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Language Dynamics among Pahari Speakers: Trends in Language Use and Shift over Time

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the language dynamics among Pahari speakers, focusing on language choices during social interactions and the pattern of language shift in the Poonchi dialect of Pahari. It also aims to find out the linguistic preferences and shifts within the Pahari-speaking community. Using a stratified random sampling technique, data were collected from 300 respondents through a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire, designed in a multiple-choice format, facilitated the collection of relevant information from the informants. The major findings reveal a notable trend towards the adoption and promotion of Urdu and English among Pahari speakers, influenced by the increasing exposure to Urdu in academic and social settings and the global prominence of English. The linguistic landscape in Rawalakot, district Poonch reflects a pattern of multilingualism, where individuals possess varying levels of proficiency in Pahari, Urdu, and English. The fourth generation shows a pronounced shift towards bilingualism in Urdu and English, signaling a diminishing proficiency in Pahari. The study suggests a trajectory of language shift from Pahari towards Urdu and English, driven by socio-economic factors and changing societal norms.

| **KEYWORDS** | Language Development, Pahari, Language Shift, Socio-Economic Factors |

Introduction

Language is deeply connected to how people interact in society. It changes depending on the social events and things happening around us. No language stays the same when it's used in different social situations. This means that the way we talk is influenced by the culture, politics, and economy of where we live. The use of a language by people depends a lot on the freedoms they have and how well they live. These choices show up in how language is used in different communities. Essentially, people's attitudes towards languages show how society, politics, and money influence the way we talk.

Humans use language for many reasons, and it's a complex way we connect with others. Language helps us feel like we belong and express our thoughts and feelings. It allows us to understand others and share our own ideas. We use language to inform, express emotions, entertain, persuade, and more. Language also holds the history and values of a society. As cultures change, so do the languages they speak. This has been happening throughout history, as languages are tied to their cultures and evolve over time. In today's world, people choose which language to use based on their preferences and circumstances. This can be a conscious decision or happen without thinking much about it. When people change how they use language, it shows a shift in their attitudes and the changes in their community.

This study looks into how people's attitude about languages relate to changes in how they use language and their language choices with reference to the Pahari language which is widely spoken in Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

The Pahari community is stratified into various socio-economic groups. Those in higher economic brackets tend to prioritize English in their speech and education, often holding prominent roles in local, provincial, and national governance, politics, and academia. In rural settings, Urdu holds a prestigious position compared to other languages. Individuals with at least university-level education prefer using English and Urdu, especially when communicating with their children. Pahari speakers also integrate numerous Urdu and English terms into their everyday conversations.

Although Pahari is the primary native language in the Poonch district of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, the influence of Urdu and English is evident across various social and linguistic settings. Generally, families in Rawalakot prioritize educating their children in environments that foster proficiency in Urdu and especially English. This preference is particularly notable among affluent and university-educated families, who often use Urdu or English rather than Pahari when communicating with their children at home. They aim for their children to excel in Urdu and/or English, showing little inclination towards Pahari in their upbringing. Consequently, Urdu and English are gradually becoming more prevalent among the Pahari-speaking population, especially among younger generations who lack a natural affinity or emotional connection to Pahari. This disconnect may stem from Pahari being viewed as a language associated more with previous generations than with their own identities or futures.

Literature Review

Language shift refers to a process whereby speakers or users of a language give up using their local language in favor of using another language. The topic of language shift has been an area of research for many decades. Fishman (1991) finds it natural that speakers of a language, which is being generally used in low-prestige domains, prefer to shift towards a language that is being generally used in high-prestige domains.

Hoffman (1991 pointed out that a shift in language takes place under certain political, social and cultural conditions which urge the community to go for the change. However, attitude remains an important factor that exerts influence both on language shift and language maintenance.

Crystal (2000) outlines language shift as a gradual process categorized into three main stages. Initially, individuals face significant social pressure to adopt the dominant language, driven by the socio-economic advantages associated with it. This pressure leads to bilingualism in the second stage, where individuals attain proficiency in both the dominant language and their native language. However, as they increasingly perceive limited utility for their mother tongue in various contexts, they tend to prioritize the dominant language. This shift from bilingualism to a state of semi-lingualism culminates in mono-lingualism, where individuals abandon their mother tongue in favor of the dominant language.

Studies on language shift suggest that women in comparison with men happen to be more active in contributing towards language shift; as they are inclined to shift their speech faster than men (Al Khatib, 2001). One of the main causes of language shift as proposed by researchers includes 'differential power among cultural and linguistic groups' (Tse, 2001) that results in one group dominating the others in several spheres which include

language also. Those language groups that lack in political, social or economic authority find themselves unable or helpless to influence policies in their favor.

