

Exploring Language Shift and Maintenance: A Review of Indian Subcontinental Diaspora in Multicultural Societies

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Abstract

This study explores the complex dynamics of language shift and maintenance among broader Indian subcontinental diaspora communities residing in multicultural societies. It investigates the interaction of linguistic, cultural, and social factors that influence language shift and maintenance. The inquiry examines sociolinguistic interconnections of language shift and maintenance. These subtle interconnections in multicultural settings are crucial for understanding how diaspora communities negotiate their cultural identities while integrating into new linguistic and cultural environments. The exploration adopts a systematic and analytic approach to identify and analyze literature on language shift and maintenance. The selection criteria include relevance, timeframe, and geographical scope. The paper reviews reputed academic databases and peer-reviewed journals and the findings reveal that the second and successive generations among diaspora communities go through the process of language shift and attrition, resulting in the loss of their heritage languages. Therefore, language maintenance arises as a central concern for diaspora communities. Diaspora families, community organizations, and cultural institutions play vital roles in preservation efforts. However, linguistic and social pressures—the pressure to assimilation, language discrimination, and negative stereotypes—pose significant challenges to language maintenance. This study contributes to sociolinguistics and bilingualism by shedding light on the dynamic language practices of diaspora communities. The implications of this research extend to policymakers and community leaders and emphasize the need for inclusive heritage language policies, support for community-based language initiatives, and promotion of intercultural understanding to foster more equitable and inclusive multicultural societies.

Keywords: Sociolinguistics, Language shift, Language maintenance, Indian subcontinental diaspora, Heritage language, Multicultural societies

1. Introduction

The broader Indian subcontinent, a region in Asia renowned for its rich tapestry of languages and cultures, has witnessed significant waves of diaspora migration throughout history. From the early traders and laborers to the skilled professionals and entrepreneurs of today, the Indian subcontinental diaspora has established a sizeable global presence and contributed significantly to the social, economic, cultural, and linguistic landscapes of numerous countries. This diaspora encompasses a vast array of linguistic and

ethnic groups; each represents its own unique heritage and migratory experience. The sheer scale and diversity of this diaspora make it a compelling subject of study for sociolinguistics, particularly concerning language shift and maintenance in multicultural societies.

The linguistic diversity within the Indian subcontinent deserves academic discussion. While Hindi and English serve as official languages of India, a multitude of other languages thrive including Bengali, Urdu, Gujarati, Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu, Marathi, Kannada, Malayalam, etc. This linguistic landscape reflects the complex historical, cultural, and social interactions that have shaped the region. Each language represents not just a means of communication but also a repository of cultural knowledge, traditions, and values because language acts as a powerful marker of identity and connect individuals to their ancestral heritage language and shape their sense of belonging.

In the context of diaspora communities, the heritage language takes adds additional significance. It serves as a vital link to the homeland and makes individuals nostalgic to their ancestral roots and help preserve cultural memory across generations. Language plays a crucial role in maintaining cultural identity, transmitting cultural values, and fostering a sense of community among diaspora members (Cook & David, 2020). However, the pressures of integration into new societies often lead to language shift, where the heritage language is gradually replaced by the dominant cultural language of the host country (Hornberger, 2010). This process of language shift can have profound implications for cultural identity as it can potentially lead to a loss of cultural heritage and a weakening of ties to the ancestral homeland. Consequently, the issue of language maintenance comes into play. Understanding the factors that influence language shift and maintenance among Indian diaspora communities is, therefore, essential for preserving linguistic and cultural diversity and promoting intercultural understanding in an increasingly globalized world.

This investigation delves into the intricate interplay between language practices and cultural identity within the context of Indian subcontinental diaspora residing in multicultural societies. It examines how language acts as a marker of cultural identity and community belonging because linguistic practices evolve in response to social and cultural practices of multicultural environments. The inquiry focuses on the challenges faced by diaspora communities in maintaining their heritage language amidst the pressures of language shift, attrition, and assimilation. It investigates the factors that contribute to language maintenance or loss, including family interactions, community support, institutional policies, and societal attitudes. This exploration also aims to gain a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between language, culture, and identity in the context of migration and settlement.

The intent of this review is to synthesize key findings on language shift and maintenance among the works on subcontinental diaspora in multicultural societies. It focuses specifically on the sociolinguistic factors within these communities and explores the factors that influence language retention, attrition, or loss across generations. The scope of the review encompasses studies conducted in diverse multicultural settings and examines the interplay of individual, familial, communal, and societal factors that shape language practices and cultural identity negotiation among broader subcontinental diaspora members. Keeping in conformity with the objectives, the exploration draws and seeks to address the following three research questions: a. What factors contribute to language shift or maintenance among Indian subcontinental diaspora communities? b. How do multicultural societies influence the linguistic practices of the subcontinental diaspora communities? and c. What efforts have the diaspora communities taken to maintain heritage languages?

