

LANGUAGE AT WORKPLACE SETTING: A STUDY OF PAHARI USAGE AMONG THE EMPLOYERS AND WORKERS IN MURREE

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Abstract

Pahari is the native language of Murree and its adjoining areas in the northern Punjab province of Pakistan. It is in contact with Urdu, Punjabi and English. Urdu as a national language controls most of the domains and especially the work domain in Murree. Consequently, the use of less Pahari and more Urdu creates a sense of inferiority complex among the Pahari language speakers. The study reports on the usage of Pahari at the workplace in order to ascertain the status of Pahari language in comparison with other dominant languages. The study is descriptive in nature and is based on the detailed interviews and observation of a sample of 112 people including both workers and their employees. Observation remains the major source of data collection and hence the entire sample was not interviewed. The study finds out that the use of Urdu at workplace is more frequent which in fact is the result of the perceived low social status of Pahari. If they were to speak something other than Urdu, they would speak Punjabi instead of Pahari.

Keywords: Workplace; Pahari; Ethnography, language Endangerment

1. Introduction

It is a universal phenomenon that languages with less social, political and economic status hardly find a way to give themselves a respectable place in the world. The languages of power have always enjoyed the prerogative to be the languages of status and respect (Rahman, 2006). The weaker communities tend to adopt the languages of power to improve their social status and get better jobs. In this process, the regional indigenous languages tend to decline and shift to prestigious languages. There are many examples in the history where thousands of languages have disappeared from the scene of the world or have become moribund (Crystal, 2000; Wurm, 1995; Krauss, 1992). In Pakistan, the status of indigenous languages is not enviable just like other third world countries. Urdu, the national language of Pakistan enjoys the status of being the language of the upper class. Urdu is also functioning as a lingua franca. English, on the other hand, is the language of the elite and they seem to keep it as long as their interests are served.

Pahari language is one such regional language which has little power or prestige. It is the language of the economically, socially and politically downtrodden people. That is why; it is being considered a dialect of Punjabi and sometimes Hindko. Language without power cannot form its identity. Pahari is spoken in the north of Punjab, some areas of Azad Kashmir and Khyber Pakhtoonkhwa (KPK). Primarily it is spoken in Murree. It is sometimes called Pahari Pothohari or Pahari Potwari. But in the books of linguistic researches, Dhundi Kairali has been used as its name. Dhunds are the majority tribe living in this part of the world. They are also called Abbasis. Kairals are the second largest tribe. Dhunds had a tug of war with the English colonizers and therefore, lived away from the cities and settled themselves in the villages of Murree. After partition, they started coming out to test their fortune in the cities. The most important thing about this tribe is that they were very rigid who took pride in their culture and tradition, but with the passage of time, they also adopted the new traditions to some extent.

The present study is the study of language used by the workers and employers. These workers belong to different parts of Murree. They come to Murree city to work and earn their living. Although, they are basically Pahari speaking people but they often tend to speak Urdu with an addition of English words. The participants were asked certain questions regarding their use of language at workplace. The study was designed to seek the views of the people working against different positions in the government and private sector about the use of different languages by them at their workplace.

2. Methodology

Data were collected through ethnographic interviews and participant observation. The researchers visited different offices and interviewed the participants. This involved repeated visits by the researchers to the research sites. The selection of the research sites and the workers was also based on the previous contacts with these people who further introduced more people related to work. According to Lucca et al. (2008) Participant observation is the best tool to get the understanding of the social group being studied because in this way the researcher rebuilds a complex connection among interactive practices, social structures and the attitudes of the individuals. So, self-reports of the participants along with observation makes the data comparatively reliable and representative. In fact, Murree has the significance of being a tourist place and people from within and outside Pakistan visit it. So the local people are constantly in contact with other languages such as Urdu, Punjabi, and English etc. It was the purpose of the study to find out the responses of the people vis-à-vis the preference of Urdu. The sample has been divided into parents and grandparents to show the age difference among the people. People up to 45 years of age have been treated as parents and more than 45 years have been given the label of grandparents. These two labels have been devised to show the difference of language between the two generations which consequently show the decline of language in the coming generations. Each of the following table is based on the information of a central question which is asked in a variety of ways to elicit the required information.

