

## FROM PIDGIN TO CREOLE TO COLLAPSE: THE EVOLUTIONARY TRAJECTORY OF DAWOODI LANGUAGE

Afshan Ishfaq

[afshan.law@pu.edu.pk](mailto:afshan.law@pu.edu.pk)

Lecture in English, The University of the Punjab

Azhar Munir Bhatti

[azharmunir18@hotmail.com](mailto:azharmunir18@hotmail.com)

Lecturer in English, Higher Education Department, Punjab

### Abstract

*This paper explores the historical evolution of Dawoodi as a contact language, tracing its development from pidgin origins to creole stabilization and its current phase of decline. Drawing on comparative linguistic analysis, historical documentation, and field-based data, the study situates Dawoodi within a complex multilingual ecology shaped by sustained contact with Burushaski, Shina, and Wakhi. The findings suggest that Dawoodi once functioned as a fully developed creole, characterized by expanded grammatical structures, stable speaker communities, and distinct ethnolinguistic identity. However, the study reveals that this trajectory has shifted dramatically in recent decades. Instead of continued expansion or stabilization, Dawoodi is undergoing structural simplification, lexical erosion, and functional marginalization. This phenomenon challenges traditional models of creole development, which often assume long-term stability or expansion. The paper introduces the concept of “post-creole collapse” to describe this stage, where a once-stable contact language begins to disintegrate under sociopolitical and economic pressures. By analyzing linguistic features alongside social dynamics, the study demonstrates how language evolution is deeply intertwined with community identity and power relations. The decline of Dawoodi is not merely a linguistic process but a reflection of broader shifts in social structure and cultural valuation. This research contributes to contact linguistics and creole studies by presenting Dawoodi as a rare and significant case that expands theoretical understanding of language life cycles in endangered contexts.*

**Keywords:** Dawoodi language, pidgin–creole evolution, language shift, lexical attrition, post-creole collapse, contact linguistics, language endangerment, structural simplification, intergenerational transmission, linguistic ecology

### 1: Introduction

#### 1.1 Introduction

Languages do not disappear suddenly; they unravel. Quietly, incrementally, and often invisibly—until what remains is not a living system but a residue of memory. Within the field of contact linguistics, language evolution has traditionally been conceptualized as a forward-moving process, beginning with pidginization, progressing through creolization, and culminating in stabilization (Holm, 2000; McWhorter, 2005). This model assumes growth, expansion, and eventual equilibrium. However, such a linear trajectory does not adequately capture the realities of marginalized and endangered language ecologies. The Dawoodi language presents a compelling disruption to this theoretical narrative.

Situated within a highly multilingual environment shaped by sustained contact with Burushaski, Shina, and Wakhi, Dawoodi historically emerged as a contact language that underwent processes consistent with pidginization and subsequent creolization. Over time, it developed structural complexity, functional range, and a distinct ethnolinguistic identity. In this sense, Dawoodi aligns with classical definitions of a creole as a fully developed linguistic system with native speakers and expanded grammatical features (Bickerton, 1981). Yet, unlike prototypical creoles that stabilize or expand, Dawoodi is undergoing a process of reversal.

Previous research has already established that Dawoodi is experiencing advanced language shift characterized by intergenerational disruption, domain restriction, and the emergence of

passive speakers . This shift is not merely a reduction in usage but a reconfiguration of linguistic competence across generations, where younger speakers exhibit diminished fluency and reduced engagement with the language. Building on this, further investigation into lexical systems has demonstrated that vocabulary erosion is not only widespread but systematic, with younger speakers replacing culturally embedded Dawoodi lexicon with dominant-language equivalents, leading to semantic flattening and loss of expressive depth . These findings collectively point toward a deeper and more critical phenomenon: Dawoodi is not simply shifting; it is collapsing.

This study introduces the concept of post-creole collapse to describe this stage of linguistic evolution. Unlike language death models that focus on terminal decline, post-creole collapse captures a transitional phase in which a once-stabilized creole begins to disintegrate structurally, lexically, and functionally under sustained sociopolitical and economic pressures. This concept challenges dominant assumptions in creole studies by demonstrating that creole stability is not an endpoint but a contingent state, vulnerable to disruption.

### 1.2 Background of the Study

The Dawoodi-speaking community exists within a complex linguistic ecology where multiple languages coexist in hierarchical relationships. In such environments, language use is not determined solely by communicative needs but by broader socio-economic and ideological forces. Dominant languages such as Urdu and regional lingua francas occupy positions of prestige and utility, while minority languages like Dawoodi are often confined to informal and domestic domains.

Historically, Dawoodi functioned as a community-bound language transmitted through oral traditions and everyday interaction. It carried not only communicative value but also cultural knowledge, social organization, and collective identity. However, increasing access to formal education, urban mobility, and media exposure has reshaped linguistic preferences within the community. As Bourdieu (1991) argues, languages operate within markets where their value is determined by their symbolic and economic capital. In this context, Dawoodi has gradually lost its perceived utility, leading to its marginalization.

Empirical evidence from earlier studies indicates that Dawoodi has already entered an advanced stage of language shift, where intergenerational transmission has significantly weakened and younger speakers demonstrate passive or limited competence . This aligns with Fishman's (1991) framework, which identifies the breakdown of transmission within the family as the critical tipping point in language decline.

At the same time, lexical analysis reveals that the language is undergoing rapid vocabulary loss, particularly in culturally embedded domains such as kinship systems, traditional occupations, and oral narratives . This lexical attrition is not merely a reduction in vocabulary size but involves qualitative changes in meaning systems, resulting in semantic narrowing and flattening.

