

ABSTRACT

Dissertation: Ideology, Language Attitudes, and Status of Punjabi in Pakistan

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DEGREE: Doctor of Philosophy

COLLEGE: Sciences and Humanities

Date: July 2015

Pages: 200

Pakistan is a multiethnic and multilingual country; approximately 72 languages are spoken there including Punjabi, Urdu, Sindhi, Pashto, Balochi, Brahavi, Saraiki, and Shina. Punjabi is the language of 44% of the Pakistanis, but it has no official status and is not used in educational or governmental settings. This study investigates attitudes towards Punjabi and the covert and overt prestige associated with it among 18-30 year-old young adults in Punjab, Pakistan.

This project hypothesizes that significant differences in language attitudes and choices will be found between the rural/urban sectors of the population and between young male and female Punjabi speakers. It also focuses on how these attitudes are reflected in perceptions and language choices made by these young adults. Much of the research on this topic suggests that its own speakers consider Punjabi an inferior language as compared to English and Urdu in

Pakistan. This is especially true among urban populations of Punjab where people are abandoning Punjabi and use more Urdu in their day-to-day life (Rahman 2002).

Structured interviews were recorded in Punjabi with 96 respondents (25 males and 25 females from rural areas of District Sahiwal, and 23 males and 23 females from Lahore city). Interviews employ a questionnaire that is based on Garrett, Bishop, and Coupland (2009). The questionnaire consists of 35 questions that have been divided into two major sections, part one includes themes related to the word 'Punjabi' and part two is further divided into five subsections that include 'affiliation to language,' 'language and entertainment,' 'vitality of language,' 'domain of language,' and 'perception of language.' While conducting the interviews, the researcher spoke Punjabi and left it at the discretion of the respondent to reply in the language of their choice. Interviews were transcribed to identify themes that were further coded into different categories to provide insight into patterns of attitudes and perceptions regarding Punjabi among the sample populations.

The study demonstrates that although Urdu is more prevalent in the urban areas there is a positive change in attitudes towards Punjabi among urban population. Both urban and rural populations affiliate to Punjabi in spite of the fact that Punjabi is not spoken very much in urban areas outside of the home. The study shows that Punjabi is considered more of a language for fun and entertainment at least in urban Lahore. Most of the respondents seem to agree that Punjabi should continue to be used in the home although respondents in rural areas favor a larger and more significant role for Punjabi in all spheres of life. Most of the respondents (especially the urbanites) show eagerness to keep Punjabi alive, but paradoxically, in rural areas where Punjabi is the dominant language in all domains, respondents seem more negative when it comes to the future of Punjabi as the language of Punjab. Significant differences between rural/urban and

male/female populations were found regarding perceptions, practices and attitudes towards Punjabi.

Previous studies have focused only on urban and educated populations, this study is the first of its kind that also looks into rural and uneducated people's attitudes and perceptions towards Punjabi. The study is also significant in its applicability to important social issues involving identity, official language, and language of instruction in public schools.