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**Language Attitude of Hindi-Urdu Speakers in Patiali**  
**A Perspective**

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**Abstract**

Present paper deals with the language attitude of Hindi-Urdu speakers in a small town called Patiali of Etah District. In this paper an attempt has been made to throw some light on various definitions of language attitude propounded by different scholars from time to time. It also looks into ethnic perception of Hindi-Urdu speakers of Patiali town and its findings. In this paper study has been attempted throughout the general perception of Hindi-Urdu speakers and the attitude towards the linguistic reality about these speakers. The objective of this study is to discover, analyze, and describe the relation between the linguistic majority-minority populations, and demonstrate, among other things, that the linguistic relation continually evolves and, in reality, is relative to the socio-political and economic conditions.

**Introduction**

***Demography of Etah District***

Hindi and Urdu are speech forms spoken in Patiali town of Etah district. Etah is a district of Agra Division of Uttar Pradesh and is bounded on the north by the Badaun district, on the west by district of Aligarh, Hathras, Mathura and Agra, on the south by Mainpuri and Firozabad, on the east by Farrukhabad. The district has 18 blocks. The total land area of the district is 4446

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sq.kms. The population of Etah district is about 22,44,998. The district has a population density of 627 persons per sq. km., which is low as compared to 689 of the state. The annual exponential growth rate of the district during 1991-2001 is 2.17 percent, which is lower than that of the state 2.29 percent. About 17.34 percent of the population of the district lives in urban areas in contrast to 20.78 percent in the state. The sex ratio of the district is 847 females per 1000 males, which is lower than that of the state average of 898. The Schedule caste population is much lower 17.3 percent than the state's percentage of 21 percent. (Census of India, 2001)

### ***The Patiali Town***

The district is known for Patiali, a small town which is the place where Khusro was born in 1253. Ameer Khusro served as an ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity in his time. His Hindu or Hindwi poetry is popular among the school-going children as well as adults. In his introduction to Ghurrat-ul-Kamal, Khusro writes, "A few poems that I have composed in Hindwi, I have made a gift of them to my friends. I am a Hindustani Turk. I compose verses in Hindwi with the fluency of running water." He called himself *Tuti-e-Hind* (a parrot of India). 'To speak the truth, I am an Indian Parrot. If you want to listen from me some subtle verses, ask me then to recite some of my Hindwi poems'. He himself did not collect and preserve his Hindwi poems but made a gift of them to his friends. His poem, Khaliq Bari is a lexicon composed of synonymous words, from four languages, Arabic, Persian, Turkish and Hindwi.

### **1.2. Purpose of the Present Study**

The purpose of the present study is to review the ethnic perception and linguistic reality about Hindi and Urdu speakers by means of a rapid appraisal of the sociolinguistic situation in the area. More broadly, the goal of the study is to discover, analyze, and describe the relation between the linguistic majority-minority populations, and demonstrate, among other things, that the linguistic relation continually evolves and, in reality, is relative to the socio-political and economic conditions. In addition, the recent processes of globalization, focus on English education, zest for jobs abroad, and the growth of a vast middle class spanning across ethnic and linguistic boundaries are also discussed. Because of the apparent linguistic similarity of Hindi, Urdu and Hindustani, there was special interest in assessing each speech community's comprehension and attitude towards the other speech forms.

### **2. Methods and Procedures**

The present study based solely on data collection and participant observation was done by using a recently developed approach known as "rapid appraisal". This approach is characterized by its limited goals (to gain a general overview of the sociolinguistic situation in a particular area) and specific, non-technical procedures (usually limited to conversations with politico-administrative authorities), informal interviews, group and individual questionnaires. Other information, such as additional linguistic data (where this is lacking), or felt needs for development, may also be collected if time allows and as this information is seen to be helpful.

Using these procedures with a focused set of objectives, study goals can be met in a short time, usually less than a week. Such was the case for the present study, in which sufficient data was collected in less than one week.

The investigators pursued their research with three aspects of the sociolinguistic situation in mind. These are:

- The dialect situation, the level of comprehension of related speech forms and the reason for this comprehension, and the degree of feeling of solidarity with the people who speak them.
- The extent of familiarity with languages of wider communication (LWCs), especially Hindi-Urdu, and the attitudes toward this LWCs. Language of wider communication.
- The feasibility of a language development project in the local language, as revealed in overall language attitudes and reported patterns of language use.

For determining how well related languages are understood and whether comprehension is based on inherent intelligibility (due to linguistic similarity) or to language learning (due to contact with speakers of the language), two diagnostic question were used.

- “If you are in that place, what language do you use, what language do they use, and how well do you understand each other”?
- “Can even a young child from this place understand someone from that place? (If not,) How old must the child be?”

### **3. Results and Evaluation**

#### **3.1 Dialect Situation And Linguistic Relationship To Other Speech Forms**

##### **3.1.1 Inter-comprehension among Related Speech Forms**

Within the linguistic boundaries of Patiali, the Hindi Urdu speech forms seem to be homogeneous. However in the survey it is reported that these are the two varieties. The differences seem to be fairly slight and were said to cause no problems for comprehension between the two varieties. It also appears that there are no problems of comprehension between Braj, Hindi and Urdu speakers. This refers to “practical” as opposed to “inherent” inter-comprehension, which is to say that in each case a certain degree of acquisition is required.

However, since contact between these people is quite common, a child of 10 or 12 years of age, generally speaking, is said to be able to understand speakers of the other speech forms. This depends, of course, on the amount of communication an individual has had with people from the other groups, as stated by several of the interviewees themselves. Some said that children as young as 6 to 7, given enough exposure, would have no difficulty understanding the other speech forms, while others said that it might take until a child was 10 years old to attain

sufficient experience. In any case, it seems to be not a question of whether or not an individual would acquire comprehension of the other speech forms, but rather a question of how early in life this would occur.

### ***Hindi Speakers' Use***

In Patiali, forty five people were interviewed. They all said that they would speak Hindi to Urdu speaker, who would reply in Urdu, with no lack of comprehension by either party. When asked what language they would use with a Braj speaker, 44 out of the 45 replied that they would speak Hindi. The Braj speakers would respond in Braj and there would be no difficulty in understanding each other. For some unspecified reason, one interviewee felt that he might need to speak Braj with the Braj speakers, who would then respond in Braj.

### ***Urdu Speakers' Use***

In Patiali, of the forty five people interviewed, 44 reported the familiar pattern of each party using their own mother tongue. This was true with respect to both Hindi and Urdu speakers. Six people said they spoke both Hindi and Urdu well and that they would use those forms when speaking with someone from those speech communities. Another reported that they spoke Hindi well and that they would use Hindi with a Hindi speaker, but that they could not speak Urdu and he would have to use English with an Urdu speaker. However, they would be able to understand if the other party responded in Urdu. The other respondent said he would use Hindustani with someone from either Hindi or Urdu. They would respond in Hindi or Urdu and they would have no trouble in understanding. This might be partially explained by the fact that he has spent 5 of her 20 years in Patiali going to school and he prefers to use Hindustani, even when speaking with her hometown friends.

### ***Braj Speakers' Use***

For the corresponding question in Braj speaking village, 44 out of the 45 respondents reported that each party would use their own 'language', with no reported difficulties in comprehension. One person from the Braj speaking part of Patiali village said that he would use Braj with speakers of Hindi and Urdu, who would respond in their language. This respondent was 24 years old and has lived outside the region for 8 years. In each of these places he spoke mainly Dravidian languages. Particularly interesting is the fact that he also said he would even use Dravidian languages in Patiali which is Hindi-Urdu speaking village.

## **3.1.2. Attitudes of Hindi-Urdu Speakers**

### **Defining Language Attitude**

Learning a language is closely related to the attitudes towards the languages (Starks & Paltridge 1996: 218). In the *Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics* (1992:199) 'language attitudes' are defined as follows:

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“The attitude which speakers of different languages or language varieties have towards each others’ language or to their own language. Expressions of positive or negative feelings towards a language may reflect impressions of linguistic difficulty or simplicity, ease or difficulty of learning, degree of importance, elegance, social status, etc. Attitudes towards a language may also show what people feel about the speakers of that language”.

Wenden (1991) sees attitudes as including three components: First, attitudes tend to have a cognitive component. This could involve beliefs or perceptions about the objects or situations related to the attitude. Second, attitudes have an evaluative component. This means that the objects or situations related to the attitude may generate like or dislike. Third, attitudes have a behavioral component, i.e. certain attitudes tend to prompt learners to adopt particular learning behaviours.

Cheshire stresses that language attitude surveys are important to language planning, teaching and the status of a language in public life generally (Cheshire 1991: 8). In Fasold's view, even the question of one's mother tongue may present the first problem in attitude surveys in multilingual countries: an Indian person's answer to the question can be based on the desire to be associated with a particular language, to appear patriotic, or to show belonging to a local ethnic group (Fasold 1984: 23).

### 3.1.2 (A) Attitudes of Hindi Speakers

The information given here comes from the group interviews as well as from above questions of the questionnaire. In each mohalla, the attitude expressed towards the other two speech forms was quite positive. Seventeen interviewees said they would be willing to learn to read one of the other forms, if it were written instead of their own, while 6 said they would be unwilling to do so.

They were also asked which of the other forms they would prefer if given the choice to learn to **read and write** one or the other of the 18 people who responded to this question, 3 indicated no preference. The remaining 15 were equally split by ethnicity of origin, five from each. Disregarding their own speech form and comparing only preferences concerning the other two forms relative to each other, Hindi received 4 first place preferences and 6 second place. Urdu also received 7 first and 3 second place preferences, while Braj received 4 first place and 6 second place preferences. In this small sample, there seems to be a slight preference for the Hindi form. The responses by religious and ethnic groups are shown in the given below Table:

Table: 1 Preferences of languages in relation to read and write.

Speakers	First Preference R/W	Second Preference R/W	Total
Hindi	4	6	10
Urdu	7	3	10
Braj	4	6	10

It seems that all three speech communities could eventually not be served by one written form as Urdu is written in Perso-Arabic script. It is hoped that the men mentioned in the preceding paragraph can be put into contact with each other to coordinate their efforts or help to form a committee that would interest itself in dealing with these issues.

### 3.1.2 (B) Attitudes of Urdu Speakers

In general, respondents' attitudes to Urdu seemed to be positive, and gave the impression that they considered speaking Urdu to be an essential and inevitable part of modern-day living in the area.

Two questions on the questionnaire were intended to shed light on attitudes to Urdu:

- **Question: Can you always understand people who speak Urdu?**
- **Question: Are you always able to say everything you want in Urdu?**

The following table summarizes the responses to each question:

Table: 1 Attitude towards Urdu Language of the speakers.

Speakers	Yes	No	NR	Total
Urdu	60	25	5	90
Hindi	34	55	1	90
Braj	69	24	7	90

Below diagram shows the percentage of Urdu, Hindi and Braj speakers in relation to attitudes of Urdu languages.

### Figure: 1

### Percentage of Urdu speaker

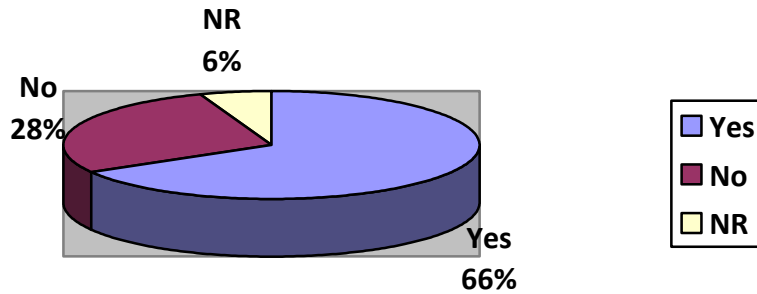


Figure: 2

### Percentage of Hindi speakers

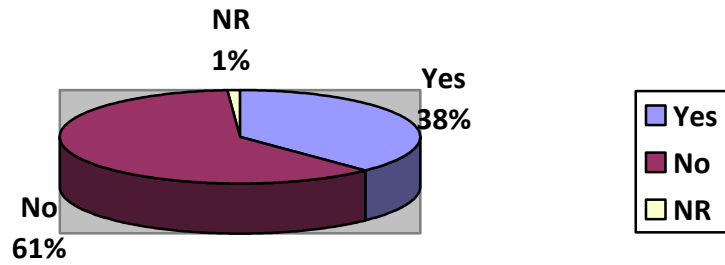


Figure: 2

### Percentage of Baraj speakers

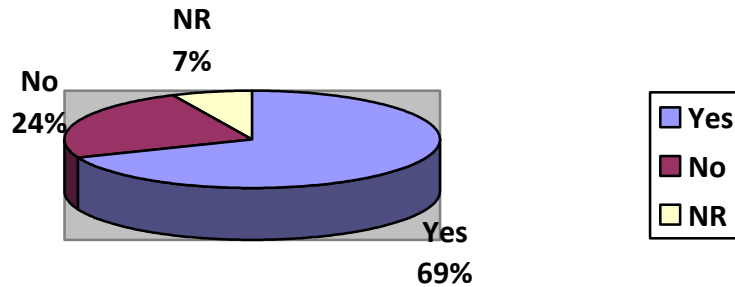


Table: 2 Attitude of peoples towards the ethnic groups.

Speakers	Hindi	Urdu	Both	Hindustani	Total
Muslim	5	45	25	15	90
Hindu	30	5	30	25	90
Others	18	10	35	27	90

The diagram below shows the percentage of all ethnic groups by religion.

Figure 1

### Percentage of Urdu speakers

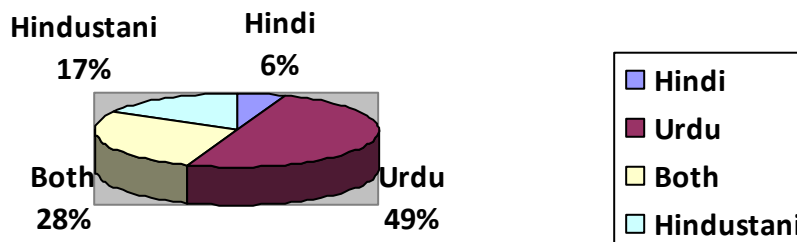




Figure 2

### Percentage of Hindi speakers

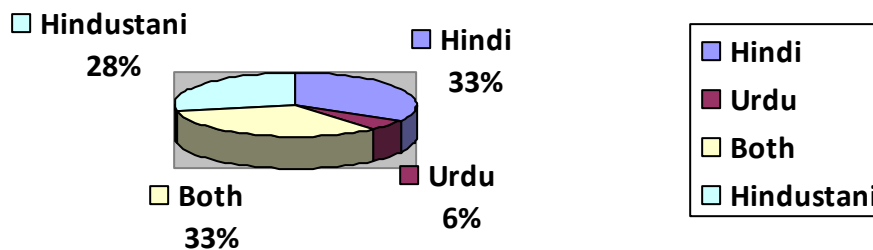
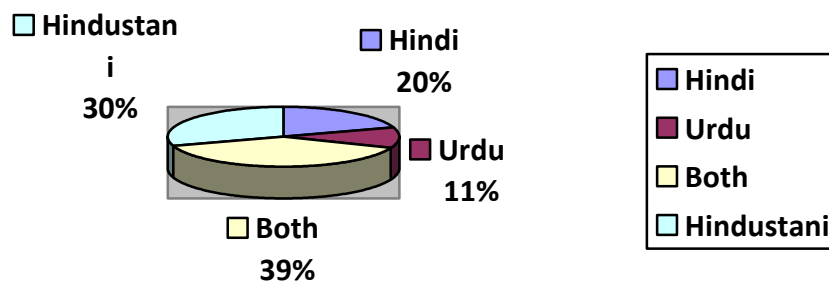


Figure: 3

### Percentage of Other Speakers



The total number of respondents was 90. The total number of those who indicated they spoke Urdu was 45. Although the responses to these question are very much subjective, and cannot give precise information on the true linguistic ability of the respondents, the information

gathered does indicate that there is a positive attitude overall to speaking and understanding Urdu.

### **3.1.2 (C) Attitudes of Others Speakers**

The general attitude towards the local speech form seems to be very positive. All 24 respondents said they would be interested in learning to read and write in the 'Hindustani', and 22 of them would like to see it used as the medium of instruction during the first few years of school. One wasn't sure if that would be a good idea or not, and the other said that it would be better to use Hindi, right from the start as is done at present. When asked whether another language was replacing their mother tongue, 7 of the 24 said Hindi was doing so. Two of these thought this was a good thing because Hindi is the national language and it is good for (inter-group) communication. Five people saw this as a bad trend because they feared they would lose their traditions along with their language. The remaining 17 did not think their speech form was being replaced.

### **3.1.3. Comments**

The Patiali people seem to have a very positive attitude towards their own speech forms, as well as a very strong ethnic identity. Their ethnic boundaries are blurred with religious identities.

There also seems to be a positive attitude towards the use of Urdu, particularly among the younger generation who has lived outside the region for some time. While the use of Urdu seems to be increasing, a large majority of the people questioned do not perceive it to be a threat to replace the local speech forms. 'Hindi' appears to be used quite vigorously, particularly within the context of government offices as well as in the home and village, and appears to fill the role of official language.

## **3.2. Viability of Hindi and Urdu**

While the viability of a language is certainly very difficult to assess, the responses to certain questions asked in the individual interviews as well as information gained from group interviews can shed some light on this issue and give a certain feeling for the actual situation. In the above questions use the elicit language use patterns in various domains, while other questions are designed to uncover attitudes toward use of the local language in school and as a written form. Some questions give insight into the perceived health of the language which is also used by the people.

## **3.3. Patterns of Language Use**

The following patterns were discovered with respect to language use in the respective domains:

### ***School***

Hindi is used in the schools throughout the patiali region. Many children are exposed to Hindi for the first time when they go to school, but there are also those whose families use some Hindi at home to prepare them for school.

### ***Official business***

Hindi is used in the sub-divisional government offices as reported by all the respondents. One elderly woman did not speak Hindi and said she would go with her husband if she had any official business to conduct.

### ***Market***

Patterns of language use in the marketplace seem to be quite varied. One person mentioned only the use of the local speech form while 3 mentioned only the use of HINDI. The great majority, 40 of 44, said that several languages would be used. The general pattern seems to be that in the local markets or with other inhabitants of the region one would use his own speech form. In the larger markets, with people from outside the region, one would use HINDI or another mutually understood language. (Other possibilities mentioned were URDU and Hindustani.) One person also mentioned that HINDI would be used more commonly by the young.

### ***Home***

Language use in the home is also somewhat varied. When asked what language(s) they used with their spouse and children, 19 people said they use exclusively their own speech form and 22 said they use both 'Hindi and Urdu'. An unemployed school teacher, reported that he uses only Urdu at home, for the remaining two there was no response, since it was felt that the question was not applicable because they are not yet married. In response to the question of what language(s) children use at play, one person mentioned only the local language and one mentioned only the use of Hindi. This latter response is not being interpreted to mean that they use only Hindi, but rather that Urdu is included when children are at play. The remaining 22 said that both the local speech form and Hindi Urdu are used, in varying degrees. The use of Hindi and Urdu reportedly increases with age and level of schooling: the more schooling a child has received, the greater his exposure to Hindi and Urdu and the more he uses it in everyday situations with his friends.

## **4. Conclusions**

The present study confirmed that there are three similar but distinct speech forms called Hindi, Urdu and Braj in Patiali region. There is no dialectal variation within the Urdu speech form; the small amount of differences said to exist between the speeches of the Patiali villages apparently do not interfere with comprehension. There is also no dialectal variation within Braj,

the speech of the villages of Patiali, however, other speech forms are found elsewhere in the Agra Division, and these are not considered “dialects of Braj”.

It is agreed that Hindi Urdu and Braj are related speech varieties; however, none is inherently ineligible to speakers of either of the other two. A speaker of one variety is only able to understand something said in another variety once he has heard it over a period of time. Given the amount of contact among the people in this area, it is usual for a person to have acquired the ability to understand the other speech forms before adulthood, at least if he or she has not lived outside the area as a child.

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