

Missing from the ‘minority mainstream’: Pahari-speaking diaspora in Britain

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Pahari speakers form one of the largest ethnic non-European diasporas in Britain. Despite their size and over 60 years of settlement on British shores, the diaspora is shrouded by confusion regarding official and unofficial categorisations, remaining largely misunderstood as a collective with a shared ethnolinguistic memory. This has had implications for the recognition of Pahari within mainstream minority language provision. The first half of the article explores why Pahari has remained largely absent within discourse on minority languages in Britain. The second half of the article documents attempts from within the diaspora to address this gap through promoting and representing Pahari within a British context.

Keywords: minority languages; language politics; diaspora; ethnic minorities; colonialism; media

Introduction

The Pahari-speaking population from Pakistan-administered Jammu and Kashmir are one of the largest ethnic non-European diaspora communities in Britain. Despite their size and over 60 years of settlement on British shores, the diaspora remains shrouded by confusion regarding official categorisation and language status. There is a lacuna of academic literature engaging specifically with the Pahari-speaking population, and as such, they remain one of Britain’s most misunderstood and underrepresented collectives with a shared ethnolinguistic memory (Haider 2013a).

Pahari is seldom portrayed as a language in its own right within a British context. This is principally due to contemporary interpretations of geo-historical changes of provincial borders (Shackle 1979; Masica 1991) and externally generated definitions of the Pahar region (Rehman 2005; Haider 2013a, 2014). There has been an increase in Pahari language development and activism from within the diaspora, who assert the right to self-definition and reject external evaluations of their language heritage.

This article contributes to the sociological study of Pahari in Britain. In doing so it explores arguments for why Pahari has remained largely outside official language categorisation and documents attempts from within the diaspora to promote and represent Pahari as a language in its own right. Prior to commencing discussion on language representation a brief overview of the diaspora under study is provided.

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Becoming a diaspora: Pahari migration to Britain

The Pahari-speaking diaspora (PSD) in the UK overwhelmingly originates from the Mirpur District of Pakistan-administered Jammu and Kashmir.¹ Mirpur sits within the wider geo-linguistic region that encompasses the Pahari-speaking peoples. Pahari is a cognate term for the dialects spoken within the mountainous terrain of the Hazara Hills, Pothwar Plateau and Jammu and Kashmir (Khan and Sarfraz 2009; Lothers and Lothers 2010; Haider 2013a). Linguists have traditionally subsumed these mutually intelligible dialects within the Northern Lahndi dialect-continuum (Grierson 1928; Masica 1991; Lothers and Lothers 2010, 2012). The Pahari spoken by the British diaspora from Mirpur is referred to as ‘Mirpur’ Pahari by Lothers and Lothers (2010, 2012) and part of the Pahari language branch (Rehman 2005; Lothers and Lothers 2010; Haider 2014).

Large-scale migration of the PSD was facilitated by labour shortages in Britain after the Second World War. Among the new workforce were a numerically significant contingent from the Mirpur District who, having become displaced from their land in the erstwhile state of Jammu Kashmir, arrived to work in Britain’s industrial hubs during the 1950s and 1960s (Ansari 1969).

It is estimated that the diaspora represent two-thirds of those officially classified as British Pakistani, and as a result form a linguistic majority within this ethnic minority (Imran and Smith 1997). This equates to a population size of approximately 800,000² based on 2011 Census figures for England and Wales (Office for National Statistics 2013). However, other academics have argued that the proportion of Pahari speakers is even higher than this, stating that the figure is closer to 80% of all Pakistani-heritage Britons (Tabbasam 2003). Furthermore, both Tabbasam (2003) and Lothers and Lothers (2012) argue that Pahari is the second most common mother tongue in the UK after English, ahead even of Welsh. Despite this, Pahari has been overwhelmingly absent within discourse on minority languages in the UK.

Language policy and categories

The implementation of strategies for equal opportunities, including access to information and service provisions for all citizens, regardless of ethnic and linguistic background, has been an integral feature of state multicultural policy in Britain. Local government authorities (LGA) often employ the same broad official categories used by central government for ethnic monitoring purposes. However, such categories often fall short in reflecting the ethnic populations present within local authority areas (Aspinall 2007). In terms of data gathering on minority languages, LGAs tended to focus on measuring English fluency rather than understanding the extent of multilingualism among their populations. This was reflected within many government surveys for which information on languages spoken at home only recorded English, Gaelic, Welsh or Ulster Scot (von Ahn et al. 2013, 3). A recent report published by the British Academy describes how the lack of policy on multilingualism had led to a general neglect of understanding minority languages beyond practical language provision. The report describes how:

