

## In quest of Language and National Identity: A Case of Urdu language in Pakistan

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**Keywords:**

language identity; national identity; national language promotion; Pakistan

**ABSTRACT**

Language is an inherited endowment and has a strong link to identity. The paper, building on historical identity narratives, overviews the national identity challenges to Pakistan with aiming further to bring forth the integrative function of language in the process of nation binding and unification. The article investigates the views of Pakistani graduates from major ethnic groups on national language and discusses their responses to the administered survey questionnaire and follow up interview data. Despite the varied perceptions towards other identity variables such as mother tongue, religion, birthplace, customs, and traditions, etc., the study identifies common attitudes towards national language. This research finally finds out that a large majority of the respondents advocate national language as the central marker of national identity and feels an intense need to revitalize, promote and publicize Urdu in sustaining national integrity.

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### INTRODUCTION

Pakistan, even after more than seventy years of its appearance as a sovereign state on the world map is still struggling to forge its identity (Ali, 2011; Shaikh, 2009). Much has been done (Jalal, 1985) at the governmental and social levels to overcome the issue but this language dilemma has yet to be resolved. Pakistan's uncertain national identity (Shaikh, 2009: 9), leaving profound far-fetching prejudices has led the nation to divisive units socially, religiously, and mainly ethnically. Language plays a crucial role in the history-making of any country and so it did before partition in framing the identity of the Muslims of the sub-

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continent<sup>i</sup>. Urdu, being an identity marker stood aside by the Muslims while Hindu wanted Hindi to enjoy the dominant status after English hegemony (Ayres, 2009). This lingual feud caused the demand of a separate sovereign state for the Muslims where they could enjoy free will and equal rights (Rahman, 2008).

However, this language dilemma instead of getting resolved got worsened even after this dream of a separate homeland had turned into a reality (Ayres, 2009: 4), because there had been many languages other than Urdu (Bailey, 2008), claiming to be rightful for being a national language of this new-born state of Pakistan. The most prominent amongst these were Arabic, favoured by Muslim jurists, Bengali, the largest spoken language of 56% speakers in East Pakistan, Punjabi 28%, Sindhi 8%, Pashto 3% and Balochi 1.30%, 4% people spoke Urdu while English had only 1% of speakers (Bhughio, 2014). Finally, Urdu alone was declared as the national language of Pakistan while English gained the status of an official language temporarily (Kazi, 1987: 47). This decision not only arose antagonistic sentiments amongst the masses but also caused sentimental turbulence within ethnic groups, leading them to revolt. Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the first governor-general of Pakistan issued a straightforward decree in his speech at Dhaka university's convocation on 24th March 1948 and proclaimed that I would like to announce before you openly that Urdu alone and no other language has the potential to be declared as the national language of Pakistan. Don't give room to any sorts of inimical persuasions led by misconceptions because no nation can be stood united without one unanimous state language (Jafri, 1967). This consequently led to the language movements against Urdu after independence.

### **Linguistic rivalry faced by Urdu**

Urdu has constantly been in combat with other local languages right after independence facing lingual movements against it (Cohen, 2004; Islam, 2008). The very first rivalry Urdu faced was by the Bengali language (Umar, 1970), which came openly as an opponent right after getting unrestricted from the fear of Hindi dominance after freedom. Bengali language speakers joined hands with the Muslims earlier mainly because they feared that Hindi would replace the English if Pakistan came into being as a separate sovereign territory (Rahman, 1997). But later they didn't accept Urdu as the only national language of Pakistan which further led to the separation of East Pakistan as Bangladesh in 1971. Right after the separation of East Pakistan the issue of Sindhi language movement, advocated by G. M. Syed named nationalist with the motive of a separate independent state of Sindhu Desh arose in 1972. His manifesto was to make Sindhi the sole national and official language seeking

