



# Role of gender and urban/rural divide in language shift in Pakistani Punjab

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## ABSTRACT

Despite positive attitudes towards Punjabi in the urban areas of Pakistani Punjab, there is a shift towards the Urdu language in almost all domains. This study shows that significant differences in language choices are found between the rural/urban and male/female residents of Punjab province. Urban females are leading this shift in spite of their positive attitudes towards Punjabi. Urban females use Punjabi very little and only in the home domain. In social and business domains Punjabi language is almost non-existent among urban, educated, and middle class females. The shift from Punjabi to Urdu in the educated urban female group is almost complete in spite of their positive attitudes towards their ancestral language. Urban males use more Punjabi than the urban females. In rural areas Punjabi is still used in most domains by both males and females.

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## 1. Introduction

Pakistan is a multilingual and multiethnic country; approximately 72 languages are spoken there. The languages belong to four different language families: Indo Aryan, Dravidian, Sino-Tibetan, and an isolate, but most of the languages belong to the Indo-Aryan branch of the Indo-European language family<sup>1</sup> (Ethnologue, Languages of the World). The major languages (by number of native speakers) in Pakistan are Punjabi, Urdu, Sindhi, Pashto, Hindko, Balochi, Brahavi, Saraiki, Shina, and Balti. Punjabi is the language of a major portion (44%) of the population, but it is one of the most neglected languages in the country, as it has no official status (Rahman 2010, 20). In spite the fact that Urdu was the first language of only 4% of the population at the time of the birth of the country in 1947, it was declared the state language of Pakistan by the founding fathers. Mr. Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the founder and first Governor General, during his visit to Dhaka in March 1948, declared in unequivocal terms that only Urdu would be the state language of Pakistan, but that the people and legislature of the then East Bengal province could choose Bengali as an official language of the province “at the appropriate time and after full and dispassionate consideration” (Siddiqui 2015; Ayres 2009; Umar 2004; Oldenburg 1985). No mention was made of the status of any other regional language, including Punjabi. Siddiqui calls this phenomenon of choosing Urdu as the national

language “an emotional association” with the language rather than an objective and utilitarian choice for the new state of Pakistan (2015, 147). The constitution of 1973 declared English as the official and Urdu as the national language. Most of the state business in the higher echelons of power is conducted in English, while Urdu is used as an official language at the lower levels of bureaucracy and judiciary. The nation building process since 1947 that focused on promoting Urdu as the national language has led to lowering of status of the regional and local languages (Rahman 2010). Studies have demonstrated that lack of any official status for regional languages in multilingual societies impacts the attitudes and perceptions of the speakers negatively towards those languages (Woolard and Gahng 1990; Marley 2004; Sallabank 2013; Khokhlova 2014). It is noteworthy that many languages like Badeshi, Chilliso, Gowro, Kalasha, and Ushojo have died out or are at the brink of being abandoned in Pakistan (Rahman 2010, 33–34) (Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Political & Administrative map of Pakistan

Punjab is the most populous province of Pakistan. It covers an area of 205,344 square kilometers (79,284 square miles), with a population of 110 million according to the 2017 population census.<sup>2</sup> The population density is 535 persons per square kilometer, as compared to the national density figure of 164. Many of the major cities of the country are situated in Punjab. While Punjabi is the main language, it is not the only language spoken in the province. The second major language is Saraiki, which is spoken in the southern and western parts of the province. There are numerous dialects of Punjabi and controversies about the status of these dialects abound. Some of the major dialects of Punjabi in Pakistani Punjab are: Majhi, Pothohari, Jangli, Shahpuri, and Malvai (Shackle 2003; Bhatia 1993; Tolstaya 1981). Urdu and English are the languages of business and education.

Since independence in 1947, Pakistani policies have been ambivalent towards Punjabi. Although Punjabi has been taught as an optional subject in high schools and colleges since 1970, the language has no official status and is neither encouraged nor taught at primary school level (Rahman 2002, 398–420). According to Shackle (2003) this lowered status of Punjabi can be traced back to pre-partition India where Punjabi Muslims had started identifying with Urdu as an Islamic or Muslim language (Shackle 2003). Rahman (2002) attributes this attitude to ideological and nation-building arguments that are based on pre-conceived ideas (e.g. that for Pakistan to become a nation state it had to adopt one religion and one language) and lack of linguistic knowledge on the part of opinion makers (p. 402–403).

### 1.1. *The study*

This study considers role of gender and urban/rural divide in language shift towards Urdu from Punjabi in Pakistani Punjab. It is part of a larger study conducted to examine the urban/rural and male/female divide regarding perceptions, practices and attitudes towards Punjabi among young adults of 18–30 years. This study is the first of its kind, as previous studies have only looked at language attitudes and perceptions but not at practice, including language choice. Mansoor (1993) and (2004) examine the attitudes of college students in Pakistan toward English, Urdu, and Punjabi. Both of these studies used large samples, but a drawback is that they surveyed only college students, a problem, since hardly 3% (Mansoor 2004) of Pakistanis ever go to college. Rahman (2002) also conducted a large-scale attitudinal survey of 372 Punjabi students regarding regional languages, English, and Urdu in Pakistan. Most of his respondents were 10th graders from varied tiers of society in major cities and towns. However this study does not include rural areas and people who do not go to school. Another more recent study by Gillani and Mahmood (2014) also focuses on the college students in Faisalabad. The present study is different from the previous ones as it focuses on both rural and urban areas and witnesses a language shift in urban areas and an ever widening linguistic chasm between urban and rural areas.

