Research Square

Preprints are preliminary reports that have not undergone peer review.
They should not be considered conclusive, used to inform clinical practice,
or referenced by the media as validated information.

Assessing the Language Status of Khowar through the UNESCO Project of Language Vitality and Endangerment

Khalid Ahmed

khalid.ahmed@newinti.edu.my

INTI International University

Muhammad Nadeem Chohan

Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University

Urooj Rehan

University of Central Punjab

Ruqia Saba Ashraf

The Women University

Ahmed Basyoni

INTI International University

Cai Xiaoshu

INTI International University

Gao Jingyi

INTI International University

Research Article

Keywords: Khowar, cultural heritage, language vitality, intergenerational language transmission, language domains, language status

Posted Date: September 9th, 2026

DOI: https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.3.rs-10552727/v1

License: This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.
Read Full License

Additional Declarations:
No competing interests reported.

Table 3.5, 3.6, 3.7 are not available with this version

Assessing the Language Status of Khowar through the UNESCO Project of Language Vitality and Endangerment

Khalid Ahmed[1], Muhammad Nadeem Chohan[2], Urooj Rehan[3], Ruqia Saba Ashraf[4], Ahmed Basyoni[5], Cai Xiaoshu[6], Gao Jingyi[7]

[1]Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Education and Liberal Arts, INTI International University, Nilai, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia; khalid.ahmed@newinti.edu.my

[2]Assistant Professor of English, Department of English Language and Literature, Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University, Al-Kharj, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. m.chohan@psau.edu.sa

[3]Department of English, The Women University, Multan, Pakistan; rsadgk@gmail.com

[4]Department of English, University of Central Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan. uroojrehan786786@gmail.com

[5]Lecturer, Kimyo International University in Tashkent, Tashkent, Uzbekistan. a.abdulaziz@kiut.uz
PhD Scholar, INTI International University, Nilai, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia. i25033376@student.newinti.edu.my

[6,7]PhD Scholar, Faculty of Education and Liberal Arts, INTI International University, Nilai, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia; i25033443@student.newinti.edu.my, i26039860@student.newinti.edu.my

Corresponding author: Khalid Ahmed (khalid.ahmed@newinti.edu.my)

Abstract

This research assesses the endangerment status of Khowar, an indigenous language and vital part of the cultural heritage of Chitral, by evaluating the first four factors of UNESCO's Language Vitality and Endangerment (LVE) framework. Confined to a small and vulnerable community, Khowar is at risk of entering the endangerment zone, threatening both linguistic diversity and intangible cultural heritage. This research assesses the degree of endangerment of Khowar by exploring the pattern of Intergenerational Language Transmission (IGT) and the degree of endangerment through the factors of several speakers and domains of its language use. Sequential Mixed-Method Research Design was employed by

the instruments of survey questionnaires and focus group discussions. The questionnaires were distributed with the help of research assistants in Chitral while the research assistant team conducted the qualitative data support. Despite possessing an unbroken flow of language transmission, the Khowar language falls on the endangerment scale, particularly through its language domains. The language use of Urdu, English, and Pashto in education and legislation makes the role of Khowar more vulnerable in terms of language preference.

Keywords: Khowar; cultural heritage; language vitality; intergenerational language transmission; language domains; language status.

1. Introduction

Global linguistic diversity is facing severe threats from dominant national and global languages, with numerous regional minority languages gradually losing vitality and moving toward extinction [1][4]. Languages spoken across northern Pakistan's mountainous regions are among the most vulnerable linguistic varieties worldwide; Dardic tongues including Yidgha and Kalasha have been classified as critically endangered under 21st-century sociolinguistic surveys [9]. As early as 2004, field research conducted in Chitral confirmed that lexical erosion and loss of oral folk traditions are the primary early indicators of language decline, a crisis clearly manifested in Khowar, an Indo-Aryan Dardic indigenous language of northern Pakistan. Also known as Chitrali, Patu, Qashqari and Arniya, Khowar lacks a standardized native writing system and printed literary corpus, further accelerating its risk of attrition [8]. This study evaluates the endangerment level of Khowar by adopting the UNESCO 2003 Language Vitality and Endangerment (LVE) Nine-Factor Model [30].

Evaluating Khowar's linguistic vitality allows systematic comparison of its usage scope across different social contexts via four core UNESCO LVE indicators: intergenerational language transmission, absolute speaker population, the proportional share of Khowar speakers within the regional total population, and dynamic shifts in language use across functional domains. This paper first positions Khowar on UNESCO's official endangerment scale and compares its current vitality rating with historical classifications. The core research objectives are to predict the medium-term survival prospects of Khowar and propose targeted community and policy interventions to sustain this indigenous language.

1.1. Language Entering the Endangered Zone

A language is called endangered when it starts existing in limited areas of language use. UNESCO seconds this notion as it marks the choice of not passing the native language to the next generation and decreasing usage of its registers [32]. Since the 1990s, there has been an unstoppable growth in those organizations which are working for endangered languages. Resultantly, there is a rise in significant scholarly contributions to explain the dynamics of language endangerment [10][11][12][21]. Language endangerment was studied extra-linguistic matter at macro and micro levels [4][11][28].

1.2. The 'Kho' People

Khowar speakers were originally found in the Northwestern part of Chitral, Garam Chishma of Lotkuh valley, and north. It was the language of Mulkhow, Torkhow, Yarkhun, and Laspur [6]. Along the west side of the Chitral River, it meets with the Kalasha language and is also found in villages of the northern Yasin, Swat, and Gilgit-Baltistan. It was a language of the northwestern side of Pakistan that spread across many villages and encouraged its usage.

Khowar's geographic distribution involves Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with 200,000-300,000 speakers, but with majority of its speakers are found in Chitral where it was historically used as lingua franca [18]. Despite Khowar being spoken in Chitral widely, ten other languages tend to be spoken as well; Kalasha-mondr, Persian, Kyrgyz, Wakhi, Gujari, Yidgha, Nuristani, Burushaski, Palula, Gawar-Balti, Pashto, Dameli. But the youth mostly speak Urdu and English which they learnt at their educational institutions and used for job purposes in big cities [6]. Many immigrants are placed in Peshawar, Rawalpindi, Lahore, and Karachi for education and jobs [6]. They migrate from native northern areas to advance their social status and educational levels to keep up with the growing world. Arabic language script with an SOV (subject, object and verb) typology has been observed previously, like Urdu and Persian languages [8]. The four provinces of Pakistan hold various cultures that exist in their respective environment to ensure the survival of their linguistic ecology unless the phenomenon of language shift erupts and endangers their culture and language.

