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THE SINDHI HINDUS OF LONDON – LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE OR LANGUAGE SHIFT?

SUMMARY

The linguistic situation of the Sindhi language in London is examined with a view to determining whether the community is maintaining the use of its ethnic language. The Sindhi Hindus of London are a language community, which have never been researched. The language choice of the community in different domains and for a range of language functions is discussed. Both external and internal factors of language shift have weakened the linguistic and communicative competence of Sindhi speakers in the language contact situation of the United Kingdom.

KEY WORDS: language maintenance, language shift, language choice, London, Sindhis

Background to the Setting

Out of the total population of Great Britain of about 55 million, South Asians (Indian, Pakistani or Bangladeshi) constitute 2.7%. There are now over one and a half million South Asians in the United Kingdom and they constitute the single largest minority in the United Kingdom (Gidoomal, 1997). However, generic descriptions such as South Asian do not take into account the immense cultural, religious and social diversity within this section of the population. Of this South Asian population, the Indian population, which is culturally and linguistically heterogeneous, has been assessed at about 800,000 of whom 500,000 live in the London area. Among the four largest communities are Gujeratis 35%, Punjabis 20%, Bengalis 15% and Tamils 10%, i.e. 80,000 (Gaur, 1995).

Although studies on South Asian minority groups like the Bengalis, Gujeratis, (Desai, 1963; Bhatt, 1994) Tamils (Gaur, 1995) and Sikhs (Ballard, 1977, Bhachu, 1985) have been conducted, the language choices of the Sindhi community, who originate from Sind, today part of Pakistan, have not been researched.

The reduction of motivation and competence in transplanted heritage languages is the result of politically motivated monolingual ideology and British educational policies (Verma, Corrigon and Firth, 1995). For instance, "it has been commonplace throughout the last 30 years for bilingual parents to be told that it is in their

children's best interests to hear only English in the house. Minority languages in Britain are threatened as younger children undergo a mother tongue deskilling process in primary schools. These policies are said to relegate the maintenance of the ethnic language to the community" (Edwards and Alladina, 1991: 5–6).

T. van der Avoird and M. Verma (1996: 108), discussing the language habits of the socio-economically reasonably successful Hindi speaking community in the United Kingdom say there is "little doubt that there is a significant shift to English among the young generation because of diffuse social networks and attitude that English, not Hindi, will be pragmatically more useful in the employment". Gaur (1995) who researched a South Indian ethnolinguistic group, i.e. the Tamil community in Britain, also comes to the same conclusion with regard to the language use of the Tamils in Great Britain. She says that by the 1970s the children of middle class families made more use of English.

Such research findings reveal that on the whole minority communities tend to shift to the dominant language. This is because the implicit and explicit pressures on the members of ethnic minority groups to learn the dominant language of the host society are very high (Verma, 1995: 80). However, ethnic studies indicate that while some minority communities shift to the host language, not all minority groups succumb to the intrusion of the majority language. For instance, the Gujerati community in London, although English has become a major element in its linguistic repertoire, retains a very strong base in its ancestral language – Gujerati (Reid et al., 1985: 59). Agnihotri (1979) finds that the Punjabi Sikh community in Leeds uses a mixed Punjabi-English code for intraethnic interaction, while for the Punjabis of Southall a high ethnolinguistic vitality exists (Saxena, 1995). It therefore appears that while some ethnic minorities succumb to the host language, others maintain the use of their ethnic language.

Objective of the Study

The objective of this research is to determine whether a minority South Asian community, i.e. the Sindhi Hindu community in the London area, and more specifically those living in the borough of Redbridge, i.e. Ilford, is maintaining the use of its ethnic language or shifting away from it. Language shift is measured by making comparisons of language choices between generations and/or age groups.

Methodology

As no study has been made of the Sindhi community, the history of the community in London is pieced together from oral interviews conducted over a three-month sabbatical in London. Semi-structured interviews were held with a number of senior citizens to obtain the history of the community in the London area.

In order to get a comprehensive picture of language choice and use a 73-item questionnaire was administered to 5 Sindhi families in the Ilford area, where 9 Sindhi

families reside. The 5 selected families consist of 17 members of an extended family who live in separate homes. Details of the respondents are provided in Table 1. The Ilford Sindhi families are not only related, but a number also have businesses in the same locality, i.e. Petticoat Lane in the East End.

Table 1: Details of the respondents

Family 1
Father (X, 40 years), X's wife (originally from Singapore), son (18 years) and daughter (9 years)
Family 2
X's parents (father, 60s, originally from Singapore and Mother, 50 years, from India) and son (20s)
Family 3
X's younger brother (30s), his wife (from India) and two daughters (15 and 10 years)
Family 4
X's brother-in-law (40s), his sons (14 and 20s) and daughter-in-law (from India)
Family 5
X's brother-in-law's sister and husband

The purpose od the questionnaire was to gauge respondents' perceptions of their choice of language with different members of the family at home, in business and religious domains. The questionnaire was administered to each member of the household to get a comprehensive picture of the language options of the different members of a family.

Apart from the questionnaire, I observed a range of speech activities and speech events in order to determine the dominant language both in private and public settings of the Sindhi speech community in the London area. Transcripts of natural conversations at home, in religious domains and in intracommunity interactions were made with a view to establishing the language used in such domains.

The loss of ethnic language competence, which is a roadmark of language shift, was determined by participation observation of interactions at home, in the business and religious domains and in intracommunity interactions. In addition, in order to determine proficiency, three members of the family were asked on separate occasions to report the same joke in Sindhi.

Significance of the Study

The researcher is a Malaysian Sindhi and is also related to one of the respondents. Both these factors greatly aided in making inroads into the community under

study and facilitated a participant observation ethnographic study. The value of small studies on minority communities from an insider's perspective reveals much data that is not so easily accessible to a researcher who is an outsider. Rampton et al. (1996) acknowledges the difficulty of finding direct observational research on early language socialization of minority children at home. The research fills the dearth of such studies.

The study on the British Sindhis also contributes to the knowledge of the community in different settings, such as Singapore (David, 1997), Malaysia (David, 1996), the Philippines (Dewan, 1998) and India (Daswani and Parchani, 1965).

