

Punjabi Language and its Main Dialects

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Abstract—Punjabi is an Indo-Aryan language spoken by over 100 million native speakers worldwide, making it the 10th most widely spoken language in the world. It is the native language of the Punjabi people who inhabit the historical Punjab region of Pakistan and India. Among the Indo-European languages it is unusual in being a tonal language.

Punjabi is the most widely spoken language in Pakistan, the 11th most widely spoken in India and the third-most spoken native language in the Indian Subcontinent. Punjabi is the fourth-most spoken language in the United Kingdom and third-most spoken native language (after English and French) in Canada. The language also has a significant presence in the United Arab Emirates, United States, Saudi Arabia, and Australia. The Punjabi language is written in the Shahmukhi and Gurmukhi scripts, making it one of the relatively few languages written in more than one script.

Punjabi is also spoken as a minority language in several other countries where Punjabi people have emigrated in large numbers, such as the United States, Australia, the United Kingdom, and Canada, where it is the fourth-most-commonly used language. There were 76 million Punjabi speakers in Pakistan in 2008, 33 million in India in 2011, 1.3 million in the UK in 2000, 368,000 in Canada in 2006, and smaller numbers in other countries.

1. INTRODUCTION

Punjabi is the religious language of the Sikhs. It is also the language of the popular Bhangra folk dance and singing. Most of the people who speak this language live in the Punjab region of Pakistan and India. Punjabi is the native language of about 130 million people, and is the 10th most spoken language in the world.

Many Persian and Arabic words were incorporated in Punjabi. Punjabi developed from Sanskrit through Prakrit language and later Apabhramṣa. The word Punjabi is derived from the word Panj-āb, Persian for "Five Waters", referring to the five major eastern tributaries of the Indus River. Punjabi is classified as a member of the Indo-Aryan subgroup of the Indo-European family of languages.

In India, Punjabi is spoken as a native language by 3% of the population. This was about 33 million in 2011. It is the official language of the Indian states of Punjab and Haryana. 86% of the total population of Lahore is native Punjabi and Islamabad. Punjabi is spoken as a native language by over 44.15% of Pakistanis. About 70.0% of the people of Pakistan speak Punjabi as either their first or second language, and for some as their third language. Punjabi is the most widely spoken language in Pakistan and is the provincial language in the Punjab Province of Pakistan.

In India, Punjabi is written in Gurmukhī, a standardised script. The word Gurmukhi translates into 'from the Guru's mouth'. In Pakistan, the Shahmukhī script, meaning "from the King's mouth", based on the Persian abjad is used. The major dialects of Punjabi include Majhi, Doabi, Malwai, Powadhi, Pothohari, and Multani. Others are Shahpuri or Sargodha dialect, Dhani, Jhangochi/Changvi, Jangli/Rachnavi, Hindko, Jandali, Jafri/Khetrani, Chenavari etc.

2. PUNJABI LANGUAGE AND GURMUKHI AND SHAHMUKHI SCRIPTS

In India Punjabi is written with the Gurmukhi (ਗੁਰਮੁਖੀ) alphabet, while in Pakistan it is written with a version of the Urdu alphabet known as Shahmukhi (شاه مکھی). The written standard for Punjabi in both India and Pakistan is known as Majhi (ਮਾਝੀ/ماچھی), which is named after the Majha region of Punjab.

Punjabi is one of India's 22 official languages and it is the first official language in East Punjab. In Pakistan Punjabi is the second most widely-spoken language but has no official status.

Gurmukhi script (ਗੁਰਮੁਖੀ): The Gurmukhi alphabet developed from the Landa alphabet and was standardised during the 16th century by Guru Angad Dev Ji, the second Sikh guru. The name Gurmukhi means "from the mouth of the Guru" and comes from the Old Punjabi word guramukhī.

Notable Features

Type of writing system: syllabic alphabet

Direction of writing: left to right in horizontal lines

Used to write: Punjabi

Consonants have an inherent vowel. Diacritics, which can appear above, below, before or after the consonant they belong to, are used to change the inherent vowel.

When they appear at the beginning of a syllable, vowels are written as independent letters.

When certain consonants occur together, special conjunct symbols are used which combine the essential parts of each letter.

Punjabi is a tonal language with three tones: high falling, low rising and level. The letters ਚ (ha), ਘ (gha), ਙ (jha), ਢ (dha), ਟ (dha) and ਭ (bha) have a level tone when at the beginning or a word of syllable, and a high falling tone when elsewhere. The conjuncts ਗੁ (gha), ਜੁ (jha), ਢੁ (dha), ਟੁ (dha) and ਬੁ (bha) have a level tone when at the beginning or a word of syllable, and a low rising tone when elsewhere.

