

## Language Use and Ethnic Identity of Young Migrant Kashmiri Speakers in Karachi, Pakistan

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### Abstract

Pakistan is home to several indigenous communities. However, life in cities is much more challenging than in under-developed areas. Due to social mobility, economic uplift, and better educational and health opportunities; communities migrate from their local towns to cities. Hence, each province reflects a diverse population and cultural groups speaking their mother tongues, practicing different religions, and following their cultural norms independently. Therefore, this study aims to explore the case of young migrant Kashmiri speakers who are residing in different urban parts of Karachi. As the focus is to identify the language use and identity patterns of young Kashmiri speakers in the presence of dominant languages and cultures. Consequently, the qualitative case study has been undertaken using purposive sampling to know about the scenario of young Kashmiris. For this purpose, data were collected from 05 participants using semi-structured interviews and the responses were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings of the study show that the young Kashmiris use the Urdu language in different domains like home, market, education, and friends because of upward social mobility and lingua franca. As a result, it is being used in their ancestral hometowns as well. While the Kashmiri language has been restricted and it is only used for fun and interaction with only relatives. Similarly, the linguistic identity is predefined by being proud of the Kashmiri language, its association and affiliation with the Kashmiri land, and geography. Overall, although the language patterns showed a shift, the linguistic identity is preserved by a high ethnolinguistic vitality among the young generation in cities.

**Keywords:** Identity, Language maintenance, Language shift, Language use, Migrant

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## **Introduction**

Language is one of the foremost principles of self-identification for affiliation with an ethnic or social group (Schmidt, 2008). When a person learns a new language, sometimes they lose their mother tongue at the expense of social status, social achievement, and social distinction of the dominant language (Holmes, 2013). However, the identity and culture are intact (Abbasi, David & Ali, 2021 & David, Channa, Manan, Dumanig, 2020; Kaur et al, 2022). This simply means that although the language is just one of the features of linguistic identity, there are other determinants of ethnic identity as well (Kaur et al, 2022).

## **Linguistic Landscape of Pakistan**

Pakistan is a diverse country; as almost 74 languages are spoken in the region (Siddiqui, 2019). Therefore, each province depicts geographical, cultural, and linguistic distinctiveness. Therefore, within each province, several languages are spoken. However, some of the languages acquire the status of

dominant languages while other minority languages have less exposure and the number of speakers reduces because of no institutional support.

## **Linguistic Diversity in Karachi**

Karachi, the capital city of the Sindh province is home to several indigenous minority communities. As people from different districts and provinces migrate to the urban city for economic and social uplift. While the young generation is migrating for educational and technical opportunities as the city is a hub for industrialization and economic opportunities.

There are many indigenous languages spoken in Karachi; some of them have been explored by researchers while others are yet to be investigated like Gujarati (Abbasi & Zaki, 2019), Memoni (Ali, 2017), Burusaki, Khowar, Shina, Balti (Ali, 2015), Dhatki (Abbasi & Aftab, 2020), Marwari (Jhatial & Khan, 2021), Bagri, Kutchi, Kashmiri, Pahari, Seraiki, Hindko, and Brahevi (Veesrio, 2021). Census 2017 data as

shown in Table 1 depicts the metropolitan city (Rehman, 2021). linguistic diversity within the

**Table 1**

***Linguistic Diversity in Karachi in Census-2017***

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Language	Percentage
Urdu	42.30%
Pashtoo	15.01%
Punjabi	10.73%
Sindhi	10.67%
Balochi	4.04%
Seraiki	4.97%
Hindko	4.24%
Bravhvi	0.63%
Kashmiri	0.39%
Others	7.02%

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*The data has been presented as reported by Rehman (2021) in The News newspaper.*

**Kashmiri Speakers in Karachi**

Kashmiri is the Indo-Aryan and largest language of the Kashmir Valley; however, it has been a disputed area in the sub-continent. As a result, Kashmiris reside in both Azad Kashmir and Jammu Kashmir controlled by Pakistan and India. Veerio (2021) has narrated that Kashmiri is spoken in other areas as well like “Ponjh Tehsil Haweli (Jammu Kahsmir), District

Muzaffarabad city area (Azad Kashmir), Skardu, Gilgit, (Gilgit Baltistan), Hazara (KPK, Pakistan), Muree (Punjab, Pakistan) and Karachi, Sindh-Pakistan” (p. 339).

