

Maintaining Pashto and Losing Punjabi: Family Language Policy and Ideological Contrasts in Multilingual Punjab

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ABSTRACT

Aim of the Study: This study examines how family language policy shapes the maintenance, transmission, and omission of heritage languages among Pashtun and Punjabi families in Punjab. It explores how parental language ideologies influence children's language practices and why Pashtun families maintain their heritage language in migrant settings, while Punjabi families shift away from theirs despite living in their native environment.

Methodology: A qualitative research design is adopted, using semi-structured interviews with parents from both communities. Non-participant home observations are also conducted to capture natural parent-child interactions and actual language use. The data is analyzed thematically, focusing on language ideologies, practices, strategies, and social and institutional challenges.

Findings: The findings reveal a clear contrast between the two groups. Pashtun families maintain strong and consistent language policies, transmitting Pashto to their children due to its close association with cultural identity. In contrast, Punjabi families tend to prioritize Urdu and English, leading to the gradual omission of Punjabi in parent-child interaction. While Pashtun families face institutional and social pressures, they continue to resist language shift. Punjabi families, however, align with dominant language ideologies, accelerating the shift away from their heritage language.

Conclusion: The study concludes that heritage language transmission is shaped more by parental ideology than external conditions, highlighting the central role of family language policy in determining linguistic outcomes across generations.

Keywords: FLP, HLT, Family Ideologies, Bilingualism, Pashto, Punjabi.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Language is an important marker of identity, culture, and social belonging besides a means of communication (Zhu, 2017). The families play a vital role in the development of linguistic repertoires of children and the process of whether or not the languages of the past will be maintained or gradually replaced in multilingual nations such as Pakistan. This is commonly known as family language policy and involves the attitudes, practices, and tactics that parents use to influence the use of language at home. The

decisions gain particular importance in terms of the intergenerational legacy of heritage languages in a scenario in which multiple languages can co-exist with different levels of societal importance (Schwartz, 2010). This paper looks at how Pashtun and Punjabi families in Punjab preserve and transmit their own native languages in the family. The original context of Punjabi is a regional language, and Pashto is a heritage language that is maintained in a migrant scenario. Despite of this difference, both groups belong to a larger sociolinguistic framework where education, status and upward mobility have been frequently linked to both Urdu and English. Families have to juggle between their cultural identity and the dominant linguistic norms in this challenging environment (Burki, 2015). A conspicuous difference inspired this study: Punjabi families tend to switch to Urdu and English even in their native-language territory, whereas Pashtun families tend to keep and actually teach Pashto to their children even after they have moved. This poses a great problem on the influence of parental ideas, frequent use of language, and external influences like schools and peer groups on language outcomes. Understanding this difference can assist one in better comprehending how heritage languages are preserved or abandoned in similar situations within society. Therefore, the objective of this research is to examine the role of family language policy in Pashtun and Punjabi families and how this impacts the use of heritage languages. Specifically, it analyses home language practices, language ideology of parents, language maintenance strategies, and the social and institutional challenges. In order to offer an elaborate explanation of language preferences generation and negotiation in families, the research applies a qualitative approach to gather the perspectives and life experiences of parents.

This research is significant for its contribution to the broader field of heritage language transmission and family language policy. The study illustrates how different value systems related to language can result in varied linguistic trajectories by comparing two culturally and linguistically different groups within the same geographical environment. It also highlights how external factors, especially educational institutions, can either encourage or restrict the use of heritage languages.

1.1. Research Questions

1. What effects do Pashtun and Punjabi families' language policies have on the language use and heritage language outcomes of their children?
2. Why do Punjabi families abandon their ancestral language even if they live in their own country, but Pashtun families preserve it in immigrant contexts?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Punjabi and Pashtun communities in Pakistan are considered to have powerful ethnolinguistic identities. Their family language policies differ sharply: Pashtuns actively maintain and pass on their language (Pashto) to their descendants, viewing it as a cultural identity and source of pride. In contrast, Punjabis abandon their language due to multiple ideologies and linguistic hierarchies. This contrast shows how Family language policy, shaped by intergenerational ideologies, prestige hierarchies, and sociopolitical structures, determines the fate of a language in the home and in social settings.

2.2 Family Language Policy (FLP) and its Emergence

Families play a primary role in maintaining and transmitting heritage language (Spolsky, Language Policy, 2009); (Fishman, 1991), and creating the bilingual environment in which a growing number of youngsters are raised (Schwartz, 2010). Choosing which languages to learn, keep, and use is one of the main issues that bilingual and multilingual families face on a daily basis (Tijana Hirsch, 2018). Given these changes, Family Language Policy (FLP), a relatively new field of study that has garnered a lot of attention, focuses on how family members decide which languages to retain and which to give up, as well as how they interpret the various languages they use on a daily basis (Weihong Wang, 2018). According

to (Kendall A. King, 2008), “FLP is the term used to describe parents' explicit and/or implicit language planning for language use among family members”.

