

CELESTE SULLIVAN

## The Language Culture of Lahore\*

LAHORE and its people are possessed of a magical charm. Lahoris know that their city is culturally important. When I visited there to collect data for my dissertation, they were very pleased that this was being recognized, and not at all surprised that someone from an important university in America had come to study them. People were wonderfully helpful and patient, and generally had clear ideas about what the ethnographer should know about them and about the city. I had some questions in mind that I could ask to keep a conversation going, inoffensive topics like sports and school, but my informants usually had better topics of their

---

\*This article presents a part of my dissertation research, which was defended in the Department of Anthropology at Brown University in 2005. The project was formulated as a case study of a living example of a situation of language contact. My intention was to examine the language practices of a multilingual community in detail to discover how these practices affect language itself. The original research extended to the major languages of Lahore (Punjabi, English, Urdu, Arabic, and touching briefly on Pashto) describing conventions of use, how the languages are appropriate to different contexts within the larger social organization. Its focus was how speakers experience language in those contexts as they move through their everyday lives and how these experiences shape their languages. In this article I give attention primarily to spoken Urdu. Recent studies in sociolinguistics, especially by Susan Gal, Penelope Gardner-Chloros, Carol Myers-Scotton on language shift and processes of language mixing in contact situations, bear directly on the interests of this study. Susan Gal (1978, 1978b, 1988) draws a direct correlation between the changing social and economic environment and the language choices of the speakers she studies, particularly women, who are affected more seriously by the environments associated with the different languages. Penelope Gardner-Chloros (2001) and Carol Myers-Scotton (1992) examine configurations of code-switching and the transition from code-switching to borrowing.

own. In Lahore, people are going about very busily, using this language here, another there, speaking animatedly in one language as they are waving papers in another. At the everyday level it is one communication system, and the different languages all run together. The collage of languages is the surface structure of this communication system. Underlying it, each of the languages dominates a certain domain, and what appears on the surface is only the tip of the iceberg. People have different degrees of awareness of the domains of the languages they use, depending on their relationship to the overall social system. Here I will describe primarily the domain of Urdu, its speakers, and the effects of the situation of Urdu in the overall context of languages.

Lahoris do not think about it, but these languages came to be used in Lahore through forces from beyond its borders. These forces continue to affect the domains in which the languages are used and hence the motivations which shape speakers' uses and experiences at the very basic levels. Urdu is the national language. With the breakup of the colonial empires many new nations have had similar experiences in implementing a national language. The history of Urdu is unique but the implementation of a language with local prestige as a standard, common language, is not. Taken altogether the use of language in Lahore is not quite like these other places where English is spreading with the advance of the international economy or which have instituted national language policies in the twentieth century. These functions, in Lahore, are assimilated by propensities of Lahore's culture, and so become the expression of complementary cultural ideals. The attitudes held regarding Urdu, Punjabi, or English are not at all the same as attitudes held in India towards the same languages under different circumstances (see, for example, Faruqi 2006 and Rahman 2006).

Lahore has been in the mainstream of the historical context with the attendant cultural context, in which Urdu emerged, even though it was not until 1849, when it was introduced by the British, that Urdu had a significant place in the geography of languages there. Persian had been used as the language of administration under the Sikhs, as it had been by centuries of previous administrations. When the British annexed the Punjab in 1849 they discontinued the use of Persian for administration there, as they had discontinued it in 1837 in the eastward regions of their territory. The British rationalized their language policy: Urdu, in the minds of the decisive administrators, was considered the vernacular language of the entire India, more than that, at this time it was the language of their administrative apparatus in India (Mir 2002, 24–50). It was expedient and

economical for them to subsume their new possession into their existing maintenance program. Not all the administrators were insensitive to the extent of the use of Punjabi and the matter received some debate, but it was really in the interests of economic efficiency—allowing the British to simply extend the middle and lower levels of their existing administrative apparatus, along with individuals who had already been trained in Urdu for that apparatus, to their new territory—that they decided that Urdu was the appropriate language of administration in the Punjab.

The objectives expressed by the British, of establishing a class of Urdu-speaking elite, can be seen in fulfillment today. The vision of the British administration in the Punjab was to cultivate Urdu as the language of a cultured class. At the time of Partition there were already Urdu schools established in the Punjab, and much of the rest of Pakistan, as a result. Urdu had to some degree advanced towards this status, but with the creation of Pakistan its importance increased enormously as the national language.

At the time of the formation of Pakistan, Karachi was the site of greatest cultural mobilization for Urdu as the national language. Lahore was less dramatic, the adjustment less extreme and without the violence that was seen in subsequent years in Karachi, from the initial riots in 1971 through smaller-scale but very damaging violence in the early 1990s (Rahman 2002, 34ff.), where Urdu has now displaced Sindhi in many contexts. Lahore experienced no such upheaval. Lahore seems to be a place in which the social context of language has been relatively stable.<sup>1</sup> Many of those who came to Lahore came from other parts of the Punjab and so also spoke Punjabi. A few native Urdu speakers did come to Lahore but they integrated into the local community and had little effect on community language habits, unlike Karachi where Urdu has at present taken over many linguistic domains in response to the demands of the influx of Urdu speakers.

An important linguistic principle at work in Lahore is diglossia. This analytic concept was published by Charles Ferguson in his landmark work “Diglossia” (1959). This work became basic in the theoretical framework for subsequent discussions of the role of social context in the choice of language. In Ferguson’s original essay on diglossia he focuses on four

---

<sup>1</sup>There are also a large number of Pashto speakers, but they keep their language in the home, that is to say, like other migrants they pick up Punjabi (most of them know Urdu already), but in Lahore Pashto is only transmitted in the home to children of Pashto speakers.

examples (Arabic, Modern Greek, Swiss German, Haitian Creole) where two varieties are in use in the same community, but each is used within a different domain of functions. H, the high variety, is used for formal purposes: writing and occasions of formal speech; L, low, is informal. H is learned in school, L in the home as a child, and so on. Although the original concept was applied to a fairly restricted type of situation, it introduced an analytical approach to the distinction of a correct form for formal purposes, which is very important for understanding language use in Lahore. Later on, other authors would apply the principle recognized here to more ambiguous cases, but Ferguson used his four classic examples—in which H and L were related languages and their distinctive functions were clear—to establish the concept and the term for sociolinguistics. Ferguson's "Diglossia" lays out straightforward guidelines that distinguish the upper register from the low register language. The principles behind this distinction are at work in Lahore, but the situation is clearly more complex. Not only are there more than two languages, there is more than one dimension of relations, each of which has its own subsystem of language options. Lahore's system of language use is tailored to its sociocultural system. It has adopted elements that have been brought to it from other cultures, as has probably every community except perhaps the most isolated, but the cultural system as a whole is its own (see Leach 1970, 231).

Even though most people can use more than one of the languages and may be familiar with all of them, the everyday languages—Urdu, Punjabi, and now English—are associated with certain types of people and certain domains of use. Each language represents a domain of communication; most people participate in more than one of these domains. The domain of the written word, being essentially public, is dominated by Urdu, English, and Arabic. Punjabi is most often the language of the private domain, but Urdu is gaining here. Different functions are carried out by individuals within the society, but they are determined within the larger social context so the form of a particular utterance will be affected by the function individuals are intending to perform, as well as other factors of the context,<sup>2</sup> and by the language skills they bring to the task. Factors determining choice of language are not really separable, they are found in combination as a result of convergent factors of economics, scope of the material at hand, and the position and language competence

---

<sup>2</sup>As discussed in the work of Dell Hymes 1974, Erving Goffman 1959 and William Beeman 1986.

of the individuals involved. Status is associated with a certain range of power, including, but not limited to, a geographic range.

Of all the languages in use in Lahore, Urdu is the one that corresponds most closely with the H of Ferguson's "Diglossia." It is used for public address and for most public media. It is the language of the government school system. It conforms to Ferguson's specifications of H in that it has a historical literature which is essentially foreign, most people who write use Urdu, and it is standardized and recognized. Some of this is also true of English, but since only a small proportion of the population can understand English there is little programming in English on Pakistan television. Public speeches in English are only for limited audiences. Many students who study English literature do so because they must, to pass the Cambridge or University of London exams; only a few can appreciate the aesthetics of English literature. Most of even those who use English most of the time view it as a means to an end.

