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## The Home Domain – A Safe Haven for a Mother Tongue

(A Case Study of the Nandurbar Tribals)

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### Abstract

This paper studies the multilingual setting of the resettled villages of the Internally Displaced Populations of the Narmada Valley and tries to learn how the home domain serves as the safest zone for a mother tongue in the multilingual environment. The field work of the resettled villages explores that even the bilinguals and multilinguals speak only their mother tongue with their family members. The paper further attempts to study the phenomena of Language Maintenance and Shift through the contrastive study of the language use in the Home Domain and some of the Public Domains. The paper also provides the sociolinguistic profile of the two tribal communities (Bhil and Pawra) of the resettled villages. These resettled villages are in Taloda taluka of Nandurbar district of Maharashtra state of India. This research site is at the border areas of three Indian states - Maharashtra, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh (MP).

**Keywords:** Mother Tongue, Home Domain, FLP, Resettlement, Narmada Valley.

### 1. Introduction

A child accrues his mother tongue (L1) along with other socio-cultural basics and values naturally from his home with his family members. His abode serves as the safest precinct for all the socio-cultural essentials which give the identification to his family. These socio-cultural rudiments are the part of an individual's psychology, conduct and practice. Such practices bring commonness and harmony among the members of a family at socio-cultural and psychological levels. Along with the other socio-cultural and psychological basics, the mother tongue promotes intimacy and affection among the members of a family. The use of the same language /

dialect by all the family members for the language practice in the home domain promotes love, reliability and togetherness among the members of a family. The mother tongue proves the source of intimacy, emotion and attachment among the members of a family. The field work experience of the resettled villages of the Nandurbar District shows that even the bilingual and multilingual speakers use their mother tongue for communication with their family members. The mother tongue of an individual can generally be spoken by all the members of the individual's family of all the age groups, educational levels and both the sexes, as the acquisition of L1 takes place naturally without any formal training. But the L2 and L3 can be spoken only by the educated members of a family or by those members of a family having frequent contact with the speakers of the other language(s) outside the home / family.

A resettled population receives the socio-cultural and linguistic assets from its original place as well as from the resettled area and thus always capable to provide rich data for such kind of socio-psycholinguistic exploration. The paper studies the multilingual environment of the resettled villages of the Internally Displaced Populations in the Narmada valley and tries to explore how the home domain serves as the home (the safest haven) for a mother tongue even in the rich multilingual setting. The researcher makes a comparative analysis between the language choice and use by the speakers of the resettled villages in the home domain and the language choice and use in some of the public domains to study the phenomena of Language Maintenance and Shift. This study is one of the socio-psycholinguistic investigations of the displaced tribals who were displaced from Satpura mountain range to different talukas of Nandurbar district, Maharashtra (India).

The majority population of the Nandurbar district is of the Bhil and Pawra communities. The tribal populace can be broadly divided into two parts on the basis of their demographical structure in the resettled villages: Majority Group and Minority Group. The Pawras speak Pawri language, the Bhils speak Bhili language (or its dialects), the Bhois speak Ahirani and the Tapti-Adivasis speak Tapti-Adivasi in their homes. Thus, the four communities (Pawra, Bhil, Bhoi and Tapti-Adivasi / Blacksmiths) represent the four different languages (Bhili, Pawri, Ahirani and Tapti-Adivasi) which are spoken in their homes. This district is on the border areas of three Indian states - Maharashtra, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh. It has association with one of the famous movements of India the '*Narmada Bachao Andolan*' led by Medha Patkar along with the other Indian social activists. The resettled villages are in Taloda, Shahada and Akkalkuwa talukas (*tahsils*) of Nandurbar district of Maharashtra state of India. Each resettled village has a 'Resettlement Number'. Out of the ten resettled villages, six villages are in Taloda, three villages are in Shahada and one in Akkalkuwa taluka of Nandurbar district.

## **2. The Research Methodology:**

The data collection for the study was done largely through the interaction with the villagers and was analyzed using quantitative methods. However the researcher also tried to note the difference between the reported language use and the actual language use. The responses of the questionnaire for the languages spoken by the respondents of the two villages in these domains were labeled as the 'reported language use'. The 'actual language use' in this domain was revealed by casual observation. 'The attitudes of the speakers' towards the languages (reported

languages and actual language use) were also analyzed. No significant difference was observed between the two in the home domain.

