

EXPLORING KINSHIP TERMS USED BY YOUNG SINDHI SPEAKERS IN KARACHI, PAKISTAN

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Abstract

Young Sindhi Speakers in Karachi have been acquiring language of wider communication Urdu, and language of education and opportunities English; at the expense of their heritage language Sindhi (Abbasi, 2019). As a result, young speakers use different lexical categorizations in their daily life. Therefore, the present study explores the kinship terms being used by young Sindhi speakers in their home and the reasons for using those terms in the multilingual settings of Karachi. This case study is used under a qualitative research design to understand which kinship terms are used by young Sindhi speakers. Using a semi-structured interview guide as a data collection instrument, ten young Sindhi speakers were interviewed. The population was selected using purposive criterion sampling technique. Data was analyzed using frequency and thematic analysis. The findings of the study shows that young Sindhi speakers are using a mixed blend of Sindhi, Urdu and English kinship terms in their home settings. In most of the cases, the terms have been borrowed from Urdu and English. Also, some of the participants used both Sindhi and Urdu kinship terms to address different immediate relatives. However, English terms are more common for distant male and female young cousins. The reasons for using these kinship terms include attitude of young Sindhi speakers, social mobility and exposure to dominant languages.

Keywords: Kinship terms, lexical choice, attitude, young Sindhi speakers, Karachi.

Introduction

Kinship terms are defined as linguistic expressions used to classify and identify people within a family or social group, based on their relationships to one another (Fortes, 2017). Kins are classified according to their societal responsibilities (Gill, 2018). Kinship concepts are essential to comprehend a culture's social structure. They show how relationships are socially created, valued, and defined throughout generations in addition to reflecting the biological links that bind people together.

There are different categories for universal kinship terms. First is lineal, which refers to direct ancestors and descendants in blood relationships. The second is collateral, which describes relationships between people who are not in a direct line of descent but are related through siblings, aunts, uncles, and cousins. Third is affinal, which refers to relationships developed through marriage rather than direct biological descent. Fourth is fictive, which reflects social bonds and shared experiences that create kin-like relationships. Furthermore, these categories are also based on age, gender, or generation. (Ibid).

Studying kinship terms is important because they offer insights into how various cultures conceptualize, structure and address social relationships. Social roles, cultural values, and the linguistic development of a particular group can be learned by examining kinship terms. Anthropologists, sociologists, and linguists can explain how different cultures define family, gender, age, and authority while using these terms. Empirical study within the context of Pakistan was conducted (Khan, 2012) which compared the Urdu and English kinship terms and found out that the two languages are culturally different yet blending and borrowing of lexical terminologies is common among them. Especially in Karachi people prefer to use English terms over Urdu ones as they may not be familiar with Urdu lexical kinship term. Similarly, Sindhi speakers currently use several kinship terms. But, it was observed during informal interactions that Sindhi speakers used Urdu or English kinship terms in social

interactions, therefore, this study explores if the younger generation still favors using these terms.

Objective of the Study

To explore the kinship terms used by young Sindhi speakers in Karachi.

Research Question

What are the different kinship terms used by the young Sindhi speakers in Karachi?

Literature Review

In the 1860s, L.H. Morgan made the first systematic classification of kinship systems, which served as the basis for kinship studies (Fortes, 2017). Kinship terms have been studied widely, summing up different classification and terminologies that are used based on discrete parameters. Usmanova and Ismatullayeva (2020) also asserted that every language in the world uses a unique system of kinship terminology. For instance, Septiari (2023) investigated the kinship terms used in Balinese and English. The data on Balinese kinship were gathered through observations of daily interactions within the community, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 participants. In contrast, the data on English kinship were sourced from existing research. The findings revealed that the Balinese kinship system features a variety of kinship terms that differ based on caste, making it more complex than the English kinship system. In another study, Gusanto et al. (2025) reported that family and other community members are addressed using a variety of kinship phrases in Lemukih village, Bali, each of which reflects social status and respect. Common among the middle and lower classes, the term 'Bape' is used to refer to "father" and can also be used to refer to outsiders and local elders. The lower and middle classes use 'memek' to refer to "mother" or "old women". The words 'Kaki' and 'Kumpi' refer to grandfather and grandmother respectively, and can be applied to any elderly person, including complete strangers.