Language Policy, whether in a family context or other institutional domains, is frequently based on Spolsky's framework (2004), (2009). Family Language Policy has gained significant recognition over the past few decades. Language beliefs in the context of the home domain (i.e., FLP) refer to the attitudes and views that family members have regarding language use, multilingualism, and language(s). A family's linguistic behavior, or the language or languages they use on a daily basis, is referred to as practices. Last but not least, language management refers to attempts to mold or direct family members' language use and learning outcomes through any type planning or intervention (Kendall A. King, 2008) (Spolsky, 2004). For example, parents may try to influence their children's language development by enforcing clear rules on language use at home or in language classes, or children may steer their siblings' language choices or manipulate parental beliefs or practices (Zhu, 2017). In short, the Family language policy (FLP) typically addresses the language beliefs and policies of migrant families, with a focus on bilingualism among international or inter-national migrants. However, it rarely considers the inter-national ethnic groups (such as Punjabis and Pashtuns), which is the focus of our study. In this section, the existing scholarship on Family Language Policy, Heritage Language Transmission, and language ideologies is reviewed to situate the comparative analysis of Punjabis versus Pashtuns.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

Spolsky (2009) defines Family Language Policy as a combination of “the parents' language ideologies, their actual language practices in everyday life, and the explicit management steps they take to influence their children's language use”. He describes Family Language Policy consists of three interrelated components. a) Language ideologies or Beliefs about the maintenance of heritage/native language, attitude towards dominating language, final judgments on which language is suitable for education, religion, and identity, status, etc. b) Language Practices or actual use of language, which language parents use with children, which language siblings use with each other and which language is commonly used in home settings. According to Spolsky, the real evidence of language policy is language practice at home in a default setting as there can be conflict of opinion vs practices in many cases. c) The third tripartite is language management that what deliberate and conscious efforts family members take to control or enforce specific languages at home. This framework is expanded by Crudt-Christiansen (2009), who highlights power dynamics, parental agency, and ideological conflicts in multilingual families. She contends that FLP is a venue where sociopolitical pressures, class aspirations, and cultural expectations converge rather than just a collection of options. Broader structural factors, such as educational expectations, socioeconomic mobility, and language hierarchies, affect how families value or discount particular languages impact parents' judgments.

The theory of intergenerational transmission by Fishman (1991), which underpins these opinions, stresses the importance of families in preserving heritage languages. In his view, Fishman claims that the minority languages can be preserved in the household as the most significant environment. The transmission of language will occur only when it is not lost over the generations. Together, these frameworks present a complex look at the way families respond to multilingual settings. Although Crudt-Christian stresses the importance of ideology and agency, the structural clarity of the paradigm suggested by Spolsky is offered. Fishman underlines the importance of the generational passing on. Collectively, these perspectives allow the researchers to study the processes of how many communities (including Pashtun and Punjabi natives) create, negotiate, and sustain their language policy in specific social and cultural contexts.

2.4 Heritage Language Maintenance

The phrase "heritage language" (HL) was first used in Canada to refer to any "language other than English and French," which includes languages spoken by immigrants and Indigenous people (Cummins, 1991). However, any language "other than the dominant" is now widely referred to as an HL. Although HL is sometimes assumed to be the language used in domestic or familial settings, as (Johanna Enns-

Kananen) refers to Campbell & Peyton(1998), some emphasize that HL "may or may not be spoken in the home," pointing to HL's wider cultural connotations and significance. Accordingly, HL can refer to any nondominant language of personal relevance (Deusen-Scholl, 2003); this understanding of HL does not depend on proficiency and acknowledges that HL performances and "token uses" can also serve significant semiotic, social, and identity-building purposes (Oliver Ahlers, 2017).

The family is considered a very important domain for studying Family Language Policy because of its vital role in shaping a child's language environment. Early advocate of active language maintenance research, Fishman (1991), supported efforts at the community and family level to reverse language shift (RLS) by preserving ethnic languages. Fishman (1991) states that the family has an inherent barrier that shields it from external influences. This barrier is linked to closeness and seclusion, which make the family particularly resistant to outside rivalry and language replacement. However, the modern urban family remains "the most common and inescapable foundation for mother tongue transmission, bonding, use, and stabilization," even though it has lost much of its socialization power (Schwartz, 2010).

2.5 Internal Migration and Language Shift in Pakistan

Migration has long been seen as a major factor in language contact and change, and many studies have offered detailed explanations of how macro-social causes of migration and economic and social disruptions contribute to language contact and change, ultimately impacting the identity of migrated communities (Fishman, 1991). Numerous reasons and effects of internal migration in Pakistan are documented in the South Asian Migration Report (2017). It states that with an estimated... The term "heritage language" (HL) was first used in Canada to describe any "language other than English and French," including languages spoken by immigrants and Indigenous peoples (Cummins, 1991). However, now any language "other than the dominant" is commonly referred to as an HL. While HL is sometimes thought to be the language used in home or family settings, as (Johanna Ennser-Kananen) mentions regarding Campbell & Peyton (1998), some emphasize that HL "may or may not be spoken in the home," highlighting HL's broader cultural significance and importance.

Therefore, HL can refer to any non-dominant language that holds personal significance (Deusen-Scholl, 2003); this broader view of HL does not depend on language proficiency and acknowledges that HL performances and "token uses" can also serve important semiotic, social, and identity-related functions (Oliver Ahlers, 2017). With a population of 191.7 million, Pakistan has the tenth largest labor force in the world. The distribution of the country's economic growth has been uneven between rural and urban areas. Similarly, rural regions receive insufficient development funding, while social infrastructure investment is disproportionately concentrated in or near metropolitan areas (Burki, 2015). SAMR (2017) highlights that, in terms of rural and urban areas, the disparity in development between and within provinces is marked by unequal access to healthcare, education, and employment opportunities, which has driven internal migration. Urban areas tend to have higher wage rates, and the increase in internal movement, including interprovincial and rural-urban migration, coincides with the diversification of the labor market. The ongoing fight against terrorism in FATA, which has been part of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa since 2018, and the worsening law and order situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where about 3.2% of people were forced to flee their homes, are additional reasons for internal migration. The Pathans, or Pashtuns, are the inhabitants of KP.