2. Theoretical Framework

The literature review section consists of key theoretical concepts underpinning the core issues of this exploration. The following are the core theoretical concepts along with language shift and maintenance.

2.1 Language Shift

Language shift, also referred to as language replacement, is a gradual process where a language loses speakers and domains of usage to another powerful language (e.g., English, French, or Arabic) within a community. It describes a process by which diaspora community members transition from using a heritage language to another dominant language of the culture. It occurs when a diaspora community gradually forsakes its native language in favor of another dominant language of the society (Hornberger, 2010). This process manifests a decline in the number of speakers, a decrease in proficiency levels, or a reduction in the language's functional range. Various factors contribute to language shift, including societal pressures, economic incentives, and intergenerational transmission patterns (Rahman, 2021). For instance, immigrant communities often experience language shift as younger generations adopt the dominant language of their new environment, leading to a decline in the heritage language. This shift can be particularly pronounced in multicultural societies where multiple languages coexist, and individuals may feel compelled to prioritize the language associated with greater social and economic opportunities.

The examination of language shift among Indian subcontinental diaspora communities provides valuable insights into the complex interplay of language, culture, and identity in pluralistic societies. Research on Indo-Canadian communities has revealed a generational shift in language use, with younger generations exhibiting greater proficiency in English and a corresponding decline in Hindi or other heritage languages (Kumar et al., 2008). This shift can be attributed to various factors, including the dominance of English in educational and professional domains as well as the desire for integration into the broader Canadian society. Jackson (2019) opines that the pressure to assimilate into the dominant culture can lead to language shift, while the desire to maintain cultural ties with their homeland can motivate language maintenance efforts. Rahman (2021) argues that this shift can typically occur across generations, with younger generations increasingly adopting the dominant cultural language while the heritage language gradually fades away. Due to a decline in the functions and domains of usage, language shift potentially leads to language endangerment or extinction. Language shift can also result in the loss of cultural knowledge, traditions, and embedded values within the heritage language. It has profound sociolinguistic implications and impacts language vitality, linguistic diversity, and cultural identity. Needless to say, Fishman (1964) explores the broader aspects of language shift and maintenance as a field of academic inquiry.

2.2 Language Maintenance

Language maintenance discusses the connection between language shift and language endangerment. It is the counter-phenomenon of language shift and refers to efforts to preserve a heritage language within a diaspora community. It also refers to the continued use of a minority language in the face of competition from a regionally and socially more powerful language (Tawalbeh, 2019). Therefore, it emphasizes the efforts made by individuals and communities to preserve and transmit their native heritage language successive generations. Mesthrie (2011) argues language maintenance as a conscious strategy for cultural preservation and recognizes the vital role language plays in maintaining cultural identity, transmitting cultural knowledge, and nurturing community cohesion. Language maintenance efforts can take various forms, including family language policies, community-based language programs, heritage language schools, and cultural events that promote language use (Lewis, 2013). In addition, it highlights the

importance of cultural values and practices in language maintenance endeavors. These preservation and revitalization efforts aim to counteract the pressures of language shift and ensure the continued vitality of heritage languages within diaspora communities. Language maintenance is motivated by a variety of factors, including cultural pride, a desire to maintain intergenerational communication, and the recognition of the cognitive and social benefits of bilingualism. For example, many indigenous communities around the world actively engage in language revitalization efforts to reclaim and preserve their ancestral languages, recognizing their intrinsic value and their role in cultural identity. These efforts often involve language nests, immersion programs, and the development of language learning resources.

In the context of the Indian subcontinental diaspora, language maintenance efforts are often driven by a desire to preserve cultural identity and maintain intergenerational connections. Concerted efforts towards language maintenance can play a crucial role in preserving cultural identity and fostering intergenerational connections because they represent a complex negotiation between preserving cultural heritage and adapting to the linguistic landscape of the host society. For instance, families may implement language policies at home, encouraging the use of the heritage language in daily interaction. Mesthrie and Kulkarni-Joshi (2024) highlight various strategies employed by diaspora communities to maintain their heritage languages, including the establishment of community language schools, cultural organizations, and the use of media in heritage languages. Moreover, the success of language maintenance efforts often depends on a combination of factors, including community attitudes, institutional support, and the perceived value of the heritage language in the host society. Community organizations may offer language classes and cultural events to promote language learning and cultural engagement. Furthermore, the increasing recognition of multilingualism as a valuable asset in globalized societies has led to greater support for language maintenance initiatives. However, there are pervasive challenges, including the limited availability of resources, the pressure to conform to the dominant language, and the evolving linguistic practices of younger generations.

