Domain Specific Language Management: Study of Kumauni Speakers in Delhi

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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts to delve into the issue of use of Kumauni language in the home domain and the disposition of Kumauni language speakers towards their language in Delhi with respect to different sociolinguistic variables. The analysis relate to the change in language use patterns of the Kumauni speakers who have moved from Uttarakhand and have permanently settled in Delhi. It also attempts to describe the problems faced in preserving the mother tongue.

KEYWORDS: Language Contact, Kumauni, Sociolinguistic variables, Domain,

INTRODUCTION:

Thesituation of language contact can be seen in Delhi in case of the Kumauni language speakers who have been frequently coming in contact with Hindi language in different domains such that the usage of their mother tongue has been restricted to a certain domain.Kumauni is a non-scheduled language belonging to the Indo-Aryan family, spoken in the state of Uttarakhand. Kumauni as a language is given lesser importance, and seems to be an obstruction to be overcome, if its speakers want to advance. It is spoken at home and in limited spheres outside, wherein close friends and relatives may meet and interact with one another. Exercising Kumauni language usage as the first option is visible in the home domain among the middle aged and the old aged members of the family. The language that one sees and hears in most public places is Hindi.

The Indian capital has two official languages—English and Hindi. English is the Associate Official Language of India, while Article 343(1) of the Constitution of India states Hindi as the Official Language of the Union. Though Hindi and English language are interchangeablyused for teaching and learning different subjects, English is the major language in higher education. Kumauni language is neither taught as a subject nor is the medium of instruction in schools.

The language issue in Delhi has been promising since long due to the multilingual set up. Pandit (1972) in the study on Saurashtri population states, "One of the significant features of multilingualism in India is the existence of stable bilingual or multilingual communities. People in large metropolitan centres or district towns maintain their language identity for generations, despite 'minority' status. They speak their own language in their domestic settings and such other dealings where the speakers of 'minority' language come in contact with each other and they speak the majority language in other contexts."

This paper deals with the changing ways of language use in the home domainin Delhi. It intends to reveal the inter-generational, as well as, intra-generational use of Kumauni. Its purpose is to find out as to how far a language can be practiced through spoken form without the help of a written script.

According to Weinreich (1953) a number of processes are responsible for language shift, not all of them function simultaneously. Depending upon the cultural and socio-economic conditions, some of them are active in some regions whereas others are dominant in others. There are three main factors closely related to language issues in society-socioeconomic, cultural and political. Fishman (1972) indicates that the basic prerequisite of language maintenance and language shift is a contact situation. The contact situation may give rise to either bilingualism or language shift. Sometimes a shift may also occur after a long course of bilingualism. Fishman (1977) reiterates the need for studies of the spread of English in relation to language maintenance and language shift.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

〕 What is the relationship between different sociolinguistic variables and language use in the home domain.

〕 What is the view of the Kumauni speakers towards their mother tongue?

Delhi being the country's capital, is a mixture of a number of different speech communities that migrated from different geographical locations. Although in general, the Hindi language is predominantly used in most public spheres, other languages like Kumauni, Garhwali, Punjabi, Urdu, English among others are also spoken. People from the Kumauni community form a significant part of the Delhi populace. The Kumauni language speakers are influential and dominant, but only in a few areas where they are concentrated.

Fasold (1989) looks at language shift as the shared long term result of language preference i.e. the speakers of a community altogether choose a new language where an old one was previously used or choose to continue using a language they had used traditionally.

METHODOLOGY

This paper intends to identify the elements in language use and systematically presents the factors related to language use in Delhi among Kumauni speakers. In particular, the study examines the factors related to language use in home domain vis-à-vis different variables and the opinion of the Kumauni speakers.

SELECTION OF SAMPLES

The sample for this study comprises of 263 respondents from nine districts of Northwest, South, West, Northeast, Southwest, East, North, Central, New Delhi. A stratified random sample was taken considering different sociolinguistic variables: age, gender, education, income groups living in different residential areas.Language use in the home domain was analyzed through the questionnaire and informal interviews were carried out. A questionnaire aimed at collecting general information and aspects of language use in home domain in terms of different sociolinguistic variables was prepared and administered.

VARIABLES:

Gender

British sociologist Anthony Giddens defined 'sex' as 'biological or anatomical differences between men and women'. Labov(1966) was first to notice the important role of sex as a sociolinguistic variable.

For tabulating purpose values were assigned as

Male = 1, Female = 2.

Age

Age has been an important variable as indicated in several sociolinguistic studies. The respondents have been divided into four different age groups. Total numbers of respondents in the different age groups are as follows:

Table 1: Distribution of respondents across age groups and gender

Age Group	Males	Females	Total
Below 20 years	47	34	81
(20-40) years	49	37	86
(40-60) years	39	28	67
60 and above years	18	11	29
Total	**153**	**110**	**263**

Age groups were categorised as:

Table 2 Scale for age groups:

A1	Below 20 years
A2	20-40 yrs
A3	40-60 yrs
A4	60 yrs and above

LANGUAGE USE IN HOME DOMAIN

A migrant community practices the mother tongue generally in the home domain. In this domain, the members interact freely in their mother tongue. Mackey (1965, 66) has specified family as "members' father' mother', child, domestics, governess" etc.

Table: 3 Frequency of Language Use in Home domain Gender-wise

Language/Gender	Range	Males	Females
Kumauni	WD	24	34
	MHD	19	9
	HD	40	8
	LHD	32	15
	VL	31	25
	N	7	19
Hindi	WD	48	61
	MHD	31	10
	HD	38	15
	LHD	27	13
	VL	7	7
	N	2	4
English	WD	0	0
	MHD	0	1
	HD	6	5
	LHD	18	13
	VL	81	32
	N	48	59

WD: Whole day, MHD: More than half day, HD: Half day, LHD: Less than half day, VL: Very less, N: Nil

The Table3shows that as one move from whole day Kumauni language use to the least usage, males tend to show a moderate use of the mother tongue while females also show a balanced use of the mother tongue in the home domain with majority of them using it, compared to others showing little or no usage at all. We see a corresponding increase in the use of Hindi both among males and females. Females use more of Hindi

language for whole day in comparison to males who show a moderate use of Hindi. In case of English language we see that although it has entered the home domain, it is neither used by males nor female respondents throughout the day.

The observations in the field illustrate the fact that Kumauni is generally used at home with old aged family members and grandparents. The educated grandparents, who were rare, generally used Hindi in certain contexts, but preferred Kumauni. The language used by the children with the parents was a blend of Kumauni, Hindi and English. The parents' attitude towards their children was also to provide them social security, which they feel is in the learning of English. Therefore, parents attempt to send their children into an English medium school than a Hindi medium school, which according to some of them do not provide reliable education for upward social mobility in the contemporary times.

Table: 4 Frequency of Language Use in Home domain Age group-wise

Language/Age	Range	A1	A2	A3	A4
Kumauni	WD	10	10	21	17
	MHD	3	11	10	4
	HD	11	19	18	0
	LHD	13	16	13	5
	VL	38	16	2	0
	N	6	14	3	3
		81	**86**	**67**	**29**
Hindi	WD	51	36	8	14
	MHD	12	13	16	0
	HD	12	23	15	3
	LHD	4	12	20	4
	VL	2	2	6	4
	N	0	0	2	4
		81	**86**	**67**	**29**
English	WD	0	0	0	0
	MHD	0	1	0	0
	HD	1	5	5	0
	LHD	24	5	2	0
	VL	34	44	26	9
	N	22	31	34	20
		81	**86**	**67**	**29**

WD: Whole day, MHD: More than half day, HD: Half day, LHD: Less than half day, VL: Very less, N: Nil, A1: Below 20 years, A2: 20-40 years, A3: 40-60 years, A4: 60 & above

A decline is seen in Table 4 in the use of mother tongue Kumauni in case of the youth (A1) and adult (A2) respondents.A corresponding increase is observed in the use of Hindi compared to the use of mother tongue in

the home domain. In the case of middle aged (A3) and old aged (A4) respondents the tendency towards the maintenance of mother tongue, with more of its usage in the home domain can be clearly observed. Meanwhile, the use of English in the home domain among all the age groups of respondents can be seen dwindling starkly. Among the youth mother tongue along with Hindi is the most spoken language at home. Hindi, alone is not the preferred choice in the home domain. The use of mother tongue in the home domain is minimum among youth while middle and old aged Kumauni language speakers exhibit the maximum use of mother tongue in home domain.

CONCLUSION

The domain where usually the language is free from any pressure is home. Unless mother tongue is properly maintained, reinforced in children and transferred from one generation to another, there is a chance of adoption of dominant language of the host area as mother tongue. From the study it is clear that if there is a linguistic group which claims a minority status in other linguistically dominant language area, it always shows bilingual identity in the following conditions.

Kumauni is only used at home and with relatives. Generally, patterns of language use in domains other than home indicate structural incorporation of another language due to functional and situational needs. The analysis shows that Kumauni speakers in Delhi are very proud of their language. They are friendly towards Hindi language and care for their identity. It is the retention of mother tongue in the home domain that signals the continuity of language and identity of its speech community.

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