Language Maintenance and Shift: Attitudes of Brohi People towards Sindhi and Brahui Languages

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Abstract

Language maintenance and shift are the subfields of sociolinguistics. Language attitudes play a vital role for the maintenance and shift of any language. The study is concerned with the two regional languages Brahui and Sindhi of Pakistan. The major objective of the study is to know the attitudes of Brohi people towards Sindhi and Brahui languages in Sindh. It explores the status of Brahui language through the analysis of attitudes of the community in the context of Dadu, city in Sindh. Qualitative methodology was followed. A semi structured interview was used as data collection tool. An interview protocol was prepared for the interviews. 20 parents from Dadu city were selected as participants. The data were analyzed thematically. Findings reveal that Brohi people of Dadu city have shifted from Sindhi to Brahui language. They have negative attitudes towards Brahui language but have positive attitudes towards Sindhi language and gave more value to Sindhi than the Brahui language. These negative attitudes have caused a shift from Brahui to Sindhi language. The study recommends several efforts should be taken for the strength of Brahui language in Sindh.

Introduction

This study is concerned with the two regional languages of Pakistan; Brahui and Sindhi languages deals with the practical issue of applied linguistics; that is language shift and language maintenance. The research was intended to ascertain the status of Brahui language in district Dadu,Sindh and investigates whether Brahui language in the Dadu, Sindh is maintained or a shift was taking place from minor language Brahui to more dominant language Sindhi. Dadu district is one of the densely populated districts in Sindh and Brohi community is also one of the

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minority groups living in Dadu city. Apart from that, they also locate in Balochistan and other cities of Sindh province.

Research Questions

As the study aimed to know the status of Brahui language community living in Dadu city, it had following research questions:

Q 1: what language Brohi people use at home with their family members?

Q 2: what are the attitudes of Brohi people towards Sindhi and Brahui language?

Linguistic Background of Pakistan

Pakistan is a multi-cultural and linguistically diverse country. According to Rehman (2010), there are 72 languages spoken in Pakistan. Out of which one language 'Badeshi' is extinct, another 'Domaaki' is at its final stage of life, while 'Chilliso, Gowro and Ushojo' are in very critical condition. Atlas of the world endangered languages (2010) issued the list of 2500 endangered and extinct language, in which there are 27 Pakistani languages were also declared as endangered, including Brahui. Thus, this study is concerned a marginal language which once was declared as endangered language

Recently a census survey was conducted in Pakistan, but unfortunately it surveyed only six major languages of Pakistan and ignored other more than fifty languages including Brahui language. Following is the report of languages spoken in Pakistan:

Punjabi	**44.15%**
Pashto	**15.42%**
Sindhi	**14.1%**
Saraiki	**10.53%**
Urdu	**7.57%**
Balochi	**3.57%**
Others (including Brahui)	**4.66%**

Language census survey 2017

Literature Review

Sociolinguistics and Its Sub-fields

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Sociolinguistics is the branch of linguistics which is concerned with the relations between language and society, which is a combination of language and society. It became the recognized branch of social sciences in 1960s. It describes language as a social phenomenon. Language maintenance, language shift, language endangerment and language death are the subfields of sociolinguistics.

A language is considered endangered if it is at the risk of disappearing, while language death refers to complete disappearance of a language (Crystal 2000, Nettle & Romaine, 2000, Dorian 1989). Languages are vanishing so fast that David Crystal (2000) calculates that a language dies after every two weeks. The languages around the world are facing so many threats. A number of the small and minority languages of the world are at the risk of extinction. . Linguists are anxious with this terrible situation for languages. Linguist Krauss (1991) is so much pessimistic that he predicts as many as 95% of the world's estimated six thousand languages are going to extinct in present century. In order to face such situation they suggest making efforts to document, cataloguing, revitalizing and maintaining moribund languages.

Linguists define three different types of language death. The first one is language death through change. With the passage of time, languages change from ancient to modern time and make a unique difference. Another type of language extinction is with the sudden death or scattering of an entire community of speakers. These are due to sudden natural disasters like earthquakes, invasions or genocides which cause to language death. In the present time, the most common cause of the language death is language shift. In this type of language shift, the speakers of a language do not pass it on to their children. Rather, their children learn another powerful language. With the passage of time, the language of the entire community shift. In that way, a number of minority languages of the world extinct.

Language Maintenance and Language Shift

Although language shift and language maintenance are the sub topics of sociolinguistics for about half a century, but there is still no clear and universal definition (Knooihuizen, 2006). Batibo (2005) defines language maintenance as a situation in which a language maintains its vitality, even under pressure. It is protection and promotion of native language in individual or speech community (Baker 2000). Mostly language maintenance and shift issues occur in either minority regions or migrant communities. The process of language shift either cause language endangerment or language death. A language is said to be died if its speakers either die out or shift another language. Crystal (2000, 2003) describes language shift as the outcome of change from the use of one language to another. It is a shift from minority language to a majority language. Language maintenance, on the other hand, is the use of a community's ethnic language in at least some domains of life (Pauwels 2004).