2.3 Fishman's Sociolinguistic Theories

The discussion of the sociolinguistic theories relevant to language maintenance and shift inevitably arises from Fishman's (1964) language maintenance and language shift as a field of sociolinguistic inquiry. Fishman's other works have also been foundational in the study of language maintenance and shift. He emphasizes the importance of intergenerational transmission and the role of societal forces in language maintenance. Fishman (1991) introduced the graded intergenerational disruption scale in his seminal work of reversing language shift along with theoretical and empirical foundations for assistance of threatened languages. This book laid the groundwork for understanding language shift and revitalization efforts and made graded intergenerational disruption scale a crucial tool in the field of sociolinguistics. His scale provides a framework for assessing the degree of language shift within a community. His work also highlights the importance of domains of language use and argues that language maintenance is more likely in domains where the heritage language has a strong functional role.

2.4 Giles's Communication Accommodation Theory

Howard Giles first introduced communication accommodation theory in the early 1970s. Later other works developed the theory over time through various publications, including Giles and Byrne (1982) and Reid and Giles (2008) who examine how individuals adjust their communication styles, including language, to either converge with or diverge from their interlocutors. In the context of language maintenance and shift, the proposition can help explain how broader diaspora members adapt their language use depending on the social context. For instance, they may converge towards the dominant

language in public settings while maintaining their heritage language within the family or community. It highlights the dynamic nature of language use and the influence of social interaction on language choices.

2.5 Ethnolinguistic Vitality Framework

The ethnolinguistic vitality framework, developed by Giles, Bourhis, and Taylor (1997), examines the factors that contribute to the vitality or strength of a language within a multilingual context. It considers three key dimensions: status (e.g., economic and social status of the language group), demography (e.g., size and distribution of the language group), and institutional support (e.g., presence of the language in education, media, and government). A high degree of ethnolinguistic vitality is associated with greater likelihood of language maintenance. By contrast, low vitality can contribute to language shift. Moreover, Tawalbeh (2019) provides a critical review of theoretical approaches to language maintenance and shift research, including the ethnolinguistic vitality framework.

2.6 Multicultural Societies

Multicultural societies, which are also known as pluralistic societies, are characterized by the co-existence of diverse cultural, linguistic, and religious groups within a shared social and political framework. Berry (2009) opines that most contemporary Western societies are culturally plural. These societies recognize and value cultural diversity, promoting tolerance, mutual respect, and intercultural dialogue. This cultural diversity has led to attempts to coordinate mutual varieties and differences connected with civic and cultural identity. It is both a response to the fact of cultural pluralism in modern societies and a way of compensating cultural groups for past exclusion, discrimination, and oppression. Multicultural societies recognize and value cultural diversity, promoting tolerance, mutual respect, and intercultural dialogue. Supporters of multiculturalism view it as a fairer system that allows people to truly express who they are within a society, promoting greater tolerance and better adaptation to social issues.

2.7 Linguistic Landscapes of Multicultural Settings

Linguistic landscapes refer to the visual display of languages in public spaces, including signs, billboards, advertisements, and graffiti (Mesthrie, 2011). In multicultural environments, linguistic landscapes often reflect the diverse linguistic makeup of the community and showcase a multitude of languages and scripts. The presence and visibility of different heritage languages in the linguistic landscape can serve as an indicator of language vitality, language attitudes, and power dynamics within the society. Analyzing linguistic landscapes can provide valuable insights into the sociolinguistic interconnection of multicultural societies and the ways in which language is used to negotiate identity, express cultural belonging, and navigate intercultural interactions.

3. Methods

3.1 Systematic Review Approach

This inquiry adopts a systematic approach to identify and analyze relevant literature on language shift and maintenance within broader Indian subcontinental diaspora communities. The selection criteria for studies include:

Relevance: The studies selected must explicitly address language shift, language maintenance, or related sociolinguistic phenomena within Indian subcontinental diaspora communities. Studies examining the relationship of language, culture, and identity in these communities will be emphasized.

Timeframe: This exploration will consider studies published within the last two decades (2004-2024). This timeframe will be prioritized to capture contemporary trends and research in the field. However, prior

seminal works and publications (e.g., Fishman's) that have significantly shaped the field will also be considered.

Geographical Scope: The review will concentrate on studies conducted in host multicultural societies with significant diaspora communities such as the UK, US, Canada, and other relevant settings where there is a significant presence of diaspora communities.

