Ideology, Language Attitudes, and Status of Punjabi in Pakistan

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 45% of the Pakistanis, but it has no official status and is not used in educational or governmental settings. This study investigates attitudes towards the Punjabi language and the covert overt prestige associated with Punjabi among18-30 year-old 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 male and female Punjabi speakers

This paper reports on the results of semi-structured interviews recorded in Punjabi with 50 respondents (25 males and 25 females) each from both Lahore City and rural areas of District Sahiwal. Respondents are recruited in public parks and teashops frequented by a broad spectrum of the population. This is both culturally and socially permissible. The interviews follow a questionnaire with open-ended questions that allow participants to explain in detail their perceptions of their native language. The interview questions focus on respondents' perceptions and attitudes towards Punjabi. Interviews will be coded for recording and measuring language perceptions and attitudes.

This study also focuses on the impact of these attitudes on language choices among adults and how perceptions about Punjabi stratify the population in terms of gender and area of residence (rural vs. urban). The uniqueness of the study lies in the fact that it focuses on the overall population of young adults in both the rural and urban centers of the province. Previous attitudinal studies have focused only on high school and college students and cannot be called representative of the general population. The study is also significant in its applicability to important social issues involving identity, official language, and language of instruction in public schools. There are significant differences in attitudes towards Punjabi between rural and urban inhabitants and males and females.