Who is the M/Other of the Two?
A Comparison of the Syntactic Systems of Punjabi and Siraiki

Junaid Hafeez, B.A. (Hons.), M.Phil. Scholar

===

Introduction

Siraiki and Punjabi are two languages of Indo-Aryan family, spoken in Pakistan (Shackle, 1976). According to 2008 Census of Pakistan, 44.15% of the total population speaks Punjabi. Likewise, Siraiki is the language of at least 15 million people (Shackle, 1976). The history of the origins of these two languages is debatable. Supporters of each language are of the view that their language is more ancient than the other. Those who support Punjabi do not even consider Siraiki a separate language; they take Siraiki as one of the dialects of Punjabi spoken in the southern regions of Punjab. The given paper is an attempt at studying syntactic systems of Siraki and Punjabi by analyzing grammatical categories. It is hoped that this syntactic comparison between these two languages will give us a better idea about their origin.

Literature Review/Background

Beames (1867) argues that Punjabi is the language of the area lying between the river Ravi and the river Bias. According to him, Punjabi is mere a dialect of Hindi that digressed from the standard Hindi language. He further proposes that Punjabi had been considered as a

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
12 : 12 December 2012
Junaid Hafeez, B.A. (Hons.), M.Phil. Scholar   72
Who is the M/Other of the Two? A Comparison of the Syntactic Systems of Punjabi and Siraiki

separate/autonomous language only because of its Gurmukhi script that has been invented to document sayings and lessons of Guru Nanak 1469-1538), the first Punjabi reformist.

This theory is reinforced by the fact that one does not find any mention of Punjabi in *Ain-I Akbari* (Blochmann, H. (tr.). 1927), a sixteenth century document that discusses Akbar's administrative affairs in detail. Abu'l Fazl, Akbar's vizier has documented thirteen languages spoken in India, but he does not include Punjabi. On the other hand, it is stated by the Punjabi language supporters that Siraiki language did not have a script before the partition of the sub-continent. It is only after 1947 that Siraiki developed a script for itself, and hence, its birth is recent and that too has been fuelled by politics.

However, Rasoolpuri (1980) argues that Siraiki has been written in Dev Nagri script in the past times. To support his claim, he quotes a saying that has been inscribed on the main gate of the ancient fort of Amrot in Bahawalpur district. The inscription translates into English as: 'This fort has been occupied by Jam Somro, and Jam Somro arranged repairs of this fort in 1491 A.D.' Abdul-Haq (1977) contemplates that Siraiki was the lingua franca in the sub-continent. He supports his claim by consulting Grierson's Linguistic Survey of India (1967).

Smirnov (1975) proposes that though Siraiki is kindred to Punjabi, it has many distinctions: Punjabi is an analytical language whereas Siraiki contains many synthetic forms. It has also been argued by Grierson (1967) that he collected language samples from Sindh, which share resemblances with the language spoken in the neighborhoods of Dera Ghazi Khan. Abdul-Haq (1977) interprets this finding to argue that Siraiki linguistics is different from Hindi or Punjabi because its origin lies in Dravidian languages, not in Indo-Aryan languages.

Present Study

The present research studies the syntactic systems of Punjabi and Siraiki languages. As it has been documented in literature review the origin of these two languages is controversial for political reasons. They share many similarities and differences in terms of grammatical categories. The given study would help the readers in getting a fresh insight into the syntaxes of these two languages. It is by looking at the syntactic systems that one can formulate a hypothesis about their origin.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
12 : 12 December 2012
Junaid Hafeez, B.A. (Hons.), M.Phil. Scholar 73
Who is the M/Other of the Two? A Comparison of the Syntactic Systems of Punjabi and Siraiki

The original plan to collect data was to record Punjabi and Siraiki utterances by three informants. Three informants studying Siraiki literature at Bahauddin Zakariya University were chosen. The other three informants were studying Punjabi literature for Civil Service Exam. Two informants from each group were native speakers of their respective mother tongues (Siraiki/Punjabi), while the remaining two were Urdu speakers. When the researcher approached the informants, they were somehow hesitant to record their voices. All efforts to convince them of the privacy of these conversations went futile. So, an alternative strategy had to be developed. The informants were asked to discuss grammar in an informal manner. Following the research ethics, the conversation was not recorded, though the informants allowed the researcher to take notes. They discussed various grammatical categories of both the languages.

