

Study of Lexical Choices: A Case Study of Khairpur and Lar Regions of Sindh

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ABSTRACT

Aim of the Study: Languages vary in time place. This variation causes language shift, language change death. Sindhi language is also undergoing continuous change under the influence of Urdu and English languages. There is a little research on the historical perspectives of Sindhi language family and its dialectal variation (Ali, 2016). Therefore, this paper aims to fill this gap and explores the lexical variations between two dialects, i.e., Lar and Utradi dialects of Sindhi language. These two dialects are adjacent, yet have some differences with respect to the lexical choices.

Methodology: This paper is carried out through a qualitative exploratory study. The observation and interview have been conducted to collect the data. The five participants were selected purposively.

Findings: The findings of the study highlights the variations in lexical choices between two dialects. The findings also revealed that the speakers of Lar region chose more typical Sindhi words such as “جوت” (in roman English ‘jot’, and in English fire, i.e., a bonfire) and Speakers of Utradi dialect chose modernised lexical choices. Hence, Utradi dialect is more inclined to language change than Lari dialect.

Conclusion: The study concluded with the assumption that social and cultural factors can be noticed in understanding the lexical choices made in both regions as the researchers showed the results with examples in which there were almost different linguistic choices. Based on the findings of this study, it can be suggested that there is huge need for the research to understand the causes of these differences that may help the language researchers to suggest the ways to maintain Sindhi language.

Keywords: Lexical, Language Death, Language Maintenance, Dialect, Observation.

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Introduction

Putting forth the fundamental tool (language) for communication in conversation and interaction is essential because it helps people stand by the language they speak. It is the only means by which human beings are distinguished from animals. With the help of unique ability, humans can talk, share, and deliver their information, feelings, message, and other phenomena to all other humans. Furthermore, It is also said that language is a complex phenomenon. So, to understand it, one can observe mysteries about the language, its changes and developments, and variations. According to Ali (2016), language has certain fixed, organized, and systemic functions which are formally handled thoroughly, while some other functions are neglected because of their complex nature.

In the same way, language varies from person to person, place to place, and state to state. One of the researches presents that the systemic processes of linguistic variation and language diversity have extended and increased to be a highly effective way to study dialectal variation in language (Jokhio, 2012). To analyze such variations in any language, Sindh, one of the provinces of Pakistan, is known to be the county's most culturally enriched and culturally diverse region wherein people from multiple cultures and languages have lived and left their influence on the Sindhi language through which variations are observed in the dialects of Sindhi language.

According to Jokho (2012), Sindhi language is rooted in the Indo-Aryan language that came from the Indus River Valley. In Sindhi language, six different dialects are spoken all over the province, and these are named according to their geopolitical and geographical areas. The number mentioned above of dialects in Sindhi language are also explored by Grierson, cited in Allana (1995), such as Vicholi, Sirolli, Lasi, Utradi, Kachhi, and Lari. These different dialects are the primary concern of the sociolinguists and Sindhi language analysts to explore and investigate the change and variation of phonology, morphology, lexicology, semantics, etc. There may be multiple variations in a single dialect, as in Sindhi language, people from Khairpur use different lexical choices in Thari Mirwah (Muu) for "I" and in Khairpur (ma:) for "I" (Shah & Mandan, 2016). In addition, they are of the view that Sindhi has a wide variety and different aspects in phonological, morphological, and syntactic features, which make its dialects different than the other regions of Pakistan. These variations occur not only in different dialects but can occur within the dialects due to the geographical effect on the language or societal impact on the language (Yule, 2020). Yule (2020) also stated that every individual uses language differently as per their social competence, which distinguishes them from others in the use of language. Likewise, there are differences in lexical choices, which are completely different in some of the regions of Sindh, which are taken out with the help of dialects influenced by their language variation and change over some time.

This study aims to explore the lexical variations in Sindhi language between two regions of Sindh. The findings of the study will help the researchers and academics to understand the reasons of the variations in lexical choices by the people of both regions. The findings will also provide an explanation for the change in lexical choices. As a whole, this will be a step to understanding the language and suggest some practical steps for language maintenance.

Literature Review

There has been the discussion among linguists and researchers in sociolinguistics that language can never be studied in isolation. It can be better understood with relation to society, community, and other social factors in which people learn the language along with different varieties in the form of dialects, idiolects, and sociolects. Additionally, society and language have a strong relationship because they influence each other (Yule, 2020). The relationship between language and society illustrates the ways language is used. The relationship between language and society can also be studied through language variation. As mentioned above, the dialects are the real essence for understanding language varieties and change throughout time.

