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Shahzaman Haque

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## Investigating language attitudes in Pakistani immigrant individuals of France

### Indagare gli atteggiamenti linguistici negli immigrati pakistani in Francia

Shahzaman Haque  
Associate professor

Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales - INALCO, Paris (France)

#### Abstract

This article attempts to investigate a case study on the language attitudes of Pakistani immigrants in France, drawing on the theoretical framework of family language policy. Over 37 individuals of Pakistani descent living in the suburbs of Paris participated in this study through a questionnaire on language attitudes. All the participants showed a positive attitude towards the teaching of the Urdu language to their children or to the second generation. Within the family arena, it has been observed that the consequences of prolonged language contact led to language changes (Ricento, 2006) from the heritage language (Punjabi in the case of the illustrated case study's participants) to the language of prestige (Urdu) through verbal interaction with the second generation. This study also takes into account the linguistic biographies of some students of Pakistani origin enrolled in a Bachelor's program with Urdu as major subject at the National Institute of Oriental Languages and Civilization in Paris. The reports by the students have further attested to language attitudes in favour of Urdu emerging as an important tool in the socio-educational context.

**Keywords:** language attitude, Pakistani immigrants in France, Urdu speakers in France, family language policy, heritage language.

#### Sommario

Questo articolo intende indagare un caso di studio sugli atteggiamenti linguistici degli immigrati pakistani in Francia basandosi sul quadro teorico delle politiche linguistiche familiari. Oltre 37 persone di origine pakistana che vivono nella periferia di Parigi hanno partecipato a questo studio condotto attraverso un questionario sugli atteggiamenti linguistici. Tutti i partecipanti hanno mostrato un atteggiamento positivo nei confronti dell'insegnamento della lingua urdu ai loro figli o alla seconda generazione. All'interno dell'ambito familiare, sono state osservate le conseguenze del contatto linguistico prolungato che porta a cambiamenti linguistici (Ricento, 2006) dalla lingua di origine (punjabi, nel caso dei partecipanti al caso di studio illustrato) alla lingua di prestigio (urdu) attraverso l'interazione verbale con la seconda generazione. Sono state prese in considerazione in questo studio anche le biografie linguistiche di alcuni studenti di origine pakistana iscritti a un corso di laurea con l'urdu come materia principale presso l'Istituto Nazionale di Lingue e Civiltà Orientali di Parigi. Il riscontro degli studenti ha ulteriormente attestato gli atteggiamenti linguistici positivi nei confronti dell'urdu, che si configura come un importante strumento nel contesto socio-educativo.

**Parole chiave:** atteggiamenti linguistici, immigrati pakistani in Francia, parlanti di urdu in Francia, politiche linguistiche familiari, lingua di origine.

#### Introduction

Under a new global economy, particularly from the second half of the twentieth century, the study of the intricate web of mobility of people and language in terms of superdiversity (Vertovec, 2007) in Western European countries has attracted many researchers (Chatzidaki and Maligkoudi, 2013). Over the past thirty years, there has been a rapid advance in terms of research on the relationship between language and ethnicity (Fishman, 2001; Harris, 2006), and language and identity politics (Wahyudi, 2017) pointing to a major outcome that language remains a key instrument in decision-making for the lives, careers and education of immigrants. Many studies have also focused interest on language attitudes (Baker, 1992; Garrett, 2010; Garrett *et al.*, 2003), a relatively new

phenomenon in the early 70s (Agheyisi and Fishman, 1970), though its relationship to language use was gaining some momentum in the 60s (Nader, 1962). Although there has been a vast literature on language practices, stemming primarily from migration narratives (*récit de migration*), reflecting the language attitudes of immigrant communities in France (Billiez, 1985; Canut and Guellouz, 2018; Trimaille, 2004; Van den Avenne, 2004), there is a serious lack of research regarding the language attitudes, practices and ideologies of immigrants of Pakistani origin. Even in Pakistan as a site, only a few sociolinguistic studies (Haque, 2019; Mansoor, 1993, 2004; Rahman, 2002) have shown interest in language attitudes towards Urdu, English and Punjabi in socio-educational settings.

In this paper, I attempt to fill this gap through a case study on the language attitudes of Pakistani immigrants in France, drawing on the theoretical and conceptual framework of family language policy. I will provide a brief outline on the status and historical sociolinguistic dynamics and importance of the Urdu, Punjabi and English languages in Pakistan, which have repercussions on the beliefs of parents who have migrated to France. Estimated to be over a hundred thousand in France (Government of Pakistan, 2018), Pakistani immigrants have so far created a close community network based on linguistic-cultural proximities, where parental decisions regarding heritage language transmission play a significant role. This paper will critically examine research conducted on 37 individuals of Pakistani descent living in the suburbs of Paris through a questionnaire on language attitudes. In addition, this paper will give an account of the linguistic biographies of some Pakistani-origin students from the second generation enrolled in a Bachelor's programme in Urdu at the National Institute of Oriental Languages and Civilization in Paris (INALCO). These two sets of profiles seem intertwined because, in some cases, the individuals (anonymous) have expressed positive attitudes towards the Urdu language in which students are enrolled. The key research question of this case study is to ascertain if the Pakistani immigrant families were able to maintain the heritage language or if there has been a language shift and loss in favour of the host language. It addresses the following questions: What are the language attitudes towards the heritage language among Pakistani immigrants living in France? Are these attitudes and beliefs translated into language practices?

