Attitude of Shina Speakers towards English and Urdu: A Threat for their Linguistic Identity

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Keywords	Abstract
- Identity construction - Multilingual - Shina - Language attitude	*The current study was carried out to explore the influence of English and Urdu on Shina and its possible threats for the linguistic identity of Shina speakers. It also attempts to find out the attitudes of the people of three successive generations towards the changes in Shina and its influence on their identity. A questionnaire was designed to study the attitude of people of different generations towards the changes in Shina and its possible repercussions. The analysis of the data revealed that English and Urdu have influenced the young Shina generation to a great extent. It also became evident that they are more open to change and have a positive attitude towards the changes in Shina. The middle Shina generation showed a neutral attitude and the variety of Shina spoken by them seems to be less affected by English and more by Urdu. The old Shina generation appeared to be apprehensive about the future of Shina and expressed the fear that Shina will die out as a result of large scale borrowings from Urdu and English. The inclination of the younger generation towards English and Urdu indicates a threat to the linguistic identity of Shina speakers. The current research recommends the inclusion of Shina in curriculum to inculcate a positive attitude towards it.*

1.   Introduction

Language is often seen as an important feature of identity construction. People speak in different ways and styles in different speech communities and the way people speak, can help others to assume the identity of the speakers. According to Norton (2013), identity is expressed not just by what is said, but by how it is said using different dialects, accents, and sociolets. People make different choices on different occasions according to societal norms and restrictions, social taboos which results in language variation. Higgins (2019) believes that in 21st century new identities are formed due to the opportunities of modern communication provided to people which has resulted in the acquisition of new languages as well. He is of the view that due to these opportunities in the modern age, identities fluctuate and do not remain constant. Torwali (2019) advocates that in this age of globalization multiple identities are formed on the basis of ethnicities, languages, and religions which are affecting different societies in the world. Block (2013) is of the view that cultural mixing has resulted due to trans-nationalism and globalization due to which people are shuttling between societies and different regions. This attitude has resulted in inter cultural awareness and compelled people from different regions and cultures to learn each other's languages which has led to the development of multiple identities in society.

Language is a way to construct national, social and individual identities (Rusi, 2014). Members of a particular society use distinct ways of expressing themselves through different codes for different situations. They use distinct ways of expressing themselves through code choices which leads to individual variation. Individuals in multilingual communities interact with each other and as a consequence, the language spoken by the dominant groups tends to become unmarked. As a result, the dialect of the dominant group acquires the standard form and constructs social identity of the members of a speech community (Hudson, 1980).

According to Rubio (2011), language is used as a maker of identity and an emblem of 'us-ness'. A common language serves as a binding force among nations. It is generally perceived that the monolingual nations are more united than bilingual or multilingual nations. In such cases language becomes the key identity marker rather than race, social class or religion, but in recent times, different languages amalgamate with each other and threatens the identity of people whose languages are minor or oral. The present study intends to investigate the threat posed by the Urdu and English languages to the identity of the Shina speakers.

Shina is the major language being spoken in the northern part of Pakistan. The majority of the speakers live in Gilgit, Diamer, Astore, Ghizer and Hunza-Negar districts of the Gilgit-Baltistan. The Shina language belongs to the group of Dardic branch of the northwestern zone of the Indo Aryan subfamily of the Indo European family of languages. The Dardic languages are clustered in the mountain areas of the northern Pakistan and stretch into Kashmir on the east and northern Afghanistan on the west (Radloff, 1999).

In Gilgit-Baltistan, Shina is spoken by Shins, Yashkuns, Gushpurs, Ronos, Kashmiris, and people from many other kin groups as their mother tongue. Gilgiti Shina is considered to be the standard dialect of Shina. According to Biddulph (1971), the original Shins were the

rulers in Gilgit valley at some point in the ninth century AD. Radloff (1999) is of the view that Gilgiti Shina presents a balanced five vowel system with short, long and nasal counterparts and thirty-four consonants. In the recent past some researchers such as Schmidt & Razawal Kohistani (2001, 2008), Carla & Peter Bakstrom (2002) have discussed the linguistic identity of Shina speakers and their attitude towards English and Urdu.

The variety of Shina used by the present Shina generation is quite different from the one used by the earlier generation. The new generation finds it difficult to understand the language used by their grandparents because the old Shina vocabulary items are no more in use and are replaced by words from other languages.

