CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

‘Words are the leaves of the tree of language, of which, if some fall away, a new succession takes their place.’ – French proverb

Statement of the Problem

Language preference is obviously available to bilingual individuals and when two languages come in contact, three major outcomes are possible: a person may decide to continue the use of ones’ mother tongue for all functions; or (s)he may decide to use the other language instead of the mother tongue in all domains, or (s)he may decide to use the mother tongue in some domains and the other language in other domains.

This multiplex situation can be seen in Delhi in case of the Kumauni language. Kumauni is a non-scheduled language belonging to the Indo-Aryan family, spoken in the state of Uttarakhand, which has a population of about nine million people (Census 2001). Kumauni is seen by the people as a language of lesser importance, and an impediment to be overcome, if the community of its speakers want to progress. It is spoken, ambit limitedly, 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.

Delhi 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. Hindi and English are used as the medium of instruction in the government, public and private school systems with one of these taught as a second language at all levels. Although Hindi and English language are interchangeably used for teaching different subjects, English is the predominant language in higher education and is generally used in science and mathematics streams. Kumauni language is neither taught as a subject nor is the medium of instruction in schools. Primarily English is the language of instruction in the universities, while Hindi is the language spoken by the majority of people at work, in schools offices and in other domains.
The language issue in Delhi has been encouraging since long due to the multilingual setting that the state provides. Pandit (1972) in his 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.”

The present research proposes to study the language loyalty and language shift from Kumauni to Hindi in Delhi, where some of the domains are seen to be showing maintenance in opposition to other domains. However, at the governmental level, there are no plans or policies for the maintenance of the Kumauni language. The absence of language policies in Delhi vis-à-vis the Kumauni language demonstrates the importance of language planning with respect to ethno-cultural identity, which if not undertaken at the earliest may die a natural death in the near future.

Educated Kumauni speakers who understand language as an essential part of their cultural identity, have to make a conscious effort in order to maintain the Kumauni language before it gets too late.

Purpose of the study

This study attempts to investigate and explore some of the issues related to Kumauni language through a field survey, carried out in the Delhi region amongst the Kumauni speech community. It intends to reveal the inter-generational, as well as, intra-generational patterns of use of Kumauni. Its purpose is to find out as to how far a language can be maintained through spoken form without the help of a written script. It also intends to do a synchronic study of the language shift and provide information regarding language loyalty, language shift and maintenance processes, and purports to analyse whether the direction of the shift from one’s mother tongue, is towards the regional, national or international language.
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prerequisite of language maintenance and contact situation may give rise to either
bilingualism or language shift. Sometimes a shift may also occur after a long course of bilingualism. He points out, "Thus, by judicious processes and types of contact situations, it should be possible to more meaningfully apportion the variance in language maintenance and language shift outcome. Furthermore, the greater our insight with respect to socio-cultural processes and the more appropriate our typology of intergroup contact situations, it becomes possible to more meaningfully assemble and analyse language shift files". Fishman (1977) reiterates the need for studies on language maintenance and language shift.

**Issues and Problems**

To study the impact of different variables on language maintenance when compared to the growth of Hindi and other societal institutions, the following questions were incorporated in the research design:

- What are the factors responsible for language shift?
- Has Hindi and English been incorporated in the schools?
- What is the impact of different age communities on one's mother tongue?
- What are the domains in which mother tongue has been maintained and where has it been lost?
- What are the steps taken to promote the shift taken place or is taking place?
- What are the domains on language shift and English languages in the schools?
- Does the Kumauni people in Delhi treat Hindi/English? Is the mother tongue included as an official or national language?
- Do the Kumauni people in Delhi treat linguistic identity as part of their cultural identity and does the loss of cultural identity necessitate the loss of
• Does the Kumauni community show a uniform degree of acceptance of the Kumauni language in various domains of use?

The study is an attempt to find answer to these questions. The study also investigates the issue of identity – whether there is a tendency among Kumauni speakers to assert their social identity as being distinct from others; or is there a concern to acquire prestige by identifying oneself with a major language group and not necessarily one’s mother tongue.