Taken together, these patterns suggest that Dawoodi is no longer functioning as a fully stable linguistic system. Instead, it is transitioning into a phase where its structural integrity is progressively weakened, and its functional domains are increasingly restricted.

### 1.3 Objectives

1. To trace the historical evolution of Dawoodi from pidgin to creole.
2. To analyze current linguistic changes indicating structural and functional decline.
3. To conceptualize “post-creole collapse” within broader theoretical frameworks.

### 1.4 Research Questions

1. What linguistic evidence supports Dawoodi's transition from pidgin to creole?
2. What structural and lexical changes characterize its current decline?

3. How do sociocultural factors contribute to this trajectory?

### 1.5 Statement of the Problem

Despite extensive research on pidgin and creole development, there remains a critical gap in understanding what occurs when a creole enters decline rather than stabilizing. Existing models emphasize emergence and expansion, largely overlooking reverse trajectories marked by structural simplification and disintegration. In the Dawoodi context, prior studies have identified language shift and lexical attrition, yet these processes are treated in isolation. There is limited integrated analysis explaining how they interact to produce systemic collapse. Moreover, no established framework captures the stage beyond attrition, where the language loses structural coherence. This theoretical absence restricts a full understanding of contact language lifecycles and risks misdirecting preservation efforts. The problem, therefore, lies in rethinking language evolution as dynamic and reversible rather than strictly linear.

### 1.6 Significance of the Study

This study operates at multiple levels of significance, theoretical, empirical, and socio-cultural. From a theoretical perspective, it challenges dominant models of creole development by introducing the concept of post-creole collapse. By demonstrating that creoles can undergo reverse evolution, the study expands existing frameworks in contact linguistics and calls for a more dynamic understanding of language life cycles. Empirically, the research builds on longitudinal evidence from the Dawoodi language, integrating findings on language shift and lexical attrition to provide a comprehensive account of linguistic decline. In doing so, it contributes to the limited body of research on micro-community languages, which are often underrepresented in linguistic scholarship. From a socio-cultural perspective, the study highlights the broader implications of language decline for identity, cultural memory, and community cohesion. The loss of Dawoodi is not merely a linguistic event but a transformation in how the community understands itself and its heritage.

### 1.7 Scope of the Study

This study focuses on the historical and contemporary evolution of Dawoodi as a contact language. It examines linguistic changes at multiple levels, including structural features, lexical systems, and functional domains, while situating these changes within their sociocultural context.

The analysis is primarily concerned with:

- The transition from pidgin to creole
- The processes of language shift and lexical attrition
- The emergence of structural and functional decline

While the study draws on empirical data from the Dawoodi-speaking community, its implications extend to broader discussions in contact linguistics, creole studies, and language endangerment.

## 2: Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

The study of language evolution, particularly within contact settings, has long been dominated by models that privilege emergence, expansion, and stabilization. Within this framework, pidgin and creole studies have historically focused on how languages form, develop structural complexity, and acquire native speakers (Bickerton, 1981; Holm, 2000). However, comparatively less attention has been paid to what occurs when such languages enter phases of decline. This imbalance in scholarly focus has resulted in a theoretical gap, where processes of language erosion, particularly in creole contexts, remain underexplored.

The case of Dawoodi demands a reorientation of this perspective. Existing research on the language has already demonstrated that it has moved beyond early stages of endangerment into

advanced phases of shift and attrition (Ishfaq & Bhatti, 2019; 2020). Yet, these processes have not been systematically integrated into broader theoretical models of language evolution. This chapter, therefore, critically reviews literature on pidgin and creole development, language shift, lexical attrition, and contact-induced change, while situating Dawoodi within these debates. It argues that existing frameworks, while valuable, are insufficient to account for reverse trajectories of linguistic evolution, thereby necessitating new conceptual approaches.

## **2.2 Pidginization and Creolization: Classical Models and Their Limits**

The traditional understanding of pidgin and creole development is rooted in the assumption of linear progression. Pidgins are typically defined as simplified contact languages that arise in situations of limited communication between groups without a shared language (Holm, 2000). These systems are characterized by reduced grammatical structures, limited vocabulary, and absence of native speakers. Through processes of nativization, pidgins may evolve into creoles, acquiring expanded grammatical systems, increased lexical resources, and stable speech communities (Bickerton, 1981).

Bickerton's (1981) Language Bioprogram Hypothesis further suggests that creole formation reflects innate linguistic capacities, resulting in structurally rich and systematic languages. Similarly, McWhorter (2005) emphasizes that creoles exhibit identifiable structural features, including reduced inflectional morphology and transparent syntax, which distinguish them from older, more "layered" languages. These perspectives collectively reinforce the notion that creolization represents a process of linguistic enrichment and stabilization.

However, these models largely assume that once a creole is established, it maintains a degree of structural stability. Even in discussions of variation, such as the post-creole continuum proposed by DeCamp (1971) and further elaborated by Rickford (1987), the focus remains on gradience between basilectal and acrolectal forms rather than systemic decline. As a result, the possibility that a creole may undergo structural disintegration is not adequately theorized.

Mufwene's (2001) ecological approach offers a more flexible framework by emphasizing the role of sociohistorical conditions in shaping language evolution. According to this perspective, languages are not autonomous systems but are deeply embedded in their socio-economic environments. While this approach opens space for considering decline, it does not explicitly address the mechanisms through which a stabilized creole may collapse.

The Dawoodi case challenges these assumptions by demonstrating that creole stability is contingent rather than guaranteed. Rather than progressing toward equilibrium, Dawoodi exhibits patterns of regression, suggesting that existing models require re-evaluation in light of endangered language contexts.

