

Understanding the Socio-economic, Socio-linguistic Situation and Social Psychology behind Learning a *Language* in Punjab

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1. INTRODUCTION

The study of language attitudes is a complex phenomenon (Saville-Taroike1989; Baker1992; Garnett, Coup Land, and Williams 1999) originated in social psychology as a discipline. The issue of language attitudes has become important in view of the regular formation and growth of multi-lingual societies. The individuals are under constant pressure to learn more than one language because of pragmatic /cultural/ political reasons. The languages in such situations compete and often generate linguistic controversies about the relevance and/or primacy or supremacy of one language over the others. The individuals undergoing the process of socialization develop positive, negative or mixed attitudes toward one or more language(s). But more interesting are the cases of contradictory positions of condemning a language in which one has acquired or has a desire to acquire a very high level of proficiency. For example, a Caribbean writer, Jamaica Kincaid, (1988) indicts the colonial rule and English as an instrument of colonization: “isn’t it odd that the only language I have in which to speak of this crime is the language of the criminal who committed the crime? And what can that really mean? For the language of the criminal can contain only the goodness of the criminal’s deed...” (quoted in Bailey1996: 41). On the other hand, it is possible that individuals, in spite of their positive attitudes toward a language, make no effort to acquire proficiency in that language because the target language lacks social and/or instrumental value. For example, some studies have shown that a great number of people in Ireland hold strong positive attitudes toward Gaelic language, yet very few of them show high proficiency in that language

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