

Factors Responsible for Code-Switching in Gulgulia

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Abstract

This paper briefly discusses the factors which contribute in code-switching in Gulgulia language which is the mother tongue of the Gulgulia community. The Gulgulias are a nomadic community, widely distributed in the states of Jharkhand, Bihar and Bengal who live by arranging shows of monkeys and bears, begging and even petty thieving.

While exploring the ethno-linguistic vitality of Gulgulia, a research-worthy aspect was detected where Gulgulia exhibits a consistent pattern of multilingualism, such as in situational code-switching where domains determine the language of choice. The members cease using Gulgulia and adhere to Hindi/ Khortha etc. during social domains like religious practices and in other festive celebrations. This is an interesting phenomenon that there is somewhat different language use in some specific domains and it is very likely that this phenomenon will become a threat to the existence of Gulgulia in the future.

Combining the general description of the Gulgulia people, Gulgulia language and its use in society with the pattern of code-switching in Gulgulia under certain domains, this paper delves widely into the factors that contribute in such code-switching thereby channelizing our concentration towards the influence of this code-switching upon the existence of Gulgulia language in the future.

The Gulgulia Community

The Gulgulias are a nomadic community, often found on the outskirts of villages, near railway stations or forests. They are chiefly distributed in the states of Bihar, Jharkhand and Bengal. They speak Gulgulia which is the mother-tongue of the community reported in the paper, 'Mother Tongues of India according to the 1961 Census' by B. Mallikarjun. Since they are nomadic people, they have picked up other languages being used in the region and show traits of multilingualism.

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The Gulgulias are divided into a number of exogamous patrilineal *gotras* like Sonarkheli, Kungera, Maldahia, etc. The community is aware of the *Varna* system. They consider themselves at the lowest rung of the *Varna* hierarchy. Their families are nuclear. They are nomadic people; therefore they have no immovable property. The movable property is inherited by the sons. The eldest son succeeds to the social offices, held by father.

Gulgulias are a landless community. Traditionally, they earned money by arranging shows of animals but these days they beg or work as daily labourers in tea stalls or shops. Sometimes they collect honey from the jungle and sell it in the local *hat* (market).

They have no traditional caste council or a panchayat. They are Hindus. They worship Lakshmi, Sitala, Durga, Jagadmai Devi, etc. They make an altar below a tree to worship their Gods. They celebrate Durgapuja, Kalipuja, the Holi festival and participate in the annual festival of Karama.

They are illiterate. Their children do not go to school due to poverty and their nomadic lifestyle. However, in Patherdih area of Dhanbad (Jharkhand) there are three children having recently joined the school.

Code- Switching and Code-Mixing

Code- switching stands as a linguistic behaviour which takes place when languages come into contact. However, it stays distinct from other language contact phenomena such as bilingualism, borrowings, pidgins, creoles, calques and language interference. According to Rosamina Lowi “Code-switching is viewed as bilingual/ multilingual practice that is used not only as a conversational tool, but also as a way to establish, maintain and delineate ethnic boundaries and identities”.

Code-switching is also referred as code mixing, code-shifting or code-changing and has been defined as the act of “alternation of two languages within a single discourse, sentence or constituent” (Poplack 1980:583). It is the tendency of the speakers to practice code-switching generally, when they are competent in two languages simultaneously.

Code-switching and Code-mixing have been considered as two separate concepts. On the one hand where Code-switching refers to the alternate use of sentences from two languages in a single discourse, code-mixing refers to the alternate use of constituents from

two languages within a sentence (Obiamalu and Mbagwu). This paper is interested in both types but we shall use code-switching to refer to both.

Major Types of Code-Switching

Intersentential switching occurs outside the sentence or the clause level (i.e. at sentence or clause boundaries). It is sometimes called "extrasentential" switching.

Intra-sentential switching occurs within a sentence or a clause.

Tag-switching is the switching of either a tag phrase or a word, or both, from language-B to language-A, (common intra-sentential switches).

Intra-word switching occurs within a word, itself, such as at a morpheme boundary.

The Data

We present here sample of Gulguia-Hindi-Khorta code-switched/ mixed utterances from our corpus of data. The first sentence shows the code switched/mixed utterance and the second sentence shows the complete Gulguia form. Gulguia is written in plain, Hindi is underlined and Khorta is italicized. The gloss in English is written below each utterance.

