

Language Planning and the Khamti Language of Assam

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ABSTRACT : Language planning is a deliberate effort to influence the function, structure or acquisition of languages or language variety within a speech community. It is often associated with the government planning, but it is also used a variety of non-governmental organization such as grass-roots organizations as well as individuals. Goals of such planning vary. Better communication through assimilation of a single dominant language can be economic benefits to minorities but it also perceived to facilitate their political domination. It involves the establishment of language regulators, such as formal or informal agencies, committees, societies or academics to design or develop new structures to meet contemporary needs. Khamti is ethnic group of Assam mostly inhabited in different parts of Upper Assam. It is important to mention here that the Khamti language is spoken among a very few people in Assam. This language is spoken by the people who are dwelling only in around 4 or 5 villages. In this sequence, the range of using Khamti language is very brief and few. The other communities do not understand or use this language and so, this language is not spoken outside the range of certain villages. There is no inconvenience in case of written form of tactical Khamti language. Khamti is a Tai-based language and the traditional written form of the script of Tai- Khamti language is very ancient. It can be found among the Khamti people who are dwelling in Assam but only a few people can write in this script at present. Since for a long time the circumstances of the bilingual policy is lessening the ability of Khamti people use to khamti language. It can be supposed that the children of new generation cannot write or read the Tai script, is a big hindrance. This paper is an attempt to analyze the language planning of the Khamti Language and factors influence the minority language like Khamtis.

KEYWORDS: Language Planning, Khamti Language, Minority language, Influence factors, Assam

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I. INTRODUCTION:

From the philological perspective, India is the most diverse nation in the world. There are almost 800 languages spoken in India. Besides, if we consider the dialect, as a separate language, the numerical data would increase. The languages that are found in India can be put into four groups of languages. These are : 1) Indo-European Language Family; 2) Dravidian Language Family; 3) Austro-Asiatic Language Family; 4) Chino-Tibetan Language Family.

After the independence of India in 1947, the newly formed Federal Union accepted a peculiar language policy. Particularly, the English language adhered to use as official language instead of widely used the Hindi language in India. Moreover the Federal Union adhered to use the regional languages of the states as the official language of the states of India. In reality, the language policy of the states was re-formed a little bit. For book translation, dictionary and composition of encyclopedia, key-board, and printing machines were used to improve and expand the Hindi language. On the other hand, many states paid their attention for the development of the majority of language empowerment. For instance, a particular committee was formed for the preparation of new terminology, judicial and bureaucratic vocabularies. The Bilingual Policy was failed mostly in India because of the opposition of Hindi language from the political, religious and practical perspectives. For this reason, again the English language was accepted in the offices as a second language in 1967. As a result, the students had to learn two languages (English and Hindi) after learning the mother language in the educational zone. On the other hand, the minorities likewise those students who did not use official language as their mother language had to learn three languages (Hindi, English and their official language of the states where they lived).

From this explanation, in case of India, one thing is clarified that in a multilingual country what a government could do or should do. Particularly, in case of the third world countries or the countries which got independence later, government's language related elucidated policy is mostly needed. In that case, a national language is to be selected or accepted and subsequently improved to be used for various purposes of communication. Along with its expansion, decision has to be made in related to the position of minority languages. In this paper, there is an attempt to illustrate about the language planning method from its various perspectives.

In general, the government institutions do their duties in case of language planning. But, like this, every person can be also involved in this case. For example, this task can be active by creating and consistently using a new word.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study is based on both primary data and secondary data. Primary data includes field observation. The secondary data includes critical references, journals and internet sources. All the collected sources will be used to analyze the proposed objective of the study. The theory to be applied for this study is language planning.

III. DISCUSSION

Types and theories of Language Planning

Language planning is related to the realization of the language policy or special part. The government implements some rules regarding the languages that are used in a country and those rules present in the form of language planning. Language planning is implemented regarding the certain language policy. Office or in the government language planning, many language organizations, educational institutions or department bear responsibilities. These departments work in accepting the uneducated language script, spelling method, sound receiving etc. Although, a government has many authorities or power, they cannot compel to speak a particular language. Suddenly, if any organization, offers any proposals about inclusions of languages through language planning, there may appear clashes between the daily conversation of used language by the language users and languages used in office. Sometimes (in case of many spoken language) language develops itself. For example, in the countries of Latin America and in Spain the 'Spanish' Academy proffers some advice regarding the new Spanish words which are borrowing words from English language to use as an optional word. But the language speakers had continued to use those borrowing words. In most cases, there are many chances to bear success in the form of written language than the spoken language. Like this a reputed literary form of language can be born rather than a spoken form of language. A language planning can be various depending upon a country or the system of environment in language community. In case of developing countries, their first task is to decide which language plays the vital role as a national language. Many countries which got independence later select the national language through this process. For example, the national language 'Bahasa Indonesia' accepted by Indonesia can be mentioned. Such kind of language planning can be referred as Language Selection.