There is a dialectal difference between the Muslim Kashmiris and Hindu Pandits in Kashmir and other parts of the country (Bhat, 2017). Overall, regional and social dialects are different (Veerio, 2021). As a result of war clouds and natural

calamities like an earthquake in the area of Kashmir and LOC, the Kashmiri speakers have migrated mostly to Azad Kashmir and other provinces in Pakistan especially cities for safe, secure, and prosperous economic and social life.

As reported by the Census-2017 data (Rehman, 2021), there are about 0.39% of Kashmiri speakers residing in Karachi, Sindh out of 0.17% of the total number of speakers in Pakistan as per 2017 census results (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2021). This 0.39% of Kashmiri speakers are residing in different areas of the city. Hence, the present study focuses on the young Kashmiri speakers whose families have migrated from Kashmir to Karachi for better educational and social life.

### **Objectives**

1. To explore the language use patterns among young migrant Kashmiri speakers in Karachi
2. To identify the linguistic identity patterns among young migrant Kashmiri speakers in Karachi

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the language use patterns among young Kashmiri speakers in Karachi?
2. What are the different linguistic identity patterns among young migrant Kashmiri speakers in Karachi?

### **Problem Statement**

Although Kashmir enjoys institutional support and recognition of the rights of Kashmir by the Government of Pakistan, little effort has been made to support and promote the Kashmiri language.

Similarly, it has been explored and investigated that mother tongue speakers are rapidly adopting the lingua franca in urban centers (Ali, 2017; Abbasi & Aftab, 2020 & Abbasi & Zaki, 2019). Especially, those migrant speakers who shifted for economic reasons from northern areas and other provinces are shifting to the majority language in cities (Ali, 2015). As previously, it has been explored that Kashmiri speakers who migrated to Muzaffarabad from the

countryside have already started using the Urdu language, especially young children (Kiani, Khan, Yasmin & Iqbal, 2019). Therefore, the present study explores the Kashmiri community who have migrated post-partition in the sub-continent and more recently after the earthquake in 2005. As observed that language and identity shifts are more frequent among the young generation (Ali, Ibrar & Khan, 2021). Hence, the present study focuses on language use patterns and the linguistic identity of young Kashmiri speakers who are enrolled in different public sector universities. Additionally, the present study aims to foresee whether 0.39% of Kashmiri speakers of the total population in Karachi are maintaining or shifting away from their linguistic and ethnic identity.

### **Literature Review**

Cities are the hub of linguistic diversity and cultural plurality. Speakers from different areas migrate from underdeveloped areas to urban centres to improve their social and economic life. However multilingual

societies have several issues as they face constant challenges from other linguistic and cultural identities.

As David, Channa, Manan, and Dumanig (2020) investigated different ways of preserving the ethnic and cultural identity of Malaysian Sindhis in Kuala Lumpur. Data was collected from 79 female members of the community aged between 50 and 70 years through one-word responses and the secondary data was collected from the researchers' three years ethnographic study to provide detailed insights about ethnic identity. The analysis of the data showed that Sindhihood had different subjective meanings for each member which is deeply rooted in the traditions, rituals, and cultural practices of daily life. While responding about their identity participants considered language, surname 'ani', Sindhi cuisine, religious ceremonies, gossip, networking, and social values of hospitable, loving, caring, and friendly as some of the distinguishing

features of their Sindhi identity in Malaysia.