The informants were interviewed for the data collection from the following sites: 1) The two resettled villages: (a) Narmadanagar village and (b) Rewanagar village, 2) Senior College, Taloda (Nandurbar) - where students of Pawra and Bhil communities study and 3) Adiwasi Hostel, Taloda (Nandurbar) - where students of both the communities stay. Narmadanagar village and Rewanagar village (the two resettled villages) were selected for data collection keeping in mind one village from the Pawras dominated villages (Rewanagar village) and one from the Bhils dominated villages (Narmadanagar village). The data from uneducated / illiterate respondents were mostly collected from the villages whereas the data from educated respondents were collected from the Senior College, Taloda (Nandurbar) and the Adiwasi Hostel, Taloda (Nandurbar).

The objective based, well designed sociolinguistic questionnaire was prepared to obtain the information regarding the use of language in the home domain and in some specific public domains. The total number of informants interviewed for the data collection was 82 of three age groups: 15 to 25, 26 to 44 and 45 and above. The language use in the home domain was examined in the following situation types: interaction with family members of the same, older and younger generations. The language use in the public domains was noted for the following situation types: interaction with neighbours, with shop-keepers in the marketplace, with government officials, social activists.

### **3. The Review of Literature:**

Dyres (2008) has taken a unique sociolinguistic case for his research work where the respondent belongs to a highly multilingual family. The mother tongue of the respondent's father is Xhosa and the mother tongue of the respondent's mother is Afrikaans. The youngest child of the respondent's family is motivated by all the family members to talk in English though she is acquiring Xhosa too from her cousin. The study finds that the mother tongue of each member of this multilingual family is strongly maintained and safe in the home domain. The verbal repertoire of the younger members of the family is richer in comparison to the older generation. Dyres (2008) says "the young who meet in the spaces like school, classroom, playground, the streets and each others' homes, appear to have adapted to their new multilingual and multicultural environment with relative ease". Despite the high multilingual environment in the family, the shift towards the dominant language (English) is not observed in the home domain.

According to Berardi-Wiltshire (2017), the Family Language Policy (FLP) of a family determines the language(s) to be used by the members of a particular family in the home domain which further builds the overall linguistic environment of a family and this specific environment finally determines the mother tongue of the children of the family. Hence, there is a close association between the Family Language Policy (FLP) of a family, the mother tongue of the children of the family and the future status (maintenance / death) of a minority language. The family serves as a critical domain for the intergenerational spread and survival of a minority language. King et al (2008) have tried to associate the domestic language planning with the child language acquisition and have also stressed the role of language ideology in the family language practice. The study focuses on the different policies that govern the overall linguistic

environment of a family. They have also pointed out the importance of the domestic language planning, its strong impact on the early cognitive and academic development of a child and finally the future status of a language especially the minority language.

Kumar et al. (2015) have classified language use in the various domains on the basis of the two kinds of motivations (Emotional Motivation and Instrumental Motivation) that remain in the mind of a language user. The emotional and intimate touch of a mother tongue prevents shift in this particular domain. The dearth of the instrumental goals in the home domain does not allow the other languages to enter in this domain.

#### 4. Presentation of the Data:

The impact of resettlement on the language use in the home domain in the three Age Groups:

- a) Age Group - 1 : 15 years to 25 years
- b) Age Group - 2 : 26 years to 44 years
- c) Age Group - 3 : 45 years and above