The significance of the study lies in the answers to be found through empirical research into the notion of the Kumauni identity and its relation to the usage of the Kumauni language in various domains of use. The study is hitherto unique as it tries to look into:

(1) the continual process of language shift, maintenance, and a person’s loyalty towards the Kumauni language.

(2) what are the patterns of language usage and what linguistic and extra-linguistic variables are important in influencing the language shift among the Kumauni community?

(3) what the attitudes of the Kumauni speakers are towards their mother tongue vis-à-vis the Hindi language and its speakers?

Precincts

For instance, language maintenance or shift cannot be attributed to one single cause. There are various factors, social, political, economic, socio-psychological, and demographic, which are responsible for language shift in a society. The study attempts to explain the role of different variables in different domains of language use, especially an analysis of factors such as attitudes towards the mother tongue Kumauni, Hindi and English language at an individual or personal level, which have contributed to different language choices at different levels. The research does not enter into the details of formal
data analysis, due to time constraints. The study however, concentrates on the sociolinguistic aspects of language shift, language maintenance and language loyalty.

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. Being the capital of the country, Delhi shares a number of diglossic situations as far as Hindi language is concerned. Newspapers and magazines in Hindi, English, Urdu, Malayam, Kannada, Tamil, Bangla and many other languages are easily available. The Kumauni language speakers are influential and dominant, but only in a few areas where they are concentrated. Until very recently, there were hardly any communities or associations for Kumauni speakers. This has now changed in the last couple of years. A large number of people participate in organisational activities, but the language of interaction, in general, remains Hindi. The Kumauni language is neither a subject at schools nor is it used as a medium of instruction. On the other hand, both Hindi and English are taught as subjects and are used as medium of instruction as well. Even Punjabi, Kannada, Bengali, Tamil and other languages are taught as subjects in some of the schools. Kurnauni is used only at the spoken level.

The areas with concentration of the Kumauni speech community show an extra effort towards language maintenance, as compared to areas with the scattered Kumauni population, wherein a trend towards lesser use of the mother tongue is observed. After field visit and data collection, it was felt that at times respondents might have lied about their abilities to use a particular language for a variety of reasons.

The criterion for the study was based on stratified random sampling, wherein respondents were willing to spare time for interaction and for filling up the questionnaire. Enough care was taken to assure that a representative sample of the Kumauni population was collected. Innumerable visits were sometimes paid and it was observed that some of the respondents not only lacked the time and patience to fill up the questionnaire but also did not consider it at times opportune even to interact. About 265 questionnaire sets were
filled completely and of which 263 were taken into consideration for analysis. The data adequately represents the issue of language shift, loyalty and maintenance, and sociopsychological dimensions of the Kumauni community settled in Delhi.

**Sociolinguistic Perspective**

India is a multicultural nation, in respect of ethnicity, culture, language and religion and continues to show a high degree of multilingualism. Previous census records show the prevalent incidence of bilingualism in the country. It is not just the educated Indians who practice bilingualism but even those who have a basic primary level of schooling and the illiterates also practice it. Bilingualism is not a recent phenomenon; it is evident throughout the Indian history. Going by the Census records, we find that a sizeable population in each state speaks the dominant language of the neighbouring state. This population is often bilingual and continues to use its mother tongue in spite of using the dominant language of the state in which they are settled.

Language preference in a multilingual society can be studied either from the perspective of an individual or from that of the speech community, employing sociopsychological analysis or grammatical analysis of the language selected. Labov (1966) and Fishman (1965) have already stated the speech community approach to language preference within a larger group of people. With the information about the respondent's relation to different sets of variables from a chosen sample, one can explain the reasons behind a particular language preference made, which in turn provides insight into the language speaker's place in a social setting. This approach views language variation as the product of comprehensive elements in a social setting and the speaker as a passive participant.

Meanwhile, Gumperz (1982a) observes the individual speaker approach as diluting the effects of societal patterns in language preference, and views it as a dynamic event, wherein speakers make language preference because of dynamic factors like whether a long or short-term association is involved or whether the power or solidarity is relevant. The individual speaker approach criticizes speech community approach for
stressing on compromise as the organizing principle of community, and its preference for studying specific members of the community and not taking cognizance of those at the precincts.

