International Bilingual Journal of Culture, Anthropology and Linguistics (IBJCAL), eISSN: 2582-4716
https://www.indianadibasi.com/journal/index.php/ibjcal/issue/view/42
VOLUME: IV, ISSUE: 4 || December, 2022 || pp. 1-21



International Bilingual Journal of Culture, Anthropology and Linguistics
ইন্টারন্যাশনাল বাইলিঙ্গুয়াল জার্নাল অফ কালচার, অ্যানথ্রোপলজি অ্যাণ্ড লিঙ্গুইস্টিক্স্
eISSN: 2582-4716

The passage towards extinction: Language Shift and Influence in the Malda Variety of Khortha

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History
Received: 22.11.2022
Revised: NA
Accepted: 15.12.2022
Published: 30.12.2022

Keywords
Khortha,
language shift,
lexical borrowing,
language loss,
language endangerment,
language contact,
Bangla,
Hindi

ABSTRACT

Khortha, also referred as Khotta is recognized as one of the 48 varieties of Hindi (2011). This paper primarily aims to discuss to state the degree of endangerment of the Malda variety of Khortha and the need for its preservation by language documentation. The fieldwork was conducted in a village named Bhajjana in Harischandrapur, Malda. The stage of language endangerment of Khortha in the framework of both GIDS and EGIDS is a stage 7, and is considered to be definitely endangered in UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger. As a result, there is loss of vocabulary, lexical borrowing, and linguistic influence.

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1.Introduction

Khortha, also referred as Khotta is recognized as one of the 48 varieties of Hindi (2011), erstwhile Hindi had 49 varieties when Maithili didn't have the language status before 2003 and was considered as one of the varieties of Hindi (2001). There are two major variations in the spelling and pronunciation of this language. It can be called Khortha or Khotta[1]. It has been claimed that Khortha is a variety of Angika; Angika is a dialect of Maithili. Maithili was considered as one of the many varieties of Hindi. In 2003, Maithili got the status of a separate language. Therefore, it is debated whether Khortha should be considered as a variety of Hindi or a variety of Maithili. The variety that has been worked upon here is found to be spoken among the people residing in Harischandrapur in the Malda district (West Bengal). This is one of the many varieties of Khortha. Khortha does not have any standard variety as of now (Bhowmik, 2018, p. 322).

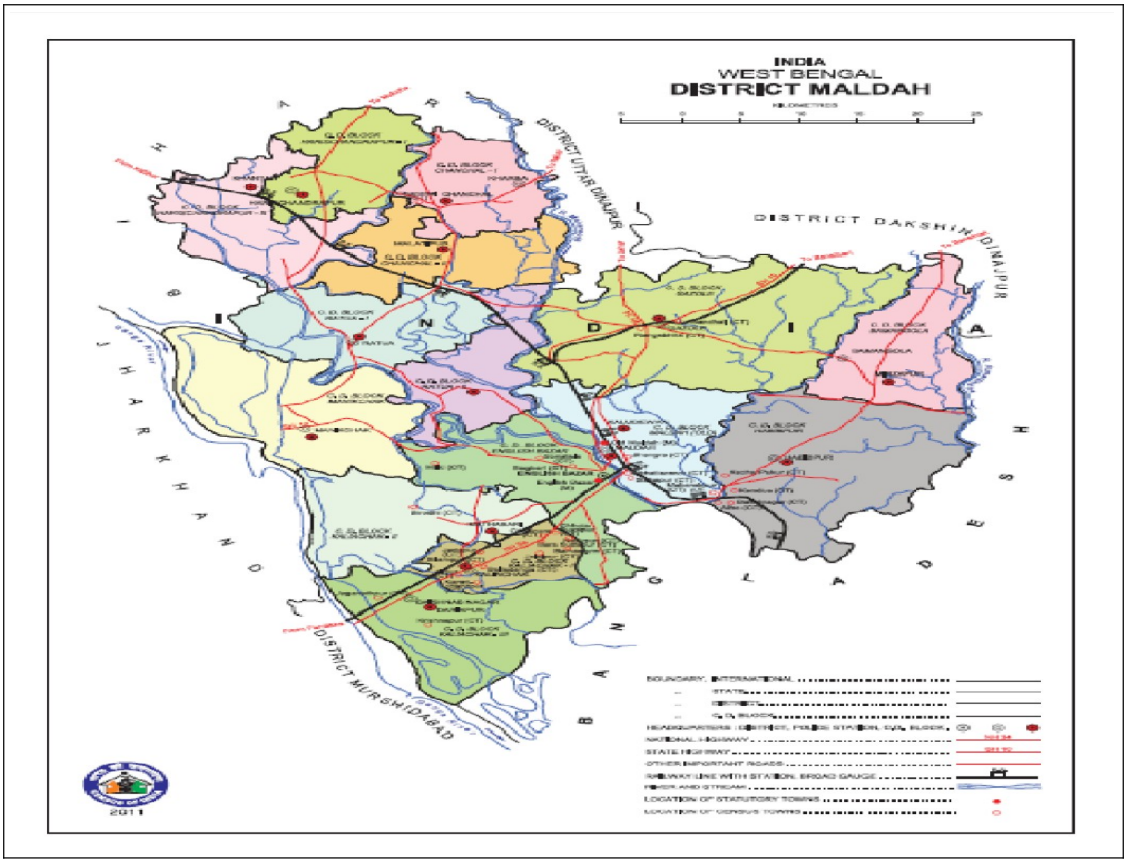

Figure 1. Map of Maldah District[2]

1 Khortha and Khotta; both the variations are used in Census (2001).

2 Retrieved from http://malda.gov.in/maps.htm on 24th March 2018.

2.Research Questions

This paper focuses on two research questions. It primarily aims to discuss to state the degree of endangerment of the Malda variety of Khortha and the need for its preservation by language documentation. The objective of this paper is to discuss language shift and loss of vocabulary in the Malda variety of Khortha. It also provides evidence to show the influence of the neighbouring languages on Khortha, based on the language contact situation of Khortha with reference to classifiers.

3.Research Methods

The fieldwork was conducted in a village named Bhajjana in Harischandrapur, Malda. The observation was made by eliciting data with the help of word list and basic sentences questionnaire list (Abbi, 2001) among 17 families. The factor which was important here is that the community on which the linguistic fieldwork was to be done was a bilingual[3] community. So, a biscriptal format is useful for both the linguist and the informant.

The linguistic composition of the speech community: Khortha

The language of the investigator: Bangla

Also, the primary focus was to work on the morphology of the language. So, the search was for someone who was a fluent and native speaker and had not forgotten the language, typically the preference was a NORM (Native Old Rural Male). Unfortunately, it was observed that most of them weren't willing to speak Khortha initially. While the search seemed futile while screening for such speakers. Meanwhile, people got curious and interested later on during the search process and a lot of them were found who later on voluntarily came to become the informants[4]. It was noticed that though they claimed they were speaking Khortha, which they weren't. They thought they were speaking Khortha but it was actually Bangla. This paper is based on the

3 bilingualism as a common human condition that makes it possible for an individual to function, at some level, in more than one language. The key to this very broad and inclusive definition of bilingualism is 'more than one'. Retrieved from https://www.linguisticsociety.org/resource/multilingualism on 30th December 2018

4 The head of the village solved the problem and requested me to talk to all the willing informants once, and later tell him who would be the ideal informant for my work. So, I listened and attended all the speakers who came up to me. They discussed their current living situation, the condition of the language and the community, the job scenario and other socio-economic factors which were the reasons for the decay of the language. But, unfortunately all these discussions were not recorded at that time as I was focusing mainly on morphology and I didn't want to interrupt the flow of speech by rummaging for the recorder and other pieces of equipment in my bag.

informal conversations with the Khortha speakers during the fieldwork. The Khortha data had been collected from Bhajjana, Harischandrapur, Malda, West Bengal; the Bangla data and the Hindi data has been collected from Kolkata, West Bengal. An analysis is produced based on the comparative study between the Malda variety and the Jharkhand variety of Khortha conducted along with their respective neighbouring languages Bangla and Hindi respectively. The data was collected by the questionnaire elicitation method in Bhajjana as previously mentioned. The varieties are referred as the Malda variety and the Jharkhand variety when discussed in comparison.[5] The collected data was compared to Bangla.[6] The collected data from Malda was later compared with the Jharkhand variety of Khortha. The data of the Jharkhand variety of Khortha was compared to Hindi.[7] The grammatical variation based on the differences and similarities has also been explored in this paper.

4. Data Collection & Analysis

4.1 Bilingualism

The ability to speak two languages is called bilingualism. Bilingualism can be either individual or societal; in the case of Khortha, it shows type II societal bilingualism (Appel & Muysken, 2005, pp. 1-3). The Khortha speakers were mostly bilingual; some of them were also multilingual. There were hardly a few monolingual Khortha speakers. They mostly comprise the age group of 61-80.

4.2 Language Contact

Matras (2009) notes that the speakers' communicative goals and intentions, their discourse strategies, and their language processing capacities, and structural innovations constitute the seeds of potential language change, i.e. contact-induced change. The concept of language contact is metaphorical. The language processing among the multilingual speakers does not touch or influence directly. The interactive communication is the locus of language contact and change. "It is therefore the multilingual speaker's interaction and the factors and motivations that shape it that deserve our attention in the study of language contact." (Matras, 2009, p. 3)

4.3 Loss of Vocabulary

5 Please note Khortha in this paper when mentioned without a variety during analysis will be considered as the Malda variety.

6 data collected from Kolkata.

7 data collected from the Hindi speakers of Kolkata.

It is natural for any language to go through the loss of certain terms in vocabulary over time. The rate of retention is generally more than the loss. It is also natural to adopt or adapt lexical items from the neighbouring language. Lexical borrowing is a contact-induced change. Lexical borrowing can occur irrespective of the language's social or linguistic status. It should be noted that "both borrowing and imposition can take place from a socially dominant to a socially subordinate language, and vice versa." (Winford, 2010, p. 171) In Harischandrapur, the socially dominant language is Bangla; whereas Khortha is the linguistically dominant language of the speakers and the socially subordinate language here.

The speakers were asked to translate the words for data collection from Bangla to Khortha i.e. to the target language. The speakers have forgotten Khortha for several basic words and have replaced it with Bangla and also Hindi for quite a few words. The speakers had imported[8] the words in Khortha and had adopted these words in its' lexical inventory with little to no change. Here is a list of words[9] which are almost obsolete in the Khortha speech. The variations that are found in use are lexical borrowings from Bangla and Hindi.

Example: Word List

(1)	**Bangla**	**Khortha**	**Variation 1**[10]	**Variation 2**[11]	**Gloss**
a.	/hãʈu/	/kehuni/	/haʈʈu/	/guʈna/	'knee'
b.	/ɟhirɟhirebriʃʈi/	/phunasi/	/briʃʈi/	-	'drizzle'
c.	/moumachi/	/birni/	-	/bhaura/	'bee'
d.	/mojur/	/manmaɟur/	-	/mor/	'peacock'
e.	/koreaŋgul/	/kaŋgalia/	-	/choʈʈaauri/	'little finger'
f.	/kalo/	/karija/	-	/kala/	'black'

8 see (Haugen, 1950)

9 These words are pretty much lost. Only a few speakers who were in the 61-80 age group could remember those words. There was hardly any young speaker who could remember those words in Khortha. Words like /karija/ 'black', /laddi/ 'river' are not used in regular speech. The speakers rather prefer to use borrowed words.

10 these words are borrowed from Bangla

11 these words are borrowed from Hindi

(1)	Bangla	Khortha	Variation 1	Variation 2	Gloss
g.	/bacca/	/ceŋgra/	/bacca/	-	'child'
h.	/ʃɔrɔtkal/	/jhari/	/ʃɔrɔtkal/	-	'autumn'
i.	/ʃɔkal/	/bihan/	/sakal/	-	'morning'
j.	/miʃʈi/	/miʈʈhai/	/miʃʈi/	-	'sweetmeat'
k.	/jɔkrit/	/libhɔr/[12]	-	-	'liver'

Table 1: Basic Word List (Translational); Bangla to Khortha

Unfortunately, it was observed that most of them weren't willing to speak Khortha initially. While the search for native, fluent speakers was on the process there were a lot of them who later on voluntarily came to become informants[13]. It was noticed that though they claimed they were speaking Khortha, they weren't[14].

4.4 Linguistic Influence (with special reference to classifiers)

In any geographical area when two languages are in contact, there is a chance of linguistic convergence. Khortha is no different in this case, sharing a lot of features with its' neighbouring languages; Bangla and Hindi. For instance, the Malda variety of Khortha shares its' inventory of numerals with Bangla (Bhowmik, 2020). The influence of Bangla has been profound on the Malda variety of Khortha, that it lacks ergativity (Bhowmik, 2018). The situation of language contact and influence is also evident in case of Khortha classifiers. This section will discuss the findings.

12 the speakers said they had a word for liver and after much struggle they said they cannot remember and they now call it /libhɔr/

13 The head of the village solved the problem and requested me to talk to all the willing informants once, and later tell him who would be the ideal informant for my work. So, I listened and attended all the speakers who came up to me. They discussed their current living situation, the condition of the language and the community, the job scenario and other socio-economic factors which were the reasons for the decay of the language. Unfortunately, all these discussions were not recorded at that time as I was focusing mainly on morphology and I didn't want to interrupt the flow of speech by rummaging for the recorder and other pieces of equipment in my bag.

14 The investigator is a native Bangla speaker and was able to distinguish Bangla from other languages. Many informants claimed that they were speaking Khortha but it was Bangla.

The categorization of the different word classes is presented by classifiers. Classifiers can serve different functions in different word classes. Aikhenvald (2000) lists six types of classifiers. They are listed below.

Noun classifiers
Numeral classifiers
Relational classifiers
Verbal classifiers
Locative classifiers
Deictic classifiers

Noun classifiers and numeral classifiers are the most common two classifiers among the world's languages that are typologically widespread. Classifiers can be of two morphological realisations; the free morpheme type and the bound morpheme type (Aikhenvald, 2000).

Free morpheme classifiers	Bound morpheme classifiers
Numeral classifiers (Animate, Shape)	Concordial classifiers (Animate, Shape)
Non-numeral classifiers (Animate only)	Predicate classifiers (Animate, Shape)
	Intralocative classifiers (Shape only)

Table 2: Classifiers, their morphological realization, and semantics[15]

The function of classifiers is used to classify morphemes of quantity and numeric values in the South Asian languages. The system of classifiers can be found around the South Asian languages among several languages from different families like Boro, Burmese, Kokborok, Malto, Assamese, Bangla, Andamanese and a few Munda languages (Abbi, 2001, p. 122).

Findings exhibit that the Jharkhand variety of Khortha uses classifiers like '-ʈho', '-go' which is close to the Hindi classifier '-ʈho'; whereas, the Malda variety of Khortha uses classifiers that seems to have adopted its' classifiers and their usage like Bangla.[16] The following examples from Khortha and Bangla along with Hindi will help in understanding the differences and the similarities. The following examples are a comparison among the singular classifiers.

Malda variety of Khortha

(2) ek-ʈa chauri
one-CLF girl

15 (Aikhenvald, 2000)

16 Number + Classifier + Noun e.g. Bangla tin ʈaboi 'three + cl + books' 'three books'. (Abbi, 2001, p. 122)

'One girl'

(3) ek-ʈa chaura
one-CLF boy
'One boy'

Bangla

(4) æk-ʈa meje
one-CLF girl
'One girl'

(5) æk-ʈa chele
one-CLF boy
'One boy'

Jharkhand variety of Khortha

(6) ek-go chouri
one-CLF girl
'One girl'

(7) ek-go choura
one-CLF boy
'One boy'

Hindi

(8) ek-ʈho larki
one-CLF girl
'One girl'

(9) ek-ʈho larka
one-CLF boy
'One boy'

Therefore, the Jharkhand variety of Khortha uses singular classifiers like '-ʈho', '-go' similar to the Hindi classifier '-ʈho'; whereas, the Malda variety of Khortha has singular classifiers like '-ʈa' which is similar to Bangla '-ʈa', '-ʈo'. The difference between the two varieties can be derived as an effect of language contact between the neighbouring languages especially Bangla in case of Malda variety. Similar patterns have been noted in plural classifiers in the Malda variety of Khortha. A comparison among the plural classifiers is demonstrated with the following examples.

Malda variety of Khortha

(10) du-ʈa boi
two-CLF book
'Two books'

(11) tin-ʈa bacca
three-CLF child
'Three children'

(12) bacca-sab
child-NOM.PL
'The children'

(13) bandhu-gala
friend-ACC.PL
'Friends'

Bangla

(14) du-ʈo boi
two-CLF book
'Two books'

(15) tin-ʈe bacca
three-CLF child
'Three children'

(16) bacca-gulo
child-NOM.PL
'The children'

(17) bondhu-gulo
friend-ACC.PL
'Friends'

Jharkhand variety of Khortha

(18) du-ʈho kitab
two-CLF book
'Two books'

(19) tin-go bacca
three-CLF child
'Three children'

(20) bacvin-sab

child-NOM.PL
'The children'

(21) sathi-sab
friend-ACC.PL
'Friends'

Hindi

(22) do-ʈho kitab
two-CLF book
'Two books'

(23) tin-ʈho bacca
three-CLF child
'Three children'

(24) bacca-sab
child-NOM.PL
'The children'

(25) dost-õ
friend-ACC.PL
'Friends'

Chatterji (1985) stated that Khortha has probably undergone a similar change and has developed the classifier as both have shared a historical origin. The Malda variety of Khortha has plural classifiers, '-sab' and '-gala'; 'gala' which is similar to Bangla 'gulo', whereas the Jharkhand variety uses only '-sab' like Hindi. Thus, both singular and plural classifiers ('gala' has undergone morphophonological change[17]) of the Malda variety of Khortha have been borrowed from Bangla as a result of language contact and not shared historical origin.

Bangla	>	Khortha (Malda)
gulo	>	gala
sɔb	>	sab

4.5 Language Attitude and Shift

The unwillingness of the Khortha speakers had hindered them in remembering the language. The language shift was noticeable through the loss of vocabulary i.e. a lot of Khortha words have been lost and are replaced with Bangla or Hindi which has been previously discussed.

17 Bangla > Khortha (Malda); gulo > gala (Plural classifier)

The Khortha speakers preferred to use Bangla over Khortha. The livelihood of the Khortha speakers in the Bhajjana village depends on agriculture (rice, mango). If there is a flood or famine any year, the people starve and die. For instance, the fieldwork was supposed to be conducted in the village named Miyahat in Harischandrapur. On reaching Harischandrapur it was known that the village has washed away a few months ago during the flood and the people who were alive have either migrated to different villages or to Malda town where the dominant language is Bangla. Therefore, the Khortha speakers who mostly belong to the low socio-economic status tend to shift towards Bangla.

The language convergence between the Malda variety of Khortha and Bangla is natural because of language contact. But the shift from one language to another for sake of prestige and better options in life seems a step toward language endangerment when the later generations do not want to speak or forget the language. "The general pattern for language shift in immigrant groups is as follows. The first generation (born in the country of origin) is bilingual, but the minority language is clearly dominant, the second generation is bilingual and either of the two languages might be strongest, the third generation is bilingual with the majority language dominating, and the fourth generation only has command of the majority language." (Appel & Muysken, 2005, p. 42) There were two types of scenarios found among the Khortha speakers in Harischandrapur. The language attitude is explained in the following sections.

Scenario 1: The grandparent generation speaks Khortha in all domains. The parent generation is reluctant and switches between Khortha and Bangla. The children speak a mix of Khortha and Bangla with their grandparents and Bangla with their parents. The parent generation needs to serve as a mediator to help the cause. A very few children use Khortha as their mother tongue but without any prolonged use. They completely shift to Bangla as soon as they get admitted to the school.[18]

Scenario 2: The grandparent generation prefers to speak Bangla over Khortha. They speak Khortha only with their peers, i.e. the Scenario 1 grandparent generation. The parent generation and the grandchildren speak in fluent Bangla. The parent generation has almost forgotten the language. They can still understand and speak a little bit of Khortha. The children cannot understand an iota of Khortha. Their mother tongue is Bangla.

The second language; i.e. Bangla plays a crucial role in language shift. The kids (approximately at the age of 4 or 5) start learning Bangla (Scenario 1) as soon as they start attending school.

18 There were no schools found near Bhajjana, Harischandrapur where primary education was imparted in Khortha. The medium of instruction was strictly Bangla.

The medium of instruction in primary education is Bangla in Bhajjana and the nearby villages. The elders in the village also encourage the kids to speak Bangla over Khortha.

"Language shift is, in fact, the redistribution of varieties of language over certain domains. If the shift is towards the majority language, this language seems to conquer domain after domain via the intermediate stage of bilingual language use. When the minority language is spoken in fewer domains, its value decreases. This, in turn, will lessen the motivation of younger people to learn and use it." (Appel & Muysken, 2005, p. 41)

4.6 Language Endangerment

"Of the 6000 languages spoken today, 276 of them comprise more than 5 billion speakers. All the rest of the languages, 95% of them, are spoken by 300 million people. Just 5% of the people in the world speak 95% of the world's languages."[19] (Bernard, 1996) In light of this the current situation of Khortha is discussed in the following section. Language endangerment has been a serious issue of concern for the past few decades. **Ethnologue** states that since 1950 the number of languages that have become extinct is 370, i.e. 6 languages are lost every year. Language endangerment is based on several factors such as status, function, number of users and so on. These multiple factors play a role in determining the language's position in terms of degree of endangerment.

The Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS) of Fishman is a seminal work on language endangerment. This scale has eight levels. The table below is given for ready reference.

Stage of endangerment	**Level of endangerment (with explanation)**
Stage 1	"some use of Xish[20] in higher level educational, occupational, governmental and media efforts (but without the additional safety provided by political independence)" (Fishman, 1991, p. 107)
Stage 2	"Xish in lower governmental services and mass media but not in the higher spheres of either" (Fishman, 1991, p. 105)
Stage 3	"use of Xish in the lower work sphere (outside of the Xish

19 Though the dynamics seem to have improved a little throughout the years, the situation for "the smallest half of the world's languages—consisting of more than 3,500 languages—are spoken by a mere 0.2 percent of the global population"(Ethnologue). Thus, this huge number of languages remain in potential danger of language endangerment and loss.

20 X = any language

Stage of endangerment	Level of endangerment (with explanation)
	neighborhood/community) involving interaction between Xmen and Y[21]men." (Fishman, 1991, p. 103)
Stage 4	"Xish in lower education (types a and b) that meets the requirements of compulsory education laws" (Fishman, 1991, p. 98)
Stage 5	"Xish literacy in home, school and community, but without taking on extra-communal reinforcement of such literacy" (Fishman, 1991, p. 95)
Stage 6	"the attainment of intergenerational informal oralcy and its demographic concentration and institutional reinforcement" (Fishman, 1991, p. 92)
Stage 7	"most users of Xish are a socially integrated and ethnolinguistically active population but they are beyond child-bearing age" (Fishman, 1991, p. 88)
Stage 8	"most vestigial users of Xish are socially isolated old folks and Xish needs to be re-assembled from their mouths and memories and taught to demographically unconcentrated adults" (Fishman, 1991, p. 88)

Table 3: GIDS (Fishman, 1991)

The situation of Khortha can be discussed based on the two scenarios. Scenario 1 indicates the range between Stage 6 and 7 of GIDS. Scenario 2 indicates Stage 7 of GIDS. Therefore, based on the observation of the two scenarios Khortha's language endangerment in the framework of GIDS is Stage 7.

UNESCO measures languages in its six-level scales of language endangerment. The table below is given for ease of understanding.

Degree of endangerment	Intergenerational Language Transmission
safe	language is spoken by all generations; intergenerational transmission is uninterrupted *>> not included in the Atlas*
vulnerable	most children speak the language, but it may be restricted to certain

21 Y = any language apart from X

Degree of endangerment	Intergenerational Language Transmission
	domains (e.g., home)
definitely endangered	children no longer learn the language as mother tongue in the home
severely endangered	language is spoken by grandparents and older generations; while the parent generation may understand it, they do not speak it to children or among themselves
critically endangered	the youngest speakers are grandparents and older, and they speak the language partially and infrequently
extinct	there are no speakers left *>> included in the Atlas if presumably extinct since the 1950s*

Table 3: UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger[22]

It can be seen from observation of Scenario 1 and Scenario 2 in Khortha that the intergenerational transmission between the parent and grandparent generation is restricted to the home domain. The youngest speakers are not learning the language as the mother tongue (refer Scenario 2). The intergenerational transmission is marginal between the parent generation and children. UNESCO's degree of endangerment shows Khortha is definitely endangered and is progressing towards severely endangered.

The Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (EGIDS) (Lewis & Simons, 2010) is an aligned, amplified, elaborate and evaluative framework for endangered languages constructed based on GIDS and other language endangerment scales, including UNESCO's. The table has 13 levels. The 13 levels are discussed in the table below:

Level	Label	Description
0	International	The language is widely used between nations in trade, knowledge exchange, and international policy
1	National	The language is used in education, work, mass media, and government at the national level.
2	Provincial	The language is used in education, work, mass media, and

22 (Moseley, 2010)

		government within major administrative subdivisions of a nation.
3	Wider Communication	The language is used in work and mass media without official status to transcend language differences across a region.
4	Educational	The language is in vigorous use, with standardization and literature being sustained through a widespread system of institutionally supported education.
5	Developing	The language is in vigorous use, with literature in a standardized form being used by some though this is not yet widespread or sustainable.
6a	Vigorous	The language is used for face-to-face communication by all generations and the situation is sustainable.
6b	Threatened	The language is used for face-to-face communication within all generations, but it is losing users.
7	Shifting	The child-bearing generation can use the language among themselves, but it is not being transmitted to children.
8a	Moribund	The only remaining active users of the language are members of the grandparent generation and older.
8b	Nearly Extinct	The only remaining users of the language are members of the grandparent generation or older who have little opportunity to use the language.
9	Dormant	The language serves as a reminder of heritage identity for an ethnic community, but no one has more than symbolic proficiency.
10	Extinct	The language is no longer used and no one retains a sense of ethnic identity associated with the language.

Table 3: EGIDS[23] (Ethnologue, 2018)

The position of the Malda variety of Khortha based on EGIDS can be stated as Shifting (Level 7). The usage of Khortha though has been restricted to certain domains; it still can be revitalized by the parent generation.

4.7 Language Revitalization

Language revitalization is the first step towards reversing language shift. It can be started with imparting primary education in Khortha. The importance of mother tongue education is

23 retrieved on 30th December 2018 https://www.ethnologue.com/about/language-status.

recommended by the National Curriculum Framework of NCERT[24]. The stigma of not knowing one of the majority languages often triggers in language loss. The medium of instruction in (primary) schools is rarely a non-official, non-state recognised language.

The factors that play an important role in language maintenance are the economic condition, social status, official status, and prestige. "Official status can lead to more resources for the language, both monetary and otherwise. It allows for (or buoys) the use of the language in official contexts, making knowledge of the language more valuable in the public sphere. Governmental recognition also increases the prestige associated with the language by placing it on the same level (at least theoretically) as the majority language." (Hoffmann, 2009, p. 19)

In India, speaking English in urban areas is seen with prestige. Similarly, in rural areas the socially dominant language (generally one of the 22 scheduled languages) of that state precedes. Therefore, such beliefs of the general mass trigger language shift among the minority language speakers. The Khortha speakers in Malda were no different. The value of the language has to be understood by the speakers themselves; else outside sources cannot help in revival if the people themselves do not respond in such efforts.

5. Results and Discussion

The language shift was noticeable through the loss of vocabulary i.e. a lot of Khortha words have been lost and are replaced with Bangla or Hindi. One is aware that "a language's history, prestige value, and the degree to which it has undergone standardization may be sources of pride or shame for members of a linguistic community, and as such may again facilitate to inhibit the vitality of a given ethnolinguistic group" (Giles, Bourhis, & Taylor, 1977, p. 312) As mentioned earlier, economic status and social status determined the language shift among Khortha speakers; thus leading towards language loss.

The Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS) of Fishman has eight levels. In case of Khortha two scenarios were found in Harischandrapur. In case of Scenario 1, the situation lies in between Stage 6 and 7 of GIDS, and in case of Scenario 2, the situation of the Malda variety of Khortha stands at Stage 7 in the GIDS. Stage 7 on the GIDS: most users of Xish are a socially integrated and ethnolinguistically active population but they are beyond child-bearing age (Fishman, 1991, p. 89). The users of Khortha has the knowledge of the language but the language is not transmitted to the children, i.e. the parents do not teach the children or refrain from teaching the language as their mother tongue. Therefore, based on the overall perspective the

24 (National Council of Educational Research and Training)

stage of language endangerment of Khortha in the framework of GIDS can be concluded as a stage 7.

UNESCO measures languages in its six-level scale of language endangerment. According to observation it was noted that the usage of Khortha in case of intergenerational transmission is restricted between the parent and grandparent generation. The intergenerational transmission of Khortha between the parent generation and the children is almost marginal in the current scenario. As per UNESCO's degree of endangerment it helps to understand that Khortha in Malda is definitely endangered and if this is not checked and any sort of measure is not taken, there is a high chance that within two to three generations it might be that this variety will become extinct. Khortha is deemed as a dialect of Angika. Angika's position is termed as vulnerable in UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger. But, the Malda variety, i.e. Khortha in Malda is definitely endangered and is slowly progressing towards severely endangered, irrespective of Angika's position in degree of endangerment.

The Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (EGIDS) (Lewis & Simons, 2010) has 13 levels. The position of the Malda variety of Khortha based on an overall evaluation can be stated as Shifting (Level 7). This level according to the EGIDS is the level where language shift is in progress. Though the parents are capable of using the language, the usage of Khortha currently has been restricted to certain domains. As Khortha has been the first language of the parents thus, Khortha can be revitalized by increased exposure. For the start, primary education in Khortha can be imparted in schools based on the improved framework of NCERT.

Matras (2009) states that the languages or the language 'systems' do not touch or influence as such, this is metaphorical; it is dependent on the multilingual speaker's interaction and motivation along with the previously mentioned factors. The Malda variety of Khortha shares many features with its neighbouring language Bangla. The effect of language contact is evident. Similiar findings were available in case of echo formation. South Asian languages exhibit reduplication in both full and partial forms. The partial reduplication based on phonology is called echo formation. Generally, echo formations are used for the meaning of 'etc'. In Indo-Aryan languages, it is seen that there is an initial sound replacement by a fixed sound, such as Hindi v-, Punjabi sh-, Bangla ʈ- etc (Abbi, 2001). Jharkhand variety of Khortha exhibit echo formation in the pattern of Hindi, whereas the Malda variety of Khortha exhibit features like Bangla. The following examples have been demonstrated to substantiate the claim.

Malda variety of Khortha

(26) ca-ʈa pi

tea-etc drink
'have some tea, etc'

(27) beg-ʈeg
bag-etc
'bag, etc'

Bangla

(28) ca-ʈa kha-n
tea-etc drink-2P-honorific
'have some tea, etc'

(29) bæg-ʈæg
bag-etc
'bag, etc'

Jharkhand variety of Khortha

(30) ca-waye l-i
tea-etc drink-2P
'have some tea, etc'

(31) bæg-wæg
bag-etc
'bag, etc'

Hindi

(32) ca-waye l-o
tea-etc drink-2P
'have some tea, etc'

(33) bæg-wæg
bag-etc
'bag, etc'

Ergativity in the Malda variety of Khortha is absent like Bangla, whereas the Jharkhand variety of Khortha has ergativity present like its' neighbouring language Hindi. For instance, in transitive sentences consonant endings receive phonological markers '-ẽ' and vowel endings receive '-~' to exhibit ergativity in the Jharkhand variety whereas any such patterns were completely absent in the Malda variety (Bhowmik, 2018).

Typologically speaking, certain grammatical features are common and widespread among the South Asian languages; based on the overall morphological analysis Khortha of both the varieties show such similarities. The focus was not the commonalities rather the differences that arose out of language contact. There are a few features that are not common for the Malda variety and the Jharkhand variety of Khortha, classifiers to start with. This is substantiated with data collected from both the varieties and compared and analysed with both Hindi and Bangla. Based on the observation it can be inferred as language contact. In some other grammatical features of the Malda variety of Khortha, it can be inferred as language contact and in some cases direct borrowing, such as numerals (Bhowmik, 2020). This claim has a basis because it can be seen that the Malda variety of Khortha shows a few grammatical features which are like Bengali and these features are not found in the Jharkhand variety of Khortha. The Malda variety of Khortha differs from the Jharkhand variety of Khortha not only in terms of classifiers but also in numerals (Bhowmik, 2020), echo-formation and ergativity (Bhowmik, 2018).

6. Conclusion

In any geographical area when two languages are in contact, there is a chance of linguistic convergence. Language contact is induced[i] because of multiple factors, one of the most common factors being language convergence and bilingualism (Appel & Muysken, 2005). The number of monolingual speakers in Khortha was limited to a very few. Khortha is no different in this case. Therefore, it can be seen that Khortha is not spoken among all the generations in all domains. The intergenerational communication in Khortha is negligible and moreover, the discouragement from older family members prohibits the children from learning or communicating in the language. A very few children who understood the language have forgotten it since they started primary education[25]. It is becoming rare where people from parent generation use Khortha for communication among themselves. It was observed that the usage of Khortha among adults along with children is almost negligible.

The problem here is deep seated as it can be observed that the parent generation[26] discourage their children to speak Khortha. They themselves are shifting from Khortha to Bengali for sake of better livelihood, job prospects and employment, education and prestige. They admitted if Khortha was taught in school or given recognition in official work[27] they would consider to

25 Scenario 1 situation only

26 It was also noted that these speakers at first didn't acknowledge Khortha as their mother tongue.

27 http://meghalayatimes.info/index.php/front-page/10142-jharkhand-assembly-accords-second-language-status-to-11-languages retrieved on 21st September 2018.

continue to speak the language and teach the younger generations to retain the language. This shows the level of language endangerment when the later generations do not want to speak or forget the language. This is the status of the Malda variety of Khortha in current situation. The only way to survive the language can be done if there is any scope of primary education in their mother tongue and taking measures through language policy and planning in India. Language documentation and archiving by preparing dictionaries will also help to take a step towards preservation of the language.[28]

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8. Author's Biographic Note:

My name is Rusa Bhowmik (pronouns: she/her), and I would like to acknowledge the people and organisations involved in the development of this paper. My gratitude extends to all the people of the Bhajjana village of Harischandrapur for their support and co-operation. I am thankful to my supervisor Dr. Atanu Saha for his guidance in the completion of the M.Phil dissertation titled 'A Comparative Study of Khortha and Bangla with a Focus on the Noun Morphology' at Jadavpur University. The data in this paper had also been exhibited in the conference presentations of ELKL 7 (Jadavpur University, Kolkata, February 22-23, 2019), ILFIEL 2019 (NEHU, Shillong, October 25-26, 2019), and ICOIL 2 (Indian Institute of Technology Madras, February 13-14, 2020).