Pahari

Pahari is also considered as a dialectical variation of Hindko or Pothohari language. It is treated so mainly because of its being an unwritten language and also for its greater resemblance with other major languages (like Punjabi) spoken in the region in terms of its vocabulary and cultural flavor of the region. Pahari, Hindko and Pothohari speakers are intelligible to each other. However, Pahari exists mainly in an oral or spoken dialectical form only and there exist only few written records for the language; these are in the form of documented literature or orthography.

According to Khan (2012), Pahari does not have a written form because it is not included in the school curriculum. Its usage is mainly limited to rural regions, but with rural-to-urban migration, individuals encounter diverse linguistic communities and tend to use Urdu as a common language. This transition is leading to the decline of Pahari. The impact of media and technological advancements further contributes to this decline, as Pahari lacks usage in scientific and technological domains (Lothers & Lothers, 2010). It is influenced by English as a global language, Urdu as a national language, and Punjabi and Hindko as regional languages. Consequently, there is an urgent need to document and preserve Pahari to prevent its extinction.

In the recent past, it has been observed noticeably that the native speakers of Pahari (in Rawalakot subdivision) seem to prefer mostly Urdu and in certain circumstances, even English, for communication with other native speakers of Pahari language, particularly the younger ones. This emerging pattern is gaining momentum owing to socio-economic and socio-political factors, such as the limited functional role associated with the Pahari language which is mainly restricted to certain informal settings, such as family gatherings and the greater socio-economic benefits that come with the learning of Urdu and English languages. Abbasi (2010) has referred to a similar phenomenon happening in Dhundi-Pahari dialect in Murree; however, such instances are yet to be established in Azad Kashmir. One of the goals of this study is to empirically verify the claim made by Abbasi (2010) by conducting research studies into language communities of Pahari speakers and to document the emerging language shift in Pahari speakers. This study aim to look into the current status of Pahari language in and around the locality of Rawalakot (sub-division) in the district Poonch of Azad Kashmir in comparison with its past and to empirically verify the perception that there is a shift in the use of Pahari language in the younger generation of its native speakers due to its subdued status compared to Urdu, the national language and English, the world language. The secondary goals are to study the social factors that contribute towards the language shift in Pahari speakers and to assess the socio-linguistic implications of the perceived language shift for the community.

Material and Metthods

 The present study is based on a field survey conducted by the researcher over a period of two weeks in the Rawalakot sub-division of district Poonch in Azad Jammu and Kashmir.

In total, data were collected from 300 respondents using stratified random sampling technique. As the study required assessing a wide range of respondents stretched over different localities, it was decided to use structured questionnaires in multiple choice format allowing the informants to respond with the required information. The instrument

was administered by the researcher himself so that any query or doubt raised by the respondents could be addressed in Urdu and also in Pahari language if needed. In order to elicit responses from the informants, all items of the questionnaire were explained in Urdu and Pahari. The respondents were assured that their identities would be kept undisclosed and their consent was obtained prior to the administration of questionnaires. Therefore, the identities of the respondents, their names or their addresses are not revealed anywhere in the study.

It was planned to approach informants of both genders and of all age groups/brackets ranging from those who are under 20 years to those who are above 60 years old. Those below the age of 15 years were not included in the study assuming that they might not be able to respond appropriately to the kind of information required. However, in order to identify any pattern of language shift, the researcher focused more on the younger respondents in the age range of 16 to 40 years.

The questionnaire was structured by dividing it into different sections, with each section focusing on a specific component area of the study. These sections included:

Bilingualism/ Multilingualism, Language Vitality, Language Development, Attitudes towards Language, Language Use, etc.

Though the research tool comprised of closed ended multiple choice questions, efforts were made to obtain both qualitative and quantitative data.

Sample

In order to record authentic and valid information, data were collected from the community of native speakers of Pahari within the Rawalakot sub-division. The sample population consisted of the native speakers of Pahari in the Rawalakot town area and its surrounding localities.

Sampling was done in a proportionately stratified manner so that it could become representative of the different sections of the community classified in terms of gender, age, education, income, locality etc. Efforts were made to gather the required data from different localities of Rawalakot sub-division. The respondents were further categorised on the basis of social factors such as; age, gender, education, region they belong to, socio-economic status, and setting (rural or urban).

Sampling Tools

Data were obtained through a questionnaire which required responses to multiple choice questions. The survey also attempted to elicit qualitative data based on respondents' views and feelings. It was hoped that this might help in identifying some important characteristic patterns specific to the population under study. It could lead to making few significant generalizations and conclusions suggesting the consequent implications of the presumed phenomenon of language shift for the future of the community of Pahari speakers in Rawalakot, district Poonch of Azad Jammu and Kashmir).