The Sindhi Diaspora

The Sindhi Hindus of London originally came from Sind, which is today a part of Pakistan. From time immemorial members of the community have been international traders. As a result of the 1947 partition of the Indian sub-continent, the Sindhis are today a dispersed community. Sindhis have settled in large numbers in all parts of India, and in places like Hong Kong, Singapore and Jakarta (Indonesia). To illustrate the international ties of the Sindhis, just one family in the Ilford area was asked in which parts of the world it had relatives. The family had kinsmen in Singapore, Holland, the United States, Indonesia, St. Martin and Pune (India). This Sindhi diaspora has resulted in the formation of international commercial and trading connections. Sindhis, whose culture is oriented towards business, work through such communal networks. An example is the Inlaks group – an international Sindhi entrepreneurial group that is based in Geneva, and is found in 15 countries including the United Kingdom.

However, wherever they are, even in Sind and in India, Sindhis have been and are still an ethnolinguistic minority. In Sind, prior to partition, the Sindhi-Hindus were a minority comprising less than 20 percent of the population and were largely a business community.

The Sindhi language belongs to the northwestern group of the Indo-Aryan languages, a sub-group of the Indo-European family. The language is based on Prakrit as well as Sanskrit, with vocabulary items also from Arabic, Persian and Dravidian. The script used by Sindhis who have settled abroad is Arabic Nask having 52 alphabets. Despite the fact that the Sindhi language was once used by the British government in Sind as a medium of education and administration, studies in different settings show that the language has lost its viability in India (Daswani, 1989), Metro Manila, the Philippines (Dewan, 1988), Malaysia (David, 1996) and Singapore (David, 1997).

Findings

The findings will be discussed under history (discussed under the heading "The Sindhi Community in London") and language choice. The former has been pieced together by spoken accounts of the first generation members of the community,

which has been collaborated against documented works on the South Asian arrival in the United Kingdom. Language choice is determined by the findings of the questionnaire as well as by ethnographic observations.

History of the Sindhi Hindu Community in London

The Sindhis in the United Kingdom are not a homogenous group. Today, although most members of the Sindhi community remain Hindus, a small group of them have become Christians. Even the Sindhis who are Hindus appear to be non-united in their faith as they tend to maintain different gurus or religious leaders. Apart from the Sindhi Hindus who originally came from Sind and other parts of India, there is also a smaller number of Sindhis who are Muslims and for the large part Pakistani by nationality. This Sindhi (Pakistani) Muslim community does not socialize with the Hindu or Christian Sindhi communities.

There are about 4,000 Sindhi Hindus in the United Kingdom. The majority, i.e. about 1,000 Sindhi families live in London although a small number of about 20 families are to be found in Manchester. This makes the Sindhis one of the smallest South Asian minorities in the United Kingdom.

Unlike the Sindhis of Malaysia (David, 1996) and Singapore (David, 1998), the Sindhis of London came to the United Kingdom from different sociolinguistic settings, some having migrated from Hyderabad Sind, some from India and others from different regions of Africa. Those coming from India, Africa and other parts of the world are also double or triple migrants. Having arrived to London, they tended to settle in the same locality where other community members from the same region they had come from had settled.

The community in London, as in Malaysia (David, 1996) and Singapore (David, 1998), is made up of the Bhaibunds trading community that makes up the majority of the Sindhi community, and the Amils who originally represented the professional class. The Bhaibunds had their roots in Hyderabad Sind. More recently such distinctions have been partly broken down since many of the offspring of the first generation Bhaibunds migrants have pursued a tertiary education and hold professional posts.

As early as in 1929 a small community of Sindhis, for the most part made up of merchant-traders, existed in London. Then in the 1950s, another group of Sindhis, mainly Amils, came from India either as doctors or dentists. Other Sindhis of middle class background came to acquire professional qualifications and then remained after having been offered appropriate work. Gaur (1995) discussing the Tamil community of London mentions the establishment of the National Health Service (NHS) which resulted in a number of doctors who, she reports, moved from India when the United Kingdom was confronted with a shortage of physicians. This group of doctors, it is hypothesized, must have also included Sindhi Amils. These early Sindhis migrants were educated in English and raised their families in the United Kingdom.

In the 1970s another group of Sindhis came from Africa. Because of the 1940 Nationality Act which bestowed British citizenship on all colonial and commonwealth citizens who wanted to work in UK, Sindhis from other parts of the British empire, such as Kenya (in 1967 Kenya expelled African Asians holding British passports) and Uganda 1972 were able to find home in the UK when the political situations and/or the Africanisation policies in these areas forced them to flee.

In addition, a group of successful Sindhi businessmen from the Eastern African countries, notably from Lagos, generally came to the United Kingdom in the 1950s and 60s. This migration accelerated in the 1970s. The Lagos Sindhis have maintained businesses and second homes in London. London was attractive to these wealthy businessmen because of its finance and banking facilities. More recently, in the 1980s, Sindhis arrived from British Guyana and in the 1990s from Hong Kong.

In the transplanted setting of the United Kingdom, the Sindhis settled in different parts of London. While the children of the Lagos Sindhi businessmen attended public boarding schools and second homes were established in the more affluent west end of London, in places like Swiss Cottage, St. John's Wood and Hempstead, those from Nairobi generally settled in Finchley (North London) while the Sindhis from Mombazique moved into the Shepherds Bush area. Those from Uganda came with their families and started by peddling their wares in London's East End, living in premises above shops or places of work.

The information about specific localities and personal contacts in these localities therefore played an important part in determining where the newly arrived Sindhis, who had come from different parts of Africa and other regions, settled in London. Such chain migration has resulted in many of the families in the area under study, i.e. Ilford, having "close and dense networks." (see Milroy, 1997). Such close and dense networks among ethnic members within a specific locality, it has been argued, favour language maintenance (Milroy, 1987).

In order to understand the dynamics of the language choice, maintenance or shift it is essential to trace the life history of subjects and place of residence before the Sindhis settled in London. In Malaysia the Sindhis are first time migrants, in contrast, the Sindhis in United Kingdom appear to consist of both first time and multifold migrants. For instance, on arrival in the United Kingdom the Sindhis from Africa were multilingual, as they knew English and some African languages in addition to their mother tongue. One first generation respondent reported that in Africa he had used Swahili to communicate with African employees, Sindhi with family members, Hindi to understand Asian films, English in school and Gujerati and Kutchi with ethnic friends.