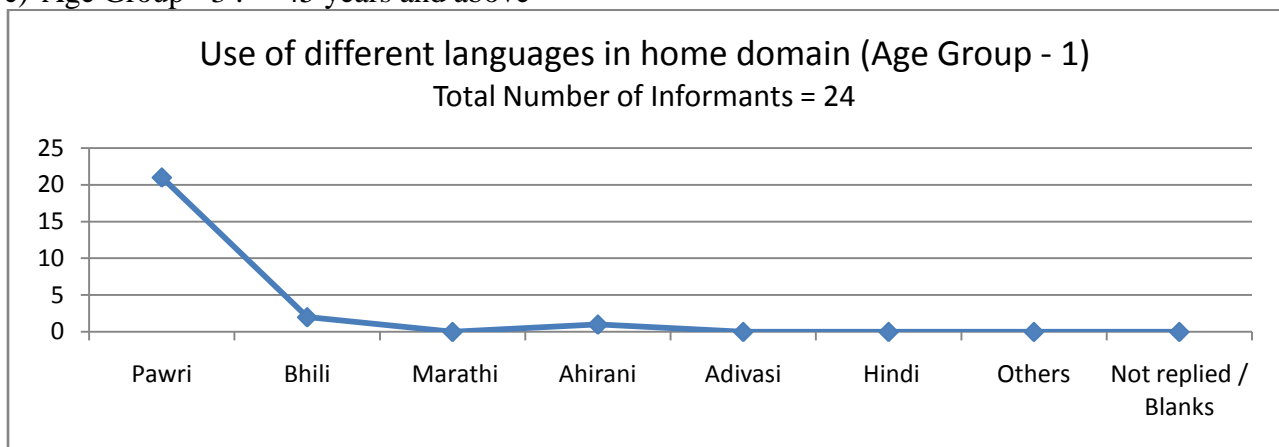


Chart 1 (Rewanagar Village)

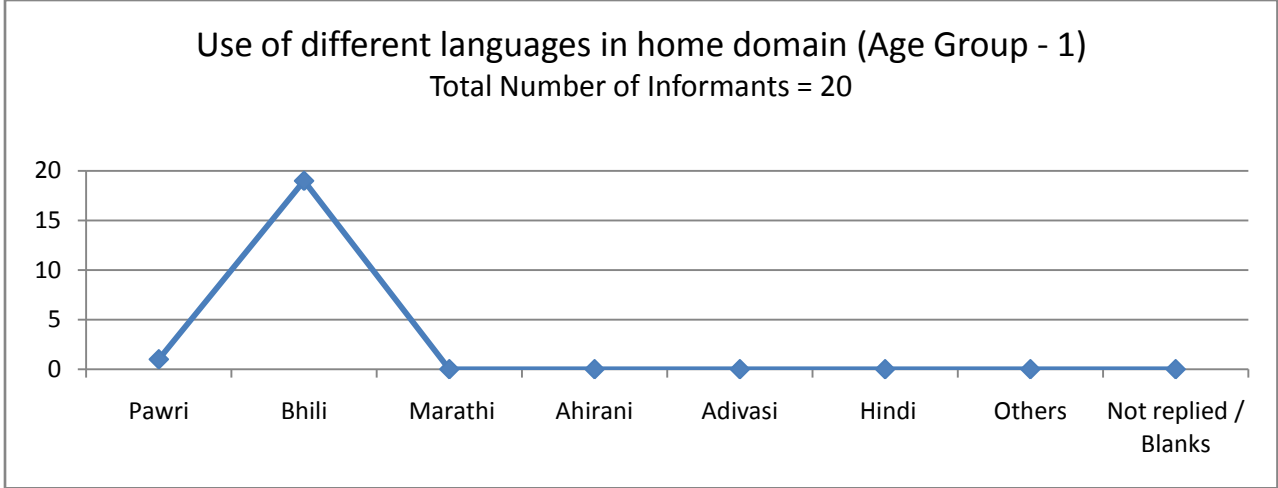


Chart 1A (Narmadanagar Village)

