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Dhani Punjabi in Karachi; A Dialect in Decline: A Case Study in Karachi

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Abstract

The phenomenon of language decline is widespread, with some Pakistani indigenous languages experiencing gradual decline, which is a serious pressing concern. This situation is the result of a variety of issues. This paper examines the decline of the Dhani dialect of Punjabi in Karachi, Pakistan. Twenty native speakers of Dhani Punjabi were selected randomly for semi-structured interview questions as a data collection tool to gain thorough insight. Participants were members of the Dhani-speaking community, with Dhani as their native language. They have been residing in Karachi for more than 03 decades. The semi-structured interviews were transcribed and recorded using a mobile recording application. Following the qualitative method, data was analyzed by using a thematic analysis approach. The paper focuses on sociolinguistic elements, language attitudes, and language decline. Language is widely considered the most immediate identity marker of any community, and the findings of this study show that the Dhani language is gradually losing its identity marker under the influence of Urdu and English in Karachi. Moreover, the result of this research also shows that Dhani in Karachi does not hold the status of an identified language by the official strata, as Urdu, English, and Sindhi are the only three languages mentioned in academic curriculums. Moreover, this paper highlights the fact that Dhani is hardly represented in mainstream media. This study contributes to the preservation and revival of the Dnani dialect in Karachi by offering some remedial steps by the government to devise certain language policies to ensure the survival of indigenous languages in the cosmopolitan city of Karachi. The study suggests some awareness programs, documentation, community involvement and bilingual education policy, local governance support and language revitalization campaigns by the government.

Keywords: Dhanni Language, Language Decline, Language Shift, L1, L2, Dialect, Language Death

Introduction

Wikipedia (2024) states that the Dhanni dialect in the Pakistan Punjabi language is one of



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the dominant variants widely spoken on the Punjab Plateau in Pakistan, mainly involving areas of Attock, Chakwal, Talagang and Jhelum districts of Punjab. It exhibits rich linguistic characteristics and sociolinguistic identity and has been playing a major role in maintaining a particular ethnic identity. The name “Dhanni” is derived from Dhan Valley. It has many sub-dialects; it is closely related to the Shapuri and Jhangvi dialects and is intermediate between Majhi (Central Punjabi) and Lahnda (Western Punjabi).

One of the primary reasons for the early migration of the Dhani-speaking community was the advancement in agriculture. The modernization in agriculture has led to minimized manual labour, resulting in reduced working opportunities for labourers. The decline of chances of employment in rural areas has pressured people to migrate to cities in the hope of finding alternative job opportunities in industries, services, and other sectors. The Dhani-speaking community was primarily centered in rural areas of the Northern plateau of Punjab. Rural areas offer limited healthcare and educational facilities. As a result, young individuals and families move to cities in search of quality education and better healthcare facilities for themselves and their children. Resultantly, to improve the standard of life and to be part of modern emerging life trends in urban areas, readily available transport, easy access to water, advanced communication networks, and the presence of developed energy resources, many rural Dhani communities migrated to Karachi.

The Dhani-speaking community is found more concentrated in regions of Karachi, where a higher ratio of forced employment became the reason for bringing them to the city from their rural area. Force personnel often experience transfers or postings to urban areas during their career. However, once transferred to urban areas, they sometimes continue living in urban areas even after retirement to attain better living standards. This is how their children are exposed to L2 along with L1. Pavlenko (2004) explores that the emotional detachment of L1 speakers from L1 due to migration and cultural assimilation into an L2 environment leads to L1 decline and death. Moreover, rural areas are more vulnerable to natural disasters. People, after losing their livelihood to natural disasters and climate change, opt to move to urban areas as a means of escaping hardship and seeking better living conditions. People began migrating to cities as the growing population led to a reduction in available land or inherited land. Development projects, industrial zones, and urban-friendly policies encourage migration to urban centers. Enhanced global trade and communication make cities hubs for economic and social activities, attracting people from diverse backgrounds.

