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**Saraiki Ethnic Identity Confronting Ethnolinguistic Vitality  
Threats From Urdu As Contact Language**



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*“Some have carried, it, held it close, protected.  
Others have pulled it along like a reluctant child.  
Still others have waved it like a flag, a signal to others.  
And some have filled it with rage  
and dare others to come close.  
And there are those who find their language  
a burdensome shackle.  
The continually pick at the lock.”*

*Zepeda (2007)*

## **Abstract**

In the contemporary globalized world, learning more than one language has become one of the basic social requirements. The constant increase in number of bilinguals and multilinguals, is evident for its significance. However, the bilingual or multilingual trends with inclination towards learning prestigious global or contact languages, has abated the worth and use of regional languages (indigenous languages). The situation takes these indigenous languages towards the brink of extinction. The practice also affects the ethnolinguistic identity of regional or native language speaking communities. Saraiki language is one of such regional languages in Pakistan, which is facing the occurrence of “language shift”. This phenomenon is resulting in disputation of the ethnolinguistic identity of Saraiki community. In this regard, present study has taken an initiative to measure “Saraiki ethnolinguistic vitality” from “social-psychological perspective”. Tajfel’s (1974) “Social Identity Theory (SIT)” has been applied to construct theoretical framework, proposed by Phinney (1992). The “Multiple Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM)” has been adapted to obtain responses about the extent of “Saraiki ethnolinguistic vitality”, from young generation of Saraiki community. The participants have responded to MEIM scale, encompassing four main components; “self-identification and ethnicity”, affirmation and belonging”, “ethnic

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identity achievement” and “ethnic behaviour and practices”. The findings obtained from the descriptive quantitative analysis of MEIM questionnaire, revealed immoderately unfavourable attitude and emotions of Saraiki community members towards their “Saraiki ethnolinguistic identity”. Consequently, the study has found ‘attitudinal and cognitive factors’ to be more dominating to influence “Saraiki ethnolinguistic vitality”. Moreover, these attitudinal factors have been predisposed by socio-economic motivational factors, which are involved in learning of the second language, while limiting the use and worth of indigenous language. In this context, the present study has offered few recommendations. The most significant requirement of making efforts to “reverse Saraiki language shift” by making the youth and parents mindful of the severity of the problem. Government policies and Media intervention can also prove to be of great help in saving languages. Essentially, saving language means saving culture, and by saving language and culture the ethnolinguistic identity will be preserved and saved from extinction.

**Key Words:** Multilingual, Contact Languages, Saraiki Regional Language, Ethnolinguistic Identity, Ethnolinguistic Vitality, Language Shift, Language Preferences, Motivational Factors.

Saraiki Ethnic Identity Is Confronting Ethnolinguistic Vitality Threats from Urdu as Contact Language

## **Introduction**

Bilingualism and multilingualism have been considered as valuable attribute for individual and societal benefits in the globalised world. Contrarily, bilingualism and multilingualism are also averred as major problem for individual and societal growth (Chibaka, 2018). The cause of this contradictory approach is that with the evolution of “bilingualism and multilingualism”, the disciplines of “language vitality” or “language maintenance” came into limelight to protect language against “language shift” or “language endangerment”. In this regard, the attitudes of bilinguals or multilinguals during “language choice” practices in day-to-day interactions, play an important role. The decision for “language choice” has diverse effects at individual as well as at societal level. The effects are pronounced when “contact language” have

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perception of prestige for individual and societal development. Therefore, “ethnolinguistic vitality” and “language attitude” of bilinguals / multilinguals possess cause and effect relationship (Bourhis & Sachdev, 1984). From the viewpoint of bilinguals’ “language choice”, “social psychology” focuses on the study of individuals’ motivations and ideologies, to construct perceptions and “identities” (Liebkind, 1999). However, the trend or occurrence of “language maintenance” and “language extinction” as “sociological problem” requires to be dealt with “social psychological approach” through studying the “cognitive processes” of “social categorization” at broader social level (Giles & Johnson, 1987). Bilinguals or multilinguals make language choices by using the “social categories” to deal with the contextual requirements (Gudykunst & Schmidt, 1987). In dealing with the complexities of the real-world situations, bilinguals and multilinguals not only choose a language as resource (Ruiz, 1984 as cited in David & Manan, 2019), but they also adopt diverse identities specifically during interaction with interethnic ingroups or outgroups, in order to develop accommodative relationship based on “convergence or divergence” (Giles & Johnson, 1987). However, it is expected from bilinguals or multilinguals to maintain both and / or all the languages with additive approach, in a way to assert “ethnolinguistic vitality” in all the languages they use.

The relationship between identity and language is analogous to identity and culture. “Ethnic group” is identified through shared characteristics which individuals biologically, culturally, geographically, religiously and linguistically, possess (Liebkind, 1999). Thus, “ethnic identity” largely relies upon the objective demographical and cultural identifications. Whereas, “social identity” is marked through “social behaviour” of individual within the contexts of “intergroup” interactions (Tajfel, 1974). In addition to this, the “social identity” relies upon the “social comparison and social categorization” of ethnic groups to which interlocutors belong, i.e., interaction between ethnic or national groups, on the basis of ideological conflicts in the social status (Tajfel & Turner, 2004). Similarly, Liebkind (1999) presented distinguishing definitions of “ethnic identity” on the basis of “ethnic component” of social identity. Whereas, “social identity” is the “individual’s self-

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perception” in association with the “social groups” with positive and negative social status values (Liebkind, 1999, p. 141). Moreover, “collective identity” is defined on the basis of shared characteristics at communal level (Ashmor, Deaux & Volpe, 2004). In the contemporary world, the statistics of bilinguals and multilinguals are better than the monolinguals. Hence, the linguistic identity conflicts remain unsolved, mainly in the regions or countries where English language learning as a second language is obligatory, such as in Pakistan. Pakistan is augmented with multiplicity regarding language as well as culture. Pakistan, with of “English language” as official language and “Urdu language” as national language, displays the cultural and linguistic diversity in marginal and regional languages. The ethnic identity of speakers of native and regional languages is constructed on their aboriginal languages. The regional languages, whether spoken by minority or majority group of speakers, are in unceasing struggle to uphold their ethnolinguistic vitality in political, socio-economic and educational domains. Moreover, the regional languages remain in conflict with the prevailing prestige of “English” and “Urdu” languages to dominate regional languages in every domain of human life. The societies residing in urban areas seem to be less inclined to use their regional languages and more inclined to use “English” and “Urdu” languages (Abbasi & Zaki, 2019). The communities speaking native or regional languages have critical responsibility of maintain the relevance through revitalizing their ethnolinguistic identity. Such state of affairs to choose a second language rather than indigenous language, is challenging the maintenance and revival of regional languages as indigenous languages. These indigenous or regional languages are not only becoming endangered languages but also casting threats to ethnolinguistic identity of their speakers. It is therefore, imperative to sensitize the regional or indigenous language speaking communities that these languages can be revived by bringing them back in use by its users.