3.2 Review Sources: The review will draw upon a variety of linguistic, sociolinguistic, ethnolinguistic, and applied linguistic sources. The following are some of the prominent characteristics of the review studies:

1. Academic research databases, peer-reviewed journals, government documents specializing in sociolinguistics, ethnolinguistics, diaspora, and cultural studies.
2. Reputable databases and repositories of scholarly and academic researched literature such as Scopus, Google Scholar, DOAJ, ERIC, etc.
3. Conference proceedings and working papers from relevant academic conferences, research networks, and works published by bodies working on revival of heritage languages.
4. Books and edited volumes on language shift, attrition, maintenance, cultural identity, bilingualism, and diaspora communities.

3.3 Analytical Framework

Analytical and thematic framework in most studies discusses the inherent and salient issues and efforts of language shift and maintenance efforts. It also pinpoints interconnected sociolinguistic issues in multicultural diaspora societies.

3.3.1 Issues in Language Shift: Language shift within Indian subcontinental diaspora communities is a complex interplay of societal pressures, intergenerational transmission patterns, community dynamics, and individual motivations. The dominance of English in many host countries creates pressure to assimilate, leading individuals to prioritize English for integration and success. This societal pressure influences intergenerational transmission—as parents may choose English to equip their children for educational and professional opportunities—potentially accelerating a shift away from heritage languages within a single generation. Strong community networks can mitigate this shift by providing support and opportunities for heritage language use. However, increasing dispersal and integration into broader society can weaken these networks, reducing heritage language practice. Individual attitudes also play a crucial role. Positive perceptions of heritage language's cultural significance and value motivate maintenance and transmission. In contrast, negative attitudes or perceived lack of practical utility can hasten language shift. Ultimately, the persistence of heritage languages depends on a complex negotiation between these factors and highlights the need for strategies that value and support heritage language maintenance within diaspora communities. Language shift is a complex phenomenon influenced by various interconnected factors. These factors play crucial roles in determining whether heritage languages are maintained or gradually replaced by the dominant language of the host country. Understanding these factors is essential for comprehending the linguistic subtleties within diaspora communities and developing strategies for language preservation and revitalization.

3.3.2 Issues and Efforts in Language Maintenance: Maintaining heritage languages within diaspora communities requires a multifaceted approach encompassing individual, family, and community efforts. Family language policies and conscious decisions to promote heritage language use at home are pivotal. Parental attitudes—often linked to identity perceptions—shape the strategies employed to teach and

reinforce the language. Community-based programs such as heritage language schools, classes, language nests, and cultural events provide structured learning environments and opportunities for language use outside the home. These programs foster intergenerational transmission, which is a critical factor for long-term language maintenance. Intergenerational transmission efforts and frequent visits to the country of origin with immersive language experiences and participation in local schooling can further strengthen heritage language preservation and acquisition. In addition, technology plays a vital role. Social media platforms, online learning resources, and digital communication tools offer new avenues for language exposure, practice, and community building, connecting diaspora members regardless of location. If the diaspora communities adopt these initiatives, they can actively work towards preserving their linguistic heritage and counteracting societal pressures that favor language shift. These combined efforts create a supportive ecosystem for heritage language usage, foster cultural continuity and promote linguistic diversity. The maintenance of heritage languages within diaspora communities is a complex and multifaceted endeavor that requires concerted efforts from individuals, families, and communities. Sociolinguists have identified various strategies to preserve and promote heritage languages to ensure their vitality across generations. These strategies are crucial in countering the forces of language shift and promoting linguistic diversity.

4. Findings

The first part of this section analyzes the factors influencing language shift while the second one highlights the efforts and strategies undertaken for the maintenance of the heritage languages within Indian diaspora communities. They both draw upon relevant research in sociolinguistics, bilingualism, and diaspora studies.

4.1 Factors Contributing to Language Shift

Sociolinguistic studies on Indian diaspora communities have identified a host of factors contributing to language shift. However, the following are some of the crucial ones:

4.1.1 Intergenerational Language Transmission

Intergenerational language transmission plays a crucial role in language. Language shift issues highlight the damaging effects of early language shift and the intergenerational trauma associated with language loss, particularly among indigenous people. Veettil et al. (2020) examine language maintenance and shift among Keralite migrants in Oman and focus on intergenerational language transfer. When intergenerational transmission is disrupted, younger generations may lose fluency in their heritage language, leading to language shift. Another study investigates language shift and maintenance among Bangladeshi immigrants in London. However, the findings of her inquiry illustrate that the language shift from Bangla to English can be termed as ‘partial shift’ rather than complete shift among second-generation Bangladeshi immigrants. Furthermore, they shift from their heritage language Bangla to English for some specific purposes (Rahman, 2021).