perpetual freedom from the ascendancy of Urdu and letting the citizenship rights only to those who would be able to speak Sindhi. A Sindhi language bill of 1972 was forwarded to Sindh assembly with the provision to make Sindhi a compulsory subject in education policies up to grade XII and to make Sindhi the language of courts, government institutions as a whole (Cohen, 2004: 212; Legislative assembly debates, 1972: 504-508), which resultantly led to the riots between Urdu speakers and Sindhi speakers. Balochistan being a multilingual province, Urdu here was opposed by Pashto, Balochi, and Brahvi languages collectively. However, the leading ethnic figure was Balochi language with the movement to preserve Balochi identity based on population majority standing in combat with national language Urdu (Cohen, 2004: 219; Islam, 2008). Pashto language movement, termed as Pakhtuwali in KPK province was used as an identity symbol for the Pashto speakers conceived by a Pashtun nationalist named Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan. The Pashto language has also secured its place in the educational system of KPK province recently which is posing a threat to the national language (Ayaz, 2013; Cohen, 2004: 217). Another language movement against Urdu was of Saraiki language spoken mainly in Southern Punjab and some districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) province like Dera Ismail Khan. Saraiki Lok Sanjh named institution is working for the development of Saraiki language but markedly within the communicational domain (Rahman, 1997). Punjabi language movement (Shackle, 1970) though being weaker is also playing a role in causing damage to the status of the national language as it's the largest spoken local language of Pakistan. Succinctly, such sorts of attitudes towards languages create a social difference causing identity shift by drawing a divisive status line which makes the people divert towards the more powerful language while leaving their own identity lagging far behind. Ethnic movements like this not only give a vent to lingual and racial differences but also induce deprivation to national identity.

As mentioned in Papia Sengupta's most recent book, *Language as identity in colonial India* that lingual based differential movements in 2000 led to the formation of three ultimately separate states in India (Sengupta, 2018: vii-viii). Pakistan is also confronting the same sort of appalling situation where regional languages by securing their existence in educational policies are challenging the status of national language which can be devastating for national unity. This is mainly because of the lacking interest of scholars and researchers in Pakistan regarding the role of national language in national identity formation. This crisis of ethnic-based dis-integrity caused Pakistan to suffer the loss of the Eastern part now Bangladesh in 1971, and the problem has not yet resolved but growing day by day, leading the masses towards sectarian and lingual prejudices based on provincialism and sectionalism. Keeping in

view this ever-growing sectarian schism and heterogeneous mindsets towards the religious creeds among the masses, there is no assurance of national integrity under a common faith on Islam in the foreseeable future. In such circumstances, the national language promotion has been conceived as the only hope of national unity as proposed and emphasized earlier by the founders of the nation.

## **Literature Review**

### **Language identity**

Identity has multidisciplinary been studied in like anthropology, psychology, sociology, history, linguistics, and education. With some notable theories (Heller, 1987) and general latest research on language identity (Edwards, 2009; Joseph, 2004; Liams & Watt, 2010; Simpson, 2007), specifically on language and national identity (Block, 2006; Coupland 2007; De Fina, Schiffrin, & Bamberg 2006; Dong & Dong 2013; Edwards 2009; Gao et al., 2015; Li, 2015; Zhang, 2005), with its role in identity construction (Barker & Galasiuski, 2001; Lacan 1977).

Johann Gottfried von Herder first identified a linkage between language and nation-building, claiming 'language as the essential defining characteristic of a nation' (Barbour, 2000: 15). Herder argued that language plays a prominent role in national identity formation (2004: 77) and Smith (1991: 143) considers national identity as the most fundamental and inclusive one out of all the collective identities. John Joseph emphasized that language cannot be detached from identity both are 'ultimately inseparable' (2004: 13). From this perspective, language being an inherited human capacity distinguishes us from other species in general and national language in particular collectively marks our national identity by differentiating us from the rest of the speakers. Herder further proposed that the preservation of certain languages as a 'collective inheritance' depends on the survival of their speech communities. Any nation's self-esteem is equipped in its dexterity and commitment to safeguarding itself but without the existence of its language it is even unthinkable (Herder 2004: 33). And this language inheritance can only be preserved through the identity circulation process by preserving and be shielding the territory of a language within the natural setting of its speakers which is a safe zone for any language to survive. While margining the boundaries of a nation internally or externally, the foremost distinctive feature is the language of its territory which can weld the nation into a strong bond of kinship and natural affinity within its speakers because a mutual language is the very first connection before any other human social relation to

proceed further as being a social animal, humans cannot escape contacting and expressing each other through language.

