

Punjabi: A Tolerated Language Young generations' attitude

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Abstract

Language is one of the important symbols of identity and status for the speakers of that language. Pakistan is a linguistically heterogenous country where speakers do not share a single language. A large population in Pakistan speaks Punjabi. In the recent years, Punjabi language is losing its status in Punjab, Pakistan, because people are shifting their language from Punjabi to Urdu according to their needs and requirements of modern age. People are having different attitudes towards their mother tongue, especially the young generation; they have stopped speaking this language. They are not interested in the preservation of the language of their forefathers. This paper seeks to investigate different attitudes of people of Punjab towards Punjabi language. To explore this phenomenon, a survey research was conducted. The data was gathered from Government College University Faisalabad to explore the attitudes of young generation towards Punjabi. The sample consisted of 60 young graduate and post-graduate students. The results have shown that the Punjabis have not a very positive attitude towards this language. Punjabi language is losing its place and shifting towards Urdu. This study concludes that Punjabi is a tolerated language as it is neither promoted nor proscribed according to young generation' opinion.

Keywords: Punjabi, status, tolerated, young generation

1 Introduction

Language is one of the important symbols of status in Pakistan. People are very conscious about the language they speak to maintain their class stratification and social status. This study investigates the attitude of young generation of Punjabis in Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan. Punjabi is the language of the majority of people in Punjab but it has not a good status in young generation's opinion. Punjabis do not feel pride in their language; rather they think that this is a derogatory language which should not be used in formal context. Except a few people, Punjabis are illiterate in their own language. They cannot read and write Punjabi. According to Zaidi (1990) just 2% people can read or write Punjabi. Rammah (2002) said that 60 % people commonly use Punjabi language in household but now the ratio is decreasing day by day. Not much work has been done so far in Punjabi regarding its status. The status of any language changes with the passage of time but it is also a fact that this 'status change' is very slow. This paper is an effort to investigate the status of Punjabi language according to the young generation in Faisalabad.

1.1 Background

Many languages are being spoken in Pakistan as Zaidi (1990) has stated that Pakistan is a linguistically heterogeneous country where population shares no single language. Punjabi is one of the mostly spoken languages in Pakistan. Encyclopedia Britannica Online (2011) states the history of Punjabi language that Punjabi is the member of Indo-Aryan and Indo-European language family. In Pakistan the western Punjabi is used to speak. It is the language of majority of people in Pakistan. Punjabi even spoken by a large majority but up till now it is not enjoying its status. According to Ethnologue of World Languages (2009):

"'Lahnda' is an earlier name for Western Panjabi; an attempt to cover the dialect continuum between Hindko, Pahari-Potwari and Western Panjabi in the north and Sindhi in the south. Majhi is the purest form of Panjabi. Several dozen dialects. The Balmiki (Valmiki) sweeper caste in Attock District speak a dialect of Panjabi."(para. 4)

This language has a vast literature from the 12th century. Baba Farid, Waris Shah, Baba Bulhey Shah etc. are the names in the history of Punjabi literature. In recent years some remarkable work has been done in Punjabi literature. Rammah (2003) has enlisted a large number of books of poetry, criticism and short stories in Punjabi literature. As it comes to its status, Punjabi speakers have negative attitude towards their language. Zaidi (1990) has stated:

"Pakistani Punjabis' negative attitude towards their language can be demonstrated by the fact that there is not a single newspaper or magazine published in Punjabi. The latest venture was a daily newspaper, Sajjan ("Friend"), edited and published by Hussain Naqi, an Urdu-speaking Indian emigrant. It only lasted a few months".(para. 7)

On the other hand Rammah (2003) stated a new wind of change:

"That a wind of change has started blowing and decades of apparently futile efforts of Punjabi writers and activists have finally started paying dividends was also evident from the survival during 2003, of a Punjabi newspaper *Bhulaikha* that is published by Mudassar Butt from Lahore. Despite its small circulation and questions about its journalistic standards, continuous publication of *Bhulaikha* stands out as a symbol of defiance and will of the Punjabi journalists to fill the void created by the absence of any Punjabi newspaper in Punjab."(para.16).

2 Literature Review

Language Planning is a deliberate and conscious effort, a political process for solving communication problems as Weinstein(1980) defines that 'language planning is government authorized, long term, sustained, and conscious effort to alter a language's function in a society for the purpose of solving communication problems" (p.56)

Status planning is a type of language planning. Kloss (1967) has categorized some types of language planning in which status planning is all-important regarding the status of a given language in society and the rights to that language. Status planning also involves the social status according to the use of the language by its speakers. Sometimes promoted or tolerated and sometimes proscribed according to the usage of language.