Background of Sindhi Language

Sindhi language is one of the old languages of the Indo-Aryan family, with a vast history and literature. Above all else, there has always been an acute observation by the researchers such as Fishman (1991) and Scott (2006) that the choice of language and lexical items vary from place to place, region to region, and participant to participant. Moreover, Scott (2006) also found the differences in the family, which represent the variation in language due to language shifts in dialect, education, and other social factors which influence language to make variations. These variations occur in the varieties of language, which include idiolect, dialect, and sociolect. As our focus is on the dialectal level, whereupon the speakers have different choices in all sorts of structural and linguistic variations of the standard language. Dialect is one of the sociolinguistic varieties of language which represents the informal choice of language in terms of phonology, morphology, lexicology, and semantics. In the same way, Lari is one of the dialects of Sindhi language spoken in Lar and other regions of the lower Sindh region (Ali, 2016).

Dialectology

Lexical choices are found to be part of the dialect's property. They usually occur differently in their respective dialect. Dialectology is the scientific study of dialects and is a branch of sociolinguistics (Petyt, 1980). The variance in a language based on geographic distribution is its main concern. Dialect varies widely. The world's languages are considered natural. Shareah and others (2015) examine how the English language is used as an example. It comes in a wide variety, including Australian, South African, British, Nigerian, and American languages, etc. British English is very distinct from British English. In his comparative study, Sanyal (2013) identifies differences between British and American English Lexical differences between the two types. Di Carlo (2013) conducted a comparable survey study to examine reciprocal comprehension between these two kinds. Both of these analyses reach the same conclusion: in addition to differences, British English has many terminologies that American English has borrowed and vice versa. TV shows, the Hollywood industry, and information and communication technology are to blame.

Previous Studies

Shaikh et al. (2013) explored Sindhi's acoustic or digital accent. The study mainly aimed to investigate accent and sound variation in different dialects of Sindhi language. The data for this study was collected through an experimental method in which the participants from different dialects were given a list of words to pronounce. Then, those pronounced words were recorded and analyzed through PRAAT software to check the acoustic variation of sounds. The study concluded that there is vowel duration, pause, and variation in the syllables in different dialects of Sindhi language.

In the same way, Arslan et al. (2021) investigated the sound shift in Punjabi language with a slightly different dimension of sound shift, as the study mentioned above was about the variation. The participants for this study were speakers of Punjabi and Urdu language. They were asked to pronounce some targeted words from the corpus they had compiled for the study. The researchers concluded their study that the speakers who spoke Punjabi in the natural situation had a variation of /n/ and /l/ sounds in their language, whereas these sounds were missing in the language of Urdu speakers.

Hassan (2016), on the other hand, conducted a sociolinguistics study on the variation in Sindhi language. He observed and compared differences in assimilation and incidental variation in Vicholi, the standard dialect, and Siroli used in Upper Sindh. The method he has used in his study includes interviews and observations. The interviews were structured in nature, while the observations were recorded on the participant's desire. The participants for this study were government and private servants from these two different dialects. The study concluded that there are many incidental differences in both dialects, while there is the assimilation of sounds such as /m/ and /s/ at the end of the words. This usual assimilation occurs in Shikarpur and Larkana regions which come under Siroli dialects.

Kaleem and Ali (2015) studied lexical differences of Pashto in the Mardan and Swat regions of KPK. The researchers collected data randomly from fifty participants of different age groups to get a sociolinguistic view of the study. The researchers also used an open-ended questionnaire for the study to get many responses from the people of Mardan and Swat. After collecting the data, the researchers observed lexical differences in Pashto language. The study's findings stated that there are different words for meals, drinks, shopping bags, and many others in both regions. The researchers concluded that there was age-wise variation and the influence of the speech community in which the participants were living.

In the same way, the other study was conducted by Hasan and Khan (2021), which was based on the linguistic variation in Punjabi language dialects. They focused on the comparative analysis of Dhani and Manjhi dialects. To conduct this study, the researchers collected data through the survey method quantitatively and qualitatively. There were 2 participants from the Utradi dialect, and three participants from Laari dialect. The study concluded that the speakers of Manjhi dialect do not use 80% of the Dhani dialect's lexical items in their dialect, and the remaining 20% is pronounced differently.

Amin and Ali (2021) explored variations in Lasi and the standard dialect of Sindhi language. They observed how phonological and morphological variations occur in both dialects. They have utilized qualitative research, and the methods are interviews, observations, digital dictionaries, and open discussions to accomplish the objectiveness of the study. The study tried to highlight phonological, such as sounds with reference to dialects, morphological variation, such as lexical choices, suffixes, and others to make changes in meaning and word. The study concluded that similarities and contradictions occur phonologically and morphologically in dialects. There are variants, such as sound, pluralization, and tense.

