

Motives Behind Stigmatization and Glorification of Languages: A Social Survey of the Provincial Languages of Pakistan

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Abstract: Linguists unanimously acknowledge the importance of the attitudes of speakers towards a particular language because their attitude is always dictated by some invisible or tangible motives. These motives may be of various kinds. But they can be categorized into linguistic and non-linguistic. Linguistically, the process of stigmatizing simply leads a language to attrition, decline and death of a language whereas, glorification of a language guides a language to rehabilitation, strengthening, thriving and expansion. Non-linguistic motives include socio, economic and political motives of the speakers. This study attempts to investigate the motivations of the speakers of the provincial languages of Pakistan for the process of glorification and stigmatization of languages.

INTRODUCTION

Every human action has a cause^[1]. Language and communication was something first that human kind used for their advancement from the pre-history to man of the post modernism. Language has not only helped man in understanding each other but has also proved vital in plumbing the nature. Ideas, emotions, wish, curses, grievances and needs need a language for their expression. Every human utterance has some tangible and some invisible motives carrying some implications. Like bio- diversity, nature has bestowed man with diversity of languages. In prehistoric era 15000-10000 languages were spoken which has now reduced to 6000 in the modern world^[2]. This decrease in number of languages shows that the speakers must have been inflicting some adverse attitude to language since the beginning that has resulted in attrition, death or murder of languages. Like many other strong human affiliations such as religious and ethnic, linguistic affiliation is one of the strongest bonds

in human being which engenders love and hatred. Glorification and stigmatization is a clear example of the speakers love for their own language and hatred for others language. This attitude of the speakers is not just for attitude sake; it is driven by linguistic and non-linguistic motives. Linguistic motives include attrition, death and murder of the target language. The speakers of the majority languages often adopt this policy to further marginalize the minority language. It is a slow poison to a language. Or it is followed by the enemies to diversity. For many thinkers linguistic diversity is a hindrance in social integrity and harmony. Thus, in order to create linguistic homogeneity, they want to wipe out other languages except the language of majority, for that they espouse different means, glorification and stigmatization is one of that. Non-linguistic motives include socio, economic and political gains. The speakers of different languages intentionally stigmatize other language in an attempt to prove their own language superior and others inferior, this way they prove other backward and

substandard as compared to their language. This may lead to the expansion of their community and contraction of the community of the target language. Hence, this process could bag economic benefit for the speakers as by glorifying the language of majority, the speakers may gain economic sympathy from majority which directly or indirectly helps in making financial gains. Similarly, this attitude is adopted in political speeches, especially in election campaigns to sack abundance of votes from the speakers of the language of majority. Thus, it is a very pertinent to investigate this process in order to know the intrinsic aims of the speakers with especial reference to the provincial languages of Pakistan. Hence, for keeping focus and not to diverge from the main point of research I hereby constitute two research questions and try to answer them in subsequent sections of this study.

Research questions: What motivates speakers of a language to stigmatize and glorify other languages? Do the speakers of the provincial languages of Pakistan opt for the process of glorification and stigmatization more for non-linguistic motives? What are they and how have they affected the Pakistani society?

Hypothesis: The attitude of the speakers to a particular language is guided by some motivations be it linguistic or non-linguistic. Linguistic motives persuade a speaker to choose the process of glorification to rehabilitation, strengthening, thriving and expansion of a language. Whereas, stigmatization of a language by a speaker is led to attrition, decline, death and murder of a language. While, political, social and economic gains are the non-linguistic incentives that drive a speaker to the process of glorification and stigmatization.

Linguistic affiliation is one of the strongest bonds that even characterize a primitive society. Linguistic identity has been a cementing force for the unity for the people of Pakistan in the times of struggle for independence. But unfortunately, after the partition, this attitude of the speakers, especially of the provincial languages grew adverse denting national solidarity to each other motivated by socio, economic and political incentives. Thus the speakers of the provincial languages seem to be consciously involved in the process for non-linguistic motives but at the same time inevitably they are unconsciously immersed in a process of linguistic motives too.

