EXPLORING THE CHANGING TRENDS IN GREETINGS: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF URBAN AND RURAL VOICES IN TALAGANG, PUNJAB, PAKISTAN

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Abstract Languages are indeed the carriers of various implicit phenomenon including concept formations, offloading ideas, operationalizing memories, collective consciousness, transmission of knowledge and preservation of cultural knowledge. The present study explored the perceptions of the local people in village of talagang and also people living in the city of talagang. Both urban and rural voices were documented and were analyzed thematically. The research also provided areas for future research especially studying the impact of dominance of the foreign language and shaping of various local concepts and its linkages with the global market.

INTRODUCTION

Language is usually encountered by its greetings and leave takings. Most of the languages foreign to us leave an impression with its unique cultural style of greetings their different social classes, events, ceremonies especially on weddings and while attending death rituals. Language is a hefty force that does more than transferring information and messages deliberately or unconsciously (Cargile, et al. 1994). Languages are living phenomenons that drive collective retention of cultures, norms, values and experiences. Languages are an integral part of our identities and are reflections of our cultural history as well as the present culture (Edwards, 1985; Fishman, 1991; Giles, et al. 1977; Khemlani-David 1998). On the other hand, English being the global and international language holds a supreme position where it finds certain ways to enter most of the languages and its cultures around the world. English language, both American and British holds a lion’s share of developing the latest trends in greetings and leave takings because it is believed, that in any form of linguistic imperialism, the first thing to be replaced by the dominant language is the daily ‘small talk’ which includes greetings, leave takings or other informal conversation forms (Paul 2007).

Since English is a widely spoken language, it is also referred to as the “Global language” or the “World language” or the lingua Franca of the present time (David 1998). English has become the language of power; this statement also holds true, pertaining the fact that it is the official language of many international organizations like the United Nations, The World Bank, and International Olympic Committee. It is also the language of some of the most powerful countries of the world like the United States of America and the Great Britain (ICAO 2011).

To further explain the global outreach of the English language we find it imperative to discuss the ‘domains’ of English. All international organizations when interacting with countries on a global level on matters of international action and diplomacy, all conferences, summits and international meetings have English as their working and operational language. English has now become the language of science and technology. Whenever new technology surfaces, it is introduced and advertised in English. All global branding and advertisements are in English, catering and addressing the global population. English also is the language of international laws and treaties. It also has an edge of being the language of internet communication. Furthermore, it is the language
of international safety i.e. air-speak and sea-
speak.

MATERIALS AND METHODS
A qualitative exploratory study was designed to
understand the perceptions on the changing
trends and its impact on the local perceptions of
the people by interviewing 12 respondents by
using an interview guide. The respondents were
from urban and rural areas, from lower class to
lower middle class and to upper middle class. The
income group has been divided as Rs 50,000 to Rs
100,000/month as upper middle and high income
group, Rs 20,000 to Rs 45,000 as middle income
group and Rs 5000 to Rs19000 as lower income
group. Names of the respondents are kept
anonymous upon request of secrecy. The
qualitative data was analyzed thematically after
cultivating categories drawn from similarities in
perceptions from a specific income group.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
The results of the study are presented below in
terms of bisecting the respondents according to
their income range.

Media and Information
“Specific classes of people i.e. lower middle and
upper middle class of people try to imitate/copy
the upper class of the society. Its more like
jumping in the bandwagon of modernity. Using
English words of greetings in our daily lives is
considered to be modern and progressive. Media
plays a huge role in this as the middle and lower
middle class tries to copy/imitate the celebrities
who are more westernized e.g. TV show hosts,
actors etc” (A public health specialist in
Islamabad from a higher income group)

Modern and Global Language; The Language of
the International Markets and Industries
“Modernization is an unconscious and ongoing
process with the people of cities. In pursuit of
acquiring a modern outlook people start greeting
each other in English language and slowly the
language slips in into our daily talk and replaces
words from regional language gradually. About
two decades ago the curriculum taught in schools
had a major share of Urdu and regional languages
like sindhi, and English as a language was
introduced to students after six to eight years of
formal schooling. Now English is taught from the
very beginning of formal schooling process and
there are more English medium schools than
Urdu medium ones hence English language is
replacing Urdu as the daily language of our
children” (A small businessman in Islamabad from
middle income group)

Integration of English Language in Education
System
“Due to abundance of English medium schools
and private schools, English language is taught
from the very beginning of schooling years of
children hence this generation of excessive
private schooling knows English better than their
any other regional or national language. People in
different environments use different greetings,
e.g. on a death ceremony, no one would say
hi/hello but would rather say Salam and same
goes for a mosque or religious get together,
however in situations different like these,
hi/hello/whats up will be used. Unconscious peer
pressure also plays a vital role, if someone’s
friends start saying hello he/she will also
eventually start saying the same” (A gatekeeper
in Islamabad from the lower income group)

Implicit Dominance
“The nations that are dominant in the world,
their norms become our induced practices.
Furthermore what ever trends media
propagates becomes a part of our daily routine slowly and
gradually. This goes to into sub conscious without
us knowing that its becoming a part of our daily
routine. And without challenging what we see on
TV, we accept it as our daily practice. Repetitive
exposure of media (TV) changes our daily
habits.” (A high income business man in Talagang)

Socialization and Enculturation
“It majorly depends upon how strong the
influence of your parents/family is upon you. If
one’s parents consider it as a taboo, one would
not adopt the habit of saying hi/hello but say
Salam instead. Young people usually have 3 spheres in their daily life 1) school/college, 2) domestic homes, 3) a social circle of friends. What ever sphere one is spending more time in will have an effect on his/her daily life. Youngsters these days spend more time in their social circles outside their home and spend a lot of time using internet (social media) where the medium of communication is English and hence they use hi/hello/whats up more than salam.” (A middle income shop keeper in Talagang)

**Marketable Language**

“English is the language of modern times, people want to look like modern, educated and liberal when they speak English. Its considered that whoever speaks fluently in this language is educated and ahead of the ones who don’t. People who move from small towns/villages to big cities and see the city people speaking fluent English they copy them and learn English and the first thing in any language that you learn is the greetings. Even in the villages now Urdu medium education is slowly dwindling and is being replaced by English medium schools. People have started wearing jeans and t-shirts in villages and maybe in another 15 to 20 years the coming generations might use English greetings.” (A low income driver in talagang)

**CONCLUSION**

The incorporation of foreign language into local daily discourse certainly develops a wide range of impact that can easily be seen in terms of changed greetings and leave takings. Certain other important factors are education, family type, role of media and more of a required skill to connect and market one’s self especially alignment with the global market. Future research may also include number of areas prone to receive implicit and explicit impact and especially the concept formation with the help of learning of a foreign language and its industrial linkages.

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