## 1. Theoretical and conceptual framework

What we know about family language policy (FLP) scholarship is largely based upon empirical studies that investigate closely how the family as a domain responds to language issues on the maintenance of heritage language or shift to the host language in the diaspora, in which ideology may serve as the core principle. Language socialisation, either in home or beyond the home – members of extended family, public meetings, schools, workplace, leisure, etc. – is traditionally pivotal in setting the order of languages within one's verbal repertoire, pertaining to «wider social pressures» (Luykx, 2003, p. 40). In France, a number of authors have used the term FLP, either briefly (Calvet, 1993; Dreyfus, 1996) or as significant contributors and pioneers in efforts to understand the heritage language crisis (De Heredia-Deprez, 1989; Deprez, 1996; Deprez and Varro, 1991), focussing primarily on the linguistic biographies and language practices of their informants.

During the last 20 years, a large volume of published studies has been developed by the Anglo-Saxon community in the field of FLP, notably from authors such as Curdt-Christiansen (2009), King *et al.* (2016), Shohamy (2006) and Spolsky (2004) among others, who have been inspired largely by Spolsky's (2004) proposed three components

– language ideology, language management and language practices – also termed «Spolsky’s framework» (Hollebeke *et al.*, 2022, p. 3228). Curdt-Christiansen and Huang (2020) have recently developed a Dynamic Family Language Policy Model arguing for an explanatory theory incorporating language ideology, language intervention and language practices focusing on external factors and internal factors. Many of these factors – political (Spolsky, 2012), socio-cultural, economic, emotion (Tang and Calafato, 2022), identity (Stacey and Soler, 2019), family cultures and tradition (Shin, 2014), child agency (Fogle and King, 2013; Mensel, 2016; Tuominen, 1999), linguistic environment and cultural environment – have already been discussed and analysed at great length. These studies demonstrate, in most cases, two warring camps – hegemonic state apparatus policies versus family language policies – providing evidence and concerns for persistent inequalities within one’s own verbal repertoire.

Language attitude may be considered central to the family language policy paradigm, but the term has not been used explicitly by sociolinguists interested in this domain. Likewise, even the general lack of research on language attitude and bilingualism has been regretted (Baker, 1992). FLP researchers, so far, have largely ignored the term *language attitude* or employed it as *beliefs* or even as «language ideology» (Schwartz, 2008, p. 404), whereas some researchers have used the term akin to the sense of feeling, or without assigning any particular definition (Curdt-Christiansen, 2013; Kopeliovich, 2010; Luykx, 2005), making its usage a mystery. The theory of attitude studies has been primarily ascribed to social behaviour, psychology or sociology and multiple definitions are attributed depending upon the disciplinary research. Language attitude was regarded as a feeling toward one’s own language or the language of others (Crystal, 2011, p. 1). Baker (1992, p. 10) defines attitude in relation to language as a «hypothetical construct used to explain the persistence of human behaviour».

For the sake of this study in relation to a theoretical framework for family language policy, the significance of attitude will be evoked in conjunction with ideology and beliefs. Among the first authors to define language attitude in conjunction with beliefs were Fishbein (1965) and Rokeach (1968). The latter associate language attitude primarily with beliefs where belief embodies affective, behavioural and cognitive elements. The former, Fishbein marks a slight distinction between *attitude* aligning it with the affective component, whereas *belief* comprises both conative and cognitive elements. Furthermore, he complains vehemently that «it is only the evaluative or ‘the affective component’ that is measured and treated by researchers as the essence of attitudes» (Fishbein, 1965, p. 108). Even in sociolinguistics literature, language attitude deals more with the affective standpoint and the notion of belief becomes secondary. Agheyisi and Fishman (1970, p. 141) classify the relevance of language attitude in sociolinguistics within three categories: «language oriented or language directed attitudes [...] community-wide stereotyped impressions toward language [...] concerned with the implementation of different types of language attitudes».

A growing body of sociolinguistic studies, mentioned hitherto, have followed the same tendency to evaluate language attitude based on judgement regarding a particular language, although the notions of belief are also apparent (see for example, Schieffelin and Doucet, 1998; Gibbons and Ramirez, 2004; Baker, 1992). In fact, beliefs are the primary indicators of attitudes toward a minority language. Allard and Landry (1992, p. 172) point out that «set of beliefs could better explain the attitude of minority group members toward the use of their mother tongue». The use of language beliefs as interchangeable with language ideology by some researchers in FLP (Curdt-Christiansen and Huang, 2020) reflects a posture portraying rationalisation of the use or form of a particular language, in addition to emotive factors (positive or negative) of the language

attitude. What are the sources among individuals of cherished beliefs regarding languages at a micro-level? Aren't they part of the outcome of a larger eco-system in which state apparatus ideologies conform to the hegemonisation of one language? It would be difficult to determine whether language attitude, being a generic term, necessarily includes language ideology or not. Attitudes are also conceived as opinions (see Baker, 1992, p. 14), which may be enmeshed either with ideology or without ideology. Measurement of attitudes through a variety of methods, such as Guttman's Scalogram analysis, Semantic Differential Technique, Repertory Grid Technique, Factor Analysis and Sociometry, may yield some results in revealing attitude and ideology in language but nevertheless, such measurements have their own limitations and there is a question mark over their validity (Baker, 1992, p. 19). Investigating language attitude through the lens of FLP may provide a broader theoretical perspective and framework complying with the methodological interest of this paper which I develop in the next section.