3. Analysis of the responses

Table 3.1 Language used to address the employer

TYPE OF PEOPLE	URDU	PAHARI	TOTAL
GRANDPARENTS GENERATION	01(50%) 4 %	01 (50%) 4.3%	02(100%) 8 %
PARENTS GENERATION	15(71 %) 65 %	06(28 %) 26 %	21(100%) (91 %)
TOTAL	16(69 %) 69 %	07(30 %) 30 %	23(100%) 100%

From the given table it is clear that those whose first language is Pahari use more Urdu than Pahari while talking to their employers/bosses at their workplace. The use of Pahari in response to this question is thirty percent while the use of Urdu remains seventy percent. It appears as if Pahari is given lesser value at workplace and the people seem to feel that their overall impression will be weak on their surroundings if they speak Pahari. One of the employees stated his impression in the following words:

main waisay tan Pahari ye bolnayan, tehmekiacchiwilaghni, lakan, maikumay upper Urdu ch gal kamayan. meiki Punjabi naiashni, baqiloug Punjabi Urdu marnayrahnay, maipher Urdu ye bolnayan. (I frequently speak Pahari and I like it too ,however, I like to speak Urdu at our workplace. I can not speak Punjabi; other people use both Punjabi and Urdu but, I only speak Urdu).

Another worker stated:

theek a kharachbashakbanda Pahari bola, laikun job opperteaffsaranalsahih Urdu bolni chai ni, natan o samjahanainnaki mala ka win a ashna. (It is alright if Pahari is spoken in the families but at job when one has to talk to ones officers, one must speak Urdu otherwise one may be considered as uncivilized and uneducated).

The above mentioned excerpts quite clearly depict the apparent value of Urdu at workplace. People have positive feeling about someone who is a good and frequent speaker of Urdu. The worker in the statement confesses that Pahari language can expose his position and he could be declared uneducated and illiterate and that he might not be considered civilized. This fear is almost there in all the workers that their use of Pahari will have a bad impression on their bosses. They further say in different words that Pahari language may be fine for conversation within

families but it is not recommended for conversation when one is out of the family. In this way, it is observed that Pahari is being reduced by its native speakers just because of these negative feelings.

Table 3.2 *Language spoken by the employer to the workers*

TYPE OF PEOPLE	PAHARI	PAHARI & URDU	ENGLISH & URDU	URDU&PUNJABI	TOTAL
GRANDPARENTS GENERATION	50% 4 %	50% 4 %	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	02(100%) 0%
PARENTS GENERATION	02 (9 %) (8 %)	01 (4 %) (4 %)	13 (61 %) (56 %)	05 (23 %) (21 %)	21 (100%)
TOTAL	03 (13 %) (13 %)	02 (8 %) (8 %)	16 (69 %) (69 %)	05 (21 %) (21 %)	23 (100%) (100%)

At the workplace which is usually recognized as the place where business or trade activities are carried out, usage of Urdu is dominant. The above mentioned table also states this fact. Mostly the businesses are run by the people who hail from other parts of Pakistan. In this case, their language remains Urdu which they use for communication. Sometimes there are offices where the head is someone from Murree and he/she speaks Pahari to the workers to some extent. This is evident from the views of the people. Still there are some employers/bosses even from Murree who prefer to speak Urdu instead of Pahari and they draw upon code switching from English. One such example of this phenomenon is evident from the attitude of the school teachers. Replying to a question a female teacher of a school said:

bachunkaysath to ham Urdu hi boltay ha kiunkeaghar ham Pahari bolaingha to discipline kharaab ho jai ga, is liay ham school kay premises ma Pahari belkulnainboltay, peon sabhi Urdu ma baatkartay ha. (We talk to our children in Urdu, because if we speak Pahari, discipline can't be maintained, therefore, we always speak Urdu in the school premises and even use Urdu to communicate with peon).

The school teachers consider Pahari to be an agent which brings about ill-discipline in the schools. The teachers show their fear that they might lose discipline if they speak Pahari in the classroom. Therefore, it is their utmost effort that they should avoid this phenomenon.

The hotel owners who belong to Murree often speak Pahari with their workers. However, people in Government service use Urdu most of the time. In this way, representative data cannot be achieved. However, a general picture of the use of languages becomes apparent.

Table 3.3. *Language of the Colleagues with each other*

TYPE OF PEOPLE	PAHARI	URDU	PUNJABI AND URDU	URDU AND ENGLISH	TOTAL
GRANDPARENTS GENERATION	02 (100%) (8 %)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	02(100%) (8 %)
PARENTS GENERATION	12 (57.14%) (57 %)	04 (19 %) (17.39%)	05 (23 %) (21 %)	0 (0%)	21 (100%) (91 %)
TOTAL	14 (60 %) (60 %)	04 (17 %) (17 %)	05 (21 %) (21 %)	0 (0%)	23 (100%) (100%)

This question explains the use of language on informal occasions. The workers use Pahari when they interact with each other. Out of the sample almost sixty percent workers use Pahari as a medium of communication while remaining forty percent speak Urdu or in some cases Punjabi with their fellow colleagues.

Table 3.4 Use of language with colleagues as Interlocutors

TYPE OF PEOPLE	YES	NO	TOTAL
GRANDPARENTSGENERATION	02 (8%) (100%)	0%	02 (8%) (100%)
PARENTS GENERATION	21 (4%) (100%)	0%	21 (4%) (100%)
TOTAL	23 (100%)	0%	23 (100%)

The above table shows that Pahari speakers often tend to switch to the language of the addressees/interlocutors. All people included in the sample are of the opinion that they often adopt the language of their colleagues. It also indicates the limitation of Pahari as is observed by our team that it is only spoken when the person being addressed is Pahari speaker. It, therefore, shows that it is an addressee specific language.

Table 3.5 Conversation with customers/clients in case of job of this nature

TYPE OF PEOPLE	PAHARI AND Urdu	PUNJABI AND URDU	URDU AND ENGLISH	TOTAL
GRANDPARENTSGENERATION	01 (10%) (50%)	01 (10%) (50%)	0 (0%)	02 (100%) (20%)
PARENTS GENERATION	04 (40%) (19%)	02 (20%) (9%)	02 (20%) (9%)	08 (100%) (80%)
TOTAL	05 (50%) (50%)	03 (30%) (30%)	02 (20%) (20%)	10 (100%) (100%)

No respondent gives his views in favor of Pahari especially when it comes to address clients/customers. I had ten respondents who had some business and had to deal with customers/clients in any way. It is observed that they usually speak Urdu, English, Punjabi and Pahari. So they often mix languages when they are addressing their clients. English is most often used for the purpose of code switching and mostly lexical code switching. Code switching is also seen in other two languages like Urdu and Pahari. While speaking Pahari they tend to employ a lot of vocabulary from Urdu so as to make their language a bit more inspiring. Thirty percent of the sample also claims that they use Urdu and Punjabi. They bring various words and expressions from Urdu into their Punjabi. Especially, on formal meetings with clients, Urdu is most often used with dense code switching from English and even if Pahari is employed, it is also spoken with a lot of code switching from English and Urdu.

sarizabanabollaitahu, Urdu, kucchkucEnglish, Pahari, Punjabi, Pashto, jisterakacustomarhota ha us saussizaban ma bat kartahu. Urdu ziadachalti ha kiukaziada log issikopasankarta ha, aur ye zaban ha bhiacchi. (I can speak all languages, Pahari, Urdu, some English, Punjabi, I talk to customers in their language but Urdu's use is more than the others, most of the people like to speak Urdu and it is a good language too).

Keeping in view the above statement, it is evident that Urdu language is given a better status in the society. The speaker can, although, speak other languages too, yet he prefers to speak Urdu. In this way, the preferred languages grow and languages with less focus and less social acceptability tend to lose their speaking domain and hence become endangered. In the present case, this seems to happen with Pahari language.

4. Conclusion

The study concludes that Urdu enjoys the prestigious status and is most frequently used by the workers. It is because of the conviction of the people that Urdu is a 'civilized language' a term used by one of the participants. The workers and employers in Murree showed a strong vote for Urdu. During the interviews and discussion on other issues of interest, the participants seemed to prefer Punjabi to Pahari. Even the officers and employers used to speak

Punjabi with their Pahari subordinates. Despite the fact that the participants used to speak accented Urdu and Punjabi but they preferred not to speak Pahari with their officers. So there was a feeling among the workers and employers that Pahari is not a language to be used in formal context. That is why one participant said that “Pahari is to be used among the uneducated people, while, in the environment of offices, Pahari is not suitable”. This is perhaps because of the fact that minor languages are ignored and no effort is being made to give them the proper respect. People consequently develop a sense of inferiority complex and in order to come up to the level of educated and civilized, they tend to speak Urdu and Punjabi.

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