



Language And Identity: Hindko As A Cultural Legacy Among Communities In Hazara Division

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Abstract

Language plays a dominant part in individual's identity. Language serves as a means of communication and an indicator of cultural endurance. This study explores the connection between language and identity through the lens of Hindko, a prominent language in the Hazara Division of Pakistan. It observes how Hindko functions not only as a linguistic system but also as a vital indicator of cultural heritage, social belonging, and historical continuity among its speakers. The paper highlights the ways in which Hindko reflects the traditions, values, and collective memory of the Hazara community strengthening a shared sense of identity. By analyzing sociolinguistic patterns, cultural practices, and community attitudes, the study highlights the importance of preserving Hindko as an intangible cultural asset. It argues that linguistic diversity is essential not only for cultural preservation but also for fostering inclusive identities in multicultural societies. Ultimately, the research indicates that Hindko as a key sign of cultural identity in Hazara Division, emphasizing the need for efforts in language promotion.

Keywords: *Cultural, Communities, Language, Identity, Hindko, Hazara*

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1. Introduction

Language is an important indicator of identity, serving not only as a means of communication but also as a source of culture and history. It forms how individuals observe themselves and how they are known within their communities. In multilingual societies, language often plays a vital role in distinguishing cultural groups and preserving their exceptional heritage. The linking between language and identity becomes particularly important in regions where local languages exist with dominant national or global languages. Hindko, a broadly spoken language in the Hazara Division of Pakistan, signifies more than a linguistic system; it represents the cultural inheritance of the people of this area. Through its oral traditions, proverbs, and everyday communication, Hindko replicates the social values, historical experiences, and shared worldview of its speakers. Hindko is a key indicator of cultural values, linking individuals to their family roots and supporting a sense of community identity. The transmission of Hindko from one generation to the next plays a vital role in supporting this cultural continuity. However, the position of Hindko as a cultural indicator is gradually influenced by social and economic changes such as urbanization, modernization, and the growing dominance of languages like Urdu and English. In this modern era younger generations shifted toward these languages for education and employment opportunities, possibly weakening their connection to Hindko. This study, therefore, seeks to explore the role of Hindko in shaping identity in Hazara Division. Language is extensively recognized as an essential sign of identity, functioning not only as a means of communication but also as a fountain of cultural knowledge. As speakers use Hindko in everyday communications and social practices, they preserve and transmit a distinct cultural identity (Rahman, 2002; Shackle, 1980). Despite pressures from dominant national and global languages Hindko continues to embody local traditions and social norms. Examining Hindko as a cultural inheritance thus provides valued vision into how language withstands community unity and strengthens a shared sense of history (Fishman, 1991; Rahman, 2002). Following research objectives are explained in this study.

1.1. Research Objectives

1. To analyze how the Hindko language reflects the cultural traditions, values, and social norms of communities in Hazara Division.
2. To explore the intergenerational transmission of Hindko as a form of cultural inheritance.
3. To assess the impact of modernization, urbanization and globalization on the use and of Hindko.

1.2. Research Methodology

The study on *Language and Identity: Hindko as a Cultural Legacy among the Communities of Hazara Division* adopted a qualitative and quantitative research methodology to explore how language functions are crucial for cultural identity. This study enables an understanding of how Hindko is used, perceived, and transmitted across generations within social settings. Data was collected from different Government Colleges and Schools of Hazara Division through **questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and participant observation**. This approach allows the researcher to get narratives of cultural legacy, linguistic practices and identity construction. In addition, purposive sampling ensured representation from both urban and rural communities within Hazara Division. Analysis of the data was conducted through pie chart and graphs having percentages to interpret the factors related to language use and cultural symbolism.

2. Theoretical Frame Work

The theoretical framework of the study was grounded in **sociolinguistic theories of language and identity**, particularly drawing on Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory and Spolsky's Language Policy Framework. Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory (Giles, Bourhis, & Taylor, 1977) explains how the strength and survival of a language are closely tied to the identity of its speaker community, making it very relevant for understanding Hindko as a sign of cultural continuity. Spolsky's framework (2004) further contributes by examining the relationship between language practices, beliefs, and highlighting how social and institutional factors influence language maintenance. Additionally, the study may incorporate perspectives from scholars such as Joshua A. Fishman, who emphasizes the role of language in preserving ethnic identity and intergenerational transmission. Together, these theoretical lenses position Hindko as both a symbolic and functional resource through which cultural inheritance, social belonging, and identity are constructed and sustained in the Hazara context. Based on theoretical framework research objective are explained below in detail.