4.1.2 Role of Dominant Language in Host Society

The dominance of the host country language—such as English, French, or Arabic—exerts significant pressure on diaspora communities to shift towards the dominant language. Studies provide examples of language shift towards dominant languages in various communities. Prochazka and Vogl (2017) quantify the driving factors for language shift and emphasize the importance of interaction with speakers of the same language. The inquiry highlights the critical role of frequent interaction among speakers of the same language for preventing language shift and reinforces the idea that community interaction patterns are ce-

neutral to language shift.

4.1.3 Economic, Educational, and Social Integration

Economic, educational, and social integration are intertwined with language shift. Alyami (2023) discusses how social dislocation and other factors like minority status, low income, and limited access to education can influence language shift to the dominant cultural language. External forces like economic subjugation or internal forces like negative attitudes towards one's own heritage language can lead to language endangerment. As diaspora members strive for economic advancement and social mobility, they prioritize acquiring the dominant language, leading to a decline in the use of heritage language. Cook and David (2020) examine language shift and identity reproduction among Sindhis in India and Southeast Asia. They emphasize the influence of social and economic factors. Therefore, economic, educational, and social integration often necessitates proficiency in the dominant language and helps contribute to language shift.

4.1.4 Generational Differences: Language shift often occurs across generations, with younger generations demonstrating greater proficiency in the dominant language of the host country and reduced proficiency in the heritage language. A study touches upon the challenges of language and cultural identity for Indian immigrants and hints at potential intergenerational differences (Varma & Singh, 2019).

4.1.5 Social and Linguistic Pressures: Diaspora communities face social and linguistic pressures that can accelerate language shift. These pressures include the dominance of the host country's language in education, employment, and public life as well as negative attitudes towards heritage languages.

4.2 Strategies for Language Maintenance

This second part examines strategies employed by diaspora communities to maintain their heritage languages, which are often ancestral mother tongues.

4.2.1 Family and Community Efforts

Family language policies play a crucial role in intergenerational language transmission and its maintenance. Efforts to maintain heritage language use at home such as speaking the language with children and encouraging its use among family members are essential for language maintenance. Meddegama (2019) studies the Malayali people of Dravidian ethnolinguistic family hailing from southern Indian Kerala and highlights the importance of cultural values and practices of their heritage language maintenance within a Malayali community in the UK. It emphasizes family and community efforts as part of heritage language maintenance. Community-based initiatives such as cultural events, festivals, and social gatherings provide opportunities for heritage language use and strengthen community bonds. Furthermore, Holmes (2013), in her book, discusses the importance of community support and attitudes towards the minority language for language maintenance.

4.2.2 Cultural and Religious Institutions

Cultural and religious institutions such as community centers, mosques, temples, etc., serve as important hubs for language maintenance. These institutions often offer heritage language classes, religious instruction in the heritage language, and cultural programs that promote language use and cultural preservation. Education and community efforts are central to language maintenance. They often involve literary, cultural, historical, and political components. They can also serve as spaces for intergenerational interaction where younger generations can connect with their heritage language and culture, and hence solidifying language maintenance.

4.2.3 Language Schools and Media

Supplementary language schools provide structured language learning opportunities for children and adults in diaspora communities. Holmes (2013) emphasizes the use of minority languages in education, including bilingual education programs and heritage language classes, as a form of institutional support for language maintenance. These schools play a vital role in transmitting language skills, cultural knowledge, and a sense of cultural identity. Media—including newspapers, television, radio, and online platforms—can also contribute to language maintenance by providing access to heritage language content. Sometimes language maintenance efforts extend to political activism, which can involve advocating for language rights and representation in the media. Online platforms and social media groups can also create virtual communities where diaspora community members can connect with others who speak the same heritage language, access language learning resources, and share cultural experiences.

4.2.4 Language socialization practices: Language socialization practices within diaspora families and communities are also vital. This includes examining how parents, grandparents, and other community members transmit language and cultural values to younger generations. Mesthrie and Kulkarni-Joshi (2024) offer a comprehensive examination of language practices in various Indian diaspora communities. This collection includes case studies that explore how language is maintained and transmitted across generations in different geographical and social contexts. The work provides insights into how parents and grandparents transmit language and cultural values to younger generations in transnational contexts.

4.2.5 Role of Family: Family plays a crucial role in language transmission and maintenance. Parents who speak the heritage language at home and encourage their children to do so contribute significantly to language preservation. Diaspora family language policy and language shift discuss the importance of family language policy in language shift and maintenance.

4.2.6 Community Efforts: Despite the pressures of language shift, diaspora communities actively engage in language maintenance efforts. These efforts include establishing heritage language schools, organizing cultural events, and promoting language use within the home. Veetil et al. (2020) discuss language maintenance efforts among Keralites in Oman, underscoring the role of community organizations in supporting language preservation.

