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Dilemma of Usage and Transmission - A Sociolinguistic Investigation of Dhundi-Pahari in Pakistan

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Abstract

Dhundi-Pahari, commonly known as Pahari, is an indigenous language of the people of Murree and its adjacent areas in Pakistan. It, being a minority and regional language has the same kind of threat from Urdu and English as is evident in the case of other minority languages of the world vis-à-vis powerful languages.

There is a growing reduction in the transmission of Dhundi-Pahari to the coming generations. Even the family domain which is supposed to be the last powerful citadel of language is being under tremendous pressure.

In order to judge this phenomenon, a sociolinguistic study was conducted and through open ended interviews, it was found out that not only was Dhundi-Pahari threatened but also the attitudes of the indigenous speakers were diverted to other powerful languages like Urdu and English. Transmission of Dhundi-Pahari to their children seems to have become their least priority.

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The present study concludes that serious efforts are needed to enliven Dhundi-Pahari language and motivate the indigenous population to adopt their native language as a cultural asset for them. (The paper is partially based on a section of my Ph.D. thesis and is submitted with modifications and additions from the large corpus of interview data).

Language Distribution in Pakistan

Pakistan has rich treasure of indigenous languages. According to Ethnologue Languages of the World 16th edition, there are 77 languages in Pakistan. Out of these 72 are indigenous languages (Lewis, 2009). Most of the population consists of bilingual, trilingual or multilingual speakers. A common phenomenon is that each person has one indigenous language which is his/her mother tongue whereas Urdu is the second language for them. Then at school they are supposed to learn English and other world languages such as Arabic, etc.

Pakistan comprises of different cultural, religious and linguistic groups which call for their own individual identity and the linguistic identity is one major source of creating social groups.

Attitudes of Various Classes toward Language Use

Urdu is the lingua franca of Pakistan and is spoken or understood by almost every Pakistani. It is also the national language of Pakistan. Pakistani society is divided into different classes. The affluent class favours speaking and learning English for their toddlers as compared to Urdu and other regional languages of Pakistan. This class which prefers English to other smaller languages is the elite class (Rahman, 2006a; Mahboob, 2002). The members of this class are educated and trained in elite English medium schools. This class usually occupies positions of importance and influence in the bureaucracy and enjoys the perks of civil service and politics. They are trained to rule the majority population or, in other words, Urdu medium masses.

Urdu medium is a term used in a derogatory sense to refer to the backwardness of Government schools as compared to English medium schools (privately established English medium schools) which symbolize high standard, knowledge and sophistication.

English is an official language of the country. It is also the language of the superior services examinations. People from the elite class, mostly trained in elite English medium institutions, qualify for higher posts and, as a consequence, a dichotomy is created among the segments of population.

The condition of the smaller and minority languages in Pakistan is not good and they may not prosper in future as these languages are not granted the appropriate status to expand their domains of use and grow. The rich heritage of the indigenous languages is being ignored and the

so-called sophisticated and cultured languages like English and Urdu continue to prosper and expand their domains of use.

The Plight of non-Urdu and non-English Pakistani Languages

The social and economic class system in Pakistan has introduced a class system among the languages of Pakistan. The middle class focuses on Urdu and to some extent English for educational and official use. The elite class focuses only on English, whereas the lower class has no option but to speak and learn through its own native mother tongue.

The regional and indigenous languages are stigmatized in such a way that their users do not generally like this stigma to be associated with their children. Therefore, the transmission of indigenous languages has declined to a considerable level. Schools also play their role in divorcing the learners from their mother tongues. Consequently the indigenous languages do not appropriately pass on to the future generations and in this way the languages tend to disappear from the scene.

Shift from One Language to Another

According to Holmes (1992), shift from one language to another language might take three to four generations but, sometimes, it takes only two generations. This normally happens with migrants who are generally monolingual in their mother tongue; their immediate descendants are bilingual, while their grandchildren are often monolingual in the language of the host country.