Elie Kedourie (1961) emphasized on single language as being the central identity marker and that could be the national language\_ an unprejudiced neutral language, spoken and understood by a large majority of a country. She further asserted that for the attainment of the status of a state or a nation it is the requisite for the inhabitants to start feeling alike based on religion, culture and mainly on language (Kedourie, 1961: 9).

### **Urdu\_ from language to identity**

Papia Sengupta argued that there was no such sign of language-based identity in the sub-continent till the beginning of the eighteenth century (2018: 17). The foundation of language-centered identity was primarily laid by the East India Company (EIC) after its arrival in India. The game of language thus started during colonialism on the policy of ‘divide and rule’ (Spivak, 1996: 21) So that the British would govern not only the people but also on their minds. Their main purpose behind this was to create lingual differences, dividing the masses in combat with each other and to set up a social class of their alliance who would be ‘Indian in blood and color but English in taste, moral and intellect’ (Macaulay, 1935: 359). This language division further led to the communal and sectarian division based on lingual identity, as there were neither such divisive units before colonial rule nor any sign of lingual identity formation (Jalal, 2000: 124). Thus, this Hindi and Urdu division marked the identity of Hindus and Muslims resultantly (Robinson, 1974). Pointing towards this Jalal further argued, ‘the linguistic categories were a colonial invention-vitiating attempt to project Hindi and Urdu as symbols of a coherent Hindu and Muslim identity respectively’ (2000: 103).

Urdu, in this regard, has always played a vital role in representing the Muslim culture, their independence movements and national identity (Ayres, 2009; Rahman 2008) before and even after the appearance of Pakistan on the world map. Since language as a defining national feature is mainly a European commenced concept as detailed theoretically narrated by Herder and Fichte (Chatterjee, 1986: 9), this classification laying afore the foundation of lingual identity has made language the central marker amongst other identity constituents like religion and caste (Sengupta, 2018: 50). After this classification, Urdu became the defining feature of the Muslims of the sub-continent based on belongingness and identification (Matin at el. 2001) which further led to the independence movement in the form of a unified race<sup>ii</sup>.

## **Urdu\_ from identity to national identity**

The founding fathers, Allama Iqbal and Quaid-e-Azam understood and projected Muslim nationalism and Pakistani nationalism as one and laid great stress on the former before partition and suggested the later one after the independence in 1947. In his speeches, Quaid-e-Azam always emphasized the equal citizenship of Pakistanis regardless of religious and ethnic prejudices. He said that religious faith is purely a personal matter between individuals and God and that it has nothing to do with the business of the state. Pakistan doesn't mean only to Muslims, 'we have many non-Muslims—Hindus, Christians, and Parsees—but they are all Pakistanis. They will enjoy the same rights and privileges as any other citizens and will play their rightful part in the affairs of Pakistan because they are all Pakistanis' (Jinnah, 1948).

Jinnah's main motive was to awaken in the masses a sense of national identity leaving aside the minor differences by living, thinking and acting as Pakistani and for that he sought no other commonality but only Urdu language (Rahman, 2008) which could bind together all the people, preventing them from sectionalism. His arguments on Urdu as an only national language linking it to Islam were because Urdu was the only language that could serve as a national language being spoken and understood by hundred million people of the sub-continent at the time of Pakistan's emergence and mainly because Urdu is being used in many Islamic territories and being linked to Muslims carries with it a history of Islamic civilization and Muslims' traditional heritage as compare to any other language. It didn't mean at all that all those who strove for Pakistan as a separate independent state spoke Urdu as their first language but it was Quaid-e-Azam's foresightedness that only Urdu language would uniform the multilingual ethnic groups into one strong bond of lingual harmony. The first speech of the father of the nation in the Constituent Assembly can be a guiding principle for all to avoid any kind of sectionalism on ethnic or sectarian prejudices in which he declared; 'Now that you have got your separate homeland, do remember one thing. Start your new life as free citizens of the state, leaving aside all your angularities and differences of Muslim and non-Muslim, Sunni or Shia, Punjabi or Pathan. "You are free; you are free to go to your temples, you are free to go to your mosques or any other place of worship in this state of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion or caste or creed this has nothing to do with the business of the state". Your religion, your race, your sect is your personal matter but in the political sense, all of you are the citizens and equal citizens of the state of Pakistan (Ali, 2011: 29).