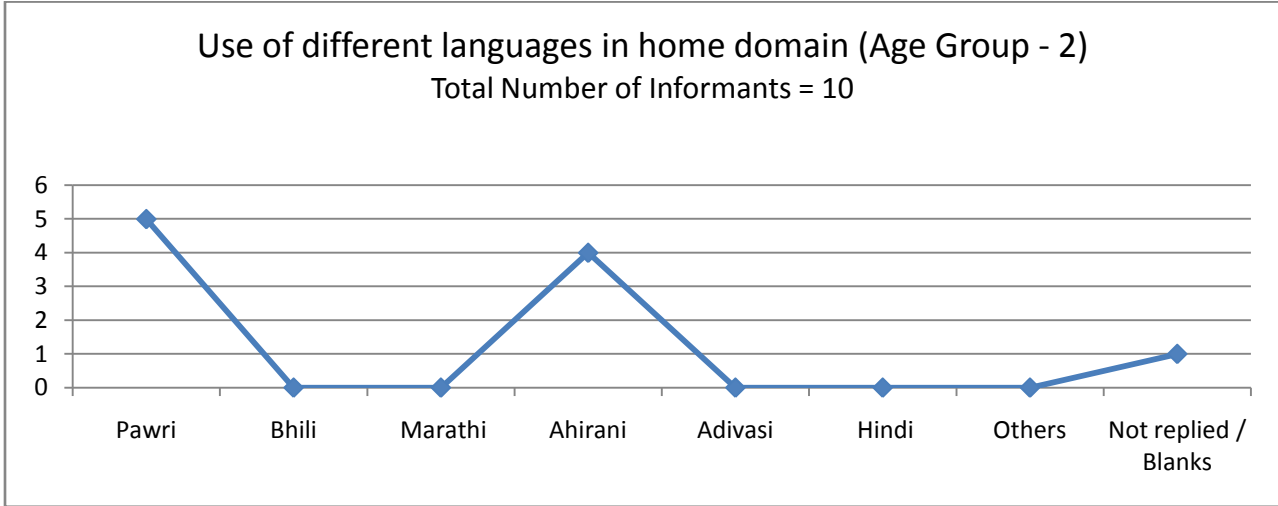


Chart 2 (Rewanagar Village)

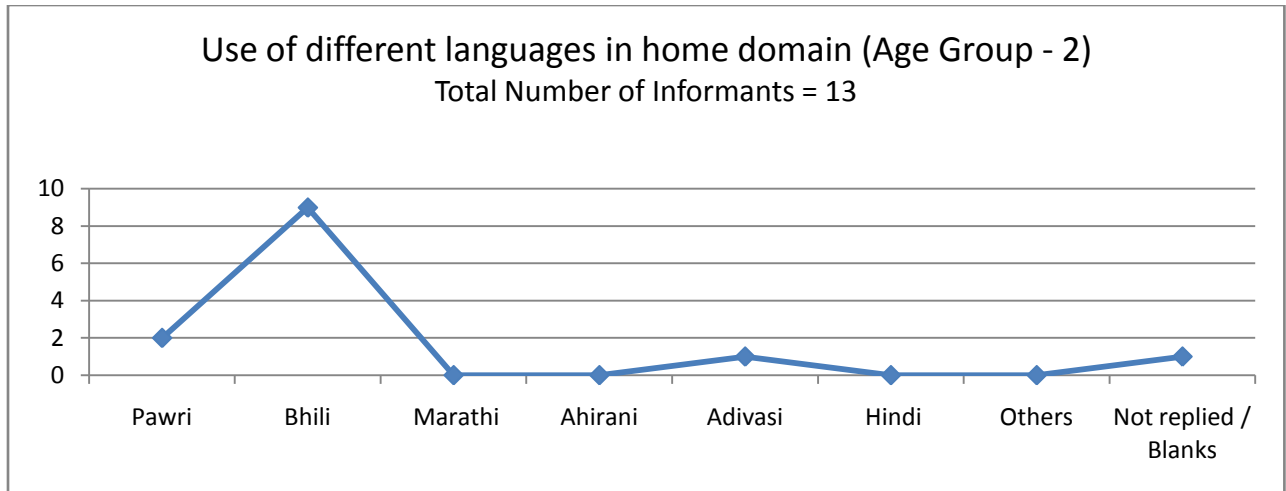


Chart 2A (Narmadanagar Village)

