

# Tracing Gujarati Language Development Philologically and Sociolinguistically

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## Introduction

This article traces the gradual evolution of the Indo-Aryan languages and more specifically, the Gujarati language. This language is spoken mainly in Gujarat, a state in western India, where it is a regional language officially recognized by the Constitution of India. It is written in Gujarati script which is very similar to Devanagari (the script used for Sanskrit) but without the continuous line at the top of the letters. The origin of the Gujarati language lies in the Sanskrit language, the oldest known form of the Indo-Aryan languages. The Indo-Aryan languages are a sub-set of the Indo-European language family (Chatterji 1978:476). In tracing Gujarati language development, it is important to also trace the history of its root language, Sanskrit. Such a study of the historical processes of how a language was formed from an ancestor language to its present condition is called *philology* (Canonici 1997:37). With respect to the philological analysis of the evolution of Gujarati, data was drawn from primarily from secondary sources.

The article also outlines the dialects of the Gujarati language spoken in South Africa, and makes comparisons with the standard variety. Data for the analysis of the Gujarati spoken currently in South Africa was collected through interviews conducted with Gujarati home language speakers in four provinces of South Africa, namely, KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng, Eastern Cape

and Western Cape. It is worth noting that the speakers of the Gujarati language form a minority within the minority Indian population of South Africa. Interestingly, the 1980 and 1991 South African population census figures reveal that Gujarati is proportionately the most spoken Indian language in South Africa. A literature review indicates that there is a lack of information with regard to changes that have taken place in the various Indian languages spoken in South Africa to this day, including the Gujarati language.

### **Background Information**

Known as 'passenger Indians' since they paid for their own fare, the first band of Gujaratis arrived in Durban in 1875. They came mainly from Kathiawad, Porbandar and Surat, areas that lie on the northwest coast of India and which form part of the Gujarat state. The majority of the immigrants were Muslim traders and some were Hindu traders. They settled mainly in the provinces of Kwazulu-Natal and Gauteng. Following the indentured labourers who came in 1860, these 'passengers' came primarily to serve the material needs of their compatriots. Besides the many prosperous Gujarati traders who sought this opportunity to increase their wealth, there were also those who had found it extremely difficult to eke out a reasonable living in India and they came as semi-skilled and skilled artisans. The 'passenger' Indians mainly spoke their mother-tongue, Gujarati. There were a few who had gone to Anglo-vernacular schools in India and therefore had some proficiency in English. Many of the interviewees stated that whenever they ordered goods for their small shops, the orders were made out to the European wholesalers in Gujarati who then had to get the orders translated into English.

Of the current minority Indian population which comprises approximately 1 million (3% of the total population of the Republic of South Africa), 30 000 Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Parsees and Jains constitute the Gujarati community in South Africa (Desai 1992). Klein (1986:25) refers to the South African Gujaratis as 'a middleman minority' group. Klein explains that a middleman minority is a minority in a minority group within a society who originate from a land other than their present home, or are descendants of those who migrated. Middleman minorities have strong ethnic ties and concentrate on entrepreneurial business.

While the speakers of the Gujarati language are spread all over South Africa, the majority of the speakers currently reside in the provinces of KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng, Mapumalanga, Eastern Cape and Western Cape. In comparison to Gujarati-speaking Hindus, the larger Gujarati-speaking Muslim community played an important role in the maintenance of the Gujarati language in South Africa by using it in the *madressas* i.e., the schools conducted in the mosques of the Muslims in South Africa. However, Gujarati language teaching was discouraged in these schools after the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947. With the Gujarati language not being taught to the children of the first and second generation Gujarati-speaking Muslims, the number of Gujarati speakers greatly diminished.