In addition to this Shina has also borrowed words from Urdu and English. The growing influence of Urdu and English on one hand and external factors like the desire to communicate, trade purposes and globalization on the other hand are changing Shina, ultimately challenging the linguistic identity of the Shina speaking people.

1.1. Aim of the Study

The mountainous region of Gilgit-Baltistan is probably unique in entire world due to its multilingualism and diversity in its culture. Many languages with several dialectal variations are spoken in this region. Most of the indigenous languages such as Shina, Brushaski, Balti, Khowar and Domaki are oral languages and facing tremendous pressure of other languages like English and Urdu, as a result these languages are on the verge of extinction. The younger generation considers their mother tongue as a great obstacle in the way of their progress. Urdu and English are deemed as languages of power, prestige, wealth and influence which is making people shift to these languages. This rapid and voluntarily language shift is threatening not only these local languages but also posing a threat to the identity of the people living in the region to the extent that one of the languages Domaki has been declared as endangered by UNESCO (2011). The endangered Domaki language has a few hundred speakers who are basically artisans and musicians by profession. It is believed that with the gradual extinction of these languages, the unique culture and identity of this region will die out.

Shina is prone to change because of many factors. The isolated status of Gilgit-Baltistan changed with the advent of the British Empire in subcontinent. After the British, the region got connected with other parts of Pakistan through KKH which resulted in people being exposed to other languages like Urdu and English. Moreover, the medium of instruction in educational institutions played a vital role in changing the attitude of Shina speakers towards English and Urdu. The moment they enter academic institutions they are being exposed to both English and Urdu.

Apart from this, English has also become a status symbol. Modern technology like computers and internet has also played a role in changing Shina, if not anything else the desire to communicate with people from different parts of the world makes them learn these languages which in turn changing the existing shape of Shina.

Several areas like syntax, phonetics, vocabulary and pronunciation are affected by language change, but the present study is delimited to attitude of the Shina people towards the changes occurring in Shina language. The study is limited to hundred informants. Three people from every family participated in the research. Although Shina has various dialects but the present study has analyzed the reactions of the Gilgiti people of three generations towards the changes in Shina. It is also an endeavor to expose Shina to the rest of the world and show how English and Urdu have influenced Shina. This study also reflects the attitudes of the people of different generations towards the changes taking place in Shina.

1.2 Research Questions

1- How Urdu and English have influenced the identity of Shina speakers?

2- What is the reaction of the people of different age groups towards the changes in Shina?

2. Literature Review

Changing attitudes of the speakers towards their language result in mixing more than one language in discourse that ultimately poses a threat to the linguistic identity of the people. Hudson (1980) is of the view that different varieties get mixed up with each other through the process of borrowing. Yule (1996) describes the changing language attitudes in different generations which affect the identity of speakers.

The term 'identity construction' is an intricate and multifaceted phenomenon (Block, 2007). There is no specific or consistent terminology that appropriately describes the essence of the term identity in particular terms. Besemeres (2002) believes that the notion of identity seems to be polarized, as some researchers perceive the term 'identity' as an abstract, and subjective phenomenon, while others take it as something actively constructed through social interaction and its positioning in the society (Bailey, 2000; Block, 2007). Yet another group considers identity to be 'a function of self- and other description' (Bailey, 2000). Hammers and Blanc (2000) believe that one only becomes aware of one's own identity when he or she realizes that there are other identities in existence in the society side by side with their identities. Gee (1996:127) is of the view that code choices of a community are "a sort of identity kit which becomes complete with the appropriate costume and instructions on how to act, talk and often write so as to take on a particular social role". Bucholtz and Hall (2005) are of the view that identity is a relational and socio-cultural phenomenon which emerges and circulates in local discourse contexts of interaction in the society.

Identity is imbibed in discourse of a nation. Anchimbe (2007) considers that linguistic identity in postcolonial spaces is multifaceted-either it is used for survival, which is to benefit from the advantages of association with a linguistic group or for asserting pride in one's roots. An obvious outcome of language mixing results in borrowing or code-switching which is common in Gilgit-Baltistan. Shina has borrowed numerous words from Urdu and English. Some of the words have been borrowed along with their actual

pronunciation while the pronunciation of some words has undergone changes in order to be assimilated with the Shina words. It is natural that new vocabulary is needed for the latest inventions, such as transport, domestic appliances industrial equipment, sporting, entertainment and leisure pursuits. Ali (1991) points out that the use of tractors and threshers have replaced old Shina conventional devices used for cultivation and threshing e.g. '*hal*', '*naal*', '*phaal*', '*halboni*', '*pharpit*', '*uduh*', '*boovey*', '*baralas*', '*chupai*' etc.