## **2.3 Language Shift and Endangerment: From Transmission to Disruption**

Language shift has been extensively studied within sociolinguistics as a process through which communities gradually abandon their native language in favor of a more dominant one (Weinreich, 1953). Central to this process is the concept of intergenerational transmission, which Fishman (1991) identifies as the key determinant of language vitality. Once transmission within the family domain weakens, the language enters a trajectory of decline that often leads to eventual extinction.

Fishman's Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS) provides a structured model for understanding this process, outlining stages through which languages move from stable transmission to obsolescence. Similarly, UNESCO's (2003) framework for language vitality emphasizes factors such as speaker population, domain usage, and institutional support. These models collectively highlight that language decline is not abrupt but occurs through identifiable stages.

Empirical studies have further demonstrated that language shift is closely linked to socio-economic and ideological factors. Gal (1979) shows that language choices are influenced by perceptions of social mobility, while Bourdieu (1991) conceptualizes language as a form of symbolic capital, where certain languages carry greater prestige and economic value. In such contexts, minority languages are often devalued, leading speakers to adopt dominant languages.

Within the Dawoodi context, these dynamics are clearly observable. A diachronic study has shown that the language has transitioned from stable intergenerational transmission to a state of advanced disruption, where younger generations exhibit passive competence or complete disengagement (Ishfaq & Bhatti, 2019). This pattern aligns with late-stage language shift, where the language is no longer actively transmitted and survives primarily among older speakers.

However, while language shift models effectively explain the social dynamics of decline, they do not fully account for the internal linguistic changes that accompany this process. To understand how structural and lexical systems are affected, it is necessary to turn to research on language attrition.

#### **2.4 Lexical Attrition and Structural Erosion**

Lexical attrition has been identified as one of the earliest and most visible indicators of language decline (Dorian, 1981; Crystal, 2000). It refers to the gradual loss of vocabulary and the weakening of lexical access, particularly in contexts of reduced usage (Schmid, 2011). Unlike complete language loss, lexical attrition often begins at the level of specific semantic domains, particularly those associated with cultural practices and traditional knowledge.

Research on endangered languages consistently shows that lexical systems are highly vulnerable to change. Harrison (2007) argues that culturally embedded vocabulary is often the first to disappear, as shifts in lifestyle render certain concepts obsolete. Similarly, Evans (2010) emphasizes that lexical loss entails the erosion of unique cognitive and cultural frameworks, as language encodes ways of understanding the world.

In the Dawoodi context, lexical attrition has been empirically documented as a central mechanism of decline. A study examining generational differences in language competence found that younger speakers exhibit significantly reduced vocabulary, particularly in domains such as kinship systems, traditional occupations, and oral narratives (Ishfaq & Bhatti, 2020). This reduction is not merely quantitative but qualitative, involving semantic flattening and loss of nuance.

Importantly, this research demonstrates that lexical attrition functions not only as a symptom but also as a driver of language decline. As vocabulary erodes, the language's capacity for expression diminishes, leading to increased reliance on dominant languages and further accelerating shift. This aligns with Schmid's (2011) argument that reduced frequency of use leads to decreased lexical accessibility, creating a feedback loop that intensifies attrition.

While lexical attrition provides insight into micro-level processes of decline, it must be understood in relation to broader dynamics of language contact.

#### **2.5 Language Contact, Borrowing, and Linguistic Convergence**

Language contact is a fundamental factor in linguistic change, particularly in multilingual environments. Weinreich (1953) identifies borrowing and interference as natural outcomes of contact, while Thomason (2001) argues that the extent of change depends on social factors such as prestige and intensity of interaction. In contexts where one language holds greater socio-economic power, borrowing may lead to structural convergence and eventual shift.

Code-switching, as explored by Myers-Scotton (1993), reflects the dynamic negotiation of identity and power within multilingual communities. While it can serve as a communicative

resource, sustained code-switching may contribute to the erosion of minority languages, particularly when dominant-language elements increasingly replace native structures.

In Dawoodi, contact with Urdu, Burushaski, and Shina has resulted in extensive borrowing and code-switching, particularly among younger speakers. Empirical findings indicate that borrowed lexical items frequently replace original Dawoodi terms, leading to what can be described as linguistic dilution (Ishfaq & Bhatti, 2019; 2020). Over time, this process contributes to structural simplification, as the language becomes increasingly dependent on external systems.

These dynamics highlight that language decline is not solely an internal process but is shaped by external pressures and interactions. However, existing theories of contact-induced change do not fully account for the cumulative effects of shift and attrition on the overall structure of a language.

### **2.6 Toward a New Framework: Beyond Shift and Attrition**

The reviewed literature provides valuable insights into different aspects of language evolution, including creole formation, language shift, lexical attrition, and contact-induced change. However, these areas are often treated as separate domains, resulting in a fragmented understanding of language decline.

The Dawoodi case demonstrates that these processes are interconnected. Language shift disrupts intergenerational transmission, lexical attrition reduces expressive capacity, and contact-induced change accelerates structural simplification. Together, these processes create conditions in which the language no longer functions as a coherent system.

Despite this, there is no established concept within existing literature that captures this stage of decline. Models of language death focus on end states, while creole studies emphasize emergence and variation. The transitional phase between these points remains under-theorized. This gap necessitates the introduction of a new conceptual framework.

### **2.7 Research Gap**

The critical gap identified in this review lies in the absence of a theoretical model that integrates processes of creole development, language shift, lexical attrition, and structural decline into a unified trajectory. While each of these processes has been studied extensively, their interaction has not been adequately explored, particularly in the context of endangered creole languages.

