



LANGUAGE SHIFT AND IMMINENT LANGUAGE DEATH: A DIACHRONIC STUDY OF DAWOODI

Afshan Ishfaq

afshan.law@pu.edu.pk

Lecture in English, The University of the Punjab

Azhar Munir Bhatti

azharmunir18@hotmail.com

Lecturer in English, Higher Education Department, Punjab

Abstract

This study investigates the phenomenon of language shift within the Dawoodi-speaking community through a diachronic framework, tracing its trajectory from stable intergenerational transmission to near extinction. The research integrates oral histories, sociolinguistic interviews, and generational language competence assessments. The findings reveal a systematic decline in Dawoodi usage across domains, particularly within domestic and communal settings, where dominant regional languages have increasingly replaced it. The study identifies key drivers of this shift, including socio-economic mobility, educational policies favoring majority languages, and the absence of institutional support for minority language preservation. A critical pattern emerging from the data is the transition from active bilingualism among older speakers to passive comprehension among younger generations, indicating a late-stage language shift scenario. The research situates Dawoodi within established models of language endangerment, arguing that it has entered an advanced phase of obsolescence characterized by functional reduction and symbolic marginalization. By combining historical linguistic insights with contemporary sociocultural analysis, the study highlights the urgency of documentation and revitalization initiatives. Ultimately, this paper contributes to the broader discourse on endangered languages by presenting Dawoodi as a critical case of imminent language death in South Asia, emphasizing that without immediate intervention, the language risks irreversible loss within a single generation.

Keywords: Lexical Attrition, Language Shift, Language Endangerment, Generational Language Competence, Dawoodi Language, Indigenous Languages

1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Language is not merely a communicative tool; it is a repository of collective memory, identity, and epistemology. When a language declines, it is not simply words that disappear, but entire worldviews, cultural practices, and systems of knowledge (David Crystal, 2000). Across the globe, linguistic diversity is under severe threat, with nearly half of the world's languages predicted to disappear within this century (Michael E. Krauss, 1992).

Within this global crisis, the Dawoodi language represents a critical yet under-documented case of language endangerment in Northern Pakistan. Historically sustained through oral transmission and close-knit community networks, Dawoodi has undergone a gradual but significant shift toward dominant regional languages such as Shina, Burushaski, and Urdu. This transition reflects a broader sociolinguistic phenomenon where minority languages lose ground under socio-economic and political pressures (Fishman, 1991).

This study adopts a diachronic perspective to examine the trajectory of Dawoodi from a relatively stable linguistic system to a state of imminent language death. By integrating generational

competence analysis with sociocultural variables, the research seeks to uncover not only how the shift has occurred but why it has accelerated in recent decades.

1.2 Context of the Study

The Dawoodi-speaking community, primarily located in Mominabad (Hunza region), exists within a highly multilingual ecology where linguistic hierarchies are deeply embedded in social, economic, and institutional structures. In such environments, minority languages often experience domain shrinkage, gradually being replaced by languages of wider communication (Weinreich, 1953).

Historically, Dawoodi functioned as a community-bound language, transmitted intergenerationally within domestic and cultural spaces. However, increasing access to formal education, urban mobility, and media exposure has reoriented linguistic preferences toward dominant languages that offer greater socio-economic capital (Bourdieu, 1991).

The phenomenon of language shift is not abrupt but occurs through stages. According to Fishman's Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS), languages move from stable transmission to eventual extinction as intergenerational continuity weakens (Fishman, 1991). In the case of Dawoodi, preliminary observations suggest that the language has entered an advanced stage of disruption, where younger generations exhibit passive competence or complete linguistic disengagement.

This context positions Dawoodi within the broader framework of endangered languages in South Asia, where linguistic diversity is increasingly threatened by homogenizing forces of globalization, state policies, and cultural assimilation (Annamalai, 2001).

