

## Exploring the Diglossia of Thanewal Accent: Unveiling its Sociolinguistic Impact on Regional Speakers of Other Accents

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### Abstract

This study investigates the impact of the Thanewal accent on speakers from neighboring regions surrounding Thana. Through comprehensive interviews and field research conducted across the eastern, western, southern, and northern areas, this research reveals the complex relationship between language and identity. The findings of this study suggest that the Thanewal accent plays a significant role in shaping social interactions, cultural perceptions, and attitudes toward language in the mentioned regions. Its influence is closely linked to factors such as interpersonal communication, local commerce, family connections, and migration patterns. This research offers valuable insights into how language varies across geographic and social boundaries, highlighting the need for further research on other indigenous languages in the Malakand region.

**Keywords:** Diglossia, Thanewal Accent, Yousafzai Dialect, Pashto, Malakand Division.

### Introduction

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## Background of Study

The current research is a descriptive-analytical study of language diglossia. In the context of language and diglossia, this research uncovers a detailed description of the language patterns and diglossic situations in the Malakand Division (Al-brri, 2015). Language is a fundamental aspect of human communication, enabling individuals to convey thoughts, emotions, and ideas across cultures and geographical boundaries (Bonvillain, 2019). In multilingual societies, language use can be characterized by diglossia, where “diglossia is a situation in which a community uses two or more languages or dialects in a way that is functionally differentiated” (Hymes, 1973, p. 23). Hence, this study highlights the complex dynamics of language contact in diglossia in Malakand Division.

In terms of Pashtun communities in Pakistan, diglossia is a prevalent phenomenon where the Thana dialect coexists with standardized Pashto (Rahman, 2002). For instance, diglossia can manifest in various forms, depending on the social, cultural, and linguistic context. One common type is classic diglossia, where a high variety (H) is used in formal situations, such as education, government, and literature, while a low variety (L) is used in informal situations, such as at home and in local markets (Ferguson, 1959). Additionally, there is another phenomenon known as triglossia, where three language varieties coexist in a single community, often with complex and varied social and cultural dynamics (Gumperz, 1964).

## History and Origin of the Pashto Language

Pashto is an Indo-Iranian language primarily spoken in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Its origin can be traced back to the ancient languages of the region, specifically the Avastan and Old Persian languages. Pashto has evolved over centuries, influenced by various historical events, migrations, and cultural exchanges. Its poetry dates back to the 9<sup>th</sup> century C.E., reflecting the cultural and historical developments of the Pashtun people (MacKenzie & David, 2018).

### *Pashto Dialects*

The Pashto dialects are connected to both geographical facts and tribal identity. According to Elfenbein (1997, p. 739), “geographical classification alone does not-cannot-take enough account

of tribal distinctions...classification by tribe alone fails to take into account the essential geographical facts” (Miller, 2014).

Pashto is mostly spoken in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and among the Pashtun diasporic communities around the globe (Iqbal & Rahman, 2016), having at least five major dialects in different areas in Pakistan (Rahman et al., 2020). Most of the regions where Pashto is spoken are identified based on the linguistic markers, along with other political and social divisions. Regional identity is formed under the influence of the regional characteristics of location and the regional languages spoken therein (Fitjar, 2010). The issues for a particular language across regions have been investigated in many studies (King, 2016), identifying geographical location and linguistic variations from many perspectives (Kimper, 2011). These regional features are found in the linguistic repertoire of the communities speaking their respective varieties (Androutsopoulos & Ziegler, 2004; Rafiq & Hamid, 2021).

### ***Aryan migrations and Gandhara: A Deep History of Pashto Speech and Writing***

The complex prehistory and history of the Pashto language, along with the numerous conflicting academic and popular claims regarding the origins of the Pashtuns, are hindered by the scarcity of pieces of evidence associated with the earliest uses of Pashto. This lack of data complicates the task of pinpointing exactly when Pashto emerged as a spoken language. However, we can gain a fundamental understanding of the main historical processes that contributed to the evolution of spoken Pashto, both in its context and in relation to the surrounding linguistic landscape.