Bilingualism seems to be considered an asset if it is learned rather than acquired (i.e. natively) and/ or if it involves a language of (relative) prestige. Conversely bilingualism is perceived as a deficit if acquired in an immigrant/ minority home, if it is a non-standard language, if it has no ‘market’ value, [or] if it will interfere with learning the majority language. (2012, 4)

It was not until 2008 that collecting language data became compulsory for all LGA in a standardised fashion (Aspinall 2007). Using the Annual School Census (ASC) the first language, other than English, spoken by all children attending state schools within each LGA was recorded. Although the ASC provides a list of 322 language codes, schools are not obliged to use the full list and can, if they so choose, simply select 'Other than English'. LGAs may also expand the list by requesting additional languages for inclusion within their specific localities (von Ahn et al. 2013, 3). Although Pahari is listed among the 322 codes introduced in the 2008 ASC, it is often amalgamated with other South Asian language categories or conflated with Punjabi more specifically, particularly for the purposes of analysis. Furthermore, there are multiple Punjabi codes amongst which 'Punjabi Mirpuri' and 'Punjabi Pothwari' are listed. This is particularly indicative of the confusion surrounding the classification and representation of PSD discussed by this article.

In 2011 the National Census for England and Wales also collected comprehensive data on language for the first time. As a result of lobbying on the part of NGO's seeking official Pahari language recognition, Pahari-Pothwari³ was considered a valid 'write-in' answer for the question on the Census form.

At a community service level, language provision in the form of interpreters and written community-focused material is still left to the discretion of the individual LGA. Punjabi and Urdu were assumed sufficient for dealing with the language needs of all Pakistani immigrants. However, as Richardson and Wood (2004) describe, it is important to understand British Pakistanis as a 'community of communities', with many members of diaspora from Pakistan-administered Jammu and Kashmir rejecting the Pakistani ethnic classification altogether. Reflecting how data were generally collected to record English fluency, other minority languages within the broader Pakistani diaspora did not feature until their communities lobbied for adequate and equitable provision. K. Ali (2005) describes how:

Many British decision makers, in an attempt to make services accessible have invested in interpreting and translation services. However the languages offered to people from South Asia have been limited to Urdu, Hindi, Bengali, Punjabi or Gujarati. There has been very little reference made to the Pahari language. Instead decision makers have incorrectly tended to use Urdu or Punjabi to communicate with the UK's Kashmiri⁴ community. In such instances members of the community have had to settle with another group's language.

Several studies on service provision have demonstrated difficulties with the use of Urdu and Punjabi as service languages for members of the PSD. In a paper on the educational underachievement of PSD, D. Ali (2007) describes findings from research in schools within two LGAs. His interviews with parents of children attending a school in Kirklees highlighted demands from parents for school staff to recognise Pahari as their community language. Furthermore, he describes how in Slough, 'it emerged that Kashmiri parents often do not understand the English education system and audio or video information in Punjabi and Urdu is foreign to them' (26).

An investigation by the Leeds City Council (N. Ali 2005) on the experiences of elderly service users describes a lack of confidence in accessing services as a direct result of the absence of Pahari interpreters and language provision. N. Ali conducted interviews with both service users and community representatives from the PSD who described difficulties in communication with Urdu- and Punjabi-speaking staff, employed to deliver community engagement with South Asian groups. The report concludes how elderly

members of the PSD are at risk of isolation as a result. Supporting these findings at a wider community level is a report by Blakey, Pearce, and Chesters (2006). The report identified groups vulnerable to marginalisation in public service decision-making processes and highlighted those originating from Mirpur as one such community.

Therefore, despite the fact that the majority of those classified as Pakistani in the UK are Pahari speakers from Mirpur and surrounding areas, the language is underrepresented as a community language for British Pakistanis, be it in respect of data monitoring, academic study, community service provision or language media services. The remainder of the article explores arguments for why Pahari remains contested as a minority language in its own right. This is followed by examples of Pahari language development and representation from within the diaspora who increasingly assert the right to define their community language.

Classification and representation

Sociolinguists such as Romaine (2000) and May (2001) discuss how determining whether a vernacular is a dialect or language relying solely upon linguistic paradigms is not always possible, ‘since some languages are mutually intelligible while some dialects of the same language are not’ (May, 2001, 6). Furthermore, whether a vernacular is considered a language rather than a dialect is dependent upon the way it is socially and politically constructed. Therefore, such determinations can often be fraught by conflicting interpretations (Romanie 2000).