In the case of Dawoodi, previous research has provided detailed insights into language shift (Ishfaq & Bhatti, 2019) and lexical attrition (Ishfaq & Bhatti, 2020), yet these findings have not been synthesized into a broader model of language evolution. Furthermore, existing creole theories do not account for the possibility of reverse trajectories, where a stabilized creole undergoes structural collapse. This study addresses this gap by proposing the concept of post-creole collapse, which conceptualizes this stage as a distinct phase in the lifecycle of contact languages.

## **3: Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Understanding the evolutionary trajectory of an endangered contact language such as Dawoodi requires an approach that moves beyond single-method investigation. Language decline is not merely a structural phenomenon; it is simultaneously social, cognitive, and cultural. Processes such as language shift, lexical attrition, and structural simplification are deeply embedded in patterns of use, identity formation, and intergenerational transmission. Consequently, any attempt to examine the transition from creole stabilization to what this study conceptualizes as post-creole collapse must integrate both quantitative and qualitative dimensions of analysis.

This chapter outlines the methodological framework adopted to investigate these processes. It situates the study within a mixed-methods paradigm, combining corpus-based linguistic

analysis with sociolinguistic inquiry. The approach is designed to capture both observable patterns in language use and the underlying social dynamics that shape them. In doing so, the study aligns with corpus-assisted discourse traditions, which emphasize the importance of moving from computational evidence to contextually grounded interpretation (Partington et al., 2013; McEnery & Hardie, 2012).

### **3.2 Research Design and Philosophical Orientation**

The study is grounded in a pragmatic research paradigm, which prioritizes methodological flexibility and problem-oriented inquiry over strict adherence to a single epistemological stance. Pragmatism is particularly suited to sociolinguistic research, as it allows for the integration of quantitative and qualitative methods in order to address complex, real-world phenomena (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). In the context of Dawoodi, where linguistic decline is intertwined with social and cultural factors, such flexibility is essential.

The research design is both diachronic and comparative. It is diachronic in that it builds upon earlier empirical work documenting language shift and lexical attrition within the Dawoodi-speaking community (Ishfaq & Bhatti, 2019; 2020), thereby situating the present study within a broader temporal trajectory. It is comparative in that it examines differences across generational groups, allowing for the identification of patterns of intergenerational disruption that are central to language decline (Fishman, 1991).

This dual orientation enables the study to move beyond static description and instead trace the progression of linguistic change over time, linking earlier stages of shift and attrition to the current phase of structural collapse.

### **3.3 Mixed-Methods Approach and Rationale**

The study adopts a mixed-methods approach that integrates quantitative corpus analysis with qualitative sociolinguistic investigation. This integration is not merely additive but complementary, with each method addressing different dimensions of the research problem. Quantitative analysis provides systematic evidence of linguistic patterns, including frequency, distribution, and collocation of lexical items, while qualitative analysis offers insight into meaning-making processes, language attitudes, and identity construction.

Such an approach is consistent with contemporary developments in corpus-assisted discourse studies, which emphasize the need to combine statistical rigor with interpretive depth (Partington et al., 2013). It also aligns with broader methodological trends in sociolinguistics, where mixed-methods designs are increasingly employed to capture the complexity of language use in context (Creswell, 2014).

In the Dawoodi context, this approach is particularly important. Previous research has demonstrated that language shift and lexical attrition are not purely structural phenomena but are closely linked to social dynamics such as prestige, identity, and access to resources (Ishfaq & Bhatti, 2019; 2020). A mixed-methods framework allows these dimensions to be examined simultaneously, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the processes involved.

### **3.4 Data Sources and Corpus Construction**

The primary data for this study consists of recorded speech samples collected from members of the Dawoodi-speaking community. These samples include both spontaneous conversations and elicited narratives, ensuring that the corpus captures a range of linguistic contexts. The inclusion of naturalistic speech is particularly important, as it reflects actual language use rather than idealized or self-reported forms.

The corpus is constructed through a systematic process of transcription, cleaning, and formatting. Transcription converts audio data into written form, enabling computational analysis, while cleaning ensures consistency by removing disfluencies, repetitions, and

transcription errors. The finalized corpus is then formatted into a machine-readable structure suitable for analysis using corpus tools.

Corpus-based approaches have been widely recognized as effective in identifying patterns of language use that may not be immediately apparent through manual analysis (Biber et al., 1998). In the context of lexical attrition, such methods allow for the measurement of lexical diversity, frequency distribution, and collocational patterns, providing empirical evidence of change.

### **3.5 Analytical Tools and Procedures**

The analysis employs a combination of corpus linguistic tools and qualitative coding software. Corpus tools such as AntConc and Sketch Engine are used to generate frequency lists, identify keywords, and analyze collocations. These outputs provide a quantitative foundation for identifying patterns of lexical usage and change (Anthony, 2019; Kilgarriff et al., 2014).

In parallel, qualitative data derived from interviews and narratives is analyzed using thematic coding. This process involves identifying recurring themes related to language use, attitudes, and identity, allowing for the interpretation of linguistic patterns within their social context. NVivo is utilized to facilitate this coding process, enabling systematic organization and analysis of qualitative data.

The integration of these tools reflects the methodological principle that quantitative outputs must be interpreted in relation to their communicative and social context. As McEnery and Hardie (2012) note, corpus data does not speak for itself; it requires interpretation informed by theoretical and contextual understanding.

### **3.6 Generational Analysis and Sampling Strategy**

A central component of the study is the comparison of linguistic competence across generational groups. Participants are categorized into older, middle, and younger generations, reflecting differences in exposure, usage, and proficiency. This categorization is based on the assumption that language shift manifests most clearly through intergenerational variation, with older speakers typically retaining full competence and younger speakers exhibiting reduced or passive knowledge (Dorian, 1981).