## 2. Literature review

Gender is considered a social performance as compared to sex, which is biological. Gender research in modern sociolinguistics has focused on “doing gender” (Wodak 1997, 12).

Gender in this approach is not seen as a permanent identity, but rather a performance in the “ethno methodological” sense. According to Wodak, “In this sense, membership of a gender constitutes a performance act and not a fact” (13). In the context of language use and attitudes, a number of studies have shown that women tend to use prestigious forms of language more than men (Trudgill 1972; Labov 1966). According to Trudgill, women’s tendency towards prestigious forms of language could be attributed to their desire to transmit higher cultural norms to their offspring, their insecurities in male dominated societies, and judgmental values of society towards women, where women are judged on how they appear as compared to men on what they do (Trudgill 1974, 1983). According to Eckert (2000), women tend to use symbolic means to define their social position, which leads them to use more prestigious forms of language. On the other hand, men’s use of “stigmatized” forms of language carries “covert prestige”, which can be attributed to notions of “solidarity, toughness”, and expression of “masculinity” (Trudgill 1974). Research has also shown that usually women tend to be more progressive and adopt new variants (usually these variants are considered prestigious forms) more quickly than men (Labov 1966).

Deeper and more extensive research on the topic shows that differences between male and female speech patterns cannot be summarized as neatly and clearly as mentioned in the previous paragraph. Milroy (1980) shows that young women who belonged to a dense multiplex network tended to use certain vernacular variants at a greater percentage rate than men. Labov (1966) has demonstrated that female-male differences can vary in different speech contexts, with women sometimes showing higher usage of prestige forms in formal domains but lower levels than men in casual and informal settings. Additionally, Labov (1966) and Wolfram (1969) found different patterns of male-female language difference in different social classes, with the differences between the sexes being greater in the middle groups than the lowest and highest social classes. Middle-class women tend to be more upwardly mobile than members of any other social class; therefore, they particularly focus on increasing their social prestige. A study of Ocracoke English by Schilling-Estes (1999) suggests that language contact and age also play a role in differences between male and female speech patterns. The study showed that middle-aged men used fewer vernacular forms than women because they came in contact with tourists more often than women, who used more vernacular forms. Although women seem to be more standard and innovative in their use of language the dichotomy between men and women is not simple and linear. A number of other social factors such as age, social class, group identity, education, and language contact play an important role in gender based linguistic variations between men and women.

### 3. Methodology

The data for this study were elicited through structured interviews with 96 respondents recorded in Punjabi. They were based on a questionnaire with 35 open-ended questions, each question had a probing “why” at the end, that allowed participants to explain in detail their attitudes, perceptions, and language choices in certain domains. The interview questions were based on a questionnaire developed by Garrette, Bishop, and Coupland (2009). In case the respondents did not understand a question, the researcher explained it to them. The interviews were administered

orally in Punjabi. While conducting the interviews the researcher spoke Punjabi and left it to the discretion of the respondents to reply in the language of their choice. Most of the respondents chose to respond in Punjabi even in those cases (especially in urban Lahore) where they identified Urdu as their mother tongue [Figure 2](#).

**3.1. Sample populations**

The sample population consisted of two primary and four secondary groups. The primary groups were divided on rural/urban lines and each group was further divided by gender. There were 96 respondents (25 males and 25 females from rural areas of District Sahiwal, and 23 males and 23 females from the city of Lahore). The rural male, rural female, and urban male groups represent almost all of the segments of society and can be considered fairly representative of their respective population groups. In contrast, the urban female group consisted primarily of students at elite colleges and women in professional fields such as banking and education. [Table 1](#) provides the means and standard deviation (SD) of age and education for all respondents.



**Figure 2.** Punjab (Pakistan)

Table 1. Demographics: age and education.

	AGE		EDUCATION	
	MEAN	SD	MEAN	SD
RURAL MALE	23.68	4.54	7.96	4.51
RURAL FEMALE	22.48	3.87	7.88	5.89
URBAN MALE	24.69	4.79	11.26	4.67
URBAN FEMALE	20.52	2.35	13.73	1.62

Varied strategies were used to recruit the respondents. Most of the rural respondents were recruited by using the friend of friend method (Milroy 1980). This method was used to obtain access into communities, which, due to cultural norms, tend to be very closed in rural Pakistan. Usually a total stranger is looked at suspiciously, and people assume that a stranger might have ulterior motives for interacting with them. As urban people are more open, confident, and more aware of their rights, it is not as difficult to recruit subjects by chance, especially in public places, so most of the urban participants were recruited by chance. Some urban participants were also recruited using the friend of friend method. All efforts were made to keep the selection of the participants arbitrary and by chance. This sample targeted people from a broad range of social statuses who were 18–30 years of age and who were born and raised in their respective urban and rural areas. The city of Lahore is representative of urban areas of Punjab and the rural areas of District Sahiwal have been used as representative of rural population of the Punjab province.