2.6 Language Ideologies, Stigma, and Prestige in Pakistan

Pakistanis have a diverse linguistic heritage. A report shows that they speak nearly 80 different languages. Along with English, Urdu is one of the two official languages and holds the status of national language. Pushto is spoken by 16.1% of the population, while Punjabi is spoken by 39.2%. Additionally, 10.6% of Pakistanis speak Urdu, and 13.7% speak Saraiki (Dannielle, 2023).

Mansoor (1993) stands out among studies on the status and attitudes of Punjabi speakers. The study's findings show that participants have a negative opinion of the Punjabi language and the Punjabi-speaking

community. She lists the low ethnolinguistic viability of the Punjabi language group, the lack of official and educational use of the language, and institutional support—particularly from the media—as reasons for this language shift. Abbas Zaidi (2010) claims that because there has not been much discussion about Punjabi culture in Pakistan, Punjabi has never been allowed to flourish during any political era. In 2011, Akram and Yasmeen showed that people's feelings about the English language are more positive than those toward Punjabi. According to their research, the Punjabi language has little economic, social, and educational importance.

The survey also revealed stereotypes about the Punjabi language, such as the belief that it is spoken by immoral and uneducated people. Nazir et al. (2013) examined the linguistic situation of Punjabi in Sargodha and the social mechanisms threatening its wider survival. According to the survey, Punjabi speakers are not committed to their language. Since most Punjabi speakers are shifting their allegiance to Urdu, the Punjabi language faces the risk of extinction. A recent study by Gilani and Mahmood (2014) confirmed earlier research by Akram and Yasmeen (2011) and Nazir et al. (2013) indicating that Punjabis hold negative attitudes toward their own language. The study also notes a language shift in Pakistan, with Urdu replacing Punjabi. Gilani and Mahmood (2014) state that Punjabi is neither actively promoted nor banned, making it a permitted language (Mariam Gillani, 2014). Several of these studies show that native Punjabi speakers often despise their language. Instead of taking pride in their mother tongue, many see it as inferior and feel it should not be used in formal settings. This highlights the need to collect empirical data from Punjabi speakers in a linguistically competitive environment to better understand their language attitudes and the actual situation.

The Pashto language, spoken by Pathans from Afghanistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and FATA (which merged into KP in 2018), defines the Pathan people. Pashto belongs to the East Iranian branch of the Indo-Iranian language family. It is closely related to Kurdish, Balochi, Persian, and other Iranian languages. It is more distantly related to other Indo-European languages and somewhat less connected to Indo-Aryan languages like Urdu, Punjabi, and Sindhi (David, 2014). After Persian, Pashto is the second most important language in Iran. According to a BBC Urdu report (Baloch, 2018) on migration, Afghan migrants living in Karachi have expressed concern about their young generation losing Pashto and Persian. Urdu is not understood by the older generation of Afghans. Similarly, the younger generation (ages 10 to 25) is more likely to speak Urdu than Pashto or Persian. Their parents claimed that because they cannot converse with locals, they feel "deaf and dumb" when they return to their homeland (Khan, 2021). Pashto's status has fluctuated greatly across two countries. Pashto has been promoted as a symbol of national identity, especially since the early 20th century, and is one of the two official languages of Afghanistan alongside Dari, also known as Afghan Persian (Rahman, 1996). The Jirga (traditional council) system, a method of resolving conflicts and governing within tribal groups, relies heavily on the Pashto language. Even in the face of external language pressures, Pashto's survival is secured by its deep cultural roots (Akhunzada, 2017). It serves as a powerful marker of cultural pride and identity, bringing people together across borders (Khurshid Ali, 2024). Maintaining Pashto is crucial to cultural survival, as many Pashtuns see speaking it as a way to preserve their identity and legacy (Intikhab Alam, 2025). Pashto, primarily spoken in KPK and parts of Balochistan, is an important provincial language in Pakistan. Although it holds official status in KPK, the Pashtun community often feels neglected because it has received little national support (Dinakhel, 2023). This lack of official backing has influenced different attitudes toward language preservation and shift. For Pashto speakers, the issue of maintaining the language versus shifting to another language is a key concern (Akhunzada, 2017).

Although Pakistan is a linguistically and culturally rich country, its heritage-language trends remain understudied. This study explores the families' linguistic ideologies in Heritage language transmission among the Punjabi and Pashtun communities, and how these ideologies operate in contrast yet coexist in the same social settings.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this research, the primary analytical tool is the Family Language Policy (FLP) and the qualitative and comparative research design to examine heritage language transmission (HLT) in the family. It deals with two Pakistani sociolinguistic groups, Punjabi local families and Pashtun migrant families residing in Punjab. Because HLT is an intergenerational and socially based process that is governed by ideas, feelings, identity, power relations, and everyday practices of interaction that cannot be fully comprehended through the use of quantitative methods, a qualitative approach is especially suitable. The research will unveil the role of various family language policies (FLP) in facilitating or obstructing the occurrence of heritage language by comparing two communities that have similar national and institutional language contexts but differ in terms of their attitudes to heritage languages.