Vowels and Vowel diacritics (Laga Matra)

ਅ a [ə]	ਆ ā [ɑ]	ਇ i [i]	ਈ ī [iː]	ਉ u [ʊ]	ਊ ū [uː]	ਏ e [e]	ਐ ai [æ]	ਓ o [o]	ਔ au [ɔ]
ਕ ka	ਕਾ ਕੰਨਾ kannā kā	ਕਿ ਸਿਹਾਰੀ sihārī ki	ਕੀ ਬਿਹਾਰੀ bihārī kī	ਕੁ ਅੰਕੜ aunkar ku	ਕੂ ਦੁਲੈਂਕੜ dulainkar kū	ਕੇ ਲਾਂਵਾਂ lānvān ke	ਕੈ ਦੁਲਾਂਵਾਂ dulānvān kai	ਕੋ ਹੋਰਾਂ hōrān ko	ਕੌ ਕਨੇਰਾਂ kanaurān kau

Consonants (Vianjans)

ੳ ਉਰਾਂ (ūrā) u, ū, o	ਅ ਐਰਾਂ (airā) a, ā, ai, au	ੲ ਈਰੀ (īrī) i, ī, e	ਸ ਸੱਸਾਂ (sas'sā) sa [sə]	ਹ ਹਾਹਾਂ (hāhā) ha [hə]
ਕ ਕੱਕਾਂ (kakkā) ka [kə]	ਖ ਖੱਖਾਂ (khakkhā) kha [kʰə]	ਗ ਗੱਗਾਂ (gaggā) ga [gə]	ਘ ਘੱਘਾਂ (ghaggā) gha [gʰə]	ਙ ਙੱਙਾਂ (ñanñā) ña [ɲə]
ਚ ਚੱਚਾਂ (caccā) ca [tʃə]	ਙ ਙੱਙਾਂ (chachchā) cha [tʃʰə]	ਜ ਜੱਜਾਂ (jajjā) ja [dʒə]	ਝ ਝੱਝਾਂ (jhajjā) jha [dʒʰə]	ਞ ਞੱਞਾਂ (ñaññā) ña [ɲʰə]
ਟ ਟੱਟਾਂ (tairkā) ṭa [tʰə]	ਠ ਠੱਠਾਂ (thaththā) ṭha [tʰʰə]	ਡ ਡੱਡਾਂ (daddā) ḍa [dʰə]	ਢ ਢੱਢਾਂ (dhaddā) ḍha [dʰʰə]	ਣ ਣਾਂ (ṇāṇā) ṇa [ɳə]
ਤ ਤੱਤਾਂ (tattā) ṭa [tə]	ਥ ਥੱਥਾਂ (thaththā) ṭha [tʰə]	ਦ ਦੱਦਾਂ (daddā) ḍa [dʰə]	ਧ ਧੱਧਾਂ (dhaddā) ḍha [dʰʰə]	ਨ ਨਾਂ (nānā) na [nə]
ਪ ਪੱਪਾਂ (pappā) pa [pə]	ਫ ਫੱਫਾਂ (phaphphā) pha [pʰə]	ਬ ਬੱਬਾਂ (babbā) ba [bə]	ਭ ਭੱਭਾਂ (bhabbā) bha [bʰə]	ਮ ਮੱਮਾਂ (mam'mā) ma [mə]
ਯ ਯੱਯਾਂ (yayyā) ya [jə]	ਰ ਰਾਰਾਂ (rārā) ra [rə]	ਲ ਲੱਲਾਂ (lallā) la [lə]	ਵ ਵੱਵਾਂ (vavvā) va [və]	ਰ ਰਾਰਾਂ (rārā) ra [rə]
ਸ਼ ਸੱਸਾਂ (śasśā) śa [ʃə]	ਖ਼ ਖੱਖਾਂ (khakkhā) kṣha [kʰʃə]	ਗ਼ ਗੱਗਾਂ (gaggā) gā [gʃə]		
ਜ਼ ਜੱਜਾਂ (zazzā) za [zə]	ਫ਼ ਫੱਫਾਂ (faffā) fa [fə]	ਲ਼ ਲੱਲਾਂ (lallā) lā [lə]		