Lahore is the capital and the biggest city of Punjab province. It is situated on the eastern border of the province. (See Figure 2). According to the 2017 census, Lahore’s population was 11,126,000. The total area of the district (an administrative/geographical unit equivalent to a county in the US/UK) is 1772 sq. KM.<sup>3</sup> Punjabi is the main language of the province and is the most widely spoken language in Lahore. It is the primary means of communication in both the city and adjoining rural areas. The language has no official status in Lahore. Urdu and English are used widely in business and education. Many Punjabi speakers in Lahore speak the *Majha* dialect. According to the 1998 census, 86.2% of the population identified themselves as Punjabis while 10.2% as Urdu speakers. These figures do not show the exact linguistic demographics as someone who might identify as Punjabi could be an Urdu speaker and someone who identifies as Urdu speaking could be an ethnic Punjabi. The literacy rate in the city is 65% as compared to 47% for the province.<sup>4</sup>

The Sahiwal district is located in the southeast of Pakistani Punjab approximately 160 km (100 miles) southwest of Lahore (see Figure 2). The total population of the district is almost 2.5 million according to the 2017 population census, and the district covers a total area of 3200 km<sup>2</sup>. The literacy rate in the district is 47% (the same as that of the province) and most of the people are dependent on agriculture directly and indirectly.<sup>5</sup> Punjabi is the most widely spoken language in the district and almost all the people in district identify themselves as Punjabis. Urdu and English are also used widely in official and educational domains.

4. Results

Table 2 shows the results of the question, “What is your mother tongue?” Of the 96 participants, 77 (80%) declared Punjabi to be their mother tongue. There was a significant difference in identifying mother tongue across rural/urban lines. A chi-square test of independence was performed to see any relation between area and identification of mother tongue. The results show a significant relation between these two variables,  $\chi^2 (1, N = 96) = 17.66, p < .001$ . Rural respondents were more likely to identify Punjabi as their mother tongue than urban respondents. Forty-seven (94%) of 50 rural participants considered Punjabi their mother tongue, while 30 (65%) of 46 urban respondents declared Punjabi to be their mother tongue. This significant difference can be attributed to urban female group, as 57% of that group identified Urdu to be their mother tongue.

A significant difference in identifying mother tongue across gender lines was also observed. A chi-square test of independence was performed to see any relation between gender and identification of mother tongue. The results show a significant relation between these two variables,  $\chi^2 (1, N = 96) = 8.64, p = .003$ . Male respondents were more likely to identify Punjabi as their mother tongue than female respondents. More males 43 (90%) of 48 than females 34 (71%) of 48 claimed Punjabi to be their mother tongue. In rural areas, 23 (92%) of the 25 male respondents identified Punjabi as their mother tongue and one of the two people who claimed Urdu to be their mother tongue was not sure what the term “mother tongue” meant and confused it with the term “national language” which is Urdu, and said Urdu was his mother tongue. The other person who identified Urdu as his mother tongue spoke perfect Punjabi (although he claimed that he did not know any Punjabi!). Twenty-four (96%) of the 25 rural female participants claimed Punjabi to be their mother tongue, and the one person who called Urdu her mother tongue (she spoke perfect Punjabi as well) claimed that she belonged to an immigrant family and Urdu was their ancestral language. In the urban area, there was a stark contrast between males and females in identifying their mother tongue. Of the 46 participants, 30 (65%) declared Punjabi to be their mother tongue. Twenty (87%) of 23 urban male respondents declared Punjabi to be their mother tongue, while the remaining 3 (13%) called Urdu their mother tongue. The identification of mother tongue is significantly different among urban females as compared to the other three groups in this study. Only 10 (43%) of the 23 female respondents from Lahore claimed Punjabi to be their mother tongue, while the remaining 13 (57%) respondents declared Urdu as their mother tongue, although their parents were Punjabis and lived in Punjab.

Table 2. Demographics: mother tongue.

GENDER	RURAL		URBAN		TOTAL
	M	F	M	F	
TOTAL RESPONDENTS	25	25	23	23	96
PUNJABI	23 (92%)	24 (96%)	20 (87%)	10 (43%)	77 (80%)
URDU	2 (8%)	1 (4%)	3 (13%)	13 (57%)	19 (20%)

#### 4.1. Language within the family

Figure 3 shows the results of the answers to the question, “What language do you speak with your parents?” The results show a significant difference between urban and rural groups. Within the urban group there is also a significant difference between male and female respondents.

Most of the respondents, 64 (66%) out of 96, claimed that they spoke Punjabi with their parents, but there were significant differences between the male and female groups. A chi-square test of independence was performed to see any relation between gender and language of choice with parents. The results show a significant relation between these two variables,  $\chi^2 (2, N = 96) = 9.56, p < .01$ . Male respondents were more likely to speak Punjabi with their parents than female respondents. More males 39 (81%) than females 25 (52%) said they spoke Punjabi with their parents.

Most of the rural males 24 (96%), spoke Punjabi with their parents, while 23 (92%) of rural females spoke Punjabi with their parents. The 23 females also include the only female who claimed that her mother tongue was Urdu. The remaining two females in the rural group spoke both Punjabi and Urdu with their parents. Regarding the motivation for speaking Punjabi with their parents, both males 22 (90%) and females 20 (85%) stated, “we have spoken Punjabi with our parents since the beginning.” There was a further divide between male and female groups in urban Lahore, where 15 (65%) males spoke Punjabi with their parents and only two (9%) females spoke Punjabi with their parents.