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Despite its cultural and historical significance, Dawoodi is experiencing a rapid decline in active usage, with a noticeable breakdown in intergenerational transmission. The language is increasingly confined to older speakers, while younger members of the community demonstrate limited or passive competence. The core problem lies in the absence of systematic documentation and empirical analysis of this shift. While anecdotal evidence suggests language decline, there is a lack of diachronic, data-driven research that traces the progression of linguistic attrition across generations. Furthermore, existing language policies and educational frameworks in Pakistan prioritize dominant languages, thereby marginalizing minority linguistic systems. This has resulted in functional reduction, where Dawoodi is no longer used in key domains such as education, administration, or even domestic interaction. Without immediate scholarly and institutional intervention, Dawoodi risks entering the final stages of language death, where it survives only as symbolic identity rather than an active communicative system (Dorian, 1981).

1.4 Research Objectives

The primary objectives of this study are:

- To analyze the diachronic trajectory of language shift in the Dawoodi-speaking community.
- To assess generational differences in language competence and usage.
- To identify key sociolinguistic factors driving language shift and attrition.

1.5 Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How has the Dawoodi language shifted across generations within a diachronic framework?

2. What patterns of language competence exist among different age groups within the Dawoodi-speaking community?
3. What socio-cultural, economic, and institutional factors have contributed to the decline of Dawoodi?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This research operates at multiple levels of significance, both academic and socio-cultural.

From a theoretical standpoint, the study contributes to the field of sociolinguistics and language endangerment by providing a diachronic, data-driven analysis of a severely under-researched language. It extends existing frameworks such as Fishman's GIDS by applying them to a micro-community context in South Asia.

From a practical perspective, the study serves as a foundational step toward documentation and revitalization efforts. As argued by Joshua A. Fishman (1991), reversing language shift requires early identification of decline patterns and targeted intervention strategies.

Culturally, the preservation of Dawoodi is intrinsically linked to the survival of community identity, oral traditions, and indigenous knowledge systems. The loss of the language would signify not only linguistic extinction but also cultural erasure.

Finally, this research aligns with global efforts to safeguard linguistic diversity, reinforcing the urgency emphasized by UNESCO (2003) that endangered languages must be documented and revitalized before they disappear entirely.

2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The study of language shift and endangerment has emerged as a critical domain within sociolinguistics, particularly in the context of globalization and linguistic homogenization. Languages do not decline in isolation; rather, their erosion is embedded within complex socio-political, economic, and cultural dynamics. As argued by Joshua A. Fishman (1991), language shift is fundamentally a process of intergenerational disruption, where transmission weakens under external pressures.

This chapter critically reviews existing literature on language shift, language death, ethnolinguistic identity, and minority language marginalization. It synthesizes theoretical models and empirical studies to situate the Dawoodi language within global patterns of endangerment while identifying key gaps that necessitate the present research.

2.2 Conceptualizing Language Shift

Language shift refers to the gradual process through which a speech community abandons its native language in favor of another, typically more dominant, language (Weinreich, 1953). This shift is rarely abrupt; instead, it unfolds across generations, beginning with bilingualism and culminating in language abandonment.

Fishman (1991) conceptualizes language shift through the lens of intergenerational transmission, arguing that the family domain serves as the final stronghold of endangered languages. Once a language is no longer transmitted to children, its survival becomes critically endangered.

Similarly, Gal (1979), in her study of Hungarian-German bilingualism, demonstrates that language shift is closely tied to socio-economic mobility. Communities often associate dominant languages with upward mobility, leading to the gradual devaluation of minority languages.

These perspectives highlight that language shift is not merely linguistic but deeply ideological, reflecting changing perceptions of value, identity, and opportunity.

2.3 Language Death and Endangerment

Language death occurs when a language loses its last fluent speaker, marking the end of its communicative existence (Nancy C. Dorian, 1981). However, prior to this endpoint, languages pass through stages of endangerment characterized by reduced usage, structural simplification, and domain restriction.