Consequently, Kaur et al. (2022) focus on the minority Punjabi Sikh community in the capital city of Kota Kinabalu, East Malaysia where the Punjabi speakers are facing challenges of identity maintenance in the presence of dominant culture. The study aims to explore whether the Punjabi community has enculturated (preserved their uniqueness) or assimilated (adopted the majority culture) themselves into Malaysian culture. For this mixed-method study, data was collected using convenience sampling from 43 participants using a questionnaire and interviews with the community members. The analysis showed that most of the participants used and preferred English in their home domain and for various activities. As far as their ethnic identity is concerned, 24 reported that they identify themselves as Punjabi via language. At the same time, they expressed their local cultural Punjabi identity as 30 participants reported that they consume Punjabi food, 30

listen to Punjabi music, prefer local clothing and local festivals, and prefer endogamous marriages as per the rituals of the Punjabi community. Overall, the Punjabi community had assimilated and enculturated into the English language; they are still retaining their local ethnic identity.

While in the scenario of multilingual Pakistan, Ali, Ibrar, and Khan (2021) focused on the second most spoken language Hindko in the province of Khyber Pakhtoon Khwa in Peshawar. The study aimed to explore the sustainability of the Hindko language by observing the language use patterns and identity in the presence of the dominant language Pashtu. The data was collected using a quantitative survey which was administered to two different age groups (16-25 & 26-40). The analysis of the data shows that the young generation in particular shifts from their traditional language to other languages due to social mobility. Urdu is more predominant in most of the domains and social contexts than Hindko as it is used in

the marketplace, school and administration.

Subsequently, Haider, Wali, Tahir, and Parveen (2021) explored the linguistic and cultural identity of young Punjabi speakers. By investigating their identity, it aims to find out the possible reasons for language degradation among youth using a phenomenological design. The data was collected from ethnic respondents from four universities in Islamabad (60 M/F: 15 from each university). The study utilized purposive sampling to conduct semi-structured interviews, conversations, and media discourse to analyze Punjabi identity and language shift. The findings showed that Punjabi speakers do not own their identity and use the national language Urdu in most of the domains. These trends were particularly observed among women who are not transmitting the language to their younger ones.

In the same way, Jhatial & Khan (2021) explored the linguistic choice, proficiency, attitudes, and identity of Dhatki and Marwari

speakers originally from Tharparker and Umerkot studying at the University of Sindh, Hyderabad. Data were collected from 20 participants using a purposive qualitative study. The findings reveal that both these languages are not used in educational institutes and no efforts have been made to mainstream these languages on social platforms or digital media. However, Dhatki and Marwari speakers are proud of their ethnic identity and consider language as an identity marker. At the same time, they are proud of their ancient heritage and are continuously trying to make efforts to maintain their language. As they speak their mother tongue in public places easily. Although the participants are proud of their social and racial identity yet they shift to Sindhi and Urdu because of a lack of social acceptance. As a result, some of them consider themselves Sindhi first than Dhatki/Marwari (Jhatial & Khan, 2021). Also, Stereotyping Dhatki and Marwari languages as backward or language of lower-class people is common in

society as the literature is limited to mostly folktales.

### **Language Choice, Identity, Shift, and Maintenance Studies in Karachi**

Given Karachi's diverse population, this city is a host to many indigenous communities because speakers from all the provinces shift here to improve their educational standards and social status. Ali (2015) explored the linguistic journey of four indigenous communities Balti, Brushaski, Khowar, and Shina studying at one of the largest educational institutes of Karachi: the University of Karachi. Data was collected using a qualitative multiple case study design to explore speakers' behavior towards their linguistic identity. The analysis showed that speakers living away from their native geographical environment results in having a negative attitude toward their language and low ethno-linguistic vitality and decreased proficiency towards their linguistic identity and language. Similarly, while narrating about their Brushaski

identity, almost all of them reported that they use language as a marker to be recognized as a mother tongue speaker.

Additionally, Abbasi and Zaki (2019) investigated the language choices and perceptions of third-generation Gujarati speakers toward their linguistic identity. The study utilized the Perceived Benefit Model of Language Stability by Karan and Stadler (2000) which focuses on the motivation and behavior toward linguistic choice in a community. For this qualitative case study, data was collected using purposive sampling from 10 participants through the sociolinguistic profile and semi-structured interviews. The results showed that the language was shifting in most of the domains. Gujarati which is also an Indo-Aryan language is spoken worldwide. However, within cities, especially Karachi the language is surviving in oral discourse and the speakers are shifting to Urdu and English. The findings showed that there are societal, educational, and economic



factors and specifically the attitude and behavior within the family are crucial for shifting away from their mother tongue.