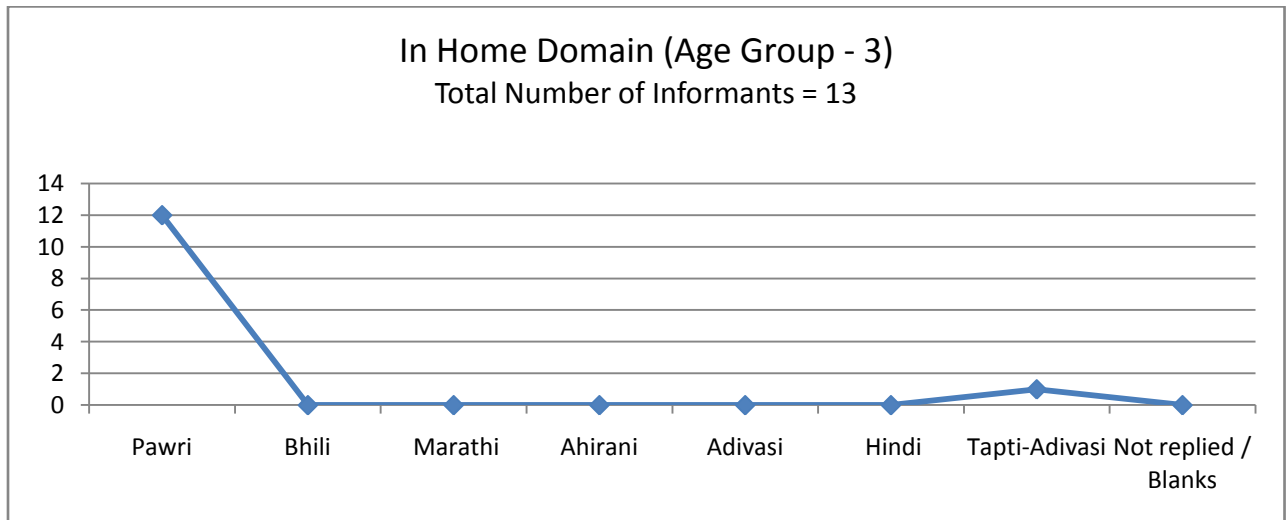


Chart 3 (Rewanagar Village)

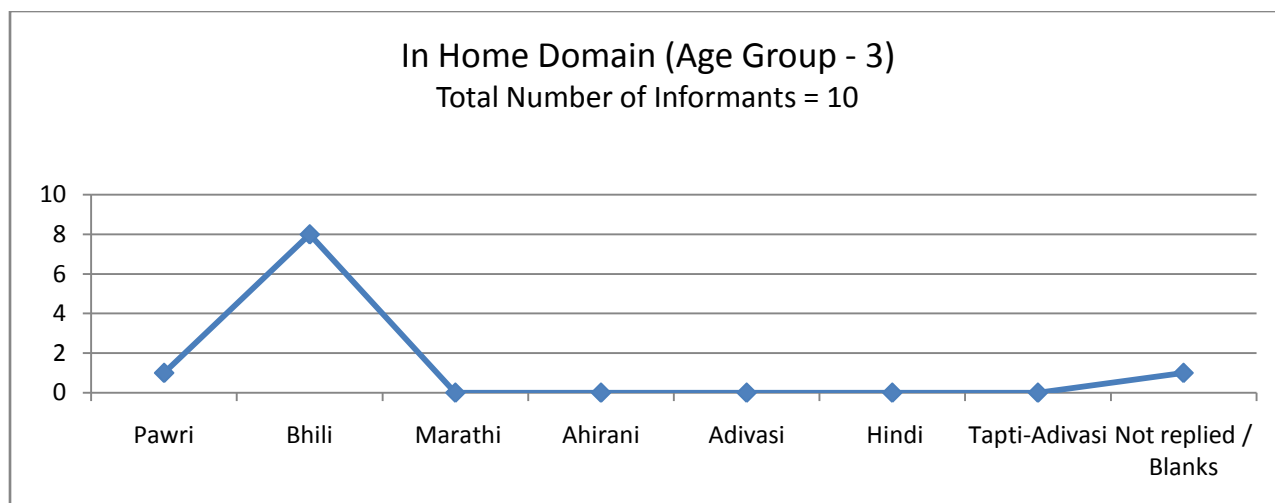


Chart 3A (Narmadanagar Village)