3.1 Participants

The research was conducted in the metropolitan regions of Punjab where the native Punjabi and Pashtun migrant families are residing together in a multilingual environment with Urdu and English being the most spoken languages. These settings were selected due to their particular relevance to the investigation of HLT since urbanization, education, and internal migration augment the stresses on the utilization of heritage languages. Purposive sampling was used to choose the participants. Families were sampled based on the following criteria: (a) they were Punjabis locals or Pashtun migrants, (b) had at least one child in school, and (c) regularly spoke more than one language at home. Both children and parents were involved to give this an intergenerational view which is key to a study on the transmission of heritage languages. Involving children acknowledges the fact that they are active agents that affect language maintenance and change, along with the fact that they are receivers of language input.

Table 1: Interview Participants

Ethnicity	Gender	Age	Education	Occupation	No. of Children	location	Language(s) spoken
Pashtun	Male	37	Masters	Govt. job	4	Punjab	Urdu, English, Pashto
Pashtun	Female	34	Masters	Housemaker	4	Punjab	Urdu, English, Pashto
Pashtun	Male	35	Graduate	Businessman	5	Punjab	Urdu, Pashto, Punjabi
Pashtun	Female	32	Masters	Housemaker	5	Punjab	Urdu, Pashto, Punjabi
Pashtun	Female	30	Inter	Housemaker	2	Punjab	Urdu, Pashto, Punjabi
Pashtun	Male	40	Matric	Businessman	4	Punjab	Urdu, Pashto
Pashtun	Female	36	Under Matric	Housemaker	4	Punjab	Pashto
Pashtun	Male	30	Inter	Private job	2	Punjab	Urdu, Pashto
Punjabi	Male	42	PhD	Professor	2	Punjab	Urdu, English, Punjabi
Punjabi	Female	40	PhD	Professor	2	Punjab	Urdu, English, Punjabi
Punjabi	Female	40	Masters	Private school Teacher	2	Punjab	Urdu, English, Punjabi
Punjabi	Female	38	Masters	Housemaker	3	Punjab	Urdu, English, Punjabi
Punjabi	Male	37	Masters	Govt. job	2	Punjab	Urdu, English, Punjabi
Punjabi	Female	34	Masters	Govt. job	2	Punjab	Urdu, English

Table 2: Observations

Participant ID	Ethnicity	Interaction observed	Language used (Parent-child)	Child response	Notable behavior
P1	Pashtun	Family mealtime interaction	Pashto	Mixed response	Deliberate efforts to maintain Pashto
P2	Pashtun	Mother-child conversation	Pashto	Responded in Pashto	Deliberate efforts to maintain Punjabi
P3	Pashtun	Conversation of children with their neighbor friends	Pashto	Responded in Pashto	Deliberate efforts to maintain Pashto
P4	Pashtun	Conversation of parents and children	Pashto	Responded in Pashto	Deliberate efforts to maintain Pashto
P5	Punjabi	A gathering of relatives	English	Responded in English	No efforts to maintain Punjabi at home
P6	Punjabi	Mother-child conversation	Urdu	Responded in Urdu	No efforts to maintain Punjabi at home
P7	Punjabi	Parents and children's conversation	Urdu	Responded in Urdu	No efforts to maintain Punjabi with children
P8	Punjabi	Family time with parents and grandparents	Urdu	Responded in Urdu	Code-switching between Urdu and Punjabi

3.2 Method of Data Collection

The data was collected through semi-structured interviews with parents, and non-participant home observations. This approach enabled the participants to contemplate their language experiences, attitudes and choices, as well as to enable the researcher to delve on issues that have a direct bearing on HLT. The interview guides were designed to gather data on the significance and the status of heritage languages, explicit and unspoken language management practices, home language practices, and the ideologies of parents with regard to the language. The interviews with the parents were centered on the motivation to keep or limit the Heritage language, perceived advantages or difficulties of using Punjabi and Pashtu, and the role of education, mobility, and the broader sociopolitical discourses. Interviews were conducted in the language or languages preferred by the participants, and responses in more than one language were encouraged to capture the real-life situations of the participants. Conversations between parents and children were observed in different home settings, which gave ample data about parents' linguistic strategies and their outputs. With informed consent, all audio recordings were automatically captured and transcribed verbatim. Since code-switching was an important source of evidence of heritage language knowledge and use in particular domain, it was retained in the transcripts.

3.3 Method of Data Analysis

The use of thematic analysis in this study has helped to examine the impact of family language policy (FLP) on Heritage Language Transmission (HLT) among Pashtun immigrants and Punjabi native families. This analysis tried to extract general and specific thematic trends to describe how language

strategies at the family level play an important role in determining heritage language results in various sociolinguistic contexts, instead of perceiving the two groups as contrasting examples. Braun and Clarke's six-phase methodology was used for the analysis. All transcripts of the interviews were read several times to get the in-depth familiarity with the data. Primary observations have been made, focusing on the language preferences of children, the experience of the intergenerational transmission, the language practices of the family and the language attitudes of parents. Then a deductive-inductive hybrid method was used in formulating the original codes. Deductive codes were based on the framework of intergenerational transmission by Fishman, (1991) and the elements of FLP by Spolsky, (2004) which were language beliefs, language practices and language management. The inductive codes were created according to the stories of the participants. Lastly, Punjabi and Pashtun databases were coded together into general themes. Interest at this point was in revealing recurrent processes through which families regulate the use of language, and also pass, alter or reduce the heritage languages through generations rather than on separating communities.