Other symbols

ੳ	ਅਧਕ (adhak) - doubles the consonant before which it appears	ਹੁੱਟੀ	huttī [hʊʈi] - tired
ੰ	ਬਿੰਦੀ (bindī) - indicates nasalization. Used with all vowels except a, i and u	ਸ਼ਾਂਤ	šānt [ʃā̃t] - peaceful
◌ː	ਵਿਸਰਗ (visarg) - used very occasionally to represent an abbreviation or to add a voiceless 'h' after a vowel.	ਕː	kah
ੰ	ਟਿੱਪੀ (ṭippī) - indicates nasalization. Used with a, i and u, and also with ū when in final position	ਤੰਦ	taṅd [tãd] - strand
◌̣	ਹਲਠਤ (halant) - silences the inherent vowel. Sometimes used in Sanskritised text and dictionaries.	ਕ̣	k
ੴ	ek onkar - often used in Sikh literature. It literally means 'one God'.		

Numerals

੧	੨	੩	੪	੫	੬	੭	੮	੯	੧੦
ਇੱਕ	ਦੋ	ਤਿੰਨ	ਚਾਰ	ਪੰਜ	ਛੇ	ਸੱਤ	ਅੱਠ	ਨੌਂ	ਦਸ
ikk	do	tinn	cār	punj	che	satt	aṭṭh	naum	das
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Shahmukhi alphabet (شاه مکھی): The Shahmukhi alphabet is a version of the Urdu alphabet used to write Punjabi in Pakistan. It is normally written in Nasta'liq style and has been used since the second half of the 20th century. The name Shahmukhi means "from the King's mouth" The chart below shows the Shahmuki script with Gurmukhi equivalents

Notable Features: Type of writing system: alphabet

Direction of writing: right to left in horizontal lines

Used to write: Punjabi

The sounds ñ [ɲ], ng [ŋ] and ɳ [ɳ] are all written with ڻ (nun ghunna). In initial and medial positions they are written with ڻ.

ٻ (bari ye) is only found in the final position, when writing the sounds e [e] or ai [æ], and in initial and medial positions, it takes the form of ٻ.

Short vowels are written with: ا [ə], 'u [ʊ], .i [ɪ]

The chart below shows the Shahmuki script with Gurmukhi equivalents

خ	ح	ڄ	ج	س	ت	ٺ	پ	ب	آ
ਖ	ਬਾਰੀ हे	जे	जि	से	ते	ते	पे	बे	अ/आ
[x]	[h]	[ɟ]	[d͡ʒ]	[s]	[t]	[t]	[p]	[b]	[ə/a]
س	س	س	ج	ج	ز	ر	ز	د	د
swat	śin	sin	zhe	ze	re	r	zal	dal	dal
[s]	[ʃ]	[s]	[ʒ]	[z]	[r]	[r]	[z]	[d]	[d]
ل	گ	ک	ق	ف	غ	ع	ظ	ط	ض
lam	gaf	kaf	qaf	fe	ghain	gh	zoey	toey	zwat
[l]	[g]	[k]	[q]	[f]	[ɣ]	[ɣ]	[z]	[t]	[z]
ث		ٻ	ی	ہ	ء	و	ں	ن	م
th		باری یے	چوٹی یے	چوٹی हे	hamza	wow	nun ghunna	nun	meem
[ʈʰ]		y/e/ai	y/i	h		u/o/au	n/ñ/ŋ	[n]	[m]
		[j/e/æ]	[j/i]	[h]		[ʊ/w/o/ɔ]	[ŋ/ɳ/ɳ]		
گ	ک	د	د	چ	ج	ٹ	ڈ	ٹ	ڈ
gh	kh	dh	dh	ch	jh	th	ph	th	bh
[gʱ]	[kʰ]	[dʱ]	[dʱ]	[tʰ]	[dʱ]	[tʰ]	[pʰ]	[tʰ]	[bʱ]

3. MAIN DIALECTS OF PUNJABI LANGUAGE

1. Majhi Punjabi: The Majhi dialect is the prestige dialect of Punjabi's and spoken in the heart of Punjab where most of the Punjabi population lives. The Majhi dialect, the dialect of the historical region of Majha, spans the Lahore, Sheikhupura, Kasur, Okara, Gujranwala, Wazirabad, Sialkot, Narowal, Gujrat and to some extent in Jhelum District of Pakistani Punjab and Amritsar, Tarn Taran Sahib, and Gurdaspur Districts of the Indian State of Punjab.

2. Pothowari Punjabi: This Pothowari dialect is spoken in north area of Pakistani Punjab. It extends in the north from Muzaffarabad to as far south as Jhelum, Gujar Khan, Rawalpindi, Murree Hills (north of Rawalpindi), and east to Bhimber. Poonchi is east of Rawalakot. Potwari is in the plains around Rawalpindi.