### Theoretical Background

Aitchison (1991:6) has outlined three theoretical possibilities of language change. The first possibility is slow decay where a standard language is used in a formal setting but the same variety changes its form in an informal setting. Aitchison (1991:6) states that many scholars were of the opinion that European languages were on the decline because they were gradually losing their word endings. In this regard, she cites the popular German writer Max Muller who asserted that 'The history of all Aryan languages is nothing but a gradual process of decay.' The second possibility is that languages may be slowly evolving to a more efficient state by becoming streamlined and sophisticated. We may be witnessing the survival of the fittest with existing languages adapting to the needs of the times. Thirdly, a language remains in a substantially similar state from the point of view of progress or decay dominated by certain general laws. Aitchison (1991:7) cites a Belgian linguist (Vendryes 1925) who claimed that "Progress in the absolute sense is impossible, just as it is in morality and politics. It is simply that different states exist, succeeding each other, each dominated by certain general laws imposed by the equilibrium of the forces with which they are confronted. So is the case with language."

Over the centuries Indian civilisation has found its expression primarily through Indo-Aryan languages. Initially, it was through Vedic Sanskrit (Old Indo-Aryan) and then through Classical Sanskrit. Thereafter, the Middle Indo-Aryan dialects came into existence. These came to be known as the *Prakrits*, a term that was used to denote the authentic, spoken

dialects. Next was the *Apabhramshas*. This term was used to refer to the dialects that were considered as 'corruptions of the norm'. These evolved in succession from spoken to literary forms and vice versa. Finally, the modern Indo-Aryan languages such as Hindi, Bengali, Marathi, Punjabi, Gujarati and many others emerged after further changes. It is clear that Sanskrit is to India what Latin is to Europe.

According to Munshi (1967:14), one of the greatest Gujarati scholars of our time, there is a series of phenomena in the Indo-Aryan languages that attract our attention on account of its periodic recurrence. He has explained that any dialect that evolves from Sanskrit attains literary status by simply drawing from the charm and importance of the root language. As a consequence, it is standardised and enriched but the gulf between *desabhasha* (the spoken language) and *sahitya-bhasha* (the literary form) widens. When the literary form becomes archaic or unsuited for popular speech, the spoken language in turn receives literary polish with the aid of Sanskrit (ibid).

On returning to the evolution of the Gujarati language, the literate class knew and spoke what came to be known as the standard variety. On the other hand the masses were not literate and did not know the 'standard' form. Hence, the spoken language became distorted. As progress was also being made in many other fields (of civilisation) the language and its varieties would need to evolve to a more accommodating, efficient state than that of the past.

### **Typological Classification of the Gujarati Language**

The Gujarati language falls within the category of the Indo-European family of languages and like other modern Indian languages, it belongs to the Indo-Aryan group (Chatterji 1978:476). Sanskrit (refined according to the rules of grammar) language is considered the mother of the Indo-Aryan group of languages. Among the world family of languages, the Indo-European language family is the largest. The Indo-European languages are so called since they have a common source in Proto-Indo-European language. This family covers practically all the languages of Europe, Iran and Northern India. The migration of the speakers of this language family is seen as the chief cause for differentiation and evolution of the separate languages e.g. English, German, Hindi and Danish (Lockwood 1972:1)

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the discovery by European scholars that the Sanskrit language possessed elements of basic vocabulary and grammatical features directly comparable to Greek and Latin called for further investigation. Subsequently, in 1786 Sir William Jones declared: "The Sanskrit language, whatever be its antiquity, is of a wonderful structure; more perfect than Greek, more copious than Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either; yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity, both in the roots of verbs, and in the forms of grammar, than could possibly have been produced by accident; so strong indeed that no philologist could examine them all three without believing them to have sprung from *some common source*, which perhaps no longer exists" (Lockwood 1969:22). The earliest documents in Sanskrit were the religious texts known as the Vedas which date from 1000 B.C. In the fifth century BC, Sanskrit had evolved somewhat, and the grammarian Panini codified and standardized it. By 200 B.C. emerged what is now known as 'Classical' Sanskrit. However, although this preserved the integrity of written language for a long time, the spoken language continued to evolve.