3. Research Methodology

This particular research is qualitative and the researchers collected first hand data i.e. the primary data though the distribution of questionnaires. The data collected was analyzed using the qualitative statistics. An inductive approach was followed in this particular study leading to the generalization of the attitudes of the Shina speakers towards their identity. The researchers have used the bottom up approach. For this purpose, two main objectives were formed as:

To find out, how Urdu and English have influenced Shina identity?

To study that what are the reactions of the people of different age groups towards the changes in Shina?

Responses were gathered from respondents representing the old, middle and young Shina speaking generation. These observations helped in making generalizations about the language change of the Shina speakers. The observations also exposed the attitude of old, middle aged and young Shina speakers towards the changes in Shina.

For the purpose of collecting data two questionnaires were designed, the purpose of one questionnaire was to detect the lexical changes in Shina language under the influence of Urdu and English. The purpose of second questionnaire was to know the attitude of Shina people towards the changes occurring in the Shina language and to find out the status of Shina in Gilgit-Baltistan in the present scenario where the close contact between the people is influencing their languages as well.

The informants of the research were those people who responded to the questionnaires. The informants were a part of the larger population of the research. The informants of this research were old, middle aged and young Shina speakers of Gilgit. In order to analyze how different generations, see the future of Shina language, the questionnaire was later categorized in three groups depending upon ages which are:

Youngsters (Age up to 30 Years)

Middle Aged (Age 31-49 Years)

Old Generation (Age 50 Years and Above)

The researchers selected a sample of 100 informants who belonged to three different generations i.e. youngsters, middle aged and old generation. The 100 informants were randomly selected for the purpose of survey.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

The participants of this research were the Shina speakers of three age groups living in Gilgit. For detailed analysis questionnaire-1 was classified into four different categories which include:

    i.   Everyday words
    ii.   Clothing
    iii. Utensils
    iv.   Edibles

In the designed Questionnaire 1, there were 34 common everyday words, 6 items of clothing, 4 utensils and 6 edibles. The reason for high percentage of common every day words was to find out how much English and Urdu Language equivalents are used in daily routine. The reason behind the selection of six edibles and six items of clothing and four utensils was to see whether borrowing second language lexical items mean borrowing that very culture as well and also to see whether the absorption of these vocabulary items in Shina has managed to change our living and eating habits.

The use of survey technique and the administration to the questionnaire has produced interesting responses and the researcher has been successful in finding out results which show the impact of Urdu and English on Shina language. The analysis of the questionnaires showed some very interesting results. Majority of everyday words have undergone Urdu influence. The main reason for the high usage of everyday Urdu words by most of the informants is that Urdu language serves as a Lingua Franca in northern areas. Moreover, it is also used for communicating with the visitors and tourists from all over Pakistan. It is also the medium of instruction in school, colleges, offices and university. The common everyday transactions also take place in Urdu. Most of the people can speak Urdu or at least can understand it. Another reason for the usage of Urdu by vast majority of the locals is diversity of Shina dialects which results in communication gaps among the users of different dialects.

The further analysis of the results showed that Urdu and English have influenced the young generation quite significantly.   The young generation has got greater trend to use English and Urdu words for Utensils. In earlier times wooden utensils were used by the people of Gilgit-Baltistan. Beautiful plates, spoons and cauldrons were made by using '*diyaar*' wood which was called *Khapayee*, *Gudur* and *turu* in Shina Language. The young Shina generation is not aware of these lexical items as they are no more in use. Today they use the word plate, cup, spoon, water and dinner set etc. This also signifies that young Shina people have started borrowing words from Urdu and English. Some English words have entered Shina through Urdu.

There is a mixed use of both Urdu and Shina in Clothing category. In earlier times people used to wear simple dresses. Old women used to wear a loose woolen shirt *'phiren'* and a woolen cap *'phuli khoi'*. Now they are being replaced by Saris, frock, coat, jackets and over coats. Those old dresses and traditional purses (phutun) and jewellery (buzu) can be found in museum now.

The Shina equivalent for the word 'cap' is preferred by the young generation because the cap is still compulsory part of the uniform in some of government schools in the area. The

Urdu equivalent for the words Necklace, uniform and Socks were used by the young generation most of the times. From the above discussion we can conclude that Urdu has started influencing clothing category significantly.

