



Endangered Punjabi Dialects and communicative constraints: An Alarming Situation for Punjab's Identity

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Abstract- This analysis aims to examine the status of Punjabi regional language within the province of Punjab. Traditional mode of communication in Punjab is Punjabi language, any region can be recognized by the culture and language, although in Pakistan, media and official language is national. The Punjabi linguistic community is massive in numbers within the country for its majority placed in the province of Punjab. Being the language of the bulk, the Punjabi language becomes restricted and finds a mere touch in articulation within the lives of its native speakers. The data was collected from 150 (both male and female) participants through interviews and questionnaires from the native speakers of Punjabi to observe the preferences towards speaking Punjabi. The findings show that the participants have confusions and lacking the sense of protecting the dying status that the Punjabi Language is facing nowadays. They are positive to speak it in social gatherings but they are reluctant to speak it in public places i.e. markets, schools, colleges etc. The young generation of Pakistan is less prone towards maintaining Punjabi language and there will be a day when Punjabi will be an endangered language in Pakistan. This study suggests that people of Punjab should never forget their identity; Punjabi communication is identity of people of Punjab. It should be evaluated to create New Providence to save Punjabi accent. Media should confer acknowledgement; there should be some seminars and debates in this regard.

Keywords: Endangered dialect; Punjabi; Linguistics status

I. INTRODUCTION

The Punjabi Language is the 2nd major language of Pakistan due to the majority of the Punjabi Language community living in the Punjab province of Pakistan (Mahmood, Hussain, & Mahmood, 2011). Although the Punjabi community is large in numbers yet the status of Punjabi is dying gradually and it has become restricted in the lives of the speakers (Nazir, Aftab, & Saeed, 2013). As language shift is thought about the change from the routine usage of one language to another (Weinreich & Mackey, 1978). This attitude towards the Punjabi language can be the result of many factors as it may be studied in the sociolinguistics scenario. It is a long term process that gradually affects the cultural and linguistic tendencies of the speakers (Kandler, Unger, & Steele, 2010). A language becomes endangered when it is less in practice and the speakers prefer one language to another (Swadesh, 1971). The language becomes rare in usage and it is considered to be less beneficial to the linguistic community. The importance of a language can be understood by its development in a specific linguistic society (Flores & Rosa, 2015). The attitude of the speakers becomes positive when a language is allowed to extend its domains in different settings of society (Cooper, 1982).

1.1 Punjabi in Pakistan

Pakistan is a country abundant in culture and multilingual assets. Its National language is Urdu while English is the official language. From the study of the census for the last five years, it is evident that the speakers of Punjabi language are decreasing every year. According to the Census of 1998, the total population of Pakistan was 132,352,279 and the total numbers of Punjabi speakers were 58,433,431. It means that 44.15% of the population included in Punjabi speakers. But the result of the Census 2017 reveals that it has reduced to 38.78%. The data are taken from ETHNOLOGUE it is evident that total users of Punjabi in Pakistan are 82,500,000.

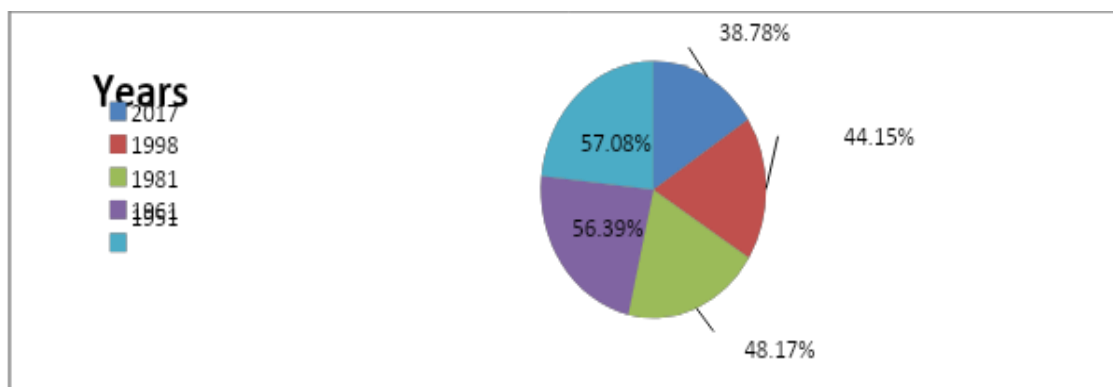


Figure 1: Census history of Punjabi speakers in Pakistan

1.2 Punjab Regions

Punjab is the province of Pakistan. Its capital is Lahore. The total population is 80 million covering the area of 205,344 sq. kilometre. Punjab is the largest sector of Pakistan in terms of its productive and economic importance. It is a prosperous province among all the provinces and has the lowest poverty rate. Punjab has the largest HDI i.e. Human Development Index.