Young women who have grown up speaking Urdu may be able to speak a limited Punjabi, usually to servants. Often, however, these women have only a passive knowledge of Punjabi. Young men, although they may also have been raised to speak Urdu, are more likely to have some familiarity with Punjabi and may actually use it, or bits of it, especially for emphasis among their friends. One finds a significant divergence in use of languages by gender here. Girls are more concerned to disassociate themselves from the stigmatic connotations of Punjabi. What for the boys is a code of frank speaking is something which most educated girls shun.

The range of highly competent Urdu speakers merges with those who use English. The people who work very effectively in written English, typists and secretaries, are among these Urdu speakers. "Better" people of the present generation are reading and speaking more and more English, and may have difficulty with the things their fathers read. One should not be too hasty to attribute gaps in the overall Urdu competence to English however. The low regard for manual arts, such as writing skills in either language, is probably as much a factor.<sup>3</sup> Urdu belongs to those of a certain status to whom nationwide communication pertains, and it also traces the ways in which the nationwide communication and administrative networks are relevant. Insofar as people need identification cards or marriage certificates, they participate in the national system, even if they never use Urdu for any other purpose. Others work in offices, govern-

---

<sup>3</sup>Literary writing is not considered in the same way as mundane writing activities.

ment or private, in which paperwork is in Urdu (or in Urdu and English). Patricia Nichols (1984) suggests that in the analysis of language variation ideas of stratification are not as important as networks of interaction in their effects. In Lahore we see very clearly a close connection between networks and status, reminiscent of the cumulative effect of extended family connections building into subcastes, and abstractly into castes (e.g., Srinivas 1989). While there are no formally articulated restrictions on interaction, most communication between people of different status is conventionalized. Certain people never come in contact with one another.

The community operates somewhat bimodally, between a dimension of what is admitted to and acknowledged, and another of what is done casually, almost as though these casual things occur someplace where no one can see or hear. Thus denial of a knowledge of Punjabi can be interpreted to mean that Punjabi is not a part of the modality of behaviors that count. The category of “uneducated” lies outside the formal dimension. In this category are mostly monolingual Punjabi speakers. The two dimensions of social action have their own norms for speech. Code-switching—that is, the use of more than one “code” (“code” usually meaning language)—is another important linguistic principle active in Lahore. Most code-switching takes place as part of the casual mode.

In the minds of many Lahoris, Urdu has prestige and an attraction because of its status as the national language. It acquired standing as an emblem of Muslim identity and as a part of the Pakistan Movement, but the prestige is its own now, too. The success of Urdu at maintaining its image as a prestige language in Lahore is partly due to the presence of Punjabi. Srinivas has discussed the process of Sanskritization in India (*ibid.*), where people strive to take on the characters of higher castes in order to enhance their own status. Punjabi speakers do something similar by learning Urdu. A very large and important segment of the population considers spoken Urdu a language of status and is replacing Punjabi with Urdu as the language of the home. As the national language, and with all the functions which that entails, Urdu is the prestige language, in many cases with no thought on the part of the speakers of the national language policy or of the broader implications which attach to it. Many speakers simply react to the authority and status that it signals, regardless or perhaps unaware of how that status originated. Urdu is the language of formal contexts, used to show categorical deference or respect for the person addressed. There is little question that in the public dimension Urdu speakers are considered better than Punjabi speakers, and as long

as Urdu continues to provide a status niche one might expect it to maintain a large body of speakers, despite the draw of English. The Urdu Department of Punjab University is flourishing and graduates large numbers of young women with Master's and Ph.D. degrees in Urdu every year. The enrollment in the Urdu Department is over ninety percent women. Men enrolled at Oriental College do study Urdu but also Punjabi, Persian and French. On the whole men are more involved in subjects that can be turned to a profit, the sciences or economics. There is a growing preference to raise girls to speak Urdu, rather than Punjabi, and higher proficiency is a step further in this direction. Urdu is a language of status. Status is crucial in Pakistani life and to speak good Urdu, not just in addition to, but *rather than* Punjabi is an advantage for a young woman in the right circles. Urdu is associated with modern ideas and with the spread of modern ideas; girls are taught Urdu in hopes that it will help them find a better marriage.

Although Urdu has prestige as the language of culture, it is also the language of general commerce and is used for communication in mid-level services. Conversational English is the language of the most well educated and most powerful part of the community. English remains exclusive because of the cost of an effective education in English and the scarcity of good teachers. On the other hand, for menial jobs, workers are constantly coming in, mostly from elsewhere in the Punjab. Since Urdu is the standard language for business interaction, even on the smallest scale throughout the country, many from outside the Punjab have learned some simple Urdu at their place of origin and often get by with that, at least at first. After a short time, menial workers who have come alone pick up Punjabi from their fellows. For those who come with their families, the family system slows formation of nonessential relationships, and Urdu serves as a common language for Lahori natives and recent immigrants.

The cultured character of Urdu is tied to its part in Mughal culture, and this is tied to Muslim identity and so, to its role as the national language. As the national language, its use becomes very general and the range of its users encompasses many of those considered the less refined of the population. Its applications as the national language, both those necessary (such as literacy education, administration, and newspapers) and derivative applications (such as its adoption as the language for transactions in many shops) expose Urdu to rough treatment, mispronunciation (especially interference from the population's mother tongues), and a general lack of the elocutionary art of the high culture which is the hallmark of classical Urdu.

Urdu was claimed for the national language on the merits of its history and its special nature, which up to that time was partly functional (as a lingua franca) but also very much aristocratic. Its character was delicate and even today literary Urdu retains an extensive vocabulary with which to express subtle and diverse aspects of beauty. As the national language, its use has expanded into a range that is not delicate or beautiful, but fundamentally practical. It is appropriate for uses that are relevant at the national level and that are entailed in the level of social organization at which written records and correspondence is used. Speakers who are most expressive in Punjabi also participate in issues of political importance and so are part of the community of Urdu speakers in this context. Urdu must be used for anything entailing bureaucracy and officialdom, and thus it emerges from the mouths and pens of men, particularly, who cannot bestow upon it the refinement of cultured speech. In the context of bureaucracy and politics, the domain of written Urdu overlaps the domain of spoken Urdu. Workers in the government secretariats in Islamabad communicate in Urdu; they come from different parts of the country and speak Urdu, often with a conspicuous regional accent. When secretariat workers from the same region with the same mother tongue get together, they speak in their mother tongue. Attitudes towards Urdu among government servants are utilitarian: they are a part of the workings of the nation and so the national language is part of their jobs. There is much Pashto, and probably other regional languages, spoken behind the scenes. Those involved in government at every level have local ties and so use their local languages and Urdu and English. Depending on the position of the individual, the local language may be dominant and Urdu may be quite imperfect, or, in the case of important officials, all three languages may be entirely fluent.

Perceptions of English and Urdu are not of status alone. They are not above and below one another on a simple scale, rather each serves a different sphere in which it has the most important functions; each dominates in a different realm where it has a certain kind of power. The power of English is very much associated with its practical advantages, it is the language of public performance for the elite who control things at the level of national policy and international dealings. Even at high level conferences, however, with agendas and opening statements in English, conversation will shift into Urdu for serious discussion.

For many people in Lahore, while English is part of a system of material success and power, correctly spoken Urdu has an aesthetic prestige which cannot be rivaled by a language of power (see Mansoor 1993,



chap. 4–5). Urdu commands respect and evokes an aura of high culture. Urdu has been a part of this very status-conscious culture for centuries and in its service has developed a wide range of deferential devices. English is a language of science, technology and status, but for deference it is inadequate. Speakers search out such devices or create them on the model of Urdu. Urdu is also a schooled language and, as such, most people know it as the language of the famous poets. The great Urdu poets are part of every Urdu curriculum and all who have attended an Urdu school have been exposed to them, and many are able to quote at length. There are frequent programs on Pakistan television featuring scholars expounding upon a piece of Urdu poetry. This ideal of Urdu as a medium of beauty and elegance is available, ideally, to all Urdu speakers. The popular news magazines carry regular sections which publish poetry, almost entirely ghazals, sent in by readers. Contributions by the readership are in the same bittersweet, ironic style of the great poets of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which is very much a part of the character of the language. Cultured men and women value the arts as did the cultured men and women of the Mughal courts. Verbal art is most esteemed and cultivated, and an official, a businessman or a country gentleman, or their sisters or daughters, may be accomplished poets who publish collections of poetry available at the better bookstores. Some form of participation in the classical Urdu tradition is available to everyone functional in that language. People have the attitude that they do actually participate, they just have other things going on at the moment (which of course can go on indefinitely). The effect is that many people feel themselves a part of these ideals—whatever their actual participation, they do not perceive themselves as outside of it—keeping an association which they identify with and have the option to animate at will.

