
A Sociolinguistic Study of Language Attitudes and Identity: The Case of Punjabi

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The study of language attitudes is essential to understanding a speech community's language ideologies, the values they attach to their languages, their beliefs, language preferences and choices. Language attitudes can also reveal the status, value and importance of a language within a speech community as well as outside that speech community. Recent developments in the field of language attitudes have led to a renewed interest in the explicit and implicit attitudes towards languages. However, previous work on language attitudes in Pakistan has failed to draw a distinction between explicit and implicit language attitudes. Most studies to date have only focused on exploring the explicit attitudes of Punjabis towards the Punjabi language. Thus, the present study investigates the explicit and implicit attitudes of Pakistani rural Punjabis towards Punjabi (their mother-tongue) and also aims to identify/explore the difference between these explicit and implicit attitudes.

Also, current implicit attitude measurement techniques are computationally demanding, often impractical, time-consuming and costly. The study employs a feasible, time-saving and economical approach to measure both explicit and implicit attitudes simultaneously. Questionnaires are employed (as a direct/explicit method) to measure the explicit attitudes of the participants, and semi-structured interviews are employed (as an indirect/implicit method) to measure respondents' implicit attitudes.

Participants' explicit attitudes are positively inclined towards Punjabi. However, the results of the indirect method indicate their negative implicit attitudes towards Punjabi. They seem to acknowledge the fact that Punjabi is their mother-tongue and it's part of their identity, but the data indicate a lack of intergenerational transmission of Punjabi. Punjabis are not teaching their language to their children which not only suggests their negative implicit attitudes towards Punjabi, but it also signals a language shift from Punjabi to Urdu (see Fishman, 1991 and Trudgill, 2000). Similarly, despite explicitly reporting that Punjabi

is important for social status, participants seem to associate Punjabi with the uneducated and rural population of the province. Thus, these preliminary results indicate that there is a difference between the explicit and implicit attitudes of the participants towards Punjabi. These attitudinal orientations are worth exploring as they strongly influence people's language choices or preference. Identification of language attitudes is also significant in determining how strongly people associate language with their individual identities, which could ultimately indicate the health or vitality of a language in the community. This research also has profound implications for and in triggering methodological innovation in the field of language attitude studies through a mixed-method approach.