Results and Discussion

Levels of Proficiency in the Use of Language

Table 1
Level(s) of Proficiency of Respondents in Pahari Listening

Proficiency Level(s)	Frequency	Percentage
Basic or Elementary	11	3.7
Intermediate/Moderate	38	12.7
Advanced/Highly Skilled	251	83.7
Total	**300**	**100.0**

The table 1 refers to the proficiency level of Pahari speakers (respondents) towards their mother-tongue, that is, Pahari language, in terms of their listening skills. Since Pahari happens to be the mother tongue of 91.3% of the respondents so a large majority of informants (83.7%) consider themselves as users of Pahari language with advanced level of proficiency. It shows that at present, a large number of people hold the ability to listen and understand Pahari language.

Table 2
Level(s) of Proficiency of Respondents in Pahari Speaking

Proficiency Level(s)	Frequency	Percentage
Basic or Elementary	15	5.0
Intermediate or Moderate	58	19.3
Advanced or Highly Skilled	227	75.7
Total	**300**	**100.0**

The table 2 shows the proficiency level of respondents in terms of speaking Pahari language. It reveals that the respondents are fluent speakers of Pahari in general. This reflects that an overwhelming majority of people hold the ability to speak Pahari language.

Table 3
Level(s) of Proficiency of Respondents in Pahari Reading

Proficiency Level(s)	Frequency	Percentage
Basic or Elementary	112	37.3
Intermediate or Moderate	177	59.0
Advanced or Highly Skilled	11	3.7
Total	**300**	**100.0**

Table 3 depicts the level of proficiency of Pahari speakers in terms of reading any written text of Pahari language. It is interesting to note that of the total 300 Pahari respondents surveyed during the study, only 11 (3.7%) rate themselves as advanced or proficient readers of Pahari language, while the remaining 289 (96.3%) rate themselves as moderate (59%) and elementary (37.3%). It is because the Pahari language mainly remains confined to its usage as a spoken language in the informal domains, such as family and friends.

Table 4
Level(s) of Proficiency of Respondents in Pahari Writing

Proficiency Level(s)	Frequency	Percentage
Basic or Elementary	206	68.7
Intermediate or Moderate	87	29.0
Advanced/Highly Skilled	7	2.3
Total	**300**	**100.0**

The table 4 refers to the proficiency level of respondents with reference to their writing skills of Pahari language. It reveals that of the total 300 respondents of the survey, only 7 (2.3%) consider themselves to have advanced level writing skills of Pahari language. It indicates that Pahari is mainly a spoken language whose native speakers are incapable of developing proficiency in writing (Pahari) mainly because it holds no status at the official or governmental and academic level within Azad Kashmir. Hence Pahari speakers tend to communicate in their mother tongue orally largely.

Language Use and Domains

Table 5
Which language do you speak with the children at home?

Language Choice	Frequency	Percentage
English	3	1.0
Urdu	190	63.3
Pahari	103	34.3
Other language	4	1.3
Total	**300**	**100.0**

The table 5 explains the views of respondents regarding the language used by them with the children at home. It reveals that out of the total 300 respondents, only 103 (34.3%) declared that they use Pahari while communicating with children at home whereas the remaining 190 respondents (63.3%) were of the view that in order to communicate with their children, the medium of language used by them is Urdu whereas only 3 respondents (1%) said that they prefer to communicate with their children in English. These figures provide significant insight into the prevailing linguistic scenario because 91.3% of the respondents had declared Pahari as their mother tongue. Yet they prefer Urdu to Pahari in order to interact with the children at home.

Table 6
Which language do you speak with your family members (other than children) at home?

Language(s) Choice	Frequency	Percentage
Urdu	49	16.3
Pahari	246	82.0
Other languages	5	1.7
Total	**300**	**100.0**

Table 6 demonstrates that out of the total 91.3% Pahari-speaking respondents, 82% speak Pahari with other family members at home, however only 34.3% speak Pahari with children at home. This shows that the use of Pahari language is experiencing a decreasing trend in terms of its usage in the community in general and the home domain in particular.

Table 7
Which language do you speak with your friends or playmates?

Language(s)	Frequency	Percentage
Urdu	122	40.7
Pahari	177	59.0
Other Languages	1	0.3
Total	**300**	**100.0**

Table 7 describes that majority of the respondents (59%) speak Pahari during their informal (frank) conversation with friends, while (40.7%) use Urdu for communication with friends. Hence, Pahari happens to be the most common language used for communication in the informal settings.

Table 8
Which language do you speak with your neighbors?

Language(s)	Frequency	Percentage
Urdu	60	20.0
Pahari	239	79.7
Other languages	1	0.3
Total	**300**	**100.0**

The figures in table 8 show that most of the respondents (79.7%) speak in the native language (Pahari) to those living in their neighborhood, while 20% use Urdu for communication. Hence Pahari happens to be the major language used in the neighborhood settings of community.