1.3 Language Shift

To get a clear idea about these facts it is better to understand the definition of Punjabi first. Ethnologue states three types of Punjabi i.e. Western, Eastern and Mirpur Punjabi. These are called the varieties of a dialect. By combining all three groups we get a whole that is called Great Punjabi. Punjabi dialects are different from region to region all over Pakistan. A language death occurs when people of a specific region abandoned their language by the dominance to the other. Negligence of the native speakers towards their language leads them to the death of that language (Akhtar, Talib, & Khaliq, 2020). Certain people try to acquire a dominant language of the society but they do not leave their native language and they are few in numbers. Language shift occurs when most of the people in the community leave their native language collectively (Trudgill, 2003). When two or more languages are mixed this is called multilingualism and it is a common practice of the bilingual community. People use different languages while speaking and this is called code-switching (Gluth, 2020). Pakistan is a bilingual or multilingual society and most of the population speaks more than one language so code-switching is frequent here. Most of the people speak Urdu i.e. the National language of Pakistan but they like to mix Urdu and English to get a high prestige in the society (Akhtar et al., 2020).

Being the language of a high social class English is welcomed everywhere whether it may be the cultural, social or educational need. But, Pakistani youths, regrettably have a disrespectful approach towards their native language. All of their task whether they are professional, scholarly or social exercises, happen in the national language, i.e. in Urdu or international English (Abbas & Iqbal, 2018).

1.4 Punjabi Language shift – Causes

Language is assumed to transfer from one era to another for its survival and is postured to risk when either speaker of a community halted conferring it breaking the nonstop chain of dialect transmission. In 1982, Grosjean presented a modal where the first generation is mostly monolingual in the home dialect as compared to the second generation where the speakers are bilingual in home language and the language of the society. Then the speakers of the third generation are monolingual in the language of the prevailing times. The situation in Pakistan is a bit different and the reason for language shift may be the result of many other social, economic and political factors (Grosjean, 1982).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A lot of researchers have worked on the language shift. Concurring with Abbas Zaidi, Punjabi has never been permitted to develop in any political time as there has been exceptionally small wrangle about Punjabi culture in Pakistan (Zaidi, 2010). Yasmeen uncovered that the individuals have more positive demeanour towards English as compared to Punjabi dialect. The study indicated the stereotyped ideas connected to the Punjabi being the language of ignorant and uneducated individuals of the society (Akram & Yasmeen, 2011). Nazir, Aftab and Saeed inspected the situation of Punjabi in Sargodha and the social component which postures risk to the maintainability of Punjabi on the larger scale. The research shows that Punjabi speakers are not steadfast to their dialect. Punjabi dialect is declining day by day and subsequently, a risk is confronted to the Punjabi as the larger part of the Punjabi speakers are moving their tendencies towards Urdu (Nazir et al., 2013).

The conclusion of the research done by Mansoor indicated the negative attitude towards Punjabi opting it as a subject of their studies. The youth of Pakistan consider it a low scope language that has nothing to do with future and modern perspectives (Ali, Masroor, & Khan, 2020).

III. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of the study is to investigate the language attitude of the native speakers towards their mother tongue i.e. Punjabi. Despite being their mother tongue, people feel ashamed to speak Punjabi and they also want their children not to speak Punjabi. This research explores the reasons behind endangered Punjabi language leading to the extinction and people's mindset about their children to learn developing languages of the society other than Punjabi.

IV. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How language choice establishes an opinion?
2. How frequent is the attitude of native speakers towards endangered language?

V. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research has been done by using both qualitative and quantitative approach. The data collection was done through questionnaire and interviews preferably from educated youth i.e. students of Punjab, (public and private) Universities, colleges, fresh graduates and post-graduates. The small amount of data was also collected from mature and elderly participants to observe the trends in the language shift. All the participants were distributed into age-wise divisions to find out the status of Punjabi in the regions of Punjab. The data was personally managed by the researcher and the equal representation was given to both male and female during the data collection process. Since the research aimed to investigate the Punjabi language status and the future decline leading it towards one of the endangered languages, all the participants, who took part in the questionnaire and semi-structured interviews, were the native speakers of Punjabi language. These interviews were recorded and then analyzed to get the opinion about the speakers about their mother tongue.

