

Some Salient Features of Bhojpuri English

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Abstract

This paper aims to discuss the Phonology of Bhojpuri English including vowels, consonants and diphthongs. This also tries to find out the reasons behind the interference of Bhojpuri in the speech of Bhojpuri speakers of English. The hypothesis is that it will help the Indian speakers of English improve their pronunciation and try to overcome the errors made because of mother tongue (L1) interference.

Keywords

Bhojpuri, dialects, interference, pronunciation, problem etc.

Introduction

1. Bhojpuri English

The preference given to the term Bhojpuri English is simply because the speakers of this dialect have their very distinct color of the English they speak. So, Bhojpuri English here is used in very restricted sense refers to that sub (non-standard) dialect of Bihari English. Since there is one to one relationship in the alphabets and the sounds in Bhojpuri, Bhojpuri English is clearly marked in comparison to Maithili, Magahi or Angika English.

1.1 Bhojpuri Language

Bhojpuri, one of the four most important and widely spoken dialects in Bihar is also a regional language spoken in parts of north-central and eastern India. Bhojpuri language is a part of Eastern Hindi or Bengali continuum of languages which once extended from Assam and Bengal to Banaras. Though the rest of Bihar and UP slowly adopted the new Hindi standard, the language remained strong in the areas between Patna and Banaras. But the government of India is not ready to grant it the statutory status of a national scheduled language.

There is much in common in the vocabularies of Sanskrit, Hindi, Urdu and Indo-Aryan languages of northern India. Bhojpuri and several closely related languages, including Magahi and Maithili, are together known as the Bihari languages. They are part of the Eastern Zone group of Indo-Aryan languages which included Bengali and Oriya. There are several dialects of Bhojpuri, including three or four in eastern Uttar Pradesh alone.

Mahapandit Rahul Sankrityayan, the scholar, Polymath and Polygot wrote some works in Bhojpuri. The other eminent writer of Bhojpuri is Viveki Rai. The other legendary figure who enriched Bhojpuri literature with his immortal "Bidesia" folk songs is Bhikhari Thakur. In comparison to the number of Bhojpuri speakers around the world it is sad that Bhojpuri literature is not so rich. Some other notable Bhojpuri personalities are the legendary freedom fighter Swami Sahjanand Saraswati, the first president of India Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Manoj Bajpai, and former Indian Prime ministers Lal Bahadur Shastri, and Chandra Shekhar. Sharda Sinha "Bihar Kokila and Padma Shri" is a famous Bhojpuri folk singer.

1.2 Bhojpuri Speech Area

As discussed above Bhojpuri language is spoken in parts of north-central and eastern India. It is spoken in the western part of Bihar, the north western part of Jharkhand, and the Purvanchal region of Uttar Pradesh, as well as adjoining area of southern plains of Nepal. Bhojpuri is also spoken in Guyana, Suriname, Fizi, Trinidad, Tobago, Mauritius. The variant of Bhojpuri of Surinamese Hindustanians, is also referred to as Sarnami Hindi or

just Sarnami when it is mixed with (Creole) English or Dutch words. In comparison to Suriname a smaller percentage of the Indian know Bhojpuri in Guyana and Trinidad also.

1.3 Speakers of Bhojpuri

The census of India (2001)¹ counts 33,099,497 millions of people in India who speak Bhojpuri dialect under the Hindi language sub-family. Wikipedia says that an estimated 6 million Bhojpuri speaking people living outside the Bhojpuri heartlands of Bihar and Purvanchal. These areas include Nepal, especially Birgunj, Mauritius, Fizi, Suriname, Guyana, Uganda, Singapore, Trinidad and Tobago; Saint Vincet and the Grenadines, Great Britain and the United States.

Bhojpuri language has been heavily influenced by other languages in several parts of the world. Mauritian Bhojpuri includes many Creoles and English words, while the one spoken in Trinidad and Tobago has picked up some Caribbean words along with English.

1.4 Script

Until late 19th century Bhojpuri was commonly written in “Kaithi” as well as “Nastaliq” (Persian) scripts. But in modern times, Bhojpuri like other major dialects in Bihar uses “Devnagan” as its script.

2. The phonology of Bhojpuri

There has never been scientific study of phonology of Bhojpuri as such, and in all the Bhojpuri grammar books, the writers even differ on the number of letters in the Bhojpuri alphabet. Acharya Ramdeo Tripathi (1987)² in his “Bhojpuri Vyakaran” mentions a total of sixty-four(64) letters- twenty-two (22)vowels, thirty (30) consonants, and twelve (12) other letters which he puts under ‘Antastha’(6), ‘Ushm’ (4) and ‘Ayogwas’(2).

On the other hand another grammarian Uday Narayan Tiwari³ in his book “Bhojpuri Bhasha aur Sahitya” mentions only fifty-one (51)- fourteen(14) vowels and thirty-seven (37)consonants. Another Bhojpuri grammarian Shukdeo Singh⁴ in his book “Bhojpuri aur Hindi Ka Tulnatamak Viyakaran” mentions fifty-eight (58) letters-seventeen (17) vowels and forty-one (41) consonants.

A critical analysis of these three books mentioned above shows that there is no consistency in their approach. All of them have put allophonic variants as different letters (morphemes) to that extent that Tripathi puts four variants of /e/ and Tiwary and Singh put four variants of /ə/; to mention a few only.

Similarly all of them have put /^h+h/, /n+h/, /m+h/, /l+h/ and /r+h/ as separate morphemes. Based on the above three analyses it is found that Bhojpuri has twelve vowel and 33 consonant sounds.

2.1 Vowels

The ten (10) pure vowels in Bhojpuri are:

/ə, ə:, a, ɪ, i:, e, e:, æ, o, o: /

2.2 Consonants

The thirty-three (33) normal consonants of Bhojpuri are given below in the chart:

Kabarg	k	kh	g	Gh	ᵑ
Chabarg	c	ch	j	Jh	ṽy
Tabarg	T	Th	D	Dh	N
tabarg	t	th	d	Dh	n
Pabarg	p	ph	b	Bh	m
Antasth	y	r	l	W	
Ushm	ṣ	(x)	s	H	

Bhojpuri Consonant Chart

3. The interference of Bhojpuri in the speech of Bhojpuri speakers of English

To find out the interference of Bhojpuri in the speech of Bhojpuri speakers of English in Bihar, the author made a parameter taking into consideration the pronunciation at following levels:

3.1 Sounds

- (a) vowels, (b) diphthongs, (c) consonants, (d) conjuncts,
- (e) length of vowel sounds, (f) aspiration, (g) silent consonants

3.2 Stress

- (a) word stress, (b) sentence stress, (c) stress in connected speech

3.3 Tone and Intonation

3.4 The other features of speech which is taken in account are:

- (a) the use of weak-forms.
- (b) the pronunciation of certain suffixes like '-s', '-es', and '-d', '-ed'.

3.1 Sounds

(a) Vowels

It is observed that Bhojpuri speakers have problem in the pronunciation of four vowel sounds /ɜ:/, /ɒ/, /ɔ:/ and /ə/. They usually replace /ɜ:/ with /ʌ+r/, /ɒ/ and /ɔ:/ with /o/ and /o:/ and /ə/ with /ʌ/. The use of /ə/ is not commonly found in the speech of Bhojpuri speakers, even in common words like fever and together. Other important feature to note is that they use additional vowel sounds /ɪ/, /e/ and /ʌ/ in words like star, stair, scale etc.

(b) Diphthongs

Bhojpuri speakers of English hardly use Diphthongs in their speech. It is a common problem area for the speakers in Bihar.

(c) Consonants

Bhojpuri speakers also have problem in the pronunciation of eight consonant sounds namely /f, v, θ, ð, z, ʃ, ʒ and w/. It is because the heavy interference of the mother tongue (L1) in their speech. They usually replace /f, v/ with Hindi /Ph, bh/, /θ, ð/ with /th, d/, /z/ with /dʒ/, /ʃ/ with /s/, /ʒ/ with /dʒ/ and /w/ with /v/.

(d) Conjuncts

Conjuncts, commonly known as consonant clusters, pose real problem for Bhojpuri speakers of English in Bihar. They are facing problem in pronouncing even simple words having a cluster of only two consonants like 'penetrated' which has a /t/, /r/ cluster. Instead of pronouncing /p e n t r e t r i d/, most of the respondents managed with /p e n t r e d/, /p e n t r e d/ and /p e n t r e t e d/ etc.

(e) Length of Vowel Sound

Bhojpuri speakers of English generally fail to make clear distinction between short and long vowels like ship and sheep, heap and hip, fool and full etc. Because of the heavy interference of the mother tongue Bhojpuri speakers tend to emphasize each syllable and for this their shortcut seems to be lengthening even the short vowel sounds.

(f) Aspiration

Aspiration is hardly found in the speech of Bhojpuri speakers of English.

(g) Silent consonants

Like weak forms, they barely use silent consonants in their speech. Some glaring examples are bomb, tomb, calm, debt etc.

3.2 Stress

It is observed that the Bhojpuri Speakers of English don't take full care of proper stress (word stress, sentence stress and stress in connected speech).

3.3 Tone and Intonation

Tone and intonation is another important feature of Standard English which affects both intelligibility and acceptability and may pose great semantic problems, more because English happens to be a stress-timed language and rhythm played a great role in it.

It is observed that Bhojpuri is a dialect which sounds very harsh and this harshness is evident in the tone and intonation of Bhojpuri speakers whose English speech is all colored with Bhojpuri tone.

3.4 The other features of speech which is taken in account are:

(a) Use of weak-forms.

Bhojpuri is a very strong dialect and Bhojpuri speakers love to pronounce each letter with equal force. Naturally they hardly use weak forms in their normal speech.

(b) Pronunciation of certain suffixes like '-s', '-es', and '-d', '-ed'.

Bhojpuri speakers of English have problem in pronouncing certain suffixes like '-d' and '-ed', '-s' and '-es'.

Conclusion

The study above shows that the Bhojpuri speakers of English have problem in the pronunciation of four sounds /ɜ:/, /ɒ/, /ɔ:/ and /ə/. The use of /ə/ is not commonly found in their speech. They also have problem in the pronunciation of diphthongs and consonant sounds like /f, v, θ, ð, z, ʃ, ʒ and w/. They do not give proper attention towards the use of some Supra Segmental Features like: Stress, Tone and Intonation, Conjuncts, Length of vowel sounds, Weak-forms, Silent consonants, Aspiration and Suffixes etc. which make their speech unintelligible and unacceptable. But they can overcome these problems if they will try to unlearn their wrong language habits by their continuous practice and consciousness towards it. This study will also inspire the scholars to work on this dialect.

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