The sampling strategy is purposive, focusing on individuals who represent different levels of linguistic competence within the community. Given the limited number of fluent speakers, particularly among younger generations, snowball sampling is also employed to identify participants with relevant linguistic knowledge.

This approach ensures that the sample captures the full range of variation within the community, allowing for a nuanced analysis of linguistic change. It also aligns with established practices in sociolinguistic research, where targeted sampling is often necessary to access specific speaker groups (Milroy & Gordon, 2003).

### **3.7 Analytical Framework**

The analytical framework of the study integrates multiple dimensions of linguistic analysis. At the lexical level, frequency analysis and type-token ratio are used to assess vocabulary range and diversity. Collocational analysis examines patterns of lexical association, providing insight into semantic structures and usage patterns. These measures are particularly relevant for identifying lexical attrition, as reduced diversity and altered collocations indicate weakening lexical systems.

At the qualitative level, thematic analysis is employed to interpret patterns of language use and attitudes. This includes examining how speakers perceive Dawoodi in relation to dominant languages, how they negotiate identity through language choice, and how these factors influence linguistic behavior.



The study also draws on corpus-assisted discourse analysis, which combines quantitative and qualitative approaches to explore how meaning is constructed in language use (Partington et al., 2013). This framework is particularly useful for understanding how structural and lexical changes reflect broader sociocultural dynamics.

### **3.8 Validity, Reliability, and Ethical Considerations**

Ensuring the validity and reliability of the data is a critical concern in sociolinguistic research. In this study, validity is enhanced through triangulation, where multiple data sources and methods are used to cross-check findings. Quantitative corpus analysis is complemented by qualitative interviews, allowing for the verification of patterns across different types of data.

Reliability is addressed through systematic procedures for data collection and analysis, including consistent transcription protocols, standardized corpus preparation, and transparent coding processes. These measures ensure that the analysis is replicable and that findings are not dependent on subjective interpretation alone (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Ethical considerations are particularly important in research involving endangered and marginalized language communities. The study adheres to principles of informed consent, confidentiality, and respect for community ownership of linguistic data. Participants are fully informed about the purpose of the research, and their identities are protected throughout the study.

Moreover, the research recognizes that linguistic data is not merely an academic resource but a cultural asset. As such, the study is conducted with sensitivity to the community's perspectives and with the aim of contributing to preservation efforts rather than exploitation.

### **3.9 Methodological Positioning within the Research Trajectory**

This study does not exist in isolation but builds upon a continuum of research on the Dawoodi language. Earlier work has established the presence of advanced language shift and the breakdown of intergenerational transmission (Ishfaq & Bhatti, 2019), while subsequent research has identified lexical attrition as a key mechanism driving this decline (Ishfaq & Bhatti, 2020).

The present methodology is designed to extend this trajectory by examining how these processes interact to produce broader structural change. By integrating diachronic insights with contemporary data, the study aims to capture the transition from shift and attrition to what is conceptualized as post-creole collapse.

## **4: Data Analysis and Findings**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the analysis of linguistic data collected from the Dawoodi-speaking community, with the aim of identifying patterns that reflect the transition from language shift and lexical attrition to what this study conceptualizes as post-creole collapse. The analysis integrates corpus-based quantitative findings with qualitative insights derived from interviews and narrative data, allowing for a multi-layered interpretation of linguistic change.

Rather than treating linguistic features as isolated variables, this chapter approaches them as interconnected indicators of systemic transformation. The analysis is therefore organized around key dimensions of change, including generational competence, lexical diversity, borrowing and code-switching, semantic restructuring, and domain restriction. These dimensions collectively provide evidence of a language that is no longer maintaining internal stability but is progressively losing structural coherence.

Importantly, the findings are interpreted in relation to earlier research on Dawoodi, which has already established the presence of advanced language shift and lexical attrition (Ishfaq & Bhatti, 2019; 2020). The present analysis extends these findings by demonstrating how these processes converge to produce structural disintegration.

#### **4.2 Generational Differentiation and Linguistic Competence**

One of the most striking patterns emerging from the data is the clear stratification of linguistic competence across generations. Older speakers exhibit full fluency, characterized by stable grammatical structures, extensive vocabulary, and contextually appropriate usage. Their speech reflects a system that is internally coherent and functionally complete.

In contrast, the middle generation demonstrates partial competence, with noticeable lexical gaps and increased reliance on borrowing. While they retain the ability to communicate in Dawoodi, their speech often reflects hybridization, where elements of dominant languages are integrated into the linguistic system.

The younger generation presents the most significant shift. Their competence is largely passive, with limited ability to produce spontaneous speech. When attempting to speak Dawoodi, they frequently rely on dominant-language substitutions, hesitations, and fragmented structures. This pattern aligns with the concept of “semi-speakers” identified by Dorian (1981), where linguistic competence is incomplete and unstable.

These findings reinforce earlier observations that Dawoodi has entered an advanced stage of intergenerational disruption. However, the present analysis suggests that this disruption is not merely a matter of reduced transmission but reflects a deeper transformation in the structure of the language itself. The generational divide is not simply quantitative but qualitative, indicating that the language is no longer being reproduced as a stable system.

#### **4.3 Lexical Diversity and Reduction**

Corpus analysis reveals a significant decline in lexical diversity among younger speakers. Measures of type-token ratio indicate that older speakers utilize a wider range of lexical items, including low-frequency and culturally specific terms, while younger speakers rely heavily on a restricted set of high-frequency vocabulary.

This reduction in lexical diversity reflects a narrowing of expressive capacity. Younger speakers are able to convey basic meanings but lack the lexical resources required for nuanced expression. This aligns with previous findings that lexical attrition in Dawoodi disproportionately affects culturally embedded domains.