5.1 Data analysis

The attitude and trend of the native speakers have been observed through interviews and questionnaire. This shows how native speakers shifted from their mother tongue and they used to prefer other dominant and growing languages i.e. Urdu, English etc. All the participants answered all questions and a combined picture has been drawn for the results. Out of 20 questions the following given are having main variables and their data has given below through graphs.

a) From which region of Punjab you belong?

The questionnaire was analyzed firstly region wise and then according to the age group of the speakers. It is discussed earlier in research methodology that the sample size is of 150 participants divided into two groups having an equal number of male and female. The Punjabi language finds its concentration in the central parts of Punjab i.e. Lahore, Sialkot, Gujranwala as compared to the other parts of Punjab. See figure.2

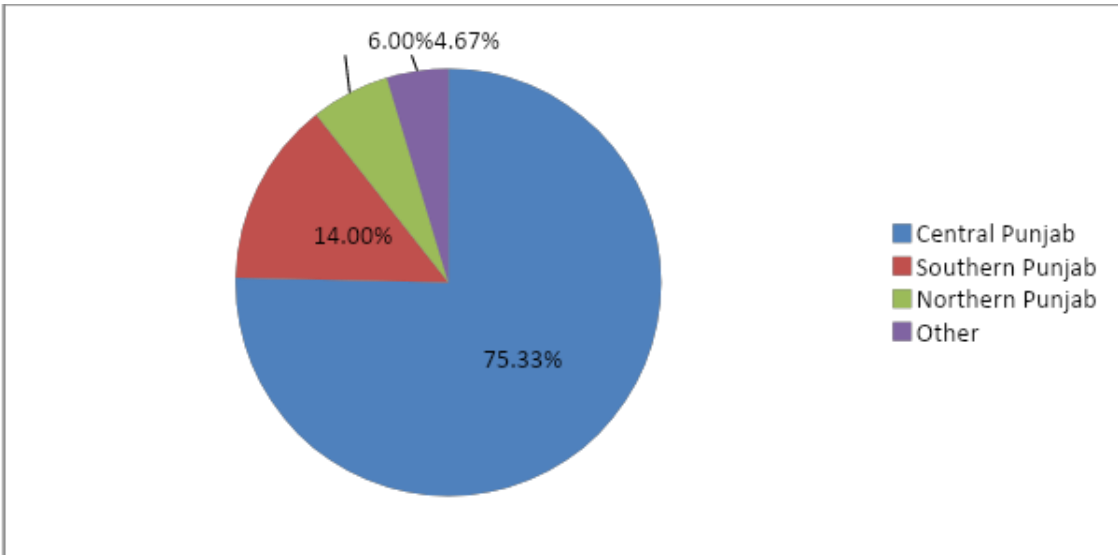


Figure 2: Punjabi speakers from different regions of Punjab

It is evident from figure.3 that people with age group 20-25 have the least tendency towards the Punjabi language. They have a negative attitude towards their mother tongue.

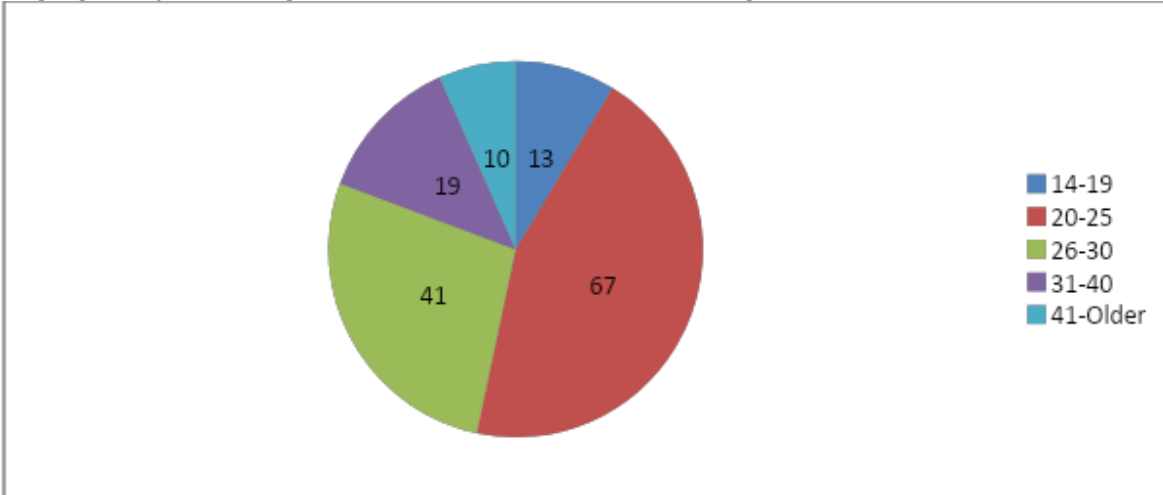


Figure 3: Age Group of Punjabi speakers

B) Which primary language you were taught in your childhood?