According to Lockwood (1972:1-2) the grammar of the Indo-European languages has developed on the following principles: a distinction between animate and inanimate objects being further divided into masculine, feminine and neuter; nouns and adjectives were declined as seen in Sanskrit, Latin and Greek languages and there were eight cases viz., nominative, vocative, accusative, instrumental, genitive, dative, ablative and locative. Each case is identified by a special suffix i.e., a word-ending component. The declension of adjectives was in principle identical with that of nouns. Adjectives agreed with nouns in number and gender. The distinction of two numbers i.e. singular and plural is also evident in the grammar; The verbal system has three basic tenses, namely, present, past and future and these can be categorised either as transitive or intransitive verbs. The past tense transitive verb agrees with the object in gender and number. By virtue of belonging to the Indo-European family, the Gujarati language shares such similarities in grammar.

Between 500 B.C. to 1000 A.D the dialects of Sanskrit had assumed importance and entered the Prakrit stage, 'unrefined' or naturally evolved further from the codified Sanskrit. All the Prakrits share a common ancestry, but they are not necessarily mutually intelligible. The development of the

First Prakrit occurred during the period of Buddha and Mahavira around 500 BC. One branch of this Prakrit is represented by *Pali*, the language used by Buddha for his religious teachings. Another Prakrit is represented by *Ardha-Magadhi* used by Mahavir, the Jain preceptor.

The Second Prakrit developed between 100 AD and 500 AD. These developed in various regions and came to be labelled accordingly. Its chief varieties were *Shaurseni*, *Magadhi* and *Maharashtri*. The first developed in the western region which is presently known as Mathura. The second, a Rajasthani dialect, developed in the districts of Bihar and Ayodhya with the following dialects emanating from it: Maithili, Awadhi and Bhojpuri. The third variety mentioned above was the language of the Maharashtra Districts of Kashmir and Ladakh.

The Third Prakrit developed between 500 AD and 1000 AD. By this era, the literary form was distinguishable from the spoken form. The new spoken forms came to be known as *Apabhramsha*, literally meaning 'to degenerate'. Through the course of time the *Apabramsha* was also standardised. From each of the above mentioned regional Prakrits developed an *Apabhramsha* form.

Most of the modern Indian languages trace their roots to the *Apabhramsha* languages spoken between 500 AD and 1000 AD. Gujarati, Hindi, Rajasthani, and the Pahadi languages find their roots in Shaurseni Apabhramsha. A formal grammar of the precursor of this language was written by the Jain monk and eminent scholar, Hemachandra-charya in the reign of the Rajput king, Siddharaj Jayasinh of Patan. This was called Apabhramsha grammar.

The language spoken in Gurjardesh in western India around the period 916A.D.came to be known as 'Gaurjar Apabhramsha'. In the 14th century the Gurjar Apabhramsha (the early literary medium of Gujarat) gave rise to Gujarati, Marwadi and the Malavi languages. The early literature in old Gujarati was written mainly by the Jain monks. The forces of change operating within the modern Indo-Aryan languages later separated Gujarati from the others. Although modern Gujarati evolved from old Gujarati spoken between 1200 AD and 1500 AD, far-reaching evolutionary changes have taken place and old Gujarati is no longer comprehensible to the speakers of modern Gujarati.

## The Gujarati Language from 1850 A.D. Onwards (The Modern Literary Period)

The political situation had changed in India by the beginning of the 19th century. The British rule had become dominant and interactions among the Indians and those from Europe were heightened. Education, the great pioneer of all reforms, and other social advancements, had made rapid strides. The introduction of the printing press gave impetus to the development of language and literature. Newspapers and periodicals played a substantial role in shaping the ideas of the population.

Modern Gujarati literature may be divided into four periods, namely, *Sudharak Yuga*, *Pandit Yuga*, *Gandhi Yuga* and *Adhunik Yuga*. Each period expresses the fundamental values attached to the social, religious and political conditions of that particular era. Parallel with developments in Gujarati literature through these four periods, the Gujarati language also underwent significant changes.