Alternate names: Potwari, Pothohari, Potohari, Chibhali, Dhundi-Kairali. Dialects: Pahari (Dhundi-Kairali), Pothwari (Potwari), Chibhali, Punchhi (Poonchi), Jhelumi, Mirpuri.

Pahari means 'hill language' referring to a string of divergent dialects, some of which may be separate languages. Pahari is a dialect chain with Panjabi and Hindko. Closeness to western Pahari is unknown. Lexical similarity 76% to 83% among varieties called 'Pahari', 'Potwari', and some called 'Hindko' in Mansehra, Muzaffarabad, and Jammu.

3. Hindko Punjabi: Classified under Lahnda languages by many linguists; perhaps differs from Punjabi. Hindko dialect is spoken in north west Pakistani Punjab and North-West Frontier Province mainly this dialect is spoken in districts of Peshawar, Attock, Nowshera, Mansehra, Balakot, Abbottabad and Murree and the lower half of Neelum District and Muzaffarabad.

4. Jhangochi/Rachnavi/Changvi or Chenavari Punjabi: Jhangochi dialect is spoken in Pakistani Punjab. Jhangochi or Rachnavi is the oldest and most idiosyncratic dialect of the Punjabi.

It is spoken throughout a widespread area, starting from Khanewal and Jhang at both ends of Ravi and Chenab to Gujranwala district. It then runs down to Bahawalnagar and Chishtiaa(n) areas, on the banks of river Sutlej. This entire area has almost the same traditions, customs and culture.

The Jhangochi dialect of Punjabi has several aspects that set it apart from other Punjabi variants. This area has a great culture and heritage, especially literary heritage, as it is credited with the creation of the famous epic romance stories of Heer Ranjha and Mirza Sahiba.

It is spoken in the *Bar* areas of Punjab, i.e., areas whose names are often suffixed with 'Bar', for example Sandal Bar, Kirana Bar, Neeli Bar, Ganji Bar and also from Khanewal to Jhang includes Faisalabad and Chiniot.

5. Shahpuri Punjabi: The Shahpuri dialect has been spoken by the people of the town Shahpur. This language has been spoken by the people of District Sargodha including Dera Chanpeer Shah, Khushab, Mianwali, Attock, Chakwal, Mandi Bahauddin and Jhang. Parts of Faisalabad, Dera Ismail Khan, Dera Ghazi Khan and Bahawalnagar districts.

6. Dhani Punjabi: The people of Pothohar speak Pothohari dialect. However, the people of Chakwal or the Dhanni area in particular do not speak Pothohari and are ethnologically not regarded as Potoharis. They speak a distinctive Chakwali or Dhanni dialect of Punjabi, which is closer to Shahpuri, a dialect spoken in the Shahpur-Salt Range area and also has a slight element of Saraiki and Pothohari.

7. Multani/ Saraiki Punjabi: Multani or Saraiki is a mixture of Jhangochi of Punjabi and Sindhi. Saraiki is the new name. For centuries, Multani was in use. It is now considered a separate language instead of merely a dialect of Punjabi.

Historically, the speakers of dialects now recognized as belonging to Saraiki did not hold the belief that they constituted a cohesive language community or a distinct ethnicity. This consciousness developed among local elites in the years after the founding of Pakistan in 1947 in response to the social and political upheaval caused by the mass immigration of Urdu speaking refugee Muslims from India.

Saraiki has various sub-dialects such as Derewali, Thalochi, Multani and Riasuti. It is mostly spoken in southern and western districts of Punjab, which comprises Dera Ghazi Khan, Muzaffargarh, Bhakkar, Layyah, Mianwali, western parts of Khushab districts, Multan, Lodhran, southern and western parts of Khanewal, Bahawalpur, southern parts of Bahawalnagar and Rahim Yar Khan.

In India, Saraiki is spoken in Sirsa, Fatehabad, Hisar, Bhiwani, Panipat districts of Haryana, some area of Delhi and Ganganagar district, Hanumangarh and Bikaner districts of Rajasthan.

8. Malwi Punjabi: Malwi dialect is spoken in the eastern part of Indian Punjab. Main areas are Ludhiana, Moga, Sangrur, Barnala, Faridkot, Patiala, Fatehgarh Sahib, Mansa, Muktsar, Ambala, Bathinda, Ganganagar, Malerkotla, Ropar, and Ferozepur.

Malwa is the southern and central part of present day Indian Punjab. It also includes the Punjabi speaking northern areas of Haryana, viz. Ambala, Hissar, Sirsa, Kurukshetra etc. Not to be confused with the Malvi language, this shares its name.