2.1. Hindko Language reflects the Cultural Traditions and Social Norms of Communities in Hazara Division

The Hindko language serves as an influential factor of cultural traditions in the Hazara Division. Hindko is a source of oral heritage with traditional stories proverbs and poetry. Through traditional narratives and idiomatic expressions, Hindko converts local histories and indigenous knowledge that are passed down across generations. For example, traditional sayings often highlight themes such as hospitality, honor and communal harmony elements of Hazara's culture. These linguistic forms are not simply talkative tools but representations of shared cultural meanings. Language has a tremendous influence on social inclusion (Lippi-Green, 2012). As noted by Fishman (1991) language plays a vital role in preserving cultural continuity and transmitting inheritance, mainly in communities where oral traditions remain leading. Hindko functions as a living archive of

traditions that endures cultural uniqueness within the region. Hindko reflects the **ideals and social norms** of Hazara communities through its patterns of use and expressions. The language encodes respect for elders, gender roles, and social grading through forms of address and politeness approaches. Moreover, the constant use of Hindko in family and public domains highlights the value placed on relationship and cultural belonging, even in the face of multilingualism and urbanization. Drawing on Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory (Giles et al., 1977) the continued use of Hindko indicates a solid sense of group identity and unity among its speakers. According to Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory, keeping the Hindko language alive helps the whole community stay strong. It allows cultural traditions, social networks, and a shared identity to continue, even when other languages are becoming more dominant. Similarly, Dell Hymes (1974) highlights those communicative practices are shaped by cultural norms, suggesting that Hindko not only reflects but dynamically strengthens the social structure and value system of Hazara society. The Hindko language plays a dominant role in preserving cultural unity in Hazara Division. As a regional language profoundly tangled with local traditions and social practices, Hindko unites its speakers of the areas in family interactions, communal get-togethers, and religious ceremonies. In Hazara, Hindko is not only a medium of communication but also transmit moral lessons, social norms that strengthen bonds among community members. The data collected through the questionnaire reveals several important insights into the use and cultural significance of the Hindko language among respondents. When asked through questionnaire whether they speak Hindko, 80% of respondents answered in the affirmative, while 20% reported that they do not speak the language (Fig.1). Regarding the contexts in which Hindko is primarily used, 60% of respondents indicated that they use it at home. In contrast, 15% reported using it in the market, another 15% in the workplace, and 10% in social gatherings. This suggests that Hindko is predominantly a home-based language (Fig.2). When participants were asked whether Hindko reflects the traditions of their community, 60% strongly agreed, while the remaining 40% agreed (Fig.3). Similarly, 65% of respondents strongly agreed that Hindko expresses their cultural values and beliefs, 30% agreed, and 5% remained neutral (Fig.4).