Krauss (1992) states that almost half of the total languages spoken in the world are not being transmitted to the next generations. An additional 40 percent may be in danger as the number of children learning them is decreasing. The remaining 10 percent of the world's total languages are relatively safe.

Dorian (1982) believes that economic and social factors are responsible for language shift. A language does not lose its prestige as long as these two factors are favourable to it. If any other language excels in getting the status and value in these two fields, the shift to that language would be natural.

Medium of Instruction Controversy and the State of Indigenous Languages in Pakistan

As stated above, English is basically the medium of instruction in the elite and privileged schools in the present day Pakistan as it was in vogue during the British control for the exclusive purpose of creating an anglicized class to safeguard British rulers' interests in the colonies (Rahman, 2005). Lord Macaulay specified the same in his Minute of 1835 where he talked about the significance of setting up a representative class, English in their behaviour and Indian in their

colour and origin (Thirumalai, 2003). They ultimately succeeded in designing such a class and, with that class, the English language turned out to be the symbol of status and a symbol of superiority in the Subcontinent. This had been accomplished through the elite English medium institutions.

Two Kinds of Educational Institutions in Pakistan

In Pakistan, there are fundamentally two kinds of educational institutions—English medium schools and non-English medium schools. The English medium schools are of three types —

- i. State-influenced elitist public schools or cadet colleges,
- ii. Private elitist schools, and
- iii. Non-elitist schools (Rahman, 2005).

English is the medium of instruction in the elite schools which prepare an elite class to rule the country as it was planned by the British colonizers (for details, see Thirumalai, 2003). In the non-elite schools too the medium of instruction is English but these schools are at miles distance in performance, style and quality from the first two types of elitist schools. These non-elitist English medium schools found in every nook and corner of cities, towns and villages are crowded by the children belonging to the middle class and upper lower class parents who are ambitious about the education of their children. The rest of the downtrodden send their children to Government schools. English, being an official language of Pakistan, occupies all domains of power -government, bureaucracy, military, judiciary, commerce, media, education and research and knowledge of English promises bright future, security, prestige, and recognition (Rahman, 2005:1). It is consequently, the desire of the parents to invest for the education in English.

The Power and Authority Rest with Two Languages in Pakistan

According to Rahman (2006b) the power and authority is captured by only two languages—English and Urdu. English, being the language of the colonizers, is the symbol of power, authority, manners, sophistication and precisely everything which is noble and great. Urdu is the second most powerful language. On the other hand indigenous languages having no support from the political quarters are becoming the symbol of shame and are being devoured by the powerful languages (ibid). Rahman (2005) discusses the consequences of this policy by the successive governments and analyses the attitude of the indigenous language speakers towards their mother tongues. Mother tongue which should basically be an asset for the native speakers has become a liability for them in Pakistan

Dhundi-Pahari Community and Language

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Pahari/Pahari-Potwari/Dhundi Kairali or Dhundi are the names of the language used by its speakers alternately without change in meanings. Generally, the community members use 'Pahari' as a common name. The name is given after the names of the two majority tribes—Dhunds and Kairals living in Murree and adjoining areas.

Dhundi is the name derived from Dhund which is the name of a tribe also called 'Abbasi'. The major population of Murree, Gulyat and Circle Bakote comprise Dhund Abbasis. Dhunds also live in majority on both sides of the river Jehlum from Kahuta to Muzaffarabad and in the Bagh district in the part of Kashmir in Pakistan (Awan, 2006). 'Kairal' is the second largest tribe in this area. Besides these two majority tribes, there are many different tribes living in this region (Alvi, 2006).

Besides the majority tribe, i.e., Abbasids, other tribes also have their settlements in and around Murree. These include: Satti, Dahnial, Kathwal, Jascomb, Awan, Gujjars, Mughals, Sadaat, Rehmani, Kashmiri, Balti, Poonchi and a very few migrated from India. (Abbasi, 1985; Kashmiri, 2006). Majority of the population lives in villages and Abbasids constitute the major portion of the population of Murree. Education rate has been very low especially among the women. However, in the last three decades or so, the trend of education for both the sexes has increased enormously. As a result there is a mushroom growth of private English medium schools even in the villages. The parents desire to give modern education through Urdu and English to their children. They seem to have realized that their past insular life pattern was of no use and that they should give exposure to their children.

