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Linguistic Pluralism and Phonological Change: A Case Study of Kashmir

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Linguistic Heterogeneity is observed in societies where more than one language is used. In the context of linguistic heterogeneity, different kinds of linguistic changes or variations can occur. Any society where two or more languages are in contact, these languages influence each other though they may belong to different families. The contact of one language with two or more languages influences it at various linguistic levels. In the present scenario of Kashmir, Kashmiri is in contact with English and Urdu. These two languages have entered Kashmir through Education, though now even areas of informal acquisition for these two languages can be identified (Kak 2002). It is important to note here that Urdu was introduced in Kashmir at the end of 19th century while as English was introduced later in the beginning of the 20th century through Christian missionaries. In Kashmir, both English and Urdu are on a higher prestigious scale as compared to Kashmiri.

It is a well-known fact that languages are continuously changing and change revolves around the manner in which the phonological, morphological, syntactic and other features of a language are modified over time. There are two sources of change in

language-Internal and External. Internal changes are those changes that occur within the language itself while as External changes refer to elements introduced from other languages. These sources may interact, as small changes introduced from outside may cause a ripple effect that ends up altering other language. The contact of Kashmiri with English and Urdu has also influenced it at various linguistic levels. The present paper discusses certain phonological features of Kashmiri which are influenced by the two contact languages English and Urdu, and vice versa.

Method: The method involved recording the casual conversations of 47 native speakers of Kashmiri, having exposure of English and Urdu with skills ranging from a minimum level of comprehension in one of the contact languages to the maximum level of respectable proficiency in all the 4 skills. The informants were from both genders, belonging to different social strata and regions. The conversations were recorded and then subjected to rigorous analysis.

It is important to point here that this paper is part of a larger study of language contact phenomenon which is still in process and only the broader aspects of the study are mentioned in the paper.

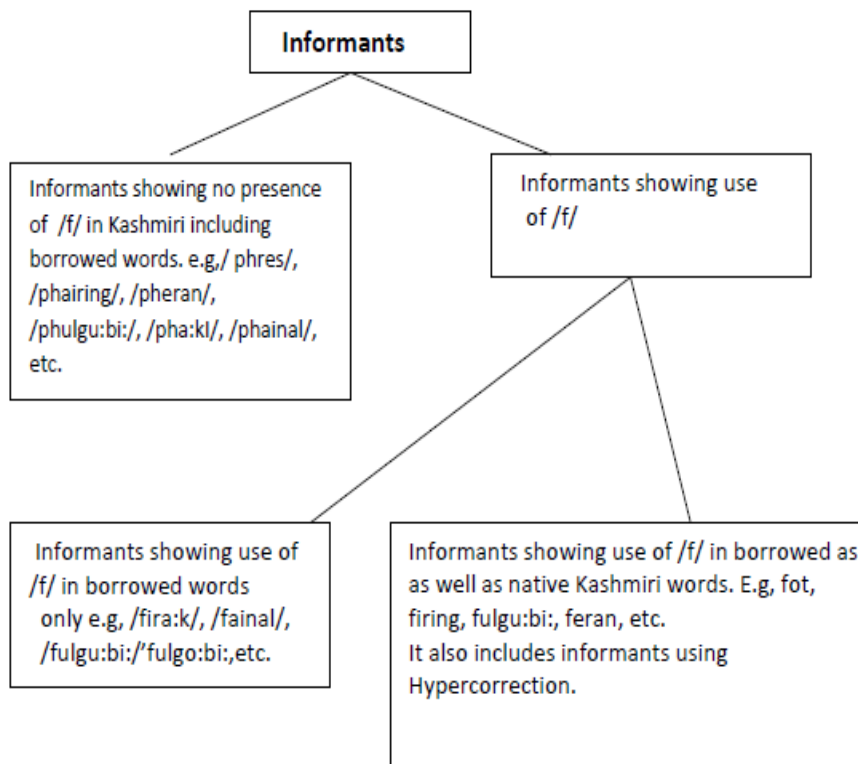
Analysis: In the analysis, various phonological changes/variations were observed which are discussed below:

Kashmiri /ph/ to /f/: The labiodental fricative /f/ is a part of English and Urdu phonological systems. However, /f/ is absent in Kashmiri. In the case of borrowed items containing the labiodental fricative /f/, this phoneme was normally observed to be replaced in Kashmiri by /ph/, a bilabial stop. E.g., words such as full /ful/, life /laif/, five /faiv/,

/fasa:d/ 'turmoil', /safe:d/ 'white' /kaf/ 'cuff' were pronounced as /phul/, /laiph/, /phaiv/, /phasa:d/, /saphe:d/, /kaph/, respectively.

In our sample, the informants showed a hierarchy regarding the presence and absence of /f/ and those who showed the presence of /f/ also had differences in terms of usage.

This is shown schematically as follows.



However, interestingly it was observed in this study that the labiodental /f/ which previously was replaced by the bilabial /ph/ has started being used in Kashmiri. However, the usage was observed in three sets of informants.

a. There was a class of informants using the labiodental /f/ with borrowed words only such as /fira:k/, 'frock', /fairing/ 'firing', /fulgu:bi:/ 'fu:lgo:bi:, etc and /ph/ phoneme with the native words like /phres/, /pheran/, etc. This was mainly found in young informants who had a high proficiency in Urdu and English and belonged to Urban areas.

b. There was a class of informants, using the labiodental /f/ with borrowed Urdu and English words as well as native words. For example, /fres/ 'phres', /fulgu:bi:/

'phulgu:bi:', /feran/ 'pheran', /firing/, /final/, /fala:ni:/, /faki:r/, /fæla:v/ 'phæla:v', /fir/ 'phir', etc. So invariantly, no /ph/ was observed in their speech. These informants were young, showed positive attitudes for Urdu and English and low attitudes towards Kashmiri. These informants were mostly from Urban areas. Some of the words where /f/ phenomena is observed are given below:

words with /f/ phoneme	Gloss
/feran/	'cloak'
/fot/	'basket'
/fres/	'tree'
/fiara:n/	'repent'
/fiãTa:n /	'annoyed'
/pɔf/	'aunt'
/fulgu:bi:/	'cauliflower'
/fru:ts/	'lucky'
/frik'/	'bobbling'
/falə:n'/	'that person'
/fə:tir/	'fool'

Table 1

c. Another set of informants still retained the /ph/ and did not use it at any place in Kashmiri. E.g, /phairiN/ 'firing', /pha:kl/ 'fast', /phainal/ 'final', /pha:yida:/ 'fa:yida:'etc. This set of informants did not use the labiodental /f/ in Urdu or English. So it will be safe to say that this process of inclusion of /f/ in Kashmiri phonology is still in the beginning stage and shows strong correlations with exposure to Urdu and English through education and otherwise. It was also observed that the frequency of /f/ is higher in Srinagar as compared to rural areas. Some of the words where /ph/ phenomenon is observed are given in table 2.

words with /ph/ phoneme	Gloss
/pheran/	'cloak'

/phot/	'basket'
/phres/	'tree'
/phaS/	'pat'
/phiara:n/	'repent'
/phiāTa:n/	'annoyed'
/pɔph/	'aunt'
/phulgu:bi:/	'cauliflower'
/phru:ts/	'lucky'
/phrik'/	'bobbling'
/phalə:n'/	'that person'
/phə:tir/	'fool'

Table 2

English and Urdu /p/ → /f/: An important aspect of the influence of English and Urdu on Kashmiri comes with the realm of Hypercorrection. There were informants who were observed to use labiodental /f/ in Kashmiri in place of bilabial stop /p/ of English and Urdu. Both /ph/ and /p/ are bilabial stops and the difference lies only in *aspiration*. Phoneme /f/ is prestigious, because of its association with two prestigious languages English and Urdu, somehow some informants were observed to use it in place of /p/. Though the frequency is low (6 informants used it). These informants showed high proficiency in Urdu and low proficiency in English. The following data shows the use of /f/ in place of /p/ of English and Urdu.