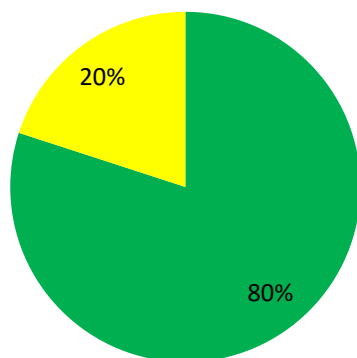


Fig 1: Indication about Hindko speaking

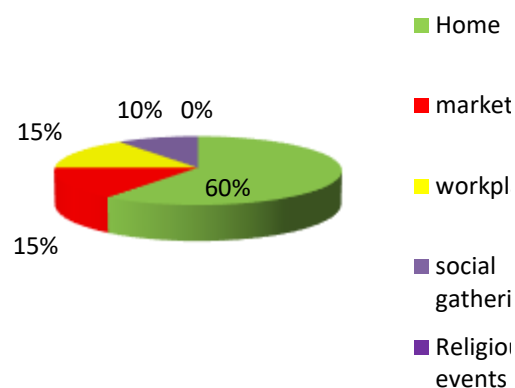


Fig 2: Indication about primary use of Hindko

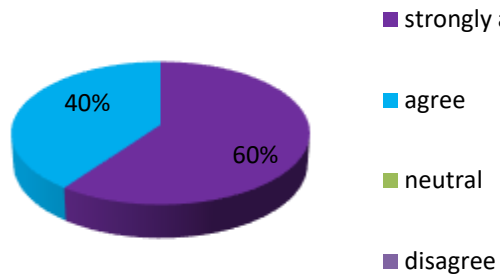


Fig 3: Indication about Hindko that it reflects the traditions of their community

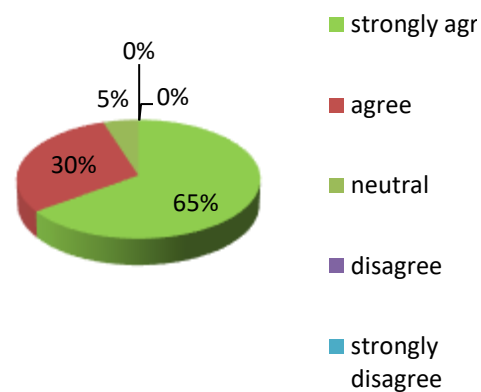


Fig 4. Indication about Hindko expresses the cultural values

2.2. Intergenerational Transmission of Hindko as a form of Cultural Inheritance.

The intergenerational transmission of the Hindko language characterizes a key factor through which cultural inheritance is preserved within families and communities in Hazara Division. This transmission occurs in informal fields like home, where elders play a dominant role in mingling children into dialectal and cultural practices. Through normal communication, storytelling and participation in cultural ceremonies younger generations get not only linguistic competence but also implanted cultural knowledge and social norms. As Fishman (1991) argues, the family is the most critical domain for supporting minority and regional languages, as it certifies endurance beyond formal institutional support. In the case of Hindko, its use in family communication strengthens emotional bonds and a sense of belonging, making it an energetic sign of cultural identity. However, the process of intergenerational transmission is gradually influenced by external sociolinguistic pressures such as urbanization, migration, and the supremacy of national and global languages. These factors can lead to **language shift**, where younger speakers may favor more socially beneficial languages, possibly weakening the transmission of Hindko. According to Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory (Giles, Bourhis, & Taylor, 1977) people continue to use Hindko which shows that the community is flexible and works together to keep their language alive. Pierre Bourdieu (1991) also points out that language have symbolic value so Hindko is respected and important in local communities. This means that passing Hindko from one generation to the next is an ongoing process, influenced both by people's commitment to their culture and by changes in society around them. People who do not speak the native language they find difficulties to obtain services in social interactions (Halliday & Hasan, 1989). Language is also a tool for self-expression (Cameron, 1995). Additionally, language has a role in the formation of social identities and group dynamic (Woolard, 1989). The cultural richness of the language is further emphasized by responses to the statement that proverbs and idioms in Hindko carry cultural wisdom. During the collection of data a majority of 70% strongly agreed with this statement, 20% agreed, and 10% were neutral (Fig.5). The role of Hindko in personal identity is evident, with 55% of respondents strongly agreeing that speaking Hindko is part of their identity, 20% agreeing, 10% remaining neutral, and 15% disagreeing (Fig.6). Moreover, 20% strongly agreed and 60% agreed that they feel more connected to people who speak Hindko, while 10% were neutral and 10% disagreed (Fig.7).