Table 9
Which language do you speak with your coworkers, fellows or clients?

Language(s)	Frequency	Percentage
English	3	1.0
Urdu	256	85.3
Pahari	41	13.7
Total	**300**	**100.0**

The table 9 shows the language used by the respondents in their professional settings whereby 85.3% use Urdu, 13.7% use Pahari and only 1% use English. It refers to the high social and official status enjoyed by Urdu and also the low official/professional value associated with Pahari.

Table 10
Which language do you speak with strangers or public in general?

Language(s)	Frequency	Percentage
English	7	2.3
Urdu	259	86.3
Pahari	34	11.3
Total	**300**	**100.0**

This table (10) shows that a wide majority (86.3%) prefer using Urdu and 2.3% use English, however; only 11.3% prefer speaking Pahari while dealing with the public in general or strangers. Thus, majority of the people prefer using Urdu in formal settings.

Attitudes towards language

Table 11
Which language is the most useful for you?

Language(s)	Frequency	Percentage
English	115	38.3
Urdu	164	54.7
Pahari	15	5.0
Any other	6	2.0
Total	**300**	**100.0**

Table 11 gives an indication of the degree of importance associated by the respondents with Pahari, their mother tongue; Urdu the official language; and English, a widespread international language. The majority (54.7%) considers Urdu as the most important language for them, 38.3% view English as the most valuable language and only 5% of the respondents value their mother tongue (Pahari) as the most valuable language to them. This also refers to a growing trend whereby Pahari is losing its social and cultural significance among its native speakers who prefer Urdu and English for being the most

valuable language to them on practical grounds. It also shows that very few people hold Pahari in high esteem on socio-cultural grounds.

Table 12
Which language is the best to teach at the school level?

Language(s)	Frequency	Percentage
English	128	42.7
Urdu	165	55.0
Pahari	5	1.7
Other languages	2	0.7
Total	**300**	**100.0**

The table 12 refers to the perception of Pahari speakers towards the suitability of language(s) for teaching at the school level. It shows that majority (55%) of them consider Urdu as the most suitable language to be taught in the academic circles, while another 42.7% are convinced that English is the most valuable language for educational purposes, however, only 1.7% think Pahari, their mother tongue as an appropriate language for teaching at the school level.

Table 13
Which language is the most appropriate for a teacher to use in the school?

Language(s)	Frequency	Percentage
English	87	29.0
Urdu	202	67.3
Pahari	7	2.3
Other languages	4	1.3
Total	**300**	**100.0**

This table (13) determines that predominant majority (67.3%) of the respondents consider Urdu as the best language to be used by teachers, around thirty percent (29%) view English as the most suitable, whereas only 2.3% term Pahari as the best choice of language for teachers' communication.

Table 14
We like to teach Pahari language to our children

Degree of Response(s)	Frequency	Percentage
Never	118	39.3
May be	77	25.7
Yes	45	15.0
Surely	32	10.7
Unsure	28	9.3
Total	**300**	**100.0**

Table 14 is based on an attempt to measure the extent of willingness of Pahari speakers to transmit their native language to their children. It reveals that around 39.3% of them are strongly opposed to the idea of teaching Pahari to their children; hence they would never like their children to learn to use Pahari. Moreover, around a quarter (25.7%) of the respondents feel uncertain in terms of their willingness to transmit their mother tongue to their children. 15% of the respondents express their willingness in this regard, while only 10.7% show a strong and definite desire to do so. These figures provide an indication of the prevailing attitude of Pahari speakers towards their mother tongue with regard to their willingness for its onward transmission to their next generation. Thus it seems that Pahari is experiencing a decline in terms of its usage among the future generations.

Language Vitality and Perception

Table 15
Pahari language is in the process of changing

Responses	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	66	22.0
Agree	107	35.7
Disagree	31	10.3
Strongly Disagree	24	8.0
Not Sure	72	24.0
Total	**300**	**100.0**

This table (15) tries to elicit information from the respondents with regard to their understanding of the native Pahari language in terms of the changes that it may be experiencing over the period of time. In general, majority of the informants are convinced that Pahari seems to be undergoing changes at present. It is believed to be so mainly under the influence of Urdu and English languages.

Table 16
Young Pahari speakers speak Pahari less frequently than the elder speakers

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	98	32.7
Agree	133	44.3
Disagree	22	7.3
Strongly Disagree	17	5.7
Not Sure	30	10.0
Total	**300**	**100.0**

Table 15 refers to the tendency of Pahari speakers in terms of its frequency of usage among its younger and adult speakers both. It shows that Pahari speakers are aware that their younger generation of speakers has reduced its usage for interaction in their community.