*Sudharak Yuga* or the reformist age was the name given to the first part of the modern period in Gujarati literature. Social movements of this period influenced the writers of this period and the literature of a 'new era' appeared which was in great contrast to the medieval period. All over India there was a new spirit of re-awakening and reform. The old rigid dogmatic customs and beliefs had caused stagnation and the reformers proved to be a driving force leading the people out of the old to a new direction. Even the subject matter had changed from mainly religious and devotional to nationalism, liberation, education, science, philosophy, economics and description of nature and travel. Narmad, a poet, the founder of modern Gujarati literature as well as the father of Gujarati prose composed the first dictionary in Gujarati. In practicing social reforms, he himself married a widow against the wishes of his family and caste. Like the other writers of this period, Narmad was influenced by Shakespeare, Scott, Shelley and Keats. New words (e.g. sonnet) were borrowed mainly from the English language and other Gujarati dialects.

However by 1886 which was the beginning of the *Pandit Yuga* (era of the scholars), the scholars felt that there had been an overflow of western influence in the previous age which was contrary to their ideals. They endeavoured to bring about a change by reverting to the rich, cultural, traditional and hereditary Sanskrit language and Aryan ideology. This era

came to be known as the period of Sanskrit revival. The University of Bombay had been established in the 1860's and by 1890 it produced a notable group of scholars. All the writers of this era belonged to what was considered at the time, an 'elite' group who maintained a high standard in their works and who drew words abundantly from the Sanskrit language.

There were certain inspiring forces that evolved in this age which affected the propensity of the writers. Narmad's reformist ideals were seen as a threat to the preservation of fundamental principles of Aryan culture and Gujarati language and literature. Most of the scholars of *Pandit Yuga* were proficient in both English and Sanskrit. Such scholars were not against reform but wanted to implement changes evolving out of 'Indian culture' rather than adopting 'Western culture'.

Following the return of Gandhi to India from South Africa in 1915 the period following *Pandit Yuga* was referred to as the *Gandhi Yuga* or the Gandhian Era in the political, social and literary contexts. Poets and writers of this time wrote about social order, the struggle for independence and especially about Gandhi himself. Gandhi did not claim to be a poet or a scholar yet he greatly influenced his compatriots. His language was direct, clear and simple. He motivated his contemporaries to write for the masses in their dialects and to use 'simple' language. He had firm convictions about teaching children in their mother tongue and also teaching them to respect their language. He emphatically stated that "I would not have a single Indian to forget, neglect or be ashamed of his mother tongue, or to feel that he or she cannot think or express the best thoughts in his or her own vernacular." (Narayan 1968:285).

Although there were regional and caste-based varieties of Gujarati, the standard variety used in education, literature and mass media was understood and respected by everyone. During this period, the Gujarat Vidyapith founded by Gandhi at Ahmedabad in 1922 became the centre of all literary activities where new values emerged and more emphasis was given to Indianisation. The Gujarati dictionary was endorsed by Mahatma Gandhi and published by the Gujarat Vidyapith in 1929. It has played a major role in the standardisation process of the Gujarati language in the twentieth century and has allowed for links to be forged across the diaspora.



## Modern Gujarati and its Dialects from 1500 A.D. Onwards

Like other provinces in India, Gujarat may be distinguished from other provinces by a single dominant language, Gujarati. This has enabled its inhabitants to create an independent social and cultural identity.

The Gujarati language that is written and spoken today may be traced back to the fifteenth century (Munshi 1967:174) and Narsinh Mehta is said to be the *ādi kavi*, that is, the first poet of modern Gujarati literature. The Gujarati language has remained stable for the last five centuries. In modern times the printing press and progress in the educational field have primarily contributed to the standardisation of languages. The written or printed Gujarati language used in the media has maintained uniformity throughout Gujarat. Even though Gujarati was by no means a direct descendant of Sanskrit, the *Pandit Yuga* writers viewed it as having descended from the classical purity of Sanskrit. As purists they desired to protect it from distortion. However, people from different geographical areas are likely to have differences in speech in which socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic rules may alter slightly. There is a famous saying in Gujarati regarding dialects that *dar bār gāve bolī badalāy* (*At every twenty miles a dialect changes*).

