

Language, A Representation of Cultural Heritage and Identity- Marwari, Rajasthan, India

By

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Language provides a unique window into cognition and the capacity of the human mind and for the member of the speech community, language represents cultural heritage and identity.

Marwari Language

Marwari is the most spoken Rajasthani language with approximately 45 to 50 million speakers situated in the historic Marwar region of western Rajasthan, India. The 2001 census, however, records only 7.9 million speakers. Like Standard Rajasthani, many Marwari speakers are conflated with Hindi speakers in the census. There are those who point out that Rajasthani is not one language, but more an umbrella term for a collection of dialects such as Dhundhari, Hadauti, Mewari, and Marwari, among others. Since Independence, there has been no official recognition of the language of Rajasthan. It is neither a recognized medium of instruction in schools and colleges nor does it have recognition in the courts of Rajasthan or in its Vidhana Sabha. In 2003, the state assembly had passed a resolution for including Rajasthani in the Eighth Schedule. Recognition will bring the language into public spaces and inspire confidence in its speakers to speak it.

Keywords

Marwari, language, Marwar, Rajasthan

Brief Review of Research & Development in the Language

Marwari is generally written in the Devanagari script, although the Mahajani script is traditionally associated with the language. In Pakistan, it is written in the Perso-Arabic script with modifications. Historical Marwari orthography for Devanagari uses other characters in place of standard Devanagari letters. Marwari (Mārwarī; also rendered

Marwadi, Marvadi) is a Rajasthani spoken in the Indian state of Rajasthan. Marwari is also found in the neighboring state of Gujarat and Haryana, Eastern Pakistan, and some migrant communities in Nepal. Marwari has no official status in India and is not used as a language of education.

While language endangerment and loss are unfortunate from many perspectives, the recognition of language loss has led to increased attention to the linguistic description and language documentation, and with it a richness of materials in terms of description, awareness of ethical responsibilities, and unprecedented technological support.

Literature Review

As per the findings of the Sociolinguistic survey of selected Rajasthani speech varieties of Rajasthan (SIL Electronic Survey Reports 2012-029), the speakers of many Rajasthani varieties often perceive their varieties as related dialects, and also report that they can understand one another. However, the lexical similarity study done in this survey indicated that these dialects appeared to be fairly different from one another. The results of a Recorded Text Testing (RTT) developed in Jodhpur Marwari (perceived as the central variety of Marwari) showed that this variety was not well understood by subjects from six test points representing six other major Rajasthani dialects. The vitality of present-day Rajasthani speech varieties in India appears fairly strong. Hindi is perceived as being valuable for education and economic advancement. However, observations and self-reported information collected during this survey indicate that, aside from those who are well educated, many speakers of Rajasthani dialects are probably not bilingual enough in Hindi to use complex written materials in that language.

Language Situation of Marwari

Alternate Names Marrubhasha, Marvadi, Marvari, Marwadi, Rajasthani

Autonym मारवाड़ी (Mārwarī)

User Population 7,830,000 in India (2011 census). Total users in all countries: 7,856,410

(as L1: 7,855,400; as L2: 1,010).

Location Rajasthan state: Barmer, Bikaner, Churu, Jaisalmer, Jalore, Jodhpur, and Pali

districts; Delhi, Gujarat, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, and Uttar Pradesh states; throughout India.

Classification: Indo-European, Indo-Iranian, Indo-Aryan, Intermediate Divisions, Western, Rajasthani, Marwari

Language Use: Home, village, market, religion. Used by all. Positive attitudes. Also use Hindi, especially for educated people.

Language Resources: OLAC resources in and about Marwari

Writing: Devanagari script [Deva].

Language Shift

The following data indicate that there is a major shift of the Marwari speakers to other languages (Hindi).

Table 1. Data Collected From Students Who are Native Speakers of the Marwari Language,

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Name (Age Group 20-25 Yrs)	Language Spoken	Dominant language	Language Shift, which language?	Place
Praveen Kumar	Marawadi	Shekhawati	Yes/Hindi	Chitalwana, Jalore
Manjeet Singh Rathore	Marwadi	Marwari	Yes/Hindi	Ajmer
Hem Singh	Marwadi	Marwadi	Yes/Hindi	Ajmer
Khinvraj Nain	Marwadi	Marwadi	Yes/Hindi	Nagaur
Kalyan Singh	Marwadi	Marwadi	Yes/Hindi	Jalore
Yashvi Bhati	Marwadi Hindi (at	Marwadi	Yes/ English & Hindi	Ajmer

	home)			
Prabal Chauhan	Marwadi	Marwadi	Yes/Hindi & English	Nagaur

Linguistic Ancestry and Traditions

In terms of historical development, linguistic structure, and literary traditions, there is little to back the argument that Rajasthani is a dialect of Hindi. The various forms of the languages spoken in Rajasthan have a common ancestry that is distinct from what are referred to as the “Western Hindi dialects”, such as Brajbhasha. Linguist Luigi Pio Tessitori has postulated the existence of a missing link between Apabhramsha and the neo Indo-Aryan (or modern Indian) languages such as Gujarati, Marwari, Brajbhasha, and so on. This pertains to the era between roughly the 13th century and the 15th-16th centuries when Apabhramsha increasingly began to show the linguistic elements of the languages that were to become Gujarati and Rajasthani.

