

The Intersection of Geography and Dialect: A Study of the Wagadi Dialect of Southern Rajasthan

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Abstract

Wagad region is located in the Southern part of Rajasthan state. This region has its own specific ethnic identity and is named after the dialect Wagadi, which is spoken in the region. Wagadi dialect is a deviation of Gujarati language. Initially the geographical conditions of Wagad region were such that it had always been very difficult for the people of the region to go to either Madhya Pradesh or Mewar, whereas it had always been very convenient for the people of Wagad region to go to adjoining places in the state of Gujarat. The transportation facilities available in the region have played an important role in the emergence of different varieties of the dialect, as well as in the formation of the overall nature of the region. Geographical conditions of the different areas of Wagad region have served to restrict their connectivity with other areas which has resulted in the proximity with different areas. This proximity with different adjoining areas has ultimately determined the interaction and influences of different contiguous places. It causes the emergence of five distinct varieties of Wagadi dialect. The paper explores how geographical conditions of the area have affected the culture and dialect of the Wagad region. It also discusses how the geographical conditions of the Wagad region as well as the surrounding areas played an important role in the emergence of new dialectical varieties in the region.

Keywords: Geographical conditions; Influence; Proximity; Transportation facilities; Wagad region; Wagadi dialect.

A language is influenced by the interaction of a speaker of one language community with the speaker of other language communities. This interaction is affected and influenced by many factors like sex, age, profession, social class, socio-economic status, ethnic group, etc. Proximity is an important factor which determines and influences all other factors which can affect a language. Two distinct language communities may be close to each other in terms of physical distance but geographical restrictions such as a mountain, water, dense forest or a plateau may restrict the level of interaction between the two communities. Thus, geographical conditions determine the proximity between the two areas. Peter Trudgill writes in his book *Sociolinguistics: An Introduction to Language and Society*:

Dialectologists have found that regional dialect boundaries often coincide with *geographical* barriers, such as mountains, swamps or rivers: for example, all local dialect speakers in the areas of Britain north of the river Humber (Between Lincolnshire and Yorkshire) still have a monophthong in words like house ('hoose' [hu:s]), whereas speakers south of the river have had some kind of [haus] type diphthong for several hundred years. It also seems to be the case that the greater the *geographical* distance between two dialects the more dissimilar they are linguistically... (35)

Geographical conditions of any region determine connectivity of the region and ultimately play an important role in determining the cultural tradition and language of the region. The geographical conditions of Wagad region are such that it has always been very difficult for the people of the region to go to either Madhya Pradesh or Mewar, whereas it had always been very convenient for the people of Wagad region to go to adjoining places in the state of Gujarat. Dense forest area between Wagad region and Madhya Pradesh state had always made the connectivity between these two areas very difficult. Likewise, the Plateau of Vindhya had always kept the people of Pratapgarh and Chhittorgarh districts away from Wagad region. In the same manner, sea level height of Aravalli Mountain Range in Udaipur region and the Wagad region and the dense forest had always been a great hurdle between the connectivity of Wagad region and Udaipur region.

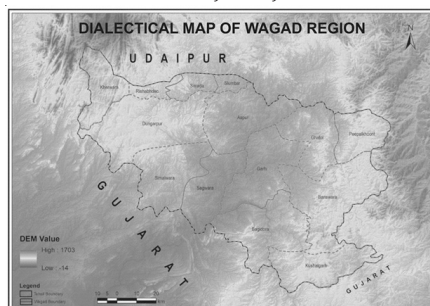
The evidences of good connectivity of Wagad region with adjoining places in the state of Gujarat can be traced in folk literature of the region.

कटे थी आवें नें करे जावे हीरो रेबारी रें।

Kate thi aawe kate jawe Hiro rebari re

मालवे थी आवें नें गुजरात जावे हीरो रेबारी रें।

Malwe thi aawe ne Gujarat jawe Hiro rebari re



(The map above is drawn on the basis of the data collected from the field work carried out in the region with help of GPS technology with help of a cartographer Mr. Kailash Meena.)

The present map of Wagad region depicts geographical conditions of the region. Red color in the map represents sea level height, whereas green color represents lower height as well as the density of the forest in the map.

