

Abstract

A Sociolinguistic Study of Khurkhul

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The current work is an attempt at a study of Khurkhul from a sociolinguistic point of view.

Khurkhul is the native tongue of the inhabitants of the Khurkhul village, which is located in Imphal West-1, one of the nine districts of Manipur, a north-eastern province of India. It is 15/16 km away from Imphal, the capital of Manipur.

Khurkhul is a variety of Meiteilon. Thus it comes under the Kuki-Chin language family.

According to 2011 population Census, the Khurkhul village has 6450 inhabitants, of which 3300 are males while 3150 are females (which include the present author). However, it has a higher literacy rate compared to the general literacy rate of Manipur. In 2011, the literacy rate of the Khurkhul village was 78.16% compared to 76.94% of Manipur.

Khurkhul is thus a critically endangered language. However, the old generation, unlike the new generation increasingly shifting to Hindi and English, still uses Khurkhul in every domain.

The Khurkhuls are *Lois*, who called themselves *Ariba Meitei* meaning ‘the original Meiteis’. There is, however, no written record of the origins of the Khurkhuls. However, the oral narratives passing down through generations give us some clues about their origins.

The current research was carried out on Khurkhul as it is spoken by the old generation of the community who are almost detached from speakers of other languages.

Language reflects the life and culture of a society and hence the development of sociolinguistics as an independent discipline, as a means to understand different aspects of the life of a human society. The present study is thus an attempt to study aspects of the Khurkhul society by describing and analysing its special vocabulary, i.e. kinship terms and colour terms; gender as reflected in Khurkhul; linguistic (and also non-linguistic) means of politeness the language adopts, and its unique proverbs and taboos, vividly reflecting the Khurkhul views about the world and human life, and their own cultural, religious and other beliefs.

The study is based on the data collected through an extensive field work done over a period of time. Part of the data also comes from the current author’s competency as a native speaker of Khurkhul.

The dissertation consists of seven chapters followed by our concluding remarks and an Appendix.