Pakistani nationhood rather than Muslim nationhood is the need of the day to assemble the divisive units of varied Islamic sects<sup>iii</sup> and the preliminary effort in this regard is the

revitalization and promotion of national language to secure national identity. A common communicative tool circulating throughout the whole country with common feelings of being a nation is integral to bind together the nation as one unit. Safran (2008) also regarded religion and language as two prominent markers of ethnonational identity, former argued historically while later being the most recent phenomenon. Religion, he pointed always had an upper hand as being used as a unifying force but language replaced it according to the changing nature of time and thus regarded nationalism itself as a religion and nationalists as a sect of the faithful.

It is evident that both Jinnah and Iqbal, two top-ranked contributors amongst the Pakistan makers, didn't point out any difference between Muslim nationalism and Pakistani nationalism except prioritizing each one according to the changing nature of the time. Islam served as an identity maker and unity creator before partition based on Two-Nation Theory (Ahmed, 2008; Ali, 2011). Because being a religious minority under British rule and for the fear of being suppressed by Hindu majority after them there was no other way to unite the Muslims, invoking them to get united and strive for a separate sovereign land where they could live freely according to the teachings of Islam. At that time, protection and preservation of the religious identity were integral to save the Muslim culture and community from being wiped out under the duressed Hindu communion. But now that the goal of securing a geographically separate sovereign state had achieved it was proposed that Pakistani nationalism should be given priority based on national language promotion to gain national identity and national unification.

Moreover, Islam is being used for political ends by certain namesake religious Mullahs currently as it has historically been used earlier as categorized differently as 'liberal-modernist Islam' of the early rulers, Ayub Khan's 'developmental Islam', Yahya Khan's 'nationalist Islam', Bhutto's 'socialist populist Islam', and Zia's 'revivalist fundamentalist Islam' (Ahmad, 1988: 232).

### **Urdu in the Constitution of Pakistan**

Despite the fact the founding father of the nation suggested it as the sole inheritor of unity maker, Urdu being the national language of Pakistan has always been treated like a step-child within its territory. A bulky-sized constitution of Pakistan mentions only a few lines concerning Urdu (Government of Pakistan, 2018). From the very first day, our constitution along with declaring Urdu as our national language vowed solemnly to make it the official language of Pakistan but has always proven it as a politician's claim. According to Article 251 of the Constitution, it is cited that from now within the next fifteen years it will be made

sure to use Urdu replacing English as the only official language of Pakistan. There is a contrary sub-clause permitting the use of English until the arrangements are made, followed by another sub-clause licensing the provinces to promote 'provincial languages' alongside Urdu. More than six decades have passed since the adoption of the first constitution of Pakistan in 1956, the process for the implementation of Urdu replacing English as an official language has yet to be accomplished. The fifteen years period of time has never to come, instead, the constitutional clause remained as it was in the 1963 and 1973 constitutions of Pakistan respectively with a minor amendment of a sub-clause permitting the promotion and inclusion of local languages in the provincial educational policies (Constitution of Pakistan, 1973).