A few vignettes will serve to show how the languages are used by the residents of representative neighborhoods:

A few blocks off the main road is a neighborhood whose combination of repertoires is typical of such places, known as “congested areas.” A girl, the oldest child in a prominent and respected local family, is very bright and well educated. Although she rarely has occasion to speak English, she can do quite well once she gets started and writes and reads with few errors. Her family lives at the top of a three-story house in an ordinary neighborhood. A dense complement of ranks and statuses live in the

neighborhood. Her mother speaks a refined Punjabi. Her father speaks Urdu and Punjabi and can also speak English. When she is not in school, this girl spends most of her time helping her mother. Her parents would like to see her continue her education, but their resources are limited and they have to be more concerned about educating her brothers. A little old woman seems to have no family, but she lives somewhere around the ground level of the house. Once she had a colorful new dupatta, but generally her clothes are old and very faded. She speaks only Punjabi, as do the other women living in the cluster of rooms at the foundation of the prominent family's house. The old woman is very good humored and will chatter on at length, smiling. Despite her defiantly cheerful disposition, most people are abrupt and impolite to her.

The entire family of a young money changer came from India at Partition. His father took a second wife when this young man was about six, so he and his mother, brother, and sister went to live with his maternal grandfather. The young man and his family speak Urdu and he also speaks Punjabi with the men who work in the area where he does. His friend, who is from the North-West Frontier Province and so speaks Pashto, also speaks Punjabi and Urdu. There is a man there who worked in England for many years as a pharmacist. He is retired and has lived in Lahore for several years now, although he plans to leave once he has settled his family's property. Sometimes he teaches a few men English for a few hours in the evenings to help them advance in their work. This pharmacist likes British culture very much and is highly critical of local traditions as superstitious. The men he teaches are involved in different very small commercial ventures involving western tourists. Their living has collapsed with the absence of such tourists following the tragic events of September 2001. During his boyhood, after his grandfather died, this young man started working in a fabric shop. Now, fifteen years later, he works as a money changer, or rather, as an agent for a money changing office, at a corner near the Punjab Assembly Building. He carries thousands of dollars in a variety of currencies about the city on his motorcycle for clients who know and trust him. From time to time there are spells of crime in Lahore and men in this line of work are the unfortunate victims of murder-robbery, usually as they are making deliveries. He may earn a fraction of a percent from each transaction he performs. When business is good, he is very busy in the evenings making deliveries to clients at their homes. When it is not so busy, he stays home with his mother and grandmother, his sister, her husband and their children. There is trouble on this street where boys become addicts, become useless, and then dis-

appear or die. His younger brother helps him but he does not have the judgment and experience to know whose checks are safe and whose may be disastrous. An average transaction is easily two hundred times the family's monthly expenses so an error in judgment can be very dangerous. For now his brother remains a helper; he has an excellent foreign stamp and currency collection that he is very proud of.

Educated women might speak Urdu almost like a song. A lady doctor, educated at Johns Hopkins in Baltimore, where her parents and sister still live, has her own practice with her husband in Lahore. She is the picture of beauty, grace, and graciousness. She speaks English very well, but her clientele and assistants speak Urdu so she usually speaks Urdu too. She easily writes several prescriptions in Urdu and then instructions for using them in English. The girls in the Urdu Department at Punjab University speak clear, proper Urdu with a musical lilt. Their clothes are always pretty. They chatter, laugh and giggle in little clusters, then disperse and regroup like a flock of brightly-colored birds. They are the darlings of their families, and their degree in Urdu will go a long way towards assuring their future through a good marriage. They do not think in terms of looking for work with their education, but that does not mean that it is purposeless. In the family system they will be an important part of a tightly knit team and, especially in this culture where aesthetics are so prized, their contribution will be highly valued.

English and Urdu are both used in the offices of the several international corporations in Lahore. At a typical one of these, business is normally conducted in English; just about all the employees are able to speak English, although it may be with difficulty except at the highest levels. Within the offices it is Urdu that is spoken. The top executive is an excellent example of the highest culture (and a fluent bilingual). His father was part of the educated Muslim elite that has been of critical importance since the late nineteenth century and was active in the educational and social reform of the Aligarh movement. Hence, this gentleman received, as a child and as a young man, the best education that could be had, both formal education at a British convent school and training by his father in Persian and Urdu. Part of the tradition of this elite is a great attention to aesthetics in every medium—language, English or Urdu, provides an opportunity to exercise this traditional value. This tradition seeks out and cultivates the graceful, the elegant, and the subtle. Consequently the English he speaks reflects these values in pronunciation, phrasing, usage, and choice of words. His English is refined and impeccable, he has the command and fluency of a public speaker. The quality of his language is

due to his background in this culture, more so than to his experience in the U.S. This gentleman executive is one of Lahore's circle of literary aficionados and stays in touch with the literary culture of the city, although the responsibilities of his career make it difficult for him to participate regularly.

The office of the international corporation which he directs is absolutely modern, the computers are the most recent models and the software the same as would be used in their head offices in Europe. Correspondence, which is conducted within Pakistan, internationally, and with high-level government officials, is in English. This executive dictates in English to his secretary. She herself is representative of the large number of speakers who can handle dictation and other demanding written functions easily, but whose English pronunciation is less smooth than that of the gentleman executive himself, and who lack familiarity with the full range of English idioms. Ordinarily conversation within the offices is in Urdu. If both interlocutors are fluent, the Urdu spoken will be heavily inlaid with English words, phrases and even clauses. This executive usually reads English, such as the newspaper or documents pertaining to corporation business, but he can easily read the most esoteric literary Urdu or the Urdu of the populace when the occasion calls for it. Like his English, his Urdu is of the most refined register. He has full command of the extensive vocabulary of literary borrowings from Persian, which to most Lahoris are simply "Farsi." Similarly he usually writes in English, since most software programs are for English, but for personal correspondence, which might be handwritten, he may also use Urdu. This gentleman embodies the best of traditional culture and of western culture. His person is impressive, his demeanor elegant and his taste discriminating; he is not merely well educated but extensively knowledgeable. Sitting at the helm of a corporate office with hundreds of employees, he speaks to each one with respect. His generosity is sincere. He is not merely a figurehead, his part in the international corporation is active. He is deeply engaged with its operations, working days as long or longer than western executives, and often administering its business in Lahore, Islamabad, and Karachi all in the same week. He reflects:

Mērē vālid kahā kartē thē ke insān kō zindagī mēñ apnē liyē hamēsha  
ēk maqām paidā karnā čāhiyē aur bēmaqṣad zindagī nahīñ guzarnā čāhiyē.  
Ādmī apnē *career* mēñ aur *society* mēñ jis mēñ vo rehtā hai us mēñ uskī  
ḥaiṣiyat aisī hōnī čāhiyē ke uskō čār afrād pehčāntē bhī hōñ aur uskī qadr  
manzilat kartē hōñ uskī 'izzat hō kō'ī bahār hō; āp apnē kirdār sē aur apnē

pēshē kē e'tibār sē āpkī shuhrat hō tāke āp ēk aččhā maqām hāšil kar sakēn *society* mēn aur zindagī mēn. Ye mērē liyē ēk *guiding principle* thā jis kē tehat mēn nē hamēsha apnē apnē *career* kō aur shakhshiyat kō sañvārnē kī kōshish kī. Is liyē mēn samajhtā hūn ke mēn nē jahān bhī kām kiyā mehnat sē kiyā imāndārī sē kiyā aur uskē natijē mēn *recognition* milā jahān bhī gayā mēn nē kāmyāb zindagī aur *profession* guzārā.... Well, *there's no substitute for hard work and honesty*. Jab bhī imāndārī aur mehnat aur lagan sē kām karēngē āpkō uskā in'ām milēgā, *reward* zurūr milēgā aur ye ēk vāhid tarīqa hai āpkō zindagī mēn kāmyāb hōnē kā kō'i dūsra *shortcut* āpkō, insān kō taraqqī kē liyē dūsra *shortcut* uskī ṣahīḥ manzil pe nahīn pahuñchā saktā. Sevā'ē ēk aččhā mehnatī *career* kē *through*.

*My father said that a person has to take a stand and not lead a life without purpose. One's role in his career and in the society in which he lives should be such that he be accountable, he should be honorable and respectable, he should have some refinement, and his conduct should bring him a good reputation among his associates so that he can assume a proper position in society and in life. This has been my guiding principle upon which I have always tried to base my career and character. I think this is why, wherever I've worked I've worked hard and faithfully and as a result I've achieved recognition and been successful in life and in my profession.... Well there's no substitute for hard work and honesty. Whenever one works diligently and faithfully and with commitment they will earn success, they will certainly be rewarded. This is the only way to success in life; there's no shortcut, there's no other way to achieve a sound outcome, other than through a good diligent career.*

This is very different from much of the population, who take life one day at a time, and, when confronted with the many adversities that they are powerless to affect, will say: "*Allah kare*" "God will take care of it." How different from the dynamic outlook of this gentleman executive, who does indeed make things happen.

In the main concourse of Liberty Market there is a photocopy shop. It is one of the most modern, well-equipped and well-run shops in Lahore. The proprietor and the young men working there are Punjabi speakers. Their families speak Punjabi, but Urdu dominates the workplace. The workers are very adept with the machinery and every Saturday all the machines are cleaned thoroughly, this is how they are able to maintain consistently good copy quality. One of the senior workers is twenty-five or thirty years old. He is married and has one son and they all live with his parents and brothers in a typical extended family. He can read and write

easily in Urdu and can also read Punjabi, but he has difficulty with English, although he likes to read about English films. His parents know only Punjabi, so he and his wife and child speak Urdu, except with his parents. This pattern of generational shift is common among families in which the wage earner makes an adequate living.

There is a tiny little dry goods shop in a settlement of service workers near the high-rent district. The woman at the counter has a soft voice and speaks clear, gentle Urdu. Some of the children to whom she is selling candies and crackers speak Punjabi, but when she tries, she cannot. Her family spoke Punjabi at one time, but since Urdu has been the national language they have been speaking Urdu. She enjoys reading and recommends a number of books (historical novels and Urdu retellings of old tales) and digests. Her husband speaks Urdu, English and Punjabi. He is from a village and is straightforward. He says some city folk look down on Punjabi because they associate it with villagers, whom they look down on for being rustic, but he speaks it, as well as English and Urdu. Sitting in his small shop with his list of debts owed on account on one side and a set of weights and scales on the other, he explains, in typical Urdu, the Islamic attitude towards work and compensation (work, even if you do not get compensation; it is man's duty to work and God's business to provide):

(Pareshaan nahii chahiye, kyo?) Is liye, ke mujhe—Punjabi me baat karu ya Urdu me baat karu? Ap ki marzi. Urdu me karta 'u. Ye pasa, *money's not problem ... My thinking is this*, ke *that, what so*—jo mere liye Allaah cha'egaa agar Allaah ne meri qismat me jo le ka' us ne mujhe wo'i dene. Mera kaam he *struggle* karna, koshish karna. Thik he? Us ke badle me Allaah mujhe kya deta'e, thik he? *Being a Muslim*, mera is baat me bhi yakin 'e ke hamare Qur'aan paak me Allaah t'alla ne ek jaga me fermaaya ke *inamal amalo biniat*. *Inamal amalo biniat* ke 'aamal ka daar-o-madaar niyatvara, agar aap ki niyat saaf he, aap ke 'aamal khud be khud thik ho jaegi. Thik he? *I translate it English*. Ke niyat *means thinking*. *If your thinking is very neat and clear you will get, very very, very very, I—my thinking*, I me ane soch ke bare me baat kar rahaa 'o ke jo meri soch 'e ke jo mujhe ta'lim dige ya apne *parents* ki taraf se ya *teachers* ki taraf se ke is ka bunyaad me ne yaha se liye ke Allaah t'alla ne hamare Qur'aan paak me jis ko ham apne awwal aur aakher kitaab maante he *Holy Qur'an*. Thik he? Qur'aan me ye ke *inamal amalo biniat* 'aamal ka daar-o-madaar niyat pe. Niyat *mean thinking*. Yani agar aap ki *thinking* saaf he *neat and clear* 'e, aap ko koi *tension* nii he, thik he, *risk* denevale Allaah ki zaat he Allaah ne *risk* dene he kis zeria se dene kasa dene. Thik he? Ye uska kaam he. Ap ka kaam he *struggle* karna koshish karna, thik he. Jase mere pas jo kuch tha

me ne is dukaan laga diya. Ab Allaah ne mujhe dene agar me is ka taraazu is jedu taraazu 'e taraazu Allaah t'alla ne hamare Habiib ne Qur'aan paak me ye farmaya apne hadis me ye farmaya Allaah t'alla ne Qur'aan pak me ye farmaya ke kam tolnevale ko me janat me daakhl nahii hone duga. *I mean weight, weight—taraazu. Kam tolna ... kam tolna ye behot burai hamare mazhab me yani aap ek kilo chiiz tolte he, to us me agar aap itni si chiiz kam daluga usse kuch nii hoga, mera kuch nii banega, lekin be imaani ho jaegi. Thik he? Vo risk hharaam ho jaega.*<sup>4</sup>

*(There's no reason to worry, why?) This is why, that—shall I speak in Punjabi or Urdu? (Whichever you like.) I'll speak Urdu. This money, money's not a problem ... My thinking is this, that, that what so—what God wants for me, what my fortune is, God will give the same thing. My job is to struggle, to make an effort. Okay? What God gives me in exchange for that is fine. Being a Muslim, I am certain of this, that in our Qur'an God has commanded that [Arabic] "Actions are judged by the intentions behind them; actions are judged by the intentions behind them." Action depends on intention. If your intention is clean, your actions (business) will work out on their own. Okay? I translate it English. That, niat means thinking, [this is conventionally translated "intention," as above] if your thinking is very neat and clear you will get, very very, very very, I—my thinking, I, I think [soch, not nia] about this I am saying that my thought [soch] is that those who taught me, from my parents or from my teachers, that I am going from this foundation, that in our Qur'an, which is our first and last book God gave this much information, [Arabic "Actions are judged by the intentions behind them;" an action depends on the intention. Niat means thinking. That is to say that if your thinking is clean, neat and clear, you have nothing to worry about, okay, taking risk is God's job, God handles the risk, which way to give it, how to give it. Okay? That's His job. Your job is to struggle and to try, okay. Just like I bought this shop with what I had. Now God gives me, if I, this balance, any balance .... God, in the tradition and in the Qur'an commanded in His tradition, commanded this in the Qur'an that he who gives short weight will not be allowed into heaven. I mean weight, weight—balance. Give short weight ... to give short weight is very bad in our religion; that is to say you weigh out a kilo of something, if you give even a little short, nothing will come of it, it won't do me any good, but it will be dishonest. Okay, that risk is forbidden.*

(a shopkeeper)

The upward aspirations of the well-to-do who see Urdu as a means to

---

<sup>4</sup>Since the quote represents the speech peculiarities of an individual, it appears without customary transliteration. — *Editor*

improved status pursue paths in the pattern set by the Pakistan movement and earlier the Aligarh movement, basically models for modernization (Rahman 2002). This attitude towards Urdu is not universal. Men, and some women, who are well established through the prominence of their families and whose status therefore leaves little room for improvement, wield a great deal of control, participate in the national government and use Urdu and English as appropriate, but it does not replace the language or traditions of their homes. For many of the most important families, this is Punjabi. Punjabi and Siraiki are the mother tongues of some extraordinarily prosperous and powerful families. On the streets of the working neighborhoods most people speak Punjabi, with a few more scrupulous shopkeepers speaking Urdu for special occasions. Residents in working neighborhoods located near the “good areas” work at a wide range of jobs there and so often have a broad repertoire of language. Punjabi is the language of servants and the poor—those not able to attend even an Urdu-medium school—who are many. When you go to school you learn Urdu and/or English. A stigma is attached to being uneducated and, since education imparts Urdu and English, to be a speaker of only Punjabi marks a person as uneducated. Villagers and servants have no thought of significant improvement in their condition. Different positions yield different attitudes towards Urdu and Punjabi, without changing the character of the languages significantly.

People who truly speak Urdu as a first language in Lahore belong primarily to the most recent generations, that is, those younger than thirty. This factor of language shift, manifesting itself in marked differences in language competence across generations, is often cited in contexts of language loss in modernizing communities (Gal 1978b; Kulick 1992). Changes in local economies, usually linked to changes in the economies of countries across the world linked with modernization and industrialization, are causing large populations to learn languages different from the ones their foreparents spoke. Shift in Lahore is more complex than the general case, where a modern language replaces a traditional language more or less across the population with passing generations. Punjabi is losing first language speakers to Urdu in a limited area of the population in certain areas of use, but for many uses, and among the majority of speakers it is still strong. Examples of language shift in other parts of the world often entail such loss as to prompt concerns about the death or crippling of the origi-



nal language altogether. (The concept of language death was first presented, for example, in Dorian 1981).

The most important factor influencing parents to raise their children as Urdu speakers is the fact that it is the national language. The Urdu movement was very important in the creation of Pakistan. The parents of those who speak Urdu in the home choose to do so as a very distinct and conscious response to the politically created social environment. These parents would themselves have grown up speaking Punjabi and have made a conscious choice to speak to their children in Urdu. This is done with a view of the future that sees Urdu, and the things associated with it, in a hopeful light. These parents are cutting their ties to Punjabi and the things associated with it and tying their children's future to the Pakistani national ideal. This ideal looks to the modern, new ideas introduced from the West and rejects much of the antecedent culture as superstitious, or at best, quaint and outdated.<sup>5</sup> There is a very clear generational demarcation in these young people who grew up speaking Urdu. They are the children of many who were young themselves at the creation of Pakistan, and their choice to raise their children speaking Urdu reflects the optimism that people at that time felt for the future of their new country. Urdu was, and is, seen as the language of betterment and of the future. This is also expressed in the use of Urdu as the language which Punjabi and Urdu speakers alike use for communication in the domain of modern-oriented, nationally relevant communication.

The connection of Urdu with modernization and national identity gives it a more general association with higher status. Many of those who are able to maintain a lifestyle which is essentially modern, who live in the modern areas and work in offices associated with the modern worldview, such as banks, educational institutions, and the travel industry (in which paperwork is often in English), maintain Urdu as the language of the home. Scattered throughout other parts of the city are families who have also made Urdu the language of the home. The pattern of adoption of Urdu is comparable to what has been documented in recent studies elsewhere in the world. Studies in language variation and bilingualism have shown that language choice at the individual level is linked to the national and international level through the kinds of choices the dynamics at these levels make available to those individuals (Milroy 2001; Gal 1988). Examples of language choice connecting the speakers to higher-level

---

<sup>5</sup>Ewing 1997, on the attitudes towards traditional religious figures, describes the divergent views towards things modern and towards traditional beliefs.

conditions through the effects of those conditions on the lives of speakers, particularly economic motivations such as the availability of jobs, are documented. Of particular relevance is Susan Gal's (1978, 1978b, 1988) study of the shift to German among the younger generation in Austria, especially young women, in response to an environment in which modern jobs, and a larger context entailing the German language, appeal more and more to young women, drawing them away from agriculture and the Hungarian language associated with it, and also away from husbands in agricultural occupations or who speak the associated Hungarian language. The situation parallels the circumstances in Lahore in several ways. Gal notes that the connotations of each language to bilinguals reflects the cultural connotations of the community and the context with which they are associated, much like the domains of the languages in use in Lahore (1978, 6–7; 1988, 253–55).

This current association of Urdu with higher status appears to be a stage in a long and gradual transformation of the population. When it was introduced with the British educational system in the nineteenth century, it was looked down upon by the community and by indigenous scholars and was seen as merely a form of job training by which the mediocre could qualify for low-level positions in the British administration (Leitner 1882). Urdu education under the British lacked the positively valued cultural features of indigenous education which incorporated ideals of virtue into the acquisition of technical skill in reading and writing. At that time the economy was almost entirely based upon income from the land (most indigenous schools also received their support from endowments of land), and to their students monetary income by employment would have been incidental. The system of calculation and notation that was taught in its own schools, prior to the British, in preparation for trades such as shopkeeping, had long since fallen out of use.

The rise in the importance of Urdu has parallels in the language policies of other new nations. With the withdrawal of the colonial powers in the past century, citizens of the new nations around the world have found themselves in situations similar to that of Lahore two generations ago. In some cases, claim to a common and distinctive language has been an important part of the claim to the right of nationhood. In other cases, the choice of language has been less obvious and even itself a source of contention in the formation of new nations (see Fishman, et al. 1968 and Schiffman 1996). In many African nations, which were compounded from a number of diverse groups speaking several languages, the choice of a national language has been shaped by complex historical forces (Laitin

1992, chap. 5). In the case of Indonesia, the Dutch played an important role in the establishment of a new, national language (Errington 1998). As in Pakistan, these new nations have had to propagate not only the national language but a new relationship with language, through education, as part of a new kind of relationship of citizens to the state (Gellner 1983, 29–38). Pakistan shares with these nations the circumstance of a citizenry divided in ideology along the same lines on which it is divided in education. Those who participate in education, Urdu, and the modern economy and culture that go with it, distance themselves from the uneducated laborers and peasants. “Uneducated” itself is as much a derogatory epithet as it is a simple descriptive term. To be uneducated carries not only the connotation of lacking the information that is a part of western education, but also of being without the necessary social graces.

To use Urdu as the language of the home in contemporary Lahore means having parents who are educated in Urdu. The initial introduction of Urdu into the community was through schools, not speakers, and it continues to be maintained largely by schools. Its widespread use as a status language is also bound up in its being associated with schools by virtue of the fact that schools are closely associated with social and economic status. Having been introduced as a language of education (these parents would have learned it in school) the model for Urdu is the standard which has been established through government textbooks and the corpus of literature identified by selection for those textbooks, or a model derived from that standard and corpus. On the national level, the Language Authority produces a range of materials that provide a model for correct Urdu, and at the provincial level the Punjab textbook board is very prolific.<sup>6</sup> The process of the standardization of Urdu began under the British when, in 1837, the decision was made to conduct local administration in the vernacular (Rahman 2002, chap. 2). This process of standardization, also known as corpus planning, is common to innumerable modern nations both in Europe (e.g., France, see Schiffman 1996, chap. 5) and the developing world (see Fishman, et al., 1968). Because of the examination system, in which students seeking certification must pass the same nationwide examination at each level, nowadays, even when a school uses texts from a private publisher, there is considerable uniformity in the material. Correct, desirable Urdu should be realized with attention to pronunciation, vocabulary, and the details of grammar and usage. It should,

---

<sup>6</sup>For a thorough account of the history of Pakistan’s language policy, see Tariq Rahman 1999 and 2002.

ideally, reflect some knowledge of literature, and, in many contexts, it often also has an appealing musical quality.<sup>7</sup> Common schools cannot provide teachers who will impart the highest standards. Even the many who lack the education to generate really correct Urdu readily recognize and appreciate correct pronunciation and delivery.

Of the written languages, Urdu is the one most widely taught in public schools and in less expensive private schools. Even with the recent increase in the number of Qur'an schools, in which a student would first be introduced to Arabic, Urdu is likely to be the first written language that is learned. In Lahore, most of the population speaks Punjabi and learns Urdu as something of a second language while learning to write or for limited use at a job. For most people this is a perfectly natural state of affairs and many highly proficient readers in Urdu, and even some authors, do not use Urdu as their main language at home.

Local literature in Urdu includes poetry, songs and aphorisms, which are very much a part of oral interaction and popular publications; some who gain recognition as poets publish collections of their poetry. There is a large readership for the serials and short stories that are published in monthly digests or weekly magazines. There is also a literary culture in Punjabi, which might be likened to that in Urdu and which shares some fora with the Urdu literary culture. The written aspect of Punjabi literary culture can be found in books of poetry or novels, but has not expanded to weekly or monthly publications.

Knowledge of Arabic and the Qur'an seems to occur unpredictably, even within families. Urdu in the religious sphere is part of religious movements which, while they use Arabic and the Qur'an, produce quantities of Urdu-language religious material that is widely read (Rahman 2006). These contrast with local religious customs which often include ritual Arabic, and the Urdu-language print material that is spread by religious organizations is often hostile to traditional practices. It appeals to a rational approach that the culture associated with reading encourages

---

<sup>7</sup>Urdu depends very much on these cultivated particulars. Families of laborers who came from India in the previous generation speak a language identical to Urdu in structure and all but a few key items of vocabulary; however, it does not conform in these details (especially pronunciation and intonation). They did not know until recently, when they were told by educated Urdu speakers, that their language is something other than Urdu; some of these people themselves have come up with the name *Babarati*, since it is spoken by people who migrated recently from India (Bharat).

(Ewing 1997, 97–106; Zaman 2002, 119–27; Eickelman 1992).

