



Attitude of Bhojpurians' towards Bhojpuri Language: An Overview

***Dr. Neelam Yadav**

Abstract

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Motivation and positive attitude are the key factors which influence the success of learning any language. This paper aims to draw attention towards the situation of Bhojpuri as first language. It flashes that, in present scenario, how educated people, irrespective of class and caste they belong to, avoid Bhojpuri as first language. This paper discusses the responsible factors behind this attitude of Bhojpuri speakers in Varanasi(urban).

Keywords: attitude; motivate; Bhojpuri language; respect

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*** Dr. Neelam Yadav, Assistant Professor, Department of Linguistics, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar University, Agra, U.P. Email: bhashachintan2021@gmail.com**



Introduction:

Bhojpuri language: The word ‘Bhojpuri’ signifies a language and the people who speak that language. People in several districts of western Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh, a few pockets of Jharkhand and a little stretch of Nepal alongside the lower range of the Himalayas speak Bhojpuri in their inimitable local flavours. Broadly it covers Bhojpur, Rohtas, Buxar, Bhabhua, Chhapra Siwan, Gopalganj, Motihari, Bettiah, Hajipur districts in Bihar. In Uttar Pradesh, it is spoken in Ballia, Banaras, Gorakhpur, Ghazipur, Mirzapur, Azamgrah, Mau, Deoria districts and some central-eastern districts like Faizabad, Jaunpur, Basti, Bahraich and Gonda. In Jharkhand, Bhojpuri is spoken in Palamu region. Besides, Bhojpuri has a vast diasporic existence.

Attitude and Motivation towards language: Tavit, Z. rightly said, “Language learning is considered as the keystone of human survival” (17). Some factors such as motivation, attitude, anxiety, learning achievements, aptitudes, intelligence, age, and personalities influence the learning process. Undoubtedly, the most important factor that influences on language, whether as first or second language, learning is learners’ attitudes (Fakeye 22). The present study is an effort to bring something about the attitude and motivation towards Bhojpuri as first language.

This study particularly examines the attitudes of the Bhojpurians towards Bhojpuri, it seems ridiculous that being a Bhojpuri speaker, people’s attitude are not so positive towards Bhojpuri. Kara, A. argued, “Opinion and beliefs have a significant effect on learners’ attitudes towards learning first/Second language.”(34). Positive belief leads to a positive attitude towards learning language, and negative beliefs would lead to the negative attitude.

Atul Kumar Tiwari, a government officer, with Uttar Pradesh Public Service Commission, Allahabad in his article *Bhojpuri aur Hindi Virodh ka sahcharya* (n.pag) expressed his sorrow for Bhojpuri Speakers in terms of Hindi movies. Such instances create a poor and pitiable attitude towards Bhojpuri.



This study is grounding on Bhojpuri speaking people in Varanasi, their attitude and reasons behind as not so interested to continue with the language formally but informally, irrespective of class and caste they belong to.

Literature Review:

In present scenario not only second or foreign but even first language is highly influenced by learners' attitude and motivation. Here this has been taken up with reference to Bhojpuri language. Attitudes are considered to be one of the most important factors affecting the failure or success of any language . Therefore, it has recently received extensive attention from both first and second language researchers. According to Gardner, attitude is an evaluative reaction to some referent or attitude object, inferred on the basis of the individual's beliefs or opinions about the referent(p.91). On the other hand, Lambert, (quoted from Macnamara, 1973: 37) mentions about two types of attitudes; 'integrative' and 'instrumental' attitude to language learning. An integrative attitude is a desire to know and become friendly with speakers of a language, whereas an instrumental one is a desire to better oneself materially by means of the language. He adds, "An integrative attitude is more likely to lead to success than an instrumental one".

Brown (1994) in his great work 'Principles of Language Learning and Teaching' adds: "Attitudes, like all aspects of the development of cognition and affect in human beings, develop early in childhood and are the result of parent's and peer's attitudes, contact with people who are different in any number of ways, and interacting affective factors in the human experience" (168). Here it seems clear that there are many stimulants lead to positive or negative attitude of an individual.

Nevertheless attitude can be simply defined as a set of beliefs developed in a due course of time in a given socio-cultural setting. Although it does not necessarily determine behavior but can have some impact on it. Chamber (1999) asserts that learning occurs more easily, when the learner has a positive attitude towards the language and learning. Gardner and Lambert in their extensive studies give evidence that positive attitudes toward language enhance proficiency as



well. Language attitude studies explore how people react to language interactions and how they evaluate others based on the language behavior they observe. Language learning is affected by the attitude and motivation. Motivated, de-motivated and a motivated ones have different perceptions. Their perceptions are responsible to for their attitudes (n.pag).

Dornyei (2001) argues that unsuccessful learners' lack of learning attitude and motivation affects their learning in a negative way. Attitude and motivation play a significant role in determining the learners' level of achievement in language learning (n.pag).

Thus, attitude refers to our feelings and shapes our behaviors towards learning a language and a language too.

Research Methodology:

The research design of this study is qualitative by nature where the target respondent or subject is observed and analyzed in natural world setting to evaluate Bhojpurians'(Bhojpuri Speakers) attitude towards Bhojpuri.