Connectivity with regions close to Wagad region:-

Geographically, Madhya Pradesh is in the eastern side, Pratapgarh is in the northern side, Udaipur is in the North Western side and Gujarat is in the southern side of the Wagad region. Thus, the boundary of the region has three major adjoining regions. On the western side is Madhya Pradesh and its boundary is 135 km long; in the North Western side covering two districts of Rajasthan state the boundary is 170 km long and in the Southern side of Gujarat state, the boundary is 225 km long.

Pratapgarh and Wagad Region:-

Mahi River forms the boundary of Wagad region and Pratapgarh districts. Right after the Mahi River, the plateau of the Vindhya range starts in Pratapgarh district. Till this date, Pipalkhut is the first town of Pratapgarh district on the banks of Mahi river. There are very few villages between Pipalkhut and Pratapgarh district headquarters which covers a long area of about 40 km. The population density of these villages is also very low. Thus, geographically Mahi river and Plateau of Vindhya range form the boundaries of Wagad region and Pratapgarh districts and make the connectivity of the people of both the regions very difficult.

Udaipur and Wagad Region:-

The Western part of Dungarpur district is covered by the Aravalli Mountain range. The Aravalli Mountain range starts from Gujarat and covers Dungarpur district partially, as well as a major part of Udaipur district before ending near Delhi. The average height above the sea level of Dungarpur district is approximately 250 meters and the average height above the sea level of Udaipur district is approximately 530 meters. The average sea level height of Aravalli Mountain range in Gujarat is only 150 meters. Owing to this, almost all major rivers of the Wagad region Mahi, Som, Jakham and Anas move towards Gujarat state and ultimately fall into the Bay of Khambhat. The flow of the rivers and the lowering heights of the mountain range make the people of Wagad region connect better with Gujarat as it is more convenient compared to their connectivity with Udaipur district.

Madhya Pradesh and Wagad Region:-

The boundary between Banswara and Madhya Pradesh state is 135 km long. Two tehsils, Danpur and Kushalgarh of Banswara district, are on the

border of the state of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. These two tehsils had always been the part of Wagad region and these had never been politically governed by any ruler of Madhya Pradesh. The rulers of Malwa never showed their interest in these areas as there were dense forests at that time, and were dominated by the tribals. As the political centre of these areas had always been Banswara, the people of these areas always preferred to come to Banswara for their regular needs. Consequently, their connectivity with Madhya Pradesh state had always remained limited.

Gujarat and Wagad Region:-

The boundary between Wagad region and Gujarat state is 225 km long. As has been pointed out earlier, the average height of the Aravalli hills in Gujarat is very low as compared to the height of the range in Mewar region. Further, the climate and geographical conditions of this region are similar to the climate and geographical conditions of Gujarat state. Thus, the geographical conditions have always increased the proximity of the people of Wagad region with the state of Gujarat.

A few people of the region also stated during the course of personal interviews that in ancient times, the people of this region used to go to Ider, Modasa, Dahod, and Saambarkantha cities of Gujarat state for trading, medical facilities and employment. Thus, the interaction of the people of this region with the people of Gujarat had always been more frequent as compared to their interaction with the people of other regions. Consequently, the cultural traditions and language of the state of Gujarat have influenced the cultural traditions and dialect of Wagad region.

Earlier it is assumed that Wagadi dialect is spoken uniformly in the entire region. As a researcher in the field of Sociolinguistics and specifically Dialectology, the author looks at the Wagadi dialectical community with a fresh perspective based on the hypothesis that there are different varieties of the dialect in the same region. A closer look at the geographical conditions, as well as the development of the transportation facilities in Wagad region in the last few decades reveals that the connectivity of Wagad region had developed in four different adjoining regions. These are Kherwara, Kushalgarh, Danpur and Ghatol. The people of Kherwara area started going to their nearest city Modasa, Meghraj and other cities in Gujarat state. Similarly, people of Kushalgarh started going to their closer cities of Thandala in Madhya Pradesh and Dahod and Jhhalod in Gujarat. The people of Danpur area started going to Ratlam in Madhya Pradesh state and the people of Ghatol area started going to Pratapgarh, while the people of the town areas in the region developed their connectivity to other parts of the country.

Cross-cultural phenomenon affects the culture, traditions and dialect of any region. Socio-economically richer section of the society always influences the weaker class. In the same manner, the socio-economically richer sections of the adjoining areas have influenced the weaker parts of the region. Consequently, geographical variations determined the cross-cultural phenomenon of the region which ultimately resulted in dialectical variations in the region. Five different varieties of Wagadi dialect emerged in different parts of the region.

