

LINGUISTIC DEMOGRAPHY OF HIMACHAL PRADESH

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Himachal Pradesh is characterized by high ethno-linguistic heterogeneity and small language communities that face risk of disappearing due to changes in demography, lack of documentation and institutional policies (Negi, 2016). This article verifies the language varieties in Himachal Pradesh along with domains of use, institutional policies and the vitality of languages, relying on previous studies by Devy & Tobdan (2016), Negi (2012;16), Tobdan (2018), and field study conducted between 2017 and 2019 to corroborate the varieties.

Keywords: Himachali, Indo-Aryan, Pahari, Tibeto-Burman, vitality

1. Introduction

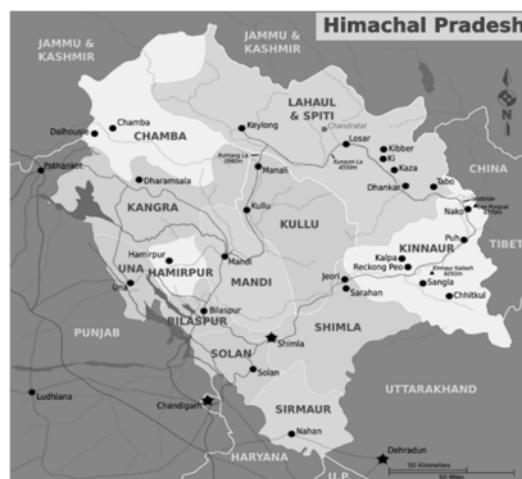
Himachal Pradesh is set on the foothills of the Himalayas in north India. Etymologically, Himachal means in the lap of snow ('him' and 'anchal'). It has a population of over 68.5 lakh (Census of India 2011), which is 0.57 percent of India's population, spread over 12 districts in an area of 55673 square kilometers. The State shares borders with the Union territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh to the north, Punjab to the west, Haryana to the southwest, and Uttarakhand to the southeast and Uttar Pradesh to the south. It also shares the border with Tibet to the east.

Himachal has a wide variety of geographical features, with high mountain ranges, narrow river lanes, valleys and river plains. It is characterized by high ethno-linguistic heterogeneity (Negi, 2016; Singh, 1996) and small language communities (Negi, 2012; 2016).

There is no direct literary or archeological evidence of pre-historic contact between different ethnic groups; early information is obscure in the form of folk traditions and myths. Rigveda mentions *Dasas*, *Dasyus*, *Kannauras*, *Nagas* etc., as the inhabitants of the present day Himachal (Bajpayee, 1981). At different stages small ethnic groups like *Bhots* and *Kirats* from east side and

the north Aryans migrated to the hills. It laid the basis of a heterogeneous ethnicity of Himachal Pradesh. 96% of people in Himachal are of Indo-Aryan ethnic stock, 95% are Hindus. Each village has powerful deities who control their social lives. The tribes are animist, they believe in supernatural powers and spirits.

Himachal also has Sikhs (1%), Buddhists (1%), and Muslims (2%). Buddhists mainly live in Lahaul & Spiti (62%) and Kinnaur (22%) (Census, 2011).



Map 1: Districts of Himachal Pradesh
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_Himachal_Pradesh.png

Himachali languages belong to the Indo-Aryan and Tibeto-Burman language family. Linguistic evidence shows traces of Sanskrit (Bailey, 1908; Sharma, 1991; Ukkhal, 1967), Austro-Asiatic (Bailey, 1908; Grierson, 1916; Kuiper, 1948; Osada 2006; Sharma, 1992; Witzel, 1999) and Dravidian (Hobbs, 2016; Sharma, 1991) languages in Himachali languages. The tribal languages spoken in Kinnaur, Lahul & Spiti districts and Malana in Kulu of Himachal Pradesh have Tibetan and Kirati influence (Bailey, 1909; Negi, 2012/ 2016; Tobdan, 2018; Saxena, 2011, Sharma, 1992; Widmer, 2018).