In all countries the minor languages are used after the national language. Language planning is being involved in relation to the placing of these minor languages- Are these tolerant, prevalent or oppressed or used in educational and bureaucratic zones etc. Even if the government does not publish the schemes that are accepted in a minor language, encapsulate by the language planning itself. Because it would be derisive if the safety is not guaranteed to the minor languages, even to the point of death. Therefore, there is language planning for minor language, which is called the Minority Language Treatment.

Language planning can be instructed to improve the nation and the minor languages as well. Such kind of improvement or development may influence onto any extent of spoken or written form of language. For example, re-examination of spelling method, in case of newly accepted national language selecting in an ideal form of language etc. Sometimes where a language is circulated in the spoken-form, for that script can be accepted. Such kind of language planning is called 'Language Development'. It should be noticed that such development is not a hereditary development.

At this point, an important question occurs, "how could an ideal language planning be determined or fixed?" Some people can say that, the aim of any planning is to develop the environment. Such planning is to be there in the domestic environment of economics. There are also troubles with such improvement and the developing measurement or its definition. Can a certain language offer a satisfactory service in case of communication of a community? It leads to two kinds of answers in the direction of language planning and these answers are dependent on social phase of language and the scope of linguistics from perspectives of severance.

The first one is- Mechanism or Instrumentalism (cf. Haugen, 1971). It may not be popular among the socio-linguists, yet it has many followers. Tauli(1968) is one of those remarkable speakers. He shows the language as an instrument or a measurement, through which evaluation, transformation, management and improvement, also new language can be created. According to Tauli, ever evaluation became possible of language in their ability the linguists evaluate its value, illogical form and indefinite form can be identified. Tauli also mentioned that, it is not basic need for us to evaluate language as a wholesome, but economy clarity, elasticity etc. need to pay attention towards the probability of certain linguistic characteristic. According to this objectives of evaluation accurately and numerically can have also such ability of measurements. From this we can say that an objective of a language or the language can be good or developed than another language from certain glances.

The second formula or the theory of language planning is-

- a) All the languages are symbolic method of same local equality.
- b) Language planning is not only related to tactical approach, it is also involved with social approach of language. The first policy is based on the acceptable reason generally in modern science. The second policy of language planning from the socio-linguistic formula propounded by Hagen clarifies the example mentioned in the social phase strongly. People use language to communicate always socially in a daily conversation. They have a separate social value and the language they use has relation to the ownership. Therefore, the language cannot be considered to use as a general instrument. It firmly supposes the planning as the social planning where a language is involved with many socially dignified sides. Usage in various social circumstances, relations of various linguistic communities one's own etc need to be given due importance here.

Such kinds of matter do not accept the probability in development of language; but it reminds the social approach and limitations of probabilities.

Generally, the Linguists of the present time seems to pay little attention in the field of language planning. There can be two reasons for this unmindful.

- a) Many linguists adhere to the approach that language is an independent method and it cannot be changed willingly by locating outside the method.
- b) In many times it seems that language planning is not only related to written language, its spoken approach is also considered as supplementary.

Utilization and Stages in Language Planning

The first step or layer of the language planning is to find out the primary problems of the language. After understanding the wholesome situations of a language it will be easy to take the steps in advantage. In this case, it is necessary to clear a concept of the ground level of the language. In our discussion, in order to emphasize the language planning of Khamti language, it is important to enquire about its number of users, social problems, social dignity, written form and the vocabularies etc.

It is important to mention here that the Khamti language is spoken among a very few people in Assam. This language is spoken by the people who are dwelling only in around 4 or 5 villages. In this sequence, the range of using Khamti language is very brief and few. The other communities do not understand or use this language and so, this language is not spoken outside the range of certain villages.

There is no inconvenience in case of written form of tactical Khamti language. Khamti is a Tai-based language and the traditional written form of the script of Tai- Khamti language is very ancient. It can be found among the Khamti people who are dwelling in Assam but only a few people can write in this script at present. Since for a long time the circumstances of the bilingual policy is lessening the ability of Khamti people use to khamti language. It can be supposed that the children of new generation cannot write or read the Tai script, is a big hindrance.

In case of spoken form of Khamti language, they use it among their community. Now they are not able to use many words and already from other languages many new words have entered into their language. For this reason it is necessary to keep the ownership and to take a particular action for the purpose of increasing vocabulary.