An intensive survey along with many personal interviews was carried out in the region to bring out the dialectical diversities as well as intelligibility in five specified locations of the region. Five villages were selected in each specified locations. Fifty respondents were selected in each village on the parameters of Age, Sex and Profession.

A wordlist of 135 words which are commonly used in day-to-day conversation in the routine lives of the respondents was executed in the survey. The data collected from the field work carried out in the five specified areas of the region reveals that different words are used to refer to the same word in various parts of the region. The differences between these varieties of the dialect can be traced on Lexical, Phonological and Grammatical levels.

To trace the differences on lexical level an example of the words used to refer to the word 'Palm' in different areas of the region is discussed in the paper. Different words are used to refer to the word 'Palm' in the region. The word अँतीली /aTili/ is used in Ghatol to refer to 'palm', whereas in Kushalgarh the word हातेली / haTeli / is used and the word हथेली / hatheli / is used in Dungarpur. The same word is pronounced as / hateli / हतेली / haTeli / in urban areas. However, the word आतली / aaTaLi / is used in Danpur and the word हतेली / haTeLi/ is used in the urban areas of the region to refer to the word 'palm'.

The survey data presents that there are many words in Wagadi dialect which have a single root word, yet they are pronounced in a different manner in various areas of the region. The root word used to refer to the word 'Ash' in the region is रकुडो / rakuDo / . However, the pronunciation of this word varies in various parts of the region. In Ghatol it is pronounced as राहुडो / rahuDo/ , in Danpur and the urban areas of the region it is pronounced as रकुडो / rakuDo/ , whereas in Kushalgarh it is रखोडुँ / rakhoDu/ and in Dungarpur urban areas it is रकुडो / rakhuDo/.

The first consonant sound of this word is alveolar trill sound 'र' /r/ and is pronounced with the same vowel sound /a/ in the entire region. However

in Ghatol, it is pronounced with the vowel sound /aa/ and becomes रा /ra/. Three different consonant sounds are used as the second sound of the word in various parts of the region. These are glottal fricative sound ह /h/ and two velar plosive sounds क /k/ and ख /kh/. Velaor plosive sound ख /kh/ is used with two vowels /u/ and /o/ in different parts of the region these become खु /khu/ and खो /kho/. Similarly, the last retroflex plosive sound ड /D/ is pronounced with two different sounds /o/ and /u/ in the region and these sounds become डो /Do/ and डु /Du/.

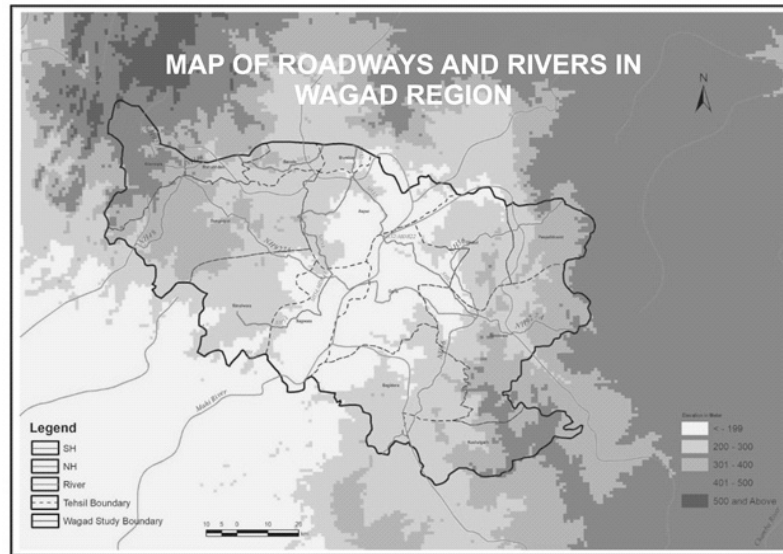
Data collected through field work shows how the differences can also be traced on grammatical levels in different varieties of wagadi dialect. Differently pronounced words are used in different parts of the region to refer to the words 'He' and 'It'. In Ghatol, Dungarpur rural and urban areas of the region pronounce /i/ is used to refer to both 'He' and 'It', whereas /vo/ pronoun is used to refer to 'It' in Danpur and Kushalgarh areas and /vu/ is used to refer to 'He' in Danpur area. However, /ve/ is used to refer to 'He' in Kushalgarh area.

The data analysis of the collected data also presents the differences that can be traced in the sentence structure in various parts of the region. Two types of sentence structures are used to refer to the sentence 'It is flying'. In different parts of the region, these are ई उडी र्यु है। /i uDi ryu he/ and ई उडे है। /i uDe he/. The suffix र्यु /ryu/ is used in the first sentence with the main verb उड /uD/ to express the complete meaning of the sentence, whereas in the second sentence no suffix is used with the verb to complete the meaning of the sentence.

There are many differences as well as similarities in Wagadi dialect spoken in different research locations. Though different words are used to refer to the same word in different research locations and these words are pronounced in a different manner, yet the root word remains the same in the entire region. As a result, the comprehension level in the entire Wagad region is more than 90%. A man from any location can understand and communicate with another man from any other location of the region. Still, he would certainly feel a level of difficulty and would be able to identify the differences between his dialect and the dialect spoken by other men from a different area.

Banswara and Dungarpur districts, along with a few villages from Pratapgarh and Udaipur districts, form the Wagad region. Banswara is the only district in Rajasthan state which is not connected with railways till date and Dungarpur district is also not very well connected with railways. Road transportation is the only means of connectivity in this region with

the adjoining places as well as other places. Road transportation is also restricted by the geographical conditions of the region, like water, dense forest mountains and plateau. Thus, the transportation facilities are very limited in this region till date.



(The map above is drawn on the basis of the data collected from the field work carried out in the region with help of GPS technology and with the help of a cartographer Mr. Kailash Meena.)

Geographical conditions and transportation facilities available in the region have played an important role in the emergence of different varieties of the dialect, as well as in the formation of the overall nature of the region. The geographical conditions of the region have compelled the people of this region to go to the contiguous areas in the state of Gujarat to meet their needs. This has ultimately influenced the culture and dialect of the region. The culture of this region is influenced by the culture of Gujarat, for example, the people of this region are fond of Garba dance and sweet taste in every item of the food. These are considered as the symbols of the culture of Gujarat. The influence of Gujarati language is so strong on Wagadi dialect that the people of the region informed the researcher that whenever they go outside the region, most of the time they are speculated to be inhabitants of Gujarat by the strangers. Other scholars who have carried out their research on Wagadi dialect have stated that Wagadi is a deviation of Gujarati language. In this connection, linguist L.D. Joshi in his book *Wagadi Boli Ka Swaroop*

Aur Uska Tulnatmak Adhyayan, mentions Shankarlal Trivedi, who has pointed out :

They speak the Wagadi form of language, which as a matter of fact, is a dialect of Gujarati with a little sprinkling of Malvi and Mewari dialects of Rajasthan, spoken in the adjacent regions to the east and north (L.D. Joshi 144).

Geographical proximity has played an important role in the emergence of different varieties of Wagadi dialect. Four locations out of the five specified locations are geographically connected with adjoining areas, however, the fifth specified location was the urban areas of the region which have good connectivity with other parts of the country. All of these adjoining locations practice absolutely different culture and speak different languages. The adjoining areas of Kherwara are Udaipur in Rajasthan and Modasa, Gandhinagar, Megharaj and Ahemdabad in the state of Gujarat, whereas the contiguous places of Kushalgarh area are Thandala in Madhya Pradesh and Jhhalod and Dahod in Gujarat. Likewise, the contiguous areas of Danpur region are Ratlam in Madhya Pradesh while the adjoining area of Ghatol is Pratapgarh district in Rajasthan state. Geographical conditions of the different areas of Wagad region have served to restrict their connectivity with other areas which has resulted in the proximity with different areas. This proximity with different adjoining areas has ultimately determined the interaction and influences of different contiguous places. It causes the emergence of five distinct varieties of Wagadi dialect.

Finally, it is imperative to note that the geographical conditions of the area have affected the culture and dialect of the Wagad region on two levels. The first level played an important role in determining the influence of culture and language of Gujarat state on the Wagad region. On the second level, it became one of the major factors in the emergence of five different varieties of Wagadi dialect in the region.

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