## 2. Methodology

Case studies have been long established practices in the FLP domain in order to present empirical data and its holistic analysis of language attitudes, beliefs and practices within the family arena. This particular study is based on a case study regarding 37 individuals of Pakistani origin who were asked to complete a closed-ended questionnaire on their language attitude, practices and beliefs regarding their mother tongue and the national language of their country of origin, Urdu. I have had a difficult time to penetrate into the Pakistani community in order to carry out my research. Even with the language, Urdu which I speak and teach, and which is considered the common language of most Pakistani individuals, my obstacle was primarily my Indian origin, for which the trust factor became perhaps more decisive. The situation becomes complex in fieldwork when it is not enough to be an *insider* (sharing the same cultural and linguistic background, which I was sharing to some extent<sup>1</sup>) and the designation of *outsider* is persistent (see also Gregory and Ruby, 2010). I approached a student of mine, Bushra Babu, of Pakistani origin, bilingual in Urdu, and who had extensive socialisation into the Pakistani community of the Parisian suburbs owing to her garment business. Bushra Babu was instructed to distribute the questionnaire to informants with children, and all the informants were told about the language attitude research project carried out by the Urdu Section of INALCO.

The questionnaire was created by myself. It was written in French and Urdu language, assuming that respondents would have skills in the national language of one country or the other, France or Pakistan, if they were literate. Participants were also briefed that they could reply either in French or in Urdu. It was decided that the questionnaire would be not completed in the presence of my student because this might enhance the risk of pressure and bias in favour of Urdu<sup>2</sup>. The fieldwork was carried out from the month of May to July in 2019. Fifty questionnaires were distributed, to which 37 individuals responded. Prior to undertaking the investigation, ethical clearance was sought from all individuals.

The questionnaire was designed in such a manner as not only to elicit the language practices of the informants but to draw out also the language attitude and beliefs regarding the languages. Most of the respondents thus expressed their negative or positive attitude toward a particular language or toward more than one language, which demonstrated their language attitude. As for the FLP, despite not employing the most common sociolinguistic tools based on the qualitative approach, such as participant observation, interview, conversation recording among family members, field notes and so forth, the focus would be to extract the ideas and reflections expressed which seemed pertinent to

the theoretical framework of the FLP. Though the data collected by questionnaire from the Pakistani informants is, in itself, unique and will contribute to the field of sociolinguistics, the main limitation of this study is that, unfortunately, it was not possible to employ further investigating tools in the field.

### 3. A brief sociolinguistics of Pakistan

For this study, it is important to shed some light on the sociolinguistics of Pakistan in order to comprehend the language attitudes at the micro-emblem level of the society. There has now been a considerable amount of literature on the sociolinguistics of Pakistan, focussing not only on the impact and status of Urdu and English, the former being the national language of Pakistan since 1948 and the latter being the official language of the country since then, but also on the issues of identity and revival of regional languages (Abbas and Iqbal, 2018; Amanat and Hussain, 2021; Manan *et al.*, 2016; Rahman, 2002; Salvaggio, 2020). Most of the analysis from Pakistani sociolinguists revolves around the status and power of the Urdu language, homogenised, eulogised and idealised even before the creation of Pakistan as an independent Islamic country. Faisal Devji (2013) draws a comparison between Israel and Pakistan on the grounds of language, where both languages, Hebrew and Urdu, were portrayed as a symbol of nationalism and religion. Article 251 (1) of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan (1973) stipulates Urdu as the national language. The role of Urdu has been instrumental in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, right from when poets glorified and dreamed the idea of such a nation, particularly the philosophical poet, Muhammad Iqbal, who had a profound effect on the founding leader of Pakistan, Mohammad Ali Jinnah<sup>3</sup>.

From a historical viewpoint, Urdu was blessed with a rich literary heritage of over 700 years, in addition to its powerful position as a lingua franca in nineteenth-century British India<sup>4</sup>. Two phases of Urdu's Islamification need to be mentioned.

1. Pre-Pakistan, pre-partition from British India in 1947: Besides Urdu's roots in Sanskrit, the language was progressively transformed from the 11th century onwards through the agency of strong cultural, linguistic, literary and religious traits imported from and inspired by the Muslim World (Arab, Iran, Turkey), shaping its Islamic identity over the years, nurtured even by non-Muslim Urdu authors.
2. Post-partition 1947: Politically, on the one hand, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, first Governor-General of Pakistan, «drew inspiration from other nation states» (Haque, 2022); metamorphosing Pakistan into one language, one religion, one nation for Urdu, Islam and Pakistan, and on the other hand, this post-colonial linguistic manufacturing of the State was carried on by hundreds of thousands of elite, Urdu-speaking Muslim migrants from the northern part of India, who contributed significantly at the ground level in building the infrastructure – schools, hospitals, roads, factories, etc. in all of which Urdu was fast becoming the wider language of communication.