4.2.7 Cultural Practices: Cultural practices such as religious ceremonies, festivals, and artistic performances can contribute to language maintenance by providing opportunities for language use and cultural expression. Meddegama (2019) emphasizes the importance of cultural values and practices in supporting heritage language maintenance within a Malayali community in the UK.

4.2.8 Attitudes and Beliefs: Community members' attitudes and beliefs about language play a significant role in language maintenance efforts. Positive attitudes towards the heritage language and a belief in its importance for cultural preservation can motivate individuals and families to prioritize language transmission.

4.2.9 Language Vitality: The vitality of a language—including its status, demography, and institutional support—influences its chances of survival in diaspora settings. Drude (2003) discusses the concept of language vitality and its relevance to language endangerment and maintenance.

5. Discussion

This section illuminates the intricate linguistic and cultural interconnections of diaspora communities within their host settings. It explores the complex dynamics of language shift and maintenance in multicultural societies and reveals how these processes shape and are shaped by the broader sociocultural

context.

5.1. Role of Multicultural Societies

Multicultural societies, characterized by their diverse linguistic landscapes and plural cultural frameworks, present both opportunities and challenges for diaspora communities. These societies, which Berry (2009) describes as culturally plural, are marked by the co-existence of various cultural, linguistic, and religious groups within a shared social and political structure.

5.1.1 Opportunities

Multicultural societies offer rich opportunities for multilingualism and cross-cultural exchange. Berry (2009) discusses the importance of understanding and managing acculturation and multiculturalism in culturally plural societies. The study underscores some opportunities. In addition, Kim (2008) explores intercultural personhood in the context of globalization and underscores advantages. Exposure to multiple languages and cultures can broaden perspectives, enhance communication skills, and foster intercultural understanding. Interactions between different cultural groups can enrich the social fabric of society and promote creativity and innovation.

5.1.2 Challenges:

Despite the opportunities, multicultural societies also pose challenges for diaspora communities. Assimilation pressures and linguistic discrimination pose significant challenges for diaspora communities in multicultural societies and can lead to language shift and cultural loss. These pressures often stem from the dominant group's expectation from the minorities to conform to the prevailing language and cultural norms and create an environment where minority languages and identities are undervalued (Fishman, 1991). As a result, younger generations may adopt the dominant language for social and economic mobility, gradually abandoning their heritage language (Prochazka & Vogl, 2017). This language shift often leads to the erosion of cultural practices and traditional knowledge tied to the heritage language.

Linguistic discrimination against certain languages and dialects persists in our society. Heritage languages—whether indigenous or due to migration—often face negative stereotypes and are undervalued, particularly within the educational system. Linguistic discrimination and prejudice against speakers of certain language can create barriers to social and economic advancement. Kircher (2024) addresses linguistic discrimination against children from families speaking a heritage language. Linguistic discrimination against certain languages and dialects persists in our society. This leads to the stigmatization and marginalization of the children using these heritage languages.

5.2 Comparative Case Studies

Comparative case studies of Indian subcontinental diaspora communities across different host countries can provide valuable insights into the diverse experiences of language shift, maintenance, cultural identity negotiation, and integration. Exploring individual cases can offer insights for such an analysis. The following are potential case study comparisons:

UK vs. USA: A comparison of Indian subcontinental diaspora communities in the UK and USA reveals distinct patterns of language maintenance and cultural preservation influenced by varying social and political contexts. The UK's longer history of colonial ties to Indian subcontinent and earlier immigration waves have allowed for more established institutional support for heritage languages and cultural practices. This contrasts with the USA, where more recent migration patterns often emphasize assimilation into the dominant English-speaking culture. Kalayil (2017) highlights the diversity within South Asian

communities in the UK in terms of language, religion, and cultural traditions. The study also notes a tendency toward homogenization in public discourse. These contrasting sociolinguistic dynamics between the USA and UK offer critical insights into how historical, political, and social factors shape the linguistic and cultural trajectories of Indian subcontinental diaspora communities in these two major countries.

Canada vs. USA: A comparison of diaspora communities in Canada and the USA highlights the impact of multiculturalism policies on language maintenance and cultural identity. Canada's official multiculturalism policy creates a more supportive environment for heritage language preservation, while the USA emphasizes assimilation. Recent studies have examined these differences among South Asian diaspora communities in both countries. Research indicates that Canada's multicultural framework facilitates the use of native or heritage languages during settlement and integration processes (Raza, 2023). In contrast, the USA's emphasis on assimilation can lead to the erosion of heritage languages and cultural identities among immigrant communities. This comparison underscores the significant role of national policies in shaping linguistic and cultural outcomes for diaspora groups.