Sociolinguistics, a sundry field, studies the interactions of language and society with varied perspectives and methods. The method this research work follows is of domain specific variable analysis, which uses quantitative and qualitative analysis to investigate language shift, loyalty and maintenance efforts, including independent linguistic and social factors.

Labov (1966) introduced the term, variable, in sociolinguistics to refer to the units in a language, which are most subject to social or stylistic variation, and thus most susceptible to change in the long term. Sociolinguistic variable is an important paradigm of this method and constitutes in general two variables – internal variables: phonological, morphological, and syntactical described quantitatively, and external variables: sociological factors specific to a speech community such as age, gender, social class, socio-economic background, education, income, occupation etc.

The distribution of one variable in opposition to another in a speech community can be correlated with social factors in search for societal trends and differences. Majority of sociolinguistic studies assign the internal linguistic variable as dependent variable and the external variable as the independent variable. Gender, age, educational background, income, occupation, migration and settlement patterns, represent independent variables in this research work, while language shift, loyalty, and maintenance of mother tongue Kumauni, linguistic and cultural identity, attitudes and views towards the Kumauni language and the majority language Hindi are the dependent variables.

The research work lays emphasis on dependent variables and the relationship between dependent variables and independent social variables to gauge the influence, change and shift in linguistic preferences and the societal structure of the Kumauni speech community. The avant-garde work in language variation studies was done by Labov, who assumed that language is heterogeneous, both in its structure and use and the variation, which has both external and internal causes for it, is patterned and highly
gular. Sociolinguists also investigate how non-linguistic factors can possibly affect language use in both, speech communities and individual speakers. Labov (1989:52, Hudson 1996:30) states, “Individual behaviour can be understood only as a reflection of the grammar of the speech community. Language is not property of the individual but of the community.” His view necessitates a need to have linguistic choices within the larger framework of speech community.

Labov (1972:120-1) identifies speech community as large, all-inclusive social group, defined and based on class, sex, age etc. He states, “The speech community is not defined by any marked agreement in the use of language element, so much as by participation in a set of shared norms. These norms may be observed in overt types of evaluative behaviour and by the uniformity of abstract patterns of variation which are invariant in respect to particular levels of usage.”

For these two sociolinguistic approaches, that of the speech community and the individual, the non-linguistic factors influencing language variation are cast in different ways. According to the sociological discipline, the speech community approach identifies social factors that divide a speech community based on age, gender, ethnicity and social class which have become the standard social factors correlated with dependent linguistic variables (Ash 2002). According to this approach, a person is an intersection of social groups. In contrast, the individual approach encapsulates non-linguistic factors in a person’s identity. The identity of a speaker usually comprises identities of age, gender, education, occupation, ethnicity, social class etc.

Sociolinguistic approach to the study of the relation between language and social identity seeks to explain language change, language shift based on invariant social categories such as socio-economic class, age, education, gender etc. With respect to gender, having discovered ‘women’s language’, researchers sought to explain how deviant it was from men’s or ‘standard language’. Labov (1966) concluded that for the people of Martha’s Vineyard, a speaker’s degree of inclination to the local community showed the strongest correlation with the variables under study. The research work of Labov and his associates has stressed the correlation of individual choices with factors that delineate social group membership and or other features of the community. These factors include socio-economic class, and many other ingredients that define speakers.
externally such as gender and ethnic groups. Research within this paradigm emphasizes the quantitative description of observable behaviour. The inherent claim in this approach explains that if information about speakers is collected in relation to specific variables, i.e. aspects of their social identities or the situation from a sample across a community, then one can also explain as to what drives their language preferences, i.e. the linguistic choices primarily reflect the speaker's place in a social group defined by the variable(s) studied. The major contribution of Labov's study of the language use patterns of speakers as member of groups has been to demonstrate that there are indeed predictable macro-patterns and a hierarchy among the social identity factors associated with language preference.