Furthermore, Neelakshi and Amr (2021) discussed kinship terms that are employed in Syrian Arabic and Hindi. The research investigated terms used for blood relatives and in-laws in these languages. Data were collected from dictionaries, questionnaires, and observations. According to the study, these languages have extensive kinship structures that consider both maternal and paternal ancestry. The results demonstrated the importance of family ties in both cultures. While respect for seniors is highly valued in both Syrian and Indian societies, the study also points out that age plays a more significant role in Indian society in relation to using kinship terms.

In Eastern cultures, people have extended family ties due to which they use various kinship terms to define their relationships whereas the West has more nuclear family structures, so they have limited kinship terms. Khan (2012) conducted a comparative analysis of Urdu and English terms. The scholar also stated that Urdu and English are not only two different languages, but two different cultures. Therefore, there is a distinct variation in kinship terms available in these languages. For instance, in Pakistan, people may use double kinship terms for one family member due to inter-family marriages. As explained by the scholar, one's *mammu* (mother's brother) could become a *susar* (father-in-law) as well, if one marries *mammu's* daughter.

In addition to that, Rácz et al. (2019) demonstrated that a rate of replacement of kinship terms is more strongly connected with their usage frequency than core vocabulary items. Furthermore, the residual variation in replacement rates is also related to the genealogical distance of the kin terms. According to the scholars, this trend results in social changes that cause variations within the semantic categories of kinship terms, which are not commonly seen in core vocabulary. They suggest that comprehending the extent of social change is critical for interpreting changes in kinship systems and predicting larger cultural evolution and system changes. This change may be observed in the younger generation because of

globalization. Metsäranta et al. (2023) also asserted that kinship terms can also be borrowed. The scholars stated that most borrowed kinship terms are used for denoting spouses, spouse's siblings, and sibling's spouses in Uralic languages, and universally for mother and father. For instance, Bayo (2024) reported borrowing Kiswahili kinship terms in the Iraqw language in Tanzania. The results demonstrated that every kinship term taken from Kiswahili had an equivalent in Iraqw, suggesting that the purpose of the borrowing was Kiswahili being the dominant language in Tanzania. Some native Iraqw kinship terms have been lost as a result of this type of borrowing among young Iraqw speakers. Moreover, Malik (2010) reported borrowing of Urdu kinship terms into Punjabi, considering their language contact a significant reason. Recently, Korn (2020) also studied the pattern of Balochi kinship terms. The scholar found out that Balochi speakers use kinship terms borrowed from different languages. For instance, they borrow Persian terms of address for father, mother and siblings, whereas for grandchildren and offsprings, they prefer Pashto kinship terms, and for grandparents, they pick terms of address from Brahui language. A significant finding was that they did not use these terms in one specific language.

Particularly, Khalil and Mohammad (2023) explored the choice of kinship terms by young Bahmaie speakers. They reported the variation in Bahmaie kinship terms, and their Persian equivalents based on age, gender and education level. A survey consisting of 32 items was given to 275 Bahmaie speakers in four age groups: those aged 15 to 40 and older. The results showed that while speakers of 40-years and older adhered to use Bahmaie terminology, younger speakers (15–19 years old) preferred Persian terms. As a result of migration, language contact, and Persian's standing as a high-status language, young speakers were observed with a growing willingness to use Persian.

Existing research has extensively explored the use of kinship terms in different languages, emphasizing the complex patterns based on preferences of caste and class system, influence of dominant languages or borrowing terms from other languages. However, limited studies have investigated the specific preferences of young speakers, particularly within Pakistan. Furthermore, Sindhi kinship terms have been reported in a detailed study (Gidwani, 1978), but have not been studied systematically in Pakistani context. Thus, this research will contribute to the field by providing empirical insights into the kinship terms used by young Sindhi speakers where they are exposed to Urdu and English more.