“Saraiki” is one of the regional but one of the majority languages in Pakistan. It is mostly spoken by the communities residing at “Southern and South Western Punjab”. The speakers of “Saraiki” language can be found in all four provinces of Pakistan, but spoken by minority communities in all four provinces (Atta, Weijer &

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Zhu, 2020). In this regard, Shackle's (1977) efforts are significant in categorizing "Saraiki" language spoken at different geographical regions of Pakistan: the first and major category is "Southern Saraiki" spoken within the geographical boundaries of Bahawalpur, D.G. Khan, and Muzaffargarh, second category of "Northern Saraiki" spoken in the district of Dera Ismail Khan and Mianwali, the third category known as "Sindhi Saraiki", along with "Sindhi language" are spoken by the speakers living in Sindh province, fourth is "Jhangi Saraiki" spoken only in "Jhang", Fifth is "Shahpur Saraiki" spoken in the region of Sargodha and the last but the chief category is the "Central Saraiki" spoken in D.G. Khan, Bahawalpur, Muzaffargarh, and Multan regions (as cited in Atta, Weijer & Zhu, 2020). Saini (2018) highlighted similarities between Punjabi, Sindhi and Saraiki languages, but regional variations of Saraiki are spoken in various regions, i.e., "Multani", "Hindko", "Riasati", "Thali" and "Jafri".

The "Saraiki" ethnolinguistic identity originated with the foundation of Indus civilization. Most of the studies reveal about its progression with the settlement of "Indo-Aryan" and "Dravidian" civilizations in subcontinent (Asif, 2005, Saini, 2018, Atta, Weijer & Zhu, 2020 and Yasir & Ghani, 2020). Throughout the colonial period in Sub-continent, "Saraiki" was recognised as a linguistic variety of "Punjabi" language. The mind state regarding "Saraiki as a dialect of Punjabi language" persisted even for several decades after Independence. In 1981, the census data discovered that "Saraiki" speakers consisted of 9.8% of population, while "Punjabi" was spoken by 14.9 % of Pakistani population (Asif, 2005). Later, the "Saraiki" ethnolinguistic struggle, to prove its independent identity, gained political momentum due to the socio-economic deprivations and backwardness of various regions central to "Saraiki communities". As emphasised by Shackle (1977) that "Multan", being central to "Saraiki" speaking regions and despite of being the "sixth largest city of Pakistan", having its religious worth in establishing Islam in the "sub-continent", and being at the heart of cultural legacy and "Sufism", has continued to be deprive of "economical resources", "social cohesion" and "cultural facilities" and "infrastructure" in comparison with "Lahore" city (pp. 392-393). These factors influenced the motivation of "Saraiki movement" to demand the rights of "ethnonationalists" in

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Pakistan which also gave inspiration to the movement for “Bahawalpur Province” (Rahman, 1995). Although, with the perspective of few linguistic and intelligible features, the similarities can be drawn between “Punjabi” and “Saraiki” languages, as equated to “Urdu” and “Hindi languages”, yet, both are distinct languages (Rahman, 1995).

Inclusive to “ethnonationalist conflict” between “Saraiki” and “Punjabi” languages, “Saraiki” communities have been facing increasing “ethnolinguistic vitality” threats from “Urdu” and “English” languages. This dilemma is being faced by almost all regional, indigenous and minority languages in Pakistan. For example, Abbasi and Zaki (2019) have concluded that “Gujrati and Sindhi” language shift process towards “Urdu language”, is influenced by economic and national prestige of “Urdu” language. This practice is common in the process of language shift and has been observed in numerous parts of the world, to list a few, London, Malaysia, and Singapore. In these countries, it has been due to the psychological, social, marital and geographical factors (David 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001 as cited in Abbasi & Zaki, 2019). However, Asif (2005) explained that the procedure of “language shift” involves the selection of second language to be used instead of one’s indigenous language in different settings; while, “language loss” refers to the process of lowering or completely losing proficiency in one language by gaining and developing linguistic proficiency in another language. This is the reason Yasir & Ghani (2020) cautioned human being regarding the persistent practice of second language in communication, while substituting the indigenous language, could subsequently end up at “language loss” or “language death”.

In the manifestation of “language death”, there lies mainly two courses; first, if all the speakers of language die, second, if all the language users stop using that language, thus stopping the transmission of that language to next generation (Ahearn, 2017). However, in multilingual contexts, such as in Pakistan, the later course of “language death” is more relevant. Therefore, it is essential to timely implement necessary measures to slow down the process of “language shift” and promote “language maintenance or revitalization”. As well-defined by Asif (2005), “language

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maintenance” refers to the development of language proficiency by ensuring its use at societal as well as at individual levels. This is because of the pattern that “language shift” initiated at individual level, through practicing “language choice” affects the “ethnolinguistic vitality” at societal level. Consequently, the indigenous, regional or minority language becomes in danger of extinction. In this respect, Karan (2008) suggested that social and psychological “motivations” construct speaker’s language attitude; a positive language attitude can serve to revitalise not only language but ethnolinguistic identity, associated with that language. This development of ‘language revitalization’ through “language maintenance” is known as “reversing language shift”. The phenomena of “reversing language shift” is a social process and in this process each individual is responsible to save language from endangerment by using the that language frequently (Fishman, 1990).

The importance of speaker’s language attitudes towards their indigenous language and ethnic identity has been proven theoretically and empirically. However, there are motivational factors which influence and develop language attitudes of bilinguals and multilinguals in their inclination towards their indigenous language or towards second language. This inclination translates into “language preference” which determines the “vitality of ethnolinguistic identity”. In this context, Gardner & Lalonde (1985) emphasised on the essential role of “motivational and attitudinal variables” with “socio-educational” perspective. However, in order to learn or use a language, “social psychology” provides a comprehensive perspective, encompassing social motivations and attitudinal influences either to learn a new language while maintaining the former language or to entirely shift from existing language to the new language. In both occurrences, “ethnolinguistic vitality” of the group’ “ethnic identity” will be affected (Gardner & Clement, 1990). Thus, socio-psychological factors, i.e., “attitude and motivations” can determine the language status and “ethnolinguistic vitality”.

Giles, Bourhis & Taylor (1977) presented “Ethnolinguistic Identity Theory” with the focus on “socio-structural influences” on the vitality of “ethnolinguistic identity” of in-group and inter-group speakers. With the perspective of “social



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psychological approach”, language is viewed as major dimension of “ethnic identity” in order to remind a group of its “values and cultural heritage”, to develop language attitude and feelings to be transmitted through their behaviour, and to keep their identity separate from others by marking distinguishing line among inter-ethnic group interactions (Giles, Bourhis & Taylor, 1977). The phenomena of “identity” is a multifaceted, complex and fluid, which can be highly diverse in the context of multilingual world (Bradley & Bradley, 2019). However, the positive or negative attitude towards “ethnolinguistics identity” of a speech community can determine its maintenance, shift or endangerment (Tawalbeh, 2019). In Pakistan, “Urdu” as “National Language” is considered as a mainstream language of Pakistan. Moreover, it is used as “Lingua Franca” by cross-linguistic ethnic communities for inter-regional communication (Shah & Anwar, 2015). This leads to the concern of the present study which is that the “existence of Saraiki language shift”, has been noticed by many scholars, due to the development of positive language attitude towards learning and using “Urdu” language more than “Saraiki” language. This occurrence of “Saraiki” language shift towards “Urdu” language is eventually becoming threat for “Saraiki ethnolinguistic identity”.