Different surveys have given different figures of language varieties in Himachal. Grierson (1909) documented twenty six Himachali languages; Ethnologue lists forty languages of Himachal. Census of India (2011) reported four languages-Hindi, Kinnauri, Lahuli and Other.¹

The Peoples' Linguistic Survey of India (henceforth PLSI) (2016) recorded 25 languages spoken in Himachal, including Hindi which has the status of Official language. The survey could not document all languages of the State. UNESCO (2010) lists seven languages of Himachal as severely endangered. The vitality of other smaller undocumented languages too is at risk. In absence of the actual number of languages spoken any language development efforts cannot be initiated.

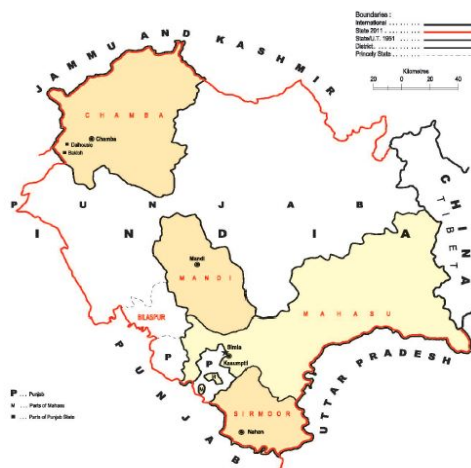
This article attempts to fill the gap in literature on languages of Himachal Pradesh, relying on Devy & Tobdan (2016) which is an indicator of the languages of Himachal Pradesh; Negi (2012) is a survey of languages of Kinnauri; Tobdan (2018) is a report on the languages of Lahaul & Spiti, and field survey conducted between 2017 and 2019 in Kinnaur, Spiti, Shimla, Solan, Mandi, Kullu, Sirmaur, and Kangra districts to identify language varieties.

The study refers to the aforementioned repertoires and joins them to account for the linguistic situation in the state, classification of languages, speakers, domains of use and institutional policies. The results will interest linguists, language planners, anthropologists, educationists working on language documentation, planning and policy implementations, and ethnic studies.

2. State re-organization

Himachal Pradesh came into being in 1948 as a Union Territory of the independent India by the integration of thirty Princely States (Verma 1995). Chamba, Mahasu, Mandi and Sirmaur were the initial four districts of the State.

In 1951, Himachal became Part 'C' State; in 1954 Bilaspur, a Part 'C' State was merged with Himachal (Verma 1995). (See Map 2 for divisions of Himachal Pradesh in 1951). In 1956, the State became a Union Territory after resisting merger with Punjab (Verma, 1995). In 1960, Kinnaur district was carved out of Mahasu district. In 1966, the hill regions of Punjab including Kangra, Simla, Kullu, Lahul Spiti, Nalagarh tehsil of Ambala, parts of Una in Hoshiarpur and Dalhousie of Gurdaspur district were merged with Himachal Pradesh.



Map 2: Himachal Pradesh in 1951

<https://censusindia.gov.in/2011census/maps/atlas/02part2.pdf>

In 1971, Himachal Pradesh was declared a full State as the eighteenth state of Indian Union (Tobdan, 2008).

3. Generic Pahari

People of Himachal are called Pahari or 'hilly,' a generic term associated with Indo-European language speaking population living in the Himalayas spread across Nepal to India and includes the people of Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Jammu & Kashmir (Paul, 1992). British noted, 'the forest tribes or Pahari or Wanwasi or hill man, the forest people, irrespective of tribal distinctions' (Bains, 1893). Pahari people are believed to have migrated from the north plains to the Himalayas over the centuries to escape wars, famines and persecutions, in search of divinity and for military

¹ Census does not publish data of languages with less than 10, 000 speakers. Local languages of Himachal were mentioned as varieties of Hindi.

expansions. Originally, the tribes are believed to have inhabited the hills (Bajpayee, 1981).

Pahari was first recorded as a mother tongue in the 1881 Census. Baines (1893) notes Pahari as, *'the variety of dialect prevailing in the submontane tract and lower valleys of the Himalayas west of Nipal. Pahari, or Hill tongue, is distinctive dialect spoken in Western or Panjab, Central, including Garhwali and Kumaoni, and the Eastern section, which is equivalent to the Nipali dialect.'*

Grierson (1916) called Hamachali Pahari a sub-branch of the Aryan language family and named it Western Pahari. Other Pahari languages were named Eastern Pahari of Nepal and Central Pahari of Kumauni-Garhwal.