In Gujarat three main regional dialects viz. Kathiawadi, Charottari and Surati have developed and these are widely spoken. A person's speech can identify him as being from a certain place and of certain caste. Along with regional variation, social variation has also been noted. The caste system also contributed to the language diversity in Gujarat. People of different castes had a distinct dialect. The Gujarati speakers of Parsi (Persian) and Muslim faiths living in Gujarat also had a peculiar dialect. The variations in both cases are notable in pronunciation, vocabulary and syntax. Six examples of Gujarati dialects spoken in South Africa as well as in India are discussed below. In each case comparisons are made between the standard variety and the dialect using the original Sanskrit Alphabet (see Antoine 1986). The diacritics used here are as per transliteration of the International Sanskrit Alphabet which is somewhat different from the International Phonetic Alphabet. Note: The 'N' at the end of a word is nasalized.

## Dialects of Gujarati

### 1. Kathiawadi (spoken in Northern Gujarat or Saurashtra)

The regional Kathiawadi dialect differs from the standardised form in some of the following ways.

**Standard**                      **Kathiawadi**

- a      kyaN bharāyo                      kyaN bharāṇo (*Where did you hide?*)

The suffix *yo* in the past tense verb of the standard variety changes to *ēo* in the dialect which is a feature of old Gujarati.

- b      javuN                                      jāvuN                      (*to go*)

In the Kathiawadi dialect the initial vowel is elongated.

### 2. Uttar Gujarati/Patni (spoken in North Gujarat)

**Standard**                      **Patni**

- a      bhāi                                      bhai                      *brother*

The initial long vowel of the standard variety is shortened in the Patni dialect.

- b      nahiN                                      naiN                      *no*  
    ahiN                                      aiN                      *here*

The letter *h* of the standard variety is dropped in the Patni dialect. Subsequently, two syllables used in the standard variety becomes one syllable with an elongated vowel *ai*.

### 3. Charotari (spoken in middle Gujarat in cities like Nadiad, Aëanda and Barodā )

**Standard**                                      **Charotari**

- a      kem                                      cem                      *why*  
    ketalā                                      cetalā                      *how many*

The *k* of the standard variety changes to *c* in the Charotari dialect.

- b      māre che                                      māre ch                      (*he*) *is hitting*

The auxillary verb *che* in the standard variety changes to *ch* in the dialect.

4. **Surti (spoken in South Gujarat)**

	<b>Standard</b>	<b>Surti</b>	
a	śāk	hāk	curry
	sāro	hāro	well
	daś	dah	ten

The s of the standard variety changes to h in the dialect.

b	āvyo	āvyo	came
	māryo	māryo	hit

In the dialect the consonants in the two syllables are switched.

5. **Parsi (spoken in areas that are inhabited by Persians)**

When the Parsis from Iran migrated to Gujarat they became assimilated within the Gujarati community and spoke Gujarati. Yet they maintained some of the Persian language features.

	<b>Standard</b>	<b>Parsi</b>	
a	paḍyo	pariyo	fell
	malyo	mariyo	met

The 'd' and 'l' consonants of the Past Tense suffix in the standard variety changes to 'r' in the Parsi dialect.

b	paṇi	pani	water
	paṇ	pan	but

The cerebral nasal sound in the standard variety changes to the dental nasal in the Parsi dialect.

6. **Vahora (spoken in Vora)**

Voras, Memons and Khojas are said to be converts from Hinduism to Islam. These speakers of Gujarati cerebralise the dental consonants (Bakshi 1981).

	<b>Standard</b>	<b>Vahora</b>	
a	tamāruN	ṭamāruN	yours
b	badhā	baḍhā	all

All these dialects are still prevalent in South Africa. However, due to the Group Areas Act of 1950, the Gujarati speakers of various dialects were brought together in a specific area, making it difficult for the regional dialects to remain unchanged for any particular group. Only those who were first and second generation speakers could identify a specific dialect. The succeeding generations came to use a mixture of these dialects. Nevertheless, the Gujarati speakers are once again residing in different provinces of South Africa and the regional peculiarities are clearly emerging amongst the speakers in South Africa as will be outlined in the next section.

### Gujarati as Spoken in South Africa

It is a natural tendency of humans to find ways out of difficult situations. Sanskrit is considered by many as a complex language and therefore, as other languages evolved from it, simpler words were 'coined'. Examine the transformation of Sanskrit words *gṛha* to *ghar* and *dugdha* to *dudha* and the Arabic word *farka* to *faraka* in Gujarati. Pronunciation of the transformed words is perceived to be easier than that of the Sanskrit and Arabic words.