Methodology

The present study aims to explore the different kinship terms and its reasons by young Sindhi speakers within the multilingual context of Karachi. For this purpose, a case study under qualitative research study has been employed. Qualitative research design provides in-depth exploration of the problem being investigated and explored. (Creswell, 2014). As the study focuses on exploring the use of kinship terms and reasons for using these terms by young Sindhi speakers in Karachi, therefore this method best suits the study.

The population of the study includes Sindhi speakers residing in Karachi. The target population includes young Sindhi speakers. Sample was selected from the target population using purposive criterion sampling. As the study aims to explore the kinship terms used by the young Sindhi speakers therefore purposive sampling was selected. The participants were selected based on a criterion. The criteria include a) young Sindhi speaker enrolled in a university b) is a multilingual speaker c) residing in Karachi for more than five years. As a result, data was collected from ten young Sindhi speakers (05 male and 05 female) who fulfil the criteria. The sample size of ten participants was enough as the data reached the saturation point. Before the actual study, piloting of the study was done with two participants for clarity. Piloting enabled the researcher to edit few kinship terms and questions. Before taking part in the study, the consent forms were filled by the participants and it was assured

that their identity would be kept confidential. The data was to be used for research purposes only.

Data was collected using semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews provide first-hand information about the different kinship terms and the different reasons for the use of these terms (Creswell, 2014). The researcher used a Kinship terms profile (Appendix A) and inquired about the kinship term (form of address) from the participants. Afterwards, the researcher inquired about the different reasons for using these terms. The profile was filled by the researcher and the responses were recorded using mobile phone and field notes.

The kinship terms were analyzed using frequency analysis as it would be more appropriate to show the different kinship terms using by the young Sindhi speakers. However, the reasons for using these terms were analyzed thematically using codes, categories, sub-themes and themes. The transcription symbols have been used for Sindhi and Urdu script (Abrar, 2024; Ali, 2018).

Findings

Kinship Terms by Young Sindhi Speakers

Based on the analysis of data, Table 1 below shows that P1, P2 and P3 used Sindhi kinship terms for all relatives, and P6 mostly used Sindhi kinship terms, except for father. However, P4 and P5 used Urdu kinship terms for all relatives. Besides them, P7 used both Sindhi and Urdu mixed kinship terms for different blood relatives. Interestingly, P8, P9 and P10 preferred all Sindhi, Urdu and English kinship terms for different relatives. P10 used the greatest number of English kinship terms for relatives as compared to P8 and P9.

Table 1
Family Kinship Terms

Term	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9	P10
pe'u Father	baba sae~	abba	baba	Abu	Abu	baba sae~, Abu	Abba, baba Abu	Dad	Pop's	Dad
maa'u Mother	amma	ammaR	amma	Ammi jaan	Ammi	amma jeejal	Ami, amma	amaR	Ami	Mummy
bha'u Brother	ada	Bha'u, bha, ada	bhaa, ada	Bhai jan,	Bhae	bha'u, bhaa	bhaa Bhae	bha'u	Bhai	Bro
bhe~R Sister	adi	Bhe~R	adi, bhe~R	Aapi,	Baji Api	adi,	adi, bhe~R	bhe~R api	Baji adi	Sis
DaaDo	DaaDo	DaaDo waDo	baba	Dada	Dada	DaaDo	DaaDo, dada	DaaDo	DaaDo	Dada
DaaDi	DaaDi	DaaDi	DaaDi amma baba	Dadi	Dadi	waDi amma	DaaDi amma	Dadi	Dadi	Dadi
naano	abba, baba waDo	abba, baba		Nana, Abbu	Nana abu	naana waDo	naano, nana	naano	naana	naano
naani	naani	naani	naani	Nano	Nano	amma miThi, amma	naani amma	naani	naani	Nano

Note: Yellow coded shows Sindhi Terms, Blue: Urdu and Green: English

Table 2 below shows the frequencies for different kinship terms as used by the Young Sindhi speakers.