Dhundi-Pahari makes its continuum with Western Punjabi in the south and Hinko in the north and the north western part. Murree, Kotli Sattian, Gulyat and Circle Bakote are the places where it is principally spoken. Although it is not possible to draw a line to show the difference in language distribution in categorical terms, yet the above mentioned areas are considered to contain the Dhundi-Pahari speaking population. Usually the censuses do not cater to record the varieties and dialects but their focus is primarily on broader definitions of languages (Romaine, 1995:27).

Position in Census Reports

According to the Census of Pakistan 1998, the population of the areas where Dhundi-Pahari language is spoken is around 440,000. This estimate has been made by the researchers by calculating the population of the areas where Dhundi-Pahari is spoken because the censuses of Pakistan have never considered it as a separate language. It has been included under the umbrella term *Landha* which means Western Punjabi. Karnahi (2007) objected to the views of Grierson and discussed the characteristic features of Pahari language and culture. In Pothohar region which includes Rawalpindi, Kahuta, Gojar Khan and Taxila, a slightly different form of Pahari is used which is called 'Pothohari'. In the part of Kashmir in Pakistan, up to Neelam valley, its

variant is called Poonchi and in Mirpur and Kotli it is called Pahari, Pothohari and Mirpuri. Alvi (2006) observed that different varieties of this language are spoken from Islamabad to Naran and from the eastern bank of the Hazara Highway to the western banks of the Jehlum River. The central variety being spoken in Murree and its surrounding areas, the language merges into Pothohari and Poonchi varieties in the South and East respectively whereas to the North and the North Western areas it merges into Hindko language.

Before Partition in 1947, the people of Murree used to depend much on their land produce and livestock. They would also dislike leaving their hills. They lived an insular life (Robertson, 1895; Kashmiri, 2006). But after independence, they started finding jobs and turned to cities for livelihood. With better economic conditions many people shifted to Rawalpindi and Islamabad for better education and economic opportunities.

The trend to spend three months of winter in the hired houses in the twin cities, i.e., Rawalpindi and Islamabad, has also increased in the recent past. The major sources of income are Government jobs, hotels and other minor businesses.

Language Preference of Three Age-Groups

The present study investigates the language preference of three age-groups belonging to both urban and rural areas. Moreover, the study tries to throw light on the dilemma of indigenous population regarding learning and transmitting Dhundi-Pahari. The suspense among the population in deciding whether they should learn and use Dhundi-Pahari or focus on other languages is the pivotal point of discussion in this paper.

Research Methodology

This paper is the outcome of the ethnographic fieldwork which lasted for a few months.

Ethnography is a tool through which one can comprehend the inner working of the minds of the people and what they say through their interviews. Ethnography basically acts as a source of interpreting the unique things in culture (Ember & Ember, 2009:1). It is basically exploratory in nature and might demand the presence of an ethnographer in the field for a long time (Neyland, 2008).

In my fieldwork situation, I had to observe the use of Dhundi-Pahari language but it was not possible until I had in my mind the Urdu and English language as well because these two languages had cast a great impact on the local languages like Dhundi-Pahari. As each language has its own culture in its background, the study of language becomes a kind of cross cultural study and this kind of study cannot be carried out without ethnography (Ember & Ember, 2009).

I used participant observation as a technique and participated in twelve families. I interviewed 78 people across the gender and age group. I being a native speaker of Dhundi-Pahari knew the way people behaved and how they could be involved in discussion. Therefore, I chose to interview the representatives of three generations.