Orthographic traditions in Himachal were known in the past. The erstwhile Princely rulers patronized Pahari languages and culture. Tankri was used up till 1940s in the Princely Courts of Chamba, Mandi, Bilaspur and Sirmaur. Literary materials in genres like poems, short stories, songs, historiographies etc. were promoted in Pahari. Important court documents, records of the shrines, business accounts, court transactions, and revenue/ settlement matters were written in Pahari using Tankri script.

In Kinnaur, Tankri was used in the Court of Bushehar rulers (Joshi 1909). In Lahul-Spiti and Kinnaur, Bhoti script is used with limited scope, to read and write religious (Buddhist) texts. Tibet was an important centre of Buddhist studies, many disciples from Kinnaur and Lahul-Spiti travelled to Tibet to study Bhoti and Buddhist philosophy (Tobdan, 2008). It led to the spread of Buddhism in the two districts.

4. Linguistic demography

Himachal Pradesh was not constituted on the basis of languages in the Union of India, rather it was formed on topographic basis by carving out the hilly areas of Punjab (Verma, 1995). The State has 12 districts, each representing more than one language, belonging to the Indo-Aryan (IA) and the Tibeto-Burman (TB) language family. The non-Himachali languages of the State are Hindi, Nepali, Punjabi, and other languages spoken by

the migratory population. Himachali languages can be categorized in following six groups:

1. Jaunsari
2. Kangric-Chamealic
3. Mandeali
4. Nuclear Himachali
5. Indigenous
6. Outer or Non-Himachali

The aforementioned languages form a dialectal continuum with varieties differing slightly from village to village.

1. Jaunsari: The language of Dodra Kwar region has Jaunsari influence.
2. Kangric-Chamealic: Show Punjabi and Dogri influence. Kangric languages are Kangri of Kangra, Hamirpur and Una, districts. Chambealic languages are Chambeali, Churahi, Bhatyali, Kahloori (Bilaspur) and Gaddi of Bharmauri and Pangwali of Pangi in Chamba district. Kahloori is also called rude Punjabi (Grierson 1916). Lahul-Lohar and Chinali of Lahul are closer to Chamealic.
3. Mandeali: Includes Siraji, Suketi and Mandiali. A variety of Chotta Bhangal/ Bada Bhangal of Mandi is a variant of Mandeali. These varieties have Punjabi origin.
4. Nuclear Himachali: This group forms the core of Himachali languages. The languages include Hindoori of Nalagarh in Solan district, Pahari Kinauri of Kinnaur, Kullu Pahari of Kullu and Cacyot Tehsil of Mandi, Mahasu Pahari of Shimla and Sirmauri of Giri and Trans-Giri area of Sirmaur district. Mahasui varieties are upper Mahasu- Siraji, Kochi or Bushehari, Kumarsaini, Sodochi of Kotgarh, and Soracholi of Rohru, and lower Mahasu- Kyonthali in Shimla, and Bagli of Arki area and Baghati in Kunihar tehsil in Solan district.
5. Indigenous: Include the Tibeto-Burman languages spoken by the tribes of Himachal. They include Sumcho, Kinnauri, Bhoti Kinnauri, Chhoyuli, Chitkul Kinnauri, Jangrami and Sunnami of Kinnaur, Kanashi of Malana, Kullu, and Spitian, sTodpa, Punan (Gahari), Khoksari, Rangloi (Tinan), Pattani

(Manchhad), Miyari (Patanam) and Tindiyaali of Lahul-Spiti districts.

6. Outer Languages: Includes Panjabi, Tibetan, Nepali and Urdu. Their speakers are Himachali but ethnically are non-native.

Official Language: Hindi, English and Sanskrit have the status of Official languages in Himachal Pradesh.

4.1 Linguistic classification

This study puts the number of Himachal languages to forty-one, out of which twenty-five are of the Indo-Aryan language family and sixteen are of the Tibeto-Burman language family.

Table 1: The classification of the IA languages of Himachal.