3.4 Theoretical Orientation

This paper is based on the theoretical framework of Spolsky (2004), which explains the tripartite model of language policy, outlining FLP as a process of interaction between language ideologies (beliefs), language practices, and language management in the family. This framework is joined with the theory of intergenerational transmission of Fishman (1991) that focuses on the family as an important environment where heritage language can survive or be disrupted. Also, the paper takes into account the active negotiating nature of language choices by parents, ensuing social restrictions due to the information provided by Crudt-Christiansen on the agency and ideology of parents. All these frameworks allow considering HLT as an active process impacted by internal and external family factors instead of a passive result.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

This section presents the thematic analysis of the role of family language policy in heritage language transmission among Punjabi and Pashtun families in Pakistan.

4.1 Theme 1: Role of Parents' Ideologies in Heritage Language Transmission

The first theme emphasizes how family dynamics affect proficiency and personal connection with heritage languages, as well as how family language practices and policies influence their use of heritage languages. In order to manage intergenerational communication, contextual usage of heritage languages, language links, and other issues, families adopt conscious as well as subconscious language policies. This theme also examines how family language strategies and intergenerational language transmission among Punjabi and Pashtun families are influenced by parental attitudes and beliefs about heritage languages. Based on the idea of language ideology found in Family Language Policy (FLP), interviews show that parents' opinions about the worth, status, and cultural relevance of their native tongue are crucial in deciding whether or not it is actively passed on to their offspring. Although the educational and sociopolitical contexts of both groups are similar, their ideological perspectives on their native tongues differ, which affects how families use language in daily life.

4.1.1 Cultural Identity and Its Continuity through Heritage Languages

Pashtun participants often stressed the importance of the ancestral language as one of the crucial aspects of their social identity and their belonging to the community. Parents clarified that they only used Pashto with their children as a way of ensuring continuity of culture among the generations and not only as a choice of language to communicate in. It is necessary to preserve Pashto in the family and this is done even in families that have relocated to some of the regions in the country where other languages dominate. They show that they want to keep their children attached to their land and ancestral culture. "What is the point of all this even when they (children) go to a different country and become very successful without being conversant with their native language and culture?" (P2, Pashtun). Parents

tended to see bequeathing heritage languages as an obligation to their children and cultural history. The language is perceived as a major marker of ethnic identity and a means to remain in touch with extended family and ancestral networks according to their stories. Due to this reason, a number of Pashtun parents indicated that they often used Pashto to address their kids, irrespective of the language used outside the house. This indicates a firm language preservation ideology with the heritage language being actively preserved and transmitted throughout the family interactions. “We will be unsuccessful as parents in case they will not be able to speak to their grandparents” (P1, Pashtun).

4.1.2 Devaluation and Poor Transmission of Heritage Languages

However, when Punjabi parents were interviewed, they showed an alternative attitude towards the use of their traditional language in the family life. Although they identified themselves as Punjabis, most respondents said that they seldom spoke Punjabi to their children. Instead, interactions between parents and children were more often in Urdu and English, especially in urban areas and households focused on education. Most parents thought that Urdu and English were both educational and socially beneficial for kids. As a result, Punjabi was considered not to be that significant to the further growth of their children. Most parents were found to have avoided teaching their children Punjabi, on the assumption that it would be more helpful in the long-term to expose children to either Urdu or English. “We attempt to educate them in keeping up with the languages that will be good to them in their future because we see no future in Punjabi” (P1, Punjabi). “We do not have any scientific literature or books in Punjabi; we want to move on with their future rather than remain attached to the past” (P3, Punjabi). These expressions demonstrate the psychology of Punjabi parents, as they care about the future success of their children, even at their cost, i.e., neglecting their language and culture, and instead teaching them English and Urdu. In the perspective of family language policy, such a tendency means a lesser emphasis on the preservation of the heritage language transmission. Intergenerational sharing is unlikely to be steady over an occasion where the language of heritage is not reinforced in the daily interactions. This will lead to children never becoming active in language knowledge or becoming semi-proficient.

4.1.3 Sociolinguistic Hierarchies and Language Prestige

One more pattern that arose due to the interviews is perceptions of language status and social importance. Punjabi respondents claimed that the language preferences of families are influenced by greater linguistic and social hierarchies, which suggest that certain languages are more prestigious or socially beneficial. Local languages are even perceived to be inappropriate in formal or aspirational environments, and Urdu and English are often perceived to be related to education, modernity, and career progression. Parental language decisions at home seem to be affected by these views. Parents may be less inclined to teach their children a heritage language if it is perceived to have little social value. Rather, family language norms may change to prefer languages perceived as having more prospects in education and in the workforce. “They are not supposed to speak Punjabi in school” (P2, Punjabi).” Punjabi is a rural language because it does not hold any meaning in urban areas and hence we see no point in imparting it to our children because we no longer speak it” (P1, Punjabi). This finding highlights the link between micro-level language practices and macro-level language hierarchies. Family language policies do not exist in isolation but exist in the context of larger sociopolitical and cultural factors that impact language use and value.

4.1.4 Cultural Recognition and the Ideology-Practice Divide

Another pattern of the data is the distinction between the active language transmission and cultural identity. Even though there were some Punjabi participants who were proud of their cultural background and traditions, efforts to maintain Punjabi language in their homes were not always based on this identity. In such situations, the participants talked about the importance of the Punjabi culture when conversing with their children in Urdu or English. This trend discloses a divide between the usage of linguistic expressions and the symbolic cultural identity. These examples, in the context of FLP, prove that cultural identification is not the only way to ensure heritage language transmission. To sustain a heritage

language, positive mindsets, regular use of a language, and intentional family behaviors that foster intergenerational communication are all necessary.