Many claim (Haque, 2018; Rahman, 2008, p. 95) that Urdu was not the mother tongue of a single person pre-Pakistan, although education, mostly in Urdu, was widespread. Urdu was imported from India, imposed on the Pakistani population and was inscribed with an Islamic identity after the creation of Pakistan.

It has been reported that there are over 90 languages in Pakistan ([www.ethnologue.com](http://www.ethnologue.com)). Although Pakistan Bureau of Statistics does not provide a complete list of Pakistani languages, it carried out a Census of Pakistan in 2017, in which the percentage populations of the top five languages are as follows: Punjabi (38.78%)

followed by Pushto (18.24%), Sindhi (14.57%), Saraiki (12.19%), with Urdu (7.08%) in fifth position (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2017). Surprisingly, no data on English speakers has been made available since the first Census was released in 1951. There has also been a significant dip in the number of speakers of Punjabi (44.15%) and a marginal fall for Urdu (7.57%) since the 1998 *Census Report of Pakistan*, but I won't dig for the reasons, which fall outside the scope of this paper. Nevertheless, it is important to note that, despite Punjabi belonging to the largest ethnic group in terms of population and language, Punjabi is not taught as a language in schools due to the fact that ideological premises favouring Urdu have been the central policy by the government. Previous studies on language situation and attitudes have reported the following traits for the Punjabi language in Pakistan:

1. considered as a reason for low esteem among students who are native speakers of Punjabi (Mansoor, 1993);
2. subject of continuous devalorisation in Higher Education (Mansoor, 2004);
3. weakest ethnolinguistic vitality (Manan and David, 2014);
4. negative perception (John, 2015)<sup>5</sup>.

Being the most spoken language of Pakistan, if Punjabi has been marginalised, the fate of other provincial languages or regional languages can be acknowledged as worrisome. Manan and David (2014) place the regional languages at the lowest level of the hierarchy. Mansoor (2004, p. 335) asserts that regional languages are «accorded a low status and are limited to community and home». Furthermore, she regrets that, even if Article 251 (3) of the Constitution, 1973 stipulates promotion of the use of regional language on condition that there is no prejudice against the national language, Urdu, hardly any step has been taken in this regard, except in the province of Sindh. Khan (2013, pp. 186-187) observes that regional languages are offered as optional languages in colleges and schools only in the province where they are spoken.

As it has been a common postcolonial regime policy to carry on the colonial heritage in terms of official language, which has been the case of many ex-British colonies, like India, Ghana, South Africa (English is the official or co-official language) etc. or ex-French colonies, like Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire or Mali (French is the official language), Pakistan has followed the same pattern, making English the sole official language of the country in its Constitution, 1973. Article 251 (2) made the provision for the transition to Urdu as the official language while arrangements are made and for the duration English may be used for official purposes. However, it has been reported that English remains even today the principal second official language (Mansoor, 2004), despite the fact that many attempts have been made to replace English by Urdu. Post-1947, subsequent phases of different political regimes have continued to maintain the status quo of English as official language, pro-English medium instruction and education in schools, its privileged status sustained except during the period of General Zia-ul-Haq in 1977 for six years, but later, he too reversed his policy in favour of English (see Mahboob, 2002, for detailed discussion). Much as in South Asia as a whole, English in Pakistan has been regarded as the language of advanced information technology, science, commerce and a tool of empowerment in which the shift of social class from lower or middle-income class to higher class is not only accessible in the local *linguistic market* (Bourdieuian concept) but also abroad. Many studies have made evident that language attitude with respect to English is highly positive: language for development and prosperity (Shamim, 2011); privileged position in sociopolitical structure (Ahmad *et al.*, 2018); passport to privilege (Haidar, 2019); facilitate the entry of ruling elite's children in positions of power and privilege (Rahman, 1997).

The following part of this paper will present the results obtained and principal findings of the current investigation in relation to language attitude, which reflects equally the family language policy of Pakistani individuals.

#### 4. Results and discussion

Among the 50 participants, 13 participants did not return the questionnaire. One reminder was sent to them, but further reminders were considered to be of no use as the recipients were either not interested in the study or did not have enough time to complete the questionnaire. They might have also anticipated further follow-up based on the questionnaire in terms of interviews, for which they might have been reluctant or opposed. Each household was given four sets of printed questionnaires so that both parents could fill up the questionnaire for themselves and for their children, if applicable. Out of 37 respondents, 35 were females and only 2 were males. It remains uncertain why male respondents were so few, but it is perhaps possible to hypothesise that the male members of the families were the principal breadwinner, as in the case of most immigrant families (see Abou Zahab, 2007), and they had less time and energy to spare for such an inquiry. Another factor could be that the questionnaires were distributed by a woman in the garment business: most of her contacts are likely to have been women. With a literacy rate of 58.91% (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2017), the immigrant population in France also includes illiterate young men for economic reasons<sup>6</sup>, which might be another reason.