Significant differences between the rural and urban groups are found in the context of language of choice between parents and children. A chi-square test of independence was performed to see any relation between area and language of choice with parents. The results show a significant relation between these two variables,  $\chi^2 (2, N = 96) = 35.45, p < .001$ . Urban respondents were less likely to speak Punjabi with their parents than rural respondents. Forty-seven (94%) of all rural participants spoke Punjabi with their parents, but only 17 (36%) of 46 urban participants said they spoke Punjabi with their parents. The explanation almost all these respondents gave for speaking Punjabi is the same as that

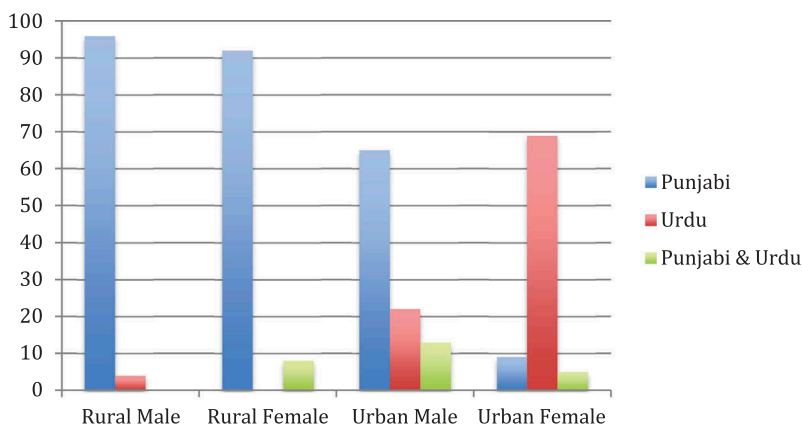


Figure 3. Language of Choice with Parents.

provided by rural participants, i.e. that their parents have spoken Punjabi with them since their childhood. Sixteen (69%) of the urban females spoke Urdu with their parents, while 4 urban females spoke both Punjabi and Urdu with their parents. Only five (22%) of the urban males said they spoke Urdu with their parents, and this included three males who identified Punjabi as their mother tongue. Only three urban males said they spoke Punjabi and Urdu with their parents. The justification both urban males and females gave for speaking Punjabi and Urdu with their parents is that they spoke either Punjabi or Urdu according to the situation. The motivation provided by five urban males and 14 females for speaking Urdu is that their parents have spoken Urdu with them since their childhood. Two urban females said that their parents spoke Punjabi with them and they spoke Urdu with their parents. Only one urban female said she spoke Urdu and English with her parents.

Figure 4 shows the results of the answers to the question, “What language do you speak with your siblings?” The results show that there are significant differences among rural and urban groups, and that rural respondents speak Punjabi with their siblings, while urban respondents prefer Urdu, however there are significant differences within the urban group on gender lines. With siblings urban females prefer Urdu, and some urban males speak Punjabi.

Rural and urban populations show significant differences in language of choice among siblings. The rural groups show a tendency to speak Punjabi more often as compared to their urban counterparts. A chi-square test of independence was performed to see whether there was any relation between area and language of choice with siblings. The results show a significant relation between these two variables,  $\chi^2 (2, N = 96) = 42.87, p < .001$ . Urban respondents were less likely to speak Punjabi with their siblings than rural respondents. Overall, 54 (57%) of all respondents speak Punjabi with their siblings, 44 (82%) out of these 54 respondents belong to rural areas. In the rural areas 44 (88%) of 50 participants speak Punjabi with their siblings, but in Lahore only 10 (23%) of 46 people do. Among rural males

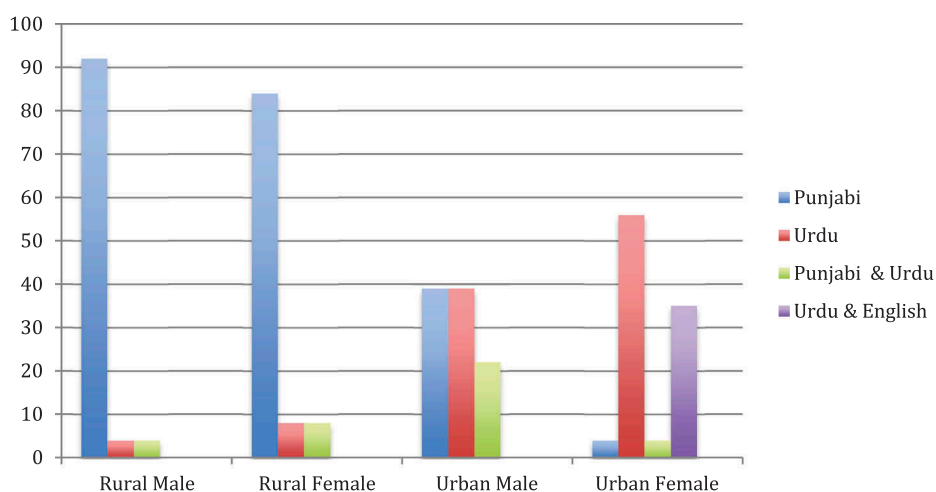


Figure 4. Language of Choice with Siblings.