Discussions regarding the peripheral position of Pahari as a minority language draw upon such sociolinguistic arguments. Here authors like Rehman (2005), D. Ali (2007), Khan and Sarfraz (2009) and Haider (2014) highlight classifications during the colonial period and subsequent representations of the PSD in British academic and social context. In this view, representations of Pahari as a dialect or sub-language of Punjabi have contributed, albeit unintentionally, to the exclusion of Pahari among commonly recognised minority languages in the UK. The implications of this are argued to extend beyond not only inadequate service provision but also the linguistic denigration of the PSD, resulting in an ‘identity crisis’ (Haider 2013b) and language inferiority complex (D. Ali 2007) particularly among second-generation Pahari speakers (SGPS).

Geo-historical markers and the politics of language

Shackle (1979) discusses how language classification in the Indic region is particularly difficult in the absence of clear-cut geographical units familiar to Europe. He writes:

The Indo-Aryan area where the absence of firm linguistic frontiers anyway makes classifications notoriously difficult, and is a region where – for both historical and economic reasons – there is a severe shortage of local resources and trained specialists to carry out the basic research needed to answer many questions of detail. Add to this the encumbrance of an awkward scheme of classification which fails to take adequate account of historical patterns of language use and is based on a very partial assessment of some modern features only, and one has all the ingredients for confusions which are sufficient to cast a dense fog over the area for those who are not specialists, and a fairly thick haze for quite a few who are! (1979, 191)

Grierson (1928) conducted the most comprehensive linguistic study of British Indian. He analysed surveys of the Pothwar Plateau and western Jammu and Kashmir and provided

the languages spoken here with their own category known as Northern Lahnda (Masica 1991; Baart-Bremer 2001). The Pahari linguistic sphere is encompassed within the Northern Lahnda dialect-continuum described by Grierson (Khan and Sarfraz 2009; Lothers and Lothers 2010; Haider 2014).

The key argument to note here is that Grierson's Northern Lahnda distinction highlighted the divergent dimensions of Pahari from its neighbouring languages. However, obscurities regarding its classification as a Punjabi language arose as a result of geo-historical shifts in the fluid and vague borders of the Punjab province (Shackle 1979). Such changes in boundaries led to the inclusion of parts of the Pahari sphere, namely the Pothwar Plateau (Khan and Sarfraz 2009; Haider 2014). Haider (2014) argues firstly that, when such border shifts occurred they were for administrative purposes and not a reflection of cultural-linguistic commonalities. Secondly, when Grierson used the term Greater Punjabi, he did so in reference to the geographical element rather than creating linguistic parallels between the languages spoken in this broad geographical space. Haider states that it is clear from Grierson's assessment that Lahnda had evolved from a different 'Apabhramsa' or Middle Indo-Aryan, to the one (standard) Punjabi had evolved from. In other words, Lahnda and Punjabi were not merely separate dialects from the same branch, but in fact different languages evolving from different linguistic sources related to Indo-Aryan, the parent language which broke off from Indo-Iranian around 2000 BCE. In this view the geo-historical shifts which led to the Majhi dialect of Lahore becoming Punjab's vernacular standard share no definitive connection with Pahari over and beyond the linguistic connections it shares with other neighbouring Indo-Aryan languages (Haider 2014).

Rehman (2005) discusses how the shifting boundaries of Punjab, determined by who was in power at any given period, are only one example of the systematic long-standing denial of the autonomy of the Pahar region. Despite the work of Grierson, he rejects Northern Lahnda (label derived from contemporary interpretations of Grierson's Northern Lahnda; see Masica 1991), simply upon the fact that it is an externally constructed label, symbolising political domination and the forced ascription of categories upon the Pahar by official 'Others'. Rehman reminds us that the term Lahnda itself means 'west' in Punjabi and describes the very viewpoint of outsiders, who literally looking to their west, attempted to make sense of the Pahari region by imposing their own measures. Therefore, current ways of thinking about the PSD must be mindful of the fact that they were constructed through neighbouring lenses from a distance, rather than from the standpoint of the Pahar region itself. This is particularly problematic when taking into account how the existence of local political prejudices towards those 'to the west' influenced interpretations of the Pahar region and its peoples, thus reinforcing marginalisation and opportunities for self-definition during colonial periods.

Rehman's position exemplifies what May (2001) describes as the politics of language. May asserts how 'language is not only, perhaps not even primarily a linguistic issue – it has much more to do with power, prejudice, (unequal) competition and in many cases overt discrimination and subordination' (4). In Rehman's evaluation, it is this political legacy that continues to influence the ambiguities surrounding Pahari representation, linguistic or otherwise, faced by the diaspora even outside of the subcontinent.