David Crystal (2000) identifies key indicators of language endangerment, including declining speaker numbers, lack of institutional support, and reduced functional domains. He emphasizes that language death is often preceded by a phase of “semi-speakers,” individuals who possess limited competence and use the language inconsistently.

Krauss (1992) warns that without intervention; a significant proportion of the world’s languages will disappear within a century. This prediction underscores the urgency of documenting endangered languages before they reach irreversible stages of decline.

UNESCO (2003) further categorizes language vitality based on factors such as intergenerational transmission, speaker population, and domain usage. According to this framework, languages with disrupted transmission and limited domains are classified as severely endangered.

2.4 Theoretical Models of Language Shift

- **2.4.1 Fishman’s Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS)**

Fishman’s GIDS remains one of the most influential models for understanding language shift. It outlines eight stages of language vitality, ranging from full intergenerational transmission to complete extinction (Fishman, 1991).

The model emphasizes that the most critical stage is the breakdown of transmission within the family. Once children no longer acquire the language as their first language, the shift accelerates rapidly.

- **2.4.2 Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory**

Proposed by Giles, Bourhis, and Taylor (1977), this theory suggests that the survival of a language depends on three key factors: status, demographic strength, and institutional support. Languages with low prestige, small speaker populations, and minimal institutional backing are more vulnerable to decline.

- **2.4.3 Bourdieu’s Theory of Linguistic Capital**

Pierre Bourdieu (1991) introduces the concept of linguistic capital, arguing that languages function within markets where some hold greater symbolic and economic value than others. In such contexts, speakers often abandon minority languages in favor of those that offer greater social mobility.

These theoretical frameworks collectively provide a lens through which the decline of Dawoodi can be understood as both a structural and ideological process.

2.5 Sociolinguistic Factors Influencing Language Shift

- **2.5.1 Education and Language Policy**

Educational systems play a pivotal role in shaping language preferences. When formal education is conducted in dominant languages, minority languages are excluded from institutional domains, leading to their gradual marginalization (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000).

- **2.5.2 Urbanization and Mobility**

Urban migration exposes speakers to linguistically diverse environments where dominant languages become necessary for communication and economic participation. This often results in

reduced usage of minority languages within both public and private domains (Milroy & Gordon, 2003).

- **2.5.3 Media and Globalization**

The proliferation of mass media and digital communication has amplified the dominance of global and national languages. Minority languages, lacking representation in media, struggle to maintain relevance among younger generations (Crystal, 2000).

2.6 Generational Language Competence and Attrition

One of the most significant indicators of language shift is the variation in competence across generations. Older speakers typically exhibit full fluency, while younger generations demonstrate partial or passive knowledge.

Dorian (1981) introduces the concept of “semi-speakers,” individuals who possess incomplete grammatical and lexical competence. This phenomenon reflects the late stages of language shift, where the language is no longer actively used but remains partially understood.

Research by Romaine (1989) further highlights that language attrition often begins with lexical loss, followed by grammatical simplification. These patterns provide measurable indicators of linguistic decline within a community.

2.7 Language, Identity, and Cultural Memory

Language is deeply intertwined with identity and cultural continuity. As argued by Joshua A. Fishman (1991), language serves as a marker of ethnolinguistic identity, linking individuals to their heritage and collective memory.

However, in contexts of language shift, identity itself undergoes transformation. Younger generations may adopt dominant languages as part of a broader process of social integration, leading to an identity shift that distances them from their linguistic heritage (Edwards, 2009).

This dynamic creates a paradox where communities maintain symbolic attachment to their language while abandoning its active use.

2.8 Language Contact, Borrowing, and Code-Switching

Language contact often accelerates language shift through processes such as borrowing and code-switching. Weinreich (1953) identifies these phenomena as natural outcomes of bilingualism, but in contexts of unequal power relations, they can lead to linguistic dilution.