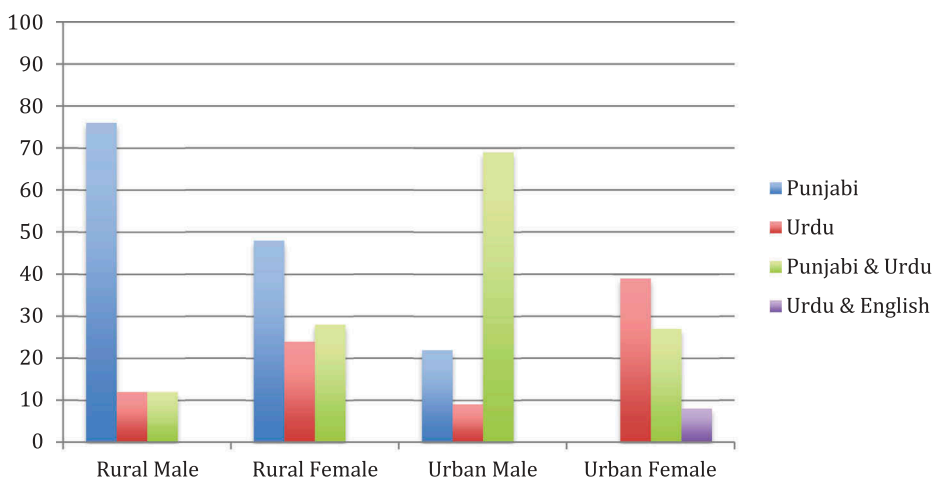
23 (92%) speak Punjabi with their siblings, and 21 (84%) rural females speak Punjabi with their siblings. One rural male claimed that he (one of the two who said Urdu was their mother tongue) spoke Urdu with his siblings and another one (not one of two who claimed Urdu to be his mother tongue) claimed that he spoke both Punjabi and Urdu with his siblings. Two rural females spoke Urdu with their siblings and the other two spoke both Urdu and Punjabi with their siblings. The explanation given for speaking Punjabi with siblings is “we have spoken Punjabi since the beginning” both by rural males and females; only two females gave a different explanation saying, “Our home environment is Punjabi.”

Only nine (39%) urban males said that they spoke Punjabi (giving the reason “they have spoken Punjabi since the beginning”) with their siblings, which is less than the 15 (64%) who said that they spoke Punjabi with their parents. Only one urban female spoke Punjabi with her siblings. Urdu is the language of choice for interacting with siblings among urban populations, and this is significantly different ( $\chi^2$  (2,  $N = 96$ ) = 42.87,  $p < .001$ ) from the rural participants. Nine (39%) urban males spoke Urdu with their siblings, while 13 (56%) urban females speak Urdu with their siblings. The reason these participants gave for speaking Urdu was that they have spoken Urdu since childhood. Five (22%) urban males said that they spoke both Punjabi and Urdu with their siblings; only one urban female claimed to do so. The reason given was “It is the trend these days.” Urban females demonstrate significant differences when compared with other groups regarding the language of choice among siblings. Six (26%) urban females claimed they spoke Urdu and English with their siblings; the explanations they offered for this, were, “our upbringing has been like this” and “home environment is both Urdu and English.” No other participant from any other groups made this claim. Two urban females claimed to speak Punjabi, Urdu, and English with their siblings, and they said that their use of these languages depended upon the situation. The usage of English among urban females indicates that these females could be from highly educated and upper middle class families who often use English in their homes.

## 4.2. *Language in society*

Figure 5 shows the results of the answers to the question, “What language do you speak with your friends?” They show a significant difference among rural and urban populations, but differences are observed within the rural group as well, as fewer rural females than rural males tend to speak just Punjabi with their friends. There are also differences within the urban group on gender lines. This study demonstrates that the use of Punjabi is on the decline in talking to friends and in interactions outside of the family; overall 36 (37%) of the 96 respondents choose Punjabi to speak with their friends.

There are significant differences in the use of Punjabi along rural/urban lines. A chi-square test of independence was performed to see any relation between area and language of choice with friends. The results show a significant relation between these two variables,  $\chi^2$  (2,  $N = 96$ ) = 28.86,  $p < .001$ . Rural respondents were more likely to speak Punjabi with their friends than urban respondents. In rural areas, Punjabi is the language of choice, with 31 (62%) of the rural respondents, when speaking with friends. Only five (11%) of the urban respondents said that they used just Punjabi to speak with their friends. Significant differences across gender lines regarding language of choice with



**Figure 5.** Language of choice with Friends

friends were also observed. A chi-square test of independence was performed to see any relation between gender and language of choice with friends. The results show a significant relation between these two variables,  $\chi^2 (2, N = 96) = 9.10, p = .011$ . Male respondents were more likely to speak Punjabi with their friends than female respondents. Twenty-four (50%) males as compared to 12 (25%) females spoke Punjabi with their friends.

More rural respondents speak Punjabi with their friends than urban respondents, but a difference between rural male and rural female population is observable in the language of choice among friends. Nineteen (76%) of 25 rural males said they chose Punjabi to talk to their friends while only 12 (48%) of 25 rural females preferred to speak Punjabi with their friends. The reason given for speaking Punjabi to friends by most of the respondents was the same as was given for previous answers, i.e. "everyone has spoken Punjabi since the beginning". Seven (28%) rural females and three (12%) rural males used a mix of Punjabi and Urdu with their friends, while six (24%) rural females and three (12%) rural males used Urdu with their friends. The explanation offered for speaking both Punjabi and Urdu was that the choice of language was "dependent on the interlocutor". On further probing about what they meant by both Urdu and Punjabi and "interlocutor", some people explained that if a person they were going to talk to started the conversation in either of the languages, they followed the lead and spoke the same language. It is important to note that they were not talking about code mixing within a phrase or sentence rather they were pointing out the code switching that happens in a certain speech event. The reasons given for speaking Urdu vary from, "it is a different scenario" to "my friends are educated".