Middle East vs. Western Countries: Comparing Indian subcontinental diaspora communities in the Middle East (e.g., UAE, Saudi Arabia, Oman) with those in Western countries (e.g., UK, USA, Canada) reveals distinctive and interesting differences in sociolinguistics. In the Middle East, the dominance of Arabic presents unique challenges for the communities striving to maintain their native language and the shift is influenced by the necessity to acquire Arabic for daily interactions and the limited institutional support for heritage languages in the region. In contrast, the diaspora communities in Western countries face distinct undercurrents regarding heritage language maintenance. While English dominance poses challenges and can lead to language attrition, institutional support such as community schools and cultural organizations helps maintain heritage languages. For example, the UK's inclusion of Urdu in educational curricula supports language learning and cultural retention among British Pakistanis.

6. Implications: Sociolinguistic and Cultural

This exploration on diaspora communities offers several significant sociolinguistic and cultural implications.

6.1 Intergenerational language transmission: The study reveals the challenges and strategies involved in transmitting heritage languages to younger generations in diaspora settings. For instance, Gambhir (2022) provides a historical overview of language maintenance and loss within the Indian diaspora and discusses factors that contribute to the preservation or decline of heritage languages. The study offers insights into the complex interplay of language transmission and the efforts of Indian families to preserve their linguistic heritage across generations.

6.2 Language contact and change: Diaspora settings often involve contact between multiple languages and lead to language change, code-switching, and the development of new language varieties. Mesthrie (2011) discusses how specific sociolinguistic features within a dominant language can be used to construct ethnic identities. This is relevant to understanding how Indian subcontinental languages might be influenced by contact with English or other dominant languages in diaspora settings.

6.3 Multilingualism and ethnic identity: The research demonstrates the complex relationship between multilingualism and identity negotiation in diaspora contexts. Diskin (2020) explores how heritage language maintenance contributes to ethnic, national, or migrant identities among multilingual migrants in Dublin. This highlights the role of language in shaping individual and collective identities within diaspora communities.

6.4 Language as a marker of identity: Heritage languages serve as powerful markers of cultural identity and connect diaspora members to their ancestral roots and distinguishing them from other groups. Tawalbeh (2019) discusses the link between language and identity and notes that individuals who view language as an inseparable and emotional part of their identity are more likely to maintain their languages.

6.5 Language and cultural transmission: Language is not merely a tool for communication; it is also a vehicle for transmitting cultural knowledge, values, ethos, and traditions. A study on a Malayali community living in the UK notes how cultural values and practices support heritage language maintenance within this Keralite diaspora (Meddegama, 2019). This emphasizes the interconnectedness of language and culture.

6.6 Language and belonging: Speaking the heritage language can foster a sense of belonging within the community among diaspora members and create a link to their shared cultural heritage. Naseem (2018) examines how Pakistani families in Canada maintain the Urdu language and uses Urdu at home to promote cultural and religious practices. Ties with relatives and visits to Pakistan further strengthen children's connection to the heritage language, despite dominance of English in context.

7. Recommendations for Language Maintenance

The recommendations are some expanded policy and educational recommendations to support language maintenance and cultural preservation in diaspora communities. They also help with revitalizing cultural diversity and promoting inclusive diaspora societies.

7.1 Multilingual Education: Implementation of multilingual education programs can be catered to diaspora communities to provide instruction in both the heritage language and the dominant language of the host country. While Hornberger (2008) argues for multilingual education framework as a means of empowering historically oppressed communities of indigenous experiences, the principles of multilingual education can be extended to diaspora communities, too.

7.2 Heritage Language Schools: Bayat et al. (2022) emphasizes the importance of minority and heritage language education for supporting language maintenance. These schools play a vital role in language maintenance and cultural transmission outside of the formal education system.

7.3 Teacher Training: Teacher training programs for heritage language teachers are important. Qualified teachers are essential for effective language instruction and cultural transmission. They can teach at language nests' programs.

7.4 Curriculum Development: Development of culturally relevant and engaging curricula for heritage language programs are essential. The curriculum should reflect the community's cultural values and traditions aimed at preserving heritage languages.

7.5 Language Access Services: Providing language access services in public institutions such as hospitals, courts, and government agencies is instrumental. This ensures that diaspora members can access essential services in their heritage languages. For example, action plan for official languages by Canadian government discusses official languages, which includes providing language access services. While this focuses on English and French, the principles can be applied to other languages as well.

7.6 Combating Language Discrimination: Promoting equality in employment, media, housing, and public services is crucial. These measures should prohibit discrimination based on language to promote inclusivity. In employment, linguistic diversity must be encouraged to protect speakers of minority or heritage languages. Media representation of multiple languages can challenge stereotypes and promote respect. Awareness campaigns and multilingual resources in housing and public services can further elim-

inate discrimination and create a society that values linguistic diversity and equity.