## **Rationale of the Study**

Pakistan is a multilingual and multicultural country, where the multilinguals or bilinguals are recognized through their “ethnolinguistic identities”, e.g., Balochi speakers belong to Balochi community, Punjabi language speakers mainly belong to Punjab. However, these regional languages and their “ethnolinguistic identities” are in danger because of constant “language shift” of regional language speakers towards the increasingly use of “Urdu” language, in various settings. It has been observed that despite being ethnolinguistically recognised as Saraikis, Punjabis and Pashtoons, the bilinguals and multilinguals have developed language attitudes to use “Urdu” and “English” languages more than their native languages. These “Urdu” and “English” languages are considered as more valuable and prestigious from academic, professional, economic and political perspective. Moreover, the increasing exposure to “Urdu” and “English” as a second language, through media and social encounters,

# *Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review*

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are also contributing to the native “language shift” and endangerment. One of such native language undergoing through “language shift” while also pushing its “ethnic identity” in danger, is “Saraiki” language. “Saraiki” language speakers are identified through their belonging to Southern and South Western Punjab. It also corresponds with the “ethnolinguistic identity” of “Saraiki” language speakers which has been achieved after great struggle. The “Saraiki language shift” has been proven by the empirical studies carried out by Asif (2005) and Yasir & Ghani (2020). Despite the fact that “Saraiki” language is one of the majority languages in Pakistan and falls at 0-4 EGIDS (Ethnologue, 2021), “Saraiki” language is being eroded by its users mainly because of its diminishing use at individual and household levels. The present study intends to focus on the adverse effects of “Saraiki language shift” on the “ethnolinguistic identity” of “Saraiki” language speakers. The study focuses on knowing extent of the vitality of “Saraiki ethnolinguistic identity”, by analysing the social and psychological factors involved in exploring and determining the affiliation of “Saraiki” language speakers with their ethnic identity.

## **Aim of the Study**

The study aims to explore the attitudes and affiliation of “Saraiki” language speakers with their “ethnolinguistic identity” as “Saraikis” and to determine the extent of “Saraiki language shift” towards “Urdu” as Contact language.

## **Research Questions**

1. How much affiliation the Saraiki-Urdu bilinguals display through their “Self-Identification” and fellowship with “Saraiki ethnolinguistic community”?
2. How much interest the Saraiki-Urdu bilinguals possess in knowing and accepting the responsibility of being member of “Saraiki ethnolinguistic community”?
3. How much the attitude of Saraiki-Urdu bilinguals is reflected through their active participation in social and cultural activities of “Saraiki ethnolinguistic community”?

## **Literature Review**

There exist many complexities for the bilinguals and multilinguals. They face the dilemma of learning and using other languages, while maintaining their native

# *Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review*

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language and culture. Though, implementing additive approach is the best to manage languages, yet, it has been observed that many bilinguals and multilinguals adopt subtractive approach, and consciously or unconsciously fall into the deception of “language choice”. On the basis of socio-economic benefits, bilinguals / multilinguals develop “language attitude” to prefer one language over another. In the process, the language with less socio-economic benefits suffers and encounters “language shift”. The most intimidating effect of “language shift” is generating a threat to “ethnolinguistic identity” which is also one of the outcomes of language shift process. Within the framework of bilingualism and multilingualism and in the context of “language shift” and “ethnolinguistic identity”, the current study intends to explore within the wider discipline of “sociolinguistic”, the effects of “language shift” in the indigenous and regional language “Saraiki”, on the identity of Saraiki ethnolinguistic community, due to the change in language attitudes of Saraiki speakers.

Foley (2016) defined “sociolinguistics” as the study of language to construct “social organization through linguistic patterns” in association with societal and individual beliefs and conduct, while dealing with linguistic and social multiplicity and their conceivable factors, i.e., ethnicity, social status, language prestige, economic benefits, etc. The phenomenon of “language shift” encompasses many factors as well as effects. However, in consonance with the research problem under study, it is essential to identify the most relevant literature to be reviewed with the focus on “language shift” and “language attitudes” as main factors, and “vitality of ethnolinguistic identity” as the main effect of “language shift”. Within the geographical context of Pakistan, it has been observed that “language shift” pattern demonstrates the “indigenous or regional language shift”, either towards “Urdu” language or towards “English” language.

The global trend exhibits the most common inclination of “language shift” is towards “English” language. The widespread use of “English” language across many countries, is often conceived as the consequence of British Colonialism, which is persisting in contemporary epoch owing to the phenomena of globalisation inspired by Western socio-cultural and political outlook. However, the situation is not less

# *Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review*

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inimitable in the State of Pakistan, where “English” language as “Official language”, has the political and institutional power and prestige, associate with it and its users. In this context, Ahmed and Hafeez (2007) identified the problem with the “Pakistan’s educational and language planning policy” which pronounces “English” language as medium of teaching and learning in Pakistani academic institutions. In practice, the Pakistani bilinguals and multilinguals translate their ideas twice; first in “Urdu” language and then in “English” language and the consequent is partial comprehension of meaning and communication of thoughts. Moreover, the most of the students prefer “English” to be taught and learnt as second language by using their regional languages as “medium of education” (Ahmed & Hafeez, 2007). The findings of the study by Ahmed & Hafeez (2007) reflect the positive language attitude of students regarding their regional language. Mansoor (2004) analysed the strong influence of “English” language on the status and importance of regional language in educational domains. Contrary to Ahmed & Hafeez (2007), the findings of the study by Mansoor (2004) demonstrated the possession of negative language attitudes of regional language speakers regarding their indigenous language. Hence, Mansoor (2004) concluded that in order to promote the “cultural pluralism” in Pakistan, the “Language Policy” needs to be reviewed with the requirement of considering and promoting regional language use in educational settings.

In Pakistan, besides the influence of “English” language on the regional language speakers in educational and institutional settings, there are other factors which are affecting regional speakers’ attitudes to cause “language shift”. A social trend has been noticed by Nawaz, Umer, Anjum & Ramzan (2012). The study found that the influences of historic, socio-cultural, economic and psychological factors, are contributing in the “language shift” of “Punjabi” regional language, towards “English” language. in U.S.A, Sarwat, Kabir, Qayyum & Akram (2021) examined the position of “Punjabi language shift” in preference for “English” language by analysing the pattern on “language shift” movement exhibited by three generations. The outcomes of the research revealed the “native language maintenance” by grandparents (first generation), while parents (second generation) showed the upward trend in favour of

# *Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review*

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“English” language with restricted use of native language limited to the functional requirements. The findings showed parents’ (second generation) preference of second language, i.e., “English” language for their children (younger generation) because they considered the future socio-economic well-being of their children attached with “English” language. Hence, the findings of the study revealed the negative beliefs of parents (second generation), regarding their native language and towards maintenance of their “Punjabi ethnolinguistic identity”. Shah & Anwar (2015) also showed the similar results regarding the vital role of “attitudinal factors” in influencing “language choice” of parents and children in favour of “English” language. Shah & Anwar (2015) concluded that multilinguals, with “Punjabi” language as their native language, prefer the use of “Urdu” or “English”, instead of “Punjabi” language. To diagnose the motivation lying behind “language choice preferences”, Abbas and Iqbal (2018) carried out a comparative study between “English, Urdu and Punjabi languages”, spoken by young Pakistanis. By applying “mentalist conceptual framework and questionnaire”, the analysis concluded that the “integrative motivation” is the reason for choosing “Urdu” or “Punjabi” languages while “instrumental and supremacy motivation” influences the use of “English” language among the “Punjabi” native language speaking youngsters.