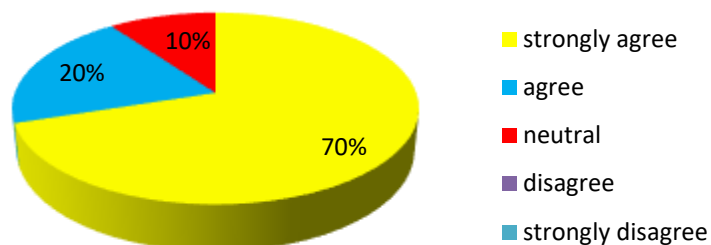


Fig 5 . Graph showing that idioms in Hindko carry cultural wisdom

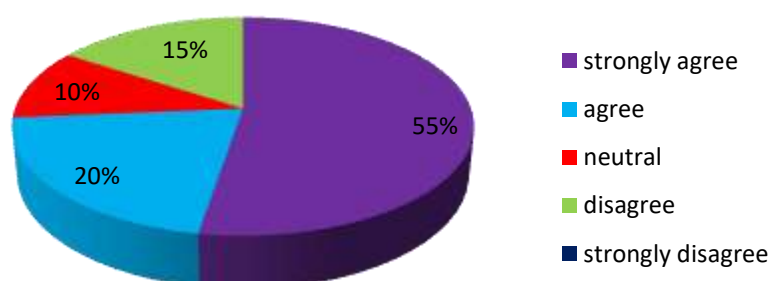


Fig 6: Indication about role of Hindko in personal identity

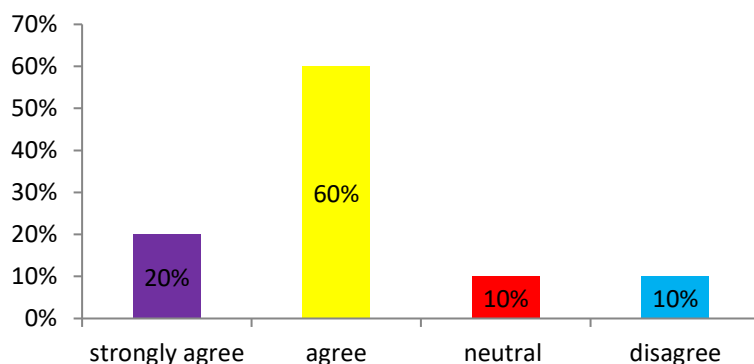


Fig 7: Indication about people who more connected to Hindko speaker

2.3. Impact of Modernization, Urbanization and Globalization on the Use of Hindko

The Hindko language has been affected by processes of modernization and urbanization, which have redesigned patterns of language use in Hazara Division. As communities transition from rural settings to more urbanized environments, there is increased interaction with dominant languages like Urdu and English, mostly in education, media and employment sectors. This move often results in domain reduction, where

Hindko becomes limited to informal settings . According to J.A. Fishman (1991) such decrease in practical domains is a critical indicator of language risk, as it weakens intergenerational transmission and everyday practice. Urban lifestyles also tend to prioritize linguistic adjustment for socio-economic mobility, leading younger generations to adopt languages apparent as more beneficial. Globalization further exaggerates these dynamics by promoting linguistic homogenization and the spread of international languages like English, through media and technology networks. Exposure to global culture can redesign linguistic preferences, particularly among youth, who may associate Hindko with tradition and limited mobility. However, globalization also offers chances for preservation through digital platforms and cultural documentation that promote linguistic pride and awareness. Drawing on Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory (Giles, Bourhis, & Taylor, 1977), the survival of Hindko depends on its apparent status, institutional support and demographic strength. Pierre Bourdieu (1991) says that people choose languages based on their *social value*. This means keeping Hindko alive depends on making it respected and useful in both local communities and the wider society. While modern life and global influences can make it harder for Hindko to survive. During the collection of data in terms of cultural connection, 50% of respondents strongly agreed that speaking Hindko connects them to their heritage, while 40% agreed and 10% neutral (Fig.8). Family influence also appears significant, as per report of maximum respondents that their parents always spoke Hindko with them at home. Respondents also highlighted several factors contributing to changes in the use of Hindko. The most frequently cited factor was the education system 20%, followed by urbanization 55% and migration 15% and media 10% (Fig.9). Finally, when asked whether losing Hindko would mean losing cultural identity, 50% of respondents strongly agreed, 20% agreed, 20% were neutral and 10% disagreed (Fig.10).