The analysis further shows that lexical loss is not uniform but domain-specific. Terms related to kinship, traditional occupations, and oral storytelling are particularly affected. These domains are closely tied to cultural practices, suggesting that lexical attrition is linked to broader socio-cultural changes.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings support the argument that lexical systems are among the most vulnerable components of language (Harrison, 2007; Evans, 2010). However, in the Dawoodi context, lexical reduction appears to extend beyond early-stage attrition, contributing to a more weakening of the linguistic system. As vocabulary diminishes, the language’s ability to encode cultural knowledge and maintain semantic distinctions is compromised, accelerating overall decline.

#### **4.4 Borrowing, Code-Switching, and Linguistic Dilution**

Another key pattern identified in the data is the extensive use of borrowing and code-switching, particularly among middle and younger speakers. Borrowed lexical items from Urdu and regional languages frequently replace original Dawoodi terms, even in contexts where native equivalents exist.

Code-switching occurs not only at the level of individual words but also within clauses and sentences, resulting in hybrid utterances that blend multiple linguistic systems. While such practices are often viewed as natural outcomes of multilingualism (Myers-Scotton, 1993), in this context they function as indicators of linguistic instability.

The frequency and distribution of borrowed elements suggest that Dawoodi is no longer operating as an autonomous system. Instead, it is increasingly dependent on dominant languages for lexical and structural resources. This process can be understood as linguistic dilution, where the distinctiveness of the language is gradually eroded through sustained contact.

These findings are consistent with earlier observations that lexical attrition is closely linked to borrowing and replacement. However, the present analysis indicates that borrowing is not merely supplementing the lexicon but actively displacing it. This shift marks a transition from enrichment to replacement, where the language loses its internal integrity.

#### **4.5 Semantic Restructuring and Loss of Nuance**

Beyond lexical loss, the data reveals significant changes in semantic systems. Older speakers demonstrate nuanced understanding and use of lexical items, with words carrying multiple layers of meaning depending on context. In contrast, younger speakers exhibit semantic narrowing, where words are used in more generalized and simplified ways.

This process of semantic flattening is particularly evident in culturally specific vocabulary. Terms that once encoded detailed social relationships or practices are replaced by broader, less precise equivalents. As a result, distinctions that were previously meaningful within the community are no longer expressed linguistically.

Such changes reflect what Traugott and Dasher (2002) describe as semantic change, but in the Dawoodi context, this process is accelerated by language shift and attrition. Rather than gradual evolution, semantic restructuring appears as a consequence of reduced competence and limited exposure.

From a cognitive perspective, this pattern aligns with theories of lexical access, where reduced frequency of use leads to weakened retrieval and eventual loss (Paradis, 2004; Schmid, 2011). However, the implications extend beyond cognition, affecting the cultural and social functions of the language. As semantic distinctions disappear, the language's ability to represent complex social realities is diminished.

#### **4.6 Domain Restriction and Functional Marginalization**

The analysis also reveals a significant contraction in the domains of language use. Dawoodi is increasingly confined to interactions among older speakers and is largely absent from institutional and public contexts. Even within domestic settings, its use is declining among younger generations.

This domain restriction is a key indicator of language endangerment, as identified by Fishman (1991). When a language is no longer used across multiple domains, its functional relevance diminishes, leading to further decline. In the Dawoodi context, this process is compounded by the dominance of Urdu and other regional languages, which occupy central roles in education, media, and administration.

The absence of Dawoodi from these domains reinforces its marginalization, creating a cycle in which reduced usage leads to further devaluation. As Bourdieu (1991) argues, languages that lack symbolic and economic capital are less likely to be maintained, as speakers prioritize those that offer greater social mobility.

These findings suggest that the decline of Dawoodi is not solely a linguistic process but is deeply embedded in broader socio-economic structures. The language's marginalization reflects shifting priorities within the community, where practical considerations outweigh cultural attachment.

#### **4.7 Synthesis: From Shift and Attrition to Structural Collapse**

When considered collectively, the patterns identified in this chapter point toward a significant transformation in the Dawoodi language. The breakdown of intergenerational transmission,

reduction in lexical diversity, increased reliance on borrowing, semantic flattening, and domain restriction are not isolated phenomena but interconnected processes.

Earlier research established that Dawoodi is undergoing advanced language shift (Ishfaq & Bhatti, 2019; ) and significant lexical attrition (Ishfaq & Bhatti, 2020; ). The present analysis demonstrates that these processes have progressed to a stage where the language is no longer maintaining systemic coherence.

This stage, conceptualized as post-creole collapse, is characterized by the disintegration of structural, lexical, and functional components of the language. Unlike earlier stages of decline, where the language remains internally stable despite reduced usage, this phase involves the breakdown of the system itself.

The findings therefore challenge traditional models of language evolution, which assume that creoles achieve long-term stability. Instead, they suggest that under conditions of sustained marginalization, creoles may undergo reverse trajectories, leading to structural collapse.

## **5: Discussion, Implications, and Conclusion**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter synthesizes the findings of the study and situates them within broader theoretical and sociolinguistic frameworks. Building on the analysis presented in the previous chapter, it interprets the patterns of linguistic change observed in the Dawoodi-speaking community as part of a larger trajectory that extends beyond language shift and lexical attrition. The discussion foregrounds the concept of post-creole collapse, examining its theoretical relevance, empirical grounding, and implications for understanding language evolution in endangered contexts.

Rather than treating the findings as isolated observations, this chapter integrates them into a coherent narrative of linguistic transformation. It also reflects on the implications of this transformation for language preservation, identity, and future research.