Table 16
Young children will speak Pahari less frequently when they will be grown up (as adults)

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	45	15.0
Agree	93	31.0
Disagree	56	18.7
Strongly Disagree	45	15.0
Not Sure	61	20.3
Total	**300**	**100.0**

This table (16) attempts to find the speakers' pattern of affiliation with the native language in the coming decades. The results indicate that the respondents hold mixed views regarding the probability of the use of Pahari by their children in future.

Table 17
How important is Pahari language to you?

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Of No Importance	28	9.3
Of Little Importance	81	27.0
Highly Important	86	28.7
Important	88	29.3
Not Sure	17	5.7

Total	**300**	**100.0**

Table 17 is based on assessing the level of socio-cultural importance of Pahari language for its native speakers. Here again, the respondents hold mixed views towards the significance or relevance of Pahari in their lives.

Language Development

Table 18
We like to listen to the radio programs in Pahari language

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strong Liking	67	22.3
Liking	136	45.3
Disliking	51	17.0
Strong Disliking	37	12.3
Not Sure	9	3.0
Total	**300**	**100.0**

This table (18) describes the responses of respondents towards the few radio programs of Pahari language available to them within the territorial jurisdiction of Rawalakot. It highlights that majority of the respondents (67.6%) like listening to the radio programs in Pahari language. Of these, 22.3% express strong liking for them, while 45.3% show a feeling of mild liking towards these. Around 29.3% people record a feeling of dislike for Pahari radio programs, out of which 12.3% hold strong dislike, whereas 17% have a sense of mild dislike. Few respondents (3%) seem indifferent towards these programs. This reflects the subjective views and feelings of Pahari speaking respondents with regard to the Pahari radio programs.

Table 19
Pahari radio programs are important, because they are:

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Easy to Understand	73	24.3
Express Social Values	94	31.3
Provide Useful Information	122	40.7
Any other reason	11	3.7
Total	**300**	**100.0**

Table 19 attempts to identify the social factors that make Pahari radio programs valuable for Pahari listeners. 24.3% respondents think that the programs are important because they are easy to comprehend as they are conducted in the native language (Pahari), 31.3% are of the view that the programs are valuable because they hold the local cultural heritage in terms of the native social values. Some 40.7% think that these programs contain useful information for them, while 3.7% view these programs valuable for other reasons such as, entertainment, etc.

Views towards Language

Table 20
Radio programs in Pahari language should continue in the future also

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strong Liking	71	23.7
Liking	144	48.0
Disliking	34	11.3
Strong disliking	34	11.3
Not Sure	17	5.7
Total	**300**	**100.0**

Here the table (20) explains the views of respondents about continuing Pahari radio programs in the future also. Though in general people express mixed views but majority of them are in favour of retaining Pahari radio programs in the future also.

Table 21
The writers should continue writing fiction (poetry, stories etc.) in Pahari language

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	100	33.3
Agree	132	44.0
Disagree	26	8.7
Strongly Disagree	28	9.3
Not Sure	14	4.7
Total	300	100.0

Table 21 refers to the responses of informants towards the limited available literature (fiction) in Pahari language as few writers are contributing to the Pahari literature by writing in some genres of literature, such as poetry and short stories. A vast majority of respondents (77%) are in favour of this ongoing literary trend of writing Pahari fiction, while 18% are opposed to this view. A few respondents (4.7%) seem unsure in this regard. In general, people express the desire that the literature of Pahari language should flourish in the future.

Table 22
Pahari will be able to survive against Urdu and English during the next 20 years

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	27	9.0
Agree	77	25.7
Disagree	67	22.3
Strongly Disagree	66	22.0
Not Sure	63	21.0
Total	**300**	**100.0**

Table 22 attempts to find out the views of respondents with regard to the prospects of the survival of Pahari in the face of increasing use of Urdu and English in their community. A large number of them (44.3%) disagree to the view that Pahari will survive within next 20 years. Thus they imply that it might get replaced by the more dominant languages, such as Urdu and/or English. However, some 34.7% feel confident that their language will be able to sustain against Urdu and English. It is also important to note that a significant number of people, 21% feel uncertain about the fate of their mother tongue after two decades.

Table 23
Pahari should be replaced in the future by Urdu and/or English

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	51	17.0
Agree	55	18.3
Disagree	91	30.3
Strongly Disagree	83	27.7
Not Sure	20	6.7
Total	**300**	**100.0**

This table (23) aims at expressing the aspirations of Pahari-speaking respondents in terms of giving preference to one language over the other. The respondents were asked whether they desire the replacement of their native language (Pahari) by Urdu and English or not. The figures indicate that 35.3% respondents wish to give up Pahari in favour of Urdu and English, yet majority of them (58%) do not desire to lose their language. Thus they are

in favour of retaining Pahari despite the extensive use of Urdu in their surroundings. A small number of the respondents (6.7%) seem indifferent while giving their opinions in this regard.

Table 24
If Pahari language dies out or gets lost within the next thirty years or more, I will be:

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Quite Satisfied	31	10.3
Satisfied	45	15.0
Normal	68	22.7
Sad	83	27.7
Very Upset	73	24.3
Total	**300**	**100.0**

Table 24 is based on the responses elicited from the 300 subjects who were asked as to how they would feel if their major language gets lost in their life time. Around one fourth (25.3%) of the respondents expressed the view that they would be satisfied if Pahari gets lost in the future. Almost the same number (22.7%) said that it would not affect their feelings in any way. Around half of them (52%) were of the view that in case their language gets lost, either it would sadden them or would even get them very upset emotionally. It reveals that people hold mixed feelings towards their mother tongue. Some would turn sad if it dies out, whereas others would remain unaffected.

Table 25
Pahari language is an important or essential part of our culture

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	103	34.3
Agree	142	47.3
Disagree	27	9.0
Strongly Disagree	17	5.7
Not Sure	11	3.7
Total	**300**	**100.0**

It is evident from the table (25) that a predominant majority of the respondents (81.6%) consider Pahari as an essential component of their culture, whereas only 14.7% consider it as an insignificant ingredient of their socio-cultural identity and 3.7% feel uncertain in this respect. Hence in general, vast majority of respondents attaches great deal of socio-cultural value with Pahari, the local language.

Table 26
If Pahari dies out or gets lost in future, it be a cultural loss for our children

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	89	29.7
Agree	114	38.0
Disagree	52	17.3
Strongly Disagree	31	10.3
Not Sure	14	4.7
Total	**300**	**100.0**

This table (26) refers to the question raised that if Pahari language dies out (becomes extinct) in the future, would it be termed as a cultural loss for future community also. Around sixty percent (57.7%) people would equate this loss of indigenous language with their socio-cultural loss of great impact, 27.6% would not treat it as a cultural loss to them, while 4.7% seem indecisive in this regard.

Table 27
We want Pahari language to be promoted

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	82	27.3
Agree	122	40.7
Disagree	45	15.0
Strongly Disagree	36	12.0
Not Sure	15	5.0
Total	**300**	**100.0**

Here the table (27) tallies the views of respondents with regard to any effort to be undertaken for promoting Pahari language. 68% of the respondents are in favour of spreading or promoting Pahari language in the community, while 27% seem opposed to the idea of promoting Pahari.

Table 28
We desire our children to use or continue using Pahari language

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	60	20.0
Agree	117	39.0
Disagree	62	20.7
Strongly Disagree	53	17.7
Not Sure	8	2.7
Total	**300**	**100.0**

The table 28 assesses the views of respondents with regard to the desire for the use of Pahari in their next generation. Majority of the respondents hold the desire that their children should also use Pahari language in the future.

Table 29
Comparative Analysis of Respondents' Language Domains of Urdu, Pahari and English language

Sr. No.	Languages	Urdu	Pahari	English
1	Language used with the children at home	63.3%	34.3%	2.4%
2	The Family Members	16.3%	82%	1.7%
3	Friends and Playmates	40.7%	59%	0.3%
4	Colleagues/ Co-workers	85.3%	13.7%	1.0%
5	Strangers/ Public	86.3%	11.3%	2.3%
6	Neighbors	20%	79.7%	0.3

Table 29 offers a description based on the comparison of the three languages (Urdu, Pahari and English) with regard to their use by the respondents in different social domains or circles ranging from the home/family domain under the informal settings to the formal domain of professional settings.

Though 91.3% respondents declare Pahari as their mother tongue or the first language acquired at home but within the home domain, only 34.3% use it with children. Hence significant majority (63.3%) of respondents speak Urdu with the younger generation at home and only (1%) use English. In comparison with Pahari, Urdu happens to be the most widespread language used by the Pahari speaking respondents while interacting with children at home. However, within the home /family circles, Pahari is the most extensive language (82%) used for communication among family members other than the young children as 82% speak Pahari, (16.3%) speak Urdu and only 1% respondents use English with family members at home. Here it shows that though Pahari is the most extensive language in the home domain otherwise, yet its dominant role gets reversed and diminished significantly (within the family domain) while interacting with the children at

home. This shows that though majority (82%) of the Pahari speaking respondents of feel comfortable while communicating in their native language with other family members, but they seem to be highly conscious or sensitive towards its use with their young children. Hence, only 34.3% people admit using Pahari with the children at home. Thus they tend to make conscious choice of using Urdu with children and Pahari with others within the family or home domain.