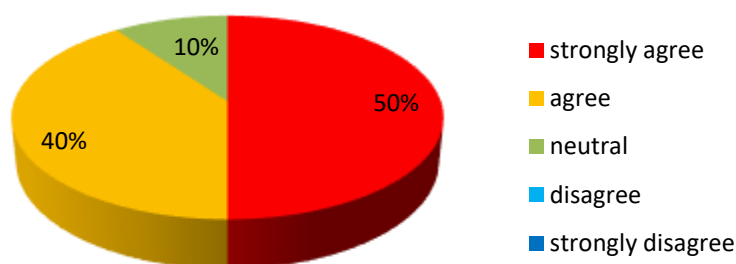


Fig 8: Indication about Hindko connects community to their heritage

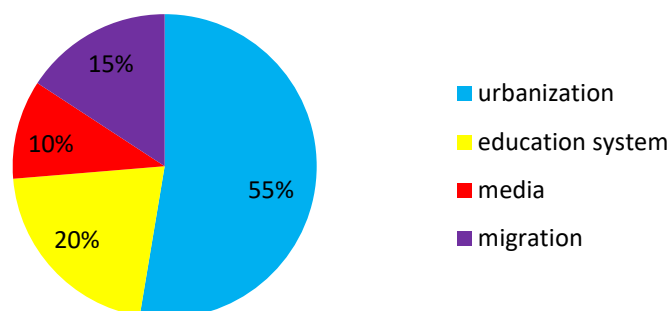


Fig 9: Indication about factors contributing to changes in the use of Hindko

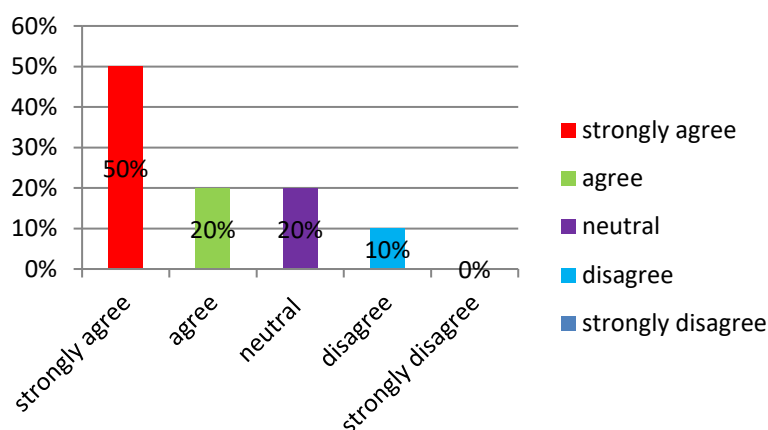


Fig 10: Indication about whether losing Hindko would mean losing cultural identity

3. Conclusion

Hindko emerges as a reflective sign of cultural legacy and identity in the Hazara Division (like, District Abbottabad, Mansehra, Haripur) and reflecting the lived experiences, traditions, and historical continuity of its speakers. More than a linguistic system, it carries within it the collective memory of generations, shaping social interactions and strengthening a shared sense of belonging. The normal use of Hindko in Hazara Division at homes, markets and community gatherings highlights its role as a living source of cultural values and local knowledge. At the same time, the challenges modeled by modernization, urbanization and the growing dominance of national and global languages. These factors frequently marginalize regional languages like Hindko, placing them at risk. Efforts in education, media representation and cultural promotion can play a crucial role in ensuring that Hindko continues to flourish. Eventually, preserving Hindko is not only about maintaining a mode of communication; it is about safeguarding a unique cultural identity that defines the people of Hazara Division. By promoting Hindko, communities confirm their heritage and pass it on to future generations. In this way,

Hindko remains a vital link between the past, present and future, sustaining both cultural endurance and a strong sense of identity in changing world. In conclusion, the findings clearly demonstrate that Hindko remains an energetic sign of cultural identity and heritage among its speakers. The majority of respondents not only speak Hindko but also primarily use it within the home, highlighting its role as a language of intimate and family communication. Strong agreement among participants of the Hazara Division that Hindko reflects traditions, expresses cultural values and carries wisdom through proverbs and idioms highlights its deep cultural significance. Additionally, the language plays an important role in shaping personal and collective identity, as many respondents feel a stronger sense of belonging and connection with Hindko speakers. The impact of family, particularly parents, further strengthens its transmission across generations. However, external factors such as urbanization, the education system, migration and media are contributing to shifts in its use, indicating potential risks to its continuity.

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