Ethnolinguistic representations of the diaspora

The nation state of Pakistan encompasses several distinct ethnolinguistic groups; however, Samad (1996) argues that one group in particular dominates the cultural

identity of Pakistan. In his paper entitled *Pakistan or Punjabistan?* Samad describes how military control by land-owning Punjab elites resulted in an unofficial cultural hegemony of the Punjab over other regions of Pakistan. He argues that ethnolinguistic differences between groups within the Pakistani nation state became overshadowed and downplayed as a result (see May 2001, 4–11, for a discussion on the creation of nation states and language status). In this view, the Punjab, its culture and language became symbols of traditional heritage for the newly formed Pakistani national identity, despite Urdu becoming the official lingua franca (Samad 1996). Ali, Ellis, and Khan support this view, arguing that:

Pakistani culture in Britain is frequently conflated with Punjabi culture as Punjabis are the dominant group within the state of Pakistan. This has led to Pakistani settlers being seen by many commentators as Punjabis but the use of the blanket identity is potentially problematic. (1996, 229)

Nowhere might the construction of Pahari as a form of Punjabi be more troublesome than within a British context. Where the PSD make up the largest proportion of the Pakistani migrant population, the remaining largest segment of the non-Urdu-speaking Pakistani population are Punjabi speakers from what is referred to as Majhi with Lahore at its centre. Stuart-Smith and Cortina-Borja (2012, 64) describe Majhi as the standard variety of Punjabi of Lahore and Ameristar, and Doabi as the dialect of the region south of Jullundur. Punjabi in Britain is dominated by Majhi and Doabi, which form the standard Punjabi employed for Pakistani Punjabi literature in community engagement and associated with British Asian youth culture through Bhangra music (Huq 2006; Roy 2011), as well as the Punjabi of popular media outlets (BBC Asian Network, Punjabi programme).

The few contemporary western scholars who write about the PSD in the UK have presented this population as essentially a Punjabi people who speak a dialect of Punjabi, referred to as ‘Mirpuri’ Punjabi (Ballard 1983; Reynolds 2002; Stuart-Smith and Cortina-Borja 2012). Such interpretations of Pahari as a sub-language category of Punjabi (whether presented as Northern Lahndi or not) have been fervently contested among Pahari speakers themselves, both from within the sub-continent (Shackle 1979) and among the diaspora (Evans 2005).

Lothers and Lothers conducted the most up-to-date sociolinguistic surveys of Pahari in both Pakistan (2010) and the UK (2012). They describe why referring to Pahari as either ‘Mirpuri’ or ‘Punjabi’ or both is problematic from a language perspective, explaining that ‘Mirpur Pahari’ is the form of Pahari spoken in Mirpur and is a dialect of

... larger language group we call Pahari. Mirpur Pahari is used clearly to distinguish it from Punjabi, which people speak in the South. Most Pakistani immigrants speak this dialect. However referring to the language of Mirpur as Mirpuri is a bit of a misnomer. Mirpuri is a label that typically describes the people who come from Mirpur but not the language itself. (Lothers and Lothers 2012, 3)

Given the scarcity of academic material dealing specifically with this community, such evaluations of Pahari as a dialect of Punjabi, coined in Britain as ‘Mirpuri’, have been taken at face value. This has resulted in notable penalties for Pahari in a British context. Firstly, by not gaining representation as a language in its own right, Pahari became amalgamated with and replaced by other South Asian languages, most often Punjabi, for the purposes of community service provision. Studies demonstrate how difficulties with

the use of the two dominant languages associated with Pakistan (Urdu, the lingua franca, and Punjabi) as service languages for PSD directly impact on access to information and services across a number of LGA (Farsi 1999; N. Ali 2005; D. Ali 2007).

There are two additional impacts of such representations worth noting for the purposes of a sociological study on Pahari in Britain. Firstly, the argument that SGPS have undergone a language 'identity crisis' (Haider 2013b). In this view, young people become particularly confused in light of the 'authentic' classification of their mother tongue as Punjabi, by writers and service providers, despite being aware that their vernacular differs significantly to the point of incomprehensibility (particularly in towns with little inter-vernacular exposure) from the recognised standard Punjabi in Britain (Haider 2013a, 2014). An illustration of such confusion is the disjoint in describing British Paharis, as demonstrated by Khan (2006), who writes about 'Mirpuris' from 'Kashmir' who speak 'Punjabi'.