4.2 Theme 2: Routine Interaction Family Language Practices

This theme looks at the way in which the Pashtun and Punjabi families apply language to their day-to-day family life and how these issues influence the heritage languages. Family Language Policy (FLP) is mostly influenced by parental opinions, yet such beliefs are frequently realized, disputed, or even denied in the process of everyday communication. The choice of language in communication between parents and children, patterns of code-switching, and domain-specific language use are important factors that contribute to or prevent the process of heritage language transfer among generations, which are analyzed when interview data are examined.

4.2.1 Dominant Language in Family Interaction

An important trend in the data is the language that parents and children communicate in. The Pashtun family language was generally referred to as Pashto. Parents explained that they naturally converse in Pashto in everyday life, when giving directions, narrating stories, and when engaging in casual conversations. The active linguistic skills of children are facilitated, and the intergenerational relationships are preserved, as the immersive language setting is provided with the frequent use of the heritage language. According to one of the Pashtun parents, “we talk Pashto to our children at home because it is our natural language and they talk back in Pashto” (P1, Pashtun). Through these reports, we can tell that heritage languages are deeply entrenched in the daily family life and not only a symbolic or infrequent occurrence. Children are also motivated to speak the language actively and are constantly exposed to it which aids in enhancing the transmission of the language. Punjabi families, on the contrary, have a different approach to the use of language. Several parents indicated that they primarily converse in Urdu with their children but in a formal or educational context, English is widely spoken. Most children know Punjabi but it was not popular in the in-person communication. One participant said that “we normally use Urdu at home since we believe that it is more appropriate when educating kids” (P2, Punjabi). The use of non-heritage languages in day-to-day communication reduces the chances of children to master Punjabi.

4.2.2 Mixed Language Practices and Code-Switching

Another important feature of family language practices is the use of code-switching in languages. Even though Pashto was the main language spoken in Pashtun families, it has been reported that code-switching to Urdu occurred particularly when talking about matters related to school or in the social life in general. However, this did not stop Pashto as the primary language of communication. Rather, it was another tactic that allowed families to cope with scenarios of multilingualism without losing a solid base in their mother tongue. In Punjabi families, code-switching appears to work in a different way. The mixing of languages is usually between English and Urdu with little or no Punjabi evident in some experiences or completely missing.

As an example, parents were speaking mostly in English and Urdu with their children, particularly English when they were discussing the school work (P3 Punjabi, home observation 4).

This trend indicates that multilingualism can strengthen the hegemony of both socially and institutionally favored languages instead of maintaining heritage languages. These findings indicate that code-switching does not necessarily affect the transmission of heritage languages positively or negatively; instead, its consequences are different based on the languages being mixed together and the level of contact with the heritage language.

4.2.3 Use of Domain-Specific Languages

Also, the results indicate that the use of language varies across the different family interactional domains. In Pashtun families, Pashto was actively spoken in many situations, including small talk, sharing feelings

and communicating with family members. This broad functional range is what contributes to the development of both a sense of belonging to the heritage language and communicative proficiency. However, Punjabi was frequently limited to particular situations in Punjabi households, such as conversations with elderly family members or casual interactions amongst adults.

An example of this was that Urdu or English was more commonly used when conversing with children especially about education or discipline whereas when conversing with the elders they were observed to speak Punjabi. (P4 Punjabi home observation 3).

This domain constraint has been associated with children being exposed to less Punjabi and having fewer opportunities to meaningfully engage with the language. In the perspective of heritage language transmission, the functional value of a language in the daily life of the children is weakened when the language is confined to certain regions, which increases the chances of the language changing with time.

4.2.4 Inequality between Practices and Beliefs

The presence of inconsistencies between what parents claim to value and what they actually do in everyday interactions is an important discovery throughout the data. Even though there are some Punjabi parents who said that they were thankful to be of the Punjabi group, this did not necessarily mean that they would speak Punjabi to their children. For example, the parents were conversing in English with their children but referring to the rich heritage of their Punjabi forebears. (P4 Punjabi, Home observation 2).

Instead, the pragmatic aspects, such as social mobility and academic success often contributed to the language decisions. Pashtun families, on the one hand, were more correlated in beliefs and practices. As an illustration, Pashtun parents were observed speaking Pashto with their children in all observations. Also, parents who stressed on the need to retain their language were more likely to speak Pashto to their children on a regular basis. This congruence supports the need of a cogent family language policy in sustaining the passage of heritage languages. In general, this theme shows that the everyday language practices are critical in understanding the process of transmission of heritage languages in families. Punjabi families are more likely to speak Urdu and English to children, thereby decreasing the active usage of Punjabi. Quite the opposite, Pashtun families are likely to continuously speak the heritage language in various interactions and contexts. These trends reveal that the use of language by regular members of a family is essential to pass on heritage languages, not only positive emotions. These practices define family language policies either to reinforce or undermine the intergenerational transmission of the heritage language.