Dhani’s status in Karachi

Karachi is one of the most densely populated cities in Pakistan. Interestingly, its population exhibits large-scale diversity in culture and language. Officially, being the port city with more occupational opportunities due to its industrial hub, the city’s landscape is replete with migrants from all over the country, so immigrants bring their regional lifestyle and culture along with them to their new settlements. Therefore, the city of Karachi displays a number of regional languages that are spoken by different indigenous communities. However, Urdu remains the mainstream language that is understood by the majority of the Karachi inhabitants. Montrul (2016) argues that migration affects L1 acquisitions in younger generations. She states that the reduced input of L1 and the social pressure to



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switch to the dominant L2 language hinder the growth of L1. This influence of Urdu being a mainstream language plays the role of connectivity and is the most commonly used medium of communication, but it has been observed as a dominant L2, causing the decline of the majority of regional languages in Karachi.

In order to get settled and mingled with other communities, speakers of other regional languages have often been observed abandoning their native language, giving priority to Urdu, which is considered a powerful language as Braj Kachru's model of English as a global language, also known as the "Three circles of English (1985) argues about a regional language because of another dominant language is a result of "Cultural and Linguistic Imperialism" of that dominant language. In fact, it is the effect of that dominant language which causes regional languages to decline. De Leeuw (2019) mentions in his research that prolonged exposure to L2 influences L1 pronunciation, especially in migrants who are seeking better opportunities in an L2 environment. It has often been witnessed that regional languages face rejection while the dominant language can be seen as a leading force in education, media and the political sector. Kachru's model (1985) stresses recognizing, accepting and respecting the linguistic diversity of different indigenous groups for the preservation of regional languages

Various linguistic studies show that the erosion of a language and the decline of L1 do not refer only to a linguistic phenomenon but are indicative of a transition that develops over time and is gradually influenced by psychological, social, and environmental factors. The aim of this paper is to identify the Dhani language shift in Karachi under the influence of the other dominant language, which has a comparatively more stable and sound status in terms of verbal priority and written literature. This study attempts to identify reasons for the decline and suggests preserving it in Karachi.

Significance of Study

Language is the most important connecting key to speakers' social and cultural identity. It has always helped humans connect with other individuals in society and develop a definite cultural and social heritage in the form of language. It represents our linguistic norms, social customs and conventions. Thus, the decline of a language might result in the loss of cultural, regional and social identity. Despite being the pressing linguistic reality, substantial research has not been conducted in Karachi to the best of the researcher's knowledge on the issue of the decline of the Dhani language in Karachi. The paper makes an attempt to shed light on the gradual decline of Indigenous languages and the need for their preservation. This study seeks to explore the elements that are the cause of the decline of the Dhani language in Karachi and offers possible solutions to revive it.

Research Objectives

1. To explore the reasons behind the gradual decline of the Dhani language in Karachi.
2. To suggest strategies to receive and preserve the Dhani language in Karachi.

Research Questions

1. What are the reasons behind the decline of the Dhani language in Karachi?
2. What steps can be taken to revive and preserve the Dhani language in Karachi?



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Literature Review

This study examines the concept of language shift, a phenomenon currently focused on sociolinguistics. One of the firmly established facts about the language shift is usually when a community starts curtailing their native language (L1) to another dominant language (L2) due to factors like social, economic and political gains. Linguistically observed, this process of language shift does not occur overnight, but, in fact, it takes ages for an established dialect to meet the utter wipeout. Sapir (1921) argued that language embodies the cultural identity of its speakers, and a shift can result in the gradual erosion of cultural heritage. Kanwal, Faizullah, and Arsalan (2024) discuss that Punjabi, the native language of millions in Pakistan, is gradually declining, specifically among the new generation. This erosion shows a widespread sociolinguistic shift caused by Urbanization, Globalization, and the increasing dominance of Urdu and English in educational and professional domains.