Kloss (1968) has described four qualities of language which determines its status; language origin, degree of standardization, Juridical status and language vitality. They defined that tolerated language is one, which is neither prompted nor discouraged by its speakers. The users of that language do not acknowledged their language nor they fully ignored their language. This ignorance of language or shifting the language with a new one, leads that language to the endangered status.

According to Brenzinger et.al. (2003)

"A language is in danger when its speakers cease to use it, use it in an increasingly reduced number of communicative domains, and cease to pass it on from one generation to the next. That is, there are no new speakers, adults or children." (p.2)

According to a survey report of Shah (2010) 26 languages of Pakistan are in threat to be extinct. These minority languages are facing this threat because their speakers have stopped using these languages. Whatever non-Punjabis think about this language the Punjabis on their own are no more interested in this language. They feel shame and insult while speaking this language. Ejaz (The status of Punjabi in west Punjab:A historical perspective, n.d.) criticized in his article that it is for the speakers of language it is something very shameful that they do want to rule every corner of the world but they do not dare to speak their own mother tongue. The Punjabi speakers think that their language is indecent and full of intensive words. Educated elite class try to keep themselves away from this language as this language could ruin their so-called social image and status. Zaidi (1990) has stated this fact:

"The Punjabis... think that Punjabi is an "indecent" or "vulgar" language. Some of them say this is because of the Punjabi accent, the rude way individual words and expressions are uttered, or because Punjabi is the language of the illiterate and the uncouth; or because there are countless swear words and double entendres in Punjabi."(para. 8)

This statement highlights what Punjabis think about their language and the language of their forefathers. Young generation is no more interested in their mother tongue. That is why the status of Punjabi is leading to the categories of Tolerated languages.

3 Methodology

Triangulation method (mixture of both Qualitative and Quantitative) has been used in this research study. The purpose of this study was to find out the attitude of young generation towards Punjabi language, that what kind of feelings and behavior they have towards their language. Data was collected in the form of Questionnaire

which was developed to measure the attitude of young speakers towards Punjabi language. The population was selected from the Government college university, Faisalabad. The population size was 60 on gender bases; 30 females and 30 males were randomly selected from graduate and post-graduate classes. One of the objective of this paper was to chose young generation because they are the people who are going to lead or endangered this language in future by speaking or leaving this language. Teenagers might get better understanding towards language and language use in their social, professional and personal settings.

This research questionnaire has also been conducted twice, in Punjabi and Urdu language respectively, that data was discarded because of the unsatisfactory nature of results as the respondents were less interested in showing their attitude honestly. Currently, these results are based on the questionnaire which was conducted in English. The nature of the questionnaire was same for both men and women. All questions were close ended for the objectivity of the results. The involved variable was gender. Questionnaire was divided in to four categories according to the nature of the questions. The software SPSS was used for data tabulation and results. Crosstabs also applied to the tables for getting the male and female frequency with percentage of responses.

4 Results and Data Interpretation

In this present study, the status of Punjabi has been discussed. Survey research has been conducted to get the results. Data interpretation starts from the overall variables involved in this study. Out of 33 questions, 7 questions which are containing main variables are displayed here with the help of the tables. These tables are further interpreted with connection of other questions asked in questionnaire.

Table 4.1

Do you know the script of Punjabi?

		Frequency	Percent
	Yes	18	30.0
	No	42	70.0
	Total	60	100.0

The speakers of Punjabi who claims that Punjabi language is their mother tongue, they even do not know that which writing style of Punjabi they are following. 70% of them are unaware of the script of Punjabi even if they have read Punjabi as a subject and they have written a lot of stuff in Punjabi. More than 20 females do not know the writing style. This shows the lack of interest of young generation towards their mother tongue that people feel no need to get some basic information about their language. On the other hand, respondents have given another confusing answer that the script of Punjabi is different from the script of Urdu. But generally, this is not the case. Punjabi script is quite similar to the Urdu script which is *Shahmukhi* and derived from perso-arabic languages.

Table 4.2

Which Language you use in your social life?