7.7 Promoting Linguistic Diversity: Promoting linguistic diversity in public spaces such as signage, public announcements, and media is essential. This sends a clear message to the diaspora communities that all languages are valued and respected. For instance, Canadian government emphasizes the importance of creating an environment where both official languages, English and French, are valued and used in the workplace. It emphasizes the integration of official languages into daily practices to foster a culture of inclusivity and respect for linguistic duality.

7.8 Community Engagement: Engaging with diaspora communities in the development and implementation of language policies is crucial. This ensures that policies are responsive to the needs and priorities of the communities they serve. In this regard, European Council recommends on plurilingual and intercultural education, which emphasizes the importance of community involvement.

8. Limitations and Future Research Directions

The current inquiry is not an ethnographic study as the inquirer is not present in the diaspora community language over a sustained period of time for the investigation. There is a possibility of collecting first-hand data to analyze and arrive at findings. On the other hand, the investigator reviews secondary data sources from research and academic databases, and reputed peer-reviewed journals and look for sociolinguistic themes and patterns on those published articles.

Future research studies can help us gain a deeper understanding of the complex interplay of language shift maintenance in unexplored fields of diaspora communities and develop more effective strategies for language maintenance strategies. Pandya's (2024) framework for a seven-year investigation comparing two cohorts of Indian older adults demonstrates the importance of long-term research in understanding language maintenance patterns across generations in diaspora communities. This approach offers valuable insights into heritage language trajectories and emphasizes the need for extended studies to capture the complex dynamics of language shift and maintenance.

Further research should evaluate the long-term effects of bilingual and heritage language programs on language maintenance and academic achievement. Green's (2015) study on English proficiency and ethnicity's impact on academic performance provides a foundation for investigating the outcomes of heritage language programs. This research can help develop more effective strategies for supporting language maintenance in diaspora communities.

Moreover, studying less-represented groups such as second-generation South Asian Britons and other under-represented communities can provide valuable insights into diverse diaspora experiences (Kalayil, 2017). This research findings will help broaden our understanding of language maintenance patterns across different cultural and linguistic contexts of second-generation diaspora communities.

Examining the use of social media and digital archives in connecting diaspora members with their heritage language and culture is crucial for understanding contemporary language maintenance strategies. It can shed light on how technology can be leveraged to support language preservation and cultural transmission in diaspora communities.

Conclusion

The study of language shift and maintenance is crucial for understanding the forces of language contact, cultural change, and identity negotiation within diverse multicultural communities. This exploration of language shift and maintenance within Indian subcontinental diaspora communities in multicultural

societies has revealed the intricate interplay of linguistic, cultural, and social factors that shape language practices. The review of literature highlighted the pervasive nature of language shift among second and subsequent generations, leading to a decline in heritage language proficiency and usage. This shift is driven by a confluence of factors, including the dominance of the majority language in education, employment, and public life. The desire for social integration and economic advancement also motivating factors. While language shift can facilitate adaptation and access to opportunities in the new society, it also raises concerns about the potential loss of cultural heritage, intergenerational communication, and the erosion of linguistic diversity.

Furthermore, the study emphasized the significance and strategies for language maintenance efforts undertaken by families, community organizations, and cultural institutions. These institutions play a vital role in creating supportive environments for language maintenance. In addition, these strategies aim to preserve heritage languages, transmit cultural values, and foster a sense of identity and belonging among diaspora community members. However, these efforts often face significant challenges, including limited resources, societal pressures to assimilate, and the evolving linguistic preferences of younger generations. Moreover, community members face immense social pressures for assimilation, heritage language discrimination, and negative stereotypes. The research highlights the need for greater recognition and support for language maintenance initiatives, including policy interventions, funding opportunities, and the development of culturally relevant language learning resources.

Finally, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the dynamic language practices of Indian subcontinental diaspora communities in multicultural societies. It emphasizes the importance of recognizing and valuing linguistic diversity, promoting inclusive language policies, and supporting community-based language initiatives. This inquiry recommends a nurturing environment that respects and celebrates both the majority cultural language and heritage languages. If the multicultural society can adopt this recommendation, it can help create more equitable and inclusive spaces for all members. This research can inform policy development and community-based programs aimed at fostering linguistic diversity and cultural preservation in an increasingly interconnected world. The findings of this review have important implications for policymakers, educators, and community leaders because there is a clear need for inclusive heritage language policies and support for community-based language initiatives. Multicultural societies can promote intercultural understanding and supporting heritage language maintenance by promoting a cohesive environment for diaspora communities. This study contributes to the fields of sociolinguistics and bilingualism by illuminating the dynamic language practices of diaspora communities and emphasizing the ongoing need for research and policy development in this area.

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