1) həmar *sər le* ðərð bhəigəl.

həmar mundə ʈe ðərð bhəigəl

(My head is aching.)

2) həmar ðəva a:ni ðe.

həmar kəngi a:ni ðe.

(Bring my medicine.)

3) a:dʒ ʈʊm kaməʃ pəre gəe tfe ?

a:dʒ ʈʊm kaməʃ pəre gəigər ?

(Did you go on work today?)

4) dəb bədzər le gʰʊri ke a:sbi, ʈəkʰən ek kedʒi: a:m lete a:na.

dʒkʰən haʃ le gʰʊri ke a:sbi, ʈəkʰən ek kedʒi: a:m ni:e a: n.

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Sneha Mishra, Ph.D. and M. Rahman, Ph.D.

Factors Responsible for Code-Switching in Gulguia

(While returning from the market, bring 1 kilo of mangoes.)

5) a:dʒ həmar kam *bhālo nā bhāigo*.

a:dʒ həmar kam bauḍhi nā bhāigəl.

(Today my work has not been good.)

6) *dʒāldi kore tel ni:e a:n*, tʃəb ma:ʃho ranbo.

bhō tel a:ni ðe, tʃəb ma:ʃho ranbo.

(Bring me the oil quickly, then I will fry the fish.)

7) a:dʒkl, dʒharkhənde nəksəli: səmi:sa ʃrəm pər bhāigəl.

əkhən, dʒharkhənde nəksəli: səmi:sa ʃrəm pər bhāigəl.

(These days, the naxal problem in Jharkhand is at its extreme.)

8) Iḥ ʃhoṛija bi:ha *həvek he ki na?*

Iḥ ʃhoṛija bi:ha bhəl ki nai?

(Is this girl married?)

9) həmə *nəhane va:ste* pokhira dʒaiʃhi:.

həmə nəhāija: le pokhira dʒaiʃhi:.

(I am going to the pond for bathing.)

10) həmə ʃangi nie: *dʒa: rəhe he*, gaʃhi kaṭbo.

həmə ʃangi nie: dʒai ʃhi:s, gaʃhi kaṭbo.

(I am taking the axe to cut the tree.)

Methodology

The recordings used for this study were recorded at multiple locations and at different situations on about 20 Gulgulia people over a period of 1 week.

The recordings were mainly in the form of paper jottings. Since the researcher never intentionally set out to go looking for instances of Code- Switching, but rather noted them down as they randomly occurred in the spontaneous speech of different individuals on different occasions, thus there was no audio-cassette recording.

Domains of Code-Switching in the Gulgulia Context

There is a shift in language behaviour from one domain to another. It is the tendency of individuals to adapt to different varieties, codes and styles and keep switching over from one code to another depending upon the domain. Language behaviour gets influenced by an individual's social intimacy, social relationship, social distance and the situation of the speaker and the hearer. The speaker doesn't initiate his way or style of language use, rather it is the context which determines the varieties according to the situations.

1. CODE-SWITCHING IN THE HOME DOMAIN

Members use a type of code with their family-members which is more informal, casual and simple. They speak Gulgulia among themselves. However, during their informal talk, they show traits of code-switching particularly at the lexical level. When the reason was asked for such a lexical shift, they told the investigator that they are the nomadic community roaming from one place to another, in search of food and shelter. In their course of migration, they pick words from other regional dominant languages and make them an integral part of their mother-tongue. Sometimes, the members are away from their community for about six months and are very much prone to acquire this trait of code-switching.

2. CODE-SWITCHING IN THE SOCIAL DOMAIN

Members use Gulgulia with minor traits of lexical code-switching in the social domain involving their own community members. The community considers themselves at the lowest rung of the Varna hierarchy and generally keep their community get-togethers restricted among its own community members. Thus on such occasions, Gulgulia language is the means of communication among the members. However, during occasions like some campaigns or processions, they largely proclaim their needs and demands in the dominant language of the region so that their voice could reach the maximum.

Amidst these social domains, Gulgulias show a peculiar behaviour of code-switching during religious ceremonies. Although they themselves conduct their religious rituals with the

oldest members of the community conducting the rituals without inviting any priest, yet they conduct the proceedings in either, Hindi, Bengali, Khortha, etc. When enquired why they exclude their vernacular for religious purposes, they stated that they don't have their own festivals, so for conduction of festivals which are inherited from other communities, they employ the language of the community to which the festival is related to.