### **5.2 Reinterpreting Language Shift: Beyond Intergenerational Disruption**

The findings of this study reaffirm the centrality of intergenerational transmission in determining language vitality, as emphasized by Fishman (1991). The breakdown of transmission within the Dawoodi-speaking community is evident in the stark contrast between fluent older speakers and passive younger speakers, a pattern already documented in earlier research (Ishfaq & Bhatti, 2019)

However, the present study extends this understanding by demonstrating that intergenerational disruption is not merely a social phenomenon but a structural turning point. Once transmission weakens, the language does not simply lose speakers; it begins to lose coherence. The generational divide observed in Dawoodi is therefore not just indicative of decline but marks the beginning of systemic transformation.

This reinterpretation challenges conventional models of language shift, which often treat transmission breakdown as a stage within a linear process leading to language death. In the Dawoodi context, it represents a transition into a qualitatively different phase, where the language is no longer reproduced as a stable system.

### **5.3 Lexical Attrition as a Catalyst of Structural Change**

The study confirms that lexical attrition plays a pivotal role in the decline of Dawoodi, supporting earlier findings that vocabulary erosion is both widespread and systematic (Ishfaq & Bhatti, 2020; ). However, the discussion reveals that lexical attrition is not merely an early indicator of decline but functions as a catalyst for broader structural change.

As lexical diversity diminishes, the language's capacity for nuanced expression is reduced. This leads to increased reliance on dominant-language equivalents, which in turn accelerates borrowing and code-switching. Over time, this process results in the restructuring of the

linguistic system, where original lexical and semantic patterns are replaced by hybridized forms.

This finding aligns with Schmid's (2011) argument that reduced frequency of use weakens lexical access, but it extends this perspective by demonstrating how lexical attrition interacts with social and structural factors to drive systemic change. In this sense, lexical loss is not an endpoint but a mechanism through which the language moves toward collapse.

#### **5.4 Contact, Power, and Linguistic Reconfiguration**

The role of language contact in shaping the trajectory of Dawoodi is central to understanding its decline. The dominance of Urdu and other regional languages reflects broader socio-economic hierarchies in which linguistic choices are tied to access to education, employment, and social mobility. As Bourdieu (1991) argues, languages function within markets where their value is determined by their symbolic and economic capital.

In the Dawoodi context, this dynamic has led to the progressive marginalization of the language. Borrowing and code-switching, while initially adaptive strategies, have evolved into mechanisms of replacement, where dominant-language elements displace original structures. This process reflects what Thomason (2001) describes as contact-induced change, but in this case, it results in convergence rather than coexistence.

The findings suggest that language decline cannot be understood solely in linguistic terms. It is deeply embedded in power relations and social structures that shape language use and perception. The collapse of Dawoodi is therefore not simply a linguistic phenomenon but a reflection of broader processes of marginalization and identity reconfiguration.

#### **5.5 Post-Creole Collapse as a Theoretical Contribution**

One of the central contributions of this study is the introduction of the concept of **post-creole collapse**. Existing theories of creole development focus on emergence, stabilization, and variation, often assuming that once a creole is established, it remains structurally stable (Holm, 2000; McWhorter, 2005). However, the Dawoodi case demonstrates that this assumption does not hold in contexts of sustained marginalization.

Post-creole collapse is characterized by the convergence of multiple processes, including intergenerational disruption, lexical attrition, semantic flattening, and domain restriction. These processes collectively lead to the disintegration of the language as a coherent system. Unlike language death, which marks the endpoint of decline, post-creole collapse represents a transitional phase in which the language loses its structural integrity before disappearing entirely.

This concept extends Mufwene's (2001) ecological model by emphasizing the vulnerability of creoles within specific socio-economic environments. It also bridges the gap between studies of language shift and creole linguistics, providing a unified framework for understanding reverse trajectories of language evolution.

#### **5.6 Implications for Language Preservation and Revitalization**

The findings of this study have significant implications for language preservation efforts. Traditional approaches to language revitalization often focus on increasing the number of speakers or reintroducing the language into educational contexts. While these strategies are important, the Dawoodi case suggests that they may be insufficient if underlying structural changes are not addressed.

The advanced stage of decline observed in Dawoodi indicates that preservation efforts must prioritize documentation, particularly of lexical and semantic systems. As Crystal (2000) argues, documentation serves as a critical safeguard against total linguistic loss. In the Dawoodi context, this includes recording culturally embedded vocabulary, oral narratives, and patterns of usage that are at risk of disappearing.

At the same time, revitalization efforts must be community-driven, recognizing that language maintenance depends on social engagement and cultural relevance. Programs that facilitate intergenerational interaction and promote the use of Dawoodi in everyday contexts may help to strengthen transmission. However, such efforts must contend with the broader socio-economic factors that influence language choice.

The study also highlights the potential role of digital technologies in preservation. The development of corpora, dictionaries, and language-learning tools can enhance accessibility and support ongoing documentation efforts. However, these tools must be designed in collaboration with the community to ensure their relevance and sustainability.

### **5.7 Limitations of the Study**

While the study provides a comprehensive analysis of linguistic change in Dawoodi, certain limitations must be acknowledged. The sample size is constrained by the limited number of fluent speakers, which reflects the endangered status of the language but also limits the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the focus on lexical and structural aspects means that other dimensions, such as phonological variation, are not examined in detail.

The study is also situated within a specific sociolinguistic context, and while its theoretical implications may extend to other languages, further research is needed to test the applicability of the concept of post-creole collapse in different settings.

### **5.8 Directions for Future Research**

The findings of this study open several avenues for future research. Longitudinal studies could provide deeper insight into the progression of linguistic change over time, allowing for a more detailed understanding of how post-creole collapse unfolds. Comparative studies involving other endangered creole or contact languages could help to determine whether similar patterns are observable in different contexts.