Options	Frequency	Percent
Urdu	43	71.7
Punjabi	15	25.0
English	1	1.7
Any other	1	1.7
Total	60	100.0

The result shows that 71% of population speaks Urdu in their social life, percentage is higher than Punjabi and English that is 25% and 1.7% respectively. These figures show that young generation likes to speak Urdu in their social life as they feel at ease and sophisticated of themselves. 71% of females are more concerned about Urdu language because of their social status as they feel themselves cultured while using Urdu. Just 25% speakers use Punjabi in their social life. People are almost ignoring Punjabi language because they are of the view that they cannot make anything up to with Punjabi. In an informal discussion with the respondents, they said that they prefer Urdu because Punjabi is not fulfilling their social and professional requirements. It shows that Speakers are shifting their language from Punjabi to Urdu. People think of themselves fluent in Punjabi who either have Punjabi as their mother tongue or not. They respond to the questionnaire that they can speak Punjabi easily and comfortably in their social as well as in personal settings. 56% of the population has responded positively that they are confident and fluent in Punjabi. On the other hand, they cannot differentiate or they are not well aware of the terms of *urduized Punjabi / actual Punjabi* and get confused what kind of Punjabi they actually speak. This confusion leads the results in to another direction because the thoughts they informally discussed and the responses they have given are quite opposite to each other.

Table 4.3

Which language you use with Family members?

Options	Frequency	Percent
Urdu	20	33.3
Punjabi	37	61.7
English	2	3.3
Any other	1	1.7
Total	60	100.0

The figures in this table depicts that 61% people speak in Punjabi with their family members and with their parents. Even parents speak Punjabi among themselves but they do not let their children to speak Punjabi. More than 15 female respondents have talked about this phenomenon that their parents do not let them speak Punjabi as they consider it a badly behaved thing. On the other hand, the frequent language surveyed by the young people is Punjabi which they use with intimate relations like parents and other members of family. The frequency which has been noticed about the usage of Panjabi in social, professional and personal is 37, 42 and 42 respectively. This shows the appreciation or affection towards the mother tongue of Punjabi people. They use their language with intimate relationships in family but not in their social life.

Table 4.4

Which language you will prefer for your children?

Options	Frequency	Percent	
	Urdu	32	53.3
	Punjabi	2	3.3
	English	24	40.0
	Any other	1	1.7
	Total	59	98.3
Missing	System	1	1.7
Total	60	100.0	

This table shows the language shift towards Punjabi to Urdu among younger's. Basically, young generation is gradually shifting their language from Punjabi to Urdu: they are of the view that Punjabi is not being able to fulfill requirements of modern age. So, they do not have to make learn this language to their children as it is of no use in near future. Just 3.3% of people prefer Punjabi language for their children, 40% of

them want their children to learn English and majority of people which is 53% prefer Urdu language for their children. According to this figure, it is something very alarming for the status and maintenance of Punjabi in near future. According to the survey, they do prefer Urdu language for their children as it is the language of sophistication according to youth.

Table 4.5

I have read materials in Punjabi.

Options	Frequency	Percent
strongly agree	10	16.7
Agree	11	18.3
Neutral	10	16.7
Disagree	19	31.7
strongly agree	10	16.7
Total	60	100.0

This question had two parts. One if they can read Punjabi and the other is if they have read materials in Punjabi like essays, articles etc. The surveyed questions brought the results that 56.7% of population agreed that they can read Punjabi language but on the other side just 10% of people agreed that they have read materials in Punjabi. This percentage is of those people who had Punjabi as a subject. However, 35% of students have read materials in Punjabi even if they had Punjabi as a subject or not. 47% people have disagreed that they have not read any materials in Punjabi because they cannot read Punjabi language. Results have also shown the conflict among the responses on cross questions likewise, 17% of population cannot read Punjabi but 43% of them have read Punjabi as a subject and they are sure that they can read Punjabi as well as they can speak. On the other hand, there is the level of contradiction among the speakers of Punjabi as they are not sure that if they can read or write Punjabi language. Because 36% of population is not sure that if they can write Punjabi with its original script. This negligence of the speakers of Punjabi about their language can lead this language to an endangered one.

Table 4.6

I feel proud while speaking Punjabi.

Options	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	11	18.3
Agree	13	21.7
Neutral	15	25.0
Disagree	16	26.7
Strongly Disagree	5	8.3
Total	60	100.0

Language is a pride for its users. Speakers do feel proud of their selves that they belong to a certain language and it's their identity. But in case of Punjabi speakers, the case is in reverse situation. They do not feel proud speaking their language in fact majority of them does not have any feelings of pride when they speak Punjabi. The taken for granted situation of Punjabi causes the change of the status of and make it fall in the list of endangered language. 34% of population does not feel proud when they speak Punjabi rather they think that their native language is very intensive and harsh that one cannot use this language in their social context.