The discussion also identifies the occurrence of “language shift” towards “Urdu language”, which has been noticed in various regional and indigenous languages of Pakistan. It is mainly due to the significance of second language in social, economic and political domains. In this regard, the shift of “Brahui” language towards “Sindhi” language in “Dadu district” has been found by Birahmani & Lohar (2019) through qualitative data and thematic analysis. The study found that the reason of “language shift” was due to the “negative attitude” of Brahui community towards their native language as minority community and their “positive attitude” to “Sindhi” language. Similarly, Abbasi & Zaki (2019) conducted a comparative analysis of the the “Sindhi and Gujrati speakers’ language preferences” in the Sindh province of Pakistan. The results were obtained through qualitative approach by conducting interviews and thematic analysis procedure. The findings demonstrated that the young

# *Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review*

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generation of Sindhi and Gujrati language speakers have been moving towards “English and Urdu language use”. Therefore, “Sindhi and Gujrati” languages are at the verge of endangerment. With respect to “Punjabi” language speakers in various regions of Pakistan, it has been found that the trend of “Punjabi language shift” is not only towards “English” but also towards “Urdu” language. For example, Rabbani & Lohat (2020) studied the trend of Punjabi language shift taking place in “Sahiwal”, and with the similar aim, Nazir, Aftab & Saeed (2013) investigated the status of Punjabi “language shift” in “Sargodha” region. Both studies concluded similar results that “Punjabi language vitality” is facing a threat to be vanished soon, due to its diminishing value, novelty and societal agility among its aboriginal speakers. However, Shafi (2013) focused on the “language preference” of the “Punjabi” parents and its effects on their children. The study found that “Punjabi” parents are certain that their “Punjabi” language association is adding into their economic and educational insecurity, thus, they do not want “Punjabi” language to be transmitted to their next generation.

Apart from the factors which contribute in “language shift”, there are also numerous effects of “language shift”, i.e., cultural, economic, educational, psychological and ethnic identity. Out of these effects, “ethnic identity” is the major concern of the present study. It is very much connected with a specific language, culture, and attitudes of the speakers of that language. With the occurrence of “language shift”, “ethnic identity” is also at risk because of endangerment of the native language. This is the reason, most of the scholars and researchers working on “language shift, endangerment and revitalization”, have conducted numerous empirical studies with theoretical guidelines and comprehensive described the factors and components interrelated with ethnicity and the language. One of such studies was conducted by Karan (2011) with the aim to propose “Perceived Benefit Model of language shift” with ‘socio-psychological’ perspective. While focusing on the motivations involved in the process of “language choice”, the model aims at estimations of “ethnolinguistic vitality” of the languages undergoing the process of “language shift”. Karan (2011) found that the patterns of speakers’ language attitude

# *Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review*

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is the most reliable predictor of “ethnic and language vitality”. Likewise, Noels, Kil & Fang (2014) revealed the same results but by applying Bourhis, Giles & Rosenthal (1981) “Subjective Vitality Questionnaire” and analysed people’s language “attitudes and affiliation” with their “ethnolinguistic groups”. Noels, Kil & Fang (2014) identified three main variables involved in “ethnolinguistic vitality”; first is to view ethnic group as “collective identity”, second refers to the “feeling, attitudes and beliefs” about one’s native language as well as about second language, and the third is to own one’s language as his / her “ethnic identity” as “ethnolinguistic identity”, with positive attitudes. However, Clement & Noels (1992) analysed the phenomenon of “ethnolinguistic identity” between two cultures; “English” and “French” in “contact” setting in Canada. The quantitative data, obtained from “Francophone and Anglophone” bilingual adult students, showed that students, at “individual levels” exhibited relevance with their identity, while at group levels, influenced by the process of “acculturation”, highlighted the importance of “status” in ethnolinguistic evolution. With the specific consideration to “ethnolinguistic” or “ethnic and language identity and vitality”, Zaidi (2016) critically analysed “Punjabi” language “ethnolinguistic vitality” by implying “Ethnolinguistic Vitality Model”. Zaidi (2016) incorporated the model with “Fishman’s Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS)” to assess the “ethnolinguistic vitality” of “Punjabi” language. The study concluded that “Punjabi” language is one of the “endangered languages”, due to the societal factors.

The occurrence and identification of “Saraiki language shift” is not new-fangled. “Saraiki” language has been influenced by the linguistic, social, political and ethnic effects of contemporary regional languages, in Pakistan. However, it has been noticed that many studies explored “Saraiki” language and its concerns, mostly through descriptive or analytical approach, based on facts. For example, Saini (2018) focused on the documentation of the “Saraiki” language from historical and developmental perspective. Whereas, Atta, Weijer & Zhu (2020) focused on description of the phonological and orthographical pattern of “Saraiki” language. Garcia (2016) presented facts to describe “Saraiki” language as a “language” rather

# *Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review*

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than a dialect of “Punjabi” language. Conversely, Khalid, Noor, Imran & Muhammad (2020) tried to prove “Saraiki” language as a dialect of “Punjabi” language, through comparative analysis of lexical similarities. Nevertheless, with regards to “Saraiki language shift”, only a few researchers explored the factors and effects of the occurrence of the phenomenon. In this context, Asif (2005) offered a remarkable foundational study by initiating the exploration of the “Saraiki language shift” in “Multan”. The data was collected through triangulation methodology by using “matched-guise test”, “speech recordings” and “interviews”. The results revealed that ethnic identity of Saraiki language speakers, is maintained in rural zones of Multan, while Saraiki language shift is obvious in urban parts of “Multan”. Asif (2005) found the “attitudinal factor” playing a central role in occurrence of “language shift”. Nevertheless, Yasir & Ghani (2020) declared “socio-economic” factors as most influential to bring “Saraiki language shift” towards “Urdu” language, in “Dera Ghazi Khan” (D.G. Khan), Pakistan. The data was collected through “multiple choice questionnaire” to get responses from three hundred children. These children belonged to “Saraiki ethnic identity” but were actively using “Urdu” language in their daily routine. The findings identified that “socio-economic” factors are motivating the native “Saraiki” language speakers to use, i.e., “Urdu” and “English”, because the speakers consider that “Urdu” and “English” languages are stronger in social, economic and political domains.

In order to reverse “Saraiki language shift” and to safeguard “Saraiki ethnic identity”, a few scholars did put in some efforts to explore the “ethnolinguistic identity vitality” but through non-empirical research designs and based on theoretical data. Asif (2005) in her another study, focused specifically to gauge “ethnolinguistic vitality” of “Saraiki” speakers, through descriptive analysis of the “efforts of Saraiki nationalist”. Asif (2005) applied “instrumentalist and Primordialist theory of ethnicity” (p. 9), and found that either “instrumentalist” or “emotional” or both motivate “Saraiki” nationalist to promote “Saraiki ethnolinguistic vitality”. Likewise, Aziz & Asif (2017) explored the promotion of “Saraiki Ethnolinguistic Identities” by analysing the ideologies reflecting in “Saraiki newspaper editorials”, through “Critical



# *Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review*

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*Online ISSN: 3006-5895*

Discourse Analysis”. The findings revealed the portraying of “Saraiki ethnolinguistic groups” and their ideologies with reference to the involvement of “Saraiki” community in the domains of politics and socio-economics. Though, it identifies some efforts, yet, consistent efforts are required to reverse “Saraiki language shift”.