An Overview of Bhojpurians' Attitude towards Bhojpuri :

Through the method applied for this research paper the findings indicated that the speakers irrespective of class, caste and education at large and shared a common first language, that is, Bhojpuri (Kashika) in Varanasi region. It was found that the speakers use a blend of Hindi in formal settings, whereas English solves academic purposes at English medium schools or in highly formal communications at offices.

This observation revealed favorable attitudes toward English also. It is found that educated Bhojpuri speakers do not share words in their native language with their children. Most often they continue with Hindi with sporadic and patchy uses of English in informal context and surroundings, the positive attitudes are not at the expense of Hindi, even little educated are found to speak Hindi with the patches of Bhojpuri (due to incompetency in Standard Hindi) to



maintain formality even before local people, with children in the family, and at public places as well as it is not considered a status symbol.

It is also observed that although Bhojpurians hold favorable attitudes toward Spoken form of Bhojpuri but displayed highly positive attitudes toward English as a medium of instruction, according to them English is simply a necessary requirement if students are to compete on an equal footing with the students from the rest of the world, Bhojpuri doesn't have that aptitude.

The main factors responsible for such attitude towards Bhojpuri as first language are lack of motivation, self-confidence, a good self image, and high level of anxiety. Overall, they don't have positive attitude towards Bhojpuri from jobs/services and career point of view. There are many examples found where highly educated parents discontinued speaking Bhojpuri with their children as first language thus they are not able to speak Bhojpuri like their parents, such situation can be considered the initiation of endangerment.

As it is also supposed that this attitude towards Bhojpuri has several socio-historical reasons such as most regional scholars argue that Bhojpuri is backward in comparison to its sister language Maithili because it has written literature in addition to oral. Eminent Hindi and Sanskrit scholar of Kashi, Baldev Upadhyaya has written that, in spite of its geographical spread, Bhojpuri is still oral because no ruler gave this language a shelter. He argues that, unlike Vidyapati in Maithili and Surdas in Braj, Bhojpuri never had literary figures or poets who created epics. Thus, Bhojpuri remained the language of uncouth, illiterate villagers.

Atul Kumar Tiwari, a government officer, with Uttar Pradesh Public Service Commission, Allahabad in his article *Bhojpuri aur Hindi Virodh ka sahcharya* (n.pag) expressed his sorrow thus: Bhojpuri remained a language of rural folks and educated people have always been averse to it; even in Hindi movies, only servants are shown as Bhojpuri speakers. This has created a poor and pitiable attitude towards Bhojpuri.

Linguist Tiwari (2011) adds another reason for the backwardness of Bhojpuri. He argues that Brahmins of Bhojpuri belt neglected Bhojpuri; Kashi (Banaras), which was a centre for knowledge, comes under Bhojpuri region, but Kashi pundits were just involved in learning and teaching Sanskrit (n.pag).



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If we further talk about written form of Bhojpuri it is said that Bhojpuri is not written and read; but it is spoken, sung and heard, but in present scenario Bhojpuri magazines like Helo Bhojpuri, Aakhar(e-Magazine), Anjoriya, Bhojpuri Journal etc. are available to read and Bhojpuri people are fond of it . Even at present most of the magazines and journals published by various Bhojpuri organizations invariably publish articles on Bhojpuri grammar. Where one hand scholars are highlighting the absence of ‘great’ literary figures in Bhojpuri, on the other hand, Chandrama Singh, a teacher at Shankar Mahavidyalaya, Sasaram, Bihar, in his article ‘*Bhojpuri par Hindi Sahitya ka Prabhav*’ (2010) highlights that from 1976 till now almost three dozen novels have been published in Bhojpuri language; the first Bhojpuri novel ‘*Bindiya*’ by Ramnath Pandey was written in 1956.

Alok Rai from Allahabad in his article *Bhojpuri Lokgeeton mein Sanskritik tatva* (2010) writes that Bhojpuri oral literature has the pain of the society; has, melody and has, the nationalist consciousness. (n.pag)

It can be seen that most of the scholars expect and aspire for a written Bhojpuri literature which can be read by an ‘educated’ class and hence achieve respectability. Obviously, Bhojpuri in its oral form cannot command the same respect.

There is a now a movement is going on to recognise and enlist Bhojpuri as a scheduled language. Such cautions and efforts are aimed at standardizing and institutionalizing Bhojpuri. Even though the fact that such institutionalization may benefit people such as it may improve employment and career scenario, it is still dubious and skeptic.

Conclusion:

The present paper is an observation of Bhojpuri speakers’ attitude towards Bhojpuri in Varanasi region in relation to career opportunities, education, formal or informal conversation, and status symbol. Speakers hold favorable attitude somewhere at the same time they don’t think it a status symbol. The main factors responsible for such attitude towards Bhojpuri language are lack of motivation, self-confidence, a good self image, and high level of anxiety along with this many socio-historical reasons are also considered responsible.



Moreover, as attitudes are not static, present observation based research does not claim to capture a change in speakers' attitude due to its limited scope. Besides, further research is needed to uncover the reasons and investigate the ways to enhance positivity in Bhojpurians' attitude.

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