Hussain (1979), described as 'acculturation' in his essay 'My fifty years in Lahore', shares his views about migrant and host communities: 'The process of acculturation is never smooth or easy. It brings to its wake many tensions, conflicts, and rifts. In fact, we, in Pakistan, are locked in the situation of Sartre's *No Exit*. Migration has landed us in a position where we have no choice but to live together: and no matter whether we love and respect or hate each other, we are influencing and being influenced by each other, without noticing it'.

Nawaz, Rehman, Khan, and Rao (2024) discuss that culture holds great importance in the preservation of a nation's identity, especially its language. However, there are different cultural motives that cause the diminishing of a language. The importance of language in education is quite evident in every sociolinguistic situation in society. According to Vygotsky (1978), language serves as a medium through which humans think and learn. He emphasized that without language, cognitive and social development may be significantly hindered. Similarly, Friere (1970) highlighted the pivotal role of language in empowering individuals to express ideas and drive social changes.

Moreover, the decline of a language can be analyzed through de Saussure's (1959) views on language abandoned by native speakers due to gradual rejection or lack of utility. The language may face extinction. Saussure's (1959) work proves that the survival of language depends on its persistent use by its native community.

In educational contexts, the absence of language can pose problems and certain hurdles to the success of sociolinguistic stability. Dewey (1916) stressed that education relies on shared communication, which is facilitated by language. If a language is ignored in schools or public discourse, its survival becomes risky.

Finally, Chomsky (1965) pointed out that a language's survival relies on active speakers transmitting it to future generations; without consistent intergenerational transmission, the language may fade from collective memory. Chambers and Trudgill (2004) state that all speakers have social and regional backgrounds. When they speak, they often identify themselves not only as natives but also as a member of a social class, region, age group and ethnic background. As Tradgill (2003) explains, whenever a speaker speaks, he cannot avoid giving his listeners a clue about his origin and personality. As stated by Bucholtz and Hall (2005), Generally, our accents and speech show where we are from geographically and what sort of social background we have, so language gives the identity to the speakers of



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society. According to Rehman (2002), Historians believe that the ancestors of the Punjabi language were the habitants of the Indus Valley at least as far as 2500 BC. Crystal (2008) defines it as a regionally or socially distinct variety of language that has its passionate set of words and grammatical structure. A dialect is a variety that is characterized by phonological, lexical and syntactic properties.

Peirsman, Geeraerts, Dirkspeedra (2010) argue that Languages are not uniform, speakers of different language varieties use certain words differently more or less frequently or with different meanings.

Culture

Culture is a significant factor in deciding any community's identity, with language as a main element in setting a definite social recognition. However, multiple reasons lead to language replacement. A prominent factor is the continued influence of dominance by a more powerful language or dialect by the leading political force of the time, which brings a transition in people's priorities of customs, cultures, and traditions. Sapir's (1921) postcolonial theory emphasizes how cultural domination often results in the supersession or erasure of indigenous languages, leading to their gradual extinction.

In many regions, including North America, indigenous people like the First Nations have witnessed the deterioration of their native languages caused by forced integration and cultural exclusion. Similar patterns can be observed worldwide, from New York to South Africa, where the co-existence of multiple languages often brings about the decline of native tongues. Boas (2008) pointed out that languages carry cultural traditions and knowledge, and their loss leads to / results in reduced opportunities to engage with ancestral heritage.

In addition, passing down of languages through generations is very important. Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory of "communities of practice" stresses the importance of shared cultural practices for sustaining language. When language is passed on orally with few written records, as is often the case with deteriorating languages, the ignorance of even one generation of speakers can be alarming. Without cultural involvement, the complex relationship between language and convention impairs, resulting in language death initially at a small scale and later at a large scale.

Moreover, the propagation of the existing language can be threatened by intercultural factors such as mixed marriages. Sociologist Bourdieu (1972) viewed language as a form of cultural capital. In a traditional joint family system, commonly seen in Pakistan and South-Asian countries, new language learners often acquire the primary language of their linguistic environment while the minority language is neglected. This phenomenon can alter the cultural identity as discussed by Anderson (1983), who emphasized that role of language unfolding the marginalized community.