Table 2
Frequency of Family Kinship Terms

Term	Sindhi	Urdu	English	Mix (S+U)
pe'u	30%	20%	30%	20%
maa'u	50%	30%	10%	10%
bha'u	50%	30%	10%	10%
bhe~R	50%	20%	10%	20%
Daada	60%	30%	-	10%
DaaDi	50%	50%	-	-
naano	70%	20%	-	10%
naani	60%	40%	-	-

The analysis of the kinship terms in Table 2 shows that 30% participants used Sindhi kinship term for father (pe'u) '*abba, baba and baba sae~*' and 30% used English kinship term '*Dad and Pop's*' while 20% used Urdu kinship term '*Abbu*'. In the same manner 20% of the participants used both Sindhi and Urdu kinship terms.

Similarly, 50% of the participants used Sindhi kinship terms for mother (ma'u) '*amma, ammaR, amma jeejal*' and 30% used '*ammi and ammi jaan*' Urdu kinship terms. Likewise, 10% of the participants used both Urdu and Sindhi kinship term for mother and 10% used '*mummy*', an English term for mother in their home settings.

For brother (bha'u), 50% of the participants used Sindhi kinship term '*bha, bhao and ada*'. The term '*ada*' is used for cousins and as a mark of respect as well. Also, 30% of the participants used more than one Sindhi kinship term '*bha'u, bha, and ada*' for male sibling. However, 20% of the participants used Urdu '*bhae and bhae jaan*' and 10% use English '*Bro*' for brother and 10% used both Urdu and Sindhi kinship terms in their homes.

In the same manner, 50% use Sindhi kinship term '*adi and bhe~R*' for sister (bhe~R) and 20% use Urdu '*baji and api*' for female siblings in Sindhi. Also, 10% of the participant use *Sis* (English) term for sister in Sindhi household, additionally, 20% use both Sindhi and Urdu kinship terms for sister within family.

In the same way 60% of the participants used Sindhi kinship term '*DaaDo, Daada wadaa and baba*' and 30% used '*Dada*' (Urdu) kinship term and 10% used both Sindhi and Urdu for paternal grandfather. One of the participants used '*baba*' term for grandfather as well, which is also used for father in Sindhi homes. Similarly, 50% of the participants used Sindhi kinship term '*dadi and dadi amma*' for paternal grandmother and 50% used Urdu kinship term '*dadi*'. None of the participant used mixed or English term to refer to their paternal grandmother. Also, 70% of the participants used Sindhi kinship term '*naano*' for maternal grandfather, some of the participants used *baba* for nano as well while others use '*abba and baba waDo*' as well. In the same manner, 20% used Urdu term '*naana*' and 10% used both Sindhi and Urdu kinship term in their homes. Also, 60% of the participants used Sindhi kinship term '*naani*' for maternal grandmother, some of them also used '*amma miThi*' in their homes. Approximately 40% of the participants used '*nano or nani amma*' (Urdu) in their household.

English Kinship Terms

The participants reported that they use English term cousin to refer to young relatives from paternal and maternal side like *cchacho jo put'r, Chachi je dheu`, puffi , puffaaT, puffaR, marooT and marootryaRi*. One of the participants recalled that he mostly uses '*the name of the younger cousins*'. Another participant remarked '*we use personal names instead of kinship terms*'. Similarly, another participant said that "*we use personal names for relative*

belonging to urban cities and residing here and traditional Sindhi kinship terms for distant cousins in rural areas or another city". Overall, English terms were favored more by both male and female young Sindhi participants than Sindhi or Urdu kinship terms.