In reality, actual planning gain importance in the second level language planning. In the second level various methods in the sequence of objectives and decision of planning and proceeding are accepted. Methods and proceedings are the main subject of language planning. There are two sides to be found as follows- Language Selection and Minority Language Treatment. Language selection is related with newly elected national language. Specially, in case of the countries which got independence lately, national language is decided through this process. Considering the situation, our discussion reveals that Khamti language does not have the eligibility to be the national language or state language.

It is important to use the language related to involving decisions in case of minority language treatment, education bureaucracy and social life etc. From this observation there is no use of Khamti language in any terms at present time. Khamti language is not use in bureaucratic field and even it is not used in the educational field. Even in public life if Khamti language is used it is hard to be observed. It is really important to notice from our perspective i.e., Education. It becomes very fruitful within the education system of many educational policies in India. But in the case of Khamti people such kind of educational system in Assam has not arised yet. There is not a single step taken for the development of the medium in mother language of them. If such kinds of motives are to be included in the language planning, then it would be a big step taken towards the reservation of Khamti language for its people. For this, of course, there will be needed some infrastructural things and economic planning.

The third process is - Codification of principles. Such principles like, Dictionary, Grammar, Spelling Method, Punctuation Marks and in Pronunciation may fall in various aspects. It is pre-determined that the collection of principles or codification of principles in terms of a language can reach a norm. Literally, Khamti

language is an acknowledged language. There is an adequate study on this language such as its dictionary, grammar or in other philological process. But there is a need to re-examine to make the Khamti language prosperous going through the situation of Khamti language of Assam. On the other hand, in order to use the Khamti language in a certain scope of educational medium, there is a need to give importance in terms of dictionary, publication of textbooks, grammar in the backdrop of Assam. Because as Tai-based language, Khamti language is to be written through Tai script and it is already observed as a prolonged written tradition. At present, there is only need to recover and re-circulate it among the Assamese Khamti people.

The last process of the language planning system is- Modernization of language. Codification of Principle and the operating union of Modernization develop the language structure. Modernization refers to the liability of a language as it can be communication medium like any other developed language. There are two kinds of approaches involved here. They are- 1) Expansion of vocabulary; 2) Development of new methods and its form.

By this way in order to plan the Khamti language of Assam, it has to face some serious troubles particularly regarding its practical use. In order to present the new methods and forms it has to confront the several challenges, which may not be impossible at all. It is observed that the approach of vocabulary expansion in language planning is to be discussed. It is very necessary to improve its vocabulary so that it can expressed several concepts of the modern world. Such kind of necessity is also involved in terms of Khamti language in Assam. In this case, through the alternation of pronunciation of the foreign words, it can be accepted or borrowed. Comparatively, alternation of word can accept the vocabulary expansion. Such kind of language planning is also important in terms of Khamti language of Assam. However, it is necessary to import many foreign-based words here and at the same time it is also necessary to accept the alternative form.

The third step of language planning is 'implementation'. It is not only to be made planning by the language community or organization, its practical view is also needed to be involved. Among the general tactics of implementing language planning are the list of vocabulary, dictionary, publishing of grammar, to provide sustenance of language, publishing books for school, vocational training for the teachers in terms of new language, implementation of government policy in certain languages, enactment of law related to the uses of the language etc. can be included. In terms of language planning in Khamti language of Assam, attention should be on such kind of implementation. Dictionary and grammar can be published for the education of Khamti language. Besides this, for the primary education books need to be published. There are needed various economic support. Teachers should appointed by providing training in Khamti language. Through such kind of implementing steps, it is possible to have proper sustenance of Khamti language.

The fourth phase of the method of language planning is- Evaluation. Whatever aim and objectives were put before to move forward and to search that arising as possible method or not is the step of evaluation. Several kinds of study in evaluation is proving one thing that language planning can be succeeded. For instance, it is notable to mention about Swahili language. This language is acknowledged as a multi-faceted national language of Tanzania. Though, English language getting a massive attention everywhere, yet the Swahili language has managed to get a strong position among the secondary education system.

On the other hand, sometimes, it can be failed if the language speaker do not change their habits or if they change it to another approach than planning approach, then the language planning will never be succeeded. This is mainly observed in case of vocabulary expansion or in new initiation. Generally, language committee or the organization try to decrease the borrowing words, but the language community may not accept their presented initiative form. Language moves forward in their own way if the language speakers stay steady in their own opinion. So it seems that, generally, language planning can be influenced only in written form. And its spoken form is left behind in unchanged situation. In reality, language planning is a cyclic process, that is why, the discovery of the language and its usage from every aspect is related to the evaluation process with its explanation and it is the newly accepted first step of the method of language planning.