Later, the 18th Constitutional Amendment also caused a hurdle in implementation of Urdu as a replacement of English as an official language in a way that the provinces took advantage of this amendment and added regional languages like Sindhi and Pashto as a medium of instruction (Ayres, 2009), disintegrating the education system and posing a threat to national identity. The problem is that in spite of so many well-established government institutions like Higher Education Commission (HEC), National Language Promotion Department (NLPD) and Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training former named as Ministry of Education (MoE), no one bothered to pay serious heed for the promotion and revitalization of Urdu by using the authoritative constitutional power. Though not much has been done in favor of Urdu from Pakistan's language policy and constitutional perspective, there is still hope for the revitalization and promotion of the Urdu language in Pakistan in the foreseeable future. On September 8, 2015, the Supreme Court of Pakistan dealing with the case of Urdu language, issued a verdict in favor of Urdu (Haider, 2015; Herald, 2017). According to Article 189, the Court directed the federal as well as the provincial governments to replace English with Urdu as an official language within three months. All the government institutions were strictly commanded to ban the use of English anymore, for being a colonial language hardly spoken and understood by a small class of people in Pakistan. However, it was conceived to use English in foreign affairs and international commerce and trade. The Cabinet Secretariat with directives to all ministries and divisions of the federal government ordered the translation of papers, official documents, signboards and websites to Urdu and all the government officials and representatives were directed to deliver their speeches in Urdu from then and on whether inside or outside the country. However, this verdict of the Supreme Court was withered like dry leaves when the ruling Sharif family, on different foreign visits afterward did not follow the directives.



This identity dilemma needs to be resolved prudently and cannot be neglected as it is the matter of survival for a sovereign independent state. Pakistan, being a multi-ethnic, multilingual and multicultural country has multi-challenges to grab this issue with iron-handed. So far as, an attempt has been made to shed some light on the issue of identity in Pakistan, historically. Hereafter, in the methodology section, the issues mentioned above through presenting the research results to commingle the theoretical underpinnings and empirical findings.

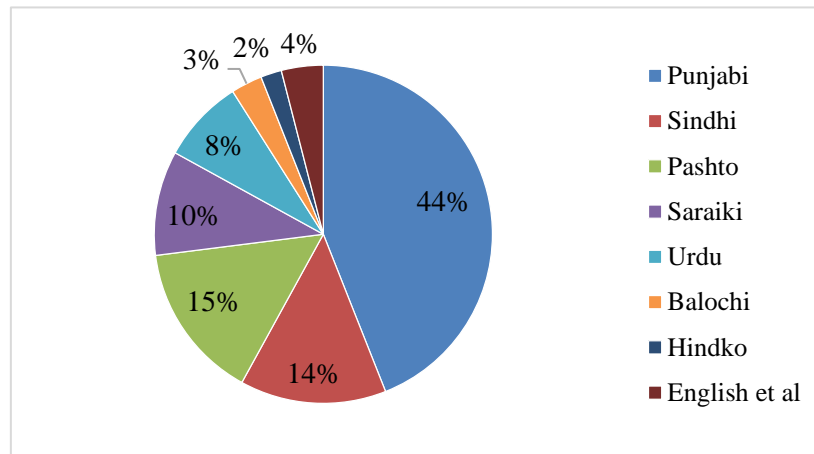


Fig. 1. Ethnic groups by population in Pakistan (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2017)

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This particular research was carried out on the speakers of five major spoken languages in Pakistan, covering almost 91% of the total population (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2017). Since a large majority of the population in Pakistan can speak or at least understand more than two or three languages, Urdu is understood by almost all the inhabitants of the country and the number of Urdu speakers is increasing day by day due to rapid growth in urban population and also because of the increasing sense of its linkage to national identity amongst the literates. Keeping in view Bendle's (2002) psychological approach to identity, this exploratory research aims to reveal the strong correlation between national language and national identity among Pakistani graduates in China mainly through questionnaire survey research and a follow-up face-to-interview. According to Bendle, identity rises as a key construct from 'inherent contradiction between a valuing of identity as something so fundamental that it is crucial to personal wellbeing and collective action, and a theorization of 'identity' that sees it as something constructed, fluid, multiple, impermanent and fragmentary' (Bendle, 2002: 1-2). Like other identity researches previously, the questionnaire (Wong-Rieger & Taylor, 1981), and interviews (Papademetre, 1994), were used as the main tools for data collection. The questