

Language Attitudes and Ideologies: A Critical Review with Reference to Dogri

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Abstract: *This paper critically examines language attitudes and ideologies with specific reference to Dogri, a regional Indo-Aryan language of Jammu and Kashmir, India. While Dogri enjoys constitutional recognition as one of India's scheduled languages, it continues to face marginalization in education, administration, and media. The study argues that this paradox, i.e., official recognition alongside social neglect - stems from deeply rooted language ideologies that equate English and Hindi with progress, prestige, and upward mobility, while relegating Dogri to the sphere of cultural tradition and domestic use. Drawing upon theoretical insights from Fishman (1972), Woolard & Schieffelin (1994), and Bourdieu (1991), the paper situates Dogri within a multilingual ecology where linguistic hierarchies and institutional structures shape speakers' perceptions and usage patterns. It further highlights how educational marginalization, media invisibility, and aspirational attitudes collectively produce negative or ambivalent orientations toward Dogri. A critical review of previous studies on language use and preference reveals that these attitudes are not merely individual choices but manifestations of broader sociopolitical ideologies. The paper concludes that revitalizing Dogri requires not only policy reforms but also an ideological reorientation-where speakers revalue their mother tongue as a symbol of identity, heritage, and cultural modernity.*

Keywords: Language attitudes; Language ideologies; Dogri; Multilingualism; Language shift; Linguistic prestige; Sociolinguistics; Identity

1. Introduction

The literature on language attitudes has highlighted their role in shaping maintenance or shift (Baker, 1992). However, attitudes are not merely reflections of "opinions"; they are products of language ideologies embedded in power structures. Edwards (1994) remarks that positive attitudes are crucial for vitality, but such attitudes must be situated in relation to socio-political pressures. For Dogri, the tension between its regional status and the dominance of Hindi and English demonstrates how attitudes are mediated by aspirations for mobility and prestige.

While surveys of language attitudes are valuable, they risk reducing complex ideological negotiations into simple positive-negative binaries. A critical approach suggests examining how attitudes are produced through education, media, and state policy, and how these discourses promote or constrain the visibility of Dogri in public life.

The case of Dogri exhibits the limits of classical diglossic frameworks. Instead of a stable high/low functional split, Dogri exists within a precarious ecology where usage, preference, and attitudes are fluid, contingent, and politically charged. Theoretical models must therefore be recalibrated to account for these dynamics. Dogri speakers' shifting preferences reflect not only communicative needs but also symbolic struggles over identity, recognition, and survival.

Section 2 outlines the existing ideas, practices, and patterns of language use and preference within the sociocultural structures of the Dogri-speaking community. This discussion re-examines how linguistic choices are shaped by social hierarchies, domains of use, and identity

negotiations, thereby offering a critical rethinking of language use and preference in the Dogri context. Section 3 examines language attitudes and ideologies surrounding Dogri, identifying the interrelated sociolinguistic, cultural, and institutional factors that have contributed to negative or indifferent perceptions of the language. These attitudes, despite Dogri's recognition as one of the scheduled languages of India, have significantly influenced its declining vitality and gradual shift toward endangerment. Section 4 provides a brief generalization of the findings, situating them within broader theoretical frameworks of language maintenance and shift. Finally, Section 5 concludes the paper by summarizing the key insights and proposing possible directions for the preservation and revitalization of Dogri.

2. Language Use and Preference

It is a well-established fact that research on language use and preference demonstrates that sociolinguistic patterns are shaped by multiple interrelated factors, including domains of use, language proficiency, dominance of particular languages, gender, psychological orientations, geographical contexts, and conversational topics.

In sociolinguistic studies, there are several key factors influencing patterns of language use and preference. The concept of domain refers to the specific social or situational contexts in which languages are used, such as the home, workplace, school, or religious settings. Each domain finds out the appropriateness of a particular language, as observed by Fishman (1972), who stressed that individuals often associate certain languages with specific spheres of life. And, proficiency, as explained by Fasold (1990), indicates the level of fluency or competence a speaker

possesses in one or more languages; speakers with equal proficiency in multiple languages can alternate between them depending on social context and communicative needs.

The term dominant language exposes a language that enjoys higher prestige, broader social power, and official status within a multilingual society. Pillai (2006) and Managan (2004) highlight that dominant languages- such as English and Hindi in India- are often linked to education, administration, and economic mobility. Here, gender also plays an important role in shaping language use. Harris (2006) and Bayer (1986) found that men and women may differ in language behavior due to differences in social exposure and traditional roles; for example, men's greater participation in public life often results in higher use of dominant languages, while women may help preserve the mother tongue through home interactions.