Currently, the research problem is; that Khowar people possess a lot of 'oral literature' but the ultimate fear is; that literature will fade away if not documented. African writers have a close association with 'oral literature', where their writers brought forward into the modern world; the rhetorical elements of their inherited oral traditions [13]. Iyasere entails that African writers didn't do this to highlight their existence but to add and transform these elements to bring a form of creative ingenuity to their execution. Preserving its languages means safeguarding a culture and saving a species from going to extinct. Music, art, and literature are various modes of transporting a culture forward worldwide. Moreover, the target audience of these genres and their ability to connect to the embedded message is also a significant aspect to consider in popularizing an unknown culture. The linguists' interactions with the Khowar community (in Chitral) have proven to be encouraging both at communal and academic levels [9]. A linguist stands as a harbinger of change and can increase the morale of the native speakers belonging to endangered languages of the world. A combined effort of both the linguists and the native community can produce a revolutionary change.

1.3. Earlier Language Status of Khowar

Faizi reports that, in the northern languages of Pakistan, Khowar's status of extinction has been consciously reversed by not just the educated 'Kho' people but also through determined efforts of linguists and language explorers in the 19th and 20th centuries to preserve its cultural heritage to prevent the loss of its oral traditions [9]. He further adds, that in 1860, the languages: Pashto, Dari, and Shina threatened Khowar's usage because these languages were predominant on its geographical borders, which is why its native speakers were a meagre 0.5million in Chitral and Ghizer districts of Pakistan. The role of

linguists and anthropologists was regarded as vital due to their consistent interaction with the language community in Northern Pakistan's isolated valleys of Chitral. The language community of Chitral passed through a stage of inferiority complex because it was believed that their language was of no use absolutely according to Faizi (2004)[9]. This was their thought because they felt that with this language, they couldn't communicate with their neighbours that extended beyond their geographical zones. Khowar people thought this because if nobody knew their language except them but if they were to only stay absorbed in their native language then this would act as a major obstacle in learning modern languages.

Also, they feared that their children would end up abandoning their native language if they explored vast opportunities for a better future [9]. An example of a father in 1860 who wasn't very educated and depicts his language attitude towards Khowar when he saw potential in his brilliant son, so he advised him to learn foreign languages and let go of Khowar because it won't lead him anywhere shortly. Other instances involve wise men advising their fellows to withdraw from speaking Khowar because their native language won't be applicable outside their geographical space. Those people were so cut off from the modern world that they had no clue to converse in more than two languages or simply be bilingual [9]. This puts a stop to language preference of the child's mother tongue and the language eventually begins to lose its survivability shortly.

In 1992, Khowar existed on level 4 which was labelled as 'vulnerable' on the endangerment scale of 'The UNESCO Language Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger', where children were only restricted to speaking their native language at their home [32]. After surveying the native speakers of Khowar in 2016, it was documented on the web version of Ethnologue: Languages of the World that Khowar has climbed down to the endangered level where children had seized to learn their native language [8]. This research aims to assess the endangered status of Khowar to determine its existence in the future.

2. Literature Review

The outcry about language endangerment became louder and louder, especially since Michael Krauss's statistics predicted the wiping out of 600 languages at the end of the 21st century (Batibo, 2005). From a prospect, it seems as if languages will be dying at a speedy pace than ever in the course of human history and with them, their cultures will die too [29]. The problem of language endangerment was addressed greatly when an International Linguistics Conference in 1992 was held in Quebec that called on UNESCO to address this urgent matter with necessary measures such as promoting and sponsoring linguistic organisations for gathering descriptive texts such as dictionaries, grammar, literature texts and also archiving urgent recordings of all oral literature [4].

2.1 Approaches to Measure Language Endangerment

According to the Oxford Research Encyclopedia, there have been different approaches designed by researchers and scholars to measure the degree of endangerment of a language by presenting a criterion through which the

language would be investigated [27]. They present the following approaches to measure language endangerment:

2.1.1 The Catalogue of Endangered Languages:

The Catalogue of Endangered Languages, developed by the linguistics department of the University of Hawaii at Mānoa and East Michigan University around 2011-2016 uses the criteria outlined in its “Language Endangerment Index” which grades a language accordingly.

2.1.2 (GIDS) Fishman’s Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale-(1991)

Fishman (1991) proposed the GIDS (Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale) for measuring language endangerment on an intergenerational level which proved influential.

2.1.3 UNESCO’s Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger

This holds the database of endangered languages all over the world while grading their vitality as vulnerable, definitely endangered, severely endangered, critically endangered and extinct [25].

2.1.4 (EGIDS) Extended Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale

Lewis and Simons (2010) produced an extended version of GIDS i.e., EGIDS (Extended Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale) which is utilized by Ethnologue [16].

2.2 UNESCO’s Response to Language Endangerment:

2.2.1 Formation of Endangered Language Organizations

Judging the dangerous situation of languages at hand, in November 1993, the General Assembly of UNESCO accepted the “Red Book of Endangered Languages” and “Endangered Languages Project” to begin the process of preserving endangered languages successfully [4]. When UNESCO stepped in to take initiatives in documenting, reviving and preserving the languages in danger, this created a surge of professional linguistic concern which spread universally gathering linguistic professionals and experts from different fields together on one platform. A lot of institutionalized work followed after the operation of an International Clearing House on Endangered Languages at the University of Tokyo, the startup of a) the Foundation of Endangered Languages in the UK and b) the Endangered Language Fund in the US around 1995 [4]. These foundations expressed acknowledgement and execution of the stark concerns in preserving the cultural heritage before it crumbled and faded away for future generations to come. Crystal (2000) synchronizes the agile responses after the publicity of the language shift and death of certain languages all over the world [4]. The numerous endangered language organizations surfacing different aspects of language endangerment and death reflect a global response to the awakening problem of language shift and death due to the efforts of linguists working diligently, resulting in the populated notion of language loss to at last enter the public consciousness.