3. CODE-SWITCHING IN THE OUTSIDE DOMAIN

Members generally switch their codes from Gulgulia to other regional languages during earning their livelihood i.e. while begging or presenting animal shows etc. Sometimes or often they switch over from one language to another in order to address and attract more and more public and thus they happen to learn different language in different contexts. However, they make use of argot when they want to prevent others from understanding what they say.

Factors Responsible for Code-Switching in Gulgulia

In Gulgulia, excluding the religious domain when the members deliberately switch their codes to the language to which the festival is related to, the investigator found four factors that contribute most in Gulgulia language shifting.

Language attitude

Language status

Subconscious linguistic behaviour

Lexical gap

A) Language attitude

Though the members of the Gulgulia community exhibit a very positive attitude towards their language and wish to see it promoted, yet the members mostly need to revert to the use of dominant languages for earning their livelihood as communication in dominant languages fetch them more profit as more and more public could be reached.

At times, there is even conscious display of knowledge of Hindi, Bengali, Khortha extensively and English too, at minor lexical levels. The more they bring words from

dominant languages in their communication, the more admiration they earn from their peer group.

B) Language status

Under Landweer's (2008) four point scale of language status namely as follows:-

- The language in question is a prestigious, nationally recognised lingua franca.
- The language in question is a regionally recognised lingua franca.
- The language in question is a locally recognised variety with neutral status.
- The language in question is a locally disparaged variety,

Gulgulia can be classed as a locally disparaged variety. In the words of Landweer,(2008) “A descending scale of relative prestige could be as follows with a nationally recognized language having the greatest prestige and thus a greater potential for use in the foreseeable future, and locally disparaged varieties having the least potential for continued use in the future (assuming other supports are also absent).”

When a language fails to attain any kind of recognition, then its survival is hardly achieved. Gulgulia is confined just within their own community having negligible prestige in the society. Al-though it is widely spoken by the community members in informal situation, is always a second choice in the formal situation. When a language stands as a second choice in most of the situation, then its survival gradually gets difficult. That is to say that the language is used less and less and finally language shift gets unavoidable. Moreover, severe illiteracy within the community shows that the documentation and preservation of the language is impossible by their own community people.

C) Subconscious linguistic behaviour

Gulgulia speakers exhibit patterns of code-switching out of habit and subconsciously switch codes with another Gulgulia speaker. Such situations could be found in their informal interactions and formal community discussions etc. It is subconscious because most people are unaware that they have switched and amazingly, none are capable to make even ten sentences without bringing in one or two Hindi, Bengali, at times English (extremely basic words like time, voter-card etc.) words or expressions.

D) Lexical gap

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There are several expressions that do not have readily available equivalents in Gulgulia. Gulgulia speakers in this kind of situation do not have any other choice than to switch to expressions available in other dominant languages.

Amidst 500-600 total population of the community, three children go to school which presents the picture of severe illiteracy within the community. Thus, there is no extensive attempt carried out by the members themselves to develop terminologies for Gulgulia.

The Impact of Code-Switching to the Existence of Gulgulia Language in the Future

Gulgulia community showing traits of Code- Switching is basically a linguistic phenomenon. This phenomenon is actually prevalent in all multilingual societies. It facilitates the need to communicate with other people who speak different languages. If this phenomenon exists temporarily, the language which is undergoing the shift isn't in a position to be endangered. However, if this shifting takes place continuously or permanently, then this may be threatening for the host language.

If we apply the above stated criteria in the Gulgulia context, where we see that code-switching is not just invading in the outside social domain but is also creeping in the home and particularly religious domains which declares negative impact on the Gulgulia existence. If the next generation adapt themselves of not using Gulgulia in majority walks of life and domains, this would pose danger to the Gulgulia (language) existence. If no preventive and proper action is taken to check this to happen, it is quite relevant to say that the Gulgulia language will vanish.

Conclusion

We could undoubtedly conclude that code-switching has become an integral part of the Gulgulia life and several factors are responsible for this. It is necessary for the linguists and lexicographers to work in a co-ordinated fashion to develop Gulgulia terminologies in order to combat the issue of lexical gap. This would enable the developed terminologies to become household terms. The government should take initiatives with regard to language planning, new policy initiatives, public awareness, technical and financial support for the promotion and preservation of Gulgulia status and language. This would thereby help reduce the incidence of code-switching among the Gulgulia as well as help in the uplift of the community and preservation of the language.

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