The Diversity of Spoken Tongues

The development of courtly registers can often be on a completely different trajectory from the languages spoken by common people. Sedentary, agrarian societies are inherently different from pastoral and mercantile societies which have constantly been on the move for many centuries. The latter doesn't have the broad linguistic uniformity that many of the former do. Rajasthan has a vast diversity in its spoken tongues – with local and hyperlocal variations, and with different castes based in the same region often speaking very differently.

Any act of enumeration or categorization in such a scenario cannot be a passive one. Instead, almost like in the quantum mechanical universe, it ends up changing the reality it intends to enumerate and categorize. The censuses over the years were such an exercise, and they brought to the fore the inherent conundrum in trying to talk of broad linguistic identities in a land as diverse as Rajasthan.

It was Grierson who first used the word “Rajasthani” to refer to the languages spoken in Rajasthan in the Linguistic Survey of India, published in 1908: “Rajasthani means literally the language of Rajasthan. The name as connoting a language has been invented for the purposes of this survey in order to distinguish it from Western Hindi on the one hand and from Gujarati on the other.” He mentions the common people of the state simply referring to their “dialects”, with identity predicated broadly on geographic region or caste. He lists out six such dialects.

In the 1951 Census, there are 18 dialects recorded as being spoken in Rajasthan. In 1961 the number jumps to 72 dialects spoken in Rajasthan – including “Agarwali” spoken by 15 people, “Alwari”, spoken by 18 people...The number of dialects continues to vary wildly, with the latest census in 2011 enumerating six dialects of Rajasthan in the state. There is clearly little to identify or separate the dialects themselves, with a widely varying self-identification of one’s boli along caste and geographic lines still being found.

This is a quite genuine question as a lot of people get confused between Rajasthani and Marwari people. They often think that all Rajasthanis are Marwari. Basically, Marwari word originated from Marwar. It's a region in Rajasthan. Rajasthan is the place of Kings and Queens. There were a lot of kingdoms ruled by different kings. Rajasthan is divided into lot of sub-parts or regions based on culture/tradition and language spoken there. Some of them are Marwar(Ajmer, Jodhpur), Mewar(Udaipur), Hadoti (Kota), Shekhawati (Nagoor) etc.

People of Marwar are called as Marwari like people from Mewar (Kingdom of Maharana Pratap) called as Mewari.

Significance of Mother Tongue

“One’s mother tongue is really one’s oral inheritance – a collective repository of our cultural memories: Stories, songs, legends, lore, and sayings – an ever-growing, ever-mutating mass of shared knowledge that exists only in minds, memories, and words – in our language. The existence and transmission of this knowledge is fragile – and depend on the ability of different generations to have conversations with each other. Taking away language is to take away memory, to take away identity, to take away continuity. When we get cut off from our mother tongues, it also cuts us off from these memories and histories which give us a sense of place in this world. And then we must find entirely new ways of making sense of ourselves.

Is it this kind of displacement that cuts us off from our immediate pasts only to leave us yearning for a distant classical golden past, maybe because there is no other sort of past that we can access?"

The significant point is that there is no one Rajasthani language – there are many tongues spoken within Rajasthan and each is a distinct language in its own right. Hence there is the risk of a dominant form of Rajasthani ending up calling itself the only legitimate form – a consequence of standardisation processes seen with so many other modern Indian languages. This track definitely warrants careful self-examination and self-introspection. An attempt needs to be made to predicate this examination and introspection not only on linguistic and historical facts, but also on an understanding of Rajasthan as a modern administrative and cultural unit.

An effort needs to be made to develop a sense of awareness that speakers as members of a speech community realized language documentation is a way of perpetuating linguistic and cultural diversity and/or maintaining ties to heritage. The goals of any study on language can be achieved only when Speakers have a vested interest and participate as collaborators in the documentation, description, and preservation of the language under study.

In Linguistics, the creation of grammars, dictionaries, and text collections for previously under-described languages is the outcome of language description and documentation project. However, works defining language documentation as a distinct subfield of linguistics emerged around 1995 as a response to the crisis facing the world's endangered languages, about half of which could disappear in the 21st century. There is an urgent need to record and analyze languages and speakers' linguistic knowledge while they continue to be spoken, and to work with communities on supporting threatened languages before opportunities to do so become reduced.

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