Secondly, I divided my field into two parts, i.e., the rural area and the urban area. I did that to collect the data from the two different sections of population. In the rural areas, the education rate is very low and the people living there have a few resources of income. Whereas, in the urban areas, people are more educated, have more resources of income than their counterparts in the rural areas. It was my observation that language decline phenomenon was more functional in the urban areas. I therefore, decided to collect data from both rural and urban areas to understand the real situation.

Description and Division of Interviews

The people who participated in my in-depth interviews were 78 in number including the urban and rural area. Primarily, it was conducted to see the people's attitude towards the use of Pahari and their willingness to adopt Pahari as a subject and course of study. Moreover, it was meant to see if the indigenous population wanted to transmit it to the coming generations. So it was, in a way, an attempt to measure the inner liking or otherwise for Dhundi-Pahari language. This, I supposed, would expose the future linguistic vitality of the community members.

I fixed the following criteria for my participants: age 10 to 20 children's generation, 21 to 50 parents' generation and 51 and above grandparents' generation. I justified the division of generations according to the average ages of becoming parents and grandparents. I did not include the children below 10 years of age because they could not explain fully what they were asked.

I selected only those people who could spare some time and who were ready to be interviewed. I interviewed them only when I received informed consent from the members of the families.

The purpose of these interviews was to elicit the opinion of the people living in this part of the world about their language and how and why they may or may not want to learn and transmit it. I recorded their views on paper. Such long sessions could not be tape recorded and later it would have taken a lot of time to transcribe the materials. So, I took notes and noted the interesting comments to be used in my analysis.

Use of Data for This Study

In the present study I limited myself to 15 excerpts from the corpus of interviews. I discussed these representative excerpts separately to infer the overt and covert desires of the community members to adopt or discard their native Pahari language.

I was not much concerned with the quantitative aspect of their responses but I was focused on the feelings towards Dhundi-Pahari language and how they would like this language to be taught in schools.

Analysis

Results from Rural and Urban Areas

The study showed considerable difference between the rural and urban samples and views about Dhundi-Pahari and Urdu. Pahari is maintained in the rural areas by and large, but, with the increase in education and income, people have developed a liking for Urdu and English. In the excerpt below a parent from rural area expresses his feelings of shame if he were to speak Dhundi-Pahari with the guests. (The excerpts have been transliterated using broad transcription.)

Excerpt 1

mi ki nai Urdu ashni, hain, Pahari bolnian lok ka akhsan, (I don't know Urdu, do I? what would be the comments of the people when they would listen to my Pahari).

The informant is ashamed of speaking Urdu because he has not learnt it as mother tongue. Now he is not confident to speak Urdu. To him, Urdu is a language which could give him respect while Dhundi-Pahari could be a disgrace factor for him. He is conscious of the impact of public opinion. This shows his feelings of inferiority complex regarding the use of languages. Use of Dhundi-Pahari does not make him confident in the society. In order to be confident, he badly needs at least Urdu, if not English. When I asked his wife about her mother tongue she said:

Excerpt 2

pahari tan hab-e-kusay ki ashni, sara bolnai, ma Urdu vi boli kinni aa (Everybody knows pahari, Everyone speaks it, I can also speak Urdu).

I have noted during my interviews in the countryside that women are not primarily satisfied with Dhundi-Pahari and they had a latent wish to speak Urdu. This is common phenomenon among the parent and children generation whereas the grandparent generation had different views about Dhundi-Pahari and Urdu.

An old man who had been a mason by profession said:

Excerpt 3

Pahari ye sikhai asna, hor ka sikan a, Urdu na fashion tan hon aaya (We have been taught Pahari, there was nothing else to be taught, the fashion of speaking Urdu started just now).

Grandparents almost had the same description of Dhundi-Pahari and Urdu. They were observed looking down upon Urdu and especially English. *Abbasi* tribe had been very instrumental in waging a war against the occupied English forces in Murree. They still have traces of hatred for them, their language and their dress. To them everyone who wore jeans or had a haircut was not good at all. But, still contrary to this attitude, they are found appreciating the English for their justice and fair play.

