

Field Survey Report

Introduction:-

Mahali is one of the Munda languages of India belonging to the Austro-Asiatic family. It is spoken by Mahalis, an indigenous tribal group. Mahalis are the tribals or adivasi people inhabiting in the Indian states of Jharkhand, Assam, Bihar and Odisha and West Bengal. In West Bengal Mahalis are concentrated in Birbhum, Maldah and Nadia districts. This field survey report focuses on the Mahali language spoken in Birbhum districts of Bhagabotipur, Narayanpur and Angargoria villages. The name Mahali stands for the name of the indigenous tribal group 'Mahali'. There are two varieties in Mahali language. One being Deshuo Mahale and other being Mahale. It is controversial which is the standardized variety among them. Some Mahali speakers use the variety Deshuo Mahale and some others use the variety Mahale. Mahali and Mahale both are the same language.

Genetic Classification of Mahali:-

Austro-Asiatic is one of the four major language families found in South East Asia. The Austro-Asiatic language family includes 169 languages (Lewis, Simons & Fennig, 2014). These languages are sub-divided into two main branches: Mon-Khmer with 147 languages and Munda with 22 languages. Diffloth (1974) represents the bipartite classification of Munda language. **Figure 1.** below represents the bipartite classification of Munda languages by Diffloth

North Munda

- Korku
- Kherwarian
- Kherwari branch: Bijori, Koraku
- Mundari branch: Mundari, Bhumij, Asuri, Koda, Ho, Birhor, Kol
- Santali branch: Santali, Mahali, Turi

South Munda

- Kharia–Juang: Kharia, Juang
- Koraput Munda

- Remo branch: Gata (Gta), Bondo (Remo), BodoGadaba (Gutob)
- Savara branch [Sora–Juray- Gorum] : Parengi (Gorum), Sora (Savara), Juray, Lodhi

Figure. 1 The bipartite classification of Munda languages by Diffloth (1974)

Brief introduction on three villages:

We, surveyors visited the three villages Bhagabatipur, Narayanpur and Angargoria in Birbhum district to collect data on Mahali language.

There is a small locality called 'Mahulipara' in Bhagabatipur village especially inhabited by Mahali tribes. This village is located under the post office Ahmedpur. There are approximately 10-12 Mahali families found in Bhagabatipur village. In case of Narayanpur which is located under 'Parui' gram panchayet, the number of mahali families are approximately 40-50 whereas in Angargoria which is located under post office, the number of Mahali families are approximately 35.

Based on the collection of data, it has been found that Mahali is widely used in home domain but never in formal domains. This means Whenever Mahali young people at home they always prefer to speak in Mahali rather than Bengali. Females (mid aged group) always speak in Mahali while chatting among themselves. Mahali children are also using Mahali language while they are in playground with their friends but in school they are switching to Bangla which is the dominant language of the district. There is no Mahali school in the village so children are not getting any opportunities to learn in Mahali that is their native language. Though it is said that mother tongue is the best medium for learning but in that case Mahali children are lagging behind. Both the younger and older generation people are switching to either in Santhali or Bengali depending on who the speakers are they are talking to. If the Mahali speakers are with Santhali they easily switch to Santhali and if they are with bengali speakers they easily switch to Bengali language. In this multilingual circumstance, there is a high probability of losing Mahali language in near future. Some factors can be considered-a) there is no script in bengali, b) there is no grammar book, dictionary in Mahali language.c)There is no Mahali school in the village.

Each and every language has own culture. Mahali people have their own culture that is specific to their community. They worship natural elements. Ancestral worship is also prevalent among the Mahali people. These people celebrate [**gramdoti**] puja which is held according to the Bangla month "**Magh**". During puja a goat is sacrificed to please the deity [**sonnansi**].All the people of the village keep fasting on that auspicious day. Nothing is cooked in the whole village.

This puja is performed for the well-being of the villagers. After having puja, chicken [sim jel] is distributed among the villagers..

Grammatical Findings:-

Phonological data analysis

Minimal pair:- Minimal pairs are pairs of words in a particular language that differ only in one phonological element and having distinctive meaning. They are always found in contrastive distribution.

Following Minimal pairs have been found in Mahali

alveolar lateral /l/ vs alveolar trill /r/

/luʃi/ 'lips' vs /ruʃi/ 'bread' /til/ 'mole' vs /tir/ 'arrow'

Voiceless alveolar plosive /t/ vs voiced alveolar plosive /d/

/taru/ 'palate' vs /dare/ 'tree'

Voiceless velar plosive /k/ vs voiced velar plosive /g/

/karha/ 'buffalo' vs /garha/ 'river'

alveolar fricative /s/ vs glottal fricative /h/

/sɔpo/ 'muscle' vs /hɔʃo/ 'throat' [near minimal pair]

voiceless plosive /p/ vs voiced plosive /b/

/pan/ 'betel nut' vs /ban/ 'flood'

voiced un aspirated velar plosive /g/ vs voiced aspirated velar plosive /g^h/

/gunti/ 'elbow' vs /g^huʃi/ 'knee'

