

# (Endangerment of Shughni language in Afghanistan)

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**Abstract:** Shughni language is one of the minority languages in Badakhshan, north part of Afghanistan. It is spoken in Shughnan District and it has more 27000 speakers. It has experienced challenges, especially in vocabulary; for instance, its speakers are losing the indigenous words and replacing them with Persian words. Questionnaire was the tool for collecting the data and participants responded questions in term of their understanding about their native language. The analysis demonstrates how indigenous words in Shughni language are losing. They are replaced by dominant languages, particularly Persian, which plays a vital role in Shughnan District. Therefore, I conclude by discussing some theoretical and methodological implications that resulted in convincing findings.

**Key words:** losing words, endangerment, indigenous words, and replacement.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Shughni language is spoken on both sides of Amo River that one side belongs to Afghanistan and another side belongs to Tajikistan. Shughnan District of Badakhshan Province is located in the north part of Afghanistan. The people who live in Shughnan District can speak Persian and Shughni language, but Shughni is the native language for all the residents of this area. There are many challenges in the way of Shughni language in both reading and writing. Persian has been primary language used in education because all the books, articles, news, magazines are available in it and it is medium of instruction. When the students go to schools, they have to read books based on Persian, so the learners are familiar with Persian language since their childhood. Cultural diversity is essential to human heritage (UNESCO, 2003). Among other components of this cultural diversity is language. Language, apart from being a medium of communication, also embodies the unique cultural wisdom of a people. The loss of any language is therefore a loss of humanity. It has been claimed that the 7 billion inhabitants of the world speak only 3 per cent of the world's 6,000 languages. More than half of the world's population speaks English, Russian, Mandarin, Hindi and Spanish. More precisely, about 97 per cent of the world's population speaks about 4 per cent of the world's languages; and conversely, about 96 per cent of the world's languages are spoken by about 3 per cent of the world's people (Bernard, 1996). Most of the world's language heterogeneity, then, is under the stewardship of a very small number of people. Shughni language is a member of the Eastern Iranian branch of the Indo-Iranian language family spoken in Tajikistan and Afghanistan. It is also known as a Pamiri language, as it is spoken in the Pamir Mountains. Shughnan is one of the districts of Badakhshan Province, which has more than 30000 population and all the people in this district speak Shughni. Colonialism put an end to the oldest surviving in the Central Asian ethno-linguistic entities that were the Pamir and Eastern Hindu Kush leadership. The areas of Wakhan, Shughnan, Rushan and Darvaz arranged in a sequence one after another in the upper reaches of the Amu-Darya, where dissected: the left bank of the village moved to a dependence on Britain to Afghanistan and the right bank to Russia and Bukhara.. Dodykhudoeva (2007), Pamir languages communities have ceased to speak their mother tongues in public, in favour of the surrounding dominant Tajik language. The languages have now deteriorated. They are spoken only in private, within the community until the native speakers adopt the externally conveyed negative attitude towards them and cease completely to pass the languages on to their children. This process is taking place in Badakhshan, affecting different languages, depending on the number of their speakers and their local status. Until the 1930s Shughni was not a written language, although Shughni speakers participated in Persian-language, which is a high culture of the region and today some are literate in Tajik and/or Russian. Shughni is a Pamir language, part of the Southeastern Iranian group within the Indo-European language family. Spoken across the Pamir range, its closest relatives include Yazgulyam in Tajikistan, Sarikoli in China, Munji and Sanglechi-Ishkashimi in Afghanistan, Yidgha in Pakistan. Compared to other Pamiri languages, Shughni remains comparatively vital, with a significant speaker base and many younger speakers. Several different orthographies have been proposed or developed since the 1930s, usually with Cyrillic or Roman letters, but none is in wide use. The Tajik Civil War