A Family Situation

I happened to interview a couple who were school teachers and had almost the same level of education. Both had an almost different perspective about Dhundi-Pahari and its teaching. The man said in Dhundi-Pahari:

Excerpt 4

Pahari honi chaha ni. Is ni lor e assa ki, (Pahari should be there, it is needed here).

He shows his commitment to promote Dhundi-Pahari language. But the fact is that he and his wife brought up their three children monolingual in Urdu. They tried to protect their children from Pahari language. This is how he disguised himself in the garb of a language activist.

When I asked his wife about her views regarding Pahari and Urdu she said in Urdu:

Excerpt 5

Hamain Urdu ko apna bachu ko sikhana chaia, ye qaumi zaban ha aura dab ahtiram wali zaban ha (We should promote Urdu language which is our national language and a language of manners).

The wife starts speaking Urdu despite the fact that she can easily speak Dhundi-Pahari. This is partly because of the shame that she feels in speaking Dhundi-Pahari and partly because of the fact that she wants to show herself as an educated person. Although, she tries to speak Urdu, she is unable to get rid of the Dhundi-Pahari accent. During the interview, I felt that she was unaware of her Dhundi-Pahari accent. In this excerpt there is one very interesting statement which I heard from different people and that focused on the *societal-behavioural value* of Urdu language. This

lady, like many other people, believes that good and polished manners are attached to the use of Urdu language. Throughout the Subcontinent, this presumption is easily discernible. During the conversation she also said in Urdu:

Excerpt 6

Pahari bolna wala bachun mai tameez nai hoti (The children who speak Pahari do not behave properly).

This statement again shows the attitude of the community members towards Pahari. These kinds of statements are often heard in one way or the other where the mother tongue is degraded as the language of the uneducated and ill-bred people. When I interviewed a school teacher who was teaching in a local English medium school, she expressed the same kind of views:

Excerpt 7

ma to Urdu hi bolti hu apna bachu sa, kyu ka ye unka future ka masla ha, aur English bhi jo aati ha bolti hu. (I converse with my children in Urdu, because it is a matter of their future. I also converse with them in English whatever I know)

It appears from her speech that Dhundi-Pahari is a stigmatized language. She prefers to speak English with her children in tune with the growing significance of English in this world and she openly expresses her views regarding this. Urdu is the national language of Pakistan and it has its recognition as the language of communication among the different speakers in Pakistan. She does not find enough utility in Dhundi-Pahari to be taught to her children.

Abrupt Shift Between Generations

It is observed that there is an abrupt shift from the grandparents' generation to children's generation and we hardly see Dhundi-Pahari speaker in the children's generation in the urban families. Even in the rural households Dhundi-Pahari is losing its ground. When I asked a parent from a rural family why they were not transmitting Dhundi-Pahari language to their younger generation he said:

Excerpt 8

“Ussa Pahari sikhi ta assai kah faida va, ajai tori sahih Urdu nai bolan honin, nikka han ussani dekhi te hasnai, main aanan yan jay unnan nain bacchay unnah ki dakhi ten nan hasan te tan ja o kemyab hon dunya wich” (We learnt Pahari but it didn't give us any benefit, I can't speak correct Urdu even up till now, children laugh at our Urdu, I

want them not to be laughed at by their children and moreover, I want them to thrive in the world).

This statement by a father shows his disenchantment about Pahari language. He is conscious of the fact that his Urdu is influenced by Dhundi-Pahari accent and that is why he becomes a laughing stock. He realizes that it is his fault that he did not have good command on Urdu and its accent. When I asked this question to many other persons, some of them were surprised to know that I was talking about Dhundi-Pahari as a language. Especially the word ‘learning’ was strange for them to use with a “language” like Dhundi-Pahari. One female parent who speaks Urdu with her children says:

Sikkhnain ni ke gal e Pahari wich, ya anwain ye acchi gacshni, (What is special about Pahari to be learnt, it is automatically acquired).