Table 4.7

When I speak Punjabi my parent's response is

Options		Frequency	Percent
	Appreciative	12	20.0
	Neutral	34	56.7
	Critical	13	21.7
	Total	59	98.3
Missing	System	1	1.7
Total		60	100.0

The dilemma Punjabi suffering from is, parents do not value this language nor they make their children to learn or speak this language rather they avoid if their children trying to speak Punjabi. They do not want their children to speak Punjabi or even to consider it their mother tongue; just 12% population agreed that their parents appreciate them when they speak Punjabi, 13% people respond that their parents rebuked when they speak Punjabi in front of them as they think this language is not for the outside or social world. Majority was of the view that their parents neither appreciate nor rebuked them when they speak Punjabi. They just have a neutral response regarding this fact.

Conclusion

This study concludes that Punjabi language is a 'tolerated language' according to young generations' view. They are not interested in speaking or even preserving the language of their forefathers. They are not as much fluent in their mother tongue as they should be; because they cannot differentiate the concept of *urduized Punjabi and actual Punjabi*. They do not like this language as a medium of instruction. A large amount of people do not prefer this language for their children, this show their lack of concern regarding Punjabi and the future of Punjabi. This phenomenon could lead this language a shift from Punjabi to Urdu which makes Punjabi a tolerated language that is not acknowledge nor fully ignored or discouraged. The situation in near future, would lead Punjabi language in to rare languages. If today its status is 'Tolerated' what would be next phase for this language. It would determine its fate. More researches are needed and more development is required and necessary for the betterment of Punjabi language and for its survival. Media should encourage Punjabi language; more TV and Radio channels are necessitated for the vitality of this language, modern literature on Punjabi should be presented to the people to encourage them about their own mother tongue and schools at primary and secondary level should develop some programs of Punjabi language teaching as an oriental language. Furthermore, parents should encourage their children to speak Punjabi language as it is their identity; the identity, which is in danger.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire

General Direction: The objective of this questionnaire is to collect data about young generation's attitude towards Punjabi language. The questionnaire has four parts. Please provide your responses according to the direction at the beginning of each part. You are requested to complete the questionnaire carefully and honestly, because your responses are the only way to reach reliable research results. Your responses will be kept confidential.

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Section 1

Name _____

Gender	1) Male	2-Female	
Age	1) 18-22	2) 23-27	3) 28-32
Discipline	1) Social Sciences	2) Management Sciences	3) Basic Sciences
Place of residence	1) Urban	2) Sub-Urban	3) Rural
Language use at home	1) Urdu	2) Punjabi	3) Any other (please Specify) _____
Mother tongue	1) Urdu	2) Punjabi	3) Any other (please Specify) _____

Section 2:

- 1- Do you know the script (writing style) of Punjabi?
 - i) YES
 - ii) NO
- 2- Does the script of Punjabi is different from the script of Urdu?
 - i) YES
 - ii) NO
 - iii) Don't know
- 3- Do you write your text messages in:
 - i) Roman Script (*mein nalaik student c*)
 - ii) Pure Punjabi
 - iii) Do not use Punjabi
- 4- Have you read Punjabi as a subject?
 - i) YES
 - ii) NO

Section 3: Please tick any one option according to your best response.

Questions	Urdu	Punjabi	English	Any other (Please Specify)
Which language you use in your social life?				
Which language you use in your professional life?				
Which language you use with your family?				
In which language your parents talk to you?				
Which language is easier for you to speak?				
In which language you write your text messages?				
In which language your parents talk among themselves?				
Which language was your medium of instruction at school?				
Which language was your medium of instruction at college?				
Which languages will you prefer for your children?				

Section 3: Please show the extent of your agreement and disagreement of the following items.

Strongly Agree= SA	Agree=A	Neutral= N	Disagree= D	Strongly Disagree= SD
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Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
I am fluent in Punjabi.					
Speaking both Punjabi and Urdu is advantage.					
I can read Punjabi.					
I speak Punjabi in every situation.					
One should have to preserve the language of one's forefathers.					
People give much importance to Punjabi.					
Only speaking Punjabi is an advantage.					
I have read literature in Punjabi.					
I feel proud while speaking Punjabi.					
There should be TV and Radio programs in Punjabi.					
I can write anything in Punjabi.					
I have read material in Punjabi e.g. Essays, Articles, Letters .					

The status of Punjabi is much higher than Urdu.					
I think Punjabi should be the medium of instruction.					
Punjabi is advantageous in the modern age.					
The purpose of educating people will fail if Punjabi is used as medium of instruction.					
The Punjabi is a clear and expressive language.					
Given the chance, I will study all my subjects in Punjabi.					

Section 4: Please tick any one option according to your best response.

I have learnt Punjabi from	Family members	Social life	Professional life
I have started speaking Punjabi at age of	Childhood	Teen age	Young age
When I speak Punjabi my parents response is	Appreciative	Neutral	Critical

Thank You!