2.2.2 Language Vitality and Endangerment (LVE)

After the weighty involvement of UNESCO (2003) in providing guidelines through instructional documentation in dealing with language shift and language death, it entitled a comprehensive document named, Language Vitality and Endangerment (LVE) framework for assessing the vitality of the endangered language at hand [30].

UNESCO's methodological guideline entitled 'Language Vitality and Endangerment' (LVE) was developed by a group of linguists from various regions in the course of 2001-2002 [23]. These guidelines were adopted by 'Safeguarding Endangered Languages' which was an international meeting held in 2003 at UNESCO Headquarters. LVE (Language Vitality and Endangerment) is a tool intended for researchers involved in: a) designing measures for language revitalization or language maintenance b) investigating the status of languages c) their linguistic diversity and lastly d) drafting language policies [23].

This research uses LVE (Language Vitality and Endangerment) developed by UNESCO in 2003 to assess the endangered status of the Khowar language [30]. Although nine factors are used in conducting a full in-depth Language Vitality Assessment, this research will employ the use of the first seven factors, because the researcher believes these are the perfect combination to assess the language status and vitality of Khowar [15]. They are listed below:

1. Intergenerational language transmission
2. Absolute number of speakers
3. Proportion of speakers within the total population
4. Trends in existing language domains
5. Response to new domains and media
6. Materials for language education and literacy
7. Governmental Policies and Attitudes

Each of these factors consists of a grading scale ranging from 5-0 (5 being the highest score and 0 being the lowest score, except Factor 2 the lower the grade, the lesser the chance for future survival of a language. The UNESCO (2003) criteria entail that the first six factors calculate the degree of endangerment and can be used to determine language vitality, because the seventh and eighth factors investigate the linguistic situation, whereas the ninth factor focuses on the urgency to preserve and document the language [23]. This present study explored the probability of Khowar's survival through the following factors: Intergenerational language transmission Absolute number of speakers, Proportion of speakers within the total population, Trends in existing language domains, Response to new domains and media, Materials for language education and literacy, and Governmental Policies and Attitudes. The relationship between language preservation and cultural identity has been documented across various conflict-affected multilingual regions [1].

3. Research Methodology

This study used a mixed-method research design. Data was collected by questionnaires and by conducting the focus group interviews to obtain necessary quantitative and qualitative data respectively. The use of survey questionnaires seems adequate in analyzing the pattern of transmission of an

endangered language (from the parental and ancestral generations to the next generations). Anjum et al (2020) worked on Pothwari endangered language and used a cost-effective survey questionnaire as a research tool for investigating intergenerational language transmission across three generations [2]. A questionnaire saves time and money by helping the researcher to access a larger sample with ease. Moreover, it serves as an excellent choice when one is investigating: the preferences, characteristics, and beliefs of a group of people [22].

3.1 Population and Sample Size

The target population for this study comprised native Khowar speakers residing in Chitral, a district in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. The population was relatively homogeneous in terms of cultural and linguistic background. A total of 150 survey questionnaires were collected, and 24 participants were recruited for focus group discussions (FGDs). The sample was stratified across three generational age groups—15–30 years, 30–50 years, and 50 years and above—to capture intergenerational language transmission patterns effectively.

Table 3.1: Demographic sample size for questionnaires

Age Range	**Generation 1**	**Generation 2**	**Generation 3**
Gender	N=52	N=46	N=52
MALE	15-30yrs	30-50yrs	50-Onwards
N = 82	N= 28	N=22	N=32
FEMALE	15-30yrs	30-50yrs	50-Onwards
N= 68	N=24	N=24	N=20

The sample included individuals from diverse occupational backgrounds, including students, teachers, government officials, entrepreneurs, unemployed individuals, housewives, and housemaids, ensuring a comprehensive representation of the Khowar speech community.

3.2 Sampling Technique

A Snowball Sampling technique was employed for this study. The researcher, being a non-native Khowar speaker with no direct access to the

Chitral community, recruited an initial Khowar-speaking contact who assisted in identifying and connecting with additional participants. This initial contact, a Khowar sportsman activist and Linguistics major, further helped in recruiting two other native Khowar speakers (an Architect and a Literature major) to form a team of three Research Assistants (RAs). This method, also known as the "chain method," was justified for two primary reasons: (a) it allowed the researcher to access a larger sample through referrals without time wastage, and (b) it proved cost-effective in reaching a geographically and linguistically secluded community.

3.3 Data Collection

3.3.1 Quantitative Data (Questionnaires)

Due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, survey questionnaires were administered by the team of three native Khowar-speaking Research Assistants in Chitral. A total of 150 questionnaires were collected from Khowar speakers across the three age groups. The questionnaire was designed to assess language vitality and endangerment based on UNESCO's Language Vitality and Endangerment (LVE) framework, specifically focusing on Intergenerational Language Transmission, absolute number of speakers, proportion of speakers within the total population, and domains of language use.

3.3.2 Qualitative Data (Focus Group Discussions)

Focus group discussions were conducted with 24 participants, equally distributed across the three age groups. The RAs facilitated conversations using pre-designed topic scripts based on the UNESCO LVE factors. All sessions were conducted in Khowar and audio-recorded. Subsequently, the recordings were transcribed in Khowar and translated into English. To ensure accuracy and preserve semantic integrity, the translated scripts were cross-verified by multiple research assistants. This rigorous process ensured that the lexical equivalents in English remained in sync with the Khowar version and that the semantic value of Khowar stayed intact within its translated version.

4. Data Analysis

4.1 Degree of Endangerment

Regarding the IGT of Khowar, this study terms it ‘Unsafe’ and finds it at level 4 of ‘Degree of Endangerment’ concerning UNESCO’s framework of ‘Language Vitality and Endangerment’ (see Table 3.5). However, in a study of the indigenous Malaysian language that a language spoken in most contexts existing with an unbroken language intergenerational flow should be graded with the value (5-) which stands for “Stable yet threatened” [3][24]. This is a relatable case to this study too, as all generations speak Khowar without a disintegration in the transmission of this language throughout the generations.

The discussions with respondents of G1 and G2 revealed that kids and college/university students tended to use Khowar only when speaking to their peers while they speak English and Urdu in their formal communication. Several respondents stated that their children liked to learn Urdu and English

more because in schools Khowar was not being used as the medium of instruction. The following is the response of the majority of parents:

توری چیترارتو روئے زیاد کھوار آ لو چا کو نیاں

This translates as:

My children have to learn Urdu and English because Khowar is not used at schools.