One often finds among young people who have studied at English-medium schools that, although they speak quite mellifluous Urdu, they have difficulties with serious Urdu writing (such as newspaper editorials), which is read with ease by the generation that precedes them and by others whose spoken Urdu is less euphonious and who speak Punjabi informally. This younger generation is often surrounded by written materials in English, in business forms and newspapers, and knowledge of English on the part of Urdu speakers is of not only the written, but also the spoken language. There is a high demand, which is not adequately met, for teachers who are able to speak English, to teach subjects in English-medium schools, and especially to teach spoken English. Most Urdu speakers, especially those who have attended an English-medium school, are also able to converse, more or less in English. Generally these Urdu speakers have little occasion to speak at any length in English; they normally converse in Urdu, but their Urdu speech is filled with English words. Beyond individual words, they may use English in formulaic phrases. It is often more difficult for someone who usually reads in English to find just the right word in Urdu. This is especially true of less commonly used words. English vocabulary is ever present in their minds so, without the constraints of formality, casual speech flows back and forth between the two.

Lahori culture depends a great deal on speaking abilities, especially persuasive abilities. Persuasion and coaxing, and magnification of the interlocutor who holds the position of advantage, are prominent in many kinds of interactions. Bargaining involves verbal skills, even beggars employ verbal skills (pleading), and what might seem to be an ordinary office transaction actually requires considerable ingenuity with verbal skills. Outside the international companies, which are a few small islands of a modern, and in many ways a foreign context, in most offices transactions take place through complex and ritualized verbal interactions. Lahoris place a great deal of emphasis on proper verbal entreaty, these expressions are composed on the basis of conventions of complimenting, one-sided or mutual, as the context may call for. These processes are much more elaborate than those Goffman (1959) describes in American culture. Since entreaty is usually directed upwards, expressions and skills in English, the high-status language, are especially sought after. The value of ornamented speech is introduced into English from the Urdu tradition. Urdu is prized for appealing, ornate expressions and the search for elevated terms of address persists from that. Urdu literature is also known for

this. This is part of the reputation on which its claim to the status of national language was based. A glance through the letters of Ghalib, or of even the model letters in the school textbooks, shows the attention paid to proper honorification, both through respectful terms of address and through the appropriate choice of words and phrases.

Context has an enormous effect on language. It often happens that bilingual speakers who use Punjabi with their friends and at home are unable or have difficulty speaking it when requested to at their shops, or in other contexts where they are accustomed to speaking Urdu. The patterns of bilingualism between Urdu and English show themselves in patterns of usage. A large number of those who have been raised speaking Urdu in the home, use English in public places and formal situations. This is especially true for the written language. In offices in the more well-to-do parts of the city, documents are available in either Urdu or English, and many choose to use English. Ordinarily, conversation is in Urdu. Differences in the Urdu conversation between these two groups, those who use English on a daily basis and those who use primarily or exclusively Urdu, are noticeable. Code-switching into English is a prominent part of the Urdu of girls educated in English-medium schools and of English-language office workers. Those who have studied English as a second language but do not use it regularly code-switch more rarely. There are a large number of English borrowings in Urdu, however, and these are a part of the language used even by those who may never have had any formal schooling. The use of English borrowings by educated Urdu speakers is less than that of less educated Urdu/Punjabi speakers. This is for two reasons: Educated speakers have a more extensive Urdu vocabulary—which includes Urdu words often themselves borrowed from Arabized-Persian a few hundred years ago—that is used for many things for which an English borrowing also exists. Uneducated speakers lack such vocabulary. Also, educated Urdu speakers are usually educated in English and so recognize these words as English and can discriminate them from Urdu, whereas less educated speakers see no difference between words borrowed from English and other words in their language. Even when it is pointed out that the same word exists in English, they often form no conclusions as to why this should be. Despite the latent ability of educated Urdu speakers to use Urdu vocabulary, one finds more and more English borrowings being used in more and more contexts where they would have been considered inappropriate and careless not long ago. Like borrowings, calques, the word-for-word translation of a common idiom of one language (here English) into another, are found in everyone's Urdu

speech (for similar examples, see Alam 1988). Because they are more difficult to recognize without considerable experience in English, they are more difficult for speakers educated in Urdu to avoid.

Individual language production is based on input from perceived language. The experiences of Lahori speakers come together in the minds of the multilingual speakers and are reflected in their production. Certain properties of language itself, which have been observed and documented for many multilingual contexts and from several approaches, can be seen at work in the processing of these experiences and in the language production of speakers in Lahore. Some of these effects are eventually incorporated into accepted forms of the languages, while others are only used in careless speech.<sup>8</sup>

It has been seen how people operate in several languages, according to conventions of appropriate language for various contexts. For each person, the various contexts in which they participate prescribe an appropriate language and a treatment of it (intonation, deferential or contemptuous devices, etc.). In one context people might deny that they speak a language which they do, in fact, speak regularly in another context; others who might admit that they do speak Punjabi, for example, at home, are not able to speak it, or speak it with difficulty, in a context in which they ordinarily speak Urdu. In the front stage dimension, participants usually try to use an approximation of the appropriate standard language. But in backstage situations, speakers are not so constrained, and, among fluent bilinguals, code-switching is common (Goffman 1959, 126–40).

The term code-switching has been used to refer to a number of kinds of switching between languages. Sometimes it refers to the use of different languages in different contexts, but here it will be used to mean interspersing words and phrases of one language in another. The use of another language altogether in different contexts has also been described in terms such as language use, language culture, or customs or conven-

---

<sup>8</sup>David Laitin (1992) reports attitudes towards code-switching in Africa similar to those in Lahore. That is, in a study by Barnabas Forson, “77 percent (of participants) felt that codeswitching is somehow immoral or impure” (qtd. in Laitin, 73). I did not ask informants what they thought of code-switching, but most of them avoided it while the tape recorder was on and some can frequently be heard to start an English word, stop themselves, and then use the Urdu word.

tions surrounding language use, or something similar. Code-switching leads to borrowing, but these are different things and they need to be considered separately. Code-switching takes place among bilinguals in less formal contexts. It is usually excluded from formal speech but certain borrowings are permitted, especially if they have been given a standard phonology in the recipient language (see below for examples). Carol Myers-Scotton distinguishes borrowing from code-switching as follows: Borrowing is the incorporation into one language of material from another language; code-switching is the selection by multilinguals of material from one language, which is embedded in utterances which are constituted primarily from a matrix language, in the same conversation. Borrowed forms have become a part of what constitutes the lexical competence of a speaker of the matrix language, code-switched forms have not been incorporated in this way. The degree of phonological assimilation is not a reliable determinant of whether a form is borrowed or code-switched because in multilingual environments speakers have internalized the available phonologies to varying degrees. In terms of the theory of language of Ferdinand de Saussure, code-switching is a feature of parole, a discourse device employing skill in two languages; borrowings have become a part of langue, the idealized form of a single language.

One example of how circumstances of use leave their mark on the languages in Lahore is the process by which words from one language (e.g., English) become borrowings, part of ordinary speech in another language of a community which does not know the first one. Those words are recognized and treated in the same way as other elements of the second language; in terms of Saussure's theory, borrowed words become a part of the langue. Interactions between people with different total repertoires are especially important to this process. People of different repertoires are associated with different domains which entail a different relationship with the rest of the nation and the world. Through the processes to be described here, these global scale forces will be seen to push their way into ordinary speech.

Insertion of lexical items has been observed in other multilingual contexts. Numerous studies of bilingual lexicon show that lexicon in multiple languages shares "storage space" in the language organ and that under many circumstances words of one language interfere with access to words of another. It is clearest in cases where a population has left the environment of one language and moved to another (Kaufman and Aronoff 1991; Ammerlaan 1996). It is also heard in many examples from Lahore where a person trying to speak in a specific language, usually



Urdu, may start to say a word in another language but stop himself to find a word in the language in which the interview is being given. This intrusion of the lexicon, often of the economically dominant language, into the speech of whatever language is being spoken is an important factor in the form of languages in multilingual situations.

Vocabulary from the various languages in one person's repertoire fit into some sort of shared access system and repeated use makes words more readily accessible while disuse makes them harder to access (Bot and Schreuder 1993; Kirsner, Lalor and Hird 1993; Ammerlaan 1996). The public social organization of Lahore requires the greatest activity in general commerce and education to be in Urdu. This means that people involved in these interactions will be rehearsing their Urdu vocabulary. Because of frequent rehearsal, Urdu vocabulary will often be the first to come to mind, especially in those areas. Punjabi is the language of informality, it is the main language spoken in contexts where attention to language form is most relaxed. It is still the language of the home for many and it should not be forgotten that parents and elder family members would be shown respect with appropriate Punjabi forms. However, depending on the audience, there may be little reflection in typically Punjabi contexts that one should limit speech to strictly Punjabi vocabulary. If an Urdu word has already come to mind, speakers may not make the effort to think of a Punjabi word. Literary, standardized Punjabi is the concern of educated people. As we have seen, Punjabi is the language of nearly all of those who have no access to education. Much of the Punjabi in Lahore is spoken by people with limited education who also speak Urdu quite frequently, even if for some it is under restricted circumstances.

