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**ATTITUDE OF COLLEGE STUDENTS TOWARDS
MOTHER TONGUE: A CASE STUDY OF DOGRI**

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ABSTRACT

The Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir is the only Union Territory in India with more than two official languages. In addition to Dogri, Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir has four other official languages including Kashmiri, Urdu, Hindi and English. English is the medium of instruction and mode of examination in higher education. Dogri is one of the major languages of the Jammu province and is taught as an elective subject in the curriculum. Although students in various spheres of life use Dogri, the attitude of students towards Dogri has not been studied till date. Given this backdrop, the present study aims to find out college students' attitudes toward Dogri. Due to its quantitative approach, this study used a survey research design. The data were collected through a five-point Likert scale questionnaire ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree' administered to a total 50 participants. The result of the study showed that the respondents tend to have a positive attitude towards the Dogri language. Still, a number of students reflect a neutral attitude in some of their statements.

Keywords: Dogri, College Students, Language Attitude, Multilingualism.

1. Introduction

Indian Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir is the only Union Territory of India with five languages as the UT's official languages. Following the abolition of Article 370 and the division of the state of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union Territories, a bill passed by the Parliament on September 22, 2020, declared Dogri, Kashmiri, Urdu, Hindi, and English as the official languages in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. In Kashmir division, Kashmiri is the dominant language and is spoken by majority of Kashmiris. In the same manner, Dogri is dominantly used in Jammu division for oral communication in almost all domains. In contrast, Hindi and English

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are used in the fields of administration, education, written communication and in formal settings.

1.2 Dogri Language

Dogri is an Indo-Aryan language spoken primarily in the Jammu province of Indian Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. It is the official language of the Jammu division of the state and is also spoken in parts of Himachal Pradesh and Punjab. The Dogri-speaking region of Jammu and Kashmir is in the southern part of the UT. It includes the districts of Jammu, Samba, Kathua, Udhampur, Reasi, and parts of Ramban, Doda and Rajouri. The language is also spoken in parts of Himachal Pradesh, particularly in Chamba, Kangra, and Una districts, and some parts of Punjab closer to Jammu. It is closely related to Punjabi and shares many linguistic features with other languages of the region, including Hindi and Urdu. However, its unique features distinguish it from these other languages.

1.3 Concept of Language Attitude

According to the *Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*, language attitudes are the attitudes that speakers of different languages or language varieties have towards each other's languages or their own language. Positive or negative feelings towards a language may reflect impressions of its linguistic complexity or simplicity, ease of learning or difficulty, importance or elegance, social status, etc. The measurement of language attitude provides useful information in language teaching and language planning. This is also the core of an enormous number of studies in Indian and foreign languages.

1.4 Literature Review

The study of language attitudes has a long and rich history. Research on language attitude started in the 1930s, with one of the pioneers in this area of investigation being Thomas Hatherley Pear. He questioned whether the voice was capable of yielding sufficient cues for a reliable and valid personality assessment. Joshua A. Fishman contributed significantly to the field and provided not only the theoretical underpinning of the field but also contributed a variety of techniques and approaches that are still in use among the scholars.

Crystal (1997) says that language attitudes deal with the speakers' feelings towards language (i.e. rich, poor, beautiful, ugly, sweet-sounding, etc.) and language maintenance and planning. In other words, language attitudes are actually "the feelings people have about their own language or the language of others."

According to Baker (1992), integrative attitude is to learn a language in order to attach to or be recognized or affiliated to a certain group or to practice their cultural dealings. “An instrumentally motivated attitude, on the other hand, is induced by a desire to gain social recognition or economic advantages through knowledge of a foreign language” (Gardner & Lambert, 1972: 14)

Holmes (Holmes, 2008 as cited by Dweik, 2015) says that people classify different languages or varieties as elegant, expressive, vulgar, musical, polite, impolite, pleasing or unpleasing (this categorization has influenced the users’ attitudes towards the language because it reflects who they are and represents the social groupings they belong to). As a result, people develop either a positive or negative attitude to other languages based on how the community identifies and labels them.

Language attitudes refer to the positive or negative evaluations of a particular language or language variety that people hold. These attitudes are shaped by a variety of social, cultural, and linguistic factors, including the history of the language, the social status of its speakers, and its perceived usefulness or prestige. Understanding language attitudes is important because it can have significant social and political implications, including influencing language policy and affecting individual and group identity. There are various factors such as social status, ethnicity and race, education, and geographic region that influence attitudes toward a language.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study adopted a quantitative approach to study the attitudes of college students toward their mother tongue, Dogri, by means of a survey questionnaire.