It shows that parents seem unwilling or reluctant to transmit their ancestral language to their next generation. The social and cultural implications of such efforts and practices can cause significant effect on the linguistic map of district Poonch in Azad Kashmir. This can also prove lasting for the linguistic diversity of Azad Kashmir in general and the Pahari speaking community of Poonch in particular.

The analysis shows that though Pahari is the most common language used for interaction under informal settings, yet it is closely followed by Urdu. The table 5.1 also shows that within the professional domain, Urdu happens to be a major language which is used extensively and Pahari holds very limited role in the professional settings. Since Pahari is neither used as a medium of instruction in academic settings nor is it taught as a course at any academic level, its use in the professional circles remains highly confined to few informal interactions at the individual or local level.

By assessing the data presented in the table 5.1 with regard to Fishman's (1991:87) well-known question regarding language shift, 'Who speaks what language to whom, and when.', it becomes evident that Urdu is the most extensive language spoken not only in the formal settings under the domains of 'public/strangers' or the 'co-workers' but also under the informal settings of the home/family domain, particularly with the young children at home. It also shows that with the noticeable increase in the use of Urdu under different social settings, the role of Pahari gets much reduced to the family circles only where its use seems confined to elderly members mainly. Consequently, Urdu seems to be replacing Pahari in most of the social domains of the Pahari speaking community.

Table 30
Respondents' attitude towards Urdu, English and Pahari

Sr.	Language Attitudes	Urdu	Pahari	English
1	The most useful language to you	54.7%	7.0%	38.3%
2	The best language to teach at school	55.3%?	1.7%	42.7%
3	The most appropriate language for a teacher to use at school	67.3%	3.7%	29%

As can be seen, the table 30 aims at determining the attitudes of respondents in their social settings towards three languages (Urdu, Pahari and English). It shows that Urdu is considered by the majority as the most useful and appropriate language in the academic settings and English is viewed as the second best choice after Urdu.

Though Pahari is the native language and mother tongue of many, and some people also hold an emotional association with it for socio-cultural reasons, yet the practical significance and utility of Urdu and English urge people to prefer these languages over Pahari. Under the noticeably dominant and increasing social significance of Urdu, the status of Pahari gets undermined and much reduced for practical purposes.

Assessing Pahari Language on the Paradigm of Language Shift Pattern

Based on the foregoing discussion of the study whereby Pahari language tends to exhibit certain characteristics of a language undergoing some form of language shift, the

following section of the study is aimed at assessing Pahari language on the framework of language shift pattern.

Bilingualism or multilingualism; Language shift and Pahari language

According to Weinreich (1968), language shift is usually preceded by bilingualism in a common language and the process of shift usually takes three to four generations. Language shift is usually manifested by a gradual process whereby in general, speakers of a language are first monolingual as they hold proficiency mainly in a single language from which they tend to start developing proficiency in another. This way, people turn from being monolingual to bilingualism or multilingualism in accordance with the number of contact languages available to them and also the social value of those contact languages. Then as their interaction grows with these languages, their proficiency exhibits a tendency of improvement towards them; however, it begins to get lowered in the first language consequently. Ultimately, this phenomenon results in a complete shift from the first language to the second.

In the light of the above, the case of Pahari language can be judged as well. Pahari happens to be the mother tongue of a vast majority of people in the sub-division of Rawalakot, district Poonch (Shakil, 2011). For the elderly members of the Pahari speaking community, it used to be the only major language in which they held proficiency of high level. These people have had limited experience of formal education (schooling) and their livelihood was mainly associated with agriculture which earned them self-sufficiency of food. Moreover, they had established a strong tribal culture of their own under which most of the social obligations were fulfilled within their own community. As a result of this relative isolation or limited outward interaction, they were left monolingual by and large. However, the situation started getting altered in their second generation because the improved forms of communication and transportation, the facilities like provision of education were enhanced and a social shift of trend to a gradually educating community of people who would prefer to seek employment elsewhere occurred. Due to rich exposure of Urdu under academic and social settings, this second generation of Pahari speakers (over 40 years of age now) developed better proficiency in Urdu largely. Thus the community started transforming from a monolingual Pahari speaking population to a bilingual (Pahari and Urdu speaking) one. As these people started migrating for work and settlement to the other parts of the state and/or Pakistan, and abroad (mainly the Arabian Peninsula in the Gulf region and to some European countries), their perspective and outlook towards life experienced noticeable modifications. It brought a shift in the attitude of people towards their own native language and also towards Urdu and English.