**Domain Model**

Fishman's (1968 a) question of "who speaks, what, where and when and to whom", the domain choice paradigm, views linguistic choices as predictable, based on the domain in which they occur. According to Fishman (1972c), a domain is a cluster of social situations, which are typically constrained by common set of behaviour rules, comprising the roles of interlocutors within a particular situation and the topics they are most likely to discuss. The domain therefore takes social organization as its conceptual basis: when speakers use two languages; they will obviously not use both in all circumstances; in certain situations, they will use the one, in others, the other. He states, "Proper usage dictates that only one of the theoretically co-available languages or varieties will be chosen by particular class of interlocutors in particular kind of occasions to discuss particular kinds of topics." (Fishman 1972 c: 15)

Fishman, Cooper and Ma (1971) based on their research in the Puerto Rican community in New York City; arrived at a list of five domains in which either Spanish or English was used consistently. These were recognized, based on observations and interviews and comprised the home domains, friends group, religion, employment and education. In each domain, there may be pressures of various kinds for instance economic, administrative, cultural, political and religious, which influence the language preference and language use of individual. The knowledge and use of a language is a function of economic and political factors. The case is similar for many speakers of South
Asian languages in Britain. Due to challenging pressures operating in a particular setting, it is not possible to predict which language an individual will use in a particular domain. The selection of a particular language in an event depends to a large extent on societal situations. Those factors are to be analyzed, which define certain types of situations in which particular preferences are normally considered acceptable and suitable.

Pandit (1977: 172-3) in one of his studies describes how a multilingual speaker may use different codes in his repertoire. He describes a businessperson living in Mumbai, whose mother tongue is a dialect of Gujarati, in the market uses a familiar variety of Marathi, the state language; at the railway station he speaks the Pan-Indian *lingua franca* Hindustani; at work the language he speaks is Kachhi, the code of the spice trade; in the evening he will watch a film in Hindi or in English and listen to a cricket-match commentary on the radio in English. One can question the roles performed by the different languages in the community or the individual.

The allocation paradigm approach in sociolinguistics is deterministic in nature. It leads to the logical conclusion that the speakers make the choices they do because they are constrained to do so by a societal system. Even if a statistically significant number of members of a group make the same choice in a given context, no studies show that all members do this. Although we agree that aspects of the larger societal background certainly affect choices, but the disparity in such factors does not directly determine the actual choices.

Fishman (1980) specifies, “more and more factors in modern life militate against social compartmentalization, the increase in open networks, in fluid role relationships, in superficial ‘public familiarity’ between strangers and semi strangers, in nonstatus-stressing interactions, even where status difference remain and, above all, in the rationalization of the work sphere”, as well as other sociological factors such as urbanization, and mobility. According to Fishman, when the stability of social compartmentalization diminishes, there is a gradual change towards language shift and the minority group gradually adopts the language of the dominant group.

The interpretation of the results was that the family and the friend domains were related to values of intimacy and therefore to more solidarity with their vernacular or mother tongue. The school, office, and work domains were more associated with status
values and favoured greater use of the language dominant in society. Social situations that constitute a domain can also be analyzed as the function of elements such as time, theme and the role of speakers, which can also influence language use (Co 1969, Fishman 1972b). Social domains, hence, seem to constitute an intermediate level analysis between a comprehensive sociological level and a micro level.

Overview of the research work

This dissertation attempts to provide insight into the issue of language shift, loyalty maintenance among the Kumauni language speakers in Delhi with respect to different sociolinguistic variables and the domains in which the language shift has been taking place. First chapter is an introduction to the rest of the thesis, and summarizes research work relevant to it. It has given a statement of the problem and provided empirical background for the research work, building upon the need for the present study. Second chapter presents the relevant background studies in the area, in addition to providing historical information about the area and possible majority language influence on the mother tongue of the Kumauni community in Delhi. Third chapter presents methodology, setting and respondents, and explains whether the shift is taking place or not, the concern and the interests of the respondents regarding their mother tongue. Fourth chapter deals with the data and its graphical representation showing different sociolinguistic variables and domains, wherein language shift, loyalty and maintenance has been occurring. Fifth chapter presents the findings and gives an overall analysis of the data on the issue of language shift, loyalty and maintenance vis-à-vis the linguistic profile, attitude and views of the Kumauni language speakers who have migrated from Uttarakhand and many of whom have been lifelong residents of Delhi. This chapter attempts to elucidate the shortcomings as well as the strength in maintaining the mother tongue. Finally, Sixth chapter is a summary of the study, with a discussion of areas for possible future research.