Regarding category of Edibles there was a mixed behavior too. Although three out of six words were preferred in Shina by the young generation but still the impact of English and Urdu can be seen on Shina. The words Fruit and Juice were used by the majority of youngsters which shows that the Shina lexical item has almost died out. These words might have entered Shina lexicon though Urdu as they have become a part of Urdu vocabulary a long time back.

The data showed that English and Urdu have influenced vocabulary items related to everyday life quite significantly. Among the thirty-four every day words fifteen words from Urdu, eight from English, ten from Shina and one common word from Urdu and English was equally used by majority of the young people. The use of few Shina words clearly signifies that the use of Shina words in day to day conversation is reducing as other language words are making their way into the Shina language due to different reasons such as Use of Urdu and English as medium of instruction in colleges and schools. Electronic and print media is also contributing a lot in injecting other language words into Shina.

The use of English words by the young generation such as Bed, cup, Table, Side, Building, First, Time and Slip clearly shows that these words have not only entered Shina language but Urdu as well. The majority of the youngsters who used above mentioned words are even sometimes not aware of Shina substitutes. Secondly these words are used so much that using Urdu or Shina equivalent seems awkward. The Shina equivalents for some of the words such as Bed, Table, Time, first and Socks have almost become obsolete.

Urdu has greatly influenced the young generation in everyday life. Out of thirty-four everyday words, sixteen were preferred in Urdu. The reason for greater impact of Urdu is the extensive use of Urdu in daily life. Urdu is not only the national language but also serves as common channel for the people who speak different dialects of Shina. Moreover, Urdu is also used in offices and schools.

It was surprising to know that few English words were not used by any of the participants representing the young generation e.g. the word "Warm" was not selected by anyone. Similarly, the Shina equivalents for Sky, Table, Zip and Umbrella were not encircled which implies that Shina equivalents are gradually diminishing. Young Shina speaking generation is not aware of certain Shina words as English and Urdu substitutes are available to them. In earlier times people use to construct one room houses called Dago. Now styles of construction have changed and words related to that style of living have become obsolete. Now the young generation is only aware of words like store, kitchen, drawing room, lounge, and terrace. In the same way vocabulary related to crops, surgical instruments, agriculture, transport, medicine, diseases, politics, socials institutions, electric items and stationery have become part of Shina lexicon.

The analysis of the results also indicates that Urdu has influenced the middle generation quite significantly. As Urdu is the national and the official language, the lingua franca; being spoken and understood by people living all over Pakistan. On the other hand, English has not affected the middle aged group much. From the analysis of the responses of old generation, it seems that to some extent Shina is still spoken in much the same way as it has been for hundreds of years, and seems to have been less affected by Urdu and English

languages. More people are learning and using Urdu, as they do so they are substituting some of the Urdu words in the Shina language. Up to now these trends have not reached major proportions. As more of the population becomes educated, however, borrowing of Urdu words into everyday Shina speech will undoubtedly accelerate with time. Although the Shina people take pride in their language and appreciate its purity, most of them do not seem concerned about these changes which are taking place in their language.

For analyzing the attitudes of the people of different generations towards the changes in Shina second questionnaire was designed in which certain questions are dichotomous while others are multiple choices. The analysis of the responses reveals that there is considerable difference in the varieties of Shina (same dialect) spoken by different generations (grandparents, parents and children) which supports the basic hypothesis of the present study that Shina is undergoing changes. The research also revealed that the Shina speakers take pride in their social and cultural identity and reported that Shina does reflect their social identity.

Though the Shina speakers accepted that Shina is undergoing changes but since they take pride in being Shina speakers they do not want Shina to undergo external influences. They want their language to remain pure by maintaining its present form. It is interesting to know that though most of the participants consider Shina a symbol of their social identity but the status of a prestigious or language of elites is enjoyed by English in the Shina community which is also a general trend in the rest of the country. So, the northern areas of Pakistan are also affected by the social, cultural and political changes taking place in the rest of the country. They realize the importance of English and accept the fact that English is the door to success, progress, knowledge and good jobs. It is the need of the hour and is required in the academic as well as the professional circles that is why most of them accepted that it is very important to learn English. Internet, electronic and print media has also played a significant role in making people realize the importance of English. Most of the informants consider the influence of English and Urdu on Shina as positive but despite having positive attitude towards the changes occurring in Shina under the influence of English and Urdu, the Shina speakers still want Shina to maintain its present form and do not want either English or Urdu to replace it. They also accept the fact that to some extent Urdu and English have replaced Shina in the Shina community. As most of the Shina speakers take pride in their social and cultural identity so they claim that Shina is an appropriate language for outdoor use. It is interesting to know that though the Shina speakers accept that Shina spoken by three successive generations is different and also have a positive attitude about the influence of Urdu and English on Shina but still they think that Shina is going at ordinary pace. It is because of the fact that the process of change is so gradual that it is hardly noticeable. It also became evident from the analysis of the responses that the Shina speakers want Urdu, English and Shina to coexist in the Shina community, but they do not want these languages to replace Shina or to get merged into each other.