When dominant languages have begun to penetrate certain contexts of importance and if there is a flux in multilingualism, then it is possible that those languages can shift the power of influence in the language domains where once Khowar was used. Despite the usage of Khowar between the three generations, it was found through the UNESCO Atlas of World Languages in Danger its vitality was marked 'vulnerable', which on UNESCO's 'degree of endangerment' means that it is being used by children but in restricted domains [32].

4.1.1 Intergenerational Language Transmission

A language will die if it stays stagnant with G2 that is the parental generation, and doesn't graduate forward to the G1, i.e., the young generation [10]. The above-mentioned participant responses from grading the items on the questionnaire regarding the IGT reveal the successful chain of transference in all three generations. When focus group discussions were carried out after the administration of the questionnaire, it was found out from all the participants that not only their L1 (first language) was Khowar, but it was the first language of their succeeding generations too. Therefore, this validates the data results of the questionnaire that Khowar is being successfully used among the members of the home domain. Several speakers reported that their parents didn't teach them Khowar. They learned to speak it on their own while seeing it mostly being spoken by their grandparents and parents among each other, as stated by the speakers below:

ما نن تت کیاوت ما نو چھیچے آ سونی کھوار کیچا کوری لو دونی رے آوا تن چھیچے آ سم

Which translates as, my parents did not teach me to speak Khowar, because I learned it on my own. However, getting hopes up for a strong language vitality would not be adequate at this stage, despite IGT being a major factor as reiterated by Norris (2007) and Austin (2008). To support this stance, Fishman (1991) pressed the view that even marking an endangered language 'safe' doesn't ensure its language vitality 100% because the upcoming generations are unpredictable and they can decide to break the chain of language transmission by reverting to a dominant and widely used language [10]. They might do so in the face of a fast-paced and tech-oriented world, where socio-political, economic, and situational developments can oppose the continuation of Khowar futuristically.

4.1.2 Absolute Number of Speakers & Proportion of Speakers within the Total Population [Factor 2 and Factor 3]

Including the Upper and Lower Chitral District, Chitral is the largest area in the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) province of Pakistan. Below are some recent statistics relevant to the District Chitral (2019):

District Profile Area: 14,850 Sq. KM

Population: 447362

Languages: Khowar
Tehsils (Upper & Lower): 1, 1
Police Stations (Upper & Lower): 18
Number of Village Councils (Upper & Lower): 39, 56
National Assembly Seats (Upper & Lower): 1
Provincial Assembly Seats (Upper & Lower): 1
Number of Neighborhood Councils (Upper & Lower): 0, 5
Map 1. Language Map of Pakistan, 2019



Source: Local Government Elections, & Rural Development, 2019

The amalgamation of ‘absolute number of speakers’ and ‘proportion of speakers within the total population was a choice in outlining the language proportions of various neighbouring areas. The above-shared statistics and map present the small population of Chitral and different linguistic regions respectively. Khowar is only presented in the shocking pink region but largely spoken languages are Pashto, Shina, Burushaski, Torwali, and Wakhi. The dotted line marks the division between upper and lower Chitral. Khowar is largely spoken in the upper district and less in the lower district.

Map 2. Distribution of Major Ethnic Groups in Pakistan



Source:《Local Government Elections and Rural Development Department, 2019》[19]

4.1.3 Comparison of Census over the Past Years:

According to the 2004 census of Pakistan, the number of Khowar speakers decreased to 290000 (i.e., 2 lacs 90 thousand) according to the 19th edition of Ethnologue's report (Languages of Pakistan, 2021). Linking that to the 2006 census of Pakistan, the Ethnologue states, 313000 i.e., three lakhs thirteen thousand native speakers of Khowar [8]. Presently, according to the 2017 census of Pakistan and from the map above the natives of Chitral has risen to 447 362 lakhs which is still a minimal increase in the language population of Chitral. The population size is an important element to ensure the survival of a language, especially when it comes to a small population, as it is prone to decimation in the course of a natural disaster, warfare, disease or even a merger with its neighbouring language group, which can result in its loss of culture and language [3].

Taking this in view, an endangerment scale was created to measure the endangerment of languages and speech communities comprising small populations. GIDS [10], EGIDS (Lewis and Simons, 2009) UNESCO LVE (2003) [30]and UNESCO Atlas (2010)[32], all these models entail a scale of endangerment for measuring languages. Ethnologue further reports that the language status of Khowar fell to level three, i.e., 'Definitely Endangered' (on the UNESCO 2003 scale of endangerment), which entails the usage of this language by the parental generation, grandparents and their ancestral lane[8].

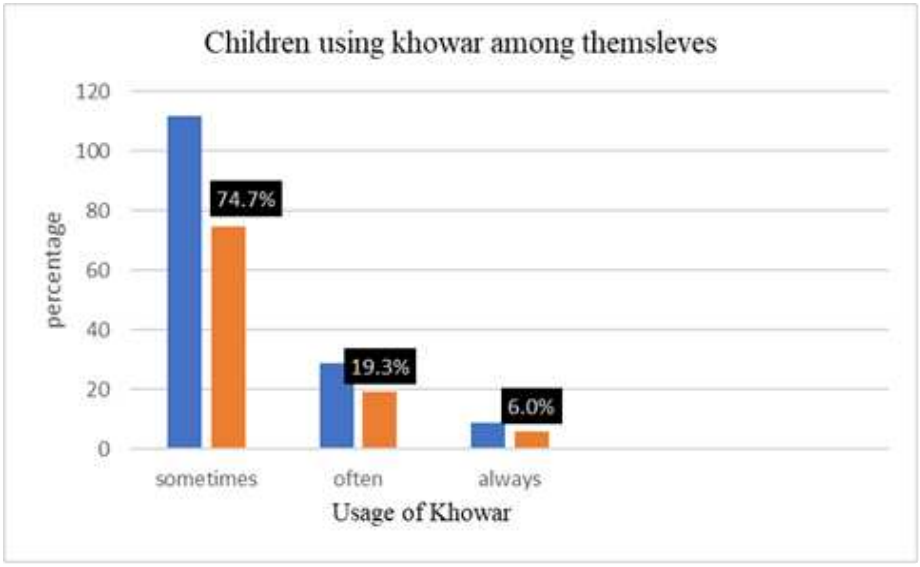
4.2. Khowar in Language Domains

Examining the trends of using Khowar in distinct domains lies second to the measurement of vitality in UNESCO (2003)[30]. As the home domain is discussed above in IGT, below are evaluations of the results received from the usage of Khowar in the: communal domain, cultural/festivities domain, educational domains, and official domains.