Being the native speakers of Punjabi and despite being their mother tongue, most of the kids are taught other languages than Punjabi in early childhood i.e. Urdu, English, Saraiki etc. The ratio of Urdu language learners is greater than that of Punjabi.

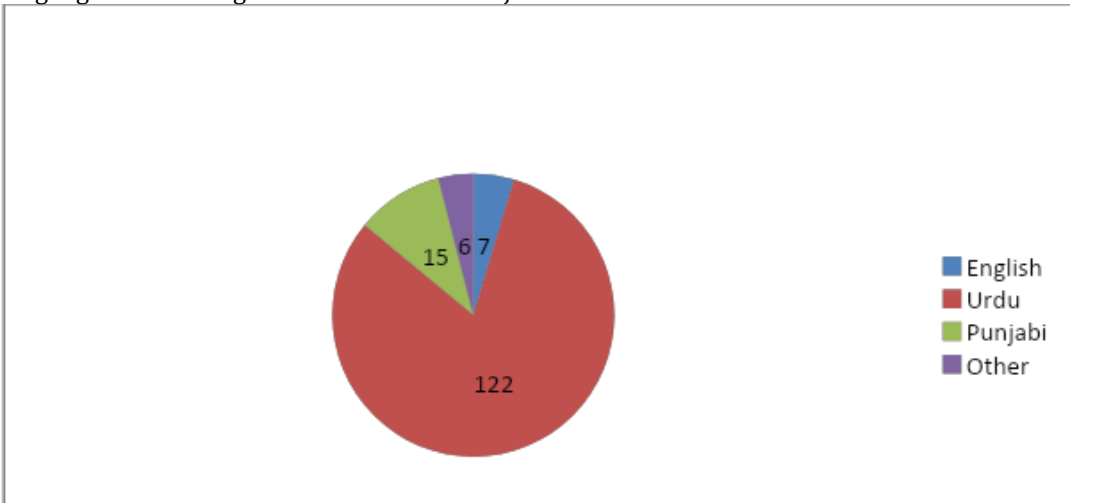


Fig: 4 Language of the childhood

C) Use of Punjabi by male and female speakers in different settings

Male speakers

The results show that 23% of the male speak Punjabi in Educational institutions and 96% of the male like to speak Punjabi in their social circle. Even it is high in number but people are still reluctant to adopt Punjabi as their survival.

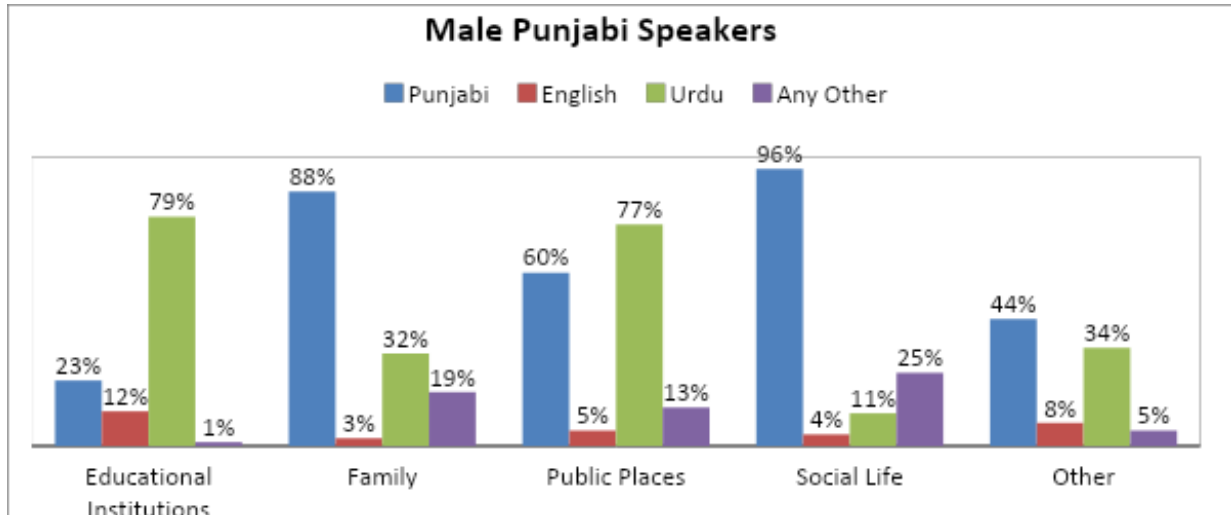


Fig.5 Male Punjabi Speakers

Female Punjabi speakers

The number of female Punjabi speakers is comparatively low in number to that of male as they prefer to speak Urdu to Punjabi in the given scenario. Use of Punjabi Language is high in family and educational institutions respectively. The results show that young generation likes to speak Urdu the most. As shown in the figure below.

