

LANGUAGE AND DIALECT:
CRITERIA AND HISTORICAL EVIDENCE

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ABSTRACT

History is replete with events, change, cause and effect on the basis of language. Political movements and geographical changes occurred in different corners of the world and eras have slightly and massively been linked with language. Many regions are currently facing separatist movements mainly rooted in languages or dialects. A few authors have written about the criteria for defining a particular linguistic system as a language in terms of the number of speakers, its prestige, whether they have been accepted as national languages, whether they present written forms and literary traditions, whether similar linguistic systems exist in the same country or area which present an elevated level of lexical similarity, whether they have less number of speakers, etc. It seems simple to differentiate between a language and a dialect. However, although the definition of language seems to be clear and every dictionary of the world contains it, in practical terms when facing the dilemma of whether a particular linguistic system is a language or a dialect, these definitions are blurry from a scientific point of view and sociolinguistic and political pressures may play a role in many cases. This paper will propose better criteria towards differentiation of language and dialect basing the argument on the empirical evidence of the history of linguistics.

Keywords: Language, dialect, Sindhi, Bengali, Punjabi, Saraiki, language varieties, difference between language and dialect.

DEFINITIONS OF LANGUAGE AND DIALECT

The concept of language is as old as the human itself. According to the *Oxford Dictionary* the term 'language' seems to derive from Middle English and this one from Old French *language*, which derived in turn from the Latin *lingua* 'tongue.' Further, the Dictionary offers two definitions:

1. 'The method of human communication, either spoken or written, consisting of the use of words in a structured and conventional way.'

2. 'A system of communication used by a particular country or community.'¹³

As far as the word 'dialect' is concerned, the Dictionary states that it derives from mid-16th century French *dialect* or via Latin from Greek *dialektos* 'discourse, way of speaking', from *dialegesthai* 'converse with'. "A particular form of a language which is peculiar to a specific region or social group."¹⁴

The reputation of the *Oxford Dictionary*, from the point of view of lexicology, is without any doubt impeccable. Nevertheless, these definitions lack clarity and most definitely scientific rigor. In this regard, the comparison between two definitions it can be inferred that a dialect is simply a variety of a language particular to a specific geographical area or group of people. This definition may give birth to various ideas. For example, is the European variety of Portuguese a dialect? One could extrapolate so, due to the fact that this particular form is peculiar to the specific region of Portugal and this particular social group too. However, I believe every single linguist of the world including the researchers would disagree, since the European variety of Portuguese is in fact a language (as the linguistic facts point to, as well as a valid criteria which been applied for this categorization) and not a dialect.

At this point, other definitions of language and dialect can be tested to find out whether they are appropriate. *The Dictionary of the Royal Academy of Spanish Language* seems to provide a more rigorous definition which has been translated below:¹⁵

Lengua from the Latin *lingua*:

¹³ *Oxford Dictionary*: Definition of language: <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/language>

¹⁴ *Oxford Dictionary*: Definition of dialect: <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/dialect>

¹⁵ *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española*: Definition of Lengua. <http://lema.rae.es/drae/?val=lengua>

2. f. Sistema de comunicación verbal y casi siempre escrito, propio de una comunidad humana.
3. f. Sistema lingüístico cuyos hablantes reconocen como modelos de buena expresión. *La lengua de Cervantes es oficial en 21 naciones.*
4. f. Sistema lingüístico considerado en su estructura.
- 1.5. f. Vocabulario y gramática propios y característicos de una época, de un escritor o de un grupo social. *La lengua de Góngora La lengua gauchesca*

2. f. Oral and almost always written communication system specific of a human community.
3. f. Language system whose speakers recognize as a model of good expression. *The language of Cervantes is official in 21 nations*
4. f. Linguistic system considered in its structure.
5. f. Vocabulary and grammar specific and characteristic of an era, of a writer or a social group grammar. *The language of Góngora Gaucho language*.¹⁶

The source further provides the definition for dialecto¹⁷ from the Latin *dialectus*, and this one from the Greek *διόλεκτος*:

1. Ling. Linguistic system considered in relation to the group of several derivatives of a common trunk. *Spanish is one of those dialects born of Latin*.
2. m. Ling. Linguistic system derived from another, usually with a specific geographical limitation, but without enough differentiation in front of others with common origin.
3. m. Ling. Linguistic structure, simultaneous to another, that misses the social category of language.¹⁸

From a linguistic point of view these two definitions seem to be more rigorous than the previous ones, especially that of dialect. Still

¹⁶ *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española*: Definition of Lengua. <http://lema.rae.es/drae/?val=lengua>.

¹⁷ *Diccionario de la Real Academia Española*: Definition of *dialecto*. <http://lema.rae.es/drae/?val=dialecto>

¹⁸ Translation: Dialect:

1. m. *Ling.* Sistema lingüístico considerado con relación al grupo de los varios derivados de un tronco común. *El español es uno de los dialectos nacidos del latín*.
2. m. *Ling.* Sistema lingüístico derivado de otro, normalmente con una concreta limitación geográfica, pero sin diferenciación suficiente frente a otros de origen común.
3. m. *Ling.* Estructura lingüística, simultánea a otra, que no alcanza la categoría social de lengua 1. m. *Ling.* Linguistic system considered in relation to the group of several derivatives of a common trunk. *Spanish is one of those dialects born of Latin*.
2. m. *Ling.* Linguistic system derived from another, usually with a specific geographical limitation, but without enough differentiation in front of others with common origin.
3. m. *Ling.* Linguistic structure, simultaneous to another, that misses the social category of language

the definition of *lengua* lends itself to confusion since all the four definitions that the Spanish dictionary provides can be those of a dialect as well. On the other hand, the definition of dialect seems to shed more light on the true meaning of the word, ‘Linguistic system considered in relation to the group of several derivatives of a common trunk.’ This naturally indicates that other linguistic systems derive from a common source and these are dialects. It further elaborates that it has a geographical limitation without the existence of considerable differentiation with others which also derive from the same origin. Until this point this definition seems agreeable. Finally the last definition explains that a ‘dialect is a linguistic system which has not achieved the social category of language and it is parallel to another.’ In this case, we should wonder whether the ‘category of language’ is only based on its ‘social’ nature. In fact, this brings to light risky implications because if language is a social category, this category is not based on linguistic elements. The lack of scientific rigor is obvious and this is mainly due to the fact that the Oxford Dictionary is based on the generality of terms, rather than on their scientific dimensions. Spanish Dictionary offers more accurate definition. It states that dialect is a linguistic system. The general dictionaries cannot be relied upon to make a proper distinction between language and dialect. In this sense, it is obvious that linguists have not established accurate criteria to determine the exact difference and there is even some level of confusion about it. Einar Haugen made this clear with this statement that ‘the identification and enumeration of languages—is greatly hampered by the ambiguities and obscurities attached to the term ‘language’ and ‘dialect.’ (Haugen, 1966:922-935). The terms are both popular and scientific although their specific parameters seem to be blurry at most. This is verified by the fact that different linguists will give different answers to the same question. For example, is Saraiki¹⁹ a language or a dialect? Some will say it is a language, some will say it is a dialect. There must be a reason for this. The reason lays on the fact that the criteria to define language and dialect are different for different linguists and traditionally this has been based on different interests of the parties involved. This situation is a sorry state of affairs. For example; in Japan there exist

¹⁹ It has been claimed by many that Saraiki is a language of the southern areas of the Pakistani Punjab, while many other differ stating it is simply a dialect.

several so-called new dialects of Japanese of which Inoue explains that its users are younger people who are aware of the fact that those linguistic systems are not formal and show a high degree of variation from the standard:

New dialect forms are linguistic phenomena which satisfy the following three qualifications:

1. More users are found among younger people than among older people,
2. Users themselves know that the forms are informal or non-standard,
3. Forms are different from those of the standard (or common) language (Inoue, 1983:975-980).

CRITERIA FOR LANGUAGE AND DIALECT IDENTIFICATION

Language has been researched for hundreds of years. However, it was elevated to the status of science in 1995 by Noam Chomsky and as abundant as the linguistic research is, twenty years later in 2015, linguists have not agreed on a widely accepted set of parameters which would differentiate a language from a dialect. The criteria Ethnologue follows for language identification is the ISO 639-3,²⁰ and it considers language according to its individual characteristics and standing within a society as opposed to a dialect: Two related varieties are normally considered varieties of the same language if speakers of each variety have inherent understanding of the other variety at a functional level (that is, can understand based on knowledge of their own variety without needing to learn the other variety).

Where spoken intelligibility between varieties is marginal, the existence of a common literature or of a common ethnolinguistic identity with a central variety that both understand can be a strong indicator that they should nevertheless be considered varieties of the same language.

Where there is enough intelligibility between varieties to enable communication, the existence of well-established distinct

²⁰ ISO 639-3:2007 Codes for the representation of names of languages—Part 3: Alpha-3 code for comprehensive coverage of languages. <https://www.iso.org/obp/ui/#iso:std:iso:639:-3:ed-1:v1:en>

ethnolinguistic identities can be a strong indicator that they should nevertheless be considered to be different languages.²¹

Interestingly enough the ISO 639-3 page seems to have taken their information on the inventory of languages from Ethnologue: The large number of languages in the initial inventory of ISO 639-3 beyond those already included in ISO 639-2 was derived primarily from *Ethnologue*.²²

From this we can assume that in fact, both, Ethnologue and the ISO organization have collaborated for the classification of languages.

Ethnologue further adds that not all linguists agree on the criteria for language identification: Not all scholars share the same set of criteria for distinguishing what level of divergence distinguishes a “language” from a “dialect” and therefore the terms are not always consistently applied.²³

This makes it clear that linguists around the world apply different criteria and in this sense, what for one may be a language for another may be a dialect and vice-versa. This is clear even in Ethnologue, the largest language database in the world. Ethnologue states that in Pakistan under the header of ‘Language Counts:’ The number of individual languages listed for Pakistan is 72. All are living languages. Of these, 6 are institutional, 18 are developing, 38 are vigorous, 8 are in trouble, and 2 are dying.²⁴

²¹ Ethnologue:<https://www.ethnologue.com/about/problem-language-identification>

²² ISO Organization: <https://www.iso.org/obp/ui/#iso:std:iso:639:-3:ed-1:v1:en>
The language identifiers according to this ISO 639-3:2007 were devised for use in a wide range of applications, especially in computer systems, where there is potential need to support a large number of the languages that are known to have ever existed. Whereas ISO 639-1 and ISO 639-2 are intended to focus on the major languages of the world that are most frequently represented in the total body of the world's literature, ISO 639-3:2007 attempts to provide as complete an enumeration of languages as possible, including living, extinct, ancient and constructed languages, whether major or minor, written or unwritten. As a result, ISO 639-3:2007 deals with a very large number of lesser-known languages. Languages designed exclusively for machine use, such as computer-programming languages and reconstructed languages, are not included in this code.

²³ Ethnologue:<https://www.ethnologue.com/about/problem-language-identification>

²⁴ Ethnologue: <http://www.ethnologue.com/country/PK>

Apart from Urdu, English, Pashto, Balochi, Sindhi and Punjabi which are the official, national and provincial languages of the country, other linguistic systems come to mind such as Kashmiri, Brahui, Hindko, Shina, Saraiki, etc. the rest are almost unknown to the average citizen of Pakistan. After some exploration the following linguistic systems listed (which I will not call languages) under 'languages of Pakistan' surfaced out:

(1) Aer (2) Badeshi (3) Bagri/Vagri (4) Balti (5) Bateri (6) Bhadrawahi (7) Bhaya (8) Brokskat (9) Burig/Purik (10) Burushaski (11) Chambeali (12) Changthang (13) Chilisso (14) Chitrali (15) Dari (16) Dameli (17) Dogri (18) Dehawri (19) Dhatki/Thari (20) Domaaki (21) Gawar-Bati (22) Ghera (23) Goaria (24) Gowro (25) Gujarati (26) Gojri (Gujari) (27) Gurgula (28) Hazaragi (29) Jadgali (30) Jandavra (31) Kabutra (32) Kachchi/Kutchi (33) Kalami (34) Kalasha-mun (35) Kalkoti (35) Kamviri (36) Kati (37) Khetrani (38) Khowar (39) Kohistani-Indus (40) Koli-Kachi (41) Koli-Parkari (42) Koli-Wadiyara (43) Lasi (44) Loarki (45) Marwari (46) Memoni (47) Od/Odki (48) Ormuri (49) Palula (50) Potohari (51) Sansi (52) Savi (53) Swati (54) Shina-Kohistani (55) Sindhi-Bhil (56) Torwali (57) Uyghur (58) Ushojo/Ushoji (59) Wakhi (60) Waneci (61) Yidgha (62) Zangskari.²⁵

The strange fact is that the bulk of these 'languages' have never been heard of by the majority of the Pakistani population and are not widely known. At this point, the question of prestige and number of speakers (leveling) comes into play. How have these sets of linguistic systems been elevated to the level of language? Which criteria have been employed?

Many other have attempted an adequate definition of 'language' with more or less success. The most complete found so far is that of the Spanish philologist and dialectologist Manuel Alvar, who dedicated his entire life to the investigation of the languages, dialects and linguistic systems of Spain and other derivatives, and whose extensive work in this regard should be lauded, proposes a very complete definition. In fact, more complete than the majority of linguists:

²⁵ Ethnologue:http://www.ethnologue.com/search/search_by_page/Pakistan?page=1

Language is, in the sense that concerns us here, the 'linguistic system a speaking community uses that is characterized by being strongly differentiated by having a high degree of leveling, being a vehicle of an important literary tradition and, on occasion, having imposed itself on linguistic systems of the same origin.'²⁶

In this sense, he defines language on the basis of the following criteria:

1. Strong differentiation among others. In this sense, every language has strictly defined rules such as orthography, grammar, phonetics, etc. These are spread through teaching, media and other manifestations in society.
2. High degree of leveling: The linguistic community is coherent and more or less numerous in members.
3. Vehicle of an important literary tradition: The language not only has a written form but also many writers have utilized the language in their literary works in prose, poetry, etc. and it has distinguished itself from others with the same origin.
4. Has imposed itself on linguistic systems of the same origin: In this aspect, the language has succeeded over other linguistic systems which have remained at an inferior level perhaps without established rules, uniformity, literary traditions, etc. (Alvar, 1966:51-60).

Consequently, language will oppose dialect. For example, the Romance languages derive from Latin and in this sense are dialects of it. They do not distinguish themselves for those linguistic common factors that relate them, rather for those factors which are different in one another.

According to the previous definition of language what would be then the definition of dialect?

For Alvar, the dialect derives from another language and has a geographical delimitation at the same time that it does not present a high degree of differentiation with another derived from the same language: It is a system of signs derived from a common language,

²⁶ This paragraph is the translation of: "Lengua es, en la acepción que aquí nos ocupa, el 'sistema lingüístico del que se vale una comunidad hablante y que se caracteriza por estar fuertemente diferenciado, por poseer un alto grado de nivelación, por ser vehículo de una importante tradición literaria y, en ocasiones, por haberse impuesto a sistemas lingüísticos de su mismo origen".

alive or extinct, normally with a concrete geographic limitation, but without a strong differentiation in front of other of common origin.²⁷

He further added that a dialect is a linguistic system parallel to others which have not achieved the categorization of language: In a secondary manner, dialects are those linguistic structures, simultaneous to others which don't reach the category of language.²⁸

The definition of dialect seems to be clear. It is a linguistic system derived from another, which enjoys less prestige than the majority language, which does not benefit from a strong differentiation from other linguistic systems and derives from the same 'parent' language. A system of signs or symbols derived from a common language and which lacks leveling. Alvar further establishes two other linguistic systems, Regional and local based on whether the linguistic system is spread throughout a region or rather is localized in smaller areas.

The matter at hand continues to be the setting of valid criteria to differentiate between language and dialect. Alvar's criteria can very well be put into practice. Hudson, as well as Lau, on the other hand do not take into account mutual intelligibility (Hudson, 1996:232; Lau, 2000:81), although it seems that lexical similarity on the basis of cognacy (as opposed to the massive borrowing of terms) is pivotal towards establishing whether two languages belong to the same family of languages or not (Maldonado & Borges, 2014:145-163 and Maldonado, 2013: 250-561). Ethnologue as well as Alvar take this matter into consideration²⁹ although for some other authors such as Montes Giraldo the criterion must be based in socio-political factors such as the autonomy of the language and its absence for the dialect (Montes Giraldo, 1980:255).

²⁷ According to Alvar 'Un sistema de signos desgajado de una lengua común, viva o desaparecida; normalmente, con una concreta limitación geográfica, pero sin una fuerte diferenciación frente a otros de origen común' Translation by María Maldonado.

²⁸ De modo secundario, pueden llamarse dialectos 'las estructuras lingüísticas, simultáneas a otra, que no alcanzan la categoría de lengua'.

²⁹ Ethnologue: <https://www.ethnologue.com/about/problem-language-identification> & Alvar López, M. (1961) "Hacia los conceptos de lengua, dialecto y hablas." Nueva Revista de Filología Hispánica 15 (1/2), 51-60, López, M. A. (1996). Manual de dialectología hispánica: el español de América. Ariel.5-14.

Even if the linguistic factors are set, a linguistic system is not isolated from its community. In this regard, as mentioned before, the socio-linguistic panorama of the particular linguistic system needs to be taken into account. Alvar's model has worked well for Spain. It could be applied to different areas of the world and tested. At this point the question arises can the task of categorizing the 72 languages of Pakistan be taken up? Can each one be analyzed from the point of view of the before mentioned criteria? It is possible without any doubt. It may be revealed that a great majority of them do not adjust to the criteria set for languages. Some will not have written manifestations or a literary tradition, some will not enjoy a high degree of leveling, etc.

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES CATEGORIZATION

The average person's thought on this matter would be, perhaps, that categorizing a linguistic system as language or dialect does not really have direct social and political consequences on society or a specific community. However, the classification is important and the categorization parameters, which may be vital, nowadays may include the political motivations of different groups which without any doubt have been observed.³⁰ There are numerous cases throughout history. In Spain for example, according to ethnicity and regionalism many communities raised their voices for the upgrading of their linguistic system to the level of language. In a third world country like Pakistan similar cases have been observed as well, with lower or higher levels of success; for example the refusal of Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and subsequent leaders to recognize Bengali language as a national language of Pakistan was one of the causes for the separation of Bengal. Further, the Saraiki community as recognized mainly on regional affiliation and settled in south Punjab and Sindhi regions bases their claim for a separate province on the fact that they have a separate linguistic system which they have called 'language' and some linguists of the world, predominantly from that area (or

³⁰ See Maldonado Garcia, M. I. (2014) *The Urdu Language Reforms*. *Almas*. Vol.15. 14-24, and also Hussain Sandhu, A. & Maldonado Garcia, M.I. (2015) *Communalism in the British Punjab during 1937 to 1939: Focus on Religion and Language*. *Al-Hikmat*. Vol.35:4-7. These articles make it clear that the socio-geographic factors of a language can derive into serious political situations.

influenced by linguists from that area, or simply perhaps who do not wish to contradict) have supported this claim. However, these are not based on the linguistic factors of their systems, rather, on non related political reasons or special interests or in many cases, the feelings of a specific community or group. In other words, they involve social or political factors.

Linguistic criteria may apparently seem easy to establish. A specific number of speakers could be set. A specific geographical area could be determined with a number of square miles or kilometers. However, things are not that simple. Different linguistic systems have manifested different idiosyncrasies. Some are reduced to a very small geographical area, do not enjoy a high level of prestige outside of that area and do not derive from any other language. Such is the case of the Basque language, which is thought to be thousands of years old and does not show resemblance with any other language. It is also the only language of Spain and of Western Europe which does not belong to the Indo-European family of languages and it has been called a language isolate because it has no relation with any other language of the world (Trask, 1997:358-390).³¹ In this case, it cannot be said it is a dialect and if we tried to establish that it is simply a regional linguistic system, since it has already been established that it is a language of Spain, not only a regional linguistic system (which could very well be established), neither a dialect, categorizing it to the level of regional linguistic system rather than a language, could in fact bring with it problems of a political nature. Interestingly enough, the Basques, (with approximately half a million speakers³² and a reduced geographical area as) just like the Catalonians, want separation from Spain on the basis of ethnicity and language, even though they are not monolingual. The main issue here is that this policy cannot be accepted applying it would mean that territorial boundaries would change according to factors like migration trends, for example. Shall this rule be applied a small part of Barcelona would become a colony of Pakistan or a separate country just because there are approximately 70,000 Pakistanis in Barcelona³³ speaking a language not native of

³¹ See also Ethnologue: <http://www.ethnologue.com/language/eus>

³² Ethnologue: <http://www.ethnologue.com/language/eus>

³³ Information taken from an interview with a Visa Officer at the Spanish Embassy, Islamabad.

Spain (Urdu but also Punjabi, Sindhi, Gujarati and others) and many of them are concentrated in specific neighborhoods. The idea seems absurd.

Basing the separation on ethnic grounds will have similar consequences. Pilar Mouton illustrates this point by stating that languages are not respectful of geographical areas: The nineteenth-century idea of "a language equal to a nation" not always reflect reality, because languages are not usually respectful of boundaries and as cultural events with its own history, sometimes stubbornly previous reflect circumstances (Mouton, 1994:9).³⁴

Europe is a multilingual continent. In some countries people speak more than two or in many cases three languages. It would not make sense and it would be impossible in many cases to further divide these linguistic communities. In any case, languages are not isolated entities. They are the vehicle of the culture they represent. They bring with them a set of cultural values, and the speaker identifies with them. In case of the bilinguals of Spain for example, the speaker has adopted the values of the main culture and the values of the regional culture.³⁵ It is a matter of identity. It depends on the speaker to be nationalist or regionalist first. In many cases, regionalist feelings overcome nationalist.³⁶

Education plays a vital role in the spread of a linguistic system. Linguistic systems which are not used as a medium of instruction are not so widely spread as those which are. The fact that a linguistic system is used as a vehicle of education ensures its survival, spread and most definitely permanence, adequate and abundant literary traditions and many more written and spoken manifestations.

³⁴ Mouton, Pilar García.(1994) *Lenguas y dialectos de España*. Vol. 20. Arco Libros, 1994. 9. Translation of:

“La idea decimonónica de “una lengua igual a una nación” no siempre se ajusta a la realidad, porque las lenguas no suelen ser respetuosas con las fronteras y, como hechos culturales con una historia propia, a veces reflejan tercamente circunstancias anteriores.”

³⁵ Marcos Marín, F. (1979) *Reforma y Modernización del Español*. Madrid: Ediciones Cátedra. S. A. 28-35.

³⁶ The case of Catalonia and the Basque Country has been explained before.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Until now the lack of agreement on the scientific definitions of language and dialect has created confusion to say the least. This is proven in many cases and illustrated by the previous example of a large portion of the languages of Pakistan. In this sense and following the scientific community consensus, the following criteria for elevation of a linguistic system to the level of language are proposed in summary:

1. The linguistic system should present a high degree of leveling. That is a large number of speakers spread over one or more geographical areas. The language community should present language coherence.
2. It presents an elevated differentiation degree.
3. The linguistic system has thrived over others of the same origin which have not presented the same level of success remaining without some of the same factors that make the former successful, such as same leveling degree, lack of formal rules, etc.
4. The language enjoys a high level of prestige. For example; it is a national language, an official language, a language of the United Nations or any other international organization, etc.
5. The linguistic system presents written manifestations as well as grammar, rules of orthography, phonetics, syntax, etc.
6. The linguistic system is utilized as a medium of instruction.
7. The linguistic system is spread through television channels, newspapers, radio and other media manifestations in society such as the internet, etc.
8. The linguistic system presents a vast literary tradition of which is vehicle and includes many forms of literary expression such as prose, poetry, etc.

Furthermore, in order to categorize a linguistic system as a dialect the following factors are proposed:

1. The dialect is a linguistic system which derived from another, extinct or in use, which falls into the above mentioned parameters of language.
2. It is a system of signs parallel to others which present similar characteristics, derived from a common language, alive or extinct.
3. It is present within a specific geographic area.

4. It does not present strong strong differentiation in front of other linguistic systems of common origin.
5. It does not adjust to the criteria of language, as its inherent characteristics fail to reach that level due to the fact that it lacks one or multiple of the following factors:
 - i) A literary tradition.
 - ii) A strong leveling with a high number of speakers.
 - iii) A high level of prestige.
 - iv) Being the medium of instruction.
 - v) Being used as the language of the media.
 - vi) Written manifestations.
 - vii) Formal rules such as grammar, syntax, morphology, etc.These are in summary a conglomerate of the parameters utilized by various linguists previously mentioned.³⁷

CONCLUSION

The elevation of minor linguistic systems to the level of language due to the political pressure of a particular group of people on the basis of territorial boundaries, ethnicity or other social factors creates social problems that could be avoided by agreeing to set the proposed criteria and although it may satisfy the needs of a particular group, targeted pressure points should not be the criterion for such promotion. As such, the elevation of a linguistic system to the level of language should not be performed on this basis if the factors of leveling, literary tradition, education system, prestige and imposition over other linguistic systems are not present. In this sense, the so called 'languages of Pakistan' as well as many other linguistic systems of the world need to be investigated further in order to determine whether they are really languages, dialects, regional or local linguistic systems. The previously mentioned languages lack in the majority of the criteria points. They do not enjoy prestige as they are mostly unknown, leveling is not present, they are not the medium of instruction in Pakistani schools and many do not have attached to them a literary tradition. The systematic elevation of such linguistic

³⁷ See Alvar (1961); Mouton (1994); Lau (1995), Marcos Marin (1975) Hudson (1996) Montes Giraldo (1980), and Li, J. (1990) for different systems of language classification.

systems to the socio-linguistic category of language only on the basis of social parameters has strings attached to it and it is simply a mistake. It serves the political purposes and personal interests of those who propose this elevation. The language scientists who wrote *Ethnologue* did a fantastic research job on the linguistic data and collected an immense amount of important and meaningful information. However, they lack the criteria discussed in this research to be able to consider whether a linguistic system is really deserving of being considered a language, it is in fact a dialect or even a regional or localized spoken manifestation. Linguists of the world need to be able to agree on the criteria so that a proper differentiation devoid of political pressures can be put into place. This research endeavor is just that, a simple effort to set valid and complete criteria.

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