4.2.1 Home Domains

When asked about the usage of Khowar, the G2 of the respondents in focus group discussions responded with answers that involved the four common languages as follows: Urdu, English, Pashto, and Khowar in the chronological order of the one used dominantly, yet all four of them have been reported by G3 and G1 respondents to be used in amalgamation while conversing with parents and grandparents. Graph 4.1 reflects the frequency and percentage distribution of children using Khowar among themselves.

Graph 4.1 Children using Khowar among themselves

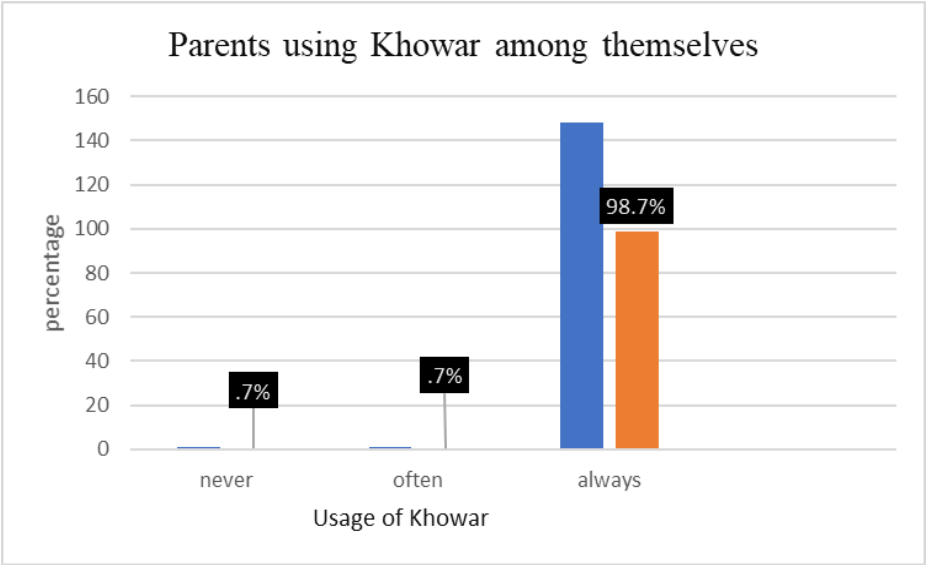


Graph 4.1 above reflects the usage of Khowar by the first generation, G1 among each other, which is very significant whether they will keep carrying on the use of Khowar with each other or whether they will prefer some other language over time. 74.7 % is the highest score for children speaking among themselves, which is level ‘2’ (sometimes) on the Likert scale and the lowest percentage is 6% which lies on level ‘4’ of the scale.

4.2.2 Parents among Themselves

Parents are the roots that uphold the tree of their children, so when studying home domains in terms of language, these two individuals become vital parts of the family in understanding the linguistic landscape of the household. Graph 4.2 reflects the frequency and percentage distribution of parents using Khowar among themselves.

Graph 4.2 Parents using Khowar among themselves



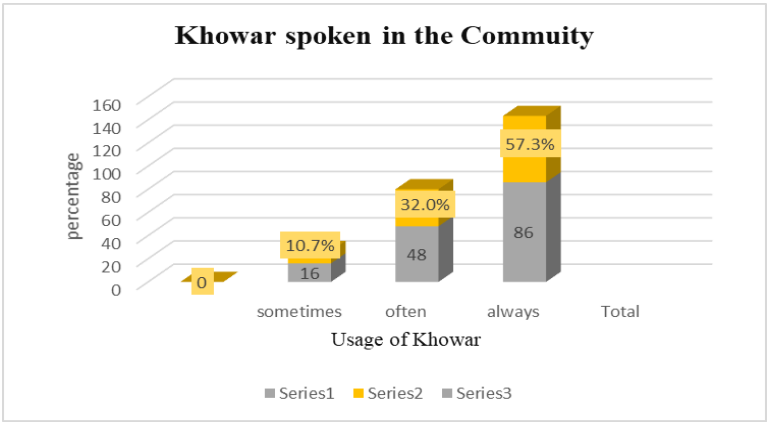
Graph 4.2 above reflects the usage of Khowar by the second generation, G2 among each other, which is very significant in determining which language will be passed on to the children. Judging from the graph, above 98.7% of the parental generation tend to communicate with each other. This result predicts that depending on the language environment of the child, Khowar is expected to be picked up by the next generation, since the parents use it actively among each other.

The attitudes and behaviours of parents directly affect their offspring. Krauss explains that individual factors are essential to examine when looking at the cause of language endangerment (2003). He further inserts that the key region in endangering a language is the G2 (the childbearing generation) also the parental generation.

4.2.3 Language in the Communal Domain

Languages come into contact, whenever people come together from different areas to meet at one point in the community. Graph 4.3 reflects the frequency and percentage distribution of Khowar used at a communal level.

Graph 4.3 Khowar spoken in the Community.



Graph 4.3 above reflects the level of Khowar usage at the communal level, the graph reflects that Khowar is used at a percentage of 57.3%, with varying differences of 32% and 10% which make up those parts of the community that are probable to use the dominant language. In the focus group discussions of the G1 females and males, it was found that Urdu, English and Pashto were being used actively by the young generation when interacting in the community.