The participant with the lowest age was a female of 14 years old and the oldest participant was a male of 62 years old. Two subjects did not report their age. The mean age for 35 participants was 35.6 years. The age range in which the highest number of respondents participated was 20-25 (all females), whereas the age ranges with the lowest numbers were 31-35, 51-55 and 60-62. The age distribution is shown in the following table.

| Age range in years | Number |
|--------------------|--------|
| 14-19              | 4      |
| 20-25              | 8      |
| 26-30              | 5      |
| 31-35              | 1      |
| 36-40              | 2      |
| 41-45              | 5      |
| 46-50              | 4      |
| 51-55              | 1      |
| 56-60              | 4      |
| 60-62              | 1      |
| Age not reported   | 2      |

Tab. 1: Age distribution of participants.

Of the 37 questionnaires, 17 were completed in French whereas 19 questionnaires were filled in Urdu and 1 was filled in Urdu and English. Hence, it could be conceivably hypothesised that the younger generation or second-generation would have recourse to the French language whereas the older generation or participants above 40 years of age would use Urdu in the questionnaire. Although most of the young respondents under 25 years in the age range 14-25 replied in French (11 replies), there were 2 replies from 26-30 and 2 replies from 41-50. Two respondents who didn't report their age also filled the questionnaire in French. As for Urdu, all respondents were in the age distribution of over

26 years old. One female informant whose age was 16 years old filled the questionnaire in Urdu and English. This is not surprising in her case, as it seems that she had newly arrived in France after her initial elementary education in a Pakistani school. Her trajectory could be understood as more or less similar to the Pakistani-origin students enrolled in the B.A. programme in Urdu at INALCO<sup>7</sup>. According to their historical biography, some students reported that they were born in Pakistan, accompanied their mothers at the age of five, ten or twelve years after a solid foundation in the heritage language and culture, and were then oriented toward the French schooling system. Some studies have pointed that immigrants from Pakistan started to arrive in France in 1970, or to be more precise after the oil crisis of 1974 (Abou Zahab, 2007). Family reunification for Pakistanis commenced from 1980, which was the main reason to bring spouse and children. Respondents of this study seemed to be from the first generation (from the 1970s) and the subsequent second and third generation were either born in France or in Pakistan.

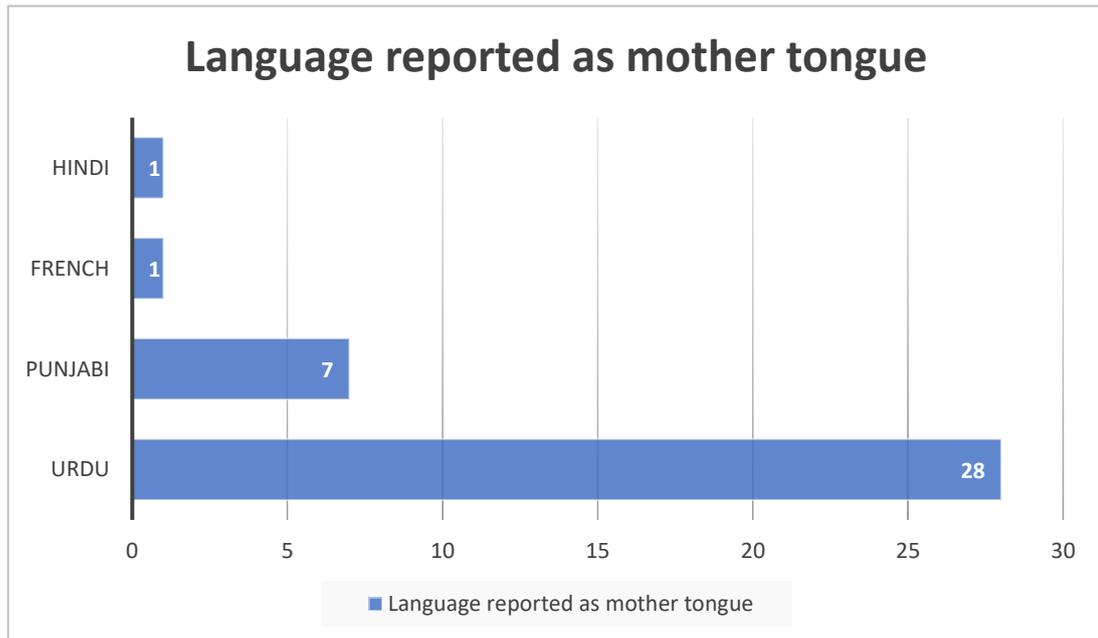
Immigrants from Pakistan, like others from South Asia, are known to have «serious difficulties in learning French» (Moliner, 2009, p. 3) and, even after «several years of their arrival in France, [the] majority of them have low competency in the language of the host country» (*ibidem*). This perception could be contested from the viewpoint of the current study, in which 8 respondents who are in the age range 43-62 have learnt French and report speaking French. Nevertheless, there are 7 respondents from the age range of 34-57, 5 of whom are in their 40s, reported that they are in the process of learning French or speak very little French. Most of my students from a Pakistani background are bilingual in French and in Urdu, speak French with siblings at home and Punjabi or Urdu with parents who have less fluency in French and remain comfortable in their heritage language. It is, therefore, surprising to see that some of the respondents filled the questionnaire in French, although they were in the age range of 41-50.