A useful starting point for understanding the origin and development of Pashto is a chart of languages from the Encyclopaedia Iranica,<sup>6</sup> which illustrates the numerous languages that are historically and structurally related to Pashto. This genealogical model portrays Pashto as a unique “leaf” on the eastern Iranian “stem” of the Indo-Aryan “branch” of the Indo-European language “tree.” Moreover, Hassan (2020) in his Ph.D. research on Afghan refugees considers Pashtuns as one of the lost tribes of Prophet Moses, who migrated to Khurasan, and their language has evolved initially in contact with the Sanskrit and Persian, as the traces of both these languages can be found in the Pashto.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.iranicaonline.org/>

Examining the theological distinctions between innovation and heresy within this context is also crucial, as it sheds light on the cultural, linguistic, and possibly proto-ethnic exchanges involved in the creation of the Pashto text. Throughout the opaque history of this formative period in Pashto writing, it is important to recognize that the first known Pashto writer was Bayazid Ansari, also known as Pir Rokhan (1525–1585). He is credited with introducing the Pashto alphabet and producing the first Pashto writing scale (Wynbrandt, 2009; Castro & Templeman, 2015).

Khushhal Khan Khattak (1613–1689) played a significant role in popularizing the Pashto language, extending its reach from Afghanistan to the Mughal Darbar (court). His contributions advanced the textualization of Pashto through innovative writing and the extensive volume of his work. Notably, the dialect he utilized in his writing differed from that of Bayazid Ansari's *Khair al-Bayan* (Farhadi, 1970; Sperl, 1996).

The influence of Persian, which was an official language of the Mughal empire, has also significantly impacted Pashto, as demonstrated in the poetry of Rehman Baba. In the 20th century, increased access to education in the Pashtun region further facilitated the recording of Pashto literature, allowing researchers to explore the language in greater depth. In this context, institutions such as the *Kabul Academy of Pashto Language*, the *Pashto Department at the University of Peshawar*, and, more recently, the *Department of Pashto at the University of Malakand* have played vital roles in advancing research on Pashto literature and language.

Similarly, the current study is also of utmost importance as it aims to explore the linguistic influence of the Thanewal accent, which is an accent of the Yousafzai dialect of the Pashto language spoken in the Malakand Division of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), Pakistan (Hassan et al., 2025). Specifically, it investigates how the Thanewal accent has influenced the language patterns, especially in terms of pronunciation in the surrounding regions, including the northern, eastern, southern, and western areas of Tehsil Thana.

### **Demography and Historical Significance of Thana**

Thana, which is now a large town in Malakand district, has a population of more than 200,000, surrounded by neighboring villages such as Jalala, Gat Koto, Hebat Gram, Nal Gunyar, etc. Hebat Gram has a stupa (Buddhist monument) that reminds us that this area has an ancient history. Thana has been a stronghold of the Darawar Aryan, Buddhist, and Hindu Shahi periods. Here, the effects

of the Darawar civilization were found in Gunyar when Professor Doctor Ahmed Hassan Daani excavated the site in 1962. Besides this, the ruins of Aryan culture have been found at the hilltop location of Nal Kasu Bandah, although their remnants are slowly disappearing. Similarly, the ruins of the Hindu Shahi period of Gandhara have also been found in areas such as Bar Bazar, Gir Banr, Kaafir Coat, and Bacha Coat, etc. in Thana. The place known as Gir Banr in Thana was the capital of the last Hindu Shahi ruler, Raja Gira. And it is believed that the name of this place, Gir Banr, may have been derived from Raja Gira's name (Gigyani, 2017).

Remember that the Hindu Shahi period in Malakand Agency ended completely in 1001 AD with the arrival of the Ghaznawi army and the defeat of Jayapala (the last Hindu Shahi Emperor of Gandhara). In Malakand, the Ghaznawi army fought historic battles with the Hindu Shahis at places like Zim Kot, Kaleto, Batkhela, Char Kotli, Haryan Kot, Degarh Raj, Khanwari Kanda, Qaldrh Dargai, and others. As a result of these battles, the Hindu Shahi period came to an end, and Islam gained dominance. In an account on Swat, Akhuzada (2018) in his article noted that the initial settlers in Swat might be the descendants of ancient Dardic-speaking people who were Aryans.

In the 15<sup>th</sup> century AD, Thana was the capital of the Sultans of Swat. After the arrival of the Yousafzai tribe, Thana became their center. Today, the Yousafzai sub-tribes of Baba Khel, Bazid Khel, Kator Khel, and Shamat Khel (Shah Ahmed Khel) are settled in Thana. The landlords of Thana are known as Khan Khel, while the landlords of the Palai area are known as Khan Kor. The estates of Khan Khel are only in Thana, while Khan Kor refers to those landlords who have ancestral estates in both Thana and Palai Darah (Saim, 2023).

### ***Etymology of Thana***

According to historical information, after the fifteenth century, it is known from books that the first name of this place was 'Aatan Jay'. Aatan Jay is a word from the Gabri<sup>7</sup> language. In Gabri, 'Aatan' means 'Jirga' (a gathering or meeting) and 'Jay' means 'place' or 'location'. So, the name Aatan Jay means 'the place of Jirga' or 'the gathering place'.

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<sup>7</sup> Gabri language, also known as Gawri or Kalaami/Kohistani language famously spoken in the Swat and Dir districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in Pakistan.

*Sultan Awais Swati (the last ruler of Swat before the Yusufzai's conquest)*, whose capital was Manglawar (Swat), would often visit this place to consult with his ministers, advisors, and local officials. To control the situation, jirgas (gatherings) were frequently held here. Additionally, meetings with visiting guests from outside were also arranged here, and jirgas were convened for this purpose. Hence, the name of this village became Aatan Jay. Over time, the name evolved from 'Aatan' to 'Aastana' and eventually became 'Thana'. It is worth mentioning here that during 1490, the Sultans of Swat and their subjects used to speak the Gabri language, and the areas from Swat to the border were under the control of the Sultans of Swat (Arlinghaus, 1988; Akhunzada, 2018).

### ***Thana's Reputation as a Hub of Knowledge***

Thana is considered a Hub of knowledge. The literacy rate (95%)<sup>8</sup> Here is relatively higher compared to the rest of Malakand. In 1935, the school, now known as Government Shaheed Aadil Shehzaad High School Thana, was upgraded to a secondary level. However, it had been operating as a primary school since 1912, or, according to the local resources, since 1908. Thana is home to several educational institutions, including the Government Degree College, Government College of Management Sciences, Regional Institute for Teacher Education, High School College Colony, and Girls Middle School College Colony. Thousands of local students and those from surrounding areas are enrolled in these institutes.

### **Methodology**

To explore the impact of the Thanewal accent in the surrounding areas, the researchers conducted several fieldworks. Several volunteer participants from the neighboring regions of Tehsil Thana, such as Batkhela, Chakdarah, Dargai, Kota Aboha, Barikot, Mingora, Chakdara, Aladand Dherai, and Palai, were called upon for interviews. The researchers interviewed 30 people from the above-mentioned areas. The following table shows the demographic information of the population of the study:

<sup>8</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thana,\\_Malakand](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Thana,_Malakand)

Table 1 Demography of the Population of the Study

SN	Number of participants	Gender M/F/LGBTQS			Education SSC/HSSC/Graduates			Interviews duration
1	30	24	4	2	2	7	21	220 minutes

The researchers visited various nearby locations to conduct interviews. As indicated in the table above, the number of female participants is smaller due to limited access; however, the researchers were able to interview some university students and teachers during their visits to different universities in the region. Additionally, two transgender individuals participated in the study, which provided the researchers with new insights into the influence of the Thanewal accent in surrounding areas. The researchers obtained written consent from all the participants to conduct and record the interviews. The researchers aimed to look for any deviation influenced by the Thanewal accent in their language, which helped them to draw the diglossia and influence of the Thanewal accent on the surrounding dialectal accents.

### Results and Discussion

The current study is descriptive-analytical. This was based on all the basis of evidence, fieldwork, interaction with people from different areas around the Thana, and responses of thirty participants. So, the researchers have created the diglossia of the Malakand region and taken Thana as a center of this diglossia. Apart from that, the researchers have explored the influence of the Thanewal accent on surrounding areas. The diglossia of the Malakand region, as described by the researchers, is shown in the following Figure 1:



### The influence of the Thanewal accent on the Northern Areas

Table 3: Measuring the influence of Thanewal Accent to the North of Thana

<i>Areas (North of Thana)</i>	<i>Distance from Thana</i>	<i>Influence Observed</i>
<i>Chakdara</i>	8.7 km	Nil
<i>Gulabad</i>	11.8 km	Nil
<i>Ouch</i>	17 km	Nil
<i>Talash</i>	29 km	Nil