In urban Lahore, the language of choice among friends was significantly different from that of their rural counterparts, as seen in Figure 5. Only five (12%) of the urban respondents use Punjabi among friends, all of whom were males. None of the urban females used Punjabi with friends, and this was in spite of the fact that 10 urban females identified Punjabi as their mother tongue. Among urban male respondents, only five (22%) used Punjabi with their friends, 16 (69%) used both Punjabi and Urdu, and only two

(9%) used just Urdu with their friends. One urban male explained his answer in the following words:

- (1) ***Urdu vi Punjabi vi jihoo jia yar ohoji zaban, kush log ne jehre Urdu pasand karde ne.*** (We speak both Urdu and Punjabi, and the language depends on the friend. There are some who like Urdu.)

The urban males were also significantly different from their female counterparts in choice of language among friends. No urban female spoke Punjabi with her friends, and only six (26%) spoke Punjabi and Urdu with their friends. English and Urdu seemed to be the languages of choice for urban females among friends. Nine (39%) urban females used Urdu with their friends, while eight (35%) urban female respondents used both Urdu and English with their friends. The justifications those urban participants offered for the language of choice among friends were similar to that of rural participants for speaking Punjabi, but were different for speaking Punjabi and Urdu. For Punjabi the reason was the same as that given by rural participants, as were the reasons for Punjabi and Urdu, especially among urban males; however, urban females had different reasons for using Punjabi and Urdu. For Urdu, the explanation offered by the urban females was that “they all speak Urdu”. But the most significant difference between the urban females and all other groups was that they used Urdu and English among their friends. No other respondents from any other group made this claim. The justification given by these urban females was that the environment of their school, college, and neighborhood contributed to their choice of speaking both Urdu and English.

Figure 6 shows the results of the answers to the question, “What language do you speak with your coworkers?” Results show significant differences between urban and rural groups. There were differences within urban and rural groups between male and female respondents. Punjabi was the language of choice for rural participants, and Urdu was the language used by the urban participants in talking to coworkers.

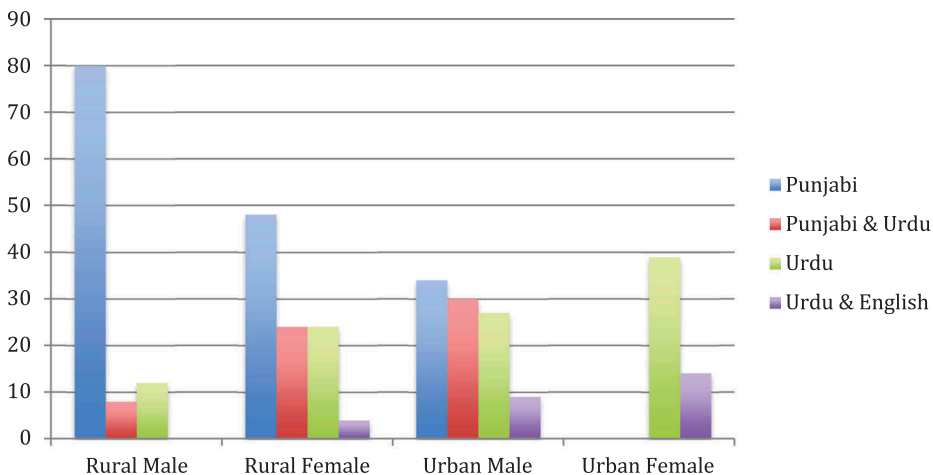


Figure 6. Language of choice with Coworkers.

Overall, 40 (42%) of the 96 respondents spoke Punjabi with their co-workers. There were significant differences between rural and urban populations. A chi-square test of independence was performed to see any relation between area and language of choice with coworkers. The results show a significant relation between these two variables,  $\chi^2 (2, N = 96) = 21.86, p < .001$ . Rural respondents were more likely to speak Punjabi with their coworkers than urban respondents. More rural 32 (64%) than urban 8 (17%) participants said they spoke Punjabi with their coworkers. Significant differences were also observed across gender lines, as more males 28 (57%) than females 12 (25%) said they spoke Punjabi with their coworkers. A chi-square test of independence was performed to see any relation between gender and language of choice with coworkers. The results show a significant relation between these two variables,  $\chi^2 (2, N = 96) = 11.02, p = .004$ . Male respondents were more likely to speak Punjabi with their coworkers than female respondents.

Among rural respondents, 32 (64%) spoke Punjabi to their coworkers, and with a difference between rural male and female groups in this regard. 20 (80%) rural males spoke Punjabi with their coworkers, while only 12 (48%) rural females said that they spoke Punjabi with their coworkers. Six (24%) rural females said they spoke Punjabi and Urdu with their coworkers and another six (24%) said that they spoke Urdu with their coworkers. Two (8%) rural males said that they spoke Punjabi and Urdu, and three (12%) said that they spoke Urdu with their coworkers.