Consequently, Abbasi and Aftab (2020) investigated the linguistic phenomenon and identity of young Dhatki speakers (Indo-Aryan language spoken in Tharparkar and Umerkot) residing in Karachi for economic and educational opportunities. This qualitative case study gathered data from 30 participants using a sociolinguistic profile while in-depth interviews were taken from six participants in a public sector university. These tools were utilized to know more about their language preference and identity in a dominant culture. The results showed that the speakers are shifting to Sindhi and Urdu while preferring to communicate in English and Chinese for academic needs and job opportunities. While in-depth analysis reveals that Dhatki speakers face stereotypical behavior because of their skin color and low-socio-economic status. As a result, they

adopt Sindhi for prestige, social acceptance, and sense of association, economic factors, and upward social mobility. While narrating about their identity, it was reported that most of them do not identify themselves with their language rather they preferred to be recognized as Sindhi. Simultaneously, most of them explained that they do not wish to transfer their language to the younger children as it may affect their proficiency as “English is everywhere” (Abbasi & Aftab, 2020 p. 90).

### **Studies on the Kashmiri Language in Pakistan**

Kiani et al. (2019) investigated the linguistic identity of five Kashmiri and five Hindko families who migrated from their villages to the city, Muzaffarbad after the 2005 earthquake. It also aims to identify the impact of attitude and culture on language shift and the relationship between social set-up and language behavior. Data was collected using a questionnaire and interviews. The questionnaire was

used to check the competency and language use of parents and their children in Hindko and Kashmiri in various domains. While interviews were used to cross-check the proficiency as reported in the questionnaire and the reasons for the language shift from their mother tongue to Urdu. The results showed that the first-generation parents are maintaining their first language in a home domain as their linguistic identity, while the children have low proficiency in their mother tongue. It was found that the children are shifting towards the Urdu language as it is the lingua franca in all the domains of language especially education, electronic media, and the marketplace. It further reported that there is a relationship between social status and language use. Speakers who are literate and belong to the upper class prefer Urdu to Kashmiri. Hence, social change within society has a great impact on society.

Hence, the present also aims to explore the language use and identity patterns among young

migrant Kashmiri speakers in a changed social situation. Holistically, it aims to determine whether the speakers' language use patterns and identity enable them to preserve their unique identity and language or it shifts to the common lingua franca, which is the dominant language in Karachi.

### **Research Method and Design**

This study utilizes the qualitative method, which means a detailed description of the problem and community attitudes, preferences, and beliefs. (Creswell, 2014) Therefore; as the present study explores Kashmiri speakers and their language use patterns and behavior in daily life; a qualitative study with a multiple-case study design has been undertaken. Multiple case study provides in-depth insights into the patterns, behavior, and perceptions (Duff, 2008). Hence, the present study focuses on Kashmiri speakers as the target of analysis, therefore multiple case study is the most reliable approach to know the phenomenon of language use and

identity construction. Previous studies (Karan & Stadler, 2000; Ali, 2015; Abbasi & Aftab, 2020; Kiani et al., 2019) have also used the qualitative case study approach to know about the detailed perspectives that community beholds with regard to their language use and identity patterns.

### **Setting**

The population of this study includes Kashmiri speakers who are residing in Karachi. The second generation of Kashmiris had migrated to Karachi for economic and social opportunities. However, the young speakers which is the third generation are studying in different educational sectors of the city and often visit their hometown in Kashmir. Therefore, the target population includes young migrant Kashmiri students who are enrolled in different programs of a public sector university and were born in Karachi or have spent considerable time in Karachi i.e., ten years or more.