#### **Description**

The concept of diglossia indicates there is a clear boundary to be defined for the influence of Diglossia, rather the flow of the influence of a language depends on certain factors such as communication patterns, stability of fluidity of language, and the existence of H and L varieties of the language (Khubchandani, 1985). However, regarding the Thanewal accent's impact on the northern regions, there are virtually no signs of this particular accent. Researchers in this study have identified the reasons for this lack of influence by analyzing data collected during fieldwork and carefully examining the relevant factors; One main reason for the lack of interaction between the two sides in the past is that the Swat River separates them, making it difficult for people to move freely between the regions. Another factor identified by the researchers is the enforced deprivation imposed by the Nawab of Dir. In interviews with a few elders from the area, it was revealed that the people living in the north were not permitted by their Nawab to pursue education. Even those who managed to escape to obtain an education had to keep it a secret; if the Nawab learned of their actions, they faced severe punishments. After the end of the Nawabi system in the

region, people were finally allowed to travel to other cities for educational opportunities. However, by that time, it was too late for them to adopt the influence of the Thanewal accent (Shahid, 2005).

### **The influence of the Thanewal accent to the North-East side**

*Table 4: Measuring the influence of Thanewal Accent to the North-East of Thana*

<i>Areas</i>	<i>Distance</i>	<i>Influence Observed</i>
<i>Shamozai</i>	12.3 km	Nil
<i>Didawar</i>	15 km	Nil
<i>Parrai</i>	21 km	Nil
<i>Dadahara</i>	26 km	Nil
<i>Kabal</i>	36 km	Nil

### **Description**

The areas mentioned in the table above are located in District Swat. As previously noted, the Thanewal accent has a distinct influence on the surrounding regions of Swat. However, the areas in Swat discussed here are situated in the northeast region, on the opposite side of the Swat River. The limited communication between the people of Thana and these areas is the primary reason their language does not exhibit any traces of the Thanewal accent.

## The Influence of the Thanewal Accent to the East

Table 5: Measuring the influence of the Thanewal accent to the East of Thana

<i>Areas</i>	<i>Distance</i>	<i>Influence Observed</i>
<i>Jalala</i>	5.2 Km	Full (same as Thana)
<i>Kota</i>	15 km	Partial (only pronouns)
<i>Aboha</i>	16 Km	Partial (only pronouns)
<i>Barikot</i>	20 Km	Partial (only pronouns)
<i>Ghalegy</i>	24 Km	Partial (only pronouns)
<i>Manyar</i>	26.1 Km	No influence found

### **Description**

The Thanewal accent significantly influences the Pashto spoken by the people in Jalala, particularly in the pronunciation of pronouns and adjectives. For example, the pronouns ته (ه) and څه (ه) are pronounced as تو (و) and څو (و), respectively. Similarly, adjectives like ښواکه (ه) and ښاره (ه) are pronounced as ښواگو (و) and ښارو (و). However, the influence of the Thanewal accent on pronouns can also be observed in areas such as Kota, Aboha, Barikot, and Ghalegy, while no influence has been found in the Manyar, which is almost 26.1 kilometers away from Thana.

The strong influence of the Thanewal accent on the people in Jalala can be attributed to their proximity, as Jalala is located just 5.2 kilometers from the Thana area, with good road and mountain pass connections. Additionally, the geography of Jalala (its proximity to Thana) makes

it more prone to the impact of the Thanewal accent. Today, the Yousafzai sub-tribes of Baba Khel, Bazid Khel, Kator Khel, and Shamat Khel (also known as Shah Ahmed Khel) reside in Thana and Jalala (who are considered the oldest residents of Thana), with the local landlords referred to as Khan Khel. Another reason is that, historically, Thana was the only center of education, and it is certain that the knowledge seekers from Jalala had a constant travel to Thana, so it might be another reason for this strong influence of Thanewal accent in Jalala.

### **The Influence of Thanewal Accent on the Western Areas**

*Table 6: Measuring the influence of the Thanewal accent to the west of Thana*

<i>Areas</i>	<i>Distance</i>	<i>Influence Observed</i>
<i>Thana to Badwan</i>	15.3 km	Partial (only Pronouns)
<i>Thana to Batkhela</i>	16 km	Partial (only Pronouns)
<i>Thana to Piran Kalay</i>	17km	Partial (only Pronouns)

### **Description**

The Pashto spoken in the Badwan area, located west of Thana, shows no influence from the Thanewal accent. Historically, the Swat River has served as a natural barrier, isolating the regions of Thana and Badwan and limiting their cultural and economic exchanges. In contrast, areas to the west, such as Batkhela and Piran Kalay, are influenced by the pronunciation common in Thana, particularly in the use of "tu" and "zu." This similarity arises from the kinship ties between the

people of Thana, Batkhela, Khadagzai, and Piran Kalay, where many families share marital connections, fostering a sense of community and cooperation among the regions.

### The influence of the Thanewal accent on the Southern Areas

Table 7: Measuring the Influence of the Thanewal accent to the South of Thana

<i>Areas</i>	<i>Distance</i>	<i>Influence Observed</i>
<i>Thana to Dheri Alladand</i>	9 Km	Same as Thana
<i>Thana to Palai</i>	26 Km	Same as Thana

### *Description*

During their field survey, the researchers surprisingly discovered that the Thanewal accent has a significant influence in the southern regions of Thana, particularly from Aladand to Palai, which spans almost 26 kilometers. This influence is notably stronger compared to other areas in the north, west, and east of Thana. Interestingly, individuals from Aladand and Palai share the same accent as those in Thana.

Some elder participants in the study shared insights into the area's history, explaining that people initially settled along the banks of the Swat River. Thana served as a gateway to Swat, Dir, and Mardan. However, due to various challenges, including the River Swat and the presence of the Nawabi system in the state of Dir, moving into Dir was difficult. As a result, residents of Thana began migrating towards the fertile plains, now known as Palai, near the Mardan district.

These areas were free of Nawabs and Walis and featured rich, arable land. Over time, the kinship between the residents of Thana and Palai grew, leading to frequent visits between the two communities. Moreover, Thana, recognized as a hub of knowledge, attracted people from Palai

and nearby areas for education. Staying with relatives in Thana further facilitated the spread of the Thanewal accent among these visitors.

### **Conclusion**

This research study aimed to identify the influence of the Thanewal accent on the surrounding regions and Pashto speakers in those areas. Through fieldwork and interviews conducted with participants from the regions around Thana, researchers found that the Thanewal accent has a greater effect on the people who live in the nearby regions unless there is a barrier. It has been found that the effect of the Thanewal accent on the eastern side of Thana extends up to a distance of 30 km. This influence is noted particularly on the south side of the river, while no impact of the Thanewal accent was observed on the north side of the river in the east. Additionally, the Thanewal accent influences the southern side of Thana up to 26 km, with a strong presence noted in Palai. The accent also reaches the western side of Thana, particularly in areas like Batkhela. However, the researchers discovered that the Thanewal accent does not have an impact on the northern side of Thana, including areas like Chakdara, which is near Thana. The reason identified for this absence of influence is the lack of movement (in the past) between Thana and the areas situated on the western side, caused by the Swat River.

After analyzing the data and conducting interviews, the researchers concluded that the accent's influence in the east, west, and south sides is primarily influenced by the interaction patterns, travel, and trade among communities. In the southern area of Palai, which exhibits a strong similarity to the accent spoken in Thana, this influence is attributed to kinship ties, shared heritage, and local conflicts. Many people from Thana migrated to Palai because it offered fertile land, a flat terrain, and easier access to cities like Mardan, Charsada, and Peshawar. Conversely, migrating to the eastern side of Thana, towards Swat, was challenging because it was a separate state with

difficult residency requirements. The western side of Thana is mostly mountainous (Malakand), posing communication challenges due to the sparse population. Consequently, the people of Thana chose to move to Palai, as it provided a more convenient relocation option compared to the eastern and western sides of Thana.

### Contributions to the Study

The influence of any accent, dialect, or language is linked to several factors, including communication patterns, kinship, and movement. Our findings reveal that the Thanewal accent is the rarest accent spoken in the Pashtun belt. Moreover, this accent influences the surrounding areas to the east, west, and south, but no influence has been observed on the north. The reasons for this influence are primarily attributed to communication patterns and human migration. The lack of influence in the north is due to the Swat River, which historically restricted the movement of people in that direction.

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