The language employed in the questionnaire may also reflect the language attitude of the person in addition to the language choices, language practices or competencies in which a person is more comfortable. Although it is quite frequent for a bilingual or multilingual speaker to use two or more languages in a questionnaire (Haque, 2012; Elbiad, 1986), no studies, to my knowledge, have provided insights on why a bilingual respondent would choose one or other language for the questionnaire. Some points could be suggested in this particular study. It could be that respondents have employed the language to self-report their proficiency in the language; however, all questions were closed-ended and only two respondents wrote a few lines.

It also shows the respondents' language immersion in the diaspora, particularly for those who were above 30 years and used French in the questionnaire. It also reflects the extent of the participant's language exposure regarding French or Urdu. Most of the female respondents using Urdu in the questionnaire indicate their schooling in Pakistan. Finally, there is also language attitude at play favouring one language over the other, having proficiency in both the language and signalling the language ideology; notably, the use of Urdu indexes the politico-religious-cultural nature of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to which the speaker is affiliated (see also Kroskrity, 2000 on language ideologies). This highlights a fertile ground for the intergenerational language transmission of the heritage language.

#### *Mother tongue and language attitude*

The results of this study indicate that Urdu has been reported as the mother tongue for most of the respondents (75%).



Graph 1: Language reported as mother tongue.

The question of reporting heritage language in the diaspora set-up has already been a matter of interest and debate among sociolinguistics (Kouritzin, 2000; Mucherah, 2008; for detailed discussion, Haque, 2012, p. 60). Jaspal and Coyle (2010, p. 202) find probable discrepancies in interpretation of the mother tongue when Pakistani-origin immigrants in the United Kingdom claim Urdu as their native language based on Pakistani identity. From a language attitude viewpoint, as I have mentioned above, the Punjabi language bears negative connotations, while Urdu and English have extremely positive attitudes among Pakistani informants in Pakistan, even among Punjabi mother-tongue speakers. In a study on attitudes to Punjabi, Sabiha Mansoor (1993) indicates that 97% of students who participated in the investigation rejected Punjabi as the language taught at school. Though there were positive attitudes expressed, such as its importance as mother tongue and for the maintenance of cultural identity, Punjabi was designated as barbaric, vulgar, impolite, spoken by illiterate rustics, and offering no future, amongst other things. Though the study is around 30 years old, the same perception of negative attitudes persists, especially in urban areas (Abbas and Iqbal, 2018; Manan and David, 2014). It is most probable that these negative attitudes have induced reporting of Urdu as the mother tongue, instead of Punjabi, for many respondents of the current study.

Most of my students report Urdu as their mother tongue and the language of the home in the introductory class but by the time they are in the second or third year of the B.A. programme, they report that Punjabi is the mother tongue of the parents and some of the students speak Punjabi or other languages, such as Saraiki or Pothwari. Among 28 respondents for Urdu as mother tongue, the discrepancy can be noted for 14 in whom Punjabi is reported as the language of parents and grand-parents, favourite language of parents, language spoken to parents at home, and listed as among other languages known to them. The mother tongue transformed, imposed and presented to one's own children for various purposes in conjunction with language attitudes or ideology may be termed a *faux* mother tongue. The deviation of parents' mother tongue from Punjabi to Urdu could be understood either as a question of positive language attitude by the respondents or by the family language policy of the parents, who side-lined their heritage language perceived as a marker of low social prestige. Some of my students have told me that,

despite their parents' mother tongue being Punjabi, they only spoke Urdu with them, and it was the language which was promoted within the household, although the parents continued to speak between themselves in Punjabi<sup>8</sup>. One respondent (59 years) who reported Urdu as her mother tongue speaks in Saraiki with her father. If a regional language has been reported along with the official or national language, there are many chances that the regional language is the real mother tongue, whereas the official or national language would be the *faux* mother tongue.

All the 7 respondents who reported Punjabi as mother tongue speak in Urdu with their children. We find here a shift from the heritage language to a socially prestigious language, Urdu, which seems to be part of the family language policy. 2 of them speak French as well as Urdu, whereas 1 of them reported English along with Urdu for daily conversation with children in home. French was reported as mother tongue by only 1 respondent, which is surprising. The second generation, or the *transition generation* as it is put by Tannenbaum (2003), though they are bilingual, acquire both the heritage and host language, but if they have done their schooling in France since childhood, which seems to be the case of most respondents under 25 years of age, the possible expectation in terms of mother tongue would be French. 2 respondents (19 and 25 years old) reported Urdu as mother tongue but put French as the preferred language. This also accords with earlier observations (Billiez, 1985; Haque, 2012), which showed that a heritage language with no skills was reported as the mother tongue by the second generation, betokening a strong positive language attitude.

