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Lexical Borrowing: A Study of Punjabi and Urdu Kinship Terms

Tahir Ghafoor Malik, M.S., Ph.D. Candidate

Abstract

This paper investigates the phenomenon of borrowing of the kinship terms from one language to another. The languages under inquiry are Punjabi and Urdu in an area where both the languages are spoken as the major languages. It is natural for languages to adopt words from other languages due to their contact with each other.

The paper explores the contact situation of Urdu and Punjabi with particular focus on the phenomenon of the borrowing of the kinship terms. A sufficient amount of literature is reviewed on language contact, loanwords, borrowing kinship terms between Urdu and Punjabi.

In order to investigate the matter quantitatively, thirty subjects were selected, whose first language (L1) was Punjabi. A questionnaire was made containing kinship terms of Urdu language and the subjects' knowledge of the Punjabi kinship terms was checked.

In a community where the speakers are bilinguals with Punjabi and Urdu languages, the study shows that Urdu kinship terms are preferred over Punjabi kinship terms to such an extent that the speakers use Urdu kinship terms even when they speak their mother tongue, namely, Punjabi.

Introduction

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Lexical Borrowing: A Study of Punjabi and Urdu Kinship Terms

Lexical borrowing can be defined as the adoption of individual words from another language. It happens when two languages are in contact and one language borrows lexical items from the other language. According to Matras and Bakker (2003), lexical borrowing concerns about ‘the incorporation in one language of content words from another language’.

Kinship terms are the terms used to label the family relationships in human society. All human societies have the same family relationships, contracted through birth and marriage, in common. Different societies, however, group these relationships together and label them in linguistically different ways (Trudgill 1992).

Borrowing is the process which requires language contact. It means there should be at least a certain degree of bilingualism for some people with the donor language and the recipient language.

In this study the donor language is Urdu and the recipient language is Punjabi and the lexical items which are analyzed are the kinship terms.

Objectives

The paper aims to:

- Compare the Urdu and Punjabi kinship terms as they are used in isolation;
- Explore the borrowing of the kinship terms when the speakers of a community use Urdu and Punjabi languages;
- Investigate the influence of Urdu on Punjabi in urban areas with particular focus on the kinship terms; and
- Discuss some of the factors that might be involved in the borrowing of the kinship terms between the two languages.

Literature Review

The nature and meaning of human relationships are different in different cultures. The system of terms available in a given language for naming relatives is called kinship terminology. It generally varies among languages. English has only ‘uncle’ whereas many other languages like Urdu and Punjabi have different words for ‘father’s brother’ and ‘mother’s brother’. In English, both men and women have only sisters, but in Basque a man has an ‘arriba’ while a woman has an ‘ahizpa’, while in Seneca there are different words for ‘older sister’ and ‘younger sister’ (Trask 1999). Connections between people based on genetic ties (such as between parents and children and among siblings) are known as consanguineal or blood relationships. Relationships based on marriage are known as affinal relationships.

“One language may experience changes due to the influence of another language. The speakers of any given language are almost always in some kind of contact with the speakers of one or more other languages.

When two different languages are spoken in adjacent areas, speakers on both sides of the boundary will be exposed to the other language, and may often gain some fluency in that other language. Because of conquest or migration, speakers of two or more languages may be mixed together in a single community. Speakers of one language may travel and become exposed to different languages spoken elsewhere. And, of course, in modern times the mass media have brought awareness of a number of languages into regions in which these were formerly unknown. In all such cases, speakers of one language may, deliberately or unconsciously, introduce into their language features of another language to which they have been exposed, and we therefore speak of language contact, or simply contact.” (Trask 1999)

Trask (1999) further states that “the consequences of contact may range from the trivial to the far-reaching. At the simplest level, speakers may merely take over a few words from their neighbors; this is called borrowing, and the words borrowed are loan words in the receiving language. This happens most readily because the words are the names of genuinely new things: for example, English-speakers had never seen coffee, or boomerangs, or tobacco, or chocolate, or pizzas until they encountered them being used by speakers of various other languages and so took them over along with their foreign names. But it can also happen purely for reasons of prestige: the enormous prestige of Norman French in England after the Conquest brought thousands of Norman French words into English, where they often displaced their native equivalents, as when *army* and *face* displaced native English here and *andwlita*. In extreme cases, the effects of contact may be so overwhelming that one language is abandoned entirely by its speakers in favor of another and this process called language death.”

Borrowing is the process of incorporating linguistic items into one language which originally belong to another. 'It is common for one language to take words from another language and make them part of its own vocabulary: these are called loanwords and the process is called linguistic borrowing' (Campbell 1998). Borrowing occurs when one language adds a word or morpheme from another language to its own lexicon. The pronunciation of the borrowed item is often altered to fit the phonological rules of the borrowing language (Fromkin et al. 2005). Campbell (1998) says: 'a foreign sound in borrowed words which does not exist in the receiving language will be replaced by the nearest phonetic equivalent to it in the borrowing language'. This process is called adaptation.

Most languages are borrowers, so their lexicon can be divided into native and non-native, or loan words. A native word is one whose history or etymology can be traced back to the earliest known stages of the languages (Fromkin, et al. 2005). A language may borrow a word directly or indirectly. A direct borrowing means that the borrowed item is a native word in the language from which it is borrowed. The languages often differ even in apparently quite basic lexical divisions and fields such as temperature terms, kinship terms, color terms, parts of the body and divisions of the animal and vegetable worlds will divide the semantic space differently and reflect this in the

vocabulary items covering those fields (The Linguistics *Encyclopedia*). A loanword is a lexical item (a word) which has been borrowed from another language, a word which originally was not part of the vocabulary of the recipient language but was adopted from some other language and made part of the borrowing language's vocabulary (Campbell 1998).

There are two main reasons why languages borrow words. The first reason is that the recipient language does not have a word for a new concept from other languages or cultures and a word is needed. So a new word from the neighboring language enters the language. The second main reason is for prestige. At any given time in any given place, some languages typically enjoy more prestige than others, and speakers of less prestigious languages are often eager to show off their command of a more prestigious language by introducing some of its words into their own speech.

Punjabi Language

The Punjabi language is a member of the Indo-Aryan subdivision of the Indo-European language family. It is spoken by more than 100 million people in Punjab (in Pakistan and north western India). Over 44% of Pakistanis learn it as their first language and about 70% of Pakistanis can understand it. Urdu, on the other hand, the national language of Pakistan, was formed around the 1600's in Central Asia. It was used as a source of communication between the Muslim soldiers during their conquest of Ancient India and Eastern Persia. These soldiers were of Persian, Arab, or Turkish descent. The majority of the soldiers were from Persia and therefore the Urdu vocabulary contains approximately 70% Persian (Farsi) and the rest being a mix of Arabic and Turkish. Furthermore, in the course of its development, Urdu has borrowed numerous linguistic items from Perso-Arabic and Indo-Aryan languages.

Kinship Terminology in Punjabi and Urdu

The kinship terminology in both the Punjabi and Urdu languages is very extensive and specific. The system makes crucial reference to three parameters: age, consanguinity (relation by blood or marriage) and laterality (relation on the mother's side or father's side). As a result, instead of general terms as 'uncle' or 'aunt', highly specific terms are used. English-speaking people do not distinguish linguistically between *uncle* 'father's brother', 'mother's brother', 'father's sister's husband', 'mother's sister's husband', but Punjabi and Urdu languages do distinguish between all of these different relationships. The assumption is that this differential linguistic labeling reflects differences in the structures of different societies and in the roles and behavior which are expected of individuals having particular relationships with one another (Trudgill 1992).

A summary of Punjabi and Urdu kinship terms is given below, many of which simply do not exist in the English language:

Table 1
Urdu and Punjabi kinship terms and their English equivalents

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Urdu Term	Punjabi Term	English Equivalent
Abbu	Abba/ Papaji	Father
Ammi	Ammi/ Mataji	Mother
Beta	Putar	Son
Beti	Dhee	Daughter
Bara Bhai	Veer/ Bhra (Praa)	Elder Brother
Chota Bhai	Kaka	Younger Brother
Behan	Bhain (Paen)	Sister
Dada	Dada	Father's Father (Grandfather)
Dadi	Dadi	Father's Mother (Grandmother)
Nana	Nana	Mother's Father (Maternal Grandfather)
Nani	Nani	Mother's Mother (Maternal Grandmother)
Shohar/ Miyan	Karwala/ Banda	Husband
Bivi	Karwali/ Budhi	Wife
Dulha	Lara	Bridegroom
Dulhan	Wohti	Bride
Taya	Taya	Uncle (Father's Elder Brother)
Tayee	Tayee	Aunt (Wife Of Father's Elder Brother)
Chacha	Chacha	Uncle (Father's Younger Brother)
Chachi	Chachi	Aunt (Wife Of Father's Younger Brother)
Phupha	Phupher	Uncle (Father's Sister's Husband)
Phuphi	Phuphi	Aunt (Father's Sister)
Khalu	Maasser	Uncle (Mother's Sister's Husband)
Khala	Maasee	Aunt (Mother's Sister)
Mamu	Mama	Uncle (Mother's Brother)
Mamani	Mami	Aunt (Wife Of Mother's Brother)
Bhabhi	Bharjayee (Parjayee)	Brother's Wife
Bhatija	Bhatija (Patija)	Brother's Son
Bhatiji	Bhatijee (Patijee)	Brother's Daughter
Bhanja	Panewa/ Bhanja (Panja)	Sister's Son
Bhanji	Panewee/ Bhanjee (Panjee)	Sister's Daughter
Behnoyee	Jeeja	Sister's Husband
Sala	Sala	Wife's Brother
Salehar	Salehar	Wife's Brother's Wife
Sali	Sali	Wife's Sister
Sandhu	Sandhu	Wife's Sister's Husband
Nand	Nanaan	Husband's Sister
Nanaan Waya	Nanaan Waya	Husband's Sister's Husband
Jaith	Jaith	Husband's Older Brother
Jaithani	Jaithani	Husband's Older Brother's Wife

Dewar	Deor	Husband's Younger Brother
Dewarani	Darani	Husband's Younger Brother's Wife
Damad	Jawayee	Son-In-Law (Daughter's Husband)
Bahu	Noo	Daughter-In-Law (Son's Wife)
Pota	Potra	Son's Son
Poti	Potri	Son's Daughter
Dota	Dotra	Daughter's Son
Doti	Dotri	Daughter's Daughter
Suser	Sora	Father-In-Law (Husband's/ Wife's Father)
Saas	Sas	Mother-In-Law (Husband's/ Wife's Mother)

Methodology

This study is both qualitative and quantitative in its approach. A sufficient amount of literature is reviewed on language contact, loanwords, and borrowing, as well as on the Urdu and Punjabi kinship terms. In order to analyze the phenomenon of borrowing between Urdu and Punjabi scientifically, the quantitative investigation is also made.

Population

Thirty respondents were selected randomly whose first language (L1) was Punjabi and who were residing in the urban area of Lahore, Pakistan. Lahore is a multi-cultural city where Punjabi and Urdu are the major languages, but English is also used to some extent.

Procedure

A questionnaire (**Annexure**) was made consisting of 25 vocabulary items i.e. Urdu kinship terms. The respondents were asked to write down the equivalent Punjabi terms as well as the terms that they use when they speak Punjabi.

Results and Analysis of the Data

The respondents' proficiency as well as their usage of Punjabi kinship terms was checked by the questionnaire and the results were found as follows:

Total number of respondents: 30

First Language (L1) of the respondents: Punjabi

Table 2**Results of the questionnaire**

Sr. No.	Urdu kinship term	Number & %age of the respondents who knew the equivalent Punjabi Term.	Number & %age of the respondents who reported that they use Punjabi term when they speak Punjabi.
1	Abbu	30 (100%)	2 (7%)
2	Ammi	27 (90%)	3 (10%)
3	Beta	30 (100%)	10 (33%)
4	Beti	26 (87%)	9 (30%)
5	Bhai	28 (93%)	7 (23%)
6	Behan	23 (77%)	7 (23%)
7	Shohar	27 (90%)	12 (40%)
8	Bivi	28 (93%)	7 (23%)
9	Dulha	30 (100%)	11 (37%)
10	Dulhan	25 (83%)	8 (27%)
11	Phupha	28 (93%)	8 (27%)
12	Khalu	22 (73%)	1 (3%)
13	Khala	27 (90%)	1 (3%)
14	Mamu	27 (90%)	3 (10%)
15	Mamani	29 (97%)	13 (43%)
16	Bhabhi	29 (97%)	5 (17%)
17	Behnoyee	23 (77%)	4 (13%)
18	Nand	29 (97%)	11 (37%)
19	Dewar	25 (83%)	3 (10%)
20	Dewarani	18 (60%)	6 (20%)
21	Bahu	30 (100%)	11 (37%)
22	Pota	28 (93%)	12 (40%)
23	Dota	29 (97%)	14 (47%)
24	Susser	28 (93%)	11 (37%)
25	Damad	27 (90%)	3 (10%)
	<i>Average Values</i>	27 (90%)	8 (24%)

The data show that twenty seven out of total thirty respondents which become 90% of the total population under investigation know the Punjabi kinship terms. 10% of the population does not know the Punjabi kinship terms at all. As for the usage of Punjabi kinship terms, only 24% of the population (only eight out of thirty) uses Punjabi kinship terms while speaking Punjabi. They prefer Urdu kinship terms even when they speak Punjabi.

The study shows that 100% of the population knows the equivalent Punjabi kinship terms only for the Urdu terms 'Abbu', 'Beta', 'Dulha', and 'Bahu' for which the Punjabi terms are 'Abba', 'Puttar', 'Lara' and 'Noo' respectively. Only 60% respondents know the Punjabi term for 'Dewarani' which is 'Darani' and only 73% know the Punjabi term for 'Khalu' which is 'Maaser'.

At the same time, only 3% of the respondents reported that they use ‘Maasee’ and ‘Maaser’ for ‘Khala’ and ‘Khalu’ respectively while speaking Punjabi. Only 7% use ‘Abba’ for the Urdu term ‘Abbu’. Only 10% of the respondents use ‘Maa’, ‘Mama’, and ‘Deyor’ for the Urdu terms ‘Ammi’, ‘Mamu’, and ‘Dewar’ respectively.

Discussion

The literature reviewed and the data collected show that the Punjabi language is clearly borrowing kinship terms from the Urdu language where the two languages are spoken in the same area. People with Urdu and Punjabi bilingualism prefer Urdu kinship terms even when they speak Punjabi. There are two main reasons why languages borrow words. The first reason is that the recipient language does not have a word for a concept due to which a word from the neighboring language enters the language. This reason is not applicable in this study because Punjabi is also very rich in having kinship terms and therefore it does not need a term for any relationship from Urdu. The Punjabi language has got all the equivalent terms for Urdu kinship terms.

The second main reason of borrowing is that languages borrow linguistic items from other languages for prestige. This reason suits the phenomenon under investigation. The Urdu language enjoys more prestige than the Punjabi language. Being the language of schools, colleges, universities, offices and above all being the national language of Pakistan, Urdu is more prestigious language than Punjabi. So the Punjabi speakers are found to be eager to show off their command of a more prestigious language by introducing some of its words into their own speech. In doing so they prefer Urdu kinship terms over Punjabi kinship terms even while speaking Punjabi.

Although their first language (L1) is Punjabi, the data show that 10% of the population does not know the Punjabi kinship terms at all. This population knows only Urdu kinship terminology. Out of the 90% population who knows the Punjabi kinship terms, only 24% uses Punjabi kinship terms while speaking Punjabi. Most of the respondents reported that they prefer Urdu kinship terms even when they speak Punjabi. It clearly shows how strongly the prestige of a language plays its role. Once the people of a speech community get the exposure of a more prestigious language, they try to copy and adopt it.

The summary of kinship terms (Table 1) shows that most of the kinship terms of Urdu and Punjabi are similar; yet there are some differences. The Punjabi language is a member of the Indo-Aryan subdivision of the Indo-European language family. Over 44% of Pakistanis learn it as their first language. Urdu was formed around the 1600’s in Central Asia. It has borrowed numerous linguistic items from Perso-Arabic and Indo-Aryan languages. So in the course of its development Urdu might have borrowed kinship terms from Punjabi with some changes due to its different phonological system. Now it is surprising that Punjabi is borrowing the kinship terms back from Urdu exactly in the same way as they are used in Urdu because Urdu is enjoying more prestige than Punjabi.

Conclusion

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The study shows that the Urdu kinship terms are preferred over Punjabi kinship terms to such an extent that the speakers use Urdu kinship terms even when they speak in their mother tongue i.e. Punjabi. Some of the Punjabi speakers have even lost their L1 kinship terms. The paper highlights the phenomenon of borrowing of kinship terms in urban areas from comparatively high prestige language i.e. Urdu to low prestige language i.e. Punjabi. It shows that the Punjabi speakers living in urban areas could not fully retain their L1 kinship terms and adopted the Urdu kinship terms. The study also highlights the phenomenon of lexical borrowing as one of the potential factors involved in the change of lexicon of a language in language contact situations.

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<http://www.britannica.com>

<http://www.kasaindian.com/indian-restaurant-sf/tag/punjabi-kinship>

<http://www.theurdulanguage.com>

Questionnaire

Dear Participant,

I am conducting a research. Your few minutes to fill these two columns will go a long way in understanding some very important aspects of language learning. I wish to have your honest response.

Sr. No.	Urdu Term	What is the equivalent Punjabi Term?	I use this term when I speak Punjabi.
1	Abbu		
2	Ammi		
3	Beta		
4	Beti		
5	Bhai		
6	Behan		
7	Shohar		
8	Bivi		
9	Dulha		
10	Dulhan		
11	Phupha		
12	Khalu		
13	Khala		
14	Mamu		
15	Mamani		
16	Bhabhi		
17	Behnoyee		
18	Nand		
19	Dewar		
20	Dewarani		
21	Bahu		
22	Pota		
23	Dota		
24	Susser		
25	Damaad		

Thanks

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