### **Sampling**

As the study focuses on young Kashmiri speakers. Therefore, data was collected using purposive sampling in the first phase followed by snowball sampling in the second stage. As the Kashmiri speakers are enrolled in different programs in the public sector university, therefore, they were selected. However, it was not easy to find all of them therefore, the initial research participants were requested to convince other participants using their social network to become part of this study exploring their identity and language use patterns. Hence, 05 Young Kashmiri speakers aged between 18 and 30 years were part of the undertaken study. Both male and female participants were part of this study. The profile of the speakers is given in Table 2 below. The sample size of 05 participants was enough as it reached the saturation point and the researcher started receiving the same answers from the other participants.

**Table 2**

**Participant's Profile**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Area of residence in Karachi</b>	<b>Area of Location in Kashmir</b>
LCIK001	22 years	Female	Clifton, Karachi	Kotli, Azad Kashmir
LCIK002	24 years	Female	Ancholi, Karachi	Bagh, Muzaffarbad
LCIK003	21 years	Male	Garden, Karachi	Dadyal, Kashmir
LCIK004	19 years	Female	Malir, Karachi	Muzaffarbad Chakkar Area
LCIK005	21 years	Male	Gulshan-e-Iqbal Karachi	Azad Kashmir

**Methodology**

The objectives of the study aim to explore language use and different identity patterns and ultimately their impact on the Kashmiri language in society about the dominant language. Therefore, semi-structured interviews were conducted. As semi-structured interviews provide in-depth information about a speaker's behavior, attitude and ideology holistically. (Creswell, 2014).

Before conducting the interview, the objectives of the study were shared with the participants.

After the formal consent of the participants' interviews were conducted as per the convenience of the participants. 03 interviews were conducted face-to-face while two interviews were conducted online on Zoom because of time constraints and pandemic restrictions and SOPs. The interview was recorded and transcribed for analysis. The questions were asked in English; however, instances of code-switching were often found. Each interview lasted for 40 minutes and all of them were completed in more than 03 hours. The participants were informed

that the identity of the speaker would not be disclosed and the data will be used for academic research purposes only.

The transcribed data were analyzed using codes, categories, themes, and sub-themes. Hence, thematic analysis was utilized for identifying the themes from the raw data after the interviews.

### **Findings and Discussions**

#### **Language Choice Patterns in Home and other domains**

One of the major objectives of the study was to explore language use patterns in different domains. Most of the participants reported that they used Urdu in their homes. LCIK001 narrated that “*we use Urdu in our home, although my parents can communicate in Kashmiri, they talk with us in Urdu*”. Similarly, LCIK002 said that “*I communicate in Urdu with my sister and we are more comfortable using Urdu in our home*”. A similar view was given by LCIK004, who said, “*Urdu is the common tongue in Karachi and it has influenced our home settings too but*

*still my parents do speak Kashmiri but most of us use Urdu*”. In the same way, LCIK005 reported that “*we all communicate in Urdu and English most often; like with my sister who is an engineer we communicate and gossip in English about the social happenings in the society*”. Similarly, LCIK002 said that “*we use Urdu with our siblings and use Kashmiri for fun or out of necessity when the guests arrive*”. However, LCIK003 narrated that “*we use both Urdu and Kashmiri in our home*”. While narrating about the other domains; almost all the participants said that

*“We use Urdu in the market (LCIK002); school, university (LCIK001); friends, workplace; cinema (LCIK003) religious place (LCIK004); restaurant: coffee-shop, canteen, and hotel (LCIK005). LCIK005 rightly says “everywhere we use the Urdu language”.*

LCIK005, while explaining the importance of Urdu, said “*the younger ones mostly communicate in Urdu. Even when we visit our hometown in Kashmir, people*

*communicate in Urdu with the younger ones. It is because Urdu is the common language which is used by everyone*". Even LCIK002 said *"we use Urdu to communicate with our younger ones and siblings. Moreover, LCIK004 narrated the same stance: "Urdu is the language to be used even in our home-town because now people are aware of the importance of Urdu and mostly, educated people to use Urdu with their kids"*.