and an influx of outsiders into the Pamir area have started having some effect on Shughni, although not to the extent as in other, smaller languages. The last two generations—first under Soviet rule and later with Tajik independence—have seen some shift to Russian and Tajik, especially among urbanized speakers. There was relatively little attention to endangerment of Shughni language in Afghanistan, especially losing vocabulary. According to (Wheeler, “When a language dies, we lose more than just words” (2007). We lost stories, poems, songs, and history. An entire cultural panorama and a unique way of seeing the world vanished. In the Pamir Mountains of eastern Tajikistan—bordering Afghanistan in Central Asia—speakers of a language called Shughni wonder if their native language and culture have a chance for long-term survival. Young people are slowly, unconsciously, replacing Shughni words with their nearest linguistic equivalents in Russian or Tajik—the predominant languages of commerce, education and the media. Another danger is under-documentation. Little is known about Shughni, even among language scholars, in part because Shughni is not a written language. As Mirzaev (cited in Wheeler), The Threat to Shughni is real”. When the opportunity arose to work with the UK team, the Shughni scholars were elated. “There’s a great amount of knowledge among all of the linguists involved,” Alamshoev says through an interpreter. During the workshops, all three Shughni scholars described the urgency of the project. The government of Tajikistan, a former Soviet republic, and supports the preservation of Shughni among its 60,000 speakers, but much more work needs to be done. “The threat to Shughni exists, says Mirzaev (cited in Wheeler) pointedly, “and it would be extremely sad if it were lost”. The 1980 constitution designated that Pashto and Persian languages aside from national languages; they have to be the languages of media and school as well. (Kieffer, 1983).

### Present study

According to Yosufbeik (2015), The Pamir languages are strongly influenced by Persian in Afghanistan, Tajiki is influenced Russian in Tajikistan. Particularly, lexical elements of these languages were intensively borrowed from other languages. According to Alamshoev (cited in Wheeler), “The situation now is that both Tajik and Russian are influencing Shughni quite dramatically, As a result, the language may disappear and we’ll lose part of ourselves. As for the mass media, previously, the media broadcast in Pashto and Dari equally, and minority languages may have sometimes allotted. Currently, Dari is allotted 70% of the time, and Pashto 30%, and others are limited in broadcast time. In Persian language, There are news, advertisements, films, talk show, songs, and cultural programs and so on. Therefore, the speakers of the minority languages, especially Shughni speakers including children watch TV and they will imitate and learn the concepts of different programs of TV. They are very interested to follow such programs, particularly cartoons, which appear on TV. Losing indigenous words puts Shughni language in more danger. A lot of indigenous words of Shughni language have been replaced by Persian because even the educated people that they speak in academic places and they use Persian words instead of Shughni native words. It happens in a formal context, especially in meetings, parties and schools in Shughnan District. When the students join to schools, they develop their bilingualism and Persian is the medium of instruction. Thus, the teachers teach the learners whatever is in the content of books and they are always exposed to Persian language.

### Aim

The main goal of this paper is to provide information about Shughni language, and it is spoken in Badakhshan, north part of Afghanistan. It is endangered and lost its indigenous words. Besides, it has more 27000 speakers in Shughnan District. Why is Shughni language in danger? This is question in this article has to be answered. Discovering appropriate answer to this question will help the readers to be more motivated about reading minority language, which experiences nearly its death.

### Method

Participants were all the native speakers of Shughni language. They were under the different ages with different backgrounds. The ages of these participants started from 25 up to 43. Out of 16 participants, 10 of them were males and 6 of them were

females. At the same time, these participants could speak Persian and Shugni languages, Most of them graduated from universities and they have been employees in both governmental and non-governmental offices.

## Measure Used in the Study

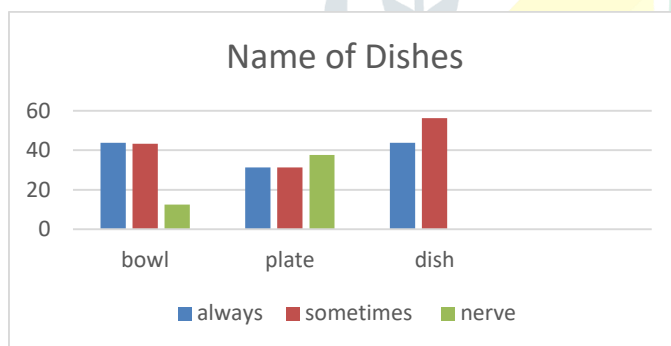
The way in which the data was collected was based on questionnaire. It had two parts. The first part had personal information, second part of questionnaire addressed the challenges of the speakers about endangerment of Shughni language in Shughnan District where it is spoken and it had six sections in order to check where more endangerment in Shughni language is.

## Procedure

The questionnaire sent through messenger to participants whose native language was Shugni and they completed their education, especially primary, secondary and high school in Shughnan District. They responded to all questions in terms of their own understanding. None of them were forced to know what was wrong or right answers. They were told whatever they know about your native language, they have to answer.

