

# Language and Identity: An investigation of the linguistic markers of regional identity

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### 1 Abstract

This assignment is about identifying the linguistic markers of regional identity of the city of Dehradun. We will try to understand what is a linguistic marker and how it is linked to our regional identity. A very short discussion on how we define regional identity. The different markers that are referenced are one's observed by me. The greatest effect is of the Gharwali language on my dialect even though neither I, nor anyone in my immediate family speak it. Although, I can understand it but only of family from mother's side. The most clear marker of the regional identity for me is the sentence structure in Gharwali is very flexible compared to Hindi, so compared to speakers from other regions, people in the Dehradun region tend to use the wrong sentence structure. Other markers are use of honorifics and vocabulary are different.

### 2 Introduction

#### 2.1 What is a linguistic marker

According to **Wikipedia**

In linguistics, a marker is a free or bound morpheme that indicates the grammatical function of the marked word, phrase, or sentence.

We need an elementary understanding of morphemes in order to understand linguistic marker.

### 2.1.1 Morpheme

According to **Oxford Languages Definition**.

The smallest unit of meaning that a word in a particular language can be divided into.

Morphemes are further defined by the Rochester Institute of Technology website as

A short segment of language that meets three basic criteria:

1. It is a word or a part of a word that has meaning.
2. It cannot be divided into smaller meaningful segments without changing its meaning or leaving a meaningless remainder.
3. It has relatively the same stable meaning in different verbal environments.

Using this knowledge we will try to find the linguistic markers to mark "regional identity" specifically.

Morphemes are further of two types:

1. **Free Morpheme** → Can stand alone with a specific meaning. Example, eat, date, weak etc.
2. **Bound Morpheme** → Cannot stand alone with meaning. Example, 's' in dogs is a plural marker telling us that there are multiple dogs.

### 2.1.2 Simple definition

Thus we can give a simple definition for linguistic marker as

**A marker is either a word or a part of a word that can define the function of a word, sentence or phrase.**

## 2.2 Regional Identity

According to **J. Pohl, in International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences, 2001**.

Regional identity is a kind of spatial identity on a certain scale called the meso-level. Regional identity is located between the national and the local level.

Meso-level is analysis on level of communities, organizations and ethnic groups. For our case we are going to consider the city Dehradun as our region, since I have not lived outside of the city for any considerable amount of time (atleast not long enough for it to effect my dialect).

### 3 Analysis of the major markers

#### 3.1 Use of honorifics

In gharwali we add an honorific to most words with address an older person. So this has led to a greater use of honorifics in the regional languages. For example, rather than addressing our older brother, uncle, aunt as भाई ,ताऊ ,ताई we use honorifics भाईजी ,ताऊजी ,ताईजी

#### 3.2 Sentence Structure

The biggest marker of regional identity is the sentence structure. In Gharwali language, the sentence structure is extremely flexible. This has caused an influence on the language of the region. For example, if using proper structure one will say.

मैंने सुबह खाना नहीं खाया।

But in the my region, a sentence like,

मैंने सुबह खाना खाया नहीं।

is also considered an acceptable sentence.  
Another example is,

मैं कल स्कूल जाऊंगा।

But in the my region, a sentence like,

मैं कल जाऊंगा स्कूल।

is also valid and is easily understood by locals of the region.

### 4 Conclusion

In this assignment, we looked at what the simplest definition of a linguistic marker can be. There was also a brief look at what is regional identity. We then looked at the linguistic markers of the hindi language used in the region of Dehradun and tried to find the connection between the Gharwali language and how it may have effected the regional languages.