Myers-Scotton (1993) argues that code-switching reflects social identities and power dynamics, often privileging dominant languages. Over time, extensive borrowing and code-switching can erode the structural integrity of minority languages.

2.9 Minority Languages in South Asia

South Asia is characterized by high linguistic diversity, yet many minority languages face endangerment due to socio-political and economic pressures (Annamalai, 2001).

In Pakistan, language policy has historically prioritized Urdu and English, often at the expense of regional and minority languages. This has contributed to the marginalization of smaller linguistic communities, many of which lack formal recognition or institutional support.

The Dawoodi language exists within this broader context, where structural inequalities and policy neglect have accelerated its decline.

2.10 Research Gap

- **2.10.1 Empirical Gap**

There is a lack of corpus-based and diachronic studies examining language shift within the Dawoodi-speaking community. Existing research on endangered languages in Pakistan rarely focuses on micro-communities.

- **2.10.2 Theoretical Gap**

While frameworks such as GIDS and ethnolinguistic vitality theory are well-established, their application to the Dawoodi context remains unexplored.

- **2.10.3 Contextual Gap**

Most studies on language shift focus on larger linguistic communities, leaving smaller, marginalized groups underrepresented in academic discourse.

- **2.10.4 Methodological Gap**

Previous studies often rely on either qualitative or quantitative methods. There is a need for integrated approaches combining sociolinguistic interviews, generational analysis, and historical perspectives.

3: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological framework adopted to investigate language shift and imminent language death in the Dawoodi-speaking community. Moving from a general philosophical orientation to specific procedural steps, the study integrates qualitative and quantitative approaches to capture both the structural and experiential dimensions of language decline.

Given the complex and socially embedded nature of language shift, a mixed-methods design is employed. This allows for triangulation of data through oral histories, sociolinguistic interviews, and generational competence assessments. Such an approach aligns with the argument that language endangerment must be studied not only as a linguistic phenomenon but also as a socio-cultural process (Joshua A. Fishman, 1991).

3.2 Research Method

This study adopts a **mixed-method research method**, combining qualitative and quantitative techniques. The qualitative component focuses on narrative accounts, language attitudes, and sociocultural contexts, while the quantitative component examines patterns of language competence across generations.

Mixed-method research is particularly suitable for sociolinguistic studies, as it enables the integration of statistical trends with contextual interpretation (Creswell, 2014).

3.3 Research Approach

The research follows a **deductive approach**, grounded in established theories of language shift and endangerment. Existing frameworks such as Fishman's GIDS and ethnolinguistic vitality theory inform the formulation of research questions and analytical categories.

At the same time, elements of inductive reasoning are incorporated during data interpretation, allowing patterns to emerge from field data.

3.4 Research Paradigm

This study is situated within a **pragmatic research paradigm**, which prioritizes methodological flexibility and problem-solving over strict adherence to a single philosophical stance.

Pragmatism supports the integration of qualitative and quantitative methods, emphasizing practical outcomes and real-world applicability (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

3.5 Research Design

A **diachronic sociolinguistic research design** is employed to trace language shift across generations. The design focuses on comparing linguistic competence and usage patterns among three generational groups:

- Older generation (60+ years)
- Middle generation (30–59 years)
- Younger generation (below 30 years)

This generational segmentation enables the identification of patterns of intergenerational disruption, a key indicator of language shift (Fishman, 1991).

3.6 Data Collection

3.6.1 Primary Data Sources

- **Sociolinguistic Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews conducted with community members to explore language use, attitudes, and identity.
- **Oral Histories:** Narratives collected from elder speakers to document historical language practices.
- **Language Competence Assessments:** Structured tasks designed to evaluate speaking, comprehension, and lexical knowledge across generations.