9. Doabi Punjabi: Doabi dialect is spoken in Indian Punjab. The word “Do Aabi” means “the land between two rivers” and this dialect is spoken between the rivers of Beas and Sutlej. It includes Jalandhar, Nawanshahr, Kapurthala and Hoshiarpur districts.

10. Pwadhi Punjabi: Powadh or Puadh or Powadha is a region of Punjab and parts of Haryana between the Satluj and Ghaggar rivers. The part lying south, south-east and east of Rupnagar adjacent to Ambala District (Haryana) is Powadhi.

The Powadh extends from that part of the Rupnagar District which lies near Satluj up to the Ghaggar River in the east, which separates the states of Punjab and Haryana. Parts of Fatehgarh Sahib District, and parts of Patiala districts like Rajpura are also part of Powadh.

The Pwadhi dialect is spoken over a large area in present Punjab as well as Haryana. In Punjab, Kharar, Kurali, Ropar, Nurpurbedi, Morinda, Pail, Rajpura, and Samrala are the areas where the Puadhi language is spoken and the area itself is claimed as including from Pinjore, Kalka to Bangar area in Hisar district which includes even Nabha and Patiala in it.

11. Dogri Punjabi: Although Dogri is generally considered a separate language having its own vocabulary, some sources consider it a dialect of Punjabi. It is spoken by about 3.5 million people in the Jammu region of India.

Examples

English	Majhi, Standard Punjabi	Pothohari	Dogri	Pahari	Multani	Doabi
What are you doing? (masculine)	Ki karda ain?/ki karan deya ain?/ki karda pya ain?	Ka karne uo?	Ke karde o?	Ke (kay) peya kare-nanh?	ke karende paye o?	ki karda aa?
What are you doing? (masculine to address fem+ale)	Ki kardi ain?/ki karan dayi ain?/ki kardi payi ain?	Ka karani ay?	Ke karani ae?	Ke (kay) pai (payi) kare-neenh?	ke (kay) karende paye o?	ki kardi aa tu?
How are you?	Ki haal ae?	Keh aal e?	ke aal a?	Tudda ke haal e (eh)?	keevin haal tuhaade?	ki haal chal aa?
Do you speak Punjabi?	Tusi Punjabi Bol lainde o?	Punjabi bolne uo?	Punjabi bolde o?	Punjabi uburne o?	tussan punjabi bol lainde o?	tu punjabi bol laena?
Where are you from?	Tusi kithon de o?/Tusi kidron aaye o?	Tusa kudhr nay ayo?	Tus kudhr to o?	Kathe ne o?	tussan kithon de o?	kithon aa tu?
Pleased to meet you	Tenu/tuanu mil ke bahut khushi hoyi.	Tusan milay tay boo khushi oye	Tusan nu miliye bahut khushi oyi	Tussan mil ke khushi thi.	Tenu/tuanu mil ke bahut khushi thi e.	tuanu mil k bahut khushi hoyi
What's your name?	Tuada naa ki ae?	Tusan naa ke aa?	Tusan da naa kay ai?	Tudda ke naanh ve?	Tuada naa ki ae?	tera naam ki aa?
My name is ...	Mera naa ain...	Mara naa ... e	Mera naa ... e	Mainda naanh ... eh	mainda naa ... e.	mera naam aa
Yes	Haanji	Aaho	Aah	Haan	haanji	hanji

4. CONCLUSION

Punjabi is the religious language of the Sikhs. It is also the language of the popular Bhangra folk dance and singing. There are numerous varieties of Punjabi that create a virtual continuum between Western and Eastern varieties of the language. For the most part, the dialects are mutually intelligible, even though there are differences in pronunciation and vocabulary. Punjabi expatriates around the world speak a creolized form of the language that is increasingly deviating from the norms of Punjabi

spoken in India and Pakistan. Creolization is a process whereby a language evolves by incorporating elements of more than one language.

Punjabi has three tones: High, Mid, and Low. The tone of a word is a pitch pattern permanently associated with it. A change of tone changes the meaning of a word.

Stress in Punjabi can fall on any syllable of a word, and can differentiate otherwise identical words. In general, stress falls on the penultimate (one before last) syllable unless the syllable ends in a short vowel. If so, then the stress fall on the antepenultimate (second from the end) syllable.

Punjabi grammar is similar to that of other Indo-Aryan languages. Like all these languages, Punjabi is agglutinative, i.e., it adds suffixes to roots to build words and to express grammatical relations.

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