2.2 Participants

The study involved 45 students from Government Degree College, Kunjwani, Jammu, and Government Degree College, Ranbir Singh Pura, Jammu. The respondents were graduate students falling in the age group of 18 and 25. All of them had studied Hindi till class 10 and English till class 12. A stratified random sampling technique was used in which the researcher can manipulate the sample according to several secondary variables; in other words, the researcher stratifies his/her sample based on different social factors (gender, age, social class, etc.).

2.3 Survey Instrument

One of the most common methods of collecting data on attitudes and opinions is the questionnaire survey since data collected through this method is easily quantifiable. The questionnaire for this study was adapted from the Questionnaire Bank for Sociolinguistic Surveys in India, developed by the Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore. Some items were added, and others were modified to meet the needs of the current study. The questionnaire was a five-point Likert scale questionnaire consisting of 10 statements in total. All 10 statements were put to a five-point rating scale ranging from “Strongly agree”, “Agree”, “Neither agree/Neither disagree”, “Disagree”, and “Strongly Disagree”.

2.4 Data Collection

Since the targeted population was not too large, the researchers administered the questionnaire himself. The researchers distributed copies of the questionnaire to the whole population. Therefore, all the participants on the day of administration were asked to complete the questionnaire. The total number of copies distributed to the students was 50 but the valid completed copies obtained after administration were 45 only.

3. Findings and Analysis

Statement Description	Attributes				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree/Neither disagree	Disagree	Totally Disagree
I like Dogri and am proud of it.	40 (88.8%)	05 (11.2%)	00	00	00

Table 1

Inference: Table 1 displays the students’ responses (which are converted into percentages for this study) whether they like Dogri and are proud of it. 88.8% of the respondents strongly agreed, followed by 11.2% who agreed with the statement. Although all the respondents speak equally fluently in Hindi and speak very well in English, there is no neutral or negative response from the informants which indicates that they have very positive attitudes towards Dogri.

Statement Description	Attributes				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree/Neither disagree	Disagree	Totally Disagree
Dogri is useful in business	18 (40.0%)	08 (17.7%)	09 (20.0%)	05 (11.2%)	02 (04.4%)

Table 2

Inference: 40.0% of the informants strongly agree and 17.7% agree that businesses are going the local way and that the possibility of making money with the help of one's mother language is enormous in today's business. Using one's mother tongue to communicate with the local customers is very much beneficial to become a businessman. However, still 20% of the respondents, one fifth, neither agreed/nor disagreed with the statement and 11.2% disagreed and 04.4% totally disagreed with it. Thus, it can be concluded that the informants show loyalty towards their mother tongue and reported that the usage of Dogri in their business would be beneficial.

Statement Description	Attributes				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree/Neither disagree	Disagree	Totally Disagree
Dogri is useful in science and technology	18 (40.0%)	05 (11.2%)	07 (15.5%)	11 (24.4%)	04 (08.8%)

Table 3

Inference: On the whole, English has been perceived as the language of science and technology. But still, 40.0% of informants strongly agreed and 11.2% agreed that Dogri is useful in science and technology. 15.5% do not take a concrete decision and said that they neither agree nor disagree with the statement. 24.4% of the informants, more than one-fifth, disagreed and 08.8% totally disagreed with the statement. Despite the fact that they have read all the science textbooks in English from 1st grade onwards, this outcome shows a positive attitude towards Dogri.

Statement Description	Attributes				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree/Neither disagree	Disagree	Totally Disagree
Dogri is helpful in getting better employment opportunities	17 (37.7%)	11 (24.4%)	11 (24.4%)	03 (06.6%)	01 (02.2%)

Table 4

Inference: Statement number 4 dealt with Dogri’s role in providing better employment opportunities. 37.7% of the informants strongly agreed with the statement followed by 24.4% who agreed. A good percentage of respondents, i. e., 24.4% neither agree/neither disagree with the statement while as 06.6% disagree and 02.2% totally disagree with this. The reason may be that native languages are assuming greater significance in the corporate world, with businesses going more local than ever before. As such, a good command of one’s mother tongue, coupled with the ability to read and write, can be a great advantage in getting better employment opportunities.

Statement Description	Attributes				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree/Neither disagree	Disagree	Totally Disagree
I will encourage my children to speak in Dogri	26 (57.7%)	09 (20.0%)	05 (11.2%)	03 (06.6%)	01 (02.2%)

Table 5

Inference: In table 5, the focus of the statement was on whether they will encourage their children to speak in Dogri and it is clearly evident that 57.7% strongly agreed and 20.0% agreed with the statement. It follows that they understand the importance of preserving their native language. 11.2% think that they neither agree nor disagree with the statement. Only 06.6% disagreed and 02.2% totally disagreed with the statement. We can see that there is a rapid transition in Dogra.

Statement Description	Attributes				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree/Neither disagree	Disagree	Totally Disagree
I would like to read literature through Dogri	18 (40.0%)	09 (20.0%)	13 (28.8%)	03 (06.6%)	02 (04.4%)

Table 6

Inference: The percentage above reflects the respondents’ responses to whether they would like to read literature through Dogri. 40% of the informants strongly agree and one-fifth, i. e., 20.0% are of the opinion that they agree with the above statement. The reason for a positive attitude may be that the thought process of an individual becomes more active and the imagination level reaches its peak when someone reads literature in his/ her own mother tongue. Mother tongue is the language of our heart and mind and reading literature in our mother tongue might give us vividness and it helps in discovering our roots better and more imaginatively. Still, a good percentage 28.8% neither agree/neither disagree and the negative responses are very minimal 06.6% disagree and 04.4% totally disagree with the statement.

Statement Description	Attributes				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree/Nor disagree	Disagree	Totally Disagree
Dogri symbolizes my regional identity	34 (75.5%)	06 (13.3%)	04 (08.8%)	01 (02.2%)	00

Table 7

Inference: After all, language is an important marker of identity and people are often categorized by others according to the language they speak. The statement “Dogri symbolizes my regional identity” may be the most important for this section. 75.5% strongly agree that Dogri symbolizes their regional identity, followed by 13.3% agree. 08.8% of informants neither agree/nor disagrees and 02.2% of the informants claim Dogri does not identify their regional identity. There were no responses stating that they completely disagreed with the statement above. It is understood that our mother tongue is the key to our culture, identity and belief system. There is a strong bond between the mother tongue and culture, and the people, who don’t know their mother tongue, have difficulty finding a connection to their roots and identity.

Statement Description	Attributes				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree/Nor disagree	Disagree	Totally Disagree
Dogri is a symbol of prestige/social status	25 (55.5%)	13 (28.8%)	06 (13.3%)	01 (02.2%)	00

Table 8

Inference: Each language has its own place and status in society and using one’s mother tongue is a matter of self-esteem and pride. It has a tremendous positive impact on an individual’s personality. This builds confidence and affinity for the community. Table 9 indicates 55.5% of informants strongly agreed that Dogri is a symbol of prestige/social status for them followed by 28.8% agreeing. 13.3% neither agree/nor disagree with the statement and the remaining 02.2% disagree. As far as the informants are concerned, there are no totally disagreeable responses.

Statement Description	Attributes				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree/Nor disagree	Disagree	Totally Disagree
I can express myself best in Dogri	26 (57.7%)	12 (26.6%)	06 (13.3%)	01 (02.2%)	00

Table 9

Inference: The finding in Table 7 shows that 57.7% of the informants strongly agreed with the statement followed by 26.6% agree. 13.3% neither agree/nor disagree with the statement and only 02.2% disagree. Informants do not respond totally disagreeably. It is a proven fact that personality, character and skills become truly revealed through our mother tongue. It is a powerful tool for people to communicate with one another. It allows them to better communicate with their family, friends and society which give them a sense of identity and belonging to them.

Statement Description	Attributes				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree/Neither disagree	Disagree	Totally Disagree
Dogri is essential for promoting communication across groups	21 (46.6%)	11 (24.4%)	14 (31.1%)	01 (02.2%)	00

Table 10

Inference: As can be seen in table 10, less than fifty percent 46.6% respondents strongly agree and 24.4% agreed with the statement that Dogri is essential for promoting communication between groups followed by 31.1% neither agree/nor disagree, 02.2% disagreed, and there is no totally disagreed response. It seems that the respondents are well aware of the fact that communication is fundamental to the existence and survival of individuals, groups, societies and nations. The most common means of communication is language and there is no society that can function without language. As language is an integral part of society, it is the native language that plays a vital role in helping people build a bridge of relationships in society.

4. Conclusion

This research shows that college students hold a positive attitude toward Dogri, which is consistently supported throughout all the statements. However, some students seem confused and neutral when it comes to some statements. Although, the college students are equally proficient in Hindi and English, they are becoming more aware about the growing demand for Dogri in the region, as well as its usage in the society. Students believe that the knowledge of Dogri will enable them to communicate with people of a similar culture. Despite the fact that and western education and culture are having a great deal of influence on the upcoming generation, this study reveals that the Dogri speakers exhibit a positive attitude towards their native language.

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