3.6.2 Secondary Data Sources

- Existing literature on endangered languages
- Regional linguistic reports
- Archival and documentary material related to the Dawoodi community

3.7 Data Analysis Tools

3.7.1 Sketch Engine

Sketch Engine is utilized for corpus extraction and lexical analysis. It enables:

- Frequency analysis
- Keyword identification
- Collocation patterns

This tool supports the identification of lexical attrition and shifts in language usage patterns.

3.8 Sample Data Source

The sample consists of members of the Dawoodi-speaking community primarily located in Mominabad (Hunza region). Participants are selected to represent different age groups, gender categories, and socio-economic backgrounds.

3.9 Sampling Technique

A **purposive sampling technique** is employed to select participants with relevant linguistic competence and community knowledge.

Additionally, **snowball sampling** is used to identify fluent speakers, particularly among the older generation, where speaker numbers are limited.

3.10 Theoretical Framework

The study is grounded in the following theoretical frameworks:

- Fishman's GIDS (1991)
- Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory (Giles et al., 1977)
- Linguistic Capital Theory (Pierre Bourdieu, 1991)

These frameworks provide a multi-dimensional understanding of language shift, incorporating structural, social, and ideological factors.

3.11 Strategy of Data Analysis

The data analysis follows a **triangulated strategy**, integrating:

- Quantitative analysis of language competence
- Qualitative thematic analysis of interviews
- Corpus-based lexical analysis

This multi-layered approach enhances the validity and depth of findings.

3.12 Corpus Compilation Procedure

• 3.12.1 Text Acquisition

Audio recordings of interviews and oral narratives are collected and transcribed.

• 3.12.2 Text Cleaning

Data is cleaned to remove inconsistencies, repetitions, and transcription errors.

• 3.12.3 Text Formatting

Texts are standardized into a machine-readable format suitable for corpus analysis.

• 3.12.4 Corpus Verification

The corpus is cross-checked for accuracy and representativeness.

• 3.12.5 Analytical Upload

The finalized corpus is uploaded into Sketch Engine for analysis.

3.13 Tools and Software Analysis

The study employs the following tools:

- **Sketch Engine** for corpus analysis
- **NVivo** for qualitative coding and thematic analysis
- **Microsoft Excel/SPSS** for quantitative data analysis

These tools facilitate systematic and replicable analysis.

3.14 Validity and Reliability of the Data

To ensure validity and reliability:

- **Triangulation** is applied across data sources and methods
- **Pilot testing** is conducted for interview protocols
- **Member checking** is used to validate interpretations with participants

These measures enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

3.15 Analytical Framework

The analytical framework integrates:

- **Lexical Analysis:** Frequency, keywords, and collocations
- **Thematic Analysis:** Coding of sociolinguistic themes
- **Comparative Analysis:** Cross-generational comparison of competence

3.16 Data Analysis Theory

The study draws on:

- Sociolinguistic theory of language shift (Fishman, 1991)
- Corpus linguistics principles (Biber et al., 1998)
- Discourse analysis frameworks

These theoretical foundations guide the interpretation of linguistic patterns.

3.17 Strategies of Data Collection

The following strategies are employed:

- Building rapport with community members
- Conducting interviews in familiar environments
- Ensuring ethical sensitivity and cultural respect
- Maintaining confidentiality and informed consent

4: Data Analysis and Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of data collected from the Dawoodi-speaking community, focusing on patterns of language shift across generations. The analysis integrates quantitative assessments of language competence with qualitative insights derived from sociolinguistic interviews and oral histories.

The objective is to identify measurable indicators of language decline, including lexical attrition, reduced domain usage, and intergenerational disruption. The findings are interpreted within established sociolinguistic frameworks, particularly those proposed by Joshua A. Fishman (1991), which emphasize the centrality of intergenerational transmission in language survival.

4.2 Demographic Profile of Participants

The study sample consists of participants categorized into three generational groups:

- **Older Generation (60+ years)**
- **Middle Generation (30–59 years)**
- **Younger Generation (Below 30 years)**
- **4.2.1 Age and Language Exposure**

The older generation reported Dawoodi as their primary language of communication during childhood, whereas the younger generation demonstrated significantly higher exposure to dominant languages such as Urdu and regional lingua franca.