## **Statement of the Problem**

“Saraiki language” is a regional and native language spoken mainly in ‘South and South Western Punjab’ by one of the majority communities in Pakistan. It achieved its political and ethnic recognition through a continuous struggle spreading over many decades. “Saraiki” language has been a dominant in uniting factor for the establishment of the “ethnic identity” of the people living in the regions with large population of “Saraiki” speaker, e.g., Multan, D.G. Khan, D.I. Khan, Mianwali and Bahawalpur, etc. Despite continuing with linguistic struggle, the “Saraiki” language is facing another daunting challenge of “language shift” towards “Urdu” language. A thorough and critical review of previous studies has provided the evidences of the occurrence of “language shift” in many regional and indigenous languages of Pakistan. However, with regards to “Saraiki language shift”, apart from few studies (Asif, 2005 and Yasir & Ghani, 2020), most of the studies approached the issue with descriptive perspective by highlighting the factors involved in causing “Saraiki language shift”, i.e., psychological, social and economic, etc. These factors could not be generalised as an empirical study. Moreover, no study has empirically evaluated the extent of “Saraiki ethnolinguistic vitality” being affected by “Saraiki language shift”. The present study intends to fill this gap through actual situational observations with socio-psychological lens. The major focus of the present paper is the “ethnolinguistic vitality” of “Saraiki ethnic identity”, which is associated with “language, culture, and attitudes” of the “Saraiki” language speakers. Therefore, present study intends to evaluate effects of “Saraiki language shift” on the “Saraiki ethnolinguistic vitality”, by assessing “Saraiki” language speakers’ attitudes and beliefs towards their “ethnic identity”, because the manifestation of “language shift” endangers “ethnic identity” of its speakers.

## **Theoretical Framework**

# *Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review*

*Print ISSN: 3006-5887*

*Online ISSN: 3006-5895*

Bilingualism and Multilingualism occur when speakers of one specific language develop two or more languages with equal or varied level of proficiency. Though language pluralism is one of the positive outcomes, yet, the “Language shift” is one of the adverse effects of bilingualism or multilingualism, particularly for the native language. Bilinguals and multilinguals often choose or prefer a language for communicative use according to the requirement of context or interlocutors. Mostly, other factors, such as exposer, can intervene in a way which do not allow bilingual and multilinguals to choose language, rather they get unconsciously switched away from their native language. Although, “language shift” starts taking place at “micro-societal level” with the factors and motivations to change individuals’ language attitude (Karan, 2011). Yet, the process of “language shift” also starts occurring at broader societal level, because of migration, industrialization or governmental policies (Fasold, 1984 as cited in Karan, 2011). Thus, the process of “language shift” can be top to down or bottom-up. However, the factors of “language shift” at individual or societal level, may affect all the community and the generations to come. “Ethnolinguistic vitality” is also one of these factors as well as an affected phenomenon, because of “language shift”. Language is interwoven with individuals’ ethnic identities that are constructed through group identities to which they belong (Liebkind, 1999).

Researchers and scholars have approached the issue with the attempts of providing theoretical as well as instrumental framework. The disciplines of social sciences have approached “ethnic identity” from their own viewpoint., i.e., sociologically, psychologically, anthropologically, perspectives of policy makers and social welfare (Phinney, 1992). Many social-psychological frameworks have been introduced to approach “ethnolinguistic vitality” of the speakers with the immigrant framework or inter-group setting, e.g., Giles & Johnson (1987) presented “ethnolinguistic identity theory”, specifically meant to maintain “ethnic language identity” within the setting of inter-group interaction. Owing to the purpose of the present study: to explore the “Saraiki” speakers’ attitude and affiliation with their “ethnolinguistic identity” to cause “Saraiki language shift” from social-psychological

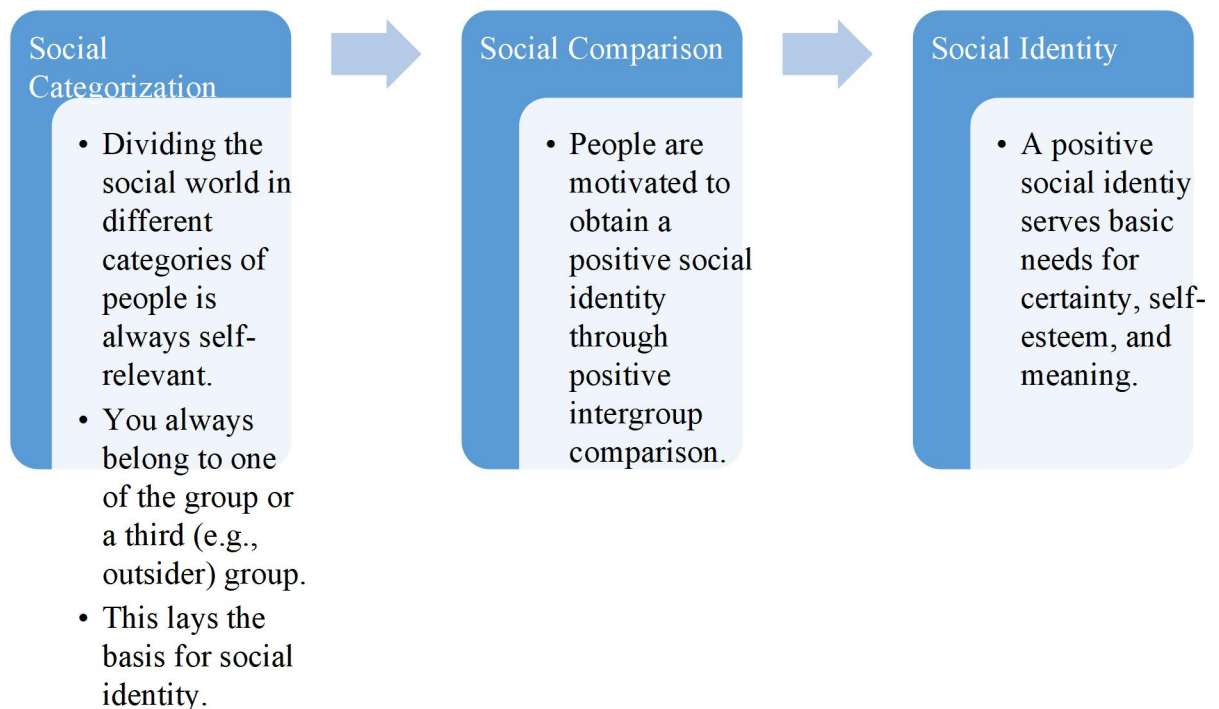
# *Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review*

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theoretical perspective, “the social identity theory” proposed by Tajfel (1974) is found to be more appropriate. The basic definition of “social identity theory (SIT)” consists of three cognitive components; “social categorization, social comparison and social identity”, combined with motivations for obtaining “positive social identity” or responses to “negative social identity”. Thus, SIT aims to develop the identification of “self-concept” in relation to the group to which an individual belongs to and the kind of social-psychological affiliation being established as member of that group (Sheepers & Ellemers, 2019). The social identity process is described in figure 1, as obtained from Sheepers & Ellemers (2019):

**Figure 1: *Social Identity Process***



Note: Figure 1 shows social identity process which has been explained by Sheepers & Ellemmer (2019). The process involves three steps of Social Categorization to Social Comparison for evolving Social Identity.

On the basis of the basic tenets of SIT, various scholars have presented their conceptual models along with the methods and instruments to identify the degree of individuals' recognition and affiliation with "ethnolinguistic identity" (Gudykunst & Schmidt, 1987, Giles, Bourhis & Taylor, 1977 and Ashmore, Deaux & Volpe, 2004).