Economic Mobility of the Community

The Sindhis are economically mobile as noted in many success stories told. For instance, from a newsagent in the 1960s one Sindhi elder advanced to owning chain shops within a relatively short period of time. Community members generally attribute economic progress such as this to their hard work, ability to spot busi-

ness opportunities, and willingness to learn the language/s of the clientele. Sindhi entrepreneurial skills have thus resulted in a very rapid upward mobility. The result of such a success-oriented culture is that a number of community members have been included in a listing of Britain's Asian millionaires. For instance, the twelfth richest Asian millionaire in the United Kingdom is a Sindhi.

Many of the Sindhis who had come from east Africa became small traders or shopkeepers, since "for many East African Asians it was traditional to be one's own boss and a disgrace to work for someone" (Gidoomal, 1993: 27). More recently, a number of younger community members have started to move away from trade and have become professionals. However, many members of the young generation harness traditional entrepreneurial skills and combine them with professionalism for business purposes. Therefore, despite having professional qualifications, these second generation members tend to join the family businesses.

In London the larger Sindhi community has had varying levels of economic success leading to a class system within the community itself which is generally categorized by residential area. Class divisions exist among community members and this economic schism is marked by residential location.

Social Cohesion

The Sindhis have closely knit family and community ties. The kinship ties are not confined to ties among the Sindhis of the UK but also with those in other parts of the world. Such links are maintained for business and for the seeking of life mates. In London intracommunity interactions, especially among those who belong to specific economic classes, are frequent, the community being held together by frequent social, religious and work-related interactions. There is a high degree of social cohesion and interaction and a number of sub-groups like the *Youth Group*, *Silver Wings* group for those aged 50 and above (that are formed under the aegis of the Sindhi Association of the United Kingdom) and other voluntary religious groups like the *Sai Baba* or *Dada Vasvani* devotees have been formed. The community tends to practice endogamy and arranged marriages prevail. Despite trade rivalries a strong sense of community exists.

In short, the Sindhis of the United Kingdom came to this country from different parts of the world, at different times and for different reasons, which included economic, educational and political ones. They view themselves as a thriving, hard-working business community with an overriding concern with status and a compelling drive towards achievement.

The Community in Ilford

Ilford, a borough of Redbridge (East London) has a large number of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs numbering about 30,000. The languages used in this locality are Gujerati, Hindi, Punjabi and Urdu. The Sindhis of Ilford, fairly recent immi-

grants in the 1950s, consist of 9 families who live in a dominant South Asian neighborhood and the children attend schools where the majority of their schoolmates today are South Asians.

Although many Sindhi families now maintain nuclear homes and the patriarchal control has somewhat broken down, the traditional extended family concept is maintained, with family members living in the same locality, albeit in separate homes. Life for the community revolves around community networks, which maintain group norms, e.g. arranged marriages, going to temples, visiting ethnic and other Indian friends and family members. There appears to be greater affinity to other Sindhis rather than to English friends.

As many of the Ilford Sindhi women work alongside their spouses, in family businesses the women are not necessarily custodians of the ethnic language. Moreover, although many of the wives of the second generation British Sindhis are first generation migrants (FG1), they do not perpetuate the use of the ethnic or ancestral language. This is because the London FG1s come from different regions of India and different parts of the world including Singapore where English is already displacing Sindhi.

The traditional notion of age and generation breaks down with the advent of these women, who though in their twenties and thirties, are first generation British Sindhis. Where traditionally first generation migrants maintain the use of the ethnic language for a longer time as compared to succeeding generations, this would not necessarily apply to the first generation Sindhi spouse generally, female, of a second generation British Sindhi. This is because the "foreign-born" women including those from India, are already proficient in English on their arrival to the United Kingdom. Second generation British Sindhi husbands appear to use English with such first generation spouses.

The Sindhi business has traditionally been in the textile trade but in the United Kingdom there has been some diversification to other products, notably electronics. These businessmen service the larger English speaking community. The Sindhi trait of wanting one's own business and the built-in drive to social and economic mobility has resulted in a quick move from joint families staying on top of the shop premises to owner occupied nuclear family homes. They have also moved from peddlers to shop owners in a fairly short period of time.

Milroy (1987) postulated that communities with close knit networks tend to maintain the use of their ancestral languages for a longer duration. The argument is that a closeknit network has the capacity to function as a norm enforcement mechanism. Whether the Sindhi community of Ilford maintains the use of its ethnic language is now determined.

Questionnaire and Ethnographic Findings – Language Choice

Under the following subheadings we will discuss: language use at home, in the workplace and religious domain; language choice with ethnic, i.e. Sindhi friends; language proficiency in spoken Sindhi; language literacy and language attitudes.

Language Use at Home

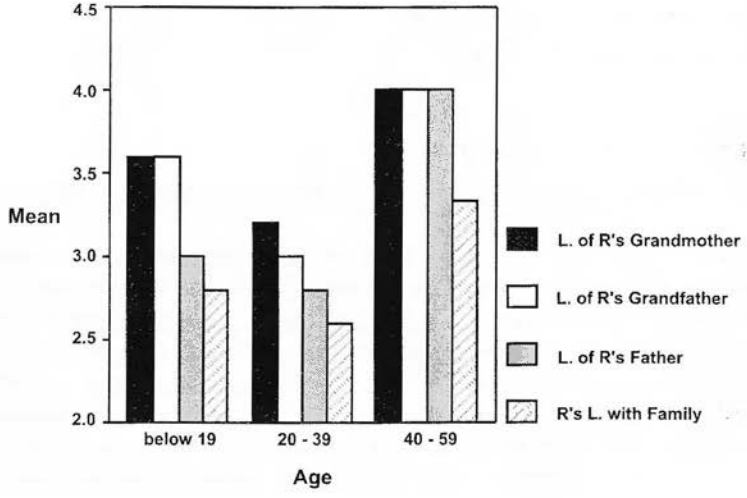
Members of the same family have different patterns of language use because of the different compositions of their networks. Where nuclear families consisting of only younger British Sindhis exist, the dominant home language is English. The general pattern in the case when there is a conflagration of first generation parents and second generation children is for the former to use Sindhi among themselves and a dominant Sindhi but with some English code with their children. This picture of variance in the language choice and use of respondents and their grandparents and parents is seen in Figure 1. The diagram shows the language used by grandparents and parents of the respondents of different age groups, i.e. R1 (below 19 years), R2 (between 20–39) and R3 (above 40).

Along the Y axis the variety of languages is shown, with 4 equating to Sindhi and 2.5 to English.

The variety of languages used in the home of older respondents (R3) is not as varied as the languages used in the homes of younger respondents. This is because the grandparents and parents of older respondents (when alive) used Sindhi. In contrast, respondents in the 20–39 age group (R2) indicate that there is non-reciprocal language use with R2s using more English with older family members. However, as contrasted to the parents and grandparents of R3s who tended to use Sindhi only, the parents and the grandparents of the R2s use a mixed discourse of Sindhi/English with R2s. Non-reciprocal language use is also seen in the language of R1 respondents, i.e. below 19 years of age

The general pattern in the Ilford Sindhi community is that the younger community members appear more proficient and comfortable in English with the older being more competent in Sindhi. Non-reciprocal language choice in the home domain is common. (See 2 and 7 below)

Figure 1: Language Choice in the Family



Observations over a three-month stay with the community in Ilford indicated that the children use English in peer interaction and a mixed discourse with dominant English and with some Sindhi when communicating with their parents. Code switching often occurs in communities undergoing rapid social and linguistic change (David, 1996). The Sindhi-Hindu community appears to be no exception to such a mixed discourse.

The home language tends to vary. Monolingual Sindhi is normally used by older community members (see lines 6 and 7 below). For elderly female members, who lack any regular social intercourse with those outside the tightly knit South Asian community (with whom Hindi is used), English proficiency is low. In contrast, monolingual English is normally used by younger community members in peer interaction. (See lines 4 and 5 below, i.e. in the talk between younger siblings).

A mixed Sindhi-English code is evident in Sindhi homes, with either Sindhi or English being dominant in this mixed discourse. This depends on who is speaking to whom. Sindhi is dominant in the mixed discourse of older community members (see lines 1 and 3). The discourse of the younger members of the community discloses that the occurrence of Sindhi does not go beyond the lexical item level. (See line 4)

1. Mother (60s) to 30-year-old daughter:
– *Kuch* (any) lock *vijo* (have you) *aye*?
Did you lock?

2. Daughter to mother:
– It was working this morning.

3. Mother: Lock *khalos aur* (open or) break *kain*? (did he)
Did he unlock it or break the lock?

4. Daughter to peer: We Mahtanis don't do *chati* (name-giving ceremony) for girls.

5. Daughter to brother: Are you ready?

6. Mother to 30-year-old daughter:
– *Ninda kanthe achas*?
Sleep not come?
(Is she /granddaughter/ not sleepy?)

7. Daughter: No she wants to play. Is the heating on in the room Mum?

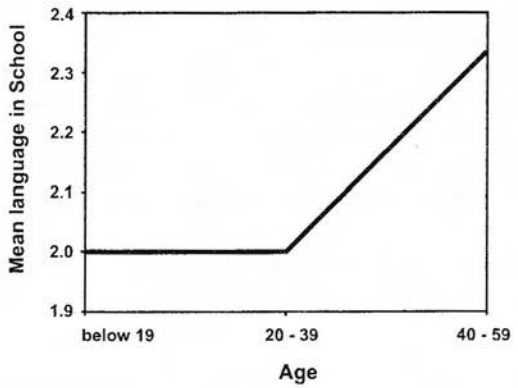
Codeswitching is an accepted convention in interaction with older community members. The basic language in such codeswitches by younger members of the community is predominantly English. At times, younger members of the community shift to English, even though spoken to in Sindhi. Such code shifts indicate a non-reciprocal code choice on the part of younger community members. However, the ability to respond to an utterance in which the dominant language is Sindhi does suggest that younger community members have a passive knowledge of the ethnic language. Despite the existence of such passive knowledge of Sindhi, the

chances of the language being passed down to the next generation appear dismal because very little Sindhi is used.

The use of Sindhi, albeit minimal in codeswitched responses indicates that the younger members of the community are, to some extent, accommodating to the speech habits of the older interlocutors. Such mixing is an integral part of the verbal repertoire of the second generation when responding to older community members. Ramat (1990) states that as long as bilingualism remains the common property of the community, code switching will function as a discourse mode. Studies of minority communities making use of a code mixed discourse in the United Kingdom have been reported (Li Wei, 1994, on the Chinese community in North East England and Saxena, 1995, on the Punjabi community in Southall).

Code mixed discourse whether with dominant English (You want to go to *dukaan*? /shop/) or dominant Sindhi (*thoro* attempt *karo*, i.e. try it a bit) is understood and responded to as the community appears to be multilingual, with the older first generation women, having a passive knowledge of English, and younger community members, having a passive knowledge of Sindhi. These differing levels of proficiency in English and Sindhi thus enable the use and comprehension of a mixed discourse.

Figure 2: Language in School



It must be emphasised that the traditional distinction between the first and second generation community members, having differing proficiencies in different languages, does not always hold true in the Ilford case. This is because not only did the second generation community members state that they regarded English as their mother tongue but some first generation migrants to the United Kingdom also admitted low proficiency in Sindhi for a number of reasons. They left India as youths to pursue further studies in the UK as single adults (see Figure 2 which shows that for the respondents of all ages, i.e. R1, R2 and R3 the mean medium of instruction is 2, i.e. English). They then generally returned to India to contract an arranged marriage and subsequently started their married life in nuclear homes in UK. Other married second generation London based Sindhi women, educated and working in

the UK, used English at home with their spouses. One respondent in the sample, a first generation father-in-law, used English with his son and daughter-in-law. One first generation elderly Sindhi among the Ilford respondents admitted that he did not know the terms for double-digit numbers in Sindhi.

Such variation in the choice of languages used in home discourse indicates that the Sindhi language is in a process of flux.