words with /p/ phoneme	use of /f/ phoneme in place of /p/ phoneme
/po:spo:n/ 'postpone'	/po:sfo:ne/
/a:p/ 'you' (hon.)	/a:f/
/cup karo/ 'Cup it'	/cuf karo/
/cape sha:l/ 'Cape Shawl'	/ke:fSa:l/
/group/	/gruf/
/make up/	/me:k uf/
/plywood/	/flaiwuD/
/ebsent/ 'absent'	/efsent/

Table 3

Variation in Consonant and Vowel Phonemes: In addition to /ph/ to /f/ phenomenon, some consonant and vowel variation was also observed. The following two tables (table 4 & 5) show variation in consonants and vowels:

/azkal/	/a:zkal/	'now a days'
/ja:na:va:r/	/ja:nIvar/	'animal'
/da:ma:nI/	/da:mnl/	'flair'
/pa:ntsah/	/pantsah/	'50'
/na:ma:va:r/	/na:mIvar/	'famous'
/asma:n/	/a:sma:n/	'sky'

Table 4

/ju:rith/	/ju:Dith/	'tied'
/ku:j/	/ku:n/	'corner'
/samsa:r/	/sansa:r/	'world'
/saNtar/	/santar/	'orange'

Table 5

In the above data, it is observed that in Kashmiri, there are chances to use more than one word for one thing. For example saNtar and santar, azkal and a:zkal, ku:j and ku:n, asma:n and a:sma:n, etc. All these pairs of words are semantically equivalent to each other and one word of each pair resembles Urdu words like santara, jo:Dke, a:sma:n, ko:na, a:jkal, etc. This study showed that in such conditions, people prefer to use that word which is phonologically similar to a prestigious language which is Urdu here.

Consonantal Clusters: As already mentioned Kashmiri has been in contact with Urdu and English. Regarding English it is observed that English has double and triple consonant clusters which Kashmiri phonology does not permit. Kashmiri phonology permits only double consonant clusters at initial and final positions of words, in case of which there are certain restrictions as given below:

- a.** In initial clusters, the first member is always either a stop, fricative or affricate and the second member is always a trill i.e. /r/. For example /pr/ in /prasun/ 'to give birth', /Sr/ in /Sra:kh/, 'a knife', /tshr/ in /tshraTh/ 'mischief', etc.
- b.** In final clusters, the first member is always either a nasal or a fricative and the second member is any of the stop. E.g, /mb/ in /amb/ 'mango', /St/ in gaSt/ 'a round' and /nD/ in /khanD/ 'sugar'.

Because of the above mentioned points, English words with triple and double consonant clusters, such as /strike/, /split/, /sprite/, /school/ and /plate/ etc are pronounced in Kashmiri as /siTraik/, /sipliT/, /səku:l/, /sipraiT/ and plleiT/ because this combination of consonants is not found in Kashmiri phonological system and are therefore nativised (as per Kashmiri phonology) by inserting a vowel within a cluster. In addition to the above statement, this study observed that this effect is reducing day by day because of education and exposure. Young informants were observed to pronounce English clusters according to English phonological system. Furthermore these informants showed high English fluency, positive attitudes towards English and their educational background was also good.

Conclusion: In this paper some cross linguistic phonological influences were observed in Kashmiri scenario. It can be assumed that Kashmiri Phonology is being influenced by English and Urdu Phonology. In Kashmir, both English and Urdu are considered as prestigious and the contact of Kashmiri with these two Languages has resulted in various changes and variations at different levels. Out of these levels, phonological level was under focus for this study. Though it is a preliminary study, this can serve as a foundation for a more rigorous study.

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