Ignorance and illiteracy are also responsible for language change in the Gujarati language. At first, a child acquires a language by hearing and observing a parent speak. Later when a child acquires formal education, he learns a standard language. A person who has not had formal education in a particular language will not be able to distinguish the correct pronunciation of a word. Therefore he/she begins to use other variations. Examples of such phonetic changes include the following: *kṛṣṇa* which becomes *kruṣṇa* or *kisan*, *vanishā* becomes *vaneśya*, *jñan* becomes *gnān*.

Aitchison (1991:27) discusses typological reconstruction which is based on the insight that languages can be divided into a number of basic types each with its own set of characteristics. This is a further development from what Lockwood (1972) had described about the salient features of the Indo-European family of languages. English, for example, can be categorized as a subject-verb-object (SVO) language, since it places the object after the verb e.g., *The boy eats an apple*. The reverse happens in subject-object-verb (SOV) languages such as Hindi, Japanese and Gujarati. In SOV languages,

the past tense transitive verb has to agree in number and gender with the object. For example, the English sentence, *Rama ate the bread*, when translated into Gujarati, becomes *rāme rotlo khādho*. Both *rotlo* (the object noun) and *khadho* (past tense transitive verb) have as their suffixes “o” reflecting the masculine categorization of the object noun and its agreement with the past tense transitive verb. Therefore if a noun from SVO language is borrowed and used by a SOV language there is likely to be a grammatical change since the borrower, being conscious of the importance of the gender categorisation of the borrowed word, may have to assign a male or female categorisation to a noun that may be gender-neuter in the language from which it comes. There are instances where the neutral categorisation of a noun may be maintained in the borrowing language.

Gujarati has undergone subtle language change after the standardisation process. During the British rule over India for almost two centuries all the Indian languages ‘borrowed’ words from the English language. Gumperz (1982:66) defines borrowing as the introduction of single words or short, frozen, idiomatic phrases from one language into another. In South Africa the Gujarati language borrows words from languages such as English, Afrikaans and the indigenous African languages. These have become part of the language, producing some interesting results. One of the reasons for borrowing could be that there are no suitable words in Gujarati which could express the exact meaning of the borrowed words.

Consider the word ‘cake’ in English which is a neuter noun. In KwaZulu-Natal ‘cake’ is used as a feminine noun by the Gujarati speakers. Therefore a person would say *men ek cake banayī* (SOV) (*lit trans: I cake made*). Here the feminine suffix *vi* of the past tense verb *banayī* denotes the feminine category associated with the noun ‘cake’. The same noun ‘cake’ is used as a masculine noun by Gujarati speakers in the Eastern Cape, resulting in *men ek cake banavyo*. In this sentence, the masculine suffix *vyo* of the verb *banavyo* denotes the masculine category assignment to the noun ‘cake’. In the Gujarati language a transitive verb in the past tense must agree with the noun. Another example is the use of the English neuter noun ‘bus’. In KwaZulu-Natal it is used as a feminine noun and one may say *bus āvij* (*The bus came*). In Gauteng ‘bus’ is used as a masculine noun saying that

*bus āvyo*. In each case the past tense verb agrees with the noun in terms of the grammatical categories, gender and number.

The Gujarati dictionary lists these borrowed English words and assigns the neutral category to *bus* as well as *cake*. However, due to the sanctions applied by India during the Apartheid rule, South African Gujarati speakers had very little interaction with their mother country during this period and as a result of the absence of scholars, education books, newspapers and films, there was a gap in acquiring and passing on knowledge especially to the newer generations. As a result, there was no fixed rule about gender assignment when using 'borrowed' words. The borrowed words were intergrated morphologically and syntactically into the grammatical system of Gujarati. Semantically, in some instances (like the examples cited above), the gender category changed from occupying the neutral category in English to the feminine or masculine category in Gujarati depending on the geographical location of the speaker.

