

FINAL PROJECT REPORT

Gender Prestige and code choices: a sociolinguistics study of Punjabi Urdu and English bilinguals



By

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CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that this thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in this research work and the preparation of thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signature of Candidate

DEDICATION

**To those sublime moments of joy and happiness that emanate from the thought of doing
something original and discovering something new**

ABSTRACT

This study aims at analyzing how the social parameter of gender affects the choices of the codes* among Punjabi, Urdu and English bilinguals in Pakistan. It examines any possible gender difference in the pattern of choices of codes among these bilinguals. It looks at how this gender difference in the tendency and pattern of code choices is related with the speaker's gender and the social status and prestige of the language. In a bid to verify the existence of what Fasold refers as 'the sociolinguistic gender pattern' (92), and what Labov considers 'the first principal of sexual differentiation' ("Intersection of Sex" 205), this research answers the question that whether or not men and women tend to use higher-status language in different proportions under the similar social and situational contexts and domains. Causal-comparative research design has been opted for this study. The code choices behavior data was collected from the sample population of 180 students, 90 boys and 90 girls purposely selected from the two campuses of Punjab College, Gujrat. The selected population comprised of young (17-21 years old) Punjabi, Urdu and English bilinguals from male and female 'homogeneous' gender groups. Both the gender groups were homogeneous as during the stage of sampling a Sociolinguistic Questionnaire was used to make sure that both the gender groups were almost similar to each other in their social, psychological, ethnic and linguistic background. The code choice behavior of our selected sample population was studied at two levels, i.e., a) at societal or domain level and b) at the inter-personal level. The code choice behavior data under the similar social and situational situation was measured at societal or domain level by using a Language Behavior Questionnaire. On the other hand, code choices behavior under the influence of internal and personal factors was measured by generating and recording a discussion between 4-5 member friends' groups on a given topic within the same-gender conversation. Our data was qualitatively analyzed to work out the frequencies of code choices both at domain level and interpersonal level. The results verified the existence of sociolinguistic gender-pattern of code choices among Punjabi, Urdu and English bilinguals.

*Code is a widely used term in sociolinguistic research and its meaning ranges from language, dialect, variety to lexis and morphemes. In this study, while discussing language behavior at societal or domain level, I have used the term code to mean language and hence code choice as language choice. Whereas, I have used the term 'code' to mean the lexis and hence 'code choices' as 'lexis choices' for the discussion regarding the corpus analysis of the recorded data.

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CHAPTER 1

PRELIMINARIES

This chapter is a brief overview of the research work. After a brief introduction it states research questions, hypotheses and the objectives of the study (see section 1.2, 1.3 & 1.4). Next section i.e., 1.5, of the study is about the definitions and the use of the terms like ‘gender’ and ‘code’. Section 1.6, is a brief literature review which highlights some of the language and gender research findings relevant to this study. Research design, sampling size and techniques and instruments used for data collection have been discussed in section 1.7. Some of the possible implications of the study have also been discussed in section 1.8 of this chapter. The last section of the study is about the order of the presentation of different chapters in this research work.

1.1 Introduction

This research aims at studying the societal and individual patterns of code (language, dialect or style) choices of Punjabi, Urdu and English bilinguals and any possible correlation between these patterns of code choices and social parameter of gender. The study explores to what extent gender determines the choices of codes made by the bilingual/multilingual speakers of Punjabi, Urdu and English it also examines any possible gender difference in the choices of prestige codes among these bilinguals. The study investigates whether or not men and women tend to use higher-status language in different proportions under the similar social and situational contexts and domains. It looks at how this gender difference in the tendency and pattern of code choices is related with the social status and prestige of the language. The focus of the study is the sample population of 180 young (17-21 years old), Punjabi, Urdu and English bilinguals from male and female gender groups. This study is primarily a quantitative study in which I have used causal comparative research design to unearth the correlation between these patterns of code choices and social parameter of gender. Fasold even refers to this prestige-pattern of language use as ‘the sociolinguistic gender pattern’ (92) and Labov calls it as ‘the first principle of sexual differentiation’ (“Intersection of Sex” 205). To know the code choices made by the multilingual speakers of Punjabi/Urdu and English in different domains, audio recordings and questionnaires

(a general socio-linguistic survey and language behavior questionnaire) has been used. Data collected through these instruments is quantitatively analyzed by using graphs and charts. It is envisaged that, findings about the social patterns of language use by Punjabi, Urdu and English bilinguals will help government to come up with better language planning. This research will also prove helpful in understanding the problem of language shift and language death. At theoretical level, this research may be considered a step towards finding out the origin(s) of gender differences (biological/innate, psychological, or socio-cultural) and its effect on the language use and language shift.

1.2 Research Questions

1. Whether or not gender is a primary determinant of the choices of code (language or constituents of language) made by the bilingual (trilingual) speakers of Punjabi, Urdu and English?
2. Whether or not the gender differentiation in the use of prestige variant exists among the Punjabi, Urdu and English bilinguals.
3. Whether or not women prefer to use prestigious code (language or constituents of a language) more than men?
4. Does 'The sociolinguistic gender pattern' of language use exist among Punjabi, Urdu and English bilinguals (Fasold 92).
5. How in the phenomenon of code choice, certain languages are privileged by their speakers.

1.3 Hypotheses

- H1. Gender is a primary determinant of the choices of code (language, dialect or constituents of a language) made by the bilingual speakers of Punjabi, Urdu and English?

- H2. Gender differentiation in the use of prestige variant exists among the Punjabi, Urdu and English bilinguals.
- H3. Among Punjabi, Urdu and English bilinguals, women will use prestigious code (language and constituents of a language) more frequently than men.
- H4. ‘The sociolinguistic gender pattern’ of language use exists among Punjabi, Urdu and English bilinguals (Fasold 92).
- H5. “In stable sociolinguistic stratification, men use a higher frequency of non-standard forms than women” (Labov, “Intersection of Sex” 205).

I.4 Objectives

This study aims at:

1. Examining to what extent gender determines the choices of code made by the multilingual speakers of Punjabi/Urdu and English languages.
2. Exploring any association between the social status of a language or language variants and the gender difference of the code choices.
3. Investigating the code choices phenomenon with a view to determining what social and educational implications of this trend are.
4. Studying the impact of globalization on the languages of Pakistan.

1.5 Issues of Defining Terms

This section of the study is about the definitions the terms like ‘gender’ and ‘code’. It also explains how these terms have been used for the current study.

1.5.1 Gender

In this study, for some methodological considerations, I have used the word ‘gender’ instead of ‘sex’. ‘Sex’ is a word which points to the visible physical differences between male

and female. On the other hand, gender is a matter of culture. A few decades ago gender and language researches aimed at formulating generalization for gender-based linguistic differences and tried to work out some universal gender pattern of language use. But in these studies, any differentiation between gender and sex was not considered necessary. In recent times, most of the sociolinguists believe that more attention should be paid to the social construction of gender which may vary from culture to culture. Now-a-days, most of the researchers deem it necessary to treat the social and cultural construct of gender differently from the biological term sex. For this study, I have opted for the constructionist view of gender which emphasizes the distinctive and overlapping social identities that men and women bear. From this perspective, I had to study gender locally which this study primarily aims at.

1.5.2 Code

Wardhaugh favours the use of term ‘code’ instead of language variety or dialect (87). He is of the view that unlike the terms; language, dialect, style, standard language, pidgin and creole, it is ‘neutral’ and does not arouse emotions. He explains that code is a neutral term and can be used to refer to ‘any kind of system that two or more people use for communication’ (Wardhaugh 87). This loose definition of code says that a code is a ‘sign system’ and using it to refer to language means that language is a system of signs like phonemes, morphemes, lexis etc., because all of them can be used for communication. In this research, I have narrowed down Wardhaugh’s loose definition of code and employed the term code to refer to the choices of languages at macro level and the choices of the language constituents (i.e., lexis in our study) at micro level. In other words, in this study, while discussing language behavior at societal or domain level, I have used the term ‘code’ to mean ‘language’ and hence ‘code choice’ as ‘language choice’. Whereas, I have used the term ‘code’ to mean the ‘lexis’ and hence ‘code choices’ as ‘lexis choices’ for the discussion regarding the corpus analysis of the recorded data. Thus, using the word ‘code’ in this narrow sense, the term ‘code choices’ is a super-ordinate or a cover term; at macro level it refers to the selection of different languages and at micro level it also refers to the selection and mixing of the language constituents or lexis in the same matrix language (see section 4.7.5).

1.6 Gender, Prestige and Language

This section briefly presents and discusses the gender and language researches to highlight the gender differentiation for the use of prestige variants.

1.6.1 Language and Gender Studies

There is a long list of researchers who have noticed gender differences of language use at phonological, lexical, grammatical, pragmatic and semantic level. Some of these researchers who have in one study or the other reported or made mention of language use differences between men and women include; Cheshire 423-43; Coates and Cameron 74-93; Abu-Haidar 471-81; Russell; Cameron; Coates; Tannen; Salami; Smith; Imam.

Another very important gender difference, which is now considered as a law (Labov, “Intersection of Sex” 205) is the gender difference in the use of standard or prestige forms or language variants. Fasold is also of the opinion that various studies have shown that women tend to avoid socially disfavoured variants in favour of socially more favoured variants (92). Labov (“Social Stratification” 64-73) in New York and later, Trudgill (“Social Differentiation” 117) in Norwich studied different sounds and found that irrespective of the other social factors such as social class, age and ethnic group, women consistently use forms which more closely approach those of the standard variety or the prestige accent than those used by men. Different researchers like, Macaulay 132-43; Shuy 849-57; Wolfram 91-92, have also showed while men correspond to vernacular norms, women stand for the standard norms.

In one of his article, Intersection of Sex, Labov comments, ‘Among the clearest and most consistent results of sociolinguistic research in the speech community are the findings concerning the linguistic differentiation of men and women’ (205). He continues and gives following principle to explain the role of gender differentiation in the process of linguistic change.

- I) In stable sociolinguistic stratification, men use a higher frequency of non-standard forms than women.

I a) In change from above, women favour the incoming prestige form more than men.

In Pakistan no serious research has been conducted to explore this ‘sociolinguistic gender pattern’ of language use. In this regard, only mentionable work is by Sabiha Mansoor. Mansoor in her book ‘Punjabi, Urdu, English in Pakistan: A Sociolinguistic Study’ has also found a similar pattern of language use among men and women. According to her findings, women from Punjabi, Urdu and English speaking communities are more likely to use prestige varieties in formal and informal domains. These women have also shown more positive attitudes than men towards prestige varieties Urdu and English. There is not only the gender difference in the use of prestige forms rather, a gender difference in the attitudes towards standard language forms has also been found by Mansoor. Her study is commendable for various reasons but owing to some methodological problems, discussed in the next chapter i.e., literature review (section 2.16.1.3), her study falls short of enlightening us clearly about the pattern of language use at societal level among Punjabi, Urdu and English bilinguals.

1.6.2 Macro and Micro Level Study

Code choices behavior perhaps can be best explained, by following two distinct but complementary approaches i.e., macro-analyses approach and micro-analysis approach. Few decades ago, most of the researchers like Fishman and Ferguson in their respective works “Domains and the Relationship between Micro and Macro-Sociolinguistics” and “Diglossia” respectively, made a detailed study of speech communities at macro i.e., domain level. They used survey interviews and recordings to study groups and language use patterns and tried to establish correlation between dialectical variations in a speech community with social and situational variables. ‘Domain’ and ‘binary-choice’ normative models that Fishman or Ferguson’s findings propose together make up an ‘allocation paradigm’ (Scotton, Social Motivations 49). But later on, it was discovered that owing to the dynamic nature of the some sociological variables like power and solidarity, micro analysis is also important to study the speech choices and dialectical variation in a speech community. According to Scotton (Social Motivations 55), Gumperz was the first who proposed an ‘interactional/interpretative paradigm’ and took ‘linguistic choices as dynamic events’. That is, not only the situational factors influence the speech choices but some dynamic factors also play their part in affecting the speech choices.

Hence, to study the language or code choices it is vital to consider these dynamic factors also, as the contributing factors of language or code choices (see ch. Methodology and Data Collection, section 4.5). Summing up, there are two paradigms i.e., allocation paradigm and interactional/interpretative paradigm, which can be used to explain the language choice behavior of a speech community.

To answer our primary research question that whether or not women use prestigious variety or language variant more than men, I had to study the pattern of language use both at macro and micro level. Macro level study of language or code choices behavior within Punjabi, Urdu and English speech community, helped me to identify the patterns of language and code choices at societal level. On the other hand, micro level study was of great help to unearth the code choice behavior of the Punjabi, Urdu and English bilinguals at inter-personal level. In other words, I have used both the allocation paradigm and interactional paradigm (see ch. Literature Review, section 2.18). Allocation paradigm has helped us to work out the language choice pattern at societal level and interactional paradigm has helped us in explaining to what extent speaker's choices of codes or alteration of codes within same interaction work in the construction of gendered identities through discourse.

1.7 Research Methodology

This is a quantitative research. I have used causal comparative research design for the study to explore the correlation between gender and the use of prestige code choices (see ch. Methodology and Data Collection, section 4.2). The data collected through questionnaires and recordings of group conversations has been worked out numerically with the help of charts and graphs for the verification of our hypotheses that women make more use of prestigious code/s than men do (see ch. Data Analysis).

1.7.1 Research Design

This is a descriptive study and I have used causal-comparative research design for exploring any possible relation between gender (independent variable) and choices of prestige codes (dependent variable). Though this research design, unlike experimental research design,

cannot prove any relationship between gender and the choices of prestige codes, yet it is hoped that it has descriptively enlightened us more about the relationship between these two variables.

1.7.2 Sampling

In this study I have used convenient sampling design. The focus of the study are 180 young (17-21 years old), intermediate students, 50 percent male and 50 percent female, drawn from two Punjab College Campuses for boys and girls.

1.7.3 Instruments

Following instruments are used to collect data

1.7.3.1 Questionnaires

Two written questionnaires: a) general socio-linguistic questionnaire and b) another language behavior questionnaire are used for the data collection (see Appendix, I & II).

b) The Sociolinguistic Questionnaire

This questionnaire is a general socio-linguistic survey. It focuses on students' social class (working, middle and upper, based on family income and parents' occupation), geographic origin (Immigrant or native) and on feelings of identification with the language communities (Punjabi, Urdu and English).

c) Language-behavior questionnaire

This Questionnaire is administered to indirectly elicit the code choice data, by asking students to opt for their possible choice of code for different contexts (e.g. asking for time at a family meal, attending the phone call, buying a car, talking to a stranger in the street).

1.7.3.2 Audio Recording

Recorded conversations are used to find out the percentage use of prestige code choices made by the bilingual speakers. The recorded conversations are written down and percentage

occurrences of the variation in the choices of prestige codes (i.e., lexis) by each respondents is calculated for both the groups i.e., male and female (see ch. Data Analysis, section 5.1).

1.8 Implications of the study

This study describes the patterns of Punjabi, Urdu and English language use at societal level. In this way, it can provide a guideline to the education policy making bodies to revise or reconsider language programmes according to the findings of the study. This research also throws light on the issue of language shift at societal level in Punjab. This study will also be of some help for the researchers interested in language variation to understand the factors that can influence the linguistic behavior of the Punjabi, Urdu and English speakers.

At methodological level, the integration of macro-level and micro-level analysis and the treatment of gender through the use of causal-comparative research design can be regarded as an original contribution of the study. At theoretical level, this research may be considered a step towards finding out the origin(s) of gender difference (biological/innate, psychological, or socio-cultural) and its effect on the communication and L2 learning.

Marilyn Sternglass and Dawn Rodrigues state, “Learning the other's ways of talking is a leap across the communication gap between men and women, and a giant step towards genuine understanding” (102). This research will try to explain the gender differences in the use of language among the bilingual speakers. Comprehension about this type of gender difference will help us to find out the causes of communication problems in cross-gender conversations.

This study also has pedagogical implications for ESL classrooms. Pakistan, where co-education is not in practice at some educational levels and where students have a low competence in English, we can exploit this gender difference of code-switching for the effective language learning. The research will also have the pedagogical implication for the communicative classroom teaching.

1.9 Chapters of the Study

This thesis has six chapters. This first chapter gives a brief overview of the thesis that set ups the objectives, research questions, hypotheses, methodology and the background of the study. Chapter 2, Literature Review, discusses the language and gender research. This chapter supports the premise that gender differentiation in the use of prestige linguistic behavior has been found in many societies. Chapter 3 is labeled as ‘Theoretical and Methodological Preliminaries’. Accordingly, it discusses the methodological issues regarding the research with special focus on the integration of allocation and interpretative paradigms for the study of code choices behavior. This chapter lays the foundation for the Chapter 4, i.e. Methodology and Data Collection. This chapter discusses the research design, variables, sampling techniques, instruments and different steps involved in the process of data collection. Chapter 5, Data Analysis, is about the analysis of the collected data. It highlights the research findings with the help of stalked-graph and pie-charts. The findings of the study support the primary hypothesis that gender differentiation in the use of prestige codes exists among the Punjabi, Urdu and English bilinguals. Chapter 6, the last chapter of the study, is a brief conclusion of the study. It also highlights some theoretical and practical implications of the study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter is a review of the literature. It begins with the discussion on the use of terms like ‘gender’ and ‘sex’ (see section 2.1 & 2.2). Afterwards it explains how gender being a social construct is influenced by a society and how this social influence affects the linguistic behavior of the members of a society (see section 2.3 & 2.4). An overview of the early and the recent gender and language studies have been given in the section 2.5. The next section is about the research findings about the gender differentiation in the use of prestige variants. Principles of gender differentiation proposed by Labov have been critically discussed in section 2.7 and 2.8. The code choices behavior of multilingual societies, with special focus on the Punjabi, Urdu and English bilinguals, has been discussed in section 2.9 and 2.10. Before the discussion on the methodological issues in the next chapter, it was imperative to explain the use of the terms like ‘code’, ‘code choices’ and ‘bilingualism’ for this research. These terms have been defined and discussed in section 2.12 and 1.13.

2.1 Gender or Sex

Usually, a layman considers sex and gender as two words describing the same thing. Though sex and gender are not synonymous terms, yet they are linked with each other in an interesting way. We, quite often hear, people using words like boy, girl, man, and woman to describe themselves. This kind of description is based on their biological sex. However, the information given by these words tells us more than one’s anatomy. Words like boy, girl, man and woman, also conjures up a configuration of personality traits and behavior patterns in the mind of a listener. In other words, if you are a woman, people will expect you to be passive, submissive, dependent, timid, shy, weak, emotional and preoccupied with appearance. If you are a man, people will expect you to be assertive, aggressive, independent, brave, bold, ambitious and active.