In the case of educated speakers whose repertoires include several languages, local words have been forgotten in favor of words from Urdu or borrowings from English. These words may have been lost altogether in the upper register repertoire. Reflections by highly educated Siraiki speakers:

"... again we'll borrow this word from Urdu: '*gulet*' ... um '*gulet*,' what would be '*wrong*? '*Thik nabii*,' again, that is Urdu, '*sabi*,' that is also Urdu." (What would your grandmother use?) "Well, I don't know what she will use over here. Again I think I have to borrow word from Urdu language, and there are several words that we borrow from Urdu language."

A generation older:

“It’s not that developed; local languages, regional languages, they’re not as developed as Urdu language because Urdu has the unique advantage of drawing from Persian, and Arabic, and Turkish.”

(A prominent public figure and his daughter)

The language of the city is notorious for its impurity, but, even in the city, there are Punjabi speakers who can use simple, unadulterated Punjabi easily. Most migrants come from within the Punjab. (In a population of approximately 6,320,000 in Lahore, half of the more than one million migrants are from other parts of the Punjab.) Migrants who have come from other places (e.g., Kashmir or Sindh) are usually absorbed and shift into local language patterns within a short time, in the unusual case by the second generation.<sup>9</sup> They identify with the city and its culture and language once they have settled there: “How long have you lived here?” “Since the beginning—15 years.” “I’m Lahori, my father came ....” Migrants from outside the Punjab, however, are likely to fall short of the full Punjabi vocabulary.

This process, as it can be observed in Lahore, appears to be a typical adaptation, a language survival skill. That code-switching patterns such as these are an adaptation for language maintenance has been proposed by Penelope Gardner-Chloros (2001). She suggests that this incorporation of content words from a dominant language allows the vulnerable, local language to survive in social contexts where it would otherwise be driven out or killed by language shift. The evidence in Lahore fits this hypothesis. The store of lexicon is handled as efficiently as possible for the communicative purposes that are required of a particular speaker. Another outcome is that, rather than handle the full apparatus of several lan-

---

<sup>9</sup>People have a very short sense of time. They deal with the present, the things they have seen. They have little way of knowing what may have gone before. An exception, which supports the analysis that people are aware of what they have evidence of, can be found in the residents of the Old City. They tell you that Lahore was built by the Mughals. They point to the walls, within which they live, and the gates through which they walk on their way to other parts of the city and explain that these walls, identified as the original Lahore, were built by the Mughals. There are historical novels, but there is also the sense that people appreciate that historical knowledge is of a different nature than information available through their own experience and that of people they can speak with. For example, I asked someone from Multan about Muhammad bin Qasim and he said, “He lived a long time ago, we don’t know anything about him, we’re men of the present.”

guages, the less advantageous language will be given up (an economical choice, in terms of available attention). This is often the fear of language activists in multilingual situations elsewhere. However, Punjabi is adapting and flourishing in Lahore. Moreover, this is not the first domination by a foreign language which Punjabi has survived. Punjabi was spoken for centuries while Persian was the language of several administrations.

Exchange of morphemes between languages takes place more smoothly if the interdependencies of the words to the others in the sentence are similar.<sup>10</sup> For example, Urdu has a mechanism to generate causative verbs from basic verbs such as eat, drink, build, but in English a causative phrase needs to be inserted.<sup>11</sup> Or, in school, the interaction surrounding examinations is conceived differently. The exchange is described in terms of the paper when it is completed, so, in Urdu, it is the student who *gives* the examination and the teacher who *takes* it, while in English the reverse is expressed. The interdependencies of words in the two languages, English and Urdu (or Punjabi) are often incongruent. In contrast, the closely parallel structure of Urdu and Punjabi are perfectly accommodating to the exchange of morphemes. In both Urdu and Punjabi the verbs “to eat” and “to feed” require an object eaten, you cannot say “he ate” or “he fed the cat,” it has to be “he ate food” or “he fed the cat food”; “eat” and “feed” in Punjabi are not usually altered, but one may commonly use an Urdu noun for the conventional object “food” or to name a specific food. Similarity makes it easy for Punjabi speakers to learn Urdu and facilitates many patterns of code-switching (see examples below; Gumperz 1964; Haarmann 1989; Bot and Schreuder 1993) which leads to mixing and thus even closer similarity.

Both Punjabi and Urdu sentence structures isolate semantic words or morphemes (in contrast to function words) in a way that facilitates easy circulation of lexicon from various sources: Urdu, English, Persian or Arabic. Positions in the sentence structure which would hold a Persian borrowing in some contexts will hold an English word at other times.

“Me ne *armament branch* me *commission* liya tha, lekin ba'd me me ne *change* kar ke, tabdiil kar ke.”

---

<sup>10</sup>In syntactic theory these interdependencies are called *theta-roles*. A similar effect of such interdependencies on lexical insertion has been analyzed by Bot and Schreuder 1993, among others.

<sup>11</sup>As easily as one can say “he fed him,” one can say “he gave him (something) to drink” or “he had him build it.”

*"I took a commission in the armament branch but after a while I changed, I changed."*

It was mentioned above that Lahoris live bimodally, sometimes in the formal sphere and sometimes in the informal, and conventions of language use are different for each. In the casual dimension, there is a dazzling array of code-switching styles: Urdu with segments of strained English, melodious Urdu gaily bedecked with English (English-medium schoolgirls), Urdu with frequent English lexical insertions, and recourse to a Punjabi word or words that come to mind more easily in a context where Urdu is customary; in the other direction, the elite rude boys' emphatic Punjabi and their unemphatic ordinary mix, the use of an Urdu word or words that come to mind more easily in the midst of an interaction in a home where Punjabi is spoken, and English words may also occur in a Punjabi context. In the serious dimension, speakers select the appropriate language and stick with it as much as they are able.

The language of the informal dimension is often perceived by speakers who, because they do not know any better, adopt bits that would be assigned to different languages by educated standards, and thus, by transmission across repertoires in the speech community, the language of the less educated (less empowered) absorbs features of the language of the better educated (more empowered). In some respects the language does not change at all, intonation will be used as appropriate to the roles during interaction, but words, and also some short phrases, are learned and become part of the less-educated speakers' ordinary language.

Speech input from the informal mode of one category of people in the community, reproduced by speakers of another category, with their respective economically determined constraints of knowledge of the languages involved, results in other-language lexical items being used as part of the less prestigious language and incorporated as part of the language. The process is as follows (for example): a bilingual English-Urdu speaker must/will speak to a non-English speaker in Urdu. They are more likely than not to inadvertently include words from English, as in the example above. Under normal conditions there will not be too many and the Urdu speaker will figure out what many of these words mean. Many of those who have no education in English also have little education in Urdu. Such people do not know that these words are from English, nor do they have enough formal knowledge of Urdu to realize that they are not simply new Urdu words, like the many Persian borrowings that are used in the difficult literature books in school and even some maga-

zines. A person with modest education may simply adopt new words that are heard repeatedly as part of the Urdu vocabulary. These words may be repeated at home or the workplace. The Urdu speaker with whom the English-Urdu speaker must interact will not speak English to him and so cannot insert disparate words or do anything else. The English speaker will only speak English to other English speakers, and even if one of them does not know English perfectly, they usually do recognize when a word from a local language is being used. The knowledge of educated speakers allows them to sort out the languages they are hearing and enables them to restrict themselves to one of them at will. Uneducated speakers lack the knowledge of standard languages and so blur the distinctions between elements of the different languages which they hear. As a result, these elements enter the language and are learned as a part of it.

The ability to demonstrate linguistic knowledge has important social rewards. To participate in higher circles, one must show near native English competence. Slips betray that a person may actually not be entirely comfortable in English. Flawed English will exclude an extremely competent man from a job which he could well perform. Contexts which are highly protected and deliberately preserved include exclusive positions, such as bank executive-managers and high government posts, and formal or serious speech and writing. English has the most power to reward or punish speakers according to how well they are able to maintain its standards. Urdu is still very much an institutional language, and Urdu speakers are also conscious of standards for Urdu and make an effort to maintain them. Punjabi speakers do so for Punjabi as well. The young lady above, who has lost some words of her mother tongue, is aware of that loss even though she is helpless to reclaim them.

In Lahore, each language has serious contexts in which an effort is made to maintain it in the form which is perceived as correct. Respected matrons speak and are spoken to in a pure, refined dialect of Punjabi. Institutions to retain a correct model differ slightly for each language. Each language is fostered somewhat in the home environment, somewhat through formal education. Speakers are very conscious of the shift to a serious context and everyone pays attention to using the most correct form of speech they have knowledge of. Most forms of written language are subject to the care associated with formal contexts.

In the context of the processes above, education is an important defense against borrowing. Borrowing from Urdu into Punjabi happens more easily because quite a lot of workers use some Urdu on the job, many use quite a lot, not to mention the not inconsiderable number who

enjoy reading and whose Urdu is quite good. Words from Urdu that slip into Punjabi will already be known to many audiences so there is no hindrance to communication. Most of the less-educated members of the population are Punjabi-Urdu speakers or monolingual Punjabi speakers, so Punjabi, the language of an impoverished population, has less education with which to defend itself from incursions by the vocabulary of other languages. Most Urdu speakers have enough education, and enough knowledge of Punjabi, to enable them to avoid Punjabi words when they speak, but many are not able to recognize and exclude English words. Even in the past, before the institutions which accompanied national languages became widespread, other institutions and traditions existed which also served to make models of correct language available to only a select few. This is why lexical items are seen again and again to be most frequently borrowed from the language of the powerful community to the language of the less powerful. The potential is there for them to be borrowed in both directions, but borrowing into the more prestigious language is blocked by ideas of language purity and institutions, such as education, that maintain it in an approved form.

It is not the language itself, but rather the importance that the community attributes to a certain form of the language, that blocks avenues of mixture in one direction while permitting it in another. Numerous devices restricting access to the languages of status maintain their symbolic capital (for a discussion of symbolic capital, see Graeber 1996 and Berger 1972). Urdu is prized by many of its speakers, and many of these speakers will be individuals who have acquired it, as different from Punjabi, and so they immediately recognize Punjabi when they hear it and can easily exclude it in serious speech. Punjabi is inappropriate in many contexts, as it is earnest in others. Yet there are still many contexts where it survives with relatively little intrusion. This is the diversity of the community.

The role of Urdu in Lahore is multifaceted. It is exclusive in its refinement and inclusive as a *lingua franca*, the national language. Wedged between English and Punjabi on an economic scale, Urdu is subject to incursions from both sides. Yet loyal speakers and advocates defend the integrity of Urdu in classrooms, newsrooms, literary venues, and in chance encounters. Urdu in Lahore is very much a living language and its future is in the hands (or rather, the voices) of a thriving and diverse population of speakers. □

## Works Cited

- Alam, Qaiser Zoha. 1988. "An Aspect of the Impact of English on Urdu." *Indian Linguistics* 49:25–33.
- Ammerlaan, Tom. 1996. "You Get a Bit Wobbly...": Exploring Bilingual Lexical Retrieval Processes in the Context of First Language Attrition. Ph.D. Diss., University of Nijmegen.
- Beeman, William. 1986. *Language, Status, and Power in Iran*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Berger, John. 1972. *Ways of Seeing*. London: Penguin Books.
- Bot, Kees de and Robert Schreuder. 1993. "Word Production and the Bilingual Lexicon." In *The Bilingual Lexicon*. Edited by Robert Schreuder and Bert Weltens. Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Dorian, Nancy C. 1981. *Language Death: The Life Cycle of a Scottish Gaelic Dialect*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Eickelman, Dale F. 1992. "Mass Higher Education and the Religious Imagination in Contemporary Arab Societies." *American Ethnologist* 19(4):643–55.
- Errington, James Joseph. 1998. *Shifting Languages: Interaction and Identity in Javanese Indonesia*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Ewing, Katherine. 1997. *Arguing Sainthood: Modernity, Psychoanalysis, and Islam*. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press.
- Faruqi, Shamsur Rahman. 2006. "Strategy for the Survival of Urdu in India Through School Education." *The Annual of Urdu Studies* 21:120–38.
- Ferguson, Charles A. 1959. "Diglossia." *Word* 15:325–40.
- Fishman, Joshua A., Charles A. Ferguson, Jyotirindra Das Gupta, eds. 1968. *Language Problems of Developing Nations*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Gal, Susan. 1978. "Peasant Men Can't Get Wives: Language Change and Sex Roles in a Bilingual Community." *Language in Society* 7:1–16.
- . 1978b. "Variation and Change in Patterns of Speaking: Language Shift in Austria." In *Linguistic Variation: Models and Methods*. Edited by David Sankoff. New York: Academic Press.
- . 1988. "The Political Economy of Code Choice." In *Codeswitching: Anthropological and Sociolinguistic Perspectives*. Edited by Monica Heller. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Gardner-Chloros, Penelope. 2001. "Code-Switching and Language Shift." In *Sociolinguistic and Psycholinguistic Perspectives on Maintenance and Loss of Minority Languages*. Edited by Ton Ammerlaan, Madeleine Hulsen, Heleen Strating, and Kutlay Yagmur. New York: Waxman.
- Gellner, Ernest. 1983. *Nations and Nationalism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Goffman, Erving. 1959. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor.
- Graeber, David. 1996. "Beads and Money: Notes Towards a Theory of Wealth and Power." *American Ethnologist* 23(1):4–24.

- Gumperz, John. 1964. "Hindi-Punjabi Code-Switching in Delhi." *Proceedings of the Ninth International Congress of Linguists*. Edited by L. Hunt. The Hague: Mouton & Company. (Reprinted in *Language in Social Groups: Essays by John J. Gumperz*. Selected and introduced by Anwar S. Dil. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1971).
- Haarmann, Harald. 1989. *Symbolic Values of Foreign Language Use: From the Japanese Case to a General Sociolinguistic Perspective*. New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Hymes, Dell. 1974. *Foundations in Sociolinguistics: An Ethnographic Approach*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Kaufman, Dorit and Mark Aronoff. 1991. "Morphological Disintegration and Reconstruction in First Language Attrition." In *First Language Attrition*. Edited by Herbert W. Seliger and Robert M. Vago. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Kirsner, Kim, Erin Lalor and Kathryn Hird. 1993. "The Bilingual Lexicon: Exercise, Meaning and Morphology." In *The Bilingual Lexicon*. Edited by Robert Schreuder and Bert Weltens. Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Kulick, Don. 1992. *Language Shift and Cultural Reproduction: Socialization, Self and Syncretism in a Papua New Guinean Village*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Laitin, David D. 1992. *Language Repertoires and State Reconstruction in Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Leach, Edmund R. 1970. *Political Systems of Highland Burma*. London: Athlone Press.
- Leitner, G.W. 1882. *History of Indigenous Education in the Punjab Since Annexation and in 1882*. Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing.
- Mansoor, Sabiha. 1993. *Punjabi, Urdu, English, in Pakistan*. Lahore: Vanguard.
- Milroy, Leslie. 2001. "Bridging the Micro-Macro Gap: Social Change, Social Networks and Bilingual Repertoires." In *Theories on Maintenance and Loss of Minority Languages: Towards a More Integrated Explanatory Framework*. Edited by Jetske Klatter-Folmer and Piet Van Avermaet. Munich: Waxman.
- Mir, Farina. 2002. *The Social Space of Language: Punjabi Popular Narrative in Colonial India 1850–1900*. Ph.D. diss., Columbia University.
- Myers-Scotton, Carol. 1992. "Codeswitching as a Mechanism of Deep Borrowing, Language Shift, and Language Death." In *Language Death: Factual and Theoretical Explorations with Special Reference to East Africa*. Edited by Matthias Brenzinger. New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Nichols, Patricia C. 1984. "Networks and Hierarchies: Language and Social Stratification." In *Language and Power*. Edited by Cheri Kramaræ, Muriel Schulz, and William M. O'Barr. London: Sage Publications.
- Rahman, Tariq. 1999. *Language, Education, and Culture*. Karachi: Oxford University Press.
- . 2002. *Language, Ideology, and Power*. Karachi: Oxford University Press.



- . 2006. "Urdu as an Islamic Language." *The Annual of Urdu Studies* 21:101–19.
- Schiffman, Harold. 1996. *Language Policy and Language Culture*. New York: Routledge.
- Srinivas, M.N. 1989. "The Cohesive Role of Sanskritization." In *The Cohesive Role of Sanskritization and Other Essays*. Edited by M.N. Srinivas. Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press.
- Zaman, Muhammad Qasim. 2002. *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.