While explaining the reasons for using Urdu instead of Kashmiri LCIK001 said *"our parents used to communicate with us in Urdu and we are more comfortable in using it and we believe we can communicate in a much better way in Urdu"*. Similarly, LCIK003 said, *"in order to get fluent in Urdu, we use the language"*. Also, while commenting about the proficiency in Kashmiri language LCIK001 said *"We have only heard my mother talking to my maternal family and my spoken is not good; although I can understand. I watch dramas in Kashmiri. We use to speak*

*in Urdu and English at home and school"*.

Overall, despite using the Urdu language at home and in other domains. Participants believe that their language would not be affected as LCIK003 said *"the language would be preserved as the young generation will keep on hearing their mother tongue from elders"*.

### **Linguistic Identity Patterns among Young Kashmiri Migrants**

The second objective of this study was to explore the linguistic identity patterns of young migrant Kashmiri speakers in new social settings. The participants narrated language, caste, skin color, gender, historical affiliation, geographical association, and struggle for human rights cause as being part of their Kashmiri linguistic identity.

### **Language, Caste, and Skin Color**

There are different ways of looking at an individual's association with an indigenous community. Language is one of the foremost elements. As LCIK001 said, *"If I look at it in the normal way; I recognize*

*myself with Kashmiri language*". Also, LCI004 said *"we denote ourselves as Kashmiri and not Urdu speakers"*. In the same way LCIK005 said *"we are proud of our mother tongue but we love to live in Karachi and not Kashmir"*.

I associate myself as Kashmiri because of my caste and there are different castes like *"Rajput, Bhutt, Chaudary; Mirza, Meer, and Dar"* (LCIK001). Similarly, *"we are Kashmiris because we are Dars"* (LCIK002).

Contrastively, LCIK003 said *"I feel proud as a Kashmiri because of my skin color and it might sound weird but this is how it is"*. Similarly, LCIK002 said, *"people do not refer or define as Kashmiri speakers as our skin color is not white"*. Although racial identity is a centuries-old concept, in the modern era, speakers identify themselves on the basis of skin color. As LCIK003 explained, *"Kashmiris are mostly white-skinned and I feel superior because of it"*.

Gender is another way of identifying one's association with a

community. The male Kashmiri speaker LCIK003 narrated that *"with respect to male and female; there are no marked differences in terms of the role; however, simply attire differentiates male and female"*. While LCIK004 narrated that *"because of the historical struggle of the Kashmiri rights; the males were considered as warriors and revolutionaries while women as queens of the valley; however, in the present; both and females are the social scientist of the current age"*. Consequently, LCIK002 narrated *"now both male and female are working and females are no more stereotypes and considered working women only"*.

### **Historical Affiliation**

A mother tongue speaker has a significant connection with their language and the community. As LCIK001 narrates *"although my grandparents died when I was 17, visiting my relatives and family members give a sense of pride being a Kashmiri"*. In the same way, LCIK003 said *"our ancestor*

*belonging to Kashmir and their residence at that place gives us a home-like feeling, as it makes us feel that we are actually part of the Kashmir valley*". While LCIK005 said *"I am Kashmiri because of my parents and grandparents; it's not just the language but your ancestors whose belongings matters the most"*.

### **Geographical Association**

Besides some participants reported that visiting their hometown gives them a sense of pride. LCIK003 reported that *"we are also proud of being a Kashmiri because of beautiful mountains, greenery, and scenery around. Neelam valley Arrangkhel located near Kel and Sharda is the place which pleases us the most as a Kashmiri speaker"*. As LCIK005 says *"my father knows more about Kashmiri language and values; yet visiting Kashmir twice was lifetime experience"*.

The remaining participants reported the opposite. As LCIK004 said, *"we used to visit our hometown on special occasions but now we do not visit on a regular basis as we*

*have been shifted to Karachi since 20 years"*. LCIK001 also narrated a similar view: *"now we visit our hometown once or twice in a year"*.