However, there have been significant preferences in using language, e.g., one of the female G1 respondents reported using Pashto when travelling to lower Chitral, where Pashtuns have populated the areas heavily, thus turning it into their dominant speech community. The respondent says:

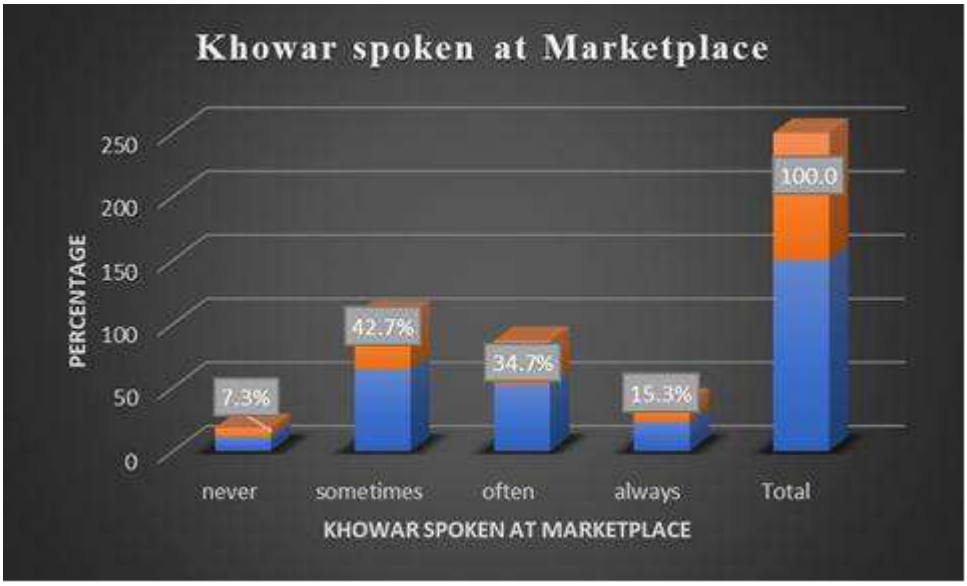
آوا۔پشتو۔آلو۔دوم۔کوراکے۔پشتو۔کوراک۔زیاد۔استانی

This translates as I prefer to use Pashto in a society that has a lot of Pashto speakers. This is a clear reflection of how language preference is affected in a community where a dominant language is being used for communication.

4.2.4 Khowar at Marketplace

Graph 4.4 reflects the frequency and percentage distribution of Khowar used at marketplaces.

Graph 4.4 Khowar used at Marketplace.



Graph 4.4 above reflects the level of Khowar usage at marketplaces. The percentage differences are highly significant, due to the market being a huge place of language contact. 15% of individuals converse Khowar when it comes to the marketplace, and one of the G2 male respondents reported that the marketplace had become the place of Pathans, due to their infiltration in the business space of earlier Chitralis. Due to the presence of Pashtuns, Pashto is the one language that is beginning to overpower Khowar heavily by suffocating it through its economy-producing landscapes, such as the marketplace.

4.2.5 Khowar at Festivals

Graph 4.5 reflects the frequency and percentage distribution of Khowar used in the Cultural Domains.

Graph 4.5 Khowar spoke at Festivals.

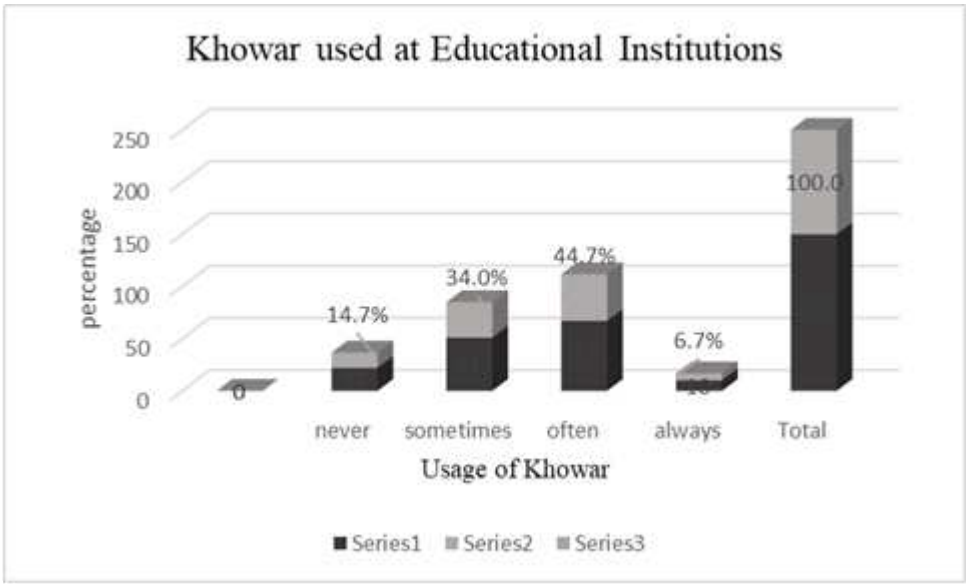


Graph 4.5 above reflects the level of Khowar usage on festivities and religious occasions. The percentage differences are significant because it reflects that 52% of the community scores the value '3' majorly on the Likert scale when interacting in Khowar at festivities, the difference in percentage variation again has its roots in language contact, as explained above. One of the respondents of G3 generation three said, that 'on 21st March they celebrate Eid where they go to each other's houses and indulge in festive practices', but the point to be noticed here is that the Pashtun community that is living scattered around Chitral, so that leaves the Pashto speakers room to invade into the cultural festivities of the Khowar speech community.

4.2.6 Khowar in Educational Domains

Graph 4.6 reflects the frequency and percentage distribution of Khowar used at educational institutions.

Graph 4.6 Khowar used in Educational Institutions.



Graph 4.6 above reflects the level of Khowar usage at educational institutions. 44.7 % of the respondents score on the value ‘3’ of the Likert scale, while the lowest score falls on ‘1’ which is the never category. Up till now, this domain is the first to express the stark difference in the liminal preference of using Khowar at educational institutions that are operated in English. Many male and female respondents of G1 (generation one) in focus group discussions reported the use of English as the medium of instruction, due to which they were indulged in speaking the more dominant language, English and besides that, they spoke Urdu and Khowar mixed. The majority of the respondents said:

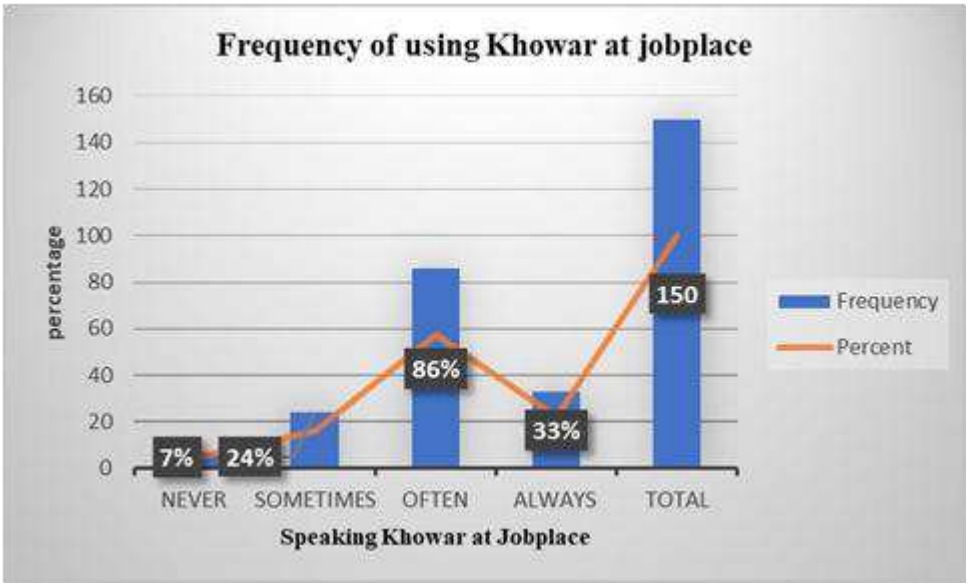
آوا۔زیاد۔اردو۔تعلیم۔آتم۔آوا۔تن۔سبقو۔ژاغا۔انگریزیا۔لوا۔چاکومان

This translates as I received my education in Urdu mostly and I speak English mostly at my educational institution. The above speech indicates that the concept of ‘Usefulness’ of a language has entered the picture, due to the medium of instruction, the language of textbooks and the language of advancement into the world is English, which leaves this indigenous language restricted to the geographical landscape of the northern terrains of Pakistan.

4.2.7 Khowar at Workplace

Graph 4.7 reflects the frequency and percentage distribution of Khowar used at the workplace.

Graph 4.7 Khowar used at Workplace.



Graph 4.7 above reflects the level of Khowar usage at the workplace, with a striking difference of 86 % of respondents scoring on value ‘3’ of the Likert scale, labelled often. In comparison, 24 % score on value ‘2’ i.e., sometimes and the least percentage 7% hits the score ‘1’ which is never, in terms of speaking Khowar. Respondents of the G2 sample for focus group discussions included middle-aged men, who reiterated that at private jobs, or businesses they used Khowar freely with colleagues who also could speak Khowar, in the case of businesses, it was found that many respondents were ‘code mixing’ Urdu and Pashto with Khowar since they operated their business while being at the marketplace region of Chitral. Maule states that code-mixing happens

when there is a certain level of proficiency developed by the speaker when used, the mix of words is smooth and spontaneous [20].

5. Conclusions

For Factor 1, the value (-5) reiterated by Brenzinger et al. (2003, 7) in the study on Language Vitality Assessment of Sihan, (an indigenous Malaysian language) is apt to grade IGT as this value exists between (Safe 5) - (Unsafe 4) values on the intergenerational language transmission scale, yet the value (-5) is not presented in the 'degree of endangerment' table. This value was taken from Mohamed and Hashim's work (2012). The value translates as 'stable yet threatened' which means that there is an unbroken chain in transmission of the native language, that is explored in this current research, so the value (-5) is an adequate score in grading the language vitality of Khowar. This has been observed above with the scores of Factor 1: Intergenerational transmission of Khowar, where all G1, G2 and G3 are transmitting Khowar forward.

But again, there is always room for the chain to be broken at any point. For Factor 2, tabulation is not present, because UNESCO (2003) didn't provide a scale [10][17], but was recommended to focus on developing a scale. Yet, this study explores Factor 2 through the linguistic mapping of Khowar and finds the spread of Pashto as a significant spread in endangering Khowar (see Map 4.2). Although UNESCO LVE (2003)[30] provided a scale for grading Factor 3, it was discussed purposefully in the section above for discussing the linguistic situation of Khowar concerning the language that potentially endangers it (See Table 3.6). For Factor 4, the following: home setting, marketplace, communal settings, festivities, employment, educational settings, and governmental and official domains were thoroughly explored in the linguistic environment of interaction through the concept of language contact. This resulted in Multilingual Parity because, in every language contact situation, a language preference was made, which was majorly Pashto, Urdu and English, instead of Khowar, due to the geographic spread of Pashto speakers that surround the scanty and secluded Chitrali community (See Table 3.7). This small size of 447,362 lakh population can easily be on the brink of language death because they could be prone to some natural disaster or some socio-political and economic calamity. Obiero (2010) supports this as he explains that small-sized speech communities tend to fade away, if necessary, revitalization strategies aren't enacted [26].

Funding: There was no funding available to conduct this research.

Conflict of Interest: There is no conflict of interest among the authors.

Ethical approval and consent to participate: All methods were performed in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki (2013) and the American Anthropological Association (AAA) Principles of Professional Responsibility (2012) . Ethical approval for this study was granted by the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Central Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan, in compliance with the guidelines of the Pakistan Higher Education Commission (HEC) .

Informed consent was obtained from all adult participants, while for participants under 18 years of age (primarily from Generation 1, aged 15–30 years), additional written consent was secured from their parents or legal guardians. Participation was voluntary, and participants were assured of their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. The Research Assistants (RAs), being native Khowar speakers, played a crucial role in communicating the consent information to participants in their native language, ensuring full comprehension of the study's purpose and their rights. All data were anonymized and stored securely to ensure confidentiality. The research team adhered to the cultural norms and sensitivities of the Khowar-speaking community in Chitral throughout the study.

Clinical trial number: Not applicable

Declarations: The authors declare that this work is original and has not been published previously, nor is it under consideration for publication elsewhere. All authors have made substantial contributions to the conception, design, data collection, analysis, and interpretation of the findings, and have reviewed and approved the final manuscript for submission. The research was conducted independently without any external funding or sponsorship that could influence the outcomes or interpretation of the results. The authors affirm that the data presented are accurate and complete, and any limitations of the study have been transparently acknowledged. There are no competing interests or conflicts of interest to disclose. The authors take full responsibility for the integrity and validity of the research presented in this manuscript.

Consent to Publish: The authors declare that this manuscript is an original work and has not been published previously nor is it under consideration for publication elsewhere. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript and consent to its publication in the journal if accepted.