Voiced bilabial nasal /m/ vs voiced velar nasal /n/

/dʒɔm/ 'to eat' vs /dʒɔn/ 'to fall'

close back rounded vowel /u/ vs close front rounded vowel /i/

/sukri/ 'pig' vs /sikri/ 'mosquito'

close front rounded vowel /i/ vs close-mid back rounded vowel /o/

/hili/ 'wife' vs /holi/ 'a festival'

There is diphthong in Mahali. They are

/ia/ - /tuigia/ 'peak of mountain'

/iɔ/ - /liɔr/ 'dew'

/ai/ - /mai/ 'mother'

/au/- /caule/ 'uncooked rice'

/oi/- /rəŋgoi/ 'cremation'

/ou/- /poure/ 'alcohol'

/oa/- /toa/ 'milk'

/ao/- /jaora/ 'wrinkle'

Both the consonant cluster and sequence are present in Mahali. Consonant cluster is always found in disyllabic words. They are never found in monosyllabic words. Example of consonant clusters are

-ŋj /paŋja/ 'ribs'

-nd /indra/ 'well'

Consonant sequence is also found in Mahali. They are

Homorganic consonant sequence (Both the sounds present in sequence belong to same place of articulation) Example:- **dr** /indra/ 'well'

Heterorganic consonant sequence (Both the sounds present in sequence either belong to different manner or place of articulation)

Example:- **nj** /paŋja/ 'ribs'

Geminates

/ɖɖ/ - /ghudɖi/ 'kite'

/cc/- /ɔccɔkkɔde/- 'divorce female' (one type of slang)

/kk/- /ɔccɔkkɔde/- 'divorce female' (one type of slang)

/jj/- /lojjaboti/ 'touch me not' (one type of plant)

Distinctive feature of consonantal sounds

	stops p b t d c ɟ k g	affricates tʃ dʒ	fricatives s ʃ z	retroflex ɻ	nasals m n ŋ	liquids l r	glides j w ʔ h
syllabic	-----	- -	- - -	-	- - -	- -	- - - -
cons	+++++++	+ +	+ + +	+	+ + +	++	- - - -
sonorant	- - - - - - - -	- -	- - -	-	- - -	+ +	+ + - -
anterior	++++-----	- -	+ + -	-	+ + -	+ +	-----
coronal	- - + + + + - -	+ +	+ + +	+	- + -	+ +	+ - - -

back	----- + + +	- -	- - -	-	- - +	- -	- + - -
high	----- + + + +	+ +	- - +	-	- - +	- -	+ + - -
low	-----	- -	- - -	-	- - -	- -	-----
nasal	-----	- -	- - -	-	+ + +	- -	-----
voice	- + - + - + - +	- +	- - +	+	+ + +	+ +	+ + - -
cont	-----	- -	+ + +	-	- - -	+ +	+ + - +
round	-----	- -	- - -	-	- - -	- -	- + - -
strident	-----	+ +	+ + +	-	- - -	- -	-----
lateral	-----	- -	- - -	-	- - -	+ -	-----
del. rel.	-----	+ +			- - -		-

Distinctive feature of vowel sounds

	i	e	ɛ	u	o	ɔ	æ	a	ə
high	+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
low	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	+	-
back	-	-	-	+	+	+	-	(+)	
round	-	-	-	+	+	+	-	-	-
ATR	+	+	-	+	+	-	-	-	+

Morphological and morpho-syntactical data analysis:-

Reduplication is found in Mahali. They are as followed

/keʔe ~ keʔe/ 'firmly'

/kale ~ kale/ 'slowly'

/giri ~ giri/ 'waste'

/henat ~ henat/ 'sequentially'

/mar ~ mar/ 'loudly'

Partial reduplication is also found in Mahali. Example- /daʔ ~ daʔte/ 'heavy rain'

Inflection:- Inflection is grammatically conditioned or expresses grammatical categories. It does not change the word class or meaning of the root. Some inflections found in Mahali are

uni - 'He/she' ul- 'mangoe' iŋ- 'I' dʒom-iŋ 'I eat'

un-ku - They ul-ku 'mangoes' iŋ-a- 'my' dʒom-l-iŋ 'you ate'

Derivation:- Derivation is the process of constructing new words by adding affixes to existing words. It can change the word class or meaning of the root. Some derivations found in Mahali are

dʒoʔ 'to sweep' (verb) dʒoʔ-deʔe 'sweeper' (noun)

edreʔ 'angry (adjective) edreʔe 'angrily' (adverb)

eneg 'to dance' (verb) eneʔe 'dancer' (noun)

gate 'to play' (verb) gateʔ 'player' (noun)

Compounding:- It is a type of word formation process where two free forms generally put together and give rise to a new word. Some of the example found in Mahali are

/baske/ 'a basket' + /daka/ 'rice=baske daka " a food item where previous night's rice soaked in basket with water

/daŋra/ 'cow' + /həpon/ 'kid' = daŋra həpon 'calf'

Cardinals:-A number system that denotes (one, two, three, four etc) as opposed to the ordinal numbers(first, second, third, fourth). Some examples of cardinals found in Mahali are

miʔ- 'one'

bar- 'two'

peʔ- 'three'

ponia- 'four'

moreʔ- 'five'

miʔs- 'hundred'

miʔ hazar- 'thousand'

No ordinal system has been found in Mahali.

Adjectives- In Mahali adjective follows the noun.

Example- ulku herom 'sweet mangoes'

marəŋ darhi 'long beard'

Verbs:-A grammatical category that denotes an action. Examples of verb found in Mahali are

dʒom 'to eat'

gate 'to play'

lel 'to see'

əʔoŋ 'to fly'

rika 'to do'

goi 'to kill'

parho 'to read'

cabaka 'to finish'

hejo? 'to come'

seno? 'to go'

Adverbs:-A word that modifies an verb expressing a relation of manner, degree, frequency, place, time. Some of the adverbs found in Mahali are

adverbs of time

ʃihij - 'today'

hɔla- 'yesterday'

gapa- 'tomorrow'

adverbs of place

enɔ- 'here'

onɔ- 'there'

hene?- 'near'

adverbs of manner

kale kale- 'slowly'

mar mar- 'loudly'

adverbs of degree

jaʃne- 'enough'

ɔhergi- 'almost'

goʃaqi- 'fully'

adverbs of frequency

sanum g^hari- 'always'

g^hane g^hane- 'often'

aka g^hari- 'sometimes'

Adverbials:- Some of the examples of adverbials found in Mahali are

baba gidraʃe khatir khæla baʃi ' kirinle

father son ADV toys buy.PST

'father bought a toy for his son'

ram iŋaʒe' orare mɔre bɔhor kaʒe meneʔ

ram house-DET five years ADV stay

'Ram stays in this house since last 5 years'

Syntactic data analysis

Agreement:- Person and number agreement are present in Mahali. There is no gender agreement

iŋ bɔl gate-iŋ
1SG football play-1SG.AGR
'I play football'

ale bɔl gate-ale
IPL football play-1PL.AGR
'We play football'

am bɔl gateʔ-am
2SG football play-2SG.AGR
'you play football'

ape bɔl gateʔ-ape
2PL football play-2PL.AGR
'You play football'

uni bɔl gateʔ-e
3SG football play-3SG.AGR
'He plays football'

uŋku bɔl gate-aku
3PL football play-3PL.AGR

There is no singular number agreement but plural number agreement is denoted by -a. For example

ale bɔl gate-a-le
IPL football play-1PL.AGR
'We play football'
ape bɔl gateʔ-a-pe

2PL football play-2PL.AGR
uŋku bəl gate-a-ku
3PL football play-3PL.AGR

Case marker

Nominative case marker- \emptyset accusative case marker- ke

ram- \emptyset mira-ke dulɛɾ-ie
ram-NOM mira-ACC love-3SG.AGR
'Ram loves Mira'

Dative case marker-te

uni bolpur-te taʔ-e
3SG Bolpur-DAT go-3SG.AGR
"He goes to Bolpur'

Ablative case marker-koi

uni kolkata- koi bolpur-te hijuʔ-kene
3SG kolkata-ABL Bolpur-DAT come-3SG.AGR
"He comes to Bolpur from kolkata"

Instrumental case marker-te

iŋ dare. ta teŋgoil-te maʔ-kid-iŋ
1SG tree- DET axe- INST cut-1SG.AGR
" I cut the tree with an axe"

Locative case marker-re

uŋku bolpur.re tæhen-a-ku
3PL bolpur-LOC live-3PL.AGR
"They live in Bolpur"

Genitive case marker-aʔ

ram-aʔ oʃa latu-gia

ram-Gen house big-COP

Ram's house is big

Tense

Two types of tense markers are found in Mahali-past and non-past marker

The past marker found in Mahali is 1+V (any vowel)

iŋ bəl gate-iŋ

1SG football play-1SG.PRS

I play football

iŋ bəl gate-lin- iŋ

1SG football play-PST.ISG.AGR

I played football

am bəl gate- am

2SG football play-2SG.PRS

You play football

am bəl gate- le-nam

2SG football play-PST-2SG.AGR

You played football

unku bəl gate- aku

3PL football play-3PL.PRS

They play football

unku bəl gate- le-ana-ku

3PL football play-PST-3PL.AGR

The word order found in Mahali are SOV

Ram saw a tiger /ram miʔte'one' baq^h'tiger' lel lede?'saw'

3SG

OBJ

verb

Negative

In Mahali negative marker is baṅ which is followed by the object.

iṅ bəl baṅ gate- iṅ

1SG football NEG play-1SG.AGR

Double negative is also present in Mahali.Example

baṅ heḷoḷe raka baṅ rita heḷoḷe

NEG come raka NEG rita come

Neither Raka will come nor Rita will come

WH Question

ama ora akare?

POSS house Q

where is your house?

uniren bhaḷite? okoi?

POSS brother Q?

'who is her brother?'

ram sitani ce emlede?

ram sita Q give

what did Ram give to Sita?

Sima tinkha heḷue?

sima Q come?

When will Sita come?

am edre keḷe hanamia? ce khatir?

why are you so angry?