One unanticipated finding of this study was that there was 1 respondent who reported Hindi as her mother tongue and Urdu among other languages known. Hindi was referred to as one of the dozen names of Urdu from the 13<sup>th</sup> up to the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; however, with the creation of Modern Hindi (from 1824 onwards; see Srivastava, 1995), and later, after the creation of Pakistan, in which Urdu literature played a significant part, Hindi was no longer associated with Pakistan. Modern Standard Hindi or New Hindi became a marker of the Hindu community in post-1947 usage, whereas Urdu was confined to Muslim identity in India (though mostly in the Northern States of India). The website *Ethnologue* does not recognise Hindi as one of the languages of Pakistan (as mentioned above), and there is no evidence of Hindi (Modern Hindi with Devanagari Script) taught in Pakistan. Furthermore, the respondent in question was born in 1980, so, being a second-generation Pakistani after Pakistan's creation would not have received any formal education in Hindi. She speaks Hindi with her parents and she employs Urdu and French to communicate with her children. Is Urdu reported as Hindi as part of her language attitude? Further data collection from her is needed in order to understand her language trajectory and practices.

#### *Language of the children and family language policy*

The questionnaire as the sole source of information was not enough to elicit the data in order to understand better the dynamics of language ideologies and practices inside the participants' households. Nonetheless, it provides some significant glimpses of a community's language practices hitherto unknown in France. The role of the family in maintaining its heritage language in the diaspora confronts many obstacles, especially from the host country's language policy where, besides the reduced prominence of the heritage languages, there is tremendous peer pressure in favour of the host language in the domains of work and school. Decisions regarding the choice and practices of language are seldom in isolation. The current study found that Urdu remained the only Pakistani language which was transmitted or taught to the children in addition to the French

language. What we observe is a process of language shift from less-valued languages in the eyes of parents, such as Punjabi or Saraiki, to strongly-valued languages, such as Urdu and French. It is difficult, however, to grasp the ideological stances of the parents on the basis of the questionnaire.

Three questions were asked which could reflect the ramifications of the FLP carried out within the family: In what language do you speak to your children? What is the language your children speak? What is the favourite language of your children? Out of the 37 respondents, 22 reported language practices and attitudes regarding their children:

| <b>Languages spoken to children</b> | <b>Numbers</b> |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|
| Only Urdu                           | 8              |
| Only French                         | 1              |
| Only Punjabi                        | 1              |
| Urdu and French                     | 6              |
| Urdu, Punjabi and French            | 3              |
| Urdu and English                    | 1              |
| Urdu, French and German             | 1              |
| Urdu and English                    | 1              |

Tab. 2: Languages spoken to children, by number of persons.

It is interesting to note that Urdu is the dominant language of communication for 20 respondents out of 22. If Urdu is only employed as the sole language by 8 individuals (all mothers), its usage is also relevant with other languages, such as French, Punjabi, English and German.

| <b>Mother tongue</b> | <b>Languages spoken to children</b> | <b>Numbers</b> |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------|
| Punjabi              | Urdu                                | 7              |
| Urdu                 | Urdu                                | 4              |
| Urdu                 | French                              | 1              |
| Urdu                 | Urdu and French                     | 4              |
| Urdu                 | Urdu, French and Punjabi            | 3              |
| Urdu                 | Punjabi                             | 1              |
| Urdu                 | Urdu, French and German             | 1              |
| Hindi                | Urdu                                | 1              |

Tab. 3: Mother tongue reported and languages spoken to children.

Language practice in terms of speaking to children is considered as a choice exercised under FLP. In the table above, we find that Urdu has been promoted or preserved as the language of communication between the individual and the children in 90% of cases, barring the two respondents who preferred French and Punjabi. Among 28 persons who reported Urdu as their mother tongue, only 4 speak in Punjabi or in Saraiki with their parents, but they have chosen to speak Urdu with their children. This shows a shift and gradual loss of language maintenance from first to third generation, which is generally acknowledged in many studies (Tannenbaum, 2003; Fishman, 1991), and though these children are addressed in Urdu, for most of them, it is probable that they will cease speaking Urdu with their own children. One respondent who reports her mother tongue as Urdu but speaks in Punjabi with her parents, says she also speaks Punjabi with her

children. However, all the 7 respondents who reported Punjabi as their mother tongue and speak the same language with their parents have shifted to Urdu for their children.

| Language spoken by children | Numbers |
|-----------------------------|---------|
| Urdu                        | 7       |
| Punjabi                     | 1       |
| French                      | 1       |
| Urdu and French             | 12      |
| Urdu, French and Punjabi    | 1       |

Tab. 4: Language practices of children reported by their parents.

| Favourite language of children | Numbers |
|--------------------------------|---------|
| French                         | 9       |
| Urdu and French                | 4       |
| French and English             | 1       |
| French, Urdu and English       | 2       |
| Urdu                           | 4       |
| English                        | 1       |
| Nothing reported               | 1       |

Tab. 5: Language attitude of children reported by their parents.

A great contrast is found between Table 4 and Table 3. French appears to outstrip other languages as the favourite language, and along with Urdu, it is not only reported by 13 persons but also it may reflect the real language practices of the children who may tilt more toward French rather than to Urdu in their daily lives. However, there is no certainty if the children were consulted by their parents for their language attitude regarding the favourite language. It is important equally to note that all children are found to be bilingual either in French and Urdu or in French and Punjabi or in French with English or German. The main outcome of this study shows that bilingualism has been endorsed and it is practiced. Further investigation is needed to validate the authenticity of the reported languages for the mother tongue as well as for the reasons and beliefs regarding the choice of particular languages.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this case study was to examine the language attitudes and beliefs of immigrants of Pakistani descent in France within the framework of family language policy, on whom no study has hitherto been carried out. Returning to the questions posed at the beginning of the study, it is now possible to state that Pakistani informants and students have opted for a value-added verbal repertoire, rather than a value-lost verbal repertoire. The language of the host country, French, on the one hand was privileged in almost all walks of life, such as work and education, and Urdu, on the other hand, was favoured at home and in education by virtue of its social prestige in the country of origin.

Reasons behind the ambivalences in language attitude regarding reporting mother tongue could not be grasped fully due to the fact that questionnaire had its own limitations. Although Agheyisi and Fishman (1970, p. 151) found questionnaire items more useful in language attitude studies, further data collection is required to determine the *real* language attitude and the FLP grounded within the family, as well as to know if the language attitude expressed in the questionnaire illustrates the FLP. Is it a part of FLP that Urdu has been reported as the mother tongue whereas the same respondent speaks in

Punjabi with their parents? The notion of *faux* mother tongue become obvious in such cases for Urdu; nonetheless, with the subsequent generation, Urdu might become the real mother tongue, with which there is a common affiliation of national identity besides its representation of familial values (Ashraf, 2008).

The findings suggest also that, in general, the language attitude has begun to crystallize in favour of Urdu and French, to the detriment of heritage languages like Punjabi or Saraiki for the informants and their children. The Punjabi language seems to lose its vitality, particularly with the third generation. This result corroborates many other studies on the attitude towards Punjabi in Pakistan and elsewhere. In this particular study, the FLP is the locus for ideological reproductions mirroring the political hegemony of state apparatus, foregrounding Urdu and French, in most cases, and in only one case, Punjabi appeared to have been privileged. Further studies directed at the relevance of language attitudes and their degree of influence on the FLP should be explored in order to understand the prevalence of multilingual repertoire and comprehend the language attitudes of Pakistanis in France.

#### Note

<sup>1</sup> Hailing from North India, my cultural and linguistic traits could be similar to those of many Pakistanis who live in big cities, like Karachi or Lahore where, post-1947, many Indian Muslims migrated and settled under the partition programme of British India into India and Pakistan.

<sup>2</sup> The student in the field and myself may have been perceived as representatives of the Urdu language in the eyes of the informant, though in reality, we were not.

<sup>3</sup> It would be hard to ignore the significant role played by Urdu literature, particularly poetry in the freedom struggle in order to mobilise people against British imperialism, and it strived to bring about reforms in the society (see Narang, 2023, in press). Other scholarship focussing on Muslim intellectuals shaping the literature of Urdu poetry in the British India context provides some marked evidence of the way Urdu emerged as linguistic capital (See Mahmudabad, 2020).

<sup>4</sup> King (2001, p. 55) writes, «British officials were in agreement that Urdu or, as they had begun to call it, Hindustani should become the *lingua franca* of all India, at least of north India». Multiple other sources have evidenced that the popularity of Urdu as *lingua franca* was on the rise in the area which was going to become Pakistan (see Government of the Punjab, 1851 and Chaudhry, 1977).

<sup>5</sup> For full discussion on the Punjabi language, its vitality, perception and ideologies of the State in Pakistan, see the doctoral dissertation by Asher John (2015). Contrary to many beliefs relying mostly on urban population, John ascertained that the Punjabi language holds a certain amount of privilege and solidarity among the rural population.

<sup>6</sup> It is difficult to find the precise numbers regarding the Pakistani immigrant population in France; however, according to one source, 14% of Pakistani immigrants in Europe have never received any formal education (Ahmed, 2017).

<sup>7</sup> No formal research inquiry has been conducted on my Urdu students. For over seven years, I have come to know about their linguistic and cultural trajectory through Urdu courses offered based on spoken classes in which they are invited to shed light on their language practices, attitudes and competencies within the family and outside the household. Survey related to INALCO Urdu students dwell on some regular feedbacks which were observed.

<sup>8</sup> Personal meeting with a Pakistani-origin doctoral student on 5th July 2022. He narrated his language biography born to Punjabi speaking parents who had similar language beliefs of negative attitude regarding Punjabi and spoke in Urdu with him. When he grew up and realised that Urdu was his *faux* mother tongue, he started learning Punjabi in order to speak the language with his parents, who, later were resentful that their children learnt an unworthy language and continued to speak with him in Urdu. Nevertheless, his grand-parents were elated to communicate with him in Punjabi.

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### **Sitography**

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