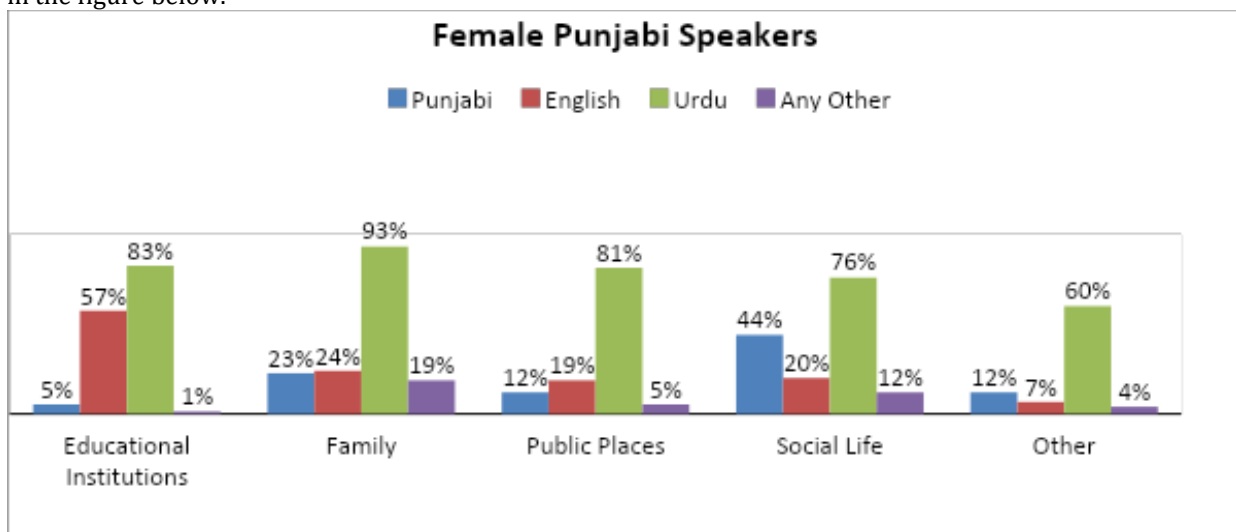


Figure 6: Female Punjabi Speakers

D) Which one language can you speak proficiently?

The speakers of Punjabi who claim to have Punjabi as their mother tongue even don't understand it properly. 65% of the participants are unaware of and have a poor understanding of Punjabi. On the other hand, the respondents have given strong statements regarding Urdu as well. It means most of the population

of Punjabi speakers is shifting towards the Urdu language.

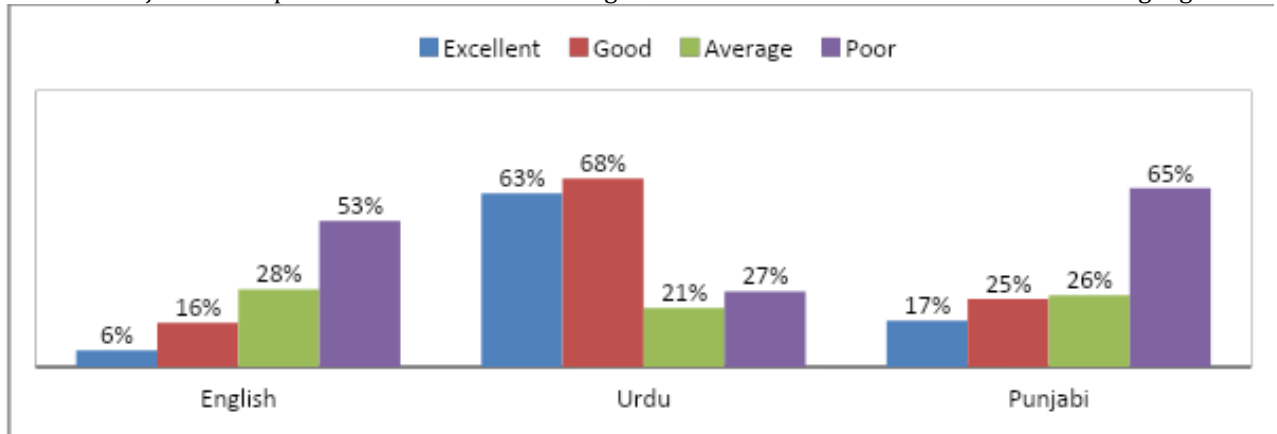


Figure.7 Language proficiency

E) How do you feel speaking Punjabi?