4.3 Theme 3: Parental Strategies and Language Management for the Transmission of Heritage Languages

This theme examines how parents are actively involved in restricting the use of language at home and how this influences the passing of heritage languages between generations. Language management as a Family Language Policy (FLP) is the deliberate or unintentional efforts of parents to regulate, foster, or restrict the use of certain languages within the home. The research indicates that the dynamics of heritage language preservation and shift in the households of both the Pashtun and the Punjabis are highly dependent on the differences in parental involvement, willingness, and consistency in language control.

4.3.1 Rules and Expectations of Explicit Language

The presence or absence of explicit rules on the language use at home is one of the significant elements of language management present in the data. Some parents in Pashtun families said that they had given clear guidelines on how the Pashto language should be used in their daily communication, particularly dealing with the older ones and at home. Children were frequently informed of these expectations directly, and they were gradually reaffirmed. To illustrate, one parent said that “because Pashto is our native language, we promote our children to use it at home, especially when communicating with older people” (P1, Pashtun). The heritage language has been normalized and given priority in a systematic linguistic

environment created by such explicit standards. Punjabi households, on the other hand, had the same stress for not speaking Punjabi at home. This paradoxical act was observed when Punjabi parents were observed instead of referring to language use as a consciously regulated method, a number of parents referred to it as a convenience or habit. “There are no rules regarding language, we just speak what is more convenient, according to one of the participants” (P2, Punjabi). But a contrasting behavior was seen.

For example, during a family get-together, parents were spotted correcting the choice of words of their children. (P5 Punjabi, home observation).

4.3.2 Parental Support and Correction Techniques

Another vital aspect of language management is how the parents respond to the use of language by the children. Parents in Pashtun homes often reported encouraging their kids to speak Pashto and correcting them when they switched to other languages needlessly. Such an active participation emphasizes the importance of the heritage language in the family and increases language acquisition. A Pashtun parent says “they are told to use Pashto when they speak Urdu so that they do not forget it” (P3, Pashtun). Although they are often humble, these remedial actions enhance productive competence of children and assist in maintaining heritage language in day-to-day communications. Nevertheless, the incidences of such correctional or encouraging activities were lower with Punjab families. Parents often did not interfere when their children wanted to speak either Urdu or English. In some cases, the use of Punjabi by children was not particularly encouraged or actively discouraged. This rather passive language management approach, whereby the heritage language is steadily edged out of the home, has the effect of restricting the chances of regular reinforcement.

4.3.3 The Intergenerational Influence and the role of the Grandparents

The data also helps see the impact of grandparents and other extended relatives on the language management strategies. The influence of grandparents on the Pashtun use of the language is also strong in cases where several generations of the family stay or live in close contact, particularly in households. In other places where the language of heritage is treasured and it is required, they are formed through interactions with the elders. For example, it was observed that since the grandparents speak only Pashto, the children have to speak Pashto with them. (P4 Pashtun home observation). This intergenerational relationship enhances the preservation of heritage languages by raising both the exposure and the need. Extended family pressure on the use of language seems to be less significant or situational in Punjabi families. Whereas the Punjabi is occasionally used in communication with the elderly family members, parent-child communication does not necessarily incorporate the language. Consequently, rather than a constant way of intergenerational communication, Punjabi remains trapped within certain family ties.

4.3.4 Active versus Passive Language Management

The difference between the active and passive management of languages is a more general trend that manifests itself in the data. Pashtun families tended to exhibit a more proactive approach, in which the use of the heritage language is intentional, expectations are clear, and the language is continually reinforced. “We would like to preserve our language and it is a tacit agreement among Pashtuns since it is not only a language, but our whole culture is attached to language” (P2, Pashtun). This proactive method facilitates intergenerational continuity by maintaining relevance of language in everyday life. The Punjabi families, on the contrary, were more passive, and the use of language was more predetermined by social and educational forces rather than by the family decisions. In such instances, the communication with children is likely to be dominated by such languages like Urdu and English.

4.4 Theme 4: Transmission problems

4.4.1 Social and Institutional Barriers to the Maintenance of Heritage Languages

The findings indicate that even with the immense efforts of parents in maintaining Pashto at home, their efforts are grossly curtailed by external influences on the family. The immediate social contexts and,

especially, schools are significant locations of the promulgation of dominant language ideology, usually at the cost of heritage languages. This invites the focus to a significant dilemma of family language policy, where greater institutional and cultural powers are involved and sometimes undermine parental goals.

4.4.2 Schools as Sites of Linguistic Regulation

Pashtun interviewees were often concerned with the fact that schools in Punjab do not encourage the use of Pashto. Parents even mentioned in the informal discussions that their children could not speak Pashto and in some cases, teachers explicitly told them not to speak their own language. Even more shocking is that a number of participants revealed that children were encouraged to conceal their linguistic and cultural identities. “Our children informed us that their teachers tell them not to inform other children that we are Pathan” (P1, Pashtun). Such policies marginalize Pashto, and create Urdu and, in some cases, English as the only acceptable languages in educational institutions. The implications of these findings are that schools are not merely neutral learning environments but proactively regulate the use of language. The minority languages are considered to be less useful or even inappropriate in the formal and semi-formal environment, and this is expressed through the privilege of the dominant languages which is implicit. Children then automatically adopt the notion that their native language is not socially acceptable and it can consequently lead to its eventual death as a Punjabi parent said, “we had to pay a fine to speak Punjabi in school” (P2, Punjabi).