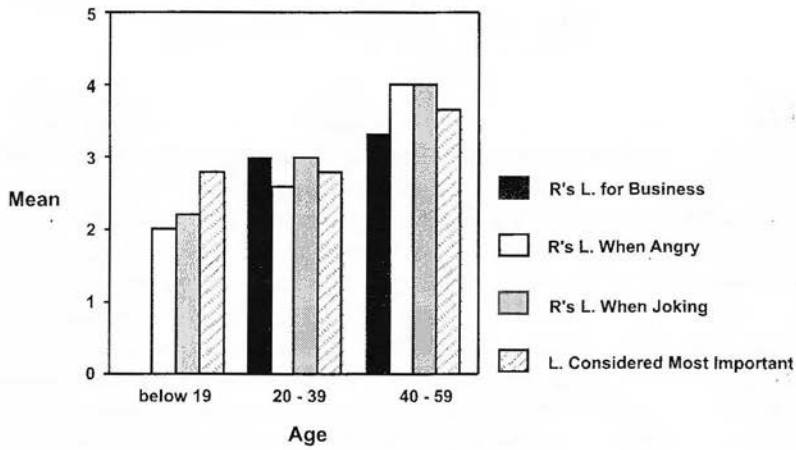
Functional Use of Sindhi

The homes of the second generation British Sindhis in many of the Ilford Sindhi homes have become English dominant. However, this does not mean that Sindhi is never used. Sindhi is still resorted to in English dominant speech when there is a need to refer to culturally loaded lexical items. In peer interaction the young still resort to single Sindhi lexical items to refer to certain specific items. For instance, as Sindhi cuisine still dominates in the English speaking Sindhi home, it is not uncommon to hear expressions like "I want *papar*" uttered by the English dominant Sindhi.

Sindhi also has specific terms to refer to a wide range of relationships. The young in English dominant speech use Sindhi kinship terms. This is because the Sindhi kinship system is three-dimensional, for instance, there is a specific term for father's sister's daughter. These kinship terms are important and are maintained in the English dominant speech as English expressions like uncle and aunt obliterate the complexity of such relationships.

Religious terms in dominant Sindhi like "*arti*, *puja*, *parsad* and *bhajan*" also feature. Code mixed utterances like "This *bhajan* will give you strength" or "*Dada* gave us the *mantra*" are not uncommon. This is because semantically motivated introduction of single Sindhi items in English dominant discourse is a communicative strategy used to express precisely and concisely a desired meaning.

Figure 3: Language for Different Functions



Apart from semantic reasons for resorting to Sindhi there are also pragmatic reasons for making use of Sindhi. Sindhi terms are used when teasing a peer as in the following example: "*Charain ain!*" (You are mad!) At times Sindhi is resorted to when retelling a story and quoting an elder who used Sindhi. Older respondents, i.e. R3 (aged 40–59) used only Sindhi (mean=4) when angry or for joking (Figure 3). In contrast, younger respondents, i.e. R2 (aged between 20–39) used a mixed discourse of Sindhi/English (mean=3) and respondents below 19, i.e. R1s used more English (mean=2) for the same language functions.

The younger community members appear to be more proficient in Hindi as it is the language of entertainment. Hindhi songs and movies/videotapes are a main source of entertainment. Hindhi is also perceived by the young to be a language for inter-South Asian community identity.

Language Use in the Workplace

While the ethnic language is not used much in peer interaction by the second generation Sindhis in home discourse, the ethnic language is resorted to in the work place. It has value in the business domain as a private and exclusionist language. In many studies on language maintenance and shift it has been declared that the home is the last bastion of ethnic language use. However, the pragmatic Sindhis resort to Sindhi in the business domain as it has the function of maintaining privacy and excluding outsiders especially when there is a need to negotiate prices or to concede to price cuts requested by customers. If their business dealings are with other Hindhi speaking South Asians, Hindhi cannot be considered a private language.

These observations of language choice at the workplace are validated by the responses to the question "What language do you use for business?" Figure 3 shows that while older respondents, i.e. R3 use more Sindhi (Mean=4=Sindhi), those between 20–39 years, i.e. R2 too use a mixed discourse of Sindhi/English.

Sindhi is, however, not the only private language at their disposal. Some of the second generation Ilford Sindhis who originally came from Singapore use Malay instead of Sindhi as a private language in the work place. In the business world there is an urgent need for a private exclusionist language and Sindhi or Malay or any other language which is not widely spoken by the clients or customers of the Sindhi businessmen fills that need.

Language Use in the Religious Domain

Unlike other parts of the world like Malaysia, where the Sindhis share a temple with other North Indian Hindus, the Sindhis of London have a temple of their own for community members.

A key personnel in the temple, the priest who used to conduct Sindhi classes, expressed the view that it was sufficient for community members to speak the ethnic language, as the written script was difficult. The priest had a tendency to switch to

English with younger Sindhi respondents after the religious service was over. The spoken languages used by the priest included Sindhi, Hindi, Punjabi and English in his "sermons". Proverbs, which were first given in Sindhi, were then explained in English.

Announcements made by community leaders were made in a code mixed discourse with English as the dominant language (see the following extract):

> So before the *arti* (hymn) I would like to thank Savithri *bain*. (Sister) *Shivaratri* (a day in honour of Lord Shiva) day is like a wedding day. Please don't be late. At time *mae acho*. (Come) Please come and wear colourful clothes. Give us a ring. *Thanjo* (your) arrangement *usae khandasie*. (We will make) (We will make arrangements for you to come.)

If community leaders show such accommodative tendencies to the linguistic preferences of younger ethnic members, the Sindhi language will not survive beyond the first generation of Sindhi migrants.

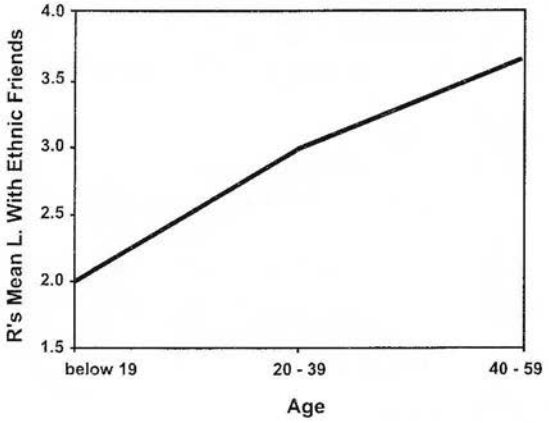
This accommodative tendency on the part of older community members to the linguistic preferences of the younger community members was again noticed in special religious prayer meetings of young devotees who believed in Dada Vaswani, a religious leader who is based in Pune, India, but travels to Sindhi communities all over the world. In London while the older Dada Vasvani group said their prayers in Sindhi and socialised after the prayers in dominant Sindhi, the younger Dada Vasvani group had their prayers and even some hymns and mantras in English. The religious and social discourse among the younger Dada Vasvani "converts" was all in English and an older first generation community member in whose house the service was held, accommodated and used English not only with the youngsters but also with her spouse. If and when the older community members (who host the function for the younger devotees) used Sindhi it was used to quote the literature and immediately after the text in Sindhi, an English translation was provided for the young audience.