This is further demonstrated through survey data where language labels used by British Paharis insert additional divergent nouns to stress the distinction between their own vernacular and Punjabi. Such labels include 'Mirpuri Punjabi', 'Kashmiri Punjabi', 'Pothwari Other' and 'Punjabi Other' (Hussain 2009). Skerry (2000) discusses how individuals insert themselves into the categories they believe society perceives they should be part of. In this view, the use of hyphenated language descriptions outlined by Hussain (2009) are symptomatic of exposure to interpretations about Pahari not being a language in its own right by 'official others'. Manuel (2006) and Burton, Nandi, and Platt (2008) describe how official categories ascribed to populations lead to significant pressure to comply with predefined group interpretations. Here it is argued that respondents place themselves within the categories they believe they are expected to by those conducting surveys.

The second implication of having one's language assessed as a lower variant or subcategory of another is that it implies Paharis are 'imposters' of another language identity. This leads to the perceived 'lower' non-standard variant becoming stigmatised and vulnerable to linguistic degradation (Haider 2013b). Some authors have described how there was (and remains) a level of stigma attached to Pahari as a result of its association with migrants from the politically ambiguous Kashmir. This echoes the descriptions of political lens through which those to the 'west' (now Pakistan-administered Jammu and Kashmir) were viewed pre-migration. In this view, Pahari speakers from the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir were treated with suspicion by those from Pakistan 'proper' (Ballard 1991; Khan 2000, Rehman 2011; Haider 2013b). This coupled with Paharis described as essentially Punjabi not only denies them their own linguistic heritage but also places them in the margins of another ethnolinguistic heritage.

A report compiled by the Portmir Foundation (2013) documents a significant body of evidence on how British Paharis from Mirpur continue to be viewed with hostility and condescension, as a result of being presented as imposters of Pakistani Punjabi heritage. The research provides an insight into the linguistic denigration experienced by the PSD as a result. The following quote was taken from a community website for British Pakistani youth and neatly exemplifies the findings on perceptions of Pahari among non-speakers.

I sincerely hope Allah speedens [sic] language change so that Mirpuri is erased. No one understands you. What a joke of a dialect that is trying to pass off as a language. (2013, 18)

The quote demonstrates a desire on the part of the non-Pahari Pakistani for the language to have no currency among the wider British Pakistani diaspora. Despite asserting Paharis' divergence to the point of unintelligibility by non-speakers (no one understands you), the author then detracts from this difference by questioning the very assertion of its distinctness (trying to pass it off as a language).

Cobas and Feagin (2008) describe how the denigration of language-speaking communities can lead to either an increase in language identity salience as a form of resistance, or a decrease in its appeal resulting in self-censoring and disassociation with the language. The result of an awareness of linguistic denigration fuelled by fellow British Pakistanis, may lead to Pahari speakers choosing to self-censor their language identity in certain domains, as is the case with other language groups who are stigmatised on the bases of their community language (Jaspal and Sitaridou 2010). In such cases, they may choose to replace Pahari in the presence of other language-speaking communities with Punjabi or Urdu, in order to disassociate with the stigmatised linguistic community. It is precisely this outcome that authors point to when describing the increase in an inferiority complex within the diaspora. However, alongside the disassociation are increasing examples of how Pahari is being cultivated within a British context, supporting the assertion by Cobas and Feagin that minority communities often respond to degradation with a greater desire to maintain their language heritage. The remainder of this article describes such attempts by the diaspora under focus.

Missing from the 'minority mainstream'

D. Ali (2007) describes how the impact of sustained language exclusion was only meaningfully challenged within the last 15 years. This coincides with SGPS attaining fluency in English and the ability to make the case for accurate language representation. It is generally through the acquisition of the dominant language of the forum that challengers may possess the level of 'linguistic capital' required to contest their representations by official others (Bourdieu 1991). However, as shown by this study, attempts from within the diaspora at self-representation have been most prolific through utilising Pahari itself.

Pahari alphabet development: naming and reclaiming

Pahari in its earliest script, Sharda Pahari, is amongst the oldest written languages of South Asia (Nassar 2002; Khan and Sarfraz 2009). The production of Pahari language texts however fluctuated significantly from its earliest period to the present day. Khan and Sarfraz (2009) describe how a history of foreign invasion within Pahari-speaking strongholds has resulted in non-indigenous dominant official languages in Pahar areas (most notably Persian, Hindi and Urdu). Furthermore, the partition of India and subsequent division of the former Princely State of Jammu Kashmir led to Pahari being apportioned across three administrative borders with different official languages and scripts. In the period since the partition, however, there appears to have been an increase in literary output in both Pakistan- and Indian-administered Kashmir, fuelled in part by developments among the PSD in Britain (Rehman 2011).