- **4.2.2 Educational Background**

A strong correlation was observed between formal education and reduced use of Dawoodi. Participants educated in Urdu- or English-medium institutions showed lower levels of Dawoodi proficiency, reinforcing the role of institutional language policies in language shift.

4.3 Generational Language Competence Analysis

4.3.1 Speaking Ability

- **Older Generation:** Native-like fluency, full grammatical competence
- **Middle Generation:** Functional fluency with occasional lexical gaps
- **Younger Generation:** Limited speaking ability; reliance on code-switching

4.3.2 Comprehension Levels

- Older participants demonstrated complete comprehension
- Middle generation exhibited high but inconsistent comprehension
- Younger participants showed passive understanding with difficulty in spontaneous response

4.3.3 Lexical Knowledge

Corpus-assisted analysis revealed a significant reduction in vocabulary among younger speakers. High-frequency lexical items were retained, while culturally specific and less frequent terms were largely absent.

This aligns with findings by Nancy C. Dorian (1981), who identifies lexical attrition as an early indicator of language obsolescence.

4.4 Domain-wise Language Usage

4.4.1 Domestic Domain

The domestic domain, traditionally the strongest site of language transmission, showed a marked decline in Dawoodi usage among younger families. Urdu and other dominant languages have increasingly replaced Dawoodi in everyday interaction.

4.4.2 Community and Social Interaction

Among older speakers, Dawoodi remains active in intra-community communication. However, mixed-language interactions are increasingly common, particularly among younger individuals.

4.4.3 Institutional Domains

Dawoodi is virtually absent in institutional settings such as education, administration, and media. This domain exclusion significantly contributes to its functional reduction (Fishman, 1991).

4.5 Language Attitudes and Identity

4.5.1 Perceived Value of Dawoodi

Older participants expressed strong emotional attachment to the language, viewing it as a core component of cultural identity. In contrast, younger participants often perceived Dawoodi as less useful in modern socio-economic contexts.

4.5.2 Prestige and Utility

Dominant languages were associated with education, employment, and social mobility. This perception aligns with Pierre Bourdieu (1991), who argues that linguistic choices are influenced by the symbolic capital attached to languages.

4.5.3 Identity Shift

A gradual shift in ethnolinguistic identity was observed, with younger speakers identifying more strongly with dominant linguistic groups while maintaining only symbolic affiliation with Dawoodi.

4.6 Language Contact and Code-Switching

Frequent code-switching between Dawoodi and dominant languages was observed, particularly among middle and younger generations. Borrowed lexical items often replaced original Dawoodi terms, leading to structural simplification.

This pattern reflects the dynamics described by Weinreich (1953), where prolonged language contact results in linguistic convergence and eventual shift.

4.7 Indicators of Language Shift

The data reveals several critical indicators of advanced language shift:

- Breakdown of intergenerational transmission
- Reduced functional domains
- Emergence of semi-speakers
- Lexical attrition and simplification
- Increased reliance on dominant languages

These indicators collectively position Dawoodi within the later stages of language endangerment.

4.8 Alignment with Language Endangerment Models

4.8.1 Fishman's GIDS Framework

Based on the findings, Dawoodi can be positioned in the **advanced stages of GIDS**, where:

- The language is no longer transmitted to children

- Usage is restricted to older generations
- Institutional support is absent

4.8.2 UNESCO Language Vitality Factors

According to UNESCO (2003), Dawoodi meets the criteria for a **severely endangered language**, characterized by:

- Limited intergenerational transmission
- Declining speaker population
- Restricted domains of use

4.9 Emergent Patterns and Interpretation

A critical pattern emerging from the analysis is the transition from:

- **Active bilingualism (older generation)**
 - **Reduced bilingual competence (middle generation)**
 - **Passive comprehension (young generation)**

This trajectory reflects a late-stage language shift scenario, where the language survives only as a residual system of understanding rather than active communication.

The findings reinforce the argument that language death is not a sudden event but a gradual process marked by identifiable stages (Crystal, 2000).

4.10 Discussion of Findings

The results demonstrate that the decline of Dawoodi is driven by a combination of structural and ideological factors. Educational policies, socio-economic mobility, and changing language attitudes collectively contribute to its marginalization.

Importantly, the study highlights that the loss of Dawoodi is not due to linguistic inadequacy but to shifting social priorities and power dynamics. As emphasized by Joshua A. Fishman (1991), language survival depends on community commitment and institutional support, both of which are currently lacking in the Dawoodi context.

5. Discussion of Findings

5.1 Intergenerational Disruption as the Core Driver

The most significant finding of this study is the breakdown of intergenerational transmission. The data clearly demonstrates that Dawoodi is no longer being actively passed on to younger generations, a condition that Joshua A. Fishman (1991) identifies as the critical tipping point in language shift.

Older speakers retain full fluency, while younger individuals exhibit only passive comprehension or complete disengagement. This pattern confirms that Dawoodi has moved beyond early-stage endangerment into an advanced phase of linguistic obsolescence.

5.2.2 From Bilingualism to Linguistic Replacement

The study reveals a clear trajectory:

Stable bilingualism → **Reduced competence** → **Language abandonment**

This shift reflects a transition from additive bilingualism, where both languages coexist, to subtractive bilingualism, where the dominant language replaces the minority language. Such transitions are often driven by perceived socio-economic advantages associated with dominant languages (Romaine, 1989).

In the Dawoodi context, languages such as Urdu and regional lingua francas have assumed functional dominance, leading to the gradual erosion of Dawoodi.

5.2.3 Domain Reduction and Functional Marginalization

Another critical finding is the contraction of Dawoodi's functional domains. Traditionally used in domestic and community settings, the language is now largely absent from institutional and public spheres.

This domain shrinkage aligns with Fishman's (1991) framework, which emphasizes that languages lose vitality when confined to limited contexts. The near disappearance of Dawoodi from the home domain is particularly alarming, as this domain is central to language maintenance.

5.2.4 Lexical Attrition and Structural Simplification

The analysis highlights significant lexical loss among younger speakers, particularly in culturally embedded vocabulary. This supports the observations of Nancy C. Dorian (1981), who identifies lexical attrition as a key feature of late-stage language decline.

Additionally, the prevalence of code-switching and borrowing suggests an ongoing process of structural simplification, where the linguistic system becomes increasingly dependent on dominant languages.

5.2.5 Language Attitudes and Symbolic Identity

The study reveals a complex relationship between language and identity. While older generations maintain strong emotional attachment to Dawoodi, younger individuals often perceive it as lacking practical value.

This reflects the dynamics described by Pierre Bourdieu (1991), where languages are evaluated based on their symbolic and economic capital. Dawoodi, lacking institutional support and socio-economic utility, is gradually being devalued.

Importantly, the findings indicate a shift from **active linguistic identity** to **symbolic identity**, where the language remains a cultural marker but is no longer used in daily communication.

5.3 Theoretical Implications

This study reinforces and extends existing theories of language shift in several ways:

- It empirically validates Fishman's model by demonstrating the centrality of intergenerational transmission.
- It supports ethnolinguistic vitality theory by showing how low status and lack of institutional support accelerate language decline.
- It expands the application of these frameworks to micro-communities, which are often underrepresented in sociolinguistic research.

The findings also highlight the need for integrating sociocultural variables more explicitly into models of language endangerment.

5.4 Status of Dawoodi: A Case of Imminent Language Death

Based on the analysis, Dawoodi can be classified as a **severely endangered language approaching imminent death**.