Out of the 44 informants of Age Group - 1 (15 years to 25 years) among whom 24 informants are from Rewanagar and 20 from Narmadanagar village, 22 (50%) informants (21 from Rewanagar and one from Narmadanagar village) speak Pawri in their homes (as their mother tongue) whereas 21 (48%) informants (2 from Rewanagar and 19 from Narmadanagar village) speak Bhili. One (2%) informant (from Rewanagar village) speaks Ahirani. (Chart 1 and 1A)

Out of the 23 informants of Age Group - 2 (26 years to 44 years) among whom 10 are from Rewanagar and 13 from Narmadanagar village, 7 (30%) informants (5 from Rewanagar and 2 from Narmadanagar village) speak Pawri in their homes (as their mother tongue) whereas 9 (39%) informants (all from Narmadanagar village) speak Bhili. 4 (17%) informants (all from Rewanagar village) speak Ahirani and one (4%) informant (from Narmadanagar village) speaks Adivasi. 2 (9%) informants (from Narmadanagar village) did not reply. (Chart 2 and 2A)

Out of the 23 informants of Age Group - 3 (45 years and above) among whom 13 are from Rewanagar and 10 from Narmadanagar village, 13 (57%) informants (12 from Rewanagar and 1 from Narmadanagar village) speak Pawri in their homes (as their mother tongue) whereas 8 (35%) informants (all from Narmadanagar village) speak Bhili. One (4%) informant (from Rewanagar village) speaks Tapti-Adivasi and one (4%) informant (from Narmadanagar village) did not reply. (Chart 3 and 3A)

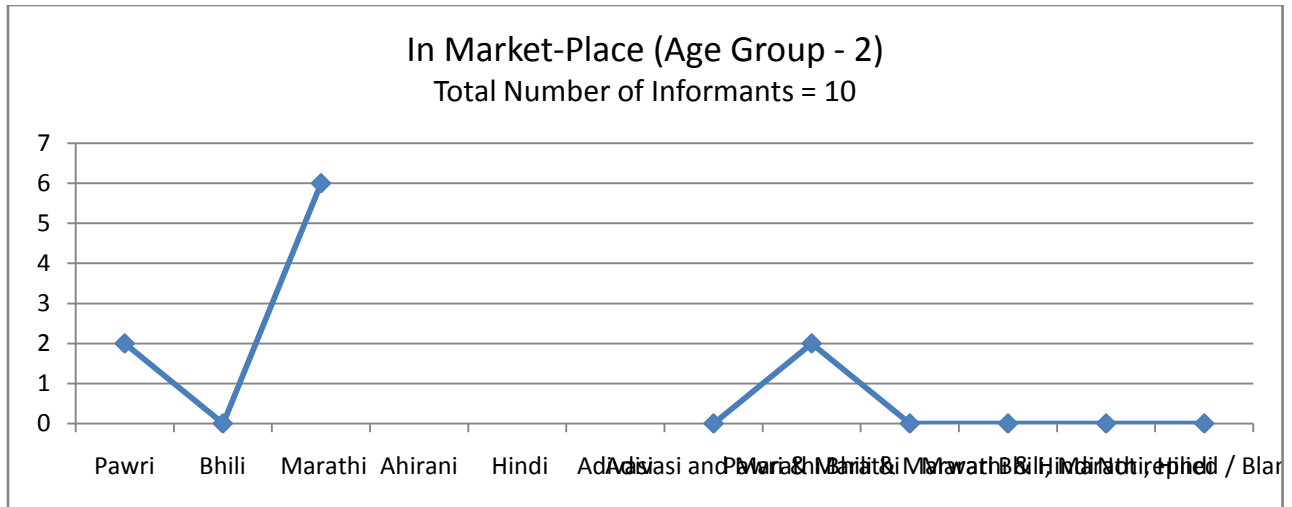


Chart 4 (Rewanagar Village)

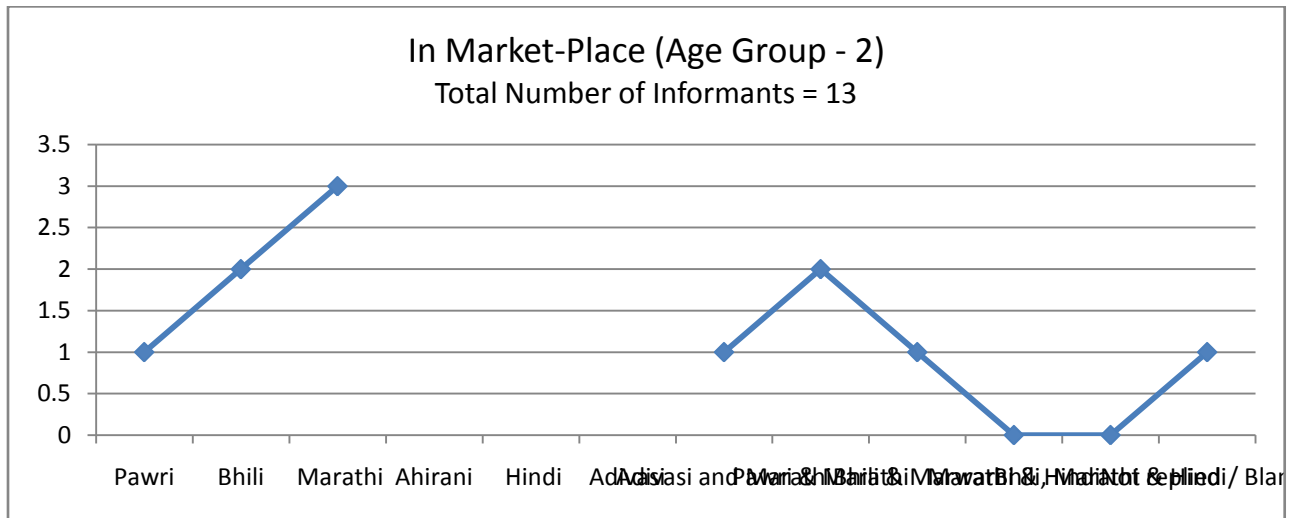


Chart 4A (Narmadanagar Village)

Out of 23 informants of Age Group - 2 (26 years to 44 years) among whom 10 are from Rewanagar and 13 from Narmadanagar village, 3 informants (13%) speak Pawri whereas 2 (9%) speak Bhili in the market-place. 9 informants (39%) speak Marathi, one informant (4%) speaks Adivasi and Marathi, 4 informants (17%) speak Pawri and Marathi, one informant (4%) speaks Bhili and Marwari and 2 informants (9%) speak Bhili, Marathi and Hindi. One informant (4%) did not reply. (Chart 4 and 4A)

## 5. The Interpretation of the Data and the Conclusion:



S. No.	The Communities of the Speakers	Languages Spoken in the Home Domain
1	Bhil	Bhili or its dialects
2	Pawra	Pawri
3	Bhoi	Ahirani
4	Tapti-Adivasi (Blacksmith)	Tapti-Adivasi

Table 1: The Communities of the Speakers and the Language(s) Spoken in the Home Domain [Source: Kumar (2016)]

The charts 1 to 10A strongly demonstrate that the use of language(s) in the home domain is reliant upon the community (Bhili / Pawri) to which an informant belongs to and not with the other sociological or biological levels. As already said, mother tongue has association with an individual's individuality, intimacy, family-relations, religion, caste and even values which a child acquires naturally in the early years of his / her life. These features of a mother tongue have been examined in Narmadanagar and Rewanagar village too where almost all the informants (100%) claim to use Bhili and Pawri respectively (their L1) in their homes. The qualitative study of this area suggests that this is true with the informants of both the sexes, all age groups and among both the communities. It is also true with all family relations like grand-parents, father / father-in-law, mother / mother-in-law, children and siblings (Charts 1 to 10A).

Language(s) used in Home Domain  $\rightleftharpoons$  The Community an Informant Belongs

Kumar (2016) says that the home domain has been called family domain, low domain, informal domain, intimate domain, fundamental domain etc. by the different linguists. The review of related literatures claims that this domain is 'the safest zone' for a mother tongue. It is the home domain that gives sustenance and liveliness to a mother tongue and saves it from slipping into loss. Duan says, "When a language has '*lost the battle*' in other domains, the family domain often remains '*the last stand*'. Keep this domain, and the language lives. Lose it, and the language dies." (2004: 66) Hence, the home domain can also be called the '*home*' of a mother tongue!

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