In South Africa some Gujarati words have been replaced permanently by borrowed words as the original words are now considered archaic. For instance, the Gujarati word *mej* (*table*), listed in the Gujarati dictionary and originally borrowed from Portuguese, is not used in South Africa any longer. Gujarati speakers use the word 'table' nowadays, including those who know the Gujarati equivalent.

English is not the only language from which Gujarati has borrowed. There are many words that are borrowed from isiZulu. The Gujarati speakers, who lived in areas away from the city centres, were in close contact with the speakers of isiZulu language and employed many on their small farms. It is therefore not uncommon to find words from isiZulu, particularly those referring to food items when there were no precise Gujarati equivalents. Words such as *isinkobe* (a type of food preparation with beans and (stamp) mealies) and *uphuthu* (a food mixture like mealie-meal) are constantly used by the Gujarati speakers. Both these words have plural forms and are gender-neuter in isiZulu. Unlike the *cake* examples explained previously, these words maintain their gender-neuter feature when used in Gujarati. A person will say *kobe kahdhuN* or *puthu khadhuN*, the N denoting neuter gender. In this example the past tense verb agrees with the neuter noun. Morphologically, the prefixes *izi(n)* and *u* in the respective

examples are elided as Gujarati does not reflect number in the way that isiZulu does, that is, by the use of noun prefixes.

There are also words that are borrowed from Afrikaans. Some of the words that have appeared in Gujarati conversation are *ja* in place of *yes*, *bru* which may be understood as an abbreviation of *broer* (*brother*) and *swaar* (*brother-in-law*). These borrowings occur not because there are lexical gaps in Gujarati. For instance, for each of the borrowed words cited here, there are corresponding Gujarati words, namely, *ji, bhāi* and *banevi* respectively. These words are used commonly among the younger generations for social reasons and are often labelled as 'Indian slang'.

There are also other features of Gujarati language change which have been noted in the spoken and written language. Over the decades of separation from the mother-country and also due to the influence of the western culture, the first names of persons in the new generations have undergone much transformation and have become anglicised. For various reasons, the younger generations are less willing to use the standard form. Some people deny and reject the origin of a name, preferring the 'transformed' name as the correct one. Consider the following:

- |   |        |           |
|---|--------|-----------|
| a | śaran  | > Sharon  |
| b | kiśan  | > Chris   |
| c | magan  | > Megan   |
| d | jaśikā | > Jessica |

An interesting development concerning language change occurred in the late nineteen seventies. There was a decline in the number of pupils attending the local Gujarati schools in South Africa (Desai:1992). There was also apathy among Gujarati speakers towards the language and the peoples' attitude had been negative towards maintenance. A prominent community member and author from East London, Mr R. L. Harry, presented a proposal to the Maha Gujarati Parishad Education Committee in which he attempted to modify the Gujarati language by omitting the muted and conjunct consonants from the language. He felt that the young learners of the Gujarati language found it difficult to write and speak the language because of the muted and conjunct consonants. There should be no strict rules about the long and short vowels in the spelling of the words. He called this a 'break-through' method.

The Maha Gujarati Parishad Education committee did not accept his proposal. There were many flaws in the proposal. If the language were changed then the future generation would not be able to read the rich treasure of Gujarati literature, written in the last five hundred years, which was the 'heart and soul' of the community. The language would not have a standard form of which the Gujaratis were extremely proud. The change in spelling could also mean a change in meaning which could further complicate the understanding of the language by the adults.

## **Conclusion**

Desai (1997) has shown that though the Gujarati language is proportionately the most spoken language amongst Indian languages spoken in South Africa, there is a definite change in the patterns of usage among the different generations of Gujarati speakers in South Africa. Using a philological perspective, this article has outlined some of the changes in the Gujarati language through time, revealing the dialects spoken in South Africa. It has also probed some of the factors that have contributed to the eminent changes although this expose is neither comprehensive nor exhaustive. As is the case with other Indian languages, the next few decades may see a further decrease of the number of speakers of Gujarati language. The process and status of Gujarati language usage need to be documented. Research that traces the changes in Gujarati through time in a given community can make a significant contribution to Sociolinguistics in general and to the status of minority languages in particular.

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