One of the conceptual models based upon SIT has been proposed by Phinney (1992). The present study seeks methodological and instrumental guidelines from the "multigroup ethnic identity measure", proposed by Phinney (1992). The conceptual model has been selected for the present study for four reasons. First, the model exhibits the general perspective of "ethnic identity" based on the universal understanding of identification and affiliation involved in group membership which is common to all human beings. Second, the selected model comprises of general elements of "ethnic identity" common to all ethnic groups. Third, the model focuses

# *Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review*

*Print ISSN: 3006-5887*

*Online ISSN: 3006-5895*

on how the development of ethnic identity affects the language attitude of group members with ingroup as well as outgroup members. Fourth, the model provides with reliable instrument, i.e., questionnaire, as well as the guidelines to interpret the findings. Thus, “The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure” also known as “MEIM” has conceptually and methodically been found comprehensive model. Moreover, MEIM presents a convincing account of carefully selected components, which are common to general “ethnic groups”. Within these components, first is “self-identification and ethnicity”, which refers to the labelling of oneself as identified member of an ethnic group, e.g., Saraiki, Punjabi (with regards to language), Multani (with regards to regional identity) and / or Pakistani (identification of national identity). Second component is “ethnic behaviour and practices” of individuals of ethnic groups in context of place and time. Moreover, the component focuses on two shared aspects of “ethnic practices; in social activities and in cultural rituals. This component also includes the language behaviour and practice in ethnic groups. Third component seeks to identify the extent of “affirmation and belongings” to interpret the attitude of group members towards their “ethnic and language identity”. The fourth component addresses the “ethnic identity achievement” with developmental perspective of increasing or evolving recognition of identity through “exploring” process and through ones’ “commitment” to “ethnic group identity”. Although, “attitude” has not been considered as a component of “ethnic identity”, yet, it is an important factor to be addressed among minority and majority ethnic groups with dominating relationships. Hence, it is presumed that the selected conceptual framework of MEIN based on the selected theoretical framework of SIT is as useful as it is comprehensible for the present study.

## **Methodology**

The efforts by Asif (2005) and Yasir & Ghani (2020) have been proven to be significant contributions in identifying “language shift” of “Saraiki language” towards “Urdu language”. These researchers have identified that “social, economic and attitudinal factors” are main reasons for “Saraiki language shift” amid other factors or motivations. However, these studies did not explore the effects of “Saraiki language

# *Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review*

*Print ISSN: 3006-5887*

*Online ISSN: 3006-5895*

shift” on the “ethno-linguistic identity” of the Saraiki community. The investigation of this unexplored dimension is the aim of the present study, which is being carried out through “descriptive research” design, with quantitative approach. By applying questionnaires, numerous scholars and researchers have been practicing quantitative approach, in the data collection as well as in data analysis, i.e., Nawaz, Umer, Anjum & Ramzan (2012), Yasir & Ghani (2020), Imtiaz, Jadoon & Naqi (2020), Shafi (2013), and Abbas & Iqbal (2018).

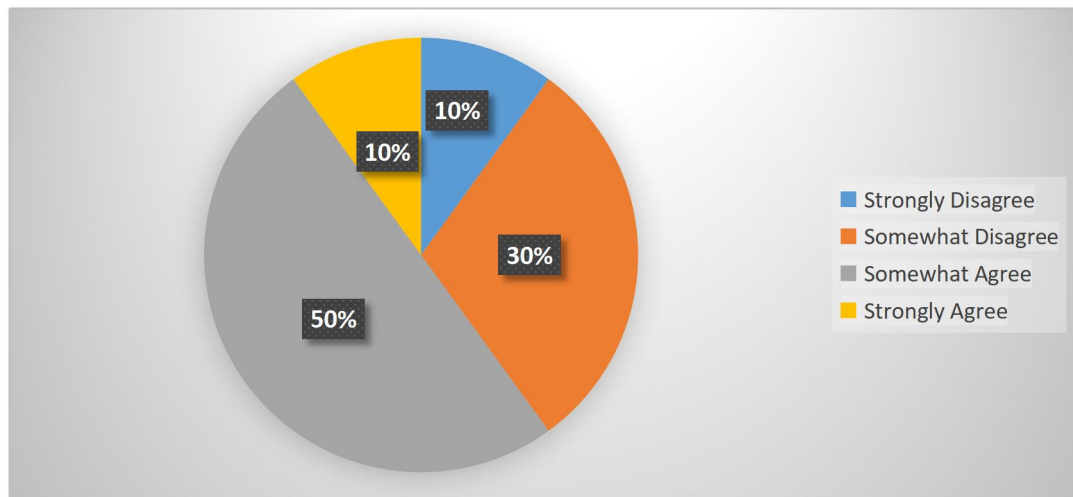
“Saraiki language” is part of “ethnic identity” of large number of speakers, living in many regions of Pakistan. Amongst these regions, “Multan” city has been chosen, owing to the dense population of Saraiki speakers in this region and its symbolic connectivity with other Saraiki speaking regions and community. By applying “random sampling” technique, 45 participants, 25 males and 20 females, with the age group between 20 to 25 years and studying at “Bahauddin Zakaria University” were selected. Owing to the current Covid-19 lockdown situation, the “questionnaires” were sent to the participants via email. However, out of 45, 30 participants responded and submitted their responses on questionnaires. The answers to the questionnaire have been analysed through “descriptive statistical method”.

## **Results**

The obtained responses from online questionnaire have been analysed and compiled, in terms of “MEIM” components. The results of analysed data are being displayed according to the components of “MEIM”. The first component has obtained data regarding “background ethnic information” of “Saraiki-Urdu” bilinguals.

The second component about “affirmation and belonging” has been addressed in three questions. Most of the participants “somewhat agreed” regarding their emotional possession of their “ethno-linguistic” identity. However, very few participants have negated the emotional bond with their ethnic identity.

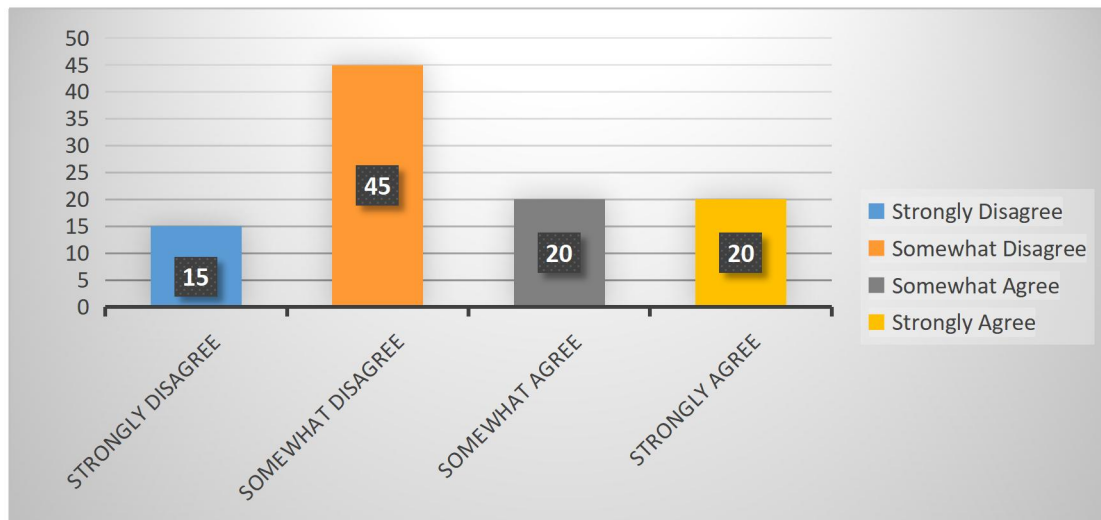
**Figure 1: Affirmation and Belonging**



Note: Results have been compiled on the basis of MEIM by Phinney (1992). The answers reveal that 50% of participants somewhat agree on their belonging to Saraiki language and cultural affiliation. However, 40% have strongly or somewhat disagreed with this belonging.