Further research is also needed to explore the interaction between lexical, grammatical, and phonological changes, as well as the role of digital media in shaping language use among younger generations. Such studies would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of language decline and preservation.

### **5.9 Conclusion**

This study set out to examine the evolutionary trajectory of the Dawoodi language, tracing its development from pidgin origins to creole stabilization and its current phase of decline. The findings reveal a clear progression from language shift and lexical attrition to a stage of structural disintegration, conceptualized as post-creole collapse.

At its core, the study demonstrates that language evolution is not a linear process but a dynamic and reversible one, shaped by social, economic, and ideological forces. The decline of Dawoodi is not simply a linguistic phenomenon but a reflection of broader transformations in community identity and social structure.

What is at stake is not only the survival of a language but the preservation of a cultural system that encodes knowledge, relationships, and ways of understanding the world. The loss of Dawoodi would therefore represent more than linguistic extinction; it would signify the disappearance of a unique cultural perspective.

Yet, within this decline lies a critical opportunity. The documentation and analysis of Dawoodi at this stage provide valuable insights into the processes of language evolution, offering lessons that extend beyond a single community. By recognizing and addressing these processes, it may still be possible to preserve aspects of the language and contribute to broader efforts to safeguard linguistic diversity.

## References

- Annamalai, E. (2001). *Managing multilingualism in India: Political and linguistic manifestations*. Sage.
- Anthony, L. (2019). *AntConc (Version 3.5.8) [Computer software]*. Waseda University.
- Biber, D., Conrad, S., & Reppen, R. (1998). *Corpus linguistics: Investigating language structure and use*. Cambridge University Press.
- Bickerton, D. (1981). *Roots of language*. Karoma.
- Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic power*. Harvard University Press.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Crystal, D. (2000). *Language death*. Cambridge University Press.
- DeCamp, D. (1971). Toward a generative analysis of a post-creole speech continuum. In D. Hymes (Ed.), *Pidginization and creolization of languages* (pp. 349–370). Cambridge University Press.
- Dorian, N. C. (1981). *Language death: The life cycle of a Scottish Gaelic dialect*. University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Edwards, J. (2009). *Language and identity: An introduction*. Cambridge University Press.
- Evans, N. (2010). *Dying words: Endangered languages and what they have to tell us*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Fishman, J. A. (1991). *Reversing language shift: Theoretical and empirical foundations of assistance to threatened languages*. Multilingual Matters.
- Gal, S. (1979). *Language shift: Social determinants of linguistic change in bilingual Austria*. Academic Press.
- Giles, H., Bourhis, R. Y., & Taylor, D. M. (1977). Towards a theory of language in ethnic group relations. In H. Giles (Ed.), *Language, ethnicity and intergroup relations* (pp. 307–348). Academic Press.
- Grenoble, L. A., & Whaley, L. J. (2006). *Saving languages: An introduction to language revitalization*. Cambridge University Press.
- Harrison, K. D. (2007). *When languages die: The extinction of the world's languages and the erosion of human knowledge*. Oxford University Press.
- Holm, J. (2000). *An introduction to pidgins and creoles*. Cambridge University Press.
- Ishfaq, A., & Bhatti, A. M. (2019). Language shift and imminent language death: A diachronic study of Dawoodi. *Harf-o-Sukhan*, 3(1), 13–26.
- Ishfaq, A., & Bhatti, A. M. (2020). Lexical attrition and generational language competence in Dawoodi speakers. *Harf-o-Sukhan*, 4(4), 97–111.
- Kilgarriff, A., Rychlý, P., Smrž, P., & Tugwell, D. (2014). The Sketch Engine: Ten years on. *Lexicography*, 1(1), 7–36. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40607-014-0009-9>
- Krauss, M. (1992). The world's languages in crisis. *Language*, 68(1), 4–10. <https://doi.org/10.2307/416368>
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage.
- McEnery, T., & Hardie, A. (2012). *Corpus linguistics: Method, theory and practice*. Cambridge University Press.
- McWhorter, J. (2005). *Defining creole*. Oxford University Press.
- Milroy, L., & Gordon, M. (2003). *Sociolinguistics: Method and interpretation*. Blackwell.

- Mufwene, S. S. (2001). *The ecology of language evolution*. Cambridge University Press.
- Myers-Scotton, C. (1993). *Social motivations for code-switching: Evidence from Africa*. Oxford University Press.
- Paradis, M. (2004). *A neurolinguistic theory of bilingualism*. John Benjamins.
- Partington, A., Duguid, A., & Taylor, C. (2013). *Patterns and meanings in discourse: Theory and practice in corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS)*. John Benjamins.
- Rickford, J. R. (1987). *Dimensions of a creole continuum: History, texts, and linguistic analysis of Guyanese Creole*. Stanford University Press.
- Romaine, S. (1989). *Bilingualism*. Blackwell.
- Schmid, M. S. (2011). *Language attrition*. Cambridge University Press.
- Skutnabb-Kangas, T. (2000). *Linguistic genocide in education—or worldwide diversity and human rights?* Routledge.
- Tashakkori, A., & Teddlie, C. (2010). *Mixed methodology: Combining qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Sage.
- Thomason, S. G. (2001). *Language contact: An introduction*. Georgetown University Press.
- Traugott, E. C., & Dasher, R. B. (2002). *Regularity in semantic change*. Cambridge University Press.
- UNESCO. (2003). *Language vitality and endangerment*. UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Languages.
- Weinreich, U. (1953). *Languages in contact: Findings and problems*. Mouton.