Moreover, psychological factors such as attitudes, identity, and emotional attachment significantly influence language choice. Lawson (2004) thoroughly observed that speakers' decisions about which language to use often depend on how they perceive their identity and the prestige associated with a language. To give an additional point, geographical factors, as noted by Steinberg (2010), include urbanization, migration, and mobility, all of which affect language maintenance and shift- speakers moving from rural to urban areas may take on more dominant languages like Hindi or English. Finally, topics of conversation can also determine language selection. Captivatingly, Fishman (2000) and Lawson & Sachdev (2004) found that some subjects are better expressed in one language than another; for instance, people might use their mother tongue to discuss family or religious matters but switch to English for academic or professional topics.

Taken together, these factors- domains of use, language proficiency, dominance of particular languages, gender, psychological and geographical influences, and conversational topics- interact in dynamic and intricate ways to shape the multilingual patterns of language use and preference observed among Dogri speakers.

It is known that Labov's (1960s) pioneering work laid the foundation for studying real-life language use. Also, Turner and Brightbill (2007) found that Dogri is largely used in home and village settings but less by educated youth. Singh (2003) and Gupta (2014) observed that while Dogri dominates daily speech in Jammu, its presence in education and media is limited. Koul and Schmidt (1983) and Bano (2000) showed that Kashmiri speakers exhibit high bilingualism, using Urdu and English in formal domains. In the same way, Qamary (2006) and Rao & Sharma (1989) found that English and Hindi dominate education and administration, while mother tongues persist in informal and religious contexts. Overall, across studies (Fishman, 1972; Fasold, 1990; Holmes, 2008), language choice reflects social function, prestige, and emotional attachment, with English preferred for advancement and mother tongues reserved for identity and culture.

3. Language Attitudes and Ideologies

It is well-known that the study of language attitudes traditionally scrutinized speakers' evaluations of languages- whether they are seen as "beautiful," "useful," "prestigious," or "backward" (Baker, 1992; Edwards, 1994). Such research often relied on surveys, matched-guise techniques, and interviews to quantify attitudes and predict language maintenance or shift.

However, attitudes cannot be reduced to individual opinions. As Woolard and Schieffelin (1994) argue, language attitudes are better understood as language ideologies- socially constructed beliefs about language that reflect and reproduce power structures. For example, the widespread idea in India that English is "modern" and "global," while regional languages are "parochial" or "backward," is not a mere opinion but an ideological construct shaped by colonial history, education policy, and globalization.

It is obvious that every society develops its own attitudes toward the varieties and dialects of language used within it. In multilingual speech communities, languages are often classified according to their population of speakers, domains of use, and functional hierarchy- for instance, as local, national, regional, official, or lingua franca (Fishman, 1972). The social perception of a language directly determines the functions assigned to it and the prestige attached to its speakers.

Language attitudes can be positive or negative, depending on how communities identify and value specific languages. A positive attitude enhances language use and maintenance, while a negative one leads to resistance and eventual decline (Crystal, 1997; Holmes, 2008). As Crystal (1997) notes, language attitudes reflect how people feel about a language- whether they consider it beautiful, rich, or inferior.

3.1 Historical and Theoretical Background

It is generally acknowledged that research on language attitudes began in the early twentieth century, most notably with Thomas Hatherley Pear's pioneering studies in the 1930s on how voice can convey social and personality attributes. Later, Fishman (1972) contributed foundational theories on language choice and attitude in multilingual societies. Baker (1992) and Gardner & Lambert (1972) distinguish between integrative attitudes (learning a language to belong to a cultural group) and instrumental attitudes (learning for social or economic benefits).

3.1.1 Language Attitudes in Multilingual Contexts

Holmes (2008, as cited in Dweik, 2015) emphasized that languages are socially categorized as elegant, polite, vulgar, or musical, shaping speakers' emotional responses and preferences. Studies such as Agbalu (2016) and Thomas (2020) show that multilingual speakers' attitudes are influenced by identity, education, and social mobility. For example, Moroccan students display a shift from French to English due to global prestige, while retaining cultural respect for Arabic and Amazigh.

Similarly, Huwari (2021) reported that Jordanian students exhibit moderate to positive attitudes towards English, with female students showing higher enthusiasm. Tamir (2020) found that the Berta community values Arabic for religious and educational functions while maintaining pride in their ethnic language, indicating bilingual identity balance.

3.2 Language Attitudes in South Asian Contexts

In the Indian context, Bano (2000) found that the Kashmiri community generally holds positive attitudes toward Kashmiri, Urdu, and English, although educated males show weaker attachment to the mother tongue. Again, Qamary (2006) observed similar trends among minority speakers in Jharkhand- Hindi and English dominate functional domains, while younger speakers show declining attachment to their native languages.

Earlier, Rao & Sharma (1989) reported that in Mauritius, Telugu and Bhojpuri communities displayed differing attitudes toward Creole, revealing historical and identity-based resistance. Similarly, Dua (1986) and Bayer (1986a, 1986b) documented strong prestige-based attachment to English among Anglo-Indians and Tamil groups in Bangalore, associating it with education and economic opportunity rather than emotional identity.

3.2.1 Cross-Regional Observations

Various studies in African and Arab contexts (Ennaji, 2005; Mugaddam, 2005; Sokarno, 2007) further confirm that positive attitudes lead to greater use and maintenance of languages, while negative or neutral attitudes contribute to language shift. For instance, Nubians value Arabic for religious purposes but cherish Nubian as a symbol of cultural identity (Sokarno, 2007).

3.3 A Summary on Attitude toward a language in multilingual Societies

It is a well-established fact that attitudes toward language play a crucial role in multilingual societies, influencing which languages continue to flourish and which fall into decline (Sadanand, 1993; Dweik, 2000). When speakers associate prestige, opportunity, or identity with a language, they tend to use and transmit it more frequently. Conversely, languages perceived as less useful or low in status face gradual functional reduction and intergenerational loss.

3.4 A Preliminary Concluding Remark

The reviewed studies collectively reveal that language use, preference, and attitude are influenced by multiple sociolinguistic factors such as- domain, proficiency, dominance, gender, psychology, geography, and topic. And, dominant languages such as English and Hindi are linked with education, administration, and mobility, while mother tongues retain value in cultural and familial contexts. Positive attitudes enhance language vitality, whereas negative ones accelerate language shift and endangerment. Ultimately, the interaction of identity, prestige, and utility defines the dynamic landscape of multilingual societies and the survival of minority languages.

4. Towards a generalization on Language Attitudes and Ideologies surrounding Dogri

In the case of Dogri, language attitudes reveal a deep ambivalence. Although many speakers express pride in Dogri as a marker of cultural and linguistic heritage, there is a marked tendency to shift toward Hindi or English in formal, educational, and aspirational domains. This ambivalence reflects the tension between identity-based positive attitudes and mobility-driven negative evaluations, a pattern common in minority and regional languages worldwide (Fishman, 1991).

The underlying idea is that a critical approach to attitudes requires moving beyond survey data to examine how policy, media, and education shape speakers' perceptions of Dogri. One can generally observe that the underrepresentation of Dogri in schools, official institutions, and mass media perpetuates the notion that it is less valuable than Hindi or English, even as it is celebrated in cultural festivals and literature.

It is well understood that language attitudes play a central role in shaping the vitality and survival of any speech community's linguistic heritage. In the case of Dogri, negative or indifferent attitudes toward the language have significantly contributed to its endangered status, despite its recognition as one of the scheduled languages of India. From a sociolinguistic perspective, I aim to outline several interrelated factors that help explain this situation.

1) Multilingual Ecology and Language Hierarchies

Dogri exists within a multilingual society where Hindi, Kashmiri, Punjabi, Urdu, and English enjoy functional dominance in various spheres. According to sociolinguistic theories of diglossia and domain analysis (Fishman, 1967), languages survive when they are maintained across multiple social domains- family, education, administration, religion, and media. Dogri, however, is largely confined to home and informal settings, while prestige languages (Hindi, Urdu, and especially English) dominate in education, governance, and media. This unequal distribution creates an implicit attitude that Dogri is a "low-function" or "non-prestigious" language.

2) Educational Marginalization

We all know that language attitudes are strongly shaped by the schooling experience. In this case, Dogri has no place as a mother tongue at the primary level, nor is it available as a medium of instruction. Instead, English and Hindi dominate, leading children and parents alike to perceive Dogri as irrelevant to socioeconomic mobility.

Sociolinguistically, this represents a case of language shift through institutional neglect, where younger generations internalize the idea that their heritage language has little instrumental value.

3) Higher Education and Elite Domains

In higher education, English controls the role of academic discourse. This creates what Bourdieu calls linguistic capital- where only English offers access to prestige, power, and employment. Dogri, in contrast, is excluded from

higher knowledge production, reinforcing community attitudes that it belongs only to “folk” or “cultural” domains rather than serious intellectual use.

4) Administrative and Official Neglect

Despite being recognized in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution, Dogri remains largely absent from administrative functions. Official documents, legal discourse, and bureaucratic procedures are all overwhelmingly conducted in English, Hindi, or Urdu. This absence delegitimizes Dogri’s status in the eyes of its own speakers, contributing to a language ideology that associates Dogri with backwardness and lack of modernity.

5) Media and Popular Culture

The language of entertainment such as- film, television, and digital platforms- rarely incorporates Dogri. The dominance of Hindi and Punjabi in popular media further marginalizes Dogri in everyday cultural consumption.

Sociolinguistically, this results in prestige borrowing, where younger speakers go behind the glamorous languages of media rather than their mother tongue.

6) English-Medium Schooling and Aspirational Attitudes

It is a fact that the rapid spread of English-medium schools strengthens a shift in attitudes. English becomes associated with progress, sophistication, and upward mobility, while Dogri is dismissed as a non-modern, rural language. This aligns with the global phenomenon of linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1992), where English is valorized at the cost of indigenous languages.

Keeping the above factors in place, from a sociolinguistic perspective, the attitudes toward Dogri are shaped by structural inequalities, educational policies, and media dominance, all of which create a hierarchy where English and Hindi enjoy prestige, while Dogri is devalued. This negative perception fosters a gradual language shift, particularly among the youth, thereby endangering the vitality of Dogri. Reversing this trend would require not only policy-level interventions (e.g., Dogri in education and administration) but also a shift in community attitudes, where speakers begin to value their mother tongue as a symbol of identity, heritage, and cultural pride.

A Generalization

The situation of Dogri highlights a broader sociolinguistic reality in multilingual contexts: when a language lacks institutional recognition and is thereby excluded from domains such as education, administration, and media, it becomes vulnerable to negative community attitudes and gradual displacement. In the case of Dogri, the dominance of Hindi, Urdu, and especially English has constructed a hierarchy of prestige in which Dogri is relegated to informal, home-based use. This has led younger generations to perceive their mother tongue as socially and economically irrelevant, while viewing other languages as more valuable for mobility and success. Such attitudes are not unique to Dogri but reflect a global phenomenon where minority and regional languages are endangered due to

educational neglect, policy marginalization, and the symbolic power of dominant languages.

At the same time, sociolinguistic research shows that positive language attitudes can serve as a powerful tool for revitalization. If Dogri is promoted as a marker of identity, heritage, and cultural pride- supported by its inclusion in schooling, media, and administration- speakers may begin to revalue their mother tongue. Thus, the future of Dogri depends not only on policy measures but also on a shift in community attitudes toward embracing the language as both a cultural resource and a vehicle of modern expression.

5. Conclusion

The analysis reveals that the vitality of Dogri is deeply tied to the ideological structures and attitudes surrounding it. Despite constitutional recognition, Dogri’s limited presence in education, administration, and media has cultivated an implicit belief that it is less valuable than Hindi or English. Such ideologies which are rooted in colonial legacies and perpetuated by globalization and educational systems have fostered a collective ambivalence among Dogri speakers. It results in what Fishman (1991) terms “domain contraction,” where the language retreats to informal and domestic spaces, losing prestige and intergenerational transmission. However, the same sociolinguistic processes that have marginalized Dogri can also serve as avenues for revitalization. Language attitudes, being socially constructed, are not immutable. A positive ideological shift through inclusion of Dogri in schools, regional media, and digital spaces can reshape perceptions of its value and function. And revitalization efforts must therefore move beyond symbolic recognition to active empowerment, where Dogri is not only a marker of ethnic identity but also a language of intellect, creativity, and modern expression. In essence, the future of Dogri depends as much on changing community attitudes as on institutional support. Only when its speakers begin to perceive their language as a source of pride and social capital, rather than a hindrance to progress, can Dogri reclaim its rightful place in the linguistic landscape of contemporary India. On the other hand, only when speakers view Dogri as both culturally significant and socially empowering can it regain its status as a living, dynamic language.

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