

Explaining Language Change in Sindhi, as a result of Bilingualism in Sindh, Pakistan

Dr. M. Qasim Bughio*

Sindh, the historically most important province of Pakistan comprises approximately one third of the over all population and space in the country. Sindh, as a home of diverse civilizations dates back to 5000 years. The city of Mohen-Jo-Daro, centuries-long cynosure of world archaeologists and anthropologists as well as sociolinguists, stands, even today, as a monumental proof of political and sociolinguistic significance of this southern most province of Pakistan. In early history Sindh saw successive onslaughts by foreign invaders and influx of immigrants, due to its stable prosperity and strategic geographical position who brought with them their languages and cultures. Its culture and language were enriched as a result of the mingling of various ethnic groups but the culture and language retained its peculiarities incorporating some features of other languages and cultures. But Sindhi society on the whole remained monolingual with some dialectal variations in the speech.

In 1843, Sindh was invaded by British and was annexed with British India. During British rule (1843-1947), Sindhi obtained the status of official language with some use of English and Hindustani and by this way some people become bilingual. The year 1947 saw Pakistan appearing on the map of the world as an independent state. Pakistan, then comprised of five provinces, all having indigenous languages but of course without having any one nationally adopted or accepted as lingua franca.

Sindh now saw the largest influx of Muslim immigrants in her history: over two million people from India, the majority of whom spoke various dialects of Hindi/Urdu and exodus of about 0.8 million Sindhi speaking Hindus to India. Urdu, the language brought by Indian immigrants, some how gained the position of national language, while English was adopted as the medium of official communication. By the adoption of both foreign languages, Pakistan was made an exoglossic country.

Sindhis now felt politically marginalized and began to struggle to procure Sindhi its earlier rightful rank. They quoted mammoth bulk of world-class literature in Sindhi as an evidence of the richness of their language. As a result Sindh was made official language of Sindh province. Sindhi and Urdu both stems from the Indo-Aryan origin. Sindhi picked up influences from Prakrit languages, whereas Urdu was an outcome of Indian multicultural environments.

During the course of History Sindhi has been able to assimilate hordes of words, terms and ideas from the concurrent languages. But during the course of years since Urdu was adopted as the sole national language of Pakistan the extent and degree of bilingualism has increased rapidly in Sindh, with exposure to Urdu involving most sections of the speech community. Suffice

it to say; today in the urban areas of Sindh, virtually every one has a command of Urdu.

The paper investigates the extent of linguistic change in Sindhi speech community as a result of bilingualism, taking linguistic variable diphthongs (au) and (ai) in account and their correlation with social variables of age and education.

The study investigates the change in Sindhi spoken in two different speech communities in a province of Pakistan, Sindh. One is urban, the other rural. By an analysis of the speech of the urban area, Hyderabad, and the rural community, Old Hala, it is hoped to investigate linguistic change in both speech communities and effect a comparison of the two sets of changes.

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