Factors that influence Language planning: A study of Khamti Language

Many factors can influence language planning. Within this socio-populated, philological, socio-psychological, political, religious and so on factors can be cited. Here in this context, various factors influencing the Khamti language has been discussed.

Socio-populated Factor

The socio-populated factors encapsulate the location of people and how many languages are spoken by how many people. To get a brief look at the direction of the Khamti language community of Assam, it can be observed that their population rate is rather low. For living among Assamese people they need to use Assamese language in various circumstances. They dwell in only about 4/5 villages in Lakhimpur district. In order to use this language by a little people in a little range it is observed if is disregarded for a several time.

Philological Factor

In the factors of philology dignity of language, its characteristics, dissimilarities of the language are contained. Getting acknowledgement through the modernization and the dignity of language are associated with the literary tradition as well. Such kinds of matters are associated in the context of Khamti language. There is the basic need of modernization of Khamti language of Assam. Though, as the Tai-based language Khamti has a literary tradition, yet, it is not completely observed that is continued to be sustaining in the background of Assam. Basically, because of the usage of Khamti language in a little range, some negative aspects can be seen in the context of the dignity in society.

In the matter of language planning, the similarities and dissimilarities between the languages is an important thing. It can be said that this thing may effect on the planning of Khamti in Assam, which is why Khamti language is – Tai-based language. There is abundance of circulation in many Tai-based languages. For instance – Khamyang, Turung, Phake, Aaiton. There is a bit of similarities among these languages and there is no discomfort to learn another language by one certain community.

Socio-Psychological Factor

In the matter of socio-psychological factors, manifestation of users is related to the language they use. Such manifestations are connected with the social situation of language community. The association of many languages in the matter of social aspect results in the different wholesome manifestations of language communities. In the third phase, there is an extensive explanation on the manifestations of Khamti language that is provided there.

Political Factor

Political factors play a vital role in language planning. In this aspect it can be seen that there is a direct connection between general policy and language policy. Sometimes preparing the language policy in a political way can shift the language of language community or it can help the language to gain acknowledgement. If it is observed from this way; it can be seen that there is a strong connection between language planning and political aim. In language planning, the general policies of former colonial power could be visible. In terms of planning of Khamti language, political factors are also related. Regarding the present geographical location of Assamese Khamti people, political factors are also connected herewith. In the past, colonial British Government destroyed the social power of Khamtis. For the present time, language policy is important to sustain and secure the language and to give a complete shape there is a need of good political intentions. In terms of language planning there is a good influence of political factors in the aspects of bilingual education or minority language education. It can be succeeded by planning politically in terms of bringing out the education of Khamti language or bilingual education of Khamti tribes. That is why it is associated with economic aspects and extensive infrastructural aspects.

Religious Factor

A factor that is involved importantly in case of language planning is ‘religious factor’. In language planning a sufficient relation between religion and language is dependent on it. However, local language is used for expansion of religion. Many such kinds of examples could be found in the world history. For example- it can be said about the missionaries who came to preach religion. On coming to preach the religion, the missionaries contributed enough to recover the Assamese language from the dominance of the British colony. Many books were composed in Assamese. There is also an approach involving the religious aspect in Khamti language planning. Khamties are Buddhists and they seem to use their own language in religious tradition. Therefore, the religious practice helps to sustain and secure the language. There are such some policies in their religious tradition that they need to be donated some religious books in form of manuscripts. Such kinds of respected eagerness of tradition could help to learn the language.

IV. CONCLUSION

As we know that “Language Planning” is a conscious endeavor to influence the function, structure or acquisition of languages or language variety within a speech community. It is often related with the government planning, but it is also used a mosaic of non-governmental organization such as grass-roots organizations as well as individuals. Goals of such planning diverge. Better communication through absorption of a single dominant language can be economic profits to minorities but it also professed to facilitate their political domination. It engages the establishment of language regulators, such as formal or informal agencies, committees, societies or academics to intend or develop new structures to meet contemporary needs.

Khamti is an ethnic group of Assam which is very few numbers in proportion to the total population of Assam. They have a distinctive language. An attempt can be made for influence structure or acquisition of language variety within the Khamti community, simply language planning. The socio-populated factor,

philological factors, socio-psychological factors, political factors and religious factors can be cited as the responsible factors that can influence in the Khamti language planning.

It is worth mentioning that languages of local ethnic groups diminishing day by day. In such a endanger situation language planning is very essential for the Khamti language. At last with the hope and optimism it can be conclude that government and non-governmental organization of the said ethnic groups should take necessary steps to plan Khamti Language for maintaining their distinctiveness of their language and their identity.

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