Significance and Delimitation:

Previously, a large amount of work has been done to trace out the evolution and history of Punjabi and Siraiki languages. The work is appreciable, but its nature is more evaluative than scientific. Owing to the politics involved, the scholars in the past have exaggerated the status of their respective languages by coining hyperbolic statements in their favor, and simultaneously passing derogatory understatements about the 'rival' language, or the language of their 'opponents' (See Abdul-Haq's *Siraiki Zaban aur Us Ki Hamsaya Ilaqai Zabanain).* The present study is aimed at studying the syntactic systems of the two languages without declaring one superior to the other.

As a linguist, the researcher believes in equality of languages and believes in the scientific study of language, which is free of human biases and emotions. It is hoped that the given study would encourage the research scholars to follow the same scientific spirit of descriptive linguistics in the perusal of regional/national/international languages.

In determining the limits of the study, the first delimiting factor is the number of participants. Since the number of informants is limited, it would not be possible to cover all the grammatical categories of these two languages. Also, all the informants are not equally trained in linguistic knowledge of grammar. Four of the informants—whose mother tongue is either Pujnabi or Siraiki—have been explaining grammatical rules on intuition. The remaining two Urdu

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
12 : 12 December 2012
Junaid Hafeez, B.A. (Hons.), M.Phil. Scholar   74
Who is the M/Other of the Two? A Comparison of the Syntactic Systems of Punjabi and Siraiki

speakers only have the course textbooks at their disposal to explain regularities and irregularities of Siraiki and Punjabi.

Results and Discussion:

The results and disuccsion based on the notes jotted down during the conversations can be summarized as follows:

Word Order

Both Punjabi and Siraiki follow the same word order of SOV (subect-object-verb).

> Punjabi: Aslam (S) khana (O) khanda (V) piya hai.

> Siraiki: Aslam (S) khana (O) kh'nda (V) paey.

> Aslam is having his meal.

Sometimes, the word order might be changed in both the languages for the purpose of stress. So, the sentence may start with an object (O) or a verb (V) as follows:

> Punjabi: khana (O) khanda (V) piya hai Aslam! (S)

> Siraiki: khana (O) kh'nda (V) paey Aslam! (S)

> Punjabi: khanda (V) piya hai khana (O) Aslam! (S)

> Siraiki: kh'nda (V) paey khana (O) Aslam! (S)

Postpositions

Both Punjabi and Siraiki have postpositions instead of prepositions. Notice the position of 'preposition' that is connecting two nouns in the following examples:

> Punjabi: Kitaab maiz <u>tay</u> (postpoistion) pai ay.

> Siraiki: Kitaab maiz <u>tay</u> (postposition) laa'thi ay.

It would now be clear to the readers that why connecting words like 'tay' are called **post**positions in Siraiki and Punjabi. Compare the above utterances with the following English translation for a clear understanding of preposition and postposition. Unlike Siraiki and Punjabi, here the preposition 'on' is positioned between two nouns for establishing a relationship between them:

> The book is lying <u>on</u> the table.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
12 : 12 December 2012
Junaid Hafeez, B.A. (Hons.), M.Phil. Scholar   75
Who is the M/Other of the Two? A Comparison of the Syntactic Systems of Punjabi and Siraiki

Sounds

Siraiki possesses some specific phonetic sounds which are not present in Punjabi. After the partition of India, Punjabi has been written in Urdu script in Pakistan, and hence the Urdu alphabets are considered sufficient for writing Punjabi. However, for Siraiki, we need to add five (5) extra alphabets to the Urdu script. These sounds are closer to the Urdu sounds of | b |, | j |, | d |, | g |, and | n | with the difference that the Urdu sounds are exhaled and the Siraiki sounds are inhaled.