Data Availability Statement: The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. The data are not publicly available due to privacy/ethical restrictions, as they contain information that could compromise the privacy of research participants in the Chitral community.

References

1. Akmal, S., Masni, M., Koma, A., Faizuddin, A., & 'Ulfitri, N. (2026). Pre serving Language, Resolving Conflict: Insights from Aceh and Patani . Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun, 14(1), 619-644. https://doi.org/10.26811/peu radeun.v14i1.1898

2. Anjum, et al. (2020). Depleting cultural heritage: A study of Pothwari fa mily domain and intergenerational transmission. Journal of Asian Histo ry. Journal of Asian Civilizations, 36(2), 127–145.
3. Brenzinger, M., Yamamoto, A., Aikawa, N., Koundiouba, D., Minasyan, A., Dwyer, A., Grinevald, C., Krauss, M., Miyaoka, O., Sakiyama, O., Smeets, R., & Zepeda, O. (2003). Language vitality and endangermen t: UNESCO expert meeting on safeguarding endangered languages. U NESCO. http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/doc/src/00120-EN.pdf
4. Crystal, D. (2000). Language death. Cambridge University Press.
5. Czaykowska-Higgins, E. (2003). $900,000 program to revitalise island Aboriginal languages. University of Victoria, UVic Communications, Me dia Release.
6. Decker, S. J. (1992). Ushojo. In C. R. Rensch, S. J. Decker, & D. G. Hallberg, Sociolinguistic survey of northern Pakistan, Volume 1: Langu ages of Kohistan. National Institute of Pakistan Studies & Summer Ins titute of Linguistics.
7. District and Tehsil Level Population. (2018). Pakistan Bureau of Statisti cs. Retrieved from Wayback Machine (archive.org).
8. Ethnologue. (2020). Khowar. Languages of the World. https://www.ethn ologue.com/language/khw
9. Faizi, I. (2004). Development of Khowar as a literacy language: Result s of interaction between linguists and language community: Case stud y in Chitral, Northern Pakistan. https://www.flionline.org/documents/lang uages/khowar/faizi-article.htm
10. Fishman, J. A. (1991). Reversing language shift: Theoretical and empi rical foundations of assistance to threatened languages. Multilingual M atters.
11. Grenoble, L. A., & Whaley, L. J. (1998). Toward a typology of langua ge endangerment. In L. A. Grenoble & L. J. Whaley (Eds.), Endanger ed languages: Language loss and community response (pp. 22–54). Cambridge University Press.
12. Hale, K., Krauss, M., Watahomigie, L. J., Yamamoto, A. Y., Craig, C., Jeanne, L. M., & England, N. C. (1992). Endangered languages. Lan guage, 68(1), 1–42. https://doi.org/10.2307/416368
13. Iyasere, S. (1975). Oral tradition in the criticism of African literature. T he Journal of Modern African Studies, 13(1), 107–119. http://www.jstor .org/stable/159699
14. Languages of Pakistan. (2021, January 10). In Wikipedia. https://en.wi kipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Languages_of_Pakistan&oldid=999472017
15. Lee, N. H., & Van Way, J. (2016). Assessing levels of endangerment in the Catalogue of Endangered Languages (ELCat) using the Langua ge Endangerment Index (LEI). Language in Society, 45(2), 271–292 . https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047404515000962
16. Lewis, M. P., Simons, G. F., & Fennig, C. D. (Eds.). (2013). Ethnolog ue: Languages of the world. SIL International.
17. Lewis, M. P., Gary, F. S., & Charles, D. F. (Eds.). (2016). Ethnologue : Languages of the world (23rd ed.). https://www.ethnologue.com/19/la nguage/khw/

18. Liljegren, H., & Khan, A. A. (2017). Khowar. Journal of the Internation al Phonetic Association, 47(2), 219–229.
19. Local Government Elections and Rural Development Department. (201 9). District Chitral Upper & Lower [Map]. Retrieved from District Chitra l (Upper & Lower) | Local Government, Elections and Rural Developm ent Department (lgkp.gov.pk).
20. Mabule, D. R. (2015). What is this? Is it code switching, code mixing or language alternating? Journal of Educational and Social Research, 5(1), 339. https://doi.org/10.5901/jesr.2015.v5n1p339
21. Matsumura (Ed.). (1995). Studies in endangered languages: Papers fr om the International Symposium on Endangered Languages, Tokyo, 1 8–20 November 1995. Hituzi Syobo.
22. McCombes, S. (2020). How to do survey research. Scribbr. https://ww w.scribbr.com/methodology/survey-research/
23. Minasyan, A. (2011). UNESCO's language vitality and endangerment methodological guideline: Review of application and feedback since 20 03. UNESCO.
24. Mohamed, N., & Hashim, N. H. (2012). Language vitality of the Sihan community in Sarawak, Malaysia. KEMANUSIAAN: The Asian Journal of Humanities, 19(1), 59–86.
25. Moseley, C. (Ed.). (2010). UNESCO atlas of the world's languages in danger. UNESCO.
26. Obiero, O. J. (2010). From assessing language endangerment or vitali ty to creating and evaluating language revitalization programmes. Nor dic Journal of African Studies, 19(4), 201–226. https://doi.org/10.53228 /njas.v19i4.195
27. Rogers, C., & Campbell, L. (2015). Endangered languages. Oxford R esearch Encyclopedia of Linguistics. https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/97 80199384655.013.21
28. Sasse, H. J. (1992). Language decay and contact-induced change: Si milarities and differences. In M. Brenzinger (Ed.), Language death (pp . 59–80). Mouton de Gruyter.
29. Skutnabb-Kangas, T. (2006). Language policy and linguistic human rig hts. In T. Ricento (Ed.), An introduction to language policy: Theory an d method (pp. 273–291). Blackwell Publishing.
30. UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages. (2003). F actor 3: Proportion of speakers within the total population. UNESCO Digital Library. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000183699
31. UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages. (2003). F actor 4: Shifts in domains of language use. UNESCO Digital Library . https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000183699
32. UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger. (2010). United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. http://www.u nesco.org/languages-atlas/index.php?hl=en&page=atlasmap&cc2=a
33. Whaley, L. J. (2011). Some ways to endanger an endangered langua ge project. Language and Education, 25(4), 339–348. https://doi.org/10 .1080/09500782.2011.577221