Figure .8 calculates the attitude of the speakers towards Punjabi in the given settings. People are ignoring the Punjabi language as they think it is not fulfilling their social needs and they are shifting their trends towards Urdu that's why most of the young generation like to speak Urdu. The Punjabi language is banned in private and most of the public institutions.

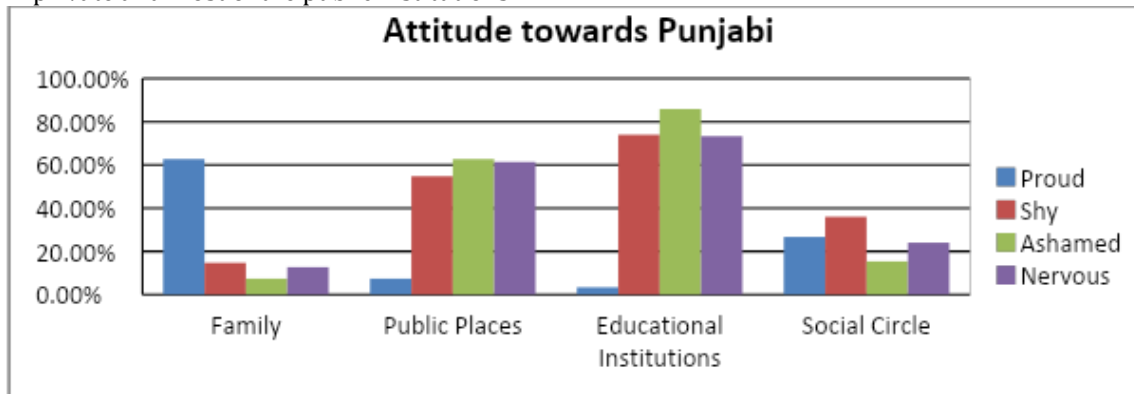


Figure.8 Attitude of the speakers

F) How do you judge others speaking Punjabi in front of you?

As language is considered to be the pride of the speakers but the majority of the linguistic community does not feel any pride while speaking their mother tongue. They consider it a low profile language that has nothing to do with their social requirements. They think about Punjabi is the language of backward areas and villagers.

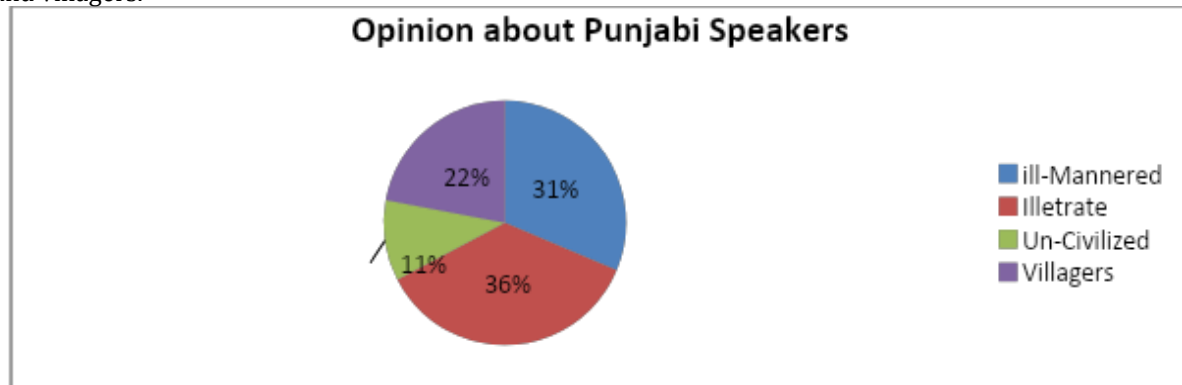


Figure.9 Opinion about Punjabi

G) Which language will you prefer for your kids in future?

Most of the youth take the Punjabi language as for granted as they think it of no use for their kids in future. They showed a negative attitude towards the learning of Punjabi. 61% of the participants reveal their positive attitude towards Urdu and this is an alarming situation for the present status and maintenance of the Punjabi shortly.