The third component of “ethnic identity achievement” to explore the participants’ involvement in knowing more about their ethnic identity, comprised of four questions and has been significant in terms of more number of questions as well as the importance. The results of third component have revealed that most of the participants “somewhat disagreed” towards their “ethnic identity achievement”. In knowing and accepting it as their responsibility, no participant has displayed the positive attitude and interested in getting more knowledge about their ethnic identity, i.e., history, values, and traditions.

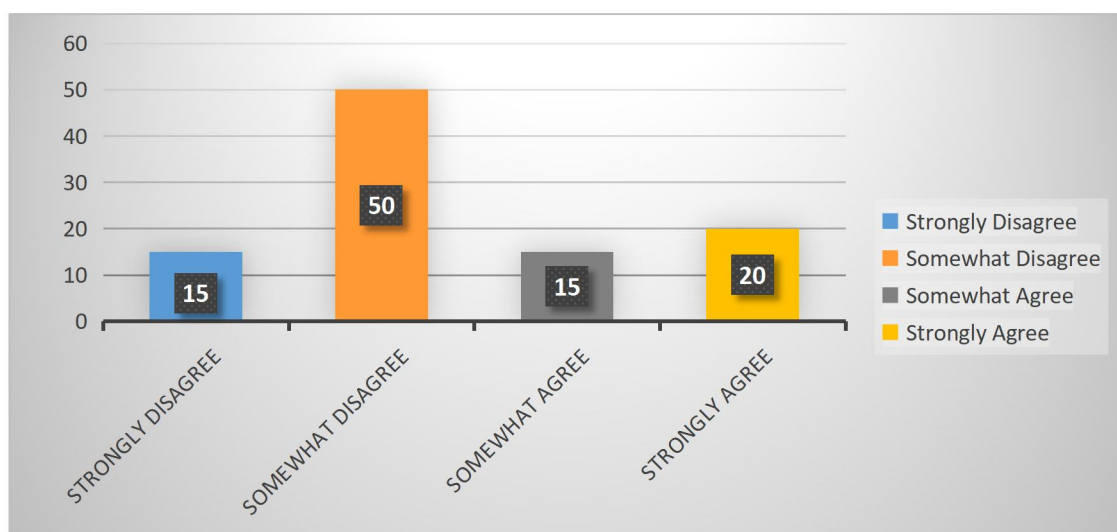
**Figure 2: Ethnic Identity Achievement**



Note: The results indicate that 60% of participants strongly or somewhat disagree in their approach towards Ethnic Identity Achievement. Only 40% of the participants strongly or somewhat agree on this component of MEIM by Phinney (1992).

The fourth component of MEIM questionnaire addresses the perception and attitudes of Saraiki-Urdu bilinguals through their extent of participation in “ethno-linguistic” and cultural practices. The results of fourth component are aligned with the results of third component. Most of the participants have shown “strong disagreement” with regard to their involvement in “ethnic-linguistic and cultural activities”.

**Figure 3: Ethnic Behaviour in Practice**





# *Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review*

*Print ISSN: 3006-5887*

*Online ISSN: 3006-5895*

*Note: 65% of the participants strongly disagree on their activeness towards their Ethnic Identity.*

The multi group ethnic identity measurement, when applied on Saraiki ethnic community, has revealed that although majority of participants are in possession of positive emotional relationship with their Saraiki ethno-linguistic identity, yet, this emotional bondage is limited to only “self-identification”. In real life and in group activities, the “Saraiki ethno-linguistic identity” of these participants lacks positive attentional attitude and participation.

## **Discussion**

With the aim of exploring the effects of “Saraiki language shift” towards Urdu language, on the “Saraiki ethno-linguistic vitality”, the present study employed MEIM by Phinney (1992). The results from questionnaire have been compiled in four sections, to address four main components of MEIM. The first section addressed the first component of “Ethnic Self-Identification”, which has provided the back ground information about participants. The results from other three sections provided significant findings for “Saraiki ethno-linguistic vitality”. The findings of these three components are being discussed in the contexts of research questions.

## **Research Question 1**

This question has been framed to ascertain the exhibition of affiliation of the Saraiki-Urdu bilinguals towards their “Saraiki Community” through their “self-identification” with their ethno-linguistic group. In relation with the second component of MEIM scale, 50% of the participants have exhibited positive emotional feelings of “affirmation and belonging” attached with their ethnic identity, as “Saraikis”. However, it has been observed that these positive feelings are merely attached with “ethno-linguistic identity”, so as to be recognized as member of “Saraiki ethno-linguistic group”. With this perspective, ethnic identity is being viewed as “given” like a “cultural heritage”. In this context, the Saraiki-Urdu bilinguals have displayed contentment with the pretext that they do not have any other option, except recognizing the given ethnic identity. Few studies have resonated such findings, e.g., Ahmed & Hafeez (2007) have concluded the positive ethno-linguistic attitudes by the

bilinguals towards their “regional language and ethnicity” with the recommendation of promoting it in educational institutions. However, the rest of participants with the negative responses in relation with their “Saraiki ethno-linguistic identity”, cannot be over-looked. These results lead to the interpretation of “discreditable or revolting” feeling of some Saraiki speakers towards their ethno-linguistic identity. The same negative attitude has been observed by numerous researchers, with regard to regional “language shift” towards Lingua Franca, e.g., Mansoor (2004), Nawaz, Umer, Anjum & Ramzan (2012) and Sarwat, Kabir, Qayyum & Akram (2021). Ethnic identity is formulated on the basis of cultural and language. Similarly, when negative attitude is developed towards learning and using of indigenous language, it also changes the attitudes and emotional belonging to that ethnic identity. This finding has also been highlighted by Asif (2005), that certain members of Saraiki community feel shame and consider Saraiki language and Saraiki ethnicity to be inferior in status. Thus, the data obtained through MEIM reveals that Saraiki-Urdu bilinguals of Saraiki community, consider their “ethno-linguistic identity” only to perform function of “self-identification” and do not possess any positive affiliation and emotions attached with their “Saraiki ethno-linguistic identity”.

### **Research Question 2**

The question has been framed to determine the level of interest and responsibility which is possessed by the Saraiki-Urdu bilinguals as members of “Saraiki ethno-linguistic group”. The answer of this “research question” relates with the third component of MEIM, i.e., “ethnic identity achievement”. On the basis of the findings, it has been revealed that Saraiki-Urdu bilingual merely recognizes him- / her-self as member of Saraiki ethnic community. During the examination of results, no psychological or emotional association has been found between Saraiki-Urdu bilinguals and their ethno-linguistic identity. The third component of MEIM addresses this occurrence, which has revealed the negative response of participants in being interested to know more about their ethnic identity. Furthermore, the Saraiki-Urdu bilinguals seem to be unwilling in accepting the responsibility of reviving or promoting their “ethno-linguistic vitality”. Though, the Saraiki-Urdu bilinguals

acknowledge that they are legitimized users of Saraiki language, which forms their “ethnic identity”, yet, they take it for granted, without realizing the historical struggle which has been carried out to get “Saraiki” language recognized as a legitimate language of a major population group in Pakistan (Shackle, 1977 and Rahman, 1995). Numerous researchers have found the similar findings and also highlighted the factors which contributed in changing the attitudes towards ethno-linguistic identity of indigenous language communities, e.g., Punjabi, Brohai and Saraiki, (Shah & Anwar, 2015, Abbas & Iqbal 2018, and Birahmani & Lohar, 2019).