Literature review: Linguists are beyond doubt that languages are facing extinction. According to Michel Krauss, since, the times of prehistory, only 10% of the world languages have survived that is to say out of 15000-10000 now only 6000 are surviving but most alarmingly 600 languages have capability to live by

2021^[3]. What happened to the rest of the languages where they have gone have been two most alluring explorative questions for the linguists. Eventually, different concepts evolved. The proponents of natural theory link language birth, development and death with biodiversity and they believe that similar to organisms language is also subject to death. Thus, most of the languages, since, the prehistory have tasted death. In Western thinking religious philosophy homogeneity and uniformity of languages is regarded positive. But linguists like Abdusalam consider it a natural result of human acceptance to heterogeneity. Bible sees linguistic diversity as a condemnation and punishment for people's pride^[4]. Whereas, Abdusalam describes linguistic diversity as a great sign of omnipotence of Almighty Allah. "Variations in languages, dialects and modes of expression among the groups and individuals are considered a sign of Allah's omnipotence, beside the creation of Heavens and Earth". Besides religious led attitude, economic, social, political and linguistic backed human propensities have posed endangerment for many languages. Already today, between 20 and 50% of the world's languages are no more being acquired by children, meaning they are "beyond endangerment, they are living dead and will vanish in the next century". When linguists subtract the notion of natural process of come and go for languages, the only viable and potent reason remains for this process is human attitude which is ubiquitous. Linguicism is shorthand used for multiplication of causes. The most potent threat for the minority languages has been the imperialism. In the modern world, although, the direct form of imperialism has ended but its shadows are still lingering in political, economic and cultural policies of the powerful countries of the world^[5]. Every state in the world generally favors one language on another for that it has many good reasons. Even if it claims to be impartial supporter of all the languages spoken within the state, it actually distorts the statistics and figures. A set of agenda-setting World Bank reports on basic education in Eastern African countries barely refers to local languages.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The first part of this research is based on a qualitative approach that deals with the question of attitudes of the general speakers for following the process of glorification and stigmatization of a language. The data for this purpose has been accumulated through open ended questionnaire. The universe of the study was Karachi based speakers of different languages, ten speakers of each language were randomly chosen. The overall conclusion of the data has been made through the critical analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The process of glorification and stigmatization of languages is as old as the history of language itself. In every epoch of the history, some languages have always enjoyed the position of the language of majority and some have always been berated as the language of minority. Language constitutes no separate entity; it is looked at as an integral part of socialization, economy and politics. For a language, being language of a minority is itself a demerit. Speakers tend to learn those languages which eventually help them to scale better life standard. Variations in the attitude of speakers of developed societies and developing societies are evident in the literature. With no difference of literate and developed societies, ability to speak multiple languages is considered a privilege, bilingualism and multilingualism are desirable and are regarded advantageous and the only advantage acknowledged for the bilingual individual is the power to use two or more languages. Beyond that, monolingualism seems more attractive and monolinguals, especially those speaking a language of wider communication seem quite content with their lot, often adopting a condescending attitude toward minority native speakers of a mother tongue who in addition have to acquire their language. Bilingualism and multilingualism are often perceived and considered as a problem or a major challenge to individual and/or societal development^[6]. While glorifying and stigmatizing a language, they remain aware of its repercussion and outcomes. Language contributes to unequal access to societal power and power structure is operated and legitimated through it^[7]. When the process holds socio, economic and political benefits for the practitioners, Linguicism of certain languages become inevitable. The heads are in clouds, they blindly and bluntly damage the target language while commodifying other languages. Attrition, decline and death appear as inevitable outcomes for those target languages. Pakistan is home to >76 languages^[8]. Interestingly, 71% of the whole population speak four provincial languages while rest of the 29% population speak 72 languages^[8]. According to the sources from Library of Congress, the USA, out of the remaining 72 languages, only 20 languages are spoken, including Shina and Broshu spoken in the Northern parts^[9]. This statistics harbinger that several languages in Pakistan are morbid or being ignored or breathing in decrepit conditions for different reasons. Amongst the various reasons for the decline, attrition and death of languages in Pakistan, the rule of stigmatization and glorification is potent one. Instead of going into inflicted and affected languages, it was decided to carry out a social survey of the speakers of provincial languages inhabiting in all four provinces to know their motives behind the perceived and alleged involvement in the process of glorification and stigmatization.

In response to our first question, what is your mother tongue? the research participants gave mixed feelings; participants from Punjab and Sindh showed their pleasure in naming their mother tongue which was Sindhi and Punjabi, respectively. They responded in a confident tone with bit arrogance as four of the respondents said, “We are proud to be Sindhi speakers”. But the respondents from KPK and Balochistan lacked this conformity in their tone. Although, they felt no shame or embarrassment in their confession to regard Pushto and Balochi their mother tongue, yet they did not use any adjective like ‘proud’ and “I am happy to be speaker of”, like the speakers of the languages of Sindhi and Punjabi. While answering to the adjacent part of the question, do you know any other provincial language? Most of the participants simply showed desire to learn them but some offered enticing responses. A participant from Sindh said that he loved to learn Punjabi language as it sounds more humiliating, commanding and imperative in abusing someone. He enjoys to listen someone calling names in Punjabi. Another participant from the same province wanted to know Punjabi because he is a government servant in a federal institution and lives in Islamabad. According to him, most of his colleagues are Punjabi speaking and he takes himself as a queer fish and fears discrimination from his bosses. So, if he could speak Punjabi there would be sheer chances of his early promotion. Cent of the participants from KPK did not know any other provincial languages. The 37% respondents from Baluchistan knew Sindhi language. According to them it’s imperative for them to know Sindhi language since they are the frequent visitors of Sindh, especially of Karachi. They are government contractors and they supply office accessories to the Sindh secretariat. If they don’t speak in Sindhi to the officials at secretariat they are not entertained and they face many hindrances in carrying out their work. The respondents from the Punjab were more excited in learning other provincial language. While the participants from KPK appeared least desirous to learn other provincial languages.

On replying to the second question, if you know other provincial languages which language do you prefer to use at home and in social circle? The answer was alike among the participants across the four provinces. They use their own provincial language which is their mother tongue, to converse with their families and with their friends. Even if they know, they avoid speaking another language in formal gathering as the rest could not understand it. One participant from Blochistan opined that it is disowning and disloyalty to our language to speak another language without compulsion. Another participant from the same province told that he tries to converse with his family members at home in Sindhi because their business is established in Larkana where their all client are Sindhi speakers and it is almost obligatory to communicate with

them in Sindhi otherwise, they prefer Sindhi vendors. Since most of the participants were monolingual as they knew only one provincial language, so, they use the same vernacular to converse with their friends. If their friends are from different provinces they speak Urdu to communicate.

The participant had mixed responses over the language of formal gathering. Asking on which language you prefer in formal gathering, most of the respondents said that it does not depend on their choice rather it depends on the nature of that formal gatherings. In most of the formal gatherings they speak Urdu or English. If they desire to speak in their provincial language their ability and aptitude level is questioned by the participants. It could harm their reputation at office and among the officials.

Language liking and disliking of the listeners is vital for the speakers of different provincial languages. Knowing about the liking of their language by the listeners boost their energy and confidence. While when they know about the disliking of their language by the listeners they lose control over expression. It is fascinating to know that Punjabi speakers have apprehension to speak Punjabi if they know the listeners are Balochi and especially if the communication takes place outside the Punjab. They think that an underlay wave of hater has been running for Punjabis in Baluchistan, so, the listener may harm him or her if not physically then at least would show adverse feeling for him/her. The participants from KPK showed no concerns for the liking and disliking of the listeners. They don't care whether someone likes their language or not. Most of the participants from these two regions were dull and unimaginative over their own languages but sometimes their compulsion particularly economic and social benefits oblige them to consider their language choice. A participant from KPK gave examples from Karachi where most of shop owners are Pathans, who despite having bulk of difficulties have to speak broken Urdu with inappropriate pronunciation and are mocked at for failure to keep differences in gender of goods. But they don't mind, since, they make money.

It is deep rooted desire of many participants across the four provinces to make their children multilingual and especially they want them to acquire one provincial language. Balochi and Pashto speakers want their children to learn Punjabi and Sindhi. They opined that in the current situation and socio-political conditions of the country learning languages of big provinces are obligatory now. Linguistic discrimination drives them to learn other provincial languages otherwise in the presence of Urdu as lingua franca in Pakistan, it is not required, said one of the participants from Baluchistan. Learning local languages of Pakistan is wastage of time and energy; rather we want our children to learn English language that could help

them to excel in their academics were the feelings expressed by one of our participants from Sindh. Our 80% respondents from Punjab want their children to learn other languages and consider multilingualism as an extra ability and quality that helps the speaker to communicate easily. However, they do not impose any particular language on their children rather want to give them freedom in choice of language.

The 45% research participants were aware of the term linguisticism whereas, 65% respondents showed their ignorance about the phenomenon of linguisticism. The respondents who knew about linguisticism, according to their responses, keep themselves aloof from any deliberate act of attrition, or killing of any language but if their liking for some particular language results adverse effects on another language they are ignorant about it. On explaining the term linguisticism, the unfamiliar participants wondered over it, overtly expressed no intentions to harm any language. One of the respondents from Blochistan province was quite compatible with linguisticism as it could turn the whole world into a monolingual place. "This would help to remove social stratification, he said." The entire participants agreed that they do glorify a language for some economic and social reasons but damaging a language has never been their purpose. If a language is extinct now or endangered that is due to the negligence and false concept of the modernity of the speakers or because of the influence of globalization. The speakers don't resist incorporating words in their languages. However, for 55% respondents, linguistic purism is now merely an idea, in reality it does not exist.

Although, none has seen complete death of any language but they have been witnessing the process of dying languages, one of the respondents said, actually the languages of third world countries and particularly of the poor nations are withering away now. Developed countries especially industrialized nation, America and England in particular, are superimposing their languages on other languages. Our new generation is learning new words every day and they mix them with their vernaculars, despite the fact that alternate words exist in local languages. This may unnoticeably lead a language to death bed. They compulsively glorify international languages and stigmatize their local languages that cannot help them to upgrade their economic and social position. Besides used for communication in informal situation, local languages have no utilization. Therefore, there is no benefit for being arrogant about them. Taking the same criterion for the provincial languages, the research participants had almost the same opinion. They don't see any danger that can be caused by a provincial language to another provincial language. For them the utilization of all the provincial languages is same, except the area and number of the speakers which hold economic and social benefit to use a particular provincial language. So, for

them, it is improbable that their preference to speak one provincial language in a particular context cause death to another language.

On asking about their involvement in the process of stigmatization and glorification most of the participants reiterated their same responses. Some of them genuinely want to learn other provincial languages for material benefits but stigmatization to cause attrition and death for language does not flip around them. But, if their language choice at a given time endangers other languages, they can't resist it. Most of the respondents, especially participants from Baluchistan and Punjab, want their children to grow multilingual while refraining themselves from stigmatization of other languages.

CONCLUSION

Socio-linguists are agreed upon the weight that the process of glorification and stigmatization carry. Either it is deliberate or unintentional; glorification of one language inevitably erodes another language. Without stigmatizing one language the possibility of glorifying another language is improbable. In the third world countries, when parents at home and teachers at academic institutions accentuate the importance of leaning English language, they actually humiliate and berate their own local languages. When the students and new generation find their career and future redemption in a particular language, they automatically hold low opinion about the other languages. Glorifying some languages merely for socio, economic benefits may seem true but harms to other languages underlay this perception. The process of attrition and death of language is not rapid and eye catching; it goes on invisibly with a very slow pace. The death of over 9000 thousand languages^[10], since, the prehistoric era, is the result of such processes. Materialistic outlook of the world has redefined the human attitude towards the languages too, rather preserving one's own language, human chase the benefits that other languages offer. This human propensity has dragged many languages to trance breath. In Pakistan, in the presence of Urdu as lingua franca, the speakers of provincial languages should hold onto their own vernaculars, quitting one language for socio-economic

benefits may have adverse effects on that language. Linguicism may be explicit or cloaked, unconscious or conscious, in that it manifests prevailing attitudes, values and hegemonic impressions about what purposes peculiar languages should serve, or about the value of certain pedagogic practices. In the absence of bilingual education the existing scenario of unconscious intralingual glorification and stigmatization of languages may result in ubiquitous formulae for conflating, distorting and downgrading or invisibilising some provincial languages in Pakistan.

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