The main reason provided by the rural respondents for speaking Punjabi was that "everyone has spoken Punjabi since their childhood." All rural male and female respondents who said that they spoke Punjabi with their coworkers offered the same explanation. Six (74%) of eight urban males who said that they spoke Punjabi with their coworkers offered the same explanation. The explanation for speaking Punjabi and Urdu was also similar to the one provided in answer to the previous question (what language you speak with your friends), that "the language spoken is dependent on the language of the interlocutor." All of the respondents who said they spoke Urdu at the work place provided the same motivation that "in the work environment only Urdu is used".

The urban population is different from their rural counterparts in the language used while talking to coworkers. Only eight (18%) urban respondents said that they preferred Punjabi. All these were males and made up almost 35% of the male respondents from Lahore city. Seven (30%) urban male participants said that they used both Urdu and Punjabi with their coworkers, the motivation provided being that the choice was dependent on the language of the interlocutor. None of the urban females used both Punjabi and Urdu with their coworkers. This is different from the language of choice with friends, where six urban females claimed to use Punjabi and Urdu with friends. Urdu and English seemed to be the languages of choice for urban participants while interacting with coworkers. Six (25%) urban males opted for only Urdu when talking to their colleagues in the workplace and nine (39%) urban female participants used only Urdu with their coworkers. For urban females the language of choice with coworkers was Urdu and English, and the explanation they gave for this was that they spoke both Urdu and English due to the environment of the workplace. Fourteen (60%) urban females used both Urdu and English with their coworkers. Only two (9%) urban males used both Urdu and English with their coworkers, and one rural female said that she used Urdu and English with her coworkers. The motivation for using both Urdu and English with

coworkers was the same across the board, “in the work environment both Urdu and English are used.”

## 5. Discussion

The results from [Table 2](#) show that the affiliation to language as mother tongue is with Punjabi in three out of four groups. The only exception is the urban female group, which views Urdu 13 (57%) as their mother tongue more often than Punjabi 10 (43%). Most of the respondents in the study who identified Punjabi as their mother tongue provided the same explanation i.e. it is their native/ancestral/home language. The results from chi-square test show significant differences across rural/urban and gender lines. This significance could be attributed to the uniformity of urban female sample. Most of these females belonged to well off families and were highly educated. This bias in the sample might have skewed the results.

Identification of Urdu as the mother tongue of the majority of urban females supports previous claims by Rahman (2002) and Mansoor (1993, 2004) that the urban middle class is abandoning Punjabi. The strong affiliation with Urdu among urban middle class females affirms the fact that the middle class is often prone to language change, and that middle class women are often the first to acquire the prestigious forms (as Urdu is considered more prestigious than Punjabi) and they are often the leaders in language change (Trudgill 1972, ; Eckert 2000). Urban middle class women choose Urdu as their mother tongue because they have been taught Urdu as their first language even though they were born into Punjabi speaking families, as many described in their interviews.

The results show that Punjabi is still the language of choice within the family in the rural areas, but in urban areas a change is taking place, and Punjabi seems to be losing ground to Urdu. The difference between the urban respondents who claimed that Punjabi was their mother tongue (30 (65%) of 46) and those who use it in their families is very conspicuous. Only 17 (37%) of all urban participants used Punjabi with their parents and just 10 (23%) used it with their siblings. This is an example of a difference and contradiction between perception and practice. Punjabi is still perceived to be the native language by most of the urban participants but is not used, even within the family circles. There was a significant difference between urban males and urban females. Although half the urban male respondents spoke Punjabi within the family, very few females used Punjabi while talking with their siblings. The reason for the difference between the urban male and female populations might be attributable to the uniformity of the female sample, which is a limitation of this study. All these females come from the middle or upper middle class, and are all educated, while the males come from varied classes, and hence are more representative of the overall population. Another difference observed within the urban male population was that more male participants spoke Urdu with their siblings as compared to those who spoke Urdu with their parents; only five (23%) males said they spoke Urdu with their parents while nine (39%) urban males said they spoke Urdu with their siblings. Fifteen (63%) urban males said that they spoke Punjabi with their parents while only nine (39%) said that they spoke Punjabi with their siblings. Only one urban female said that she spoke Punjabi with her siblings. Another difference regarding language of choice was observed within the urban female population. Although 10 (43%) urban females said their mother

tongue was Punjabi, only two (9%) spoke it with their parents, and only one (4.5%) spoke Punjabi with her siblings. This shows that though a strong affiliation to Punjabi is perceived, in practice, the urban females in this study rarely use Punjabi. The urban females feel affiliated to Punjabi because it is their ancestral language, but they rarely use it, even within the family. This indicates a change in progress, because younger generations are more prone to speaking Urdu with one another in urban areas, while in rural areas, Punjabi is still the main language spoken. In the next 20 years or so, rural areas may begin to use Urdu more frequently as more educated people begin speaking Urdu to their children there as well.

The differences between the urban and rural populations are significant for language of choice when interacting with friends and coworkers. There are not only rural/urban differences but also differences across genders within those areas. Overall, rural males in most cases (almost 80%) use Punjabi with their coworkers and friends, but rural females tend to use both Punjabi and Urdu (although almost half of them, those who work in the fields or at home, use only Punjabi). This trend shows that among educated rural females the language of choice is just Urdu or both Punjabi and Urdu. It also points to the fact that educated rural females tend to use Punjabi only with their family and close friends. This is symptomatic of the shift that is taking place in rural Punjab and is being initiated by middle class females who use Urdu in the workplace, and in some cases with their children.