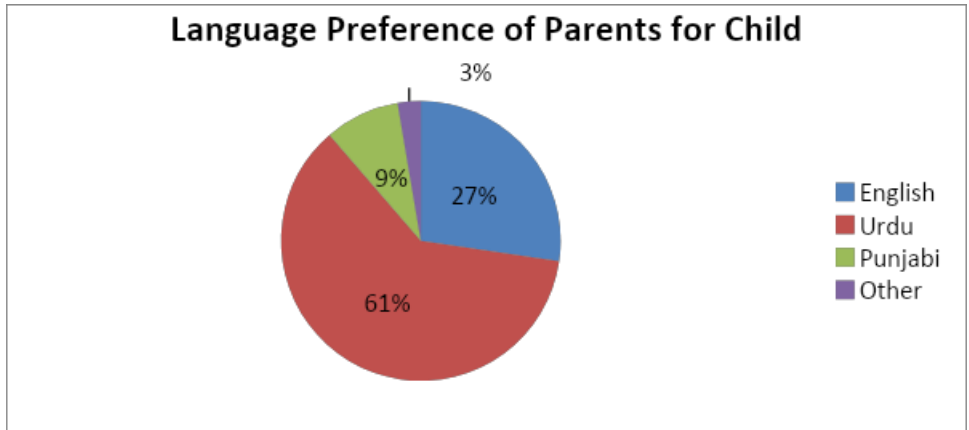


Figure.10 Language preferences for the next generation

H) Will you transfer Punjabi language to your children?

When the participants were asked to respond about transferring of Punjabi to their kids, 75% of them responded no and 25% responded positively.

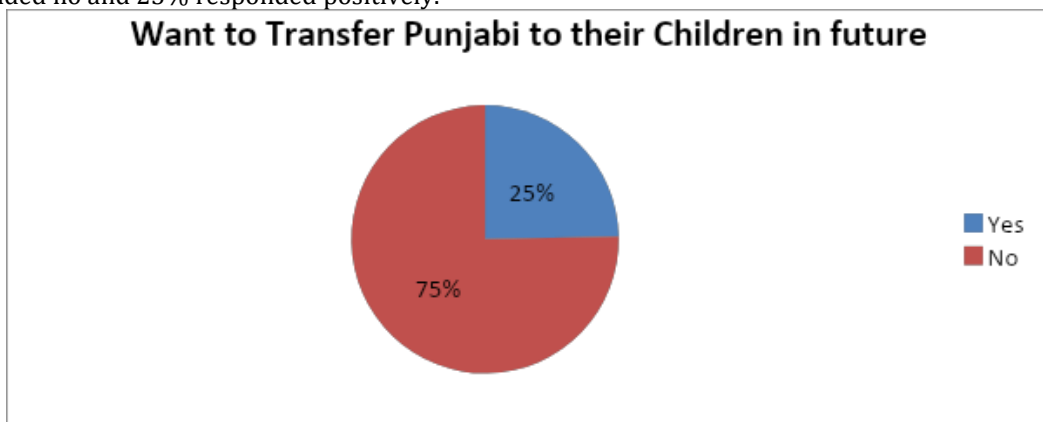


Figure10. Transferring of the language

1. If no then why?

Participants who responded negatively they considered the Punjabi language a low prestige and it is not the language of the society and outside world. 36% of them think Punjabi a language of uneducated people.