According to Clyne, (2003), "in language shift, one language is gradually replaced by another language in a minimum of one domain of life". Another definition for language shift is

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by Webb and Sure (2000: 13), who define "language shift as a process in which the speakers of one language begin to use a second language for more and more functions, until they eventually use only the second language, even in personal and intimate contexts". According to their point of view language shift does not take place all of sudden, but rather, it is a process, which is initially used only in some functions, but then replaced in all domains of life. Other linguists like Lee (2008) and Trudgill (2000) believe language shift occurs when a particular linguistic community gradually replaces the local dialect with another language which is perceived as more prestigious or dominant. In this sense, people observe the languages and choose the ones which are of high status and of prominent value.

In language shift, one language is gradually replaced by another language in a minimum of one domain of life (Clyne, 2003). Language maintenance, conversely, is a term used to describe a situation when a speech community keeps using the language in one life domain or more, although contact occurs with the mainstream language (Pauwels, 2004). Thus, she defines the term language maintenance as "a situation in which a speaker, a group of speakers, or a speech community continue to use their language in some or all spheres of life despite the pressure from the dominant or majority language" (p. 719). While Batibo (2005) defines Language maintenance as a situation in which a language maintains its vitality, even under pressure (p.102).

Although languages are spoken by individuals, but it depends upon particular speech communities that have to make their languages either survive or die (Bonvillain, 1993). While Dorian (1978) believes that 'the 'total shift' of a language in a speech community is language death, even if that language is used in other parts of the world. Likewise, Clyne (2003) describes two types of language shift; intra-generational shift and inter-generational shift. By intra-generational shift, she meant a shift within the same generation, and the inter-generational language shift takes place between the second and third generations of a migrant group. According to Clyne (2003) inter-generational shift is more common and higher than intra-generational shift.

Attitudes in Language Maintenance and Shift

The attitude basically used in social psychology, which is considered parent discipline of language attitude research. Although attitude research has played an essential and distinctive role in the social psychology for a long time, the concept of attitudes has also become a major point of interest in sociolinguistics (Garrett *et al.*, 2003: 2). As the term attitude is widely used in the field of sociology, psychology and sociolinguistics, so it has no central or precise definition. Its applications and interpretations vary according to the fields under which they are studied. In the studies about language, attitudes are major instrument to either support or reject a language or a language variety (Garrett et al. 2003: 2).

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Eagley & Chaiken (1993) describe attitude as a 'psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor' (p. 1). By the terms psychological tendency they mean that attitudes represent an individual's inner feelings which consists of that individual's attribution of various degrees of goodness or badness to a certain entity. (Eagley & Chaiken, 1993: 1-3).

An important definition considered for the term attitude is told by Weber (1992) who believes that it is 'an evaluative reaction – a judgment regarding one's liking or disliking – of a person, event, or other aspect of the environment' (p. 117). It is through these reactions and responses, through which we are able to know, identify and measure the attitudes of people about languages. The attitude of the speech community concerning their languages is one of the crucial factors in language maintenance or shift (Gere & Smith 1979). Baker (1988) also believes that the attitude of the speaker is one of the most important factors that lead to maintain a language. According to Bradley (2000), a group's attitude towards their own language has an impact on whether they maintain their language or shift to another.

Holmes (2000) believes that language shift is mostly slow in such areas where the language is highly valued by the people of that speech community and they have a high prestige for their language. That is a sign of positive attitude, which motivates its speakers to continue it Hence, their language maintenance is strong. On the other hand, if there are negative attitudes of the community members towards that language and has a lower prestige for own language, as a result, it will cause the process of shift toward the dominant language, and make their indigenous language weaker, endangered, even extinct. In other words, the attitudes have an impact on the lives of the people and their attitudes towards their own language influences whether they maintain their language or shift to another.

Language Maintenance and shift Studies

The research in language maintenance and language shift has been conducted in many parts of the world. Dweik and Refai (2015) conducted a study in Jordan. The aim of the study was to investigate whether a minority language Syriac was maintained or not. They used interviews and questionnaires. There were fifty six participants in their study. They came up with the findings that ethnic language Syriac was completely replaced by more dominant language Arabic in almost all of the domains by the people of Assyrians in Jordan.

Ghoso (2007) investigated the issue of language maintenance and shift in Canada. Her study was about Tibetan immigrants in Toronto. There were overall 200 female participants in the study. With the help of survey questionnaire, it was found out that Female Tibetan had positive attitudes toward their ethnic language. They were maintaining their Tibetan language in all their personal domains of home. They were also using it in social, religious and cultural gatherings as well.

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Studies in language maintenance and shift are mostly investigated at macro level. It is also studied at micro level: - within a single family or individually. Karim and Haq (2013) investigated the issue of language shift and maintenance in a single Pakistani individual family who was residing in New Zealand. With the help of semi-structured interview, they found that participant was lying in the middle path by maintaining his native language Urdu in his home domain and in religious gathering where as English was used in social domains with other communities in New Zealand.