Indo-European
Indo-Iranian
Indo-Aryan
Indo-Aryan Northern zone
Himachali
Jaunsari
Kangric-Chamealic
Chamealic
Curahi
Bhattiyali
Kahloori (Bilaspuri)
Chambeali
Gaddi
Pangwali
Kangri-Dogri
<i>Hamirpuri</i>
<i>Palampuri</i>
Mandeali
Nuclear Himachali
Hinduri
Indo-Aryan Kinnauri
Kullu Pahari
<i>Inner Siraji</i>
<i>Kullui</i>
Mahasu Pahari
Lower Mahasu Pahari
<i>Baghati</i>
<i>Bagli</i>
<i>Kiunthali</i>
Upper Mahasu Pahari
<i>Outer Siraji</i>
<i>Rampuri</i>

Rohruri
Shimla Siraji
Sodochi
Sirmauri

Unclassified Indo-Aryan : Chinali, Lahul Lohar

Source: <https://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/mand1409>.

Table 2: Indo-Aryan languages of Himachal

Language	Area	Status
Baghati	Kunihar/ Solan	Endangered
Bagli	Arki/ Solan	Endangered
Bhatyali	Chamba	Threatened
Bushehari/ Kochi	Shimla	Threatened
Chambeali	Chamba	Threatened
Chinali	Lahaul	Endangered
Churahi	Chamba	Endangered
Gaddi/ Bharmauri	Chamba	Threatened
Hindoori	Solan	Endangered
Jaunsari	Shimla	Threatened
Kahloori/ Bilaspuri	Bilaspur	Vigorous
Kangri	Kangra/ Una/ Hamirpur	Vigorous
Kuluvi	Siraj/ Kulu	Vigorous
Kumarsani	Shimla	Threatened
Kyonthali	Shimla	Threatened
Lahuli	Lahul	Endangered
Mahasui	Simla	Threatened
Mandeali	Mandi	Threatened
Pahari Kinnauri	Kinnaur	Endangered
Pangwali	Pangi Chamba	Endangered
Siraji	Mandi/ Shimla	Threatened
Sirmauri	Sirmaur/ Shimla	Endangered
Suketi	Mandi	Endangered
Sodochi	Kotgarh	Endangered
Soracholi	Rohru	Endangered

Source: <https://www.ethnologue.com/subgroups/western-pahari>

The nomenclature, area and status of IA languages of Himachal as per UNESCO's (2003) nine scale criteria are in table 2.

The Tibeto-Burman languages of Himachal are classified as in table 3.

Table 3: Classification of Tibeto-Burman languages of Himachal.

Sino-Tibetan
Bodic
Bodish
Lahauli-Spiti
Bhoti Kinnauri
Spiti-Jad
Spiti Bhoti
<i>Stod Bhoti</i>
<i>Choyuli (Tukpa)</i>
West Himalayish
Eastern West Himalayish
<i>Bunan</i>
<i>Sunam</i>
Western West Himalayish
Kinnauric
<i>Gahri</i>
<i>Chitkuli Kinnauri</i>
<i>Kanashi</i>
<i>Kinnauri</i>
<i>Jangshung</i>
<i>Shumcho</i>
Lahaulic
<i>Pattani</i>
<i>Tinani</i>

Source: Glottolog.

Table 4: Languages of Lahul & Spiti

Name	Area	Speaker ²	Status
Pattani/ Manchad	Chandrabaga	11,000	Endangered
Rangloi/ Tinani	Lower Tinan	2,300	Endangered
Spitian	Spiti	11,000	Endangered
Stod	Bhaga	2,100	Endangered
Miyari/ Patanam	Miyar	1,300	Endangered
Khoksari	Upper Tinan	700	Endangered
Tindiali	Tindi	1,200	Endangered
Gahri/ Punan	Lower Bhaga	4,400	Endangered

² Census of India 2011

The status of TB languages of Lahul- Spiti based UNESCO's (2003) nine factors criteria is given in table 4.

The nomenclature, area and status of Kinnauric languages of Himachal based UNESCO's (2003) nine factors criteria are in table 5.

Table 5: Languages of Kinnaur.