4.4.3 The Community Pressures and Interaction with Peers

Besides the school environment, the parents revealed that the dynamics of the community plays a critical role in determining the kind of language that their children employ. Pashtun children mostly are surrounded by the children speaking Punjabi or Urdu as their native language. Consequently, there is a need to use these dominant languages in the course of normal social interactions, including playing with neighbors. This has created a scenario where children have been compelled to speak Urdu and sometimes even Punjabi so as to blend in with the society is what parents have observed. The language change is done in response to a practical need because failure to use the shared language may result in one being isolated by their peers. In those instances, a few Pashtun children were observed speaking Punjabi with their friends of other neighboring languages but they were not losing their own language heritage under the influence of the outside world, courtesy to a well-preserved family language policy. This section of the results emphasizes the fact that language preservation is closely related to the family choice. The need to fit and socialize is often more influential on the language behaviors of children than what parents would expect of them.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

An overview of the differences in the management, transmission, and even exclusion of their heritage languages by Punjabi and Pashtun families is given by looking at four main issues. The findings indicate a considerable distinction between the language behaviors of the two groups and more significantly, their beliefs towards language and responses to sociolinguistic pressures. In even the immigrant contexts such as Punjab, Pashtun families expressed very strong and consistent measures to conserve and transmit Pashto. They relied on the belief that language is closely related to ethnic continuity and cultural identity as the foundation of their family language programs. Consequently, parent-child interactions at home use and promote the use of Pashto. Also, there are deliberate measures by the Pashtun parents to preserve the language since they do not only use it at home but also provide their children with the chance to communicate with other Pashto speakers. By so doing, although the home environment may not be within a Pashto-speaking community, they made it a secure linguistic arena that is crucial in intergenerational language transmission. In even the immigrant groups such as Punjab, Pashtun families were found to be very committed and consistent in their efforts to maintain and transmit Pashto. Their family language programs were based on the idea that language is closely related to ethnic continuity and cultural identity. Consequently, due to this faith, the usage and promotion of Pashto in the parent-child communication at

home were active. Also, Pashtun parents were observed making conscious efforts to preserve the language, which included encouraging the use of the language solely in the house and providing children with a chance to communicate with other Pashto speakers. By doing so, in spite of the home being placed in a non-Pashto-speaking milieu, they made it an enclosed language space that contributes to intergenerational transmission. The differences between the two groups are even greater when the difficulties that they experience are taken into account. The Pashtun families were faced with significant institutional and social obstacles that impede their struggle to maintain Pashto. Schools were observed to be centers of stigmatization and avoidance of Pashto, which consolidated the power of Urdu and English. Just like this case, the children were forced to learn other dominant languages so that they could socialize, which was determined by peer associations and neighborhood interactions. The tension between the language environment at home and in society limited the effectiveness of parental efforts. However, Pashtun families preserved their language traditions and showed a deep ideological devotion to overcome such forces. The differences between the two groups became very noticeable when it came to issues that they struggled with. The Pashtun families encounter significant social and institutional challenges, which deter them from speaking Pashto. The dominance of Urdu and Punjabi was strengthened in the schools where Pashto was not encouraged and even mocked. Likewise, children were forced to learn the prevalent languages to interact socially, due to peer influences and neighborhood factors. Nevertheless, Pashtun families continue to protect their linguistic traditions and ideological beliefs and resist such pressures. Such external barriers to their own language were not experienced by Punjabi families, however. Rather, their current lingual preferences were reinforced and in tandem with the wider sociolinguistic context that is inclined towards Urdu and English.

Consequently, abandoning Punjabi was perceived as an easy and favorable decision and not a difficulty. The exclusion of Punjabi in the family was further added by the fact that there is no organized preservation process and the idea that other dominant languages were more important. All of these results indicate that external factors such as migration or minority status was not the sole factors that affect language transmission. Rather, the role of parental attitudes and the significance of various languages in particular sociocultural settings were significant. An example of how a robust ideological commitment can perpetuate heritage language transmission even in challenging conditions is the Pashtun families. Punjabi families, however, demonstrated that language change may take place even in a native surrounding when the language of heritage is not promoted or appreciated. On the whole, the paper presents the intricate interplay among beliefs, practices, strategies, and restrictions as defining family language policies. It demonstrates that external factors may contribute to language maintenance as a challenge, but family language policies play a central role in the preservation and transfer of heritage language. In the end, the preservation, transmission, or loss of a heritage language is based on the congruence between language ideology and practice.

The current study expands on the findings of the previous study by (Rabia et al., 2024), which showed how multilingual families in Lahore make situational language choices and frequently give preference to home and second languages over heritage languages such as Punjabi. It does this by focusing on the reasons behind these variations between groups. This study compares Pashtun and Punjabi households to show how language choices are influenced by opposing linguistic ideologies in addition to being situational. By demonstrating that certain families (Pashtuns) actively preserve and transmit their heritage language in spite of outside influences, while others (Punjabis) tend to exclude it even in a supportive context, it expands on previous findings. As a result, this study contributes to a more complex understanding of how ideology affects different heritage language outcomes within the same sociolinguistic setting.

While this paper contrasts the language policy of Pashtun and Punjabi families, there are still several aspects that should be explored further. First, future research can be expanded into the perspective of children to help to better understand how the younger generations negotiate about the family language policy. Voluntary participation of children might have yielded a better insight into the language

preferences, identity development, and peer pressure, though the participants of the current study were parents. Second, more research may examine educational institutions' roles in more detail. The studies of teacher attitudes, school policies, and classroom practices can help clarify how institutional factors contribute to language outcomes, taking into consideration the results of the study of the adverse school environments.

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