Although, Dhundi-Pahari was learnt by all the parents in the rural setting, some of them are not in favour of transmitting it to the coming generations just because they think that it has no utility in the world vis-à-vis economic and social status.

It is generally observed that Dhundi-Pahari is spoken to the grandparents and parents’ generations more often than the children’s generation. But when we see the generation of children, people tend to speak Urdu especially if the children are below ten years of age. Most of the people have some skill to talk to children in Urdu. During my observation, I have noticed that if a child belongs to a poor family and his physical appearance shows that he is not well off, people tend to speak Dhundi-Pahari with him showing as if this language is worth his status. It is also implied that it is the language of the poor and the downtrodden people. This attitude bears out the observation that Urdu and English are associated with class, sophistication and good breeding (Rahman, 2006a). Even a small girl talked about her grandmother’s language:

Excerpt 9

“dadi amma ko Urdu aati hi nai ha, her waqt Pahari bolti rahti hai aur kehti rahti hain nikkio dand na karo (Grandmother doesn’t know Urdu , she always keeps on speaking Pahari and chides us not to make noise’).

This statement shows that children who are taught Urdu feel that Urdu is a superior language and that their grandparents must be wrong when they speak Dhundi-Pahari. The way the granddaughter associates a negative comment for her grandmother’s choice of Dhundi-Pahari describes the overall attitude of the family members towards Dhundi-Pahari.

The people, who were taught Dhundi-Pahari in their childhood, were asked if they were satisfied that Pahari was taught to them as a first language. This question brought very significant

comments from the interviewees. Around 80% of the total sample said that they were satisfied while 20% said that they would have been more satisfied if Urdu or English had been taught as a first language. But I also noticed that, from among the people who showed satisfaction, some were, in fact, not in favor of Dhundi-Pahari, but they tried to show their loyalty with their culture by asserting that they were in favour of Dhundi-Pahari language. A male grandparent from one of the urban families said:

Excerpt 10

“ya sari pio daday ni zuban i, khandani aadmi pio daday ni cheeza ki na satna” (It is the language of our ancestors and a person with decent family background does not at all throw away the things of his forefathers).

This grandfather lives in the city with his sons and grandchildren but he has not approved of the norms and fashions of city at all. I found him talking about his rural house and all about their rural culture. He did not like his son and daughter-in-law to speak Urdu with their children. He knows that Urdu is compulsory in schools but, according to him, it should not be compulsory in the homes. He complains in the following words:

Excerpt 11

nikkian ki kakh wi pata na je grain ni zidagi kie jai honi assa unna ki gora banana a (Children do not know at all about the life of the village, (Satirically) we are to make them like the English).

This is a harsh criticism of a grandfather on the course of action adopted by his son and daughter-in-law to teach Urdu and English to their children. He is worried that children will never be able to know about their culture. Grandfather was not against learning Urdu and English. He considered them to be the languages of employment and power in the world but he was in favour of additive multilingualism instead of exclusive Urdu monolingualism or Urdu and English bilingualism.

Feeling of Superiority

I also noted that, though the people did not out-rightly oppose Dhundi-Pahari as I saw in the urban side, there was still a feeling that people who learnt Urdu and English were superior to others and that they should also teach Urdu to their children so they might not face many problems in life. Most of the female participants voted in favour of Urdu instead of Dhundi-Pahari. I observed that female parents were more cautious and eager for the education and training of their children as compared to the male parents. Therefore, they wanted their children to learn modern languages.

Lack of Awareness of the Consequences for Dhundi-Pahari Language

I observed from the attitude of the families that they did not understand the gravity of the situation regarding the future of Dhundi-Pahari language. They did not generally realize that Dhundi-Pahari language would be lost if its status remained the same and if the attitude of the parents did not change and shift in favour of its use in the domains of family, social communication and education. I tried to elicit their understanding of this situation, but what they believed that Pahari would definitely be learnt by their children whether they used it in their homes or not. So, they thought that they should go for much better options instead of banking upon a language which would automatically be learnt by their children from the society. While those who favoured the transmission of Dhundi-Pahari said that Urdu would be learnt by the children automatically as it was spoken in the school premises. So, according to them, they should transmit their native language to their children.