Name	Area	Speakers	Status
Kinnauri	Kinnaur	45,000	Threatened
Sumcho	Kanam/ Spillo/ Labrang/ Syaso/ Rusklang	2,400	Endangered
Chitkuli	Chitkul/ Rakcham	1,300	Endangered
Sunam	Sunam	600	Endangered
Jangrami	Jangi/ Lippa/ Asrang	2,600	Endangered
Choyuli	Nesang/ Kunu Charan	640	Endangered
Bhoti Kinnauri	Poo/ Hangrang	6500	Endangered
Kanashi	Malana/ Kullu	1,500	Endangered

Source: Glottolog

5. Language policy and language education

Language policy of India encourages the use of mother tongue in certain delineated levels and domains through some gradual processes, but the stated goal of the policy is to help all languages to develop into fit vehicles of communication at their designated areas of use, irrespective of their nature or status like major, minor, or tribal languages.

In this light, it was expected that the non-scheduled languages will be recognized and allowed to develop like other scheduled languages. In Himachal, language policy and language-in-education policy are accused of ignoring local languages because these policies don't have a role for the local languages. Himachal Pradesh does not have an independent education policy and they follow the national

policy on education (NPE). NPE recommends use of local languages in education as medium of instruction along with the recognized languages Hindi or English.

For all practical purposes, the government run schools in Himachal Pradesh use Hindi as medium of instruction and private schools use English as medium of instruction. The language use in classroom ignores the recommendations made by the Kothari Commission (1966) and National Policy on Education (1986) which recommended the use of mother language as medium of instructions in first 2-4 years of the learners to help them improve cognitive and learning skills. It mirrors the national mood which gives importance to Hindi and English which is seen as the language of national identity and an important tool for success in higher education and employment, respectively.

The actual implementations of language policy and language-in-education are affecting the vitality of local languages in the State. No exposure to the home language in classroom affects academic performance and cognitive development of the learners and causes increase in school dropout rates. In tribal regions, most schools are run by government and Hindi is the language used as medium of instruction in the classroom. Parents are therefore forced to use Hindi at home due to the demands of the schooling of their children.

At the time of the formation of the State of Himachal Pradesh in 1971, Hindi was declared an Official language of the State with English as an additional language, and Hindi therefore became the major language of education, employment, and business. English and Sanskrit is the additional language for the State.

6. Language use

Pahari, Hindi and English are the major languages known in the State, each having different functions in different communicative contexts. Pahari is spoken in informal settings, mostly at home whereas Hindi is used in formal settings in education, business, offices etc. It is also the Official language of the State. English is used as

additional language in the State Assembly, High Court and in higher education.

Before 1947, Pahari languages were used extensively in all domains of language usage due to the patronage of the princely rulers. After the independence of India in 1947, in an effort to join the main stream, the government decided to use Hindi in education and administration.

After the State accorded primacy to Hindi in the Official language policy in 1971, the language truly developed into the major language in Himachal in all senses. English has limited functional domains. It is taught in the schools from class one in the primary schools. The language is not used by people for communication except among the elite. Number of English medium schools has come up all over the State in the race to learn English which has become a language of opportunities in the globalized world.

In the lower region, where Punjabi influence is seen, Pahari is used as lingua franca for inter group communications. The tribal languages of Himachal Pradesh had been geographically inaccessible up till most part of the 19th century. The natural boundaries in the form of mountainous terrains and valleys acted as a buffer from outside interference, hence their languages and culture flourished unaffected by outside world.

7. Vitality and endangerment

In the race of globalization, the ensuing environmental changes had led to change in the demographic landscape of the hill State. The traditional means of livelihood has changed and along with it has changed the needs of people. Now people prefer living in the urban centers for better education and employment opportunities. This has led to change in language usage pattern and the population is fast changing from a predominantly monolingual Pahari to multilingual Hindi speaker. The multilingual environment in cities has given rise to diaglossia where a language takes a low variety role which is used in informal settings and the other takes high variety which is used in formal settings.

In Himachal, Pahari is considered a low variety language and are mostly used at home while

Hindi has taken over as the high variety language and used in formal settings like schools, trade, offices, courts etc. At present, though elders as well as young people speak Pahari language vigorously at home but there is a realistic threat to its continuation by the youngest generation since children are not being taught Pahari as their first language- they are rather learning Hindi as their first language at home and in schools there is a primacy to the use of Hindi.

The tribal people live in present day Kinnaur, Lahaul- Spiti and eastern Chamba areas. They are considered the indigenous people of the Himalayas. For most part of the history, they have lived without outside interference in the lap of nature. Being an oral community, all the cultural information were transferred over generations verbally and they had managed to preserve their oral legacy. From a pastoral livelihood to the modern ways of living, globalization has made inroads in the region as well.

The loss of languages is mainly being caused due to language contact and language shift where people are giving up their mother tongue for the majority language. People are moving from rural to urban centers in search of better education and employment opportunities. People moving to new places adopt the language of their new environment and give up their native language for social or economic advantages. Also, since the local demography is changing due to influx of people from outside for jobs, trade and business new languages are developing and there is a change in language preference of the people as well.

In the UNESCO Atlas Languages in Danger, following languages have been listed as definitely endangered: Kinnauri, Baghati, Bharmauri, Chambeali, Churahi, Hinduri, Kanashi, Kului, Mahasui, Manchad, Mandeali, Sirmauri, Spiti and Tinan. Though the listed languages are spoken at present, but the next generation is unlikely to learn it as a mother tongue due to primacy to Hindi.

It is rightly said that, languages don't die but they are killed. In classrooms, medium of instruction is Hindi or English; the exclusion of local languages from the classrooms is not helping learners. They

are being deprived of the vital cultural nourishment which is essential for all round development of an individual. As a result, they grow up ignoring the indigenous languages and culture which results in a lost sense of identity. Multilingual education, at least at primary level, is one way to develop all round abilities of a child. Teaching in mother tongue at an early age helps in the development of cognitive abilities of a child which prepares them for the challenges ahead (Anderson & Lightfoot, 2018).

Himachal is bestowed with a rich linguistic and cultural diversity, but it is being threatened by changing demography and by governmental apathy. The State government in 2018 demanded for the inclusion of Pahari in the Scheduled list of languages. Past experiences prove that mere inclusion in the list doesn't guarantee development of the language. Sanskrit, Sindhi, and Konkani have shown negligible improvement in the increase in native speakers during 2001-2011 Census. Standardization of Pahari is also an issue; Himachal being a heterogeneous linguistic region, which variety of Pahari should be called '*Pahari?*' The Language and Culture department of Himachal developed a dictionary of Pahari, including glossary list of Pahari languages from Mandi, Kullu, Kangra, Chamba et al., but there is no clarity on the development and promotion of Pahari languages in the State. Government does not have sociolinguistic data to assess language use or the actual number of speakers. Government run State University doesn't have a Linguistics department to promote or conduct studies in Pahari languages and to work towards language documentation or language revitalization.

People are aware of the shift in language choice from Pahari to Hindi, but it is seen as a natural process of change. Even if some of them care for the loss of their linguistic heritage, they don't know anything about the revitalization of language. A collaborative effort by community and researchers to document and record resources of language and culture is a first step ahead to save these languages from being lost.

8. Conclusion

From this paper, we infer that language policy in education or administration in Himachal has

focused on Central government's documents. The planners have ignored linguistic diversity in the State while drafting the language policy. Education is a key front for the development of young learners and to shape future generations. With no role for indigenous languages and no efforts to restore fading cultural heritage, the young generation is seemingly disoriented about their own identity. Without being able to speak the ancestral languages, they are not able to associate themselves with the Pahari identity. Numerous results have proven that teaching young learners at primary level in mother tongue helps to develop cognitive skills. Introduction of the use of local languages at primary level will not only improve learning skills, it will also help to develop a positive attitude towards the indigenous languages.

In language development, key stakeholders are the language speakers. Their role is crucial in any language revitalization efforts. Language policy need to be discussed with community leaders and relevant experts as each of them has a role in policymaking. The current State policies on language and in education are a reflection of the national mood, rather than inward looking. With the constitutional provisions for the protection and promotion of regional languages, policies should be made at the State level with local sociolinguistic factors seated at the centre.

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