Dada Vasvani, an international Sindhi sage who annually visits Sindhis all over the world, also accommodated linguistically to the Sindhi congregation in London. The videotapes of his sermons were both in English and Sindhi, the latter was played at the meeting of the older community members while the English tape was played for the younger community members. Such sensitivity to audiences of different ages indicates that the community understands and accommodates the linguistic preferences of the English speaking younger community members.

Language with Sindhi Friends

The choice of language with ethnic friends, i.e. other Sindhis (Figure 4) shows clearly that the younger community members (R1) use English (mean=2) whereas older respondents (R3) use more Sindhi (mean=4). If the ethnic language is not used with members of the Sindhi community there is little hope for the Sindhi language.

Figure 4: Language with Ethnic Friends



Level of Proficiency in Spoken Sindhi

In order to determine the level of proficiency across age, three members of different age groups were asked to report the same joke in Sindhi. Analysis of the discourse reveals that only Sindhi was used in the discourse of the older respondent aged 40. In contrast the discourse of her daughter (aged 9) and niece (aged 15) was a mixed discourse of Sindhi/English. The 9 years old respondent used more English lexical items, for instance, the words for elephant and ant were not in Sindhi as compared to the 15 year old respondent. Although she knows the Sindhi word for elephant, the latter appears to be more comfortable in English because she automatically uses the English term first and only then followed by the Sindhi term (line 1). In the midst of her discourse she falls back to the English term (line 5).

Transcript of R (40s)

Ekro haathi ho and eekri kheelhi hui.
(One elephant there was and one ant there was)
Kheeli haathi kae chaeng musa baar haal.
Haathi chaeng kheeli kae minjo pi kae kaar laganda. Kheeli chao hara usae sothchu tha tha kuj usae baar vanu. Kheeli chao thu minje putia likh.
(There was an elephant and an ant. The ant told the...)

Transcript of R's 9 year old daughter.

1. Ekro di ekro ELEPHANT ho AND ekro ANT ho.
(One day one elephant there was and one ant there was.) There was an elephant and an ant.
2. ANT ELEPHANT kae ASK kayang SO baar ache par ELEPHANT chow na BECAUSE minjo DADDY disando AND muka TELL OFF karando.
(Ant elephant to asked so out come but the elephant said no because my daddy

will see and me tell off will do.) The ant asked the elephant to come out but the elephant said no because my father will see and tell me off.
3. Po ANT chaeva tha ma kuch THINK kandam.
(Then the ant said that I some thing think will.) The ant said that he would think of some thing.
4. SO ANT chaeng haal.
(So the ant said let's go.) So the ant said let us go.
5. ELEPHANT disae hino jo DADDY AND ANT chavae tha minjo BACK kae HIDE kar.
(The elephant saw his father and the ant said that my back behind hide.) The elephant saw his father and the ant asked him to hide behind his back.

Transcript of R's 15 year old niece

1.Ekro die ELEPHANT haathi ho.
(One day elephant elephant there was.) There was once an elephant
2.Ekro die kheeli hui.
(One day ant there was.) There was once an ant.
3.Kheeli puchang haathi kae tha thu musa baar acho.
(Ant asked elephant to that you with me out come.) The ant asked the elephant to go out with him
4.Chaeng tha ma ALLOWED kaan aye.
(Said that I allowed not.) He said that he was not allowed.
5.ELEPHANT chaeng tha THINK karo po baar viya.
(The elephant said that think do then out go.) The elephant said let me think then we can go out.
6.Haathi ditang AND chaeng minjo DADDY pyo ache.
(Elephant saw and said my daddy is coming.) The elephant saw his father approaching.
7.Kheeli chaeng tha thu minje putia HIDE kaar.
(The ant said that you my back hide do.) The ant asked the elephant to hide behind his back.

The responses of the older community members also disclose that they have little confidence in the ability of the young to understand them when they use Sindhi. For instance, at a religious gathering there was a great deal of linguistic accommodation to the language preference of the younger interlocutor. In addition, when Sindhi was used a translation in English often followed or a repetition of what had been said in Sindhi was again provided but time in English. (See the following extract). Translations in English of texts read in Sindhi are also provided.

Thum be sab jana pritam
You know everything my Lord
Tharai ichar pura
Your will be done

Language and Literacy

It has been argued that literacy is often an important factor in language maintenance and transmission from one generation to another. Van der Avoird and Verma (1996: 19) mention that many Hindus do not have active or passive control of written ethnic language. In the Sindhi temple books and handouts are available both in Romanised script and in Sindhi. Religious books like the *Guru Granth* (the Holy Book of the Sikhs) and the *Bhagavad Gita* have been translated into English. Having a romanised form of the language seems to be the only way of preserving it. With such translations available there is no real need felt by younger community members to learn the Sindhi script. Incidentally, the written notices in the temple are in a codemixed discourse with English being the dominant language.

Diagraphia is the use of two or more writing systems for representing a single language. Sindhi has four scripts: Devanagairi, Arabic-Persian, Gurumkhi and Romanised English. Some of the first generation older Sindhi women can read Sindhi only in Gurumkhi, the script of the Sikh Holy Books which they learnt in religious schools in Sind. Even some older community members reported not being fluent in writing and consequently not being able to read in Sindhi. The written skills have been lost early, a number of first generation migrants said they could not read or write Sindhi.

Language Attitudes

Language attitude is measured on the following dimensions: language preference and use, and self report data on attitudes. While it is clear that the younger members of the community are moving away from the use of their ethnic language, especially in peer interaction, the attitudes of the older community members with regard to this phenomena indicate that they, too, do not view Sindhi as an asset that is needed to survive in a world where English is the main trading language and ownership of other languages like French an asset.