Language shift and maintenance studies mostly focus on minority languages. In some places language shift is also taking place in major languages. Nawaz et al (2012) claimed that language shift was taking place from Punjabi, which is most spoken language in Pakistan, to English. There were a hundred participants in their study. They used a questionnaire in their study to find out the reasons of language shift. They came up with the results that various economic, social, psychological and historical factors caused the participants to shift from Punjabi to English language.

Another study about Punjabi language was carried out by Nazir et al (2012). They aimed to examine linguistic scenario of Punjabi language in Sargodha. They used interviews and questionnaires in their study. The results revealed that Punjabi language was shifting towards Urdu and other languages. Punjabi people were not sincere with their mother tongue. They were feeling shame when using it. Researchers predict that if this attitude continues, in near future, Punjabi language will be considered endangered in Pakistan. Gillani and Mahmood (2014) also conducted an attitude research. The data collected from 60 participants, they got different attitudes of Punjabi people towards Punjabi language and language shift was taking place from Punjabi to Urdu, which is national language of the country. The researchers suggest for the promotion of Punjabi language.

Research Methodology

This study used qualitative methodology for data collection. The tool for data collection was open-ended, in-depth interviews. These interviews were semi structured. In order to investigate the language attitudes of the community towards mother tongue Brahui and Sindhi language, we prepared an interview protocol for data collection, which consisted of eight questions. These questions were prepared in order to inquire about their age, occupation, education, language used at home with family members, and attitudes towards Sindhi and Brahui language.

The population for the study was Brohi community living in Dadu city of Sindh. The convenient sampling was used in this study, which is the technique where participants are selected of one's own accessibility and proximity. The sampling size was of the 24 participants. All the parents were male aged between 25 to 40 years, including both literate and illiterate.

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They all belonged to different occupations. All the participants were living in Dadu city and were considered chief of their families.

The interviews took 20 to 30 minutes for each participant recorded at their gathering place or guest room called "Otak". Overall, 20 days were spent for the data collection process. The audio-recorder was used for interviews. The researcher then transcribed and analyzed them according to themes.

Findings and Discussions
1. Language used at home:
All the participants told that basically their ancestors belonged to Balochistan but they migrated to Sindh from there and came here for earning purpose and settled here. Almost all of the participants said they spoke Sindhi language at home, while only two participants also spoke Brahui language along with Sindhi at home. The participants had positive attitudes towards Sindhi language. They feel happy using Sindhi language at their home and outside the home. As one of the participant said: *Our elders started speaking Sindhi when they came and settled here. (P 4)* Another participant reported: *We speak Sindhi language with family members because we are living in Sindh and have contact with Sindhi speakers. (P 7)* Participant 11 said these words: *We live in Sindh, so we speak our own language Sindhi at home.*

2. Language attitudes:
a. Attitudes towards Sindhi:
The Brohi people living in the Dadu city of Sindh have positive attitudes towards Sindhi language. They told many reasons for speaking Sindhi language at home. As reported here: *Sindhi is rich in literature; we speak in it because it is better for our future. (P 8)* Another participant gave priority to Sindhi language due to its usage at school level. *Sindhi is better, even at schools here, teachers teach our children in Sindhi. (P 2)*

b. Attitudes towards Brahui:
Regarding Brahui language, they had different perceptions. They believe its usage may cause certain problems to their family members; *Brahui language is difficult to learn, difficult to speak and also difficult to understand. Other people don't like it. (P 1)* Another community member said: *We speak in Sindhi because other people here do not understand Brohkii (Brahui) language. (P 6)* Participant 7 gave these attitudes for Brahui language: *We know Brohki (Brahui) language but we prefer Sindhi because our children with Brohki face so many problems everywhere.*

When the researcher asked them the reasons for not speaking Brahui language at home, the participants felt irritated and made such remarks: *What is difference if we speak Sindhi, Brahui is spoken so much in Balochistan. (P 15)* Another participant quoted: *People are*

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speaking Urdu and English at home, we are speaking our own language. (P 8) One more community member who told that he loved Sindh province a lot, gave these remarks: *We live in Sindh, earn in Sindh, and eat from Sindh, so we speak Sindhi. (P 5)*

Conclusion

This study was aimed to investigate the phenomenon of language maintenance and language shift in a Brohi community living in Dadu city. The study explored the language used by Brohi people at home with family members and also their attitudes towards Sindhi and Brahui language. The study found that the Brohi people living in Dadu city have shifted from Brahui to Sindhi language. They showed strong positive attitudes towards Sindhi and believed Brahui language as a worthless and difficult language.

As all languages are equal and no language is better that any other. If people think that certain languages and varieties are more precise, efficient, and beautiful or correct than others are purely social in nature and have no scientific basis. But Brohi community thinks Sindhi language as better in status than the Brahui language. They have hostile attitudes as well. As Kroskrity (2000) believes attitudes can change. The study recommends for taking steps for the strength of Brahui language. The government, linguists, policy makers, and other stake holders including community members should take their part for the promotion of Brahui language.

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