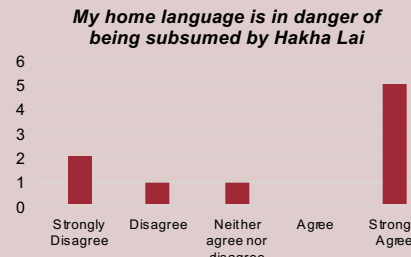
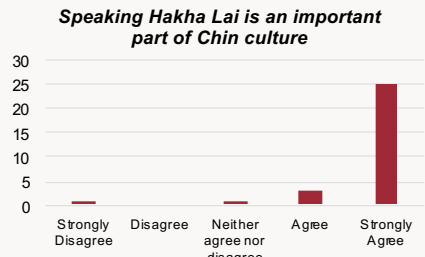
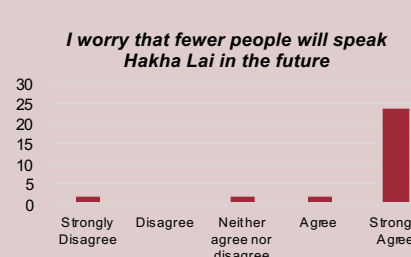
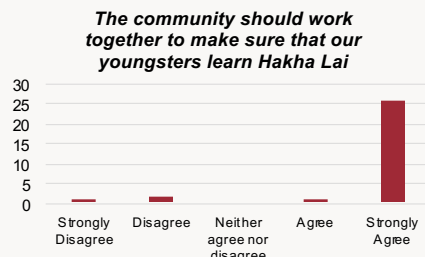
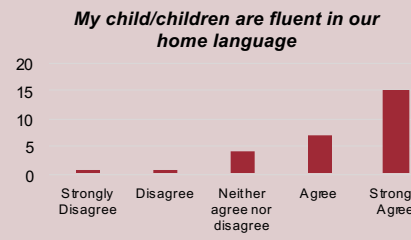
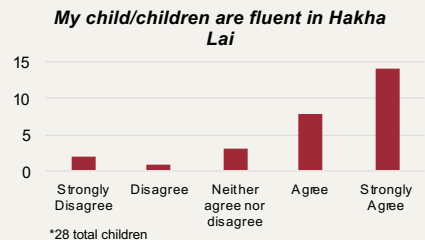
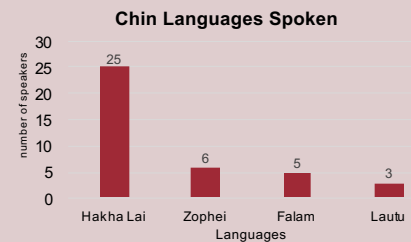
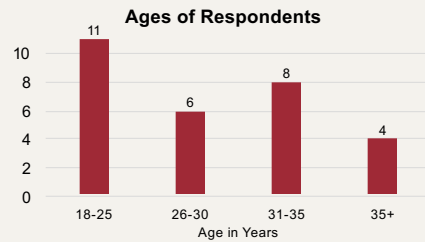
- ❖ We conducted a pilot survey to get a better picture of:
  - How many children are learning Hakha Lai
  - Parents' attitudes towards Hakha Lai
  - How many children are learning their home languages
  - Parents' desires for language teaching
  - Fluency in English, Hakha Chin, and home languages

## Methods

- ❖ The survey was created using methods from Guyette (1981)<sup>3</sup> and shared through Google Forms
- ❖ Members of the Indianapolis Chin community at least 18 years old were asked to participate
- ❖ A link to the survey was shared through online social media platforms such as Facebook and Viber
- ❖ Church leaders were also asked to make members aware of the survey

## Results

OVERALL: 30 respondents, 28 total children, 4 Chin languages represented



\*Among 10 total speakers whose home language is not Hakha Lai

## Discussion

- Respondents reported speaking several languages in addition to Hakha Lai
- Children are fluent in both Hakha Lai and their home languages
- Hakha Chin is closely identified with Chin identity and parents want children to learn Hakha Lai
- However, parents are worried that fewer people will speak Hakha Lai in the future
- They are also worried that Hakha Lai will subsume their home languages
- Translating IRB language into Hakha Lai was a challenge

Respondents expressed the desire for books, school materials, and government documents to be translated into Hakha Lai. Community members still have several vital needs to be fulfilled and this survey is a first step towards addressing linguistic issues in the community

## Future Directions

- ❖ Continue the survey through summer to get more responses
- ❖ We got 15 respondents with children and would like to get even more
- ❖ Find more participants with home languages besides Hakha Lai
- ❖ Use results to inform future projects, resource allocation, and community services
- ❖ Translate the results of this survey into a document which can be shared among the Chin community

## References

[1] Refugees Bureau of Population and Migration. 2018. Refugee arrivals by placement state and nationality. Technical report, U.S. Department of State. [2] Eberhard D. M., G. F. Simons, & C. D. Fennig (eds.). 2019. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*. Twenty-second edition. Dallas Texas: SIL International. Online version: <http://www.ethnologue.com/crosswalk/iu.edu>. [3] Guyette, S. (1981) *Community-Based Research: A Handbook for Native Americans*. American Indian Studies Center: University of California, Los Angeles.

## Acknowledgements

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