An opinion of a male parent from the rural area is very interesting. He says:

“jara lok bacchian nal Urdu bolnai te nal Englosh na wi lafz bolna, me unnan e dakhi te koft honi, nikkay na idhera jogha rahna ten a uthera joghe, adha titter adhe batair”
(I feel deep anguish to see people speaking Urdu with the addition of English words to their children. In this way children develop no proper command on any of these languages).

He used two proverbs, one from Dhundi-Pahari and the other from Urdu. Both proverbs meant that when someone tried to be like two persons, he could not be like any one in totality. But apart from this kind of feeling from some parents, a general tendency in favour of Urdu language emerged during the last two decades. From participant observation I noticed that Urdu with English lexical items was considered as a sign of sophistication and better etiquettes in some families. I have seen parents feeling embarrassed when their son or daughter spoke Dhundi-Pahari or code switched from Urdu to Dhundi-Pahari. In one such situation, a father asked his wife to take the little boy away with her (the boy began to speak in Dhundi-Pahari) on the pretext that the boy was disturbing the progress of interaction. In fact, the use of Dhundi-Pahari in the child’s speech was an embarrassment to him, although, to me, it was very natural because the grandparents of the children were Dhundi-Pahari speakers. So, the use of Urdu was not only for its economic significance but also for its social prestige in the society.

This clearly indicates how people want the use of their ethnic first language to be restricted within the four walls of the house.

The rate of ‘no’ to Dhundi-Pahari usage and transmission is pretty higher than the ‘yes’ response. This happens when a language loses social and economic motivation behind it.

In this situation where there is no apparent utility left with a language, people tend to reject it and finally it is thrown out of the home domain too. Dhundi-Pahari in the urban area is already at risk and, among those who are the mother tongue speakers of Pahari, almost 69% are not in favour of this language to be encouraged in other domains.

Women and Dhundi-Pahari Use

When I asked a mother from the urban area she said in Urdu (English translation is given):

Excerpt 12

“They may speak Pahari and they do sometimes speak it, but that doesn’t mean, we should leave out other languages like Urdu and English. If the children keep speaking Pahari in places outside their home, how will they learn Urdu and English? They must speak Urdu as much as they can, this will make them good, respected and intelligent student in the society.”

The reason told by this mother explains the psyche of the urban people regarding language use. In the rural areas, I interviewed a mother who also expressed the same kind of sentiment, using different words:

Excerpt 13

nikkay her jaga Pahari bolsan , schoola wich , bazaara wich , rishta daran wich, te lok keh akhsan ke innah ki ka wi nannai sikhaya, parhaya. (How people would criticize, if children start speaking Pahari everywhere, in the school, bazaar, etc., with the relatives. People would think that we haven’t taught and trained them.)

I found women most conscious of the “danger” of Dhundi-Pahari and its so called effects on the personality and nature of children. It is almost equal to exhibiting bad manners for their children if they use Dhundi-Pahari in domains outside their home. I have also noticed that, even in the home domain, Dhundi-Pahari may be generally used by the children only with the family member and if it is considered a great insult if Dhundi-Pahari is spoken to a guest. During my observation, I noticed that women tend to ask their children to speak in Urdu with me.

Lack of Utility as an Important Reason

Dhundi-Pahari is not included as a subject in schools in Dhundi-Pahari speaking areas of Murree and surroundings. Upon my inquiry regarding Dhundi-Pahari as a subject in schools, people

were almost at a loss what to say in response to it. The ratio of “no” was very high. Most of the people didn’t want it as a subject in schools. One mother whose son was in class 8th said:

Excerpt 14

“Pahari na subject nah hona chaina, bacchian opper pehlian a boht boj a , Urdu , englosh, arbi... Pahari na faida ya ka a”. (The children are already overburdened with subjects like Urdu, English, and Arabic, what is the utility of Pahari?)