The growing exposure of Urdu in the academic and social settings of the state of Azad Kashmir and Pakistan, and the increasing influence of English on the global horizon left them convinced with the higher social significance of Urdu and English. In addition to this, they started noticing and experiencing the gradually decaying social value of their ancestral language in their lives, particularly outside the family circles under rural settings. Hence they undertook conscious and planned efforts aimed at promoting proficiency of Urdu and English language among their children (the third generation, of those who are around 20 years of age presently) starting it preferably during early childhood education which is considered by many as the most appropriate and effective time for learning languages. Therefore, these younger speakers of Pahari language exhibit higher level of proficiency in Urdu and English. Though those who are around 20 years of age are able to speak Pahari language mostly, but hold limited proficiency in comparison with the higher proficiency level of their parents (the second generation of speakers) in a bilingual community, and the very high level of proficiency of their grandparents. Under the present

social settings of Rawalakot in district Poonch, the community of Pahari speakers exhibits a pattern of multilingualism under which people have the ability to communicate in Pahari, capability to use Urdu fluently and limited proficiency in. More importantly, in the fourth generation (of young children under 10 years of age presently), an increasing tendency can be noticed whereby community seems moving towards bilingualism and highly limited proficiency in Pahari. Consequently, the proficiency level of community marks a noticeably increasing tendency of shift from Pahari towards Urdu and English, whereas it shows a significantly decreasing pattern towards Pahari. This seems particularly true for the youngest members of Pahari speaking community.

Therefore, it seems that the process of partial shift which had started in the second generation of Urdu learning Pahari speakers is reaching close to a stage whereby the fourth generation holds highly limiting proficiency in Pahari. Keeping in view the existing sociolinguistic conditions of the community whereby higher socio-economic importance is attached with Urdu and English, it is expected that in the future people may shift completely from Pahari to Urdu in the next one or two generations that is, within a time period of two to four decades.

Pahari language and the high socio-economic, socio-political significance of Urdu in Azad Kashmir

Tendencies of language shift are also attributed to the prevalent political and economic influences exerted by the dominant languages (Bender, Cooper and Ferguson, 1972). Urdu holds the status of the official language of correspondence and the medium of instruction within Azad Kashmir. It also acts as a common language used under the formal academic and official settings. Apart from these, Urdu is used extensively in both the print and electronic media of Azad Kashmir. Under the current academic settings, students learn Urdu as a compulsory course from the elementary to the intermediate level. Moreover, tests, interviews for jobs and commercial activities are commonly conducted in Urdu. Therefore, in Azad Kashmir, Urdu is an academic and official language at all levels. It is also the language used for communication in the banking and business circles, is used extensively in the media, consequently, it happens to be the most dominant language in Azad Kashmir which exhibits healthy signs of its further spread in the near future.

People in general seem convinced by the high social value of Urdu in different social, political, economic, academic, official and government domains. In the home domain, women hold closer interaction with the youngest generation of the community, however, they are also regarded as active contributors of language shift as stated by Al-Khatib (2001), so, it seems difficult to assume that Pahari may remain safe even in its last domain of use. In comparison with men, women show more eagerness towards adopting Urdu as the mother tongue for their children. This social pattern is gaining faster pace with the younger generation of Pahari-speaking females who also happen to be more educated or qualified academically and socio-culturally more conscious. This way, the people of Azad Kashmir in general and the Rawalakot sub-division (of district Poonch) in particular, seem influenced by a tendency of language shift towards Urdu at the subconscious level. Al-Khatib (2001) also refers to the process of language shift as a subconscious practice, while regards language maintenance as a conscious one. Since Urdu language shows its growing influence in the Pahari speaking community of Azad Kashmir on both social and economic grounds, shift towards it becomes natural as Dorian (1982) states with regard to the phenomenon of language shift observed under other settings.

Conclusion

Pahari happens to be a major language of the people of Azad Kashmir and extends its role as a regional language of Pakistan into the adjoining regions of the Hazara division in the KPK province and the Pothohar region of Punjab. It also reflects heavy influence of Urdu primarily due to the non-existent academic or official significance of the former and the dominant academic and official position of the later particularly in the educational settings and government functionaries of the state of Azad Jammu & Kashmir.

Keeping in view the existing scenario of Azad Kashmir in general and the Poonch district (Rawalakot) in particular, it seems very likely that Pahari may fall out of favour within the next few decades because of its decreasing socio-cultural value and the non-existing official or governmental patronization especially in the educational circles of AJ&K. This seems more relevant to the social settings of the Rawalakot sub-division of the Poonch district known for its higher rate of literacy. As the native inhabitants of this locality seem to hold their local language in limited social value in comparison with the more dominant languages which are considered prestigious, hence, it indicates that after a few decades Pahari may assume a highly limited role under the newly evolving social settings. The younger people seem to be less inclined towards learning or using Pahari language and more importantly parents show little interest in transmitting their ancestral cultural heritage to their next generations. Hence with reduction in the number of young users of Pahari language, its domains or social circles of usage also seem to be shrinking which shows unhealthy social signs for the future of the language.

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