Rehman (2005) describes how his interest in Pahari script development came into being. It was after arriving in England that he heard Pahari used within an official forum in place of English or Urdu, a spectacle he had not been privy to in Pakistan. Despite its accidental position of the language for intra-community meetings in a British context,

Rehman learnt that once outside of Pahari circles, its speakers became all but mute. It was a direct response to this ‘inferiority complex’ (3) among the PSD that Rehman and his colleague in the alphabet project, Mehmood, commenced the Pahari alphabet initiative. He discusses how a large proportion of

... Pahari speakers are regarded illiterate in Pakistan and Kashmir respectively because they cannot read Urdu. But being Muslims [the] majority can read Arabic, the language of the Quran. But they do not understand it [Arabic]. On the other hand they do have a language, Pahari-Pothwari that they can understand but cannot read because it is not written. (2005, 3)

It was with this assertion that efforts to develop an alphabet for Pahari utilising the Arabic script were set in place. The first significant outcome of the development of the Pahari alphabet in Britain was that the authors reclaimed the identity of the language and their right as native speakers to categorise and label it. Rehman argues, however, that this was not a straightforward endeavour and describes the difficulties associated with the historical legacy, not only of the colonial period but also of those before it and since. As already discussed, there are a number of ways the diaspora community describes their mother tongue (Hussain 2009). It became apparent that the labels used by PSD to describe the vernacular were far from universal. Rehman (2005, 2) writes:

Who decides which is a language and which is a dialect? One answer is the [one with] power–political struggle linked with status and/or class position and market ... understanding ones linguistic, cultural and political past for the development and enhancement of present and future ... requires great care to avoid slipping back in the tribal past or linguistic nationalism, challenging the domination of some and dominating others. This can feed suppressive tendencies and layers of oppression in different names and forms.

Therefore, it was through a combination of careful research with authors and academics, as well as consultation with language users, that Pahari was reinstated as the language label for the alphabet. Script development was undertaken in part as a practical effort to engage within the British ethnic minority print press and to facilitate identity empowerment as a response to perceptions of illiteracy. Yet perhaps even more significant was the exercise in self-definition. It is here that the act of naming the alphabet the ‘Pahari alphabet’ not only reclassified the language to what was argued to be its original and accurate label but also it set in place the categorisation of all subsequent literature produced using the script. In doing so, the alphabet development was a significant initiative in self-definition and a direct response to external representations whether non-Pahari-speaking South Asians or Western academia.

The alphabet was adopted by the International Pahari Literacy Society, led by Mohsin Shakeel. It was utilised to produce a journal entitled *Chitka* and the first British Pahari books by Ali entitled *Poonch na Sarmad* (The Chief of Poonch), followed by *Taharaan ni aag* (Fire in the Mountain Range) and *Mehla Aasman* (The Dirty Sky). Rehman (2005, 6) describes how seeing the fruit of his script development ‘felt like I was looking at the culture which I lived and grown up in through the window of language for the first time’.

The implementation of the newly developed script did not stop at the diaspora but also made inroads within the subcontinent. This language movement was not only initiated by members of the diaspora but also engaged with language experts in the region of origin, chiefly Rizvi for Pothwari and Husain Rana for Pahari and Gojari contributions, thus transforming it into a transnational endeavour. However it was upon the involvement of the Indian Pahari writer Minhas that the true measure of its reach became apparent.

Having read British author Ali's work which had employed the script, Minhas also became involved in the movement and promoted the alphabet within India-administered Jammu and Kashmir. Therefore, the development of a Pahari alphabet within the diaspora not only contributed to the language identity and representation on British shores but was also able to influence literary expansion in their region of origin, on both sides of the Pakistan and Indian line of control.

Pahari language broadcasting: 'the voice of the voiceless'

In 2005 a consortium of British Kashmiri activists with their origins in the Mirpur met to evaluate their efforts directed at the political governance of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir. The overwhelming opinion of those present was that the British Urdu media had not provided a voice for diaspora-based pro-independence movements. It was agreed that British minority media had thus fallen short of representation, not only in terms of its agenda but also in the language employed, namely Urdu.

The development of media to address both these factors came through broadcasting in Pahari and providing a pro-Kashmiri-independence stance. Within a year, the Aapna Channel was established and broadcast from June 2006 to March 2007. Its position was explicit: it sought to provide a voice for Pahari-speaking communities, both in the diaspora and in the land of origin and did so as a response to such a voice being absent within British mainstream minority media. In presenting itself as both representative of the diaspora and compensating for inadequate media service, its slogan became the 'voice of the voiceless'.

As a subscription-free satellite channel, it broadcast into the homes of both the British diaspora and wider global audiences. As a result of organisational difficulties, the channel collapsed and was replaced by the UK-based Kashmiri Broadcasting Corporation (KBC). Like its predecessor channel, KBC was viewed by millions and supported by production teams on the Indian side of the line of control. However, it also suffered similar logistical issues and came to a sharp halt in less than a year, despite its popularity. Members of the production teams who worked on both channels were subsequently involved in a range of feature films created for the diaspora audience. These include *Miki kharo England* (Take me to England), *Pahee Adha* (The half-brother) and *Lakeer*.

Pahari 'Kool' on the net

There has also been an increase in Pahari language entertainment available on Internet platforms. The two examples discussed in this study draw upon characters who are British Paharis and display cultural references specific to the British diaspora experience. In doing so they provide examples of British South Asian Pahari youth culture. As the case with other British South Asian populations, the PSD have a younger demographic profile compared with the general population (Huq 2006, Hussain 2008), resulting in a potentially sizeable diaspora youth audience.

Miki kharo Pakistan (MKP) is produced by Teh Na Productions. It was uploaded to YouTube in 12 parts between November 2011 and November 2012. MKP is a comedy in keeping with the style of Pothwari comedies produced from within the Pahari-Pothwari region (the earlier Pothwari comedy entitled *Miki kharo England* was clearly an inspiration for the British-based namesake). It tells the story of a young man from Bradford who tries to overcome obstacles in order to visit Pakistan to find a bride. The 12 episodes have attracted over 200,000 viewers combined. More recently several episodes

have been uploaded with English subtitles, which have generated a further 13,500 views. The viewer comments on YouTube demonstrate that MKP has gained a largely positive reception from its audiences. This is in contrast to the second example described here entitled *Mirpuri Boyz*.

Mirpuri Boyz – New Comedy Drama from Mirpur via England was uploaded to YouTube by HX1Productions. It tells the story of a group of ex-pat youth who return to Mirpur for a vacation. This is a scenario that many SGPS will identify with, as Bolognani (2013) describes, some 350,000 British Pakistanis visit their country of heritage every year, with Mirpur acting as the final destination for the overwhelming majority. Unlike MKP, the two episodes that have been broadcast are set in Mirpur. Both the location and the title *Mirpuri Boyz* pay direct reference to the production's association with Mirpur and thus language heritage. MKP in contrast is set in Britain and makes no obvious reference to its identity as SGPS media through its title. Although in-groupers will instantly recognise that it is a Pahari-Pothwari language production, out-groupers may not. Therefore, only the latter would be immediately identifiable to out-groupers as *Mirpur Pahari* as a result of the title. Where MKP appears to have attracted viewers primarily from in-grouper audiences, *Mirpuri Boyz* has also caught the attention of out-groupers, as many viewer comments attest.

There are currently two episodes and a trailer for episode three uploaded to YouTube. The majority of dialogue is in *Mirpur Pahari*, with the exception of episode one in which the entire first scene is in English. The English dialogue includes regular profanities which makes it unsuitable for a universal audience. The combined number of viewers for all three videos is over 685,000, with approximately 1390 viewer comments at the time of writing this paper. Although *Mirpuri Boyz* has not presented itself as promoting an agenda of representation, it has generated discussion regarding the ethnolinguistic portrayal which takes the form of in-grouper approval, in-grouper disapproval and out-grouper contestation. Examples of responses to the videos are presented below. The first quote illustrates in-grouper approval.

Lol both parts were hilarious, I understood 9/10 of what is being said and this is how my family speak so I found it extra funny, can't wait for part 3.⁵ (Accessed on 7 June 2013)

Here the viewer provides positive feedback on the content and its intended outcome as a comedy. He then goes on to make the link between the language of expression and his mother tongue, which he describes as contributing to his experience of the material. The second quote, however, demonstrates in-grouper disapproval. Caspi and Elias (2011) discuss how media produced by diasporas themselves can challenge stereotypes of the minority group. However, several viewers have rejected the videos as a form of representation due to its perceived reproduction of stereotyped caricatures of *Mirpuri* heritage youth as 'chavs'.

Man you guys know how to put us to shame. Take this god for saken [sic] shit off ... talk about making [us] look a dick and dragging the whole community with you.⁶ (Accessed on 7 June 2013)

Examples of perceived stereotyping include frequent use of strong language (children swearing), criminal behaviour (attempts at stealing livestock) and copious amounts of aimless loitering. The third quote provides an example of how the videos have generated out-grouper contestation of identity regarding whether *Mirpur* is part of Pakistan or

Jammu and Kashmir. As the identity of the diaspora faces contestation, any production that makes reference to Pakistan risks evoking challenge from out-grouper segments of the broader category.

Fucking mirpuriz [sic] ... spoiled the image of Pakistani in Britain ... they say they are from Pakistan but they are from fucking mirpur not from Pakistan.⁷ (Accessed on 7 June 2013)

Jaspal and Cinnirella (2012) explain how ethnic and language identity can be policed by group members. The quote above demonstrates how a Pakistani is contesting the legitimacy of PSD claims Pakistani heritage, as well as policing what is deemed acceptable for the image of the Pakistani ethnic group. The comments demonstrate how Pahari 'Kool' is unlikely to break into mainstream minority media space, unlike other examples of British South Asian youth culture discussed by earlier writers such as Huq (2006) and Roy (2011).

The three types of Pahari language production discussed in this article set out to either explicitly reclaim representation, as the case with the alphabet development and satellite broadcasting, or contribute towards filling the gap in community language entertainment, like the SGPS examples. As such, all three respond to the marginal position of Pahari within Britain. In this view both the alphabet development initiative and subsequent literature, and Aapna TV and KBC challenged existing representations of PSD through reclaiming and naming Pahari. They also acted in response to existing minority media, which focused its attention on the dominant minority languages and agendas. Although primarily motivated to redress representation within the British mainstream minority context, as a result of transnational involvement they also disseminated portrayals of the British PSD globally.

Neither MKP nor Mirpuri Boyz claim an explicit position for engaging in the politics of representation. However, as demonstrated by some viewer comments, the media has elicited contestation over whether PSD have legitimate claim to the Pakistani identity. Furthermore, comments also demonstrate that PSD audiences have rejected representation of their communities by the producers. Therefore, whether intended or not, such media fuel debates about identity and representation as such highlight the marginal position of Pahari within British South Asian mainstream culture.

Conclusion

This article set out to explore the underrepresentation of Pahari as a minority language in Britain and demonstrate attempts from within the diaspora at reclaiming and promoting Pahari language use.

Geo-historical shifts in borders (Shackle 1979; Masica 1991), external definitions of the Pahar region (Rehman 2005) and the symbolic importance of Punjab for contemporary Pakistani national identity formation (Ali, Ellis, and Khan 1996; Samad 1996) are argued to have contributed to the underrepresentation of Pahari as a minority language in its own right in British context. Apart from the practical implications for community service provision, such interpretations are also argued to fuel language denigration, due to portrayals of Pahari as a subsidiary, unintelligible form of Punjabi, resulting in an identity crisis and inferiority complex particularly among SGPS (D. Ali 2007; Rehman 2011; Haider 2013a.)

There have been attempts from within the diaspora to challenge representations of their community language by naming and reclaiming Pahari and by providing a 'voice for

the voiceless' in creating media sources with a clear ethnolinguistic agenda. Attempts at finding a space outside of the minority mainstream have also been witnessed among SGPS, through the use of YouTube to broadcast Pahari language productions. Contestation prompted by such media indicates how SGPS are yet to be welcomed by the minority mainstream as a specimen of the broader South Asian diaspora experience. Nevertheless, such attempts attest to the fact that Pahari language development and maintenance has begun to take shape, despite being largely unrecognised as a minority language for over 60 years in Britain.

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Notes

1. See Snedden (2005) for discussion on the administration of Jammu and Kashmir by the Pakistani state.
2. This figure is approximately two-thirds of the total 2011 Census count for respondents who chose the predefined ethnic category 'Pakistani' combined with the total count for respondents who described Pakistan-administered Jammu and Kashmir (PJK) heritage using the 'write-in' option.
3. Pothwari is part of the Northern Lahndi continuum and often used interchangeably with Pahari for the southern Pakistan-administered Jammu and Kashmir (Rehman 2005; Lothers and Lothers 2010, 2012; Haider 2014). Accordingly, Pothwari is part of the Pahari language group, and the Pothwar Plateau is within the Pahari ethnolinguistic geographical sphere.
4. PJK heritage Britons are often referred to as 'Kashmiri', as both Pakistan- and Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir are commonly shortened to 'Kashmir'. Several PDS activists refer to the diaspora as Kashmiri based on state subject status of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir prior to migration.
5. Comment on Episode Two, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3fAAIWsoABU>
6. Comment on Episode Two, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3fAAIWsoABU>
7. Comment on Episode One, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0gSDxwv3NaQ>

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