The following indicators support this classification:

- Absence of intergenerational transmission
- Limited number of fluent speakers
- Restricted domains of use
- Predominance of passive speakers among younger generations

According to UNESCO (2003), such conditions signify a language at the brink of extinction. Without immediate intervention, Dawoodi is likely to disappear within a single generation.

5.5 Implications for Language Preservation

5.5.1 Urgency of Documentation

The first and most immediate priority is comprehensive documentation. This includes:

- Audio-visual recordings of fluent speakers
- Development of a digital corpus
- Compilation of dictionaries and grammatical descriptions

As emphasized by David Crystal (2000), documentation serves as the last line of defense against total linguistic loss.

5.5.2 Community-Based Revitalization

Language preservation efforts must be community-driven. Initiatives may include:

- Intergenerational language transmission programs
- Community language classes
- Cultural events promoting Dawoodi usage

Revitalization is most effective when rooted in local engagement rather than external imposition.

5.5.3 Policy and Institutional Support

There is a critical need for policy-level intervention, including:

- Inclusion of minority languages in educational curricula
- Recognition of linguistic diversity in national frameworks
- Funding for research and preservation projects

Without institutional backing, revitalization efforts remain limited in scope and impact.

5.6 Conclusion

This study set out to examine the phenomenon of language shift within the Dawoodi-speaking community through a diachronic lens. The findings reveal a clear and concerning trajectory from stable intergenerational transmission to advanced linguistic decline.

The evidence demonstrates that Dawoodi is no longer functioning as a fully active language but is instead transitioning into a state of symbolic existence. This shift is driven by a combination of socio-economic pressures, institutional neglect, and changing language attitudes.

At its core, the story of Dawoodi is not just about language loss; it is about the erosion of identity, heritage, and cultural memory. The disappearance of the language would represent an irreversible loss, not only for the community but for the broader linguistic diversity of the region.

The study concludes with a clear and urgent message: without immediate and sustained intervention, Dawoodi faces imminent extinction.

References

- Annamalai, E. (2001). *Managing multilingualism in India: Political and linguistic manifestations*. Sage Publications.
- Biber, D., Conrad, S., & Reppen, R. (1998). *Corpus linguistics: Investigating language structure and use*. Cambridge University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic power*. Harvard University Press.
- Crystal, D. (2000). *Language death*. Cambridge University Press.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Dorian, N. C. (1981). *Language death: The life cycle of a Scottish Gaelic dialect*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Edwards, J. (2009). *Language and identity: An introduction*. Cambridge University Press.

- Fishman, J. A. (1991). *Reversing language shift: Theoretical and empirical foundations of assistance to threatened languages*. Multilingual Matters.
- Gal, S. (1979). *Language shift: Social determinants of linguistic change in bilingual Austria*. Academic Press.
- Giles, H., Bourhis, R. Y., & Taylor, D. M. (1977). Towards a theory of language in ethnic group relations. In H. Giles (Ed.), *Language, ethnicity and intergroup relations* (pp. 307–348). Academic Press.
- Krauss, M. (1992). The world's languages in crisis. *Language*, 68(1), 4–10. <https://doi.org/10.2307/416368>
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage Publications.
- Milroy, L., & Gordon, M. (2003). *Sociolinguistics: Method and interpretation*. Blackwell Publishing.
- Myers-Scotton, C. (1993). *Social motivations for code-switching: Evidence from Africa*. Oxford University Press.
- Romaine, S. (1989). *Bilingualism*. Blackwell.
- Skutnabb-Kangas, T. (2000). *Linguistic genocide in education—or worldwide diversity and human rights?* Routledge.
- Tashakkori, A., & Teddlie, C. (2010). *Mixed methodology: Combining qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Sage Publications.
- UNESCO. (2003). *Language vitality and endangerment*. UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/>
- Weinreich, U. (1953). *Languages in contact: Findings and problems*. Mouton.