The analysis of the responses also showed that even the young Shina speaking generation is very much conscious of their social identity as most of them reported that Shina reflects their true identities. But it is quite interesting that despite being open to change, considering the influence of Urdu and English as positive they still want Shina to maintain its present form which shows their strong bond with Shina and also reflects that the spread of education, change in life style and culture has not weakened their ties with their mother

tongue. Since, they are emotionally connected to Shina so they consider it an appropriate language for outdoor use. Though the young generation feels connected to Shina but still they accept that to some extent English and Urdu have replaced Shina Most of the young informants declared English a status symbol in the Shina community.

The middle age Shina speaking generation showed a positive attitude towards the changes taking place in Shina which proves that they are more open to change as compared to the Old generation. The middle Shina speaking generation realizes the importance of English as they have seen benefits enjoyed by those who are proficient in English. It has become a status symbol in Pakistan and paves the way to prosperity and knowledge. It is also interesting that half of the informants representing the middle generation consider Shina an appropriate language for outdoor use whereas the other half does not think so.

Almost all of the respondents representing the old generation accepted that Shina spoken by their generation is different from that of middle and young generation. It became evident from the analysis of the responses of old generation that they have stronger affiliation with Shina language as all of them said that Shina does reflect their social identity. One reason is that they used to live in closed communities and used to live simple lives. Their language was also pure as in most of the cases it was the only language they knew. Trade, tourism, education, media, internet and other modern technologies were not there to change their status or language. Their lives were simple and pure so they want to see the same purity in their language as well by preserving it forever which is not possible.

It is surprising that the old generation does not realize the global importance of English and think that it is corrupting Shina. They showed negative attitude towards the changes taking place in Shina as they said that the influence of English and Urdu on Shina is negative. It is interesting to note they were flexible enough to accept the importance given to Urdu in the Shina community, but refused to accept that in order to keep pace with the modern world and to get access to knowledge and prestige it is important to learn English. They also said that English can never replace Shina completely. They accepted that to some extent Urdu and English have replaced Shina but they are not happy about it.

The fears of the old generation regarding the future of Shina become evident when they say that Urdu and English are negatively influencing the Shina language. They also shared their apprehension that Shina is dying, as it will merge into either English or Urdu and will not be able to keep its separate and independent identity. They think that English was and will remain the language of colonizers.

5. Conclusion

All languages that exist in this world change over time, and vary from place to place. Languages may change because of social, political or psychological pressures. We need new vocabulary for latest inventions, such as transport, domestic appliances and industrial equipment. Languages also changes when speakers of different languages come into contact with each other. The dominant languages of the world like English influence the minority or regional languages for example Shina is getting changed because of the influence of English and Urdu. People of different age groups, gender, social and educational backgrounds also speak in a different way. In case of Shina we witnessed

considerable differences between the varieties of Shina used by young, middle aged and old Shina speakers.

The young generation showed positive attitude towards the changes in Shina. They also accepted that to some extent Urdu and English have replaced Shina. Most of them declared English as a status symbol. The middle aged generation realizes the importance of English. They also showed positive attitude towards the changes in Shina. The analysis of the responses collected through questionnaires reflected that the old Shina generation is apprehensive about the future of Shina. They consider the changes in Shina as a threat to their identity. Language embodies the culture of its community and losing a language means losing of identity. They should realize that the process of change is natural and inevitable. Changes are bound to occur in every living language. This study showed that Shina is not an endangered language today, but it can become an endangered language in future. The Shina speakers should realize this and should take responsibility of their own language which is their identity.

5.1. Recommendations

This study recommends that government must get the regional languages like Shina added in the curriculum to foster a positive attitude towards the minority languages. It also recommends to sensitize parents to pass on the mother tongue to their children in order to minimize the possible threats to their linguistic identity. The current study is delimited to Gilgit city only. It can be extended by studying a larger population.

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