## Results

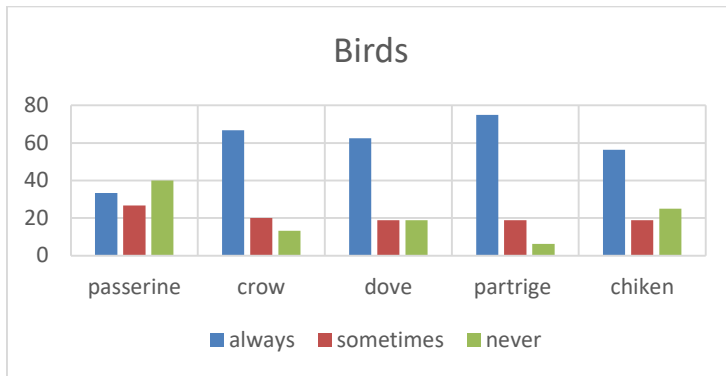
Afghanistan is a diverse country and there are about 30 languages. Persian and Pashto are national and majority languages. Shughni, which is spoken in the north of Afghanistan, is one of the minority languages. It is like other languages in the world has its own characteristics and its speakers are living in two different countries. Shughnan is part of Badakhshan in Afghanistan and another region, which is also called Shughnan, belongs Tajikistan. However, Shughni language has been losing its indigenous words. Recently, this research has done and it shows that the speakers of Shughni language use Persian words than ever before. In some sections, there are no remaining words in Shughni language, especially the sections of mines, jewelries, people's names, academic and technological words. In some other sections like: dishes, animal, birds, technical tools, vegetable, and fruits. In each of these sections, most of the words have been replaced by Persian words, but still there are many indigenous words have remained in Shughni language and its speakers use them in their daily conversation as well.



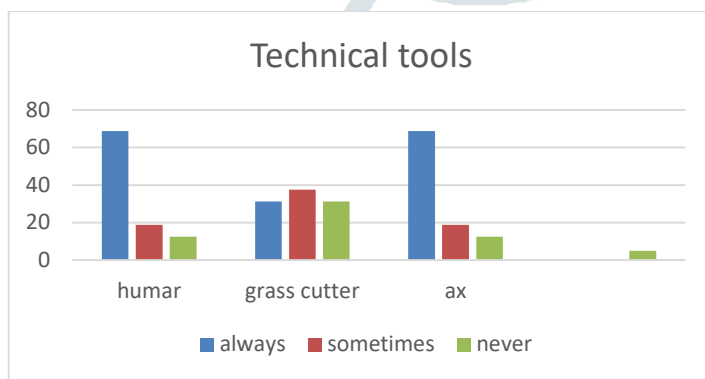
The word, tas (bowl) is an indigenous word in Shughni language and it was very common in the past. Right now, people call it kasa, which is Persian word. The words rekabi, which meaning in English language is plate. In today's world, many of Shughni speakers do not know the meaning of rekabi is. In the past, the word werik was very famous and it means in English language dish, but right now zorf is Persian word that is used in Shughni language.



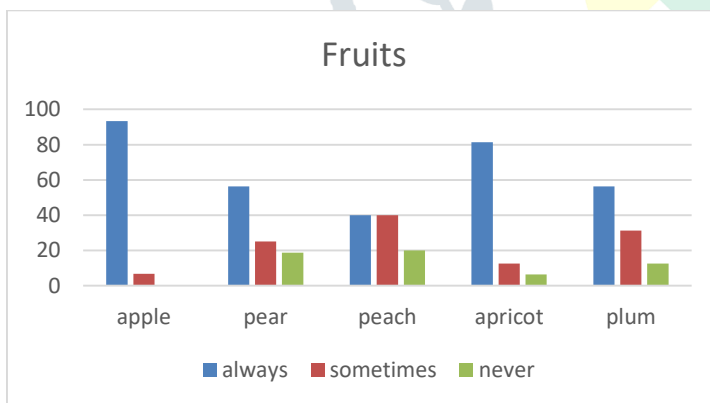
Many of the animals' names have been replaced, but these names are in danger in Shughni language because the rate of using Persian words instead of them is going up. The word warj means horse in Shughni language. The word maz(cheap) the word mizij means male cheap and zaw means is cow in Shughni language. Their meanings are changing in terms of situation. In the future, they might be replaced by Persian words.



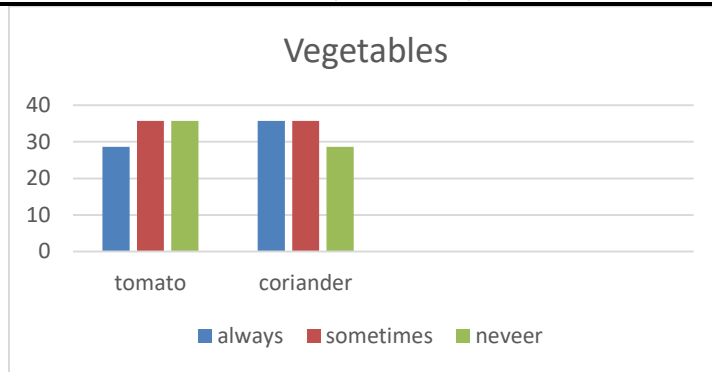
Kerjack is a native word in Shughni language and it means passerine in English language. Nowadays, for some native speakers of Shughni language it seems unknown. Khorn(crow), chebid(dove), zariz ( partridge) and chash ( chicken), some of the speakers of Shughni language use Persian names instead of these birds. For example, they use murch(chicken) instead of chash.



There were many technical tools that they were replaced by Persian language. Balka (hammer), dirw (grass cutter), and tarsh (hatchet), these are also influenced by Persian language. For example, some speakers of Shughni language used chackosh instead of balka.



In Shughnan District, there are different types of fruits. Many of fruits' names were changed by Persian words, but some of them are still very common in Shughni language. The rate shows that they are affected as well. They are like: Mon (apple), nashpoto (pear), nosh (apricot) and alganjal (plum), these words are also influenced and as it was shown in the chart.



Most of vegetables' names were changed. There remain a few of them in Shughni language and its speakers use them wherever it is necessary. Kiryapch (tomato) and lang (coriander) are vegetables, but some participants of Shughni language are not aware what the exact meanings of these words in their native language are. The chart shows that the use of these two indigenous words in Shughni language are less common among its speakers.

## Discussion

From findings of this article, all participants had different backgrounds and they had dominancy on two languages, Shughni, and Persian. However, in some sections, the indigenous words of Shughni language were lost, especially the section of minds. There was no one to know what gold in their native language is because all Persian words were used instead of them. In academic field, there is no indigenous word as well. Right now, the remaining words in all other sections in shughni language are shifting. In the past, the word weric (dish) was very popular, especially the old people in most cases they used the indigenous word. Rekabi (plate) and tas( bowl) are indigenous words in Shughni language, but in the course of time, qab(plate) and kasa( bowl), they are Persian words and came to use instead of these native words in Shughni language. In category of animal, many of the animals' names were replaced by Shughni native speakers because the young generation does not know what the native animal's name in their native language is. In this section, there were some indigenous names of different animals and the speakers of Shughni language, especially the young generation uses the names that are both famous in these two languages. For example, warj( horse) is the indigenous word of Shughni language and it has remained. Right now, asp( horse) is a Persian word and it is used in Shughni language too. In addition, in fruits and vegetables, all names that were used in Shughni language for fruits and vegetables were lost and the young generation doesn't know what they are. Kareyapch( tomato) is an indigenous word in Shughni language, nowadays, most of Shughni speakers use romi( tomato) that is Persian word in Shughni language. Therefore, changes and replacements of Persian words are happening in every section in Shughni language and it is in more danger that ever before.

## Conclusion

From discussing the findings, I have come to the following points. Shughni is one of the minority languages in Afghanistan. It is in danger because it has lost many of its indigenous words. For example, in the section of vegetable, all words were replaced by Persian words, but a few of them have remained in Shughnia language and some participants did not know what karyabch (tomato) meant in their language. Most of them used romi( tomato) instead of karyapch (tomato) in shughni language. Warik(dish) is another indigenous word in Shughni language, which the speakers of Shughni language used. They also use zarf(dish), which is Persian word uses instead of warik(dish) in their mother tongue. Kerjak (passerine) is a very common name of small bird in Shughni language, whereas it seems unknown to some of these participants and they use Kunjosh too, which is Persian word that is used instead of kerjak(passerine) in Shughni language. Alganjal( plum) is another word that is affected and the native speakers of shughni language use aalo(plum) instead of alganjal in their native language. Therefore, in all sections that Shughni language is affected and the percentage of replacing Persian words instead of indigenous words of Shughni is increasing. However, in all these sections, Shughni language has lost its indigenous words and these were a few of indigenous words that were used by its speakers. Sometimes, the use Persian words instead of them and each chart shows the percentage of change in Shughni language and it faces to more endangerment than ever before.

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