Study Objective

The present study aims to compare the lexical choices made by Khairpur and Lar Sindhi speakers who have different dialects, as Khairpur has Siroli dialect whereas Lari dialect is used in Lar. This may be a unique study because people have conducted studies on phonological, morphological, and phonetic variations in different dialects of Sindhi language. However, scholars do not highlight lexical variations in the two dialects, especially in Khairpur and Lar.

Research Questions

The study tries to explore the answers to the following questions:

1. What are the similarities in different linguistic choices made by Khairpur and Lar speakers?
2. What are the reasons for the lexical choices and variation between Lari and Utradi dialects?

Research Methodology

This study employs three observation and interview methods for data collection to compare and contrast the lexical choices used by the speakers in Khairpur and Lar regions of Sindhi language. The participants have been selected from two different dialects, which are described as a variety of language which has variation in the choice of vocabulary, lexical choice from phonology to syntax, and meaning (Yule, 2020). Hence, the data was collected from speakers of both regions to highlight different lexical choices through observation and unstructured interviews.

The observation method is one of the ways of data collection that observes and describes the behavior of a subject or a situation. Observation can be human or mechanical and may be conducted in a natural or controlled setting. Observation can provide insights and understanding of the event, activity, or situation being evaluated, and document evidence of what is seen and heard. Likewise, this researchers used this method to see how people from the Utradi and Lari dialects make variations in their language choices. This method was used to look through the different variations formed in the speech of both dialects. The

other tool to collect the data was unstructured interviews. The unstructured interviews are the tools to have conversation style to collect data from the participants (George, 2023).

This study involved the Sindhi speakers of two regions from, i.e., Utradi (northern region) and Lari (Lar region). The purposively sampling was employed to select five participants (2 from Khairpur region and three from Laar region). The sample was characterised to have pure Sindhi language family history as L1, should be the part of the same culture, must be of 30 years and above in age. These speakers were asked to choose a word which they use from a given list of lexical choices through observation form. The lead researcher was asking the choices verbally from the participants and the other was filling the form as some of the participants lacked literacy skills. After the observation, the data was translated into English language as the choices in the observation form were given in Sindhi language. As one of the researchers in the study has wide experience of teaching at university level and he has taught the Translation Theory and Translation Studies as subjects in university, so the translation of the lexical choices was not problematic and was not so challenging.

For data analysis, the researchers recorded the observed situation of native speakers of Sindhi language, and then the data were translated to carry out the study for the results. The study of language variation or variation in language use can be multifaceted because language, nowadays, is used to take different forms in different dialects to talk about things and discuss. For example, in Sindhi language, people in Lar region call an aged woman a "ڏوڪري", in Roman English 'Dokri', in English 'old woman'" and the people of Khaipur use "ڪراڙي", in Roman English 'Kuraari' in English 'old woman'" for it. As a result, a qualitative study was utilized to observe the lexical choices in two different dialects in Sindhi language (Burns & Grove, 2005).

Results and Discussion

The analysis part of the study focuses on the linguistic variation in the lexical choices found through the observation. The researchers have closely observed the difference in the meaning of the two dialects as the examples in table 4.1 illustrate the speakers' geographical identity. Moreover, the linguistic choices are influenced by the region people live in, such as the people of the Lar region have a soft tone in their language. In contrast, the people of Khairpur have a direct and blunt style that can be considered hard for the people of Hyderabad, Lar, and Thar regions. Variation in both language dialects is not logical or static; however, the variation is flexible in changing the form; meaning and structure of lexical choices when the other language, dialect or culture influence them. The data collected for this study through observation are presented in the table, which shows the different linguistic choices made by Khairpur and Lar speakers of Sindhi language.

Table 1: *Lexical Choices of both dialects*

S.No	Lexical Choices (Khairpur)	English Translation	Lexical Choices (Lar)
1.	پري	Far off, at distant	ڏور
2.	ڪراڙو ۽ ڪراڙي	Old man and woman	ڏوڪرو ۽ ڏوڪري
3.	پهچي ويو	Has reached	رسي ويو
4.	علائقو	Area	جوع
5.	پهاڙ جي چوٽي يا مٿاهين	Top of the something	ڪير
6.	هيٺانهي/اونهانهين	Below/down	ڊوري
7.	ڪوھ	Well	ٿڙ
8.	ويجهو ٿي ويھ	Sit closer	اوڻڙو ٿي ويھ
9.	ڪاڏي	Where are you heading to?	ڪيڏانهن
10.	مائي/ عورت	Woman	زائفان/رن

The lexical choices were the central issues in understanding the language use of Lar and Khairpur speakers of Sindh because both are from different dialects, which hinders them in understanding their

lexical choices to some extent. The results of this study describe how many troubling situations they face when they interact with each other. There are some common words and lexical choices which are understood and used by every speaker of Sindhi language as (ڏور) used by the Lar speaker and (پري) by Khairpur speaker to point out to an object, distance, or idea in time and place. Additionally, the people of Lar were also influenced by the Thari dialect, which had some Sanskrit impact. This impact would make the language a little different from the regular use of Sindhi, even if it were a standard dialect where the word ڀرپ is used to refer to far-off incidents. Some lexical choices were observed as similar in both dialects, such as (dhoori), a deep-down place where the water is stored. This study is the same as done by Kaleem and Ali (2015), who tried to explore the lexical features of Pashto language in Swat and Mardan. This study also refers to the same nature of the research in which the researchers have only changed the language and area. Sindhi language lexical choices may not have been explored in these areas because other researchers, such as Shaikh et al. (2013), looked at the features of phonetic variation digitally to get the accent of different people having different dialectal and maybe cultural backgrounds. Their contribution was to the phonological accent by recording their pronunciation. They compared the pronunciation of the speakers of different dialects. However, this study is based on the lexical choices, which have an essential role, because it is one of open communication among the speakers from Lar and Khairpur where they realize differences to refer to the thing. For example, the word رسي ويو may not be used for someone who has been reached by Khairpur speakers (پهچي ويو) because their dialect is rigid, less polite, and direct in stating things. Moreover, it is also linked with the standard dialect in which such expressions are formal and mutually intelligible. It is even more complex for the speakers who are not in contact with the speakers of each dialect when such lexical choices are used in the sentences. The sentences increase the difficulty in understanding tense, gender, pluralization, and some pronouns. The researchers have rarely highlighted these issues in different dialects of Sindhi language, especially Lar and Khairpur, as it is already stated that the speakers of Lar are influenced by the people of Thar and nearby areas where people use ancient lexical choices of Sindhi language that are not easy for everybody to understand. As a result, in the observed data of the study, the researchers found that people who are in regular contact with speakers of both regions can share language flexibly, such as in workplaces, schools, and universities. In contrast, people who are not in touch with one another cannot make contact or understand most of the time.

Interview

The interview data reveal that participants used different lexical choices, including their meanings in both regions. The interview revealed that there is the influence on the use of language, especially on use of lexical items if people have working-place or anyother interaction. The interviews also revealed that this interaction provides context of language use and minimises the variation in lexical choices. Otherwise, it is very challenging when you speak with a person who has a dialect in which lexical choices are entirely different from the dialect they speak. When the researchers asked about the reasons for this complexity in dialects, then one of the speakers of Lar stated in the interview:

“We have been working with the speakers of almost every dialect of the Sindhi language, but they still are unable to understand us in some situations because they are not used to those lexical choices, and those choices make hindrances in their communication.” (Lar Speaker)

The other speaker from Khairpur stated:

“I have observed that people who read and are culturally enriched can understand every lexical item because books provide you the use of lexical items of different dialects. However, everyday use can be understood if people try to contact each other for business or other means and purposes.” (Khairpur Speaker)

Dialects of Sindhi language are interlinked in terms of grammar and vocabulary. There are not many differences in English, but there are some phonological variants where sounds are pronounced differently, such as in Lasi /r/ and /l/ which have the same position. In contrast, speakers from the Standard (Vicholi) and Khairpur's dialect may not have such variants. This study is, not as a whole, similar to that of Amin and Ali (2021), who tried to explore the sounds and morphological grounds of standard and Lasi dialects. In contrast, this paper only concerns the lexical choices used by Khairpur and Lar speakers. Thus, these lexical variations mentioned in Table 4.1 highlight the significance and identification of dialects. These units of language are used to reflect and name the language and dialect of a particular language in a specific area.

Conclusion

Sociolinguistics is one of the lenses of language which helps people understand the different dialects of individual languages. And every dialect is valued and treated equally. Moreover, researchers or sociolinguists need to make people realize the role of dialect, not in the sense that there is no superiority or inferiority in the dialects of languages. Sindhi language is also one of them, which has seven dialects. The present study tried to explore the lexical variation in Khairpur and Lar speakers of Sindhi language. So, the study concluded with the assumption that social and cultural factors can be noticed in understanding the lexical choices made in both regions as the researchers showed the results with examples in which there were almost different linguistic choices. They also differed in a meaning entirely. The final section of the paper reveals that the researchers have accomplished their research with the targeted results according to the study's objectives. The objectives were obtained through the observation and interview in which the above-said speakers provided the reasons that they were influenced by the Vicholi dialect and the people of Thar, which is why they had such lexical choices which are very polite as compared to the speakers of Khairpur whose lexical choices were less polite and more direct. This study contributes that people from Lar and Khairpur can have multiple and different words to say the same things, and it creates problems for those who are unaware of those words. To overcome this problem, the present paper proved some lexical choices, as the researchers have delimited themselves with ten words and five participants due to the time and budget. Future researchers can improve this study by exploring more words and taking a large sample to get better results.

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