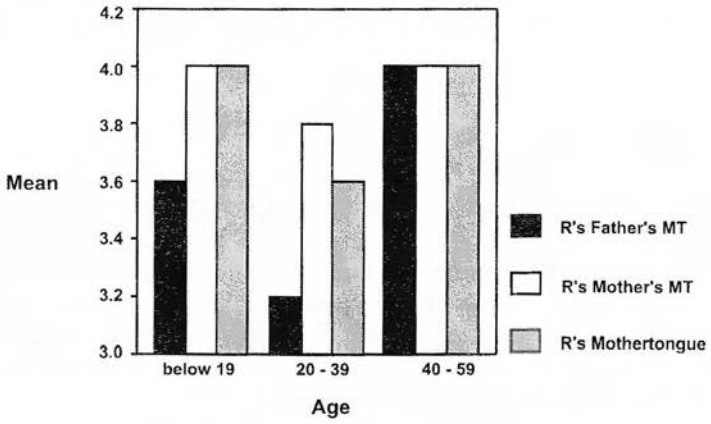
Figure 3 which shows the language for different functions also reveals that Sindhi is not considered the most important language for all respondents notwithstanding age. Although the older respondents, i.e. R3 give it a high rating (nearer 4, i.e. Sindhi), for R2 it is the mixed discourse of Sindhi and English which are both important and in this mixed discourse English is considered more important (mean =<3).

Parents are not really concerned that their children cannot read or write Sindhi. They appear to be more concerned that the children are proficient in English. English is seen as an international language, which can enhance economic mobility. Parents desire their children to become fluent in English and other foreign languages to improve their future prospects. Being fluent in several languages is seen as a business asset. "My own children don't speak Hindi, Gujerati or Sindhi and this doesn't worry me unduly. In Britain these languages are not essential to their education," said one first generation migrant.

Many first generation parents used English with their children as the educational guidelines at the time they migrated to the United Kingdom, i.e. in the fifties and sixties suggested that the use of English at home was educationally and linguistically sound. Some parents said that if it came to a choice of music lessons or any other school related curricular activity rather than time given to learning Sindhi they would veer in favour of the former as they saw no real benefit in the latter. With attitudes like this it is not unsurprising to note that while the older respondents reported Sindhi (4= Sindhi) as their mother tongue, for the younger respondents it was a mixed discourse of Sindhi/English (mean= 3.2-3.6) which was perceived as their mother tongue. (Figure 5)

The society appears to be pragmatic with materialistic motivations. Knowing Sindhi is not materially beneficial, so why learn it? There is no shame involved in not knowing one's ethnic language and no sense of loss felt by leading community members. Key personnel like the Vice President of an elite woman's group, the Sindhi *Nari Sabha*, openly admitted not being able to speak the ethnic language.

Figure 5: Perception of the Mothertongue



Although there appears to be a fear that the Sindhi language will die and not go beyond the next generation, community leaders seem to be untroubled by this "as long as we live together." Giles and Johnson (1981) have stated that although language can be a salient dimension of ethnicity, a distinctive language is not necessary for the maintenance of ethnolinguistic distinctiveness. Lack of Sindhi is not a barrier to a sense of "Sindhiness" among community members who use English as a means of communication.

Older community members accommodate to younger community members linguistically. They are willing to accept non-reciprocal language responses and are tolerant of passive knowledge of the ethnic language. They are willing to accept broken or grammatically incorrect Sindhi. They are quite satisfied if the children can understand Sindhi even if they do not speak Sindhi or are not able to write in

Sindhi. They are also willing to shift to English even if it is a pidginised version of English (see example) in order to communicate with younger community members.

Example of Pidginised English of one of the FG1s (60s)

"Why no you like it? She no eating egg."

Some younger community members have expressed an interest in learning Sindhi but only the spoken language. They do not feel the need to learn the written script. However, the history of Sindhi language classes in the London area has shown that such interest is short-lived and that attendance at such classes quickly falls and classes have to be abandoned soon after their start.

Summary and Conclusion

The language choices of three generations in the Ilford Sindhi families reveal that communication patterns and language choices vary. Sindhi will survive on the oral level, as a medium serving the limited functions for cross-generational communication with the old, but for the young a functional demise of Sindhi is obvious.

The home domain is not maintenance prone. English is replacing the language of the home and the use of Sindhi is confined to some of the older age groups. In the United Kingdom not only is there no institutional support for Sindhi but the community itself does not appear to want to maintain its ethnic language. Sindhi is less often passed on to children by parents.

There is evidence of inter-generational language shift and this shift away from use of the ethnic language had also started for some first generation Sindhis (G1), some of whom used and still use English with their children. Some of the first generation who left home at an early age are more comfortable in English and are not able to write in Sindhi. G1 competence in English has therefore encouraged language shift. The shift to the host language has been rapid since many G1 women also worked outside the home and children were left with English or Hindi speaking baby sitters. With such a home environment and the then prevailing national philosophy, which encouraged English monolingualism, it is not unsurprising that the second generation (G2) of British born Sindhis have shifted to English.

The younger generation is progressively abandoning Sindhi in favour of English. In English-dominant Britain the English language is not perceived as a prestige language (Gupta, 1998) as it is in Malaysia (see David, 1996) but as a necessity.

Some Sindhi however survives in English dominant mixed discourse. This mixed discourse serves a limited function of cross-generation communication when younger community members interact with some of the G1 Sindhi-speaking women. Although codeswitching exists as a means of communication between G1 and G2, the latter use mainly English with generation three (G3). G2 therefore use codeswitching as a tool of communication with older community members and at times with their peers especially to convey lexical items which have cultural and religious overtones.

There is evidence of dense social networks among the Sindhi community but such networks do not help to maintain the use of the ethnic language. A wide range of cultural and religious activities takes place, but even these do not support the maintenance of the ethnic language. In short, the Sindhi language does not have inextricable ties with ethnicity and the lack of an ethnic language is not salient in the formation of a Sindhi identity. Ethnic identity is prevalent despite the loss of active use of the ethnic language (see also David, 1998) as cultural practices and social cohesion are the main stay of the community's ethnic sense rather than language. The lack of Sindhi does not act as a barrier to their Sindhi reference group although for some families this lack results in limited communication with their elders.

English is perceived as the language of greater instrumentality and of peer group interaction. The shift away from the ethnic language is viewed pragmatically as English is seen to have a greater value. There is a differential attrition rate not only between receptive and productive skills in Sindhi but also between spoken and written language skills.