### **Kashmiri's Struggle for Human Rights**

Though Kashmiri citizens have migrated into different cities yet they are united against the struggle for Human Rights. As LCIK001 says *"we also celebrate Kashmir Day on 5<sup>th</sup> February. We are dressed up in our traditional attire, local food is cooked and we meet our relatives"*. However, LCIK003 said *"we do not celebrate the day in the traditional style now; we use to celebrate it during our school time. Nowadays, I just wear green kurta on that day"*.

The findings of this study report that although the language use patterns are changing yet the identity patterns are maintained to reflect the Kashmiri identity. Kiani et al. (2019) report the same findings for the language use patterns that Urdu is used in the home domains. In the same way, Ali (2015 & 2017) and Ali (2017) explored the indigenous



communities in Karachi and reported that the speakers are using Urdu in most of the domains and their language choices are governed by their social settings.

As the present study explored the young Kashmiri speakers and especially children, it was reported that they are using Urdu in all social settings. A similar view was given by Kiani et al. (2019) that children use it for education purposes and especially while doing homework. Ali (2015) reported the same findings that the indigenous speakers are more proficient in using Urdu and English in their education domain than in their mother tongue. Similarly, most of the participants in this study narrated that they do not have good proficiency in their mother tongue although they watch and listen to Kashmiri content, Kiani et al. (2019) agree with the findings as it was reported that the young Kashmiris do not have good language skills.

Although the language choices are changing, the young Kashmiris are preserving their distinct

culture through different linguistic identity patterns. Abbasi et al. (2022) while exploring the cultural patterns of young Sindhi speakers narrated that Sindhi identity is maintained by different identity markers. Moreover, Kaur et al. (2022) presented similar findings as well, that the Punjabi speakers in Malaysia are preserving their local culture through their identity patterns. Similarly, David et al. (2020) explored that language may shift but identity is permanent. As surnames, food, religion, networking, and social values are the features that are a distinct part of any identity. Kaur et al. (2020) also explored similar features in the Punjabi community. The findings of the present study reported the same identity markers. However, geographical affiliation, historical ties, and skin color are some of the new features which are being considered as important features of Kashmiri identity as explored within this study. Although Skin-color feature was explored among Dhatki speakers as well, they had a negative

image (Abbasi & Aftab, 2020). However, in the present study, the Kashmiri speakers attribute positive meaning to this feature of their identity. Consequently, Kaur et al. (2022) reported that the speakers are preferring endogamous marriages; however, in the present study, some of the Kashmiri speakers reported preferring exogamous marriage which may affect the language within the coming generation. However, despite the language shift, the community speakers had high ethnolinguistic vitality about their Kashmiri language and identity. Ali (2015), Abbasi et al. (2022), and David et al. (2020) shared similar findings for the preservation of identity patterns. However, they consider language as a vital component of identity preservation.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, the analysis of this study shows that young Kashmiri speakers use Urdu in different domains. However, it is being used in the home domain as well with the siblings for discussion, fun, and academic knowledge. However, their

parents communicate in the Kashmiri language with their other relatives. Similarly, the young generation is using Urdu in other domains as well. Despite using Urdu in most of the domains, the speakers had a positive attitude toward their language. However, the number of domains in which the Kashmiri language is used is reduced and which could lead to language shift, attrition, or loss. Despite the language patterns of the community are shifting, yet the speakers have ascribed positive features to their ethnic identity which includes language, caste, skin color, historical affiliation, geographical association, and gender role are some of the features that narrate that the Kashmiri identity is maintained among the speakers. These identity patterns are enabling the Kashmiri speakers to preserve their indigenous identity in cities. Although their visit to their native land is fewer, they have a strong sense of association with the people and geographical area.

Although the language patterns of the young migrant

Kashmiris are shifting, they are proud of the different identity features that they are beholding in cities. These features make them unique and stand indifferent from the rest of the population. A further detailed study can be conducted to know about the language use patterns in detail and reasons for switching from the mother tongue to the dominant language in cities. Although, this study provides an insight into the life of young migrant Kashmiri speakers in terms of language and identity patterns. Yet it is limited because of its scope and the number of participants in the study.

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