A language shift seems to have taken place in the urban population regarding the language of choice in professional and non-familial domains and this has been shown in another study done by and Nazir, Aftab, and Saeed (2013). Punjabi tends to be confined to the domain of the home and has a very low usage outside of the home environment at least among middle classes and professionals. Only five (22%) urban males said that they spoke it with their friends, and eight (35%) said that they spoke Punjabi with their coworkers. Other urban males either speak both Punjabi and Urdu or just Urdu with their coworkers and friends.

The language-shift taking place in urban Lahore sheds light on the stratification of populations based on language usage. The urban male sample is more or less representative of the population that includes almost all socioeconomic levels. A deeper look into the data shows that Punjabi is still prevalent in poor and less educated segments of society. The fact that stands out is that fewer urban males speak Punjabi with their friends than those who speak Punjabi with their coworkers. This may be explained by the fact that some of the respondents worked in garages or as daily-wage workers. Punjabi is the language of choice in these contexts and this could be why there are more males speaking Punjabi with their coworkers than with their friends. Another reason why there is less Punjabi spoken with male friends could be that Punjabi has a lower social status as compared to Urdu. The desire to appear more educated and respectable among friends might be the reason for more Urdu usage. Also noteworthy is that the use of both Urdu and Punjabi tends to be a choice of language depending on the language of the interlocutor. The respondents reported that in these instances it was the interlocutor who decided the language of interaction, and the interaction took place in the language that the other party chose. There are only two instances of urban males claiming that they spoke Urdu and English; this is not very common and this could be attributed to the fact

these two individuals were very highly educated and worked in very high positions in their respective organizations.

The urban female group is distinct from all the other groups in language of choice with friends and coworkers. None of the urban females used just Punjabi with their friends; however, they sometimes left it to a friend's discretion to pick the language of interaction.

If friends picked Punjabi they used Punjabi and if friends picked Urdu, they used Urdu, but only six (26%) females claimed to do this. No female claimed that she spoke only Punjabi or initiated a conversation in Punjabi with her friends. The language of choice among urban female friends is Urdu or English, and this is also true with coworkers; Punjabi is not used. The reason for the absence of Punjabi use in the urban female population may be attributable to sample bias so the results could be skewed in one direction. The urban female sample includes only educated middle-middle or upper-middle class women and does not represent all the different segments of society. Nevertheless, the results shed light on a phenomenon that has taken place in middle-middle and upper-middle classes in Lahore. If Punjabi is spoken in this class (and it is very limited), it is confined to the home environment and has no role in social interactions outside of the home. This indicates a language shift in a specific domain, and conforms to earlier studies (Trudgill 1972, 1974; Labov 1966; Eckert 2000) that indicate such changes, especially when involving a high status language, are often initiated by urban middle class females. For urban females in Lahore, Urdu and English are the languages of choice. Another explanation attributed to the prevalence of Urdu and English use by urban females is that most of the respondents were students in elite colleges and were being educated in English medium institutes and they tended to come from well-to-do families and were more exposed to English than any other group in this study.

## 6. Conclusion

Overall, most of the rural participants affiliate to Punjabi and speak it most of the time. The only exception in this context is the urban, middle class, educated female group. The urban female group identifies Urdu as their mother tongue more than Punjabi. Affiliation and use of Punjabi is declining in the urban areas, and in most cases it is confined within the family circles only. Most of the respondents are bilingual, and more urban than rural people speak more than one language. The only people who are monolinguals belong to rural areas and are not literate and come from low-income communities and families. Almost everyone speaks Punjabi within the family in the rural areas, but in urban areas very few respondents (mostly males) use Punjabi within the family. There are significant differences regarding the language of choice within the family between the urban males and urban females. More urban males than urban females speak Punjabi with their parents and siblings. No urban female speaks only Punjabi with her siblings. In social and professional contexts Punjabi is almost non-existent in the urban areas but is still spoken and used by most of the rural people. Urdu is gaining some ground in social and professional domains in rural areas, and many educated rural females opt to speak Urdu with their colleagues and friends. The disappearance of Punjabi in social and professional domains in Lahore is attributable to language attitudes and perceptions towards Punjabi that are prevalent in the society and can be traced back to government policies towards local languages. This government policy is rooted in the so-called "Pakistan Ideology" that is based on notions like "one

nation, one religion and one language". The significance of the present study lies in recording the attitudes and practices of both the rural and urban young adults in the province. It also records and describes the gradual disappearance of Punjabi language from the urban areas. This situation has grave implications both for the vitality and survival of Punjabi in Pakistan. Although this research has its limitations, it can lead to a larger more expansive research project throughout the Punjabi speaking areas of the province.

## Notes

1. <http://www.ethnologue.com/country/PK>.
2. [http://www.pbs.gov.pk/sites/default/files/PAKISTAN%20TEHSIL%20WISE%20FOR%20WEB%20CENSUS\\_2017.pdf](http://www.pbs.gov.pk/sites/default/files/PAKISTAN%20TEHSIL%20WISE%20FOR%20WEB%20CENSUS_2017.pdf).
3. <http://www.punjab.gov.pk>.
4. [http://www.pbs.gov.pk/sites/default/files/population\\_statistics/publications/pds2007/tables/t01.pdf](http://www.pbs.gov.pk/sites/default/files/population_statistics/publications/pds2007/tables/t01.pdf).
5. <http://www.punjab.gov.pk>.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

## Notes on contributor

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