With the demise of the older community members, the ethnic language of the Sindhi community of Ilford which is already losing its communicative value among younger ethnic members, will not be much used in Sindhi homes. It may, however, be maintained in the business domain for its function of being a private exclusionist language. David (1998) demonstrates that for the Malaysian Sindhis, rituals and culture are stronger than language as an ethnic marker. This also appears to be true of the London Sindhi Hindu community.

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Maya Khemlani David

SINDSKOJEZIČNI HINDI U LONDONU – OČUVANJE JEZIKA ILI JEZIČNI POMAK

SAŽETAK

Etničke studije pokazuju da neke manjinske zajednice skreću prema jeziku zemlje primitka, ali se sve ne odmiču od svoga etničkog jezika. Londonski sindskojezični Hindi manjinska su jezična zajednica koju se dosad još nije istraživalo. Lingvistička situacija sindskog jezika u Londonu istražuje se s ciljem da se ustanovi je li ta manjinska zajednica sačuvala svoj etnički jezik i koliko se njime služi. Jezični pomak mjeri se usporedbama u izboru jezika triju naraštaja. Metodologija koja se koristila za određivanje dominantnog jezika u privatnom i javnom okruženju sastojala se od anketnih upitnika sa 73 pitanja, intervjua i opažanja anketiranih o opsegu govornih aktivnosti i događanja. Upitnik je dan svakom članu pet sindskih kućanstava na području Ilforda kako bi se dobila sveobuhvatna slika jezičnih izbora različitih članova obitelji, a intervjui sa starijim članovima obitelji trebali su oslikati povijest njihove zajednice. Osim toga, kako bi se odredilo njihovo znanje, postavljen je zadatak u kojem se od triju naraštaja jedne obitelji tražilo da na engleskom jeziku ponove istu šalu. Analizirani su jezični izbori zajednice kod kuće, na poslu i u području religije, kao i u međuetničkome međusobnom djelovanju. Raspravlja se o funkcijama sindskog jezika kada se on upotrebljava u razgovoru s miješanim kodovima. Milroy (1987) tvrdi da zatvorene i guste mreže pridonose održavanju etničkih jezika. Međutim, iako je dokazano da u londonskoj sindskojezičnoj zajednici postoje guste društvene mreže, one ne pomažu očuvanju uporabe sindskog jezika. Štoviše, brakovi sa sindskim ženama iz Indije nemaju nužno za posljedicu očuvanje jezika. Ispitivanje stavova zajednice prema sindskome i engleskome, temeljeno na preferenciji, uporabi jezika i podacima koje je sama zajednica dala o sebi, otkriva pragmatičan stav prema izboru jezika. Engleski se smatra jezikom većeg djelovanja. Kuća (dom) također nije pogodno područje za očuvanje jezika jer se stariji članovi zajednice jezično prilagođavaju mlađima i voljni su prihvatiti nereciprочne jezične odgovore. Međutim, sindski se može dulje održati u sferi posla zbog svoje funkcije privatnoga, ekskluzivnog jezika. I vanjski i unutarnji čimbenici jezičnog pomaka oslabili su jezičnu i komunikativnu kompetenciju govornika sindskoga u jezičnoj situaciji kontakta u Velikoj Britaniji. Izgleda da toj zajednici nije potreban distinktivan jezik za očuvanje osjećaja pripadnosti zajednici.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI: očuvanje jezika, jezični pomak, izbor jezika, London, sindski

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LES HINDOUS SINDIS DE LONDRES: SAUVEGARDE DE LA LANGUE OU DECALAGE LINGUISTIQUE

RÉSUMÉ

Les études sur les groupes ethniques montrent que certaines communautés minoritaires se tournent vers la langue du pays de résidence, mais que toutes ne s'éloignent pas de leur langue ethnique. Les Hindous sindis de Londres sont une communauté linguistique minoritaire qui jusqu'à présent n'avait fait l'objet d'aucune recherche. La situation linguistique de la langue sindi à Londres est ici étudiée afin de déterminer si cette communauté a conservé sa langue ethnique et dans quelle mesure elle l'utilise. Le décalage linguistique se mesure par comparaisons au vu des choix de langue effectués par trois générations. Pour déterminer la langue dominante en privé et en public, on a élaboré un questionnaire de 73 questions et réuni les interviews et observations des personnes interrogées sur

la portée de leurs activités et actes langagiers. Le questionnaire a été soumis à chaque membre de cinq foyers sindis dans le quartier de Ilford, afin d'obtenir un tableau assez complet des choix linguistiques de chacun, et les interviews des membres plus âgés des familles devaient brosser l'histoire de leur communauté. En outre, afin de déterminer leur compétence linguistique, il a été demandé aux trois générations d'une même famille de répéter une même blague en anglais. On a analysé les choix linguistiques de la communauté à la maison, au travail et dans le domaine de la religion, ainsi que dans les activités au sein de l'ethnie. L'article étudie les fonctions de la langue sindi quand elle est utilisée dans une conversation à codes mixtes. Milroy (1987) affirme que les réseaux fermés et denses contribuent au maintien des langues ethniques. Cependant, bien qu'il soit prouvé que la communauté sindi londonienne possède des réseaux sociaux denses, ces derniers ne contribuent pas au maintien de l'emploi de la langue sindi. Qui plus est, même dans les couples dont l'épouse est une Sindi venue d'Inde, la sauvegarde de la langue n'est pas nécessairement assurée. L'étude des positions de la communauté envers le sindi et l'anglais à partir des préférences quant à leur utilisation et des données que la communauté donne sur elle-même, dévoile l'attitude pragmatique de ses membres vis-à-vis du choix de la langue. L'anglais est considéré comme une langue à plus grande efficacité. Le foyer n'offre pas un milieu forcément propice à la sauvegarde de la langue, car les membres plus âgés de la communauté s'adaptent linguistiquement aux plus jeunes et acceptent de recevoir des réponses dans l'autre langue. Cependant, le sindi peut se maintenir plus longtemps dans la sphère du travail en raison de sa fonction de langue privée, exclusive. Les facteurs externes et internes de décalage linguistique ont affaibli la compétence linguistique et communicative des locuteurs du sindi dans le contact linguistique avec la Grande-Bretagne. Il semble que cette communauté n'a pas besoin d'une langue distincte pour maintenir son sentiment d'appartenance à son ethnie.

MOTS CLES: sauvegarde de la langue, décalage linguistique, choix de la langue, Londres, sindi