Gender

Punjabi and Siraiki distiguish two genders: masculine and feminine. In case of Punjabi, the masculine nouns end in unaccented *ā,* the feminine nouns end in *ī.* For example, khot*ā,* khot*ī* (male donkey, female donkey); kutt*ā,* kutt*ī,* (dog, bitch) etc. In Siraiki, the second last alphabet of a masculine noun is characterized by a 'paish', and by a 'zair' in case of a feminine noun. For example,

Choh**o**r ku'n khana diyo. (Give food to the boy.)
Choh**i**r ku'n khana diyo. (Give food to the girl.)

The same rule applies to the words borrowed by Saraiki from other languages. For example, have a look at the treatment of an Urdu word 'bay sharam' (shameless) in Siraiki language:

Bay shar**o**m, roti kha ghin! [Shameless (boy), have your food!]
Bay shar**i**m, roti kha ghin! [Shameless (girl), have your food!]

Number

Siraiki and Punjabi share two numbers: singular and plural. Both the languages share many common rules of making plurals. For example, in both languages, the masculine singular nouns ending in 'a' can be made plural by adding 'ay': gorrh**a**/ghorrh**ay** (horse/horses), band**a**/band**ay** (man/men), lark**a**/lark**ay** (boy/boys) etc. Similarly, the feminine singular nouns of both the languages ending in 'i' can be made plural by adding 'yan': chach**i**/chachi**yan** (aunt/aunts), dh**i**/dhi**yan** (daughter/daughters), nan**i**/nani**yan** (grand-mother/grand-mothers) and so on.

However, there is another rule in Siraiki language for making plurals. It has been discussed earlier that a masculine singular noun in Siraiki is characterized by a 'paish' on its second last alphabet while a feminine singular noun by a 'zair'. A masculine singular noun can be made a

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
12 : 12 December 2012
Junaid Hafeez, B.A. (Hons.), M.Phil. Scholar   76
Who is the M/Other of the Two? A Comparison of the Syntactic Systems of Punjabi and Siraiki

plural masculine noun by replacing its 'paish' with 'zabar' while a feminine singular noun can be made a plural feminine noun by adding 'ain' at the end of singular while maintaining the 'zair' on its second last alphabet. Hence, 'choh**or**' (singular) becomes 'choh**ar**' (plural), and 'choh**i**r' would become 'choh**irain**.'

> Ay choh**or** kon hey? *(Who is this boy?)*
>
> Ay choh**ar** kon hin? (Who are these boys?)
>
> Ay choh**i**r kon hey? *(Who is this girl?)*
>
> Ay choh**irain** kon hin? (Who are these girls?)

Person

Seraiki and Punjabi, like English language, have three persons: first person, second person, third person. Like Urdu, Seraiki and Punjabi do not have gender discrimination in the grammatical category of persons. For example, 'o' is used for singular/plural third person regardless of masculine or feminine noun.

> Punjabi: **O** khana khandi pai hai. *(She is having her meal.)*
>
> Punjabi: **O** khana khanda piya hai. *(He is having his meal.)*
>
> Punjabi: **O** khana khanday pai nay. *(They are having their meals.)*
>
> Same is the case for Seraiki language.

Case

Seraiki and Punjabi have five cases for the persons mentioned above: direct, oblique, possessive, locative and instrumental. In Seraiki, for second person singular, they can be represented as *tuun, taiku'n', taida, tai'n which* and *tai'n kanu'n* respectively.

In Punjabi, direct and oblique cases are common while the rest are employed rarely. The instrumental case is used in the plural form of some nouns like *hatthīṃ* meaning *hatthāṃ nāl* (with hands or using hands). Examples of plural locative forms are *piṇḍīṃ* (in villages) from *piṇḍ* (village).

Suffixes

Seraiki has unqiue feature of suffixes which perform multiple functions of subject and object. They can even change the tense and type of sentence. This feature is not found in Punjabi. Have a look at the following examples:

> Siraiki: Maray'sin'**is**. *(They would beat him.)*

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
12 : 12 December 2012
Junaid Hafeez, B.A. (Hons.), M.Phil. Scholar   77
Who is the M/Other of the Two? A Comparison of the Syntactic Systems of Punjabi and Siraiki

Punjabi: oh ono maran gay.

Siraiki: Maray'sin'**ain**. *(They would beat them.)*

Punjabi: oh ona nu'n maran gay.

Siraiki: Maray'**sway**. (They would beat you.)

Punjabi: oh thuwano maran gay.

Siraiki: Maray'su**m**. (They would beat me.)

Punjabi: oh mainu maran gay.

Siraiki: Maray'sin'**ya**! (Beware, they would beat him!)

Punjabi: Khabardar, oh ono maran gay!

Siraiki: Maray'sum'**s**. *(I would beat him.)*

Punjabi: main ono maran ga.

Those who argue that Siraiki does not belong to Indo-Aryan languages put forward this particular aspect of Siraiki to support the claim that Siraiki belong to Dravidian family of languages and hence is much older than Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi or any other languages invented upon the arrival of Aryans to the sub-continent.

Conclusion

The given linguistic study was conducted in order to have a better insight into the syntactic systems of Punjabi and Siraiki. As it has been documented, Siraiki and Punjabi show resemblances in their syntactic patterns, yet, each language has its own canon of exceptions and norms when grammatical categories are explored. The given study strengthens the concept of universal grammar i.e., all the languages of the world have something common in their structures. The similarities shared by both the languages in their syntax can be related to the fact that lingual habits of speech communities living together influence each other. Though the origin of both the languages is debatable, it is a historical fact, that the Punjabi and Siraiki speakers have been living together and trading with each other for centuries. Sharing the common climate, geography, material/non-material culture, and means of production definitely produces a common worldview of the members speech communities to the extent that it is visible at the level of syntax. It is hoped that the linguists would further explore these two languages in future with the linguistic spirit of neutrality.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
12 : 12 December 2012
Junaid Hafeez, B.A. (Hons.), M.Phil. Scholar   78
Who is the M/Other of the Two? A Comparison of the Syntactic Systems of Punjabi and Siraiki

==

References

Abdul-Haq, M. (1984). *Siraiki Zaban day Qaiday Qanoon*, Multan: Siraiki Adbi Board.

Abdul-Haq, M. (1977). *Siraiki Zaban aur Us Ki Hamsaya Ilaqai Zabanain*, Multan: Siraiki Adbi Board.

Blochmann, H. (tr.). (1927). *The Ain-I Akbari by Abu'l Fazl Allami*, Calcutta: The Asiatic Society

Beames, J. (1867). Outlines of Indian Philology with A Map Showing the Distribution of Indian Languages, Calcutta: Wyman Bros.

(2008). Census of Pakistan retrieved from http:// statpak.gov.pk on June 22, 2012.

Grierson, G. A. (1967). *Linguistic Survey of India*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.

Rasoolpuri, M. A. (1980). Siraiki Zaban, Unda Rasmulkhat Te Awazan.

Smirnov, U. A. (1975). *The Lahndi Language*, Moscow: Nuka Publishing House.

Shackle, C. (1976). The Siraiki Language of Central Pakistan: A Reference Grammar, London.

Wagha, A. (1980). *The Siraiki Language: Its Growth and Development*, Islamabad: Dderawar Publications.

===

Junaid Hafeez, B.A. (Hons.), M.Phil. Scholar
Department of English
Bahauddin Zakariya University
Multan 60000
Pakistan
proem86@hotmail.com

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
12 : 12 December 2012
Junaid Hafeez, B.A. (Hons.), M.Phil. Scholar   79
Who is the M/Other of the Two? A Comparison of the Syntactic Systems of Punjabi and Siraiki