The development of negative attitude towards the ethno-linguistic identity can be due to the factors which have less motivation towards being associated with indigenous ethno-linguistic identity. However, numerous factors instigate the bilinguals to develop positive attitudes towards learning and using second language, as well as to become associated and recognized as member of that community. These factors have been analysed closely by Yasir & Ghani (2020), Asif (2005) and Abbasi & Zaki (2019). These researchers have revealed socio-economic factors as most significant in affecting language and ethnic attitudes of regional or indigenous members. Abbas & Iqbal (2018) have further distinguished socio-economic factors between “integrative motivation” for language choice in social context and “instrumental supremacy motivation” to select language for educational and economic factors. In this regard, Karan (2011) has concluded that “ethno-linguistic vitality” of any language and ethnicity can be predicted from the “speakers’ language preference” and the “fellowship of ethnic group”. Therefore, based on the findings obtained from the results of third component of MEIM, it seems plausible that Saraiki-Urdu bilinguals of Saraiki ethno-linguistic community find no “socio-economic motivational” benefits associated with their Saraiki ethnic identity as well as Saraiki language use. Thus, these factors have developed negative attitude in the Saraiki-Urdu bilinguals towards their ethnic identity. The Saraiki-Urdu bilinguals of Saraiki group do not find any use in spending time and efforts in “knowing and developing” Saraiki ethno-linguistic vitality.

### **Research Question 3**

# *Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review*

*Print ISSN: 3006-5887*

*Online ISSN: 3006-5895*

Research question 3 has been formulated to determine the attitudes of Saraiki-Urdu bilinguals exhibited through their active participation in social and cultural activities of “Saraiki ethno-linguistic group”. In addition to the language and attitudes which are affected by various motivational factors, the “ethnic behaviour” as an outcome or reflection of inner feelings, is the fourth component of MEIM. It has been addressed in section four of the questionnaire. The findings deduced from the fourth part of MEIM, has displayed disinclination of Saraiki community members towards their participatory behaviour in various “linguistic and cultural practices”. These findings are extension of the findings of previous section and component. The behavioural practices are merely the reflection of one’s thoughts and beliefs. The findings resonate with the findings of Noels, Kil & Fang (2014), who while focusing on individuals’ “language attitude and affiliation”, have analysed and measured the ethno-linguistic vitality of their groups. Clement & Noels (1992) have found the factor of “social status” influencing the “ethno-linguistic vitality” in inter-cultural setting. Similarly, Zaidi (2016) has concluded that “societal factors” are responsible for “Punjabi” ethno-linguistic vitality”.

In the light of findings from previous studies, one can interpret the findings of present study, that although, few members of “Saraki Community” display contentment with regards to their “ethno-linguistic identity”, yet, they are in the process of language shift and their “ethno-linguistic vitality” is also facing threats of ethnicity shift. Apart from the factors and motivations to bring language shift, which ultimately influence ‘ethno-linguistic vitality’, bilingual follow discursive process. Bilinguals manage two languages in almost every linguistic and social settings. During most of the speech contexts, they use “integrative approach” which appears as “code-switching and code-mixing”. The management of languages is highly automatic process. But it mostly gets influenced by psychological and social factors. Psychological factors develop positive or negative attitudes towards languages and ethnic identity. Social factors help to apply these attitudes and beliefs in real life. These social practices make these language attitudes and ethnic fellowship as habitual process and possession. Therefore, in order to save “Saraiki ethno-linguistic vitality”,

# *Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review*

*Print ISSN: 3006-5887*

*Online ISSN: 3006-5895*

it is crucial to reverse or slow down the process of, “Saraiki language shift”.

## **Conclusion**

“Being or becoming multilingual or bilingual” has become one of the basic requirements to understand and prosper in the contemporary global world. However, one has to pay cost for “being and becoming bilingual”, in terms of loss in indigenous language and ethnic identity. Pakistan, as a multilingual country is being affected with the phenomena of loss of ethno-linguistic identity owing to language shift. Apart from being contact languages, “English” as “international and institutional language”, and “Urdu” as “National language” of Pakistan, have subsided the regional languages. Numerous scholars and researchers through their studies have sensitized the issue of “language shift” and “language endangerment” of various indigenous languages. The researchers and scholars have explored various factors and motivations to either slow down the process of “language shift” or to “reverse language shift”. However, there exist a research gap as no scholar or researcher has examined the effects of “language shift” on “ethnolinguistic or ethnic vitality” being threatened by indigenous speakers’ inclination towards “contact languages”, i.e., Urdu and English. One of such indigenous languages suffering from “language shift” is “Saraiki language” which has been the main focus of present study.

The current study with the focus to fill the research gap, endeavoured to explore the extent to which “Saraiki ethnolinguistic vitality” has been affected by “Saraiki language shift”. The study has revealed the multidimensional effects of “Saraiki language shift” on “Saraiki ethnolinguistic vitality”. The findings have demonstrated the argumentative responses of Saraiki community members towards their ethnic identity. One of the major factors, posing threats to “ethnolinguistic vitality” to Saraiki community is development of negative emotions and attitudes towards their “ethnolinguistic identity”. Therefore, it is recommended to initiate such efforts which can contribute in changing these negative attitudes and beliefs with regards to indigenous languages in Pakistan.

During the process of investigation, the study encountered a few limitations, specifically due to Covid-19 lockdown situation. Face to face interviews could not be

# *Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review*

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conducted. Moreover, the online data collection took much more time than expected. Limited time and resources did not allow to conduct online interviews in order to get clearer input regarding the participants' attitudes, towards their ethnolinguistic identity. However, regardless of these limitations, the present study presents generalizable findings with strong theoretical basis.

The present study is significant in taking initiative to sensitize the scholars, researchers, policy makers and Saraiki ethnic community members, about the adverse effects of frequent and more usage of contact languages, while neglecting their native Saraiki language. In this regard, parents of Saraiki ethnolinguistic community can prove to be of great help. Parents transfer indigenous language and ethnic identity from one generation to another, at the age when individuals' attitudinal factors cannot affect the language choice. Hence, it is requisite to offer such awareness programs for parents as well as for youth, to involve them in "Saraiki ethnolinguistic activities or practices", i.e., discussion regarding "Saraiki language movement" or the historical accounts to evolve "Saraiki" as a language. The rights and responsibilities of "Saraiki ethnic community" must be informed to each of its member. Moreover, the governmental policy regarding revival of indigenous and regional languages, must be reviewed and revised. Media can provide a great support in spreading the importance of regional languages and ethnolinguistic identity to be saved and revitalized by the members of indigenous or regional language communities. Language change begins at individual level and affects the broader societal levels. Similarly, language revitalization process starts at individual level and develops "ethnolinguistic vitality" at broader community levels. Hence, it is obligatory on every individual to contribute while performing their responsibilities towards their language and ethnic identity.

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