Discussion & Conclusion

The findings of the present study were limited as the aim of the study was only to explore the kinship terms among young Sindhi speakers in Karachi. Also, the data was collected from ten participants.

Kinship terms are one of the vital ways of preserving your culture, traditional and heritage language. In the multilingual cities, where young speakers are shifting to dominant language, it is vital to explore the usage of kinship terms and promote them as well within home domain. The findings of the study shows that the kinship terms are shifting from Sindhi to Urdu to English. In some cases, young Sindhi speakers prefer to use both Urdu and Sindhi terms. Similarly, it was reported that English terms are more frequent for younger relatives. Participants used a mixed blend of terms for different relatives within the same family. It was also observed that almost 50% of the participants use Sindhi kinship terms for father, mother, brother, sister, maternal and paternal grandparents in their home for different relatives. Similarly, 30% young speakers are using Urdu kinship terms while 10% use English and 10% of the participants used a mixed blend of Sindhi and Urdu terms to refer members within their immediate family.

As it has already been observed in the literature that kinship terms are replaced or borrowed, similar reflections could be seen in the findings of this study (Metsäranta et al., 2023; Rácz et al., 2019) as well. However, future study can be conducted inquiring about the kinship terms in rural cities of Sindh province. This way, a comparative study may also be conducted for exploring the kinship terms among young Sindhi speakers in urban and rural areas of city. Furthermore, such a study can be conducted to explore kinship terms among other indigenous language speakers as well.

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Appendix A
Kinship Terms in Sindhi

Title	Relations	Forms of Address
<i>pe'u</i>	Father	
<i>maa'u</i>	Mother	
<i>bha'u</i>	Brother	
<i>bhe~R</i>	Sister	
<i>bhaJae</i>	Brother wife	
<i>bhaetio</i>	Brother's son	
<i>bhaitrii</i>	Brother's daughter	
<i>bheRveo</i>	Sister's Husband	
<i>bha~Re'j</i>	Sister's son	
<i>bha~ejee</i>	Sister's daughter	
<i>DaaDo</i>	Father's father (Paternal Grandfather)	
<i>DaaDi</i>	Father's mother (Paternal grandmother)	
<i>chacho</i>	Father's elder brother (Uncle)	

<i>chacho</i>	Father's younger brother/brother (Uncle)	
<i>chachi</i>	Father's elder brother's wife	
<i>chachi</i>	Father's younger brother wife /brother's wife	
<i>chacho jo put'r</i>	Father's brother son (Cousin)	
<i>chacho je dhe'u</i>	Father's brother daughter (Cousin)	
<i>puffi</i>	Father's sister	
<i>puffaR</i>	Father's sister's husband	
<i>puffi jo put'r/puffaat</i>	Father's sister's son	
<i>puffi je dhe'u/puffaraRe</i>	Father's sister's daughter	
<i>chacho</i>	Father's Male Cousins	
<i>chachi</i>	Father's female Cousins	
	Father's cousin children	
<i>naano</i>	Mother's father (Maternal Grandfather)	
<i>naani</i>	Mother's mother (Maternal Grandmother)	
<i>maamo</i>	Mother's brother	
<i>maami</i>	Mother's brother wife	
<i>maaroT</i>	Mother's brother son	
<i>maaroTryaRe~</i>	Mother's brother daughter	
<i>maasi</i>	Mother's Sister	
<i>maasaR</i>	Mother's sister's husband	
<i>masaat</i>	Mother's sister's son	
<i>masatiyaRi~</i>	Mother's sister's daughter	
<i>maamo</i>	Mother's cousin	
<i>DaaDo</i>	Paternal Grandfather	
<i>DaaDi</i>	Paternal Grandmother	
<i>paR DaaDo</i>	Father's father's father	
<i>paR DaaDi</i>	Father's father's mother	
<i>naano</i>	Maternal Grandfather	
<i>naani</i>	Maternal Grandmother	
<i>paR naano</i>	Mother's father's father	
<i>paR naani</i>	Mother's father's mother	