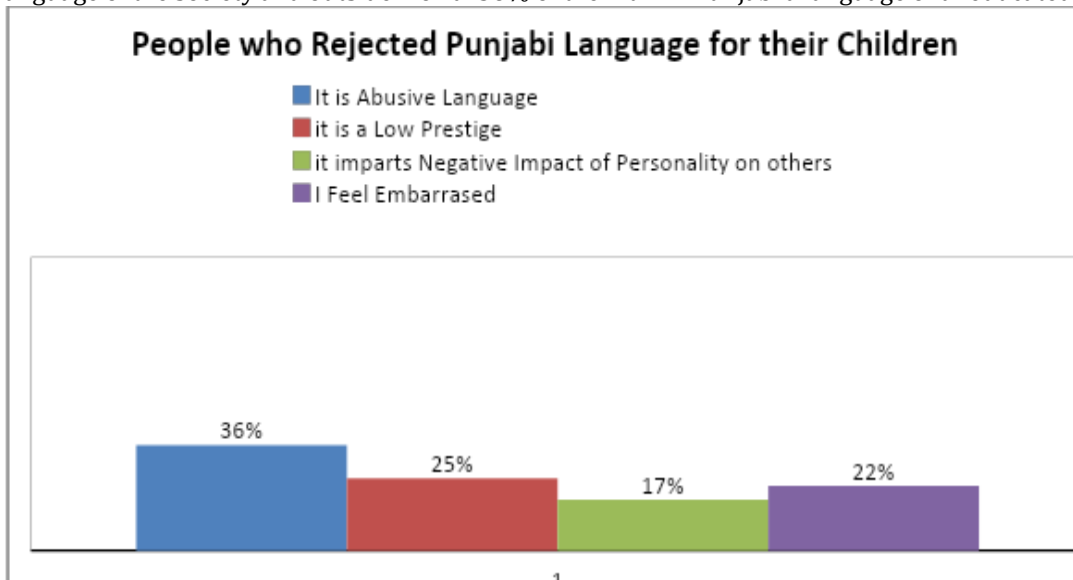


Figure11. Negative attitude towards Punjabi

2. If Yes then why?

Some of the respondents show a positive attitude, not for the sake of preserving the legacy of language rather an addition to their skills. Parents avoid their children to speak Punjabi in social circles. People feel shy while speaking Punjabi as it has no advantage in future. As shown in the figure below.

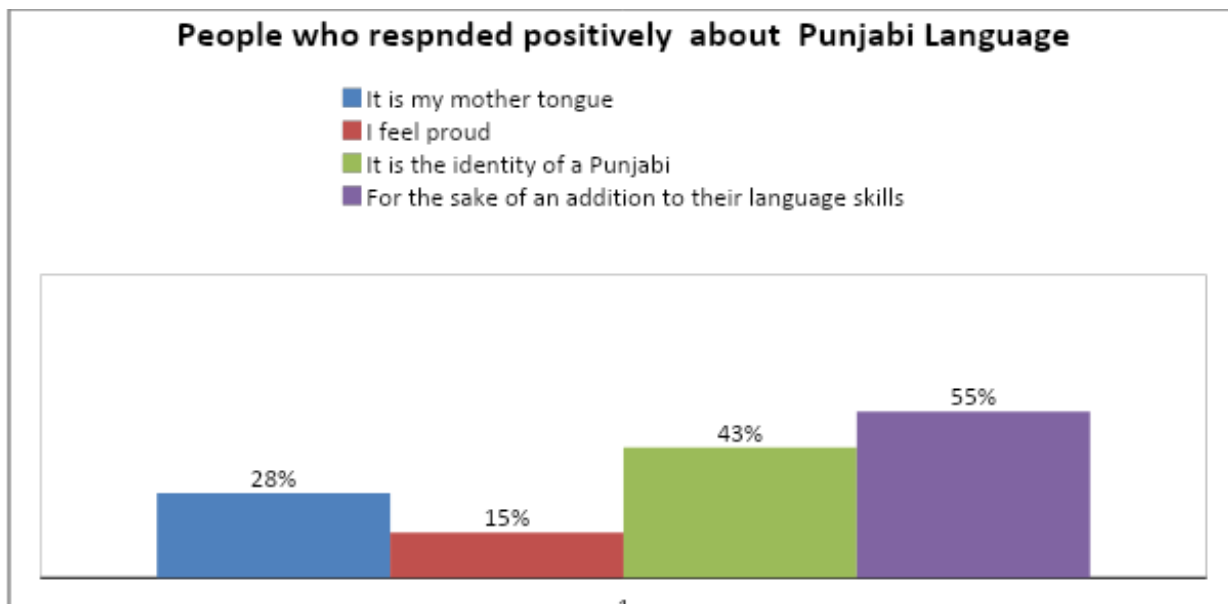


Figure.12

VI. CONCLUSION

This study sums up the tolerated behavior of the young generation towards Punjabi. They are not interested in taking care of the language of their forefathers. (Abbasa, Jalilb, & Hammad Nazir Zakic). Even they are not willing to preserve their mother tongue and they are not as fluent as they should be. They do not accept this language as a medium of instructions and for scholarly purposes. Majority of the people show their least concern towards transferring of this language to their next generation. They are shifting from their mother tongue towards Urdu and this can lead to a serious language death of Punjabi. The Punjabi language is fully ignored and discouraged the time is not far when the Punjabi language will be Endangered and rare to know in the lists of the languages. Media should promote the Punjabi language through T.V programs and radio channels should promote Punjabi for the betterment of the language. Punjabi language course should be taught in schools. Moreover, parents should encourage their children to speak Punjabi as it is their identity which is on the verge of danger.

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