Other social pressures, such as the stress on Lingua Franca, like English, can further threaten the existing regional native languages or dialects. Linguist Edwards (1985) suggested that Linguistic homogenization threatens linguistic diversity. Noam Chomsky argued that linguistic diversity is crucial for cultural resilience, yet dominant languages often overshadow smaller ones in education and social settings, creating a barrier to intergenerational communication.

It is one of the usual phenomena observed by linguists that family linguist environment and



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the element of consciousness for one's own native language are considered derogatory by the other speakers of the dominant language in the same setting. Vygotsky (1978) viewed language as a vital tool for intellectual and emotional growth. When children are not motivated to speak their mother tongue, they may get disconnected from their cultural roots, which gives rise to a sense of detachment. This decline affects language and the speaker's link to their cultural inheritance.

UNESCO's Atlas of the World's Endangered Languages highlights the dangerous situation of language complete elimination at 3%. Linguist Michael Krauss estimates that up to 90 languages may become extinct in the next century.

Bilingualism

Research proves that linguistic diversity is declining because of various social factors, including assimilation, globalization, and shifts in cultural practices. Hymes¹(996) Bilingualism often displays a paradox: while it can enrich cognitive and cultural awareness, it can also accelerate the decline of minority languages when dominant languages overshadow native tongues, says (Grosjean, 2010).

Sapir (1921) highlighted that language is not merely a tool for communication but a symbolic representation of cultural identity. When marginalized, minority languages lose their function in social and educational settings, leading to their eventual extinction. Fishman's (1991) work on reversing language shift points out that intergenerational transmission is critical for language preservation. Children raised in bilingual environments often prioritize the dominant language due to its perceived social and economic advantages. This aligns with Bourdieu's (1991) concept of capital, where language associated with power and prestige takes precedence over others, especially in formal institutions like schools.

Additionally, Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory emphasizes that early childhood is crucial for language acquisition and cultural identity formation. Parents play a pivotal role in maintaining their native language at home. If they fail to actively teach and use the language, children may lose touch with it entirely. This phenomenon becomes more pronounced in multilingual societies where dominant languages, such as English or French, serve as gatekeepers to better opportunities.

When a language disappears, the cultural impact goes beyond just communication. Gramsci's (1971) theory of cultural hegemony suggests how dominant ideologies and languages suppress alternative cultural expressions. When Indigenous or minority languages vanish, communities lose access to traditional knowledge, oral histories, and unique worldviews, as argued by Crystal (2000). For instance, indigenous groups in North America and Australia have faced significant losses in linguistic and cultural heritage due to colonial assimilation policies.

Moreover, studies indicate that schools can be both a barrier and a facilitator in language preservation. Dewey (1916) advocated for progressive education systems that incorporate minority languages to foster inclusivity and cultural pride.

Immigration

Migration plays a massive role in transforming and, in some cases, eroding languages. Historical evidence suggests that migrations, such as those in 1066, during the Norman



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Conquest of England, introduced Old Norman French as the language of the ruling elite. This led to the extensive borrowing of French vocabulary into Old English, transforming it into Middle English. The legal, administrative, and cultural dominance of Norman French reshaped English, resulting in a language with a rich blend of Germanic and Romance elements.

The colonization of the Americas by Spanish-speaking settlers drastically affected the indigenous languages. Many native languages, such as Nahuatl and Quechua, experienced significant decline due to forced assimilation and the imposition of Spanish. However, some languages, like Guarani in Paraguay, have survived and even thrived alongside Spanish through government recognition and cultural preservation. Linguist Joshua Fishman emphasizes the importance of maintaining local languages in the face of globalization pressures, noting that the loss of language often results in a severed connection to heritage and identity.

However, migration does not always lead to language extinction. In some cases, it fosters linguistic blending and the creation of pidgins or creoles, as highlighted by Derek Bickerton's work on language evolution. For example, many modern languages reflect hybrid features due to centuries of migratory interactions. For instance, the influx of Italian immigrants to Argentina in the late 19th and early 20th centuries influenced the development of the Rioplatense Spanish dialect. Italian vocabulary and intonation patterns blended with local Spanish, creating a unique linguistic identity in the region. Despite these adaptations, dominant languages often gain prominence, marginalizing minority tongues in the process.

To prevent language loss amid migration, linguists like David Crystal suggest strategies such as bilingual education and cultural reinforcement through community activities. Promoting the preservation of native languages while learning dominant ones can help communities adapt to new environments without abandoning their linguistic heritage.

Methodology

Population

In order to gain a thorough insight into the factors of declining a Dhani Dialect in Karachi, 10 Dhani communities were selected. They exhibited different scales of period spent in Karachi as permanent residents ranging for more than 03 decades. These communities were selected for an interview, and they would settle in different parts of Karachi, namely Baldia Town, Naval Colony, Gulshan-e-Hadeed, Hazara Colony, Bhains Colony, Korangi Creek, Sher Shah, Sultan-a-Baad, Rasheed-a-Baad.

Sampling

A purposive sampling method was employed to select twenty participants, using a diverse yet targeted sampling involving speakers with native Dhani backgrounds. This sample included ten male and ten female participants. Four of the male participants were graduates, while six were graduates from various professions. Among the seven female participants who were homemakers, the educational backgrounds were as follows: four had intermediate education, three had matriculation, two were graduates, and one held a master's degree. Three were working ladies being graduates. All participants were between



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thirty and sixty years old.

Research Instruments

In-depth, detailed, semi-structured interviews were used as research instruments. These interviews helped the researcher perceive sociocultural, economic and personal factors. These interviews aimed at collecting:

- Participants' personal observation of their community's attitude towards Dhani
- Participants' perceptions about the role of language's decline in the erosion of their culture.
- Participants' views on the role of Urdu and English in Dhani's decline in Karachi.

The semi-structured interviews were employed to elicit qualitative responses having open ended questions to get participants' views about the perceive notion of their native language's decline.

Research Design

A qualitative approach was used for data analysis. Detail interviews were recorded for participants' responses, perceptions and experiences for determining sociolinguistic factors responsible for Dhani's decline in Karachi. The recorded data was transcribed. Further, thematic analysis and coding were applied, which helped to examine the underlying reasons, meaning and relevant excerpts associated with a particular code for the data analysis.

Ethical Consideration

Ethical considerations were given due focus throughout the study. Participants were exposed to details of the study's purpose and utility. Freedom of speech, confidentiality, and the voluntary aspect of their participation remained the prime focus as ethical considerations. The participants' anonymity has been ensured to respect and protect their identity.

Data Analysis

The participants from the Dhani-speaking populated areas of Karachi (as mentioned above) were involved in the interviews. Appropriate, comprehensible, and relevant replies to the semi-structured questions were considered thematically for the interpretive analysis. The results from the study explore significant insight into the reasons for the Dhani language in Karachi. A thorough analysis of the collected data provides distinct facts shared by the Dhani community's speakers.

Participants, during their interviews, shared a number of reasons to avoid their mother tongue 'Dhani dialect' and they also mentioned conditions forcing them to replace their L1 with the Urdu to the extent that "Dhani dialect is undergoing a gradual decline and death.

The recorded data proves that the speakers of the Dhani community in Karachi practice considerably more code-switching of Dhani and Urdu. Code-switching is one of the main reasons for the language shift. Weinreich (1953) discusses that L1 is influenced by borrowing, code-switching, and interference from the second language (L2).

Participant#01 shared his views about his children not using his L1 Dhani dialect:



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“Shurooch jaaktaan bahr mahalay wich urdu bolenray ki zyada ehmiate diti, asan bhi nai rokya te phir kaafi temay tou ghar bhi eh mukammal urdu hi bol nein.” (Initially, children preferred speaking ‘Urdu’ in the vicinity, outside the home, and we did not stop them, so they switched to Urdu completely at the home too.)

Participant#2 mentioned, “Jesa deis wesa bhais, aapreen, aasani astay nai ja te nae Mohle wich dhalran pona.” (Be the Roman while in Rome. For ease, one has to adapt to the new environment.)

Participant# 3, 4, 5 and 7 mentioned the fact that they don’t avoid speaking ‘Dhani’ with their parents & grandparents because the elders exhibit a poor understanding of Urdu. Participant#6, explicitly and confidently declared that he himself and his children hardly communicate in Dhani. He shared his views: “Participant #6 shared his views: halan ke Karachi wich saadi zaban ne kaafi log reh nein, te khandan bradri naal bhi gal baat honi rehni eh par aapas wich bhi hunr taqreeban koi Punjabi (Dhani) nai bolna, balke aapas wich bhi saadi bradri zeida tar urdu hi bolnein”. (Although a large number of our language community members live in Karachi and we all family members keep communicating with each other, almost no one speaks (Dhani) Punjabi to each other; instead, even among each other, family members speak Urdu.

The interviews reported that Dhani can't be seen included in school curricula. It's not being used or accepted officially in schools, offices, media or other organizations which leaves it with no formal space for preservation and learning.

Participant#8 told the researcher in the interview, “Karachi wich te har pasay Urdu ei boli veni eh, bahr har koi Urdu samjhena, isay wastay asi bi zeida tar Urdu bolnay aan”. (Urdu is spoken and understood everywhere in Karachi that’s why we also communicate more frequently in Urdu.)

Participant#10 explained that Urdu is spoken and prioritized everywhere in Karachi.

Participant#14 affirmed: “asi aaprein jaaktan naal taan urdu bolne aan taa k inhan bahr te school wich masla na howay”. (We talk to our kids in Urdu so that outside schooling and communication is easier for them.) She shared her views that The government can be seen taking no interest in propagating or preserving the Dhani language, even in Dhani-speaking areas/communities. While people especially the new generation is ignoring the language because of feeling of racism the speaker of Dhani face outside their home.

Participant#16 shared the reason for his rejecting Dhani and adopting Urdu as his everyday language, saying: “asaan note kita e, jileh asi aapreen madri zaban gharon bahr bolye, asan zeida tar duji zaban aalay “Paindoo’ bulanen, jera hek bura lafaz ei, asan changa nai lagna, isay aastay asaan bahr aaprin madri boli (Dhani) bolnra chorr diti ei te urdu e bolne aan hunr. (We have observed that whenever outside our home, we communicate in our mother tongue (Dhani Punjabi), speakers of other tongue term us as “Paindoo” that is a derogatory remark and we don’t like it. That’s why we have stopped speaking our mother tongue and have switched to communicating in Urdu now.)

Spolsky (1998) discussed language maintenance and shift in his book "Sociolinguistics". He suggested that the attitudes of speakers play a critical role in whether a language is preserved or replaced. Negative attitudes towards a language can discourage its use, contributing to its decline.

Participant#18 mentioned: “asaday jakat bahr Punjabi (Dhani) nai sikhran chane keun k



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inhan behti masoos honi ei, dooji zabanaa ne lok lehjay ni waja tou mazaq uda nein. (Our kids don't want to learn Dhani because they feel insulted by facing insolent remarks that other language speaker pass on them. They are mocked and singled out because of their accent.)

Phillipson (1992) similarly highlighted that the dominance of certain languages over others reinforces such negative attitudes. It further marginalizes minority languages like Dhani. These observations show that the stigma attached to Dhani plays a significant role in its decline, as dominant languages like Urdu and English gain more prominence.

Scholars like Coulmas (2005) highlight that migration to urban areas promotes the use of dominant languages, as they are essential for communication in schools, workplaces, and public spaces. This leads to the gradual decline of regional languages, especially among young generation.

The dominance of widely spoken languages in Urban areas helps in cultural mix, which results into no significance and acceptance of regional languages like Dhani. Dhani speakers complained about being ignored and disregarded in employment and administrative areas. They are thought of as uneducated and unintelligent, which discourages the younger generation from learning it.

Participant#19 complained: "saaday kol degree honre ne bawajod asan nokri aastay na ehel samjhea wena, kujjan nokrianch asan tasub na samran hona, te ei boli ni waja to ei, isay wastay asi urdu te English bolne aan. (Even with our degrees, we are considered incompatible for jobs. We face racial bias in some jobs and this is because of our language. That's why we talk in Urdu and English). Noton (1995) argues that individuals often switch to L2 in response to discrimination and bias toward their L1. She emphasized how systemic racism affects language choices, as individuals seek to minimize discrimination by adopting the dominant language.

These experiences show the older generation's incline towards the native language. However, social and economic prospects result in the loss of native language skills in the younger generation. Blommaert (2010) discussed that in a globalized world, linguistic skills are often commodified. People learn and use languages strategically to navigate job markets that demand specific linguistic competencies.

Future of Dhani and the Perceptions of Native Speakers in Karach

The majority of the speakers and participants of the Dhani language appeared to be indifferent towards the decline of their native language. Not all the participant have expressed their concerns related to the survival of the Dhani language. Some participants mentioned that they speak Dhani only with their elders or when talking to relatives residing in Punjab.

The older generation fears the future of Dhani, seeing its steady decline. They fear that Dhani's extinction will not only erase linguistics identity but also affect their historical and cultural heritage. Younger generation already perceives it irrelevant in modern context.

However, the younger generation seems to have grown distant from their native language as they are now exposing their kids to English and Urdu only. They feel satisfied with this language shift because they consider English to be the easiest and most influential factor towards academic and professional success.



Remedies and Strategies for Language Preservation in Karachi

Preservation of endangered languages should be considered, and a professionally structured approach should be devised with policies in education systems, mass media, and community involvement to encourage the promotion of regional languages. Promoting regional languages saves cultural identity and community recognition.

Research Limitations

This study highlights the reality of the decline of the regional language, Dhani, in Karachi. The paper discusses multiple reasons behind this phenomenon and some remedial steps to prevent this decline. Although a large number of Dhani speakers reside in Karachi, the data-collecting process involved a limited sample. Since this language is the identity marker of a big community, it requires further insight and exploration to make efficient planning for its restoration and preservation.

Conclusion

In light of this research findings, it can be concluded that despite having a considerable number of speakers in the Northern Pothwari plateau of Pakistan, the Dhani Punjabi language is gradually losing its spoken preference and popularity among its native speakers in Karachi, particularly by the young generation. The research shows that although it is still being commonly spoken in homes, especially by elderly family members, the young generation's (Gen-Z) priority of Urdu over the Dhani language is contributing hugely to its decline. Schmid (2011) considers social factors responsible for L1 decline. She discusses that weaker and insufficient exposure to L1 and increased use of L2 eventually end in the decline of L1, specifically in lexical and grammatical accuracy. The findings of the study show that socio-economic factors influence language policy towards the dominating languages, Urdu and English. Heller (2011) emphasizes that language skills are tied to economic opportunities in globalized job markets. She noted that individuals often shift to economically dominant languages as a strategy for employment. The considerable influence of social media is among the significant factors causing the demotivation of the young generation of the Dhani community to promote their native language in Karachi. Baker (1992) states that language attitudes play a critical role in the survival and vitality of language. Fishman (1991) emphasizes that attitude towards a mother tongue can promote its survival and transmission to the next generations. The paper finds that the Dhani Punjabi language is facing a decline, and its survival is endangered. Crystal (2000) highlights that languages are prime in pressing culture because culture transmission to the next generation mainly occurs through languages. The paper expresses the concern of government's negligence in ignoring the decline of regional and indigenous languages. Viewing its declining status in Karachi, this paper suggests that awareness should be inculcated among the native speakers of such regional languages that they should play a vital role in keeping their language alive to avoid the extinction of their native cultural and social identity.



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