She, like many others, raises the question of the utility of Dhundi-Pahari in daily life and career, which is not very high at present. Some people expressed their pleasure to hear that Dhundi-Pahari could be introduced as a subject. People usually believed that it was useless to spend time on Dhundi-Pahari. According to them, there was no scope of Dhundi-Pahari in the economical, political and social fields. They were already studying three or four languages. When I asked them if Dhundi-Pahari were offered as a subject in the schools, would they persuade their children to study it, they were again disturbed. Those who appreciated the idea of Dhundi-Pahari as a subject were embarrassed when they were asked whether they would recommend it to their children. The following excerpt explains this phenomenon.

Excerpt 15

Yo buccian upor bhoj a iski parhi te bacchay ka karsan (It is an extra load on the children, what will the children do if they learn it.)

The above excerpt suggests that people as a whole don’t like Dhundi-Pahari to be taught at schools. Only 20% of the interviewees (including the participants from three generations) were interested in the Dhundi-Pahari language as a subject in school. In the urban area, only 12% said that Dhundi-Pahari as a subject would be a very interesting thing for their children. It is ironical that while some people professed to be supporters of Pahari, in practice they didn’t want to support its development. The reason according to them was largely economic.

Dhundi-Pahari language did not guarantee success as it was not the language of the government or offices. It was not a lingua franca either. So, the participants mostly disliked its teaching at the cost of Urdu and English.

Some participants deemed it an extra burden on the shoulders of children. Among both rural and urban participants, I noticed the negative attitude towards Dhundi-Pahari as a subject in schools. Almost 80% participants voted against the idea of persuading their children to study Dhundi-Pahari. Most of them laughed at this idea as if this language was not worth being a part of the syllabus.

Some other participants had the same kind of views put in different words. They were more critical of the system of education which had ignored important science education. This question opened up the very psyche of the participants about Dhundi-Pahari language.

Conclusion

The study concludes that the decline of Dhundi-Pahari language is obvious as its speakers are shifting to Urdu. There is a strong possibility that after a generation or two it will breathe its last and will be replaced by the dominant language such as Urdu and to some extent Punjabi and English. The study investigated the social experiences of the members of the Dhundi-Pahari community regarding the usage of language and how they developed a sense of disregard for their native language. Most of the people talked about their native language in terms of its future utility for their children in the economic field. Moreover, they felt some shame to speak Dhundi-Pahari mostly for social and economic reasons. However, some grandparents and parents show their interest in its maintenance and revitalization.

There is also clear difference in the levels of competence in Dhundi-Pahari use among the three generations. In the children's generation, there is a great reduction in the use of Dhundi-Pahari which is a threatening sign. In the urban areas, Dhundi-Pahari is more endangered as compared to the rural areas where it is maintained to a great extent.

The participants of the interviews seemed to avoid Dhundi-Pahari as a subject in school. Even those who advocated the use of Pahari in the homes did not, in general, support its teaching in school.

People did not seem to understand that the native language learning would help them in learning other languages besides broadening their mental horizon. Some people objected to the teaching of languages any more. They believed that science education was the order of the day; therefore, the teaching of languages should be stopped. According to them, one or two prestigious and international languages should be taught.

The study also found that the people, whose children did not speak Dhundi-Pahari well, were proud of that.

The study concludes that the negative impression of the Dhundi-Pahari language should be reduced by an awareness campaign which should focus on the importance of the cultural assets and cultural artifacts. Though the people who have a negative attitude toward Dhundi-Pahari do not want to pass Dhundi-Pahari on to the coming generations, they may be educated to understand the significance of their native language and how it could give them benefits. The people of this community are famous for their commitment to their culture and traditions. Despite this fact, the disowning of Dhundi-Pahari by the native community does happen.

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