



RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE

M.Ed. In TESL Program

Language Group Specific Informational Reports

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Language Group: Punjabi

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Punjabi
An Overview
By Alyson Ferney

(Ray, 2009)

Classification and History

- Punjabi is classified as a member of the Indo-Aryan subgroup of the Indo-European family of languages.
- The Punjabi language is a descendent of the Sauraseni Prakrit, a language of medieval northern India. It is believed to have developed as a distinct language from the Shauraseni Apabhramsha language around the 11th century.

Important Facts



- Punjabi is an official language in India and Pakistan. It is mainly spoken in the Punjab region of these countries.
- Punjabi is also spoken in the United Kingdom, Canada, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Australia, United Arab Emirates, United States, Singapore, and Kenya.
- According to the Ethnologue 2005 estimate, approximately 88,000,000 people worldwide speak Punjabi.
- Alternate names for Punjabi are Gurmuki, Gurumukhi, Panjabi.

(UNC.edu, 2002)

Important Facts

- Punjabi has many different dialects. Some are Punjabi Proper, Majhi, Doab, Bhatyiana, Powadhi, Malwa, Bathi, Western Panjabi, and Eastern Panjabi.
- Punjabi is the preferred language of the Sikh people and it is also the language of their religion.
- The name Punjab literally translates into “five waters” in the persian language and is thought to refer to the five major rivers found in the formerly-united Punjab territory. (This is an area of India and Pakistan that was once a British territory).

Writing System

- The Punjabi language is written in a variety of scripts. The two most common are the Perso-Arabic script known as Shahmukhi and a script based on the Gurmukhi alphabet. Less commonly, Punjabi is also written using the Devanagari script.

Writing Samples

- **Sample text in Punjabi (Gurmukhi alphabet)**

ਸਾਰੇ ਇਨਸਾਨ ਆਜ਼ਾਦ ਅਤੇ ਹੱਕ ਤੇ ਇੱਜ਼ਤ ਦੇ ਲਿਹਾਜ਼ ਨਾਲ
ਬਰਾਬਰ ਪੈਦਾ ਹੁੰਦੇ ਹਨ। ਉਹ ਅਕਲ, ਸਮਝ ਤੇ ਚੰਗੇ ਮੰਦੇ ਦੀ ਪਛਾਣ
ਅਤੇ ਅਹਿਸਾਸ ਰੱਖਦੇ ਹਨ, ਇਸ ਲਈ ਉਹਨਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਇੱਕ ਦੂਜੇ ਨਾਲ
ਭਾਈਚਾਰੇ ਵਾਲਾ ਸਲੂਕ ਕਰਨਾ ਚਾਹੀਦਾ ਹੈ।

- **Sample text in Punjabi (Shahmukhi alphabet)**

ਸਾਰੇ انسان آزاد تے حقوق تے عزت دے لحاظ نال برابّر پیدا ہوندے نیں۔ اوہ عقل سمجھ
تے چنگے مندے دی پچھان تے احساس رکھدے نے ایس واسطے لوہناں نوں اک دوجے نال
بھائی چارے والا سلوک کرنا چاہی دا اے۔

- **Transliteration**

- Sārē insān āzād tē ḥuqūq tē ‘izzat dē lihāz nāl barābar pædā næn. Oh ‘aqal samajh tē cangē mundē dī pachān tē aḥisās rakhadē ne is dasṭē lohnān nūn ikk dūjē nāl bhā’icārē wālā salūk karna cāhī dā æ.

- **Translation**

- All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

(Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights)

(Omniglot, 2008-2011)

Linguistic Features that May Affect the Learning of English

- Punjabi is a tone language, consisting of three different tones: the level tone (also called the mid tone), the high-falling tone (or high tone) and the low-rising tone (or low tone). Words in tone languages are made up of vowels, consonants, and of melodic characteristics. In tone languages, you can often find examples where the identity of a word is changed when you change the melody of the word.

(1) munu~ 'kooṛaa takaaṃ. 'Show me a whip!'

(2) munu~ 'kòṛaa takaaṃ. 'Show me a horse!'

(3) munu~ 'kóṛaa takaaṃ. 'Show me a leprosy patient!'

The pitch patterns of these Punjabi words can be described as level in the case of 'whip', low-rising in the case of 'horse', and high-falling in the case of 'leprosy patient' (Bailey 1915: ix). (In the Punjabi examples, the prime (´) indicates stress on the following syllable, the grave accent (`) indicates low-rising tone, and the acute accent (´) indicates high-falling tone.)

- (Baart, 2003)

Linguistic Features that May Affect the Learning of English

- Punjabi has a word order of SOV (Subject-Object-Verb).
- English generally has a word order of SVO (Subject-Verb-Object), however sometimes other orders can be used such as OSV (Object-Subject-Verb).
- For example:
- SVO: “I don’t know that.
- OSV: “That I don’t know”
- SOV: “I that don’t know”

(Wikipedia, 2011)

Linguistic Features that May Affect the Learning of English

- Punjabi has postpositions rather than prepositions. Postpositions follow the noun or pronoun, unlike English, where prepositions precede the noun or pronoun.
- Punjabi distinguishes two genders (male and female).
- Pronouns do not distinguish gender.
- The alphabet is syllabic. All 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 vowels appear at the beginning of a syllable, they are written as independent letters.
- When certain consonants occur together, special conjunct symbols are used which combine the essential parts of each letter.

Linguistic Features that May Affect the Learning of English

- In Punjabi, the “f” and “v” sounds are not pronounced like English “f” and “v” but sound more like “p” and “b” respectively. A native Punjabi speaker may sound like they are saying “berry” when they mean “very”.
- When a long vowel is followed by “r”, some speakers of Punjabi learning English might use a monophthong instead of a diphthong used for many words in other accents. Therefore, the word fear is pronounced “fir” instead of “fear.”
- Punjabi speakers may also lengthen short “e” sounds to a higher long “e” making “pen” sound like “paenn.”
- Punjabi learners of English often treat prepositions as nouns, reanalysing English relational terms as names of locations on the pattern of the mother tongue and producing forms such as “Put the down chair” (Perdue 1993: II-246). Some other examples of this type of error are “in upstairs”, “I live with enjoy”, “It’s belong to me”.

Communication Style

- When speaking to people older than oneself, the style is mostly indirect. When speaking to people one's own age or younger, the style is usually direct.
- Direct eye contact is usually the norm between members of the same gender and age.
- Indirect eye contact is usually the norm when speaking to elders and members of the opposite gender.
- An arm's length of personal space is common when speaking to members of the opposite gender. This space tends to be closer with members of the same gender.

Communication Style



- When a men are greeting men, a handshake and a hug is common.
- When women are greeting women, a handshake and a hug is common and some women will exchange a kiss on the cheek.
- When men are greeting women, very often a nod of acknowledgment will suffice. Handshakes are also common, but it is always best to wait for the woman to extend her hand first. Note: it is taboo for religiously observant men to touch women and vice-versa.
- Putting a hand on one's chest is a way of saying hello, showing respect.
- Showing someone the palm of your hand with all fingers outstretched is considered very rude.

(Culture Crossing, n.d.) (Business Handshake image)

Punjabi Language Lesson



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4N17C-JjP1U&playnext=1&list=PL259B48ACD91CCAF7>

(Taras, n.d.)

(Singh, 2009)

Resources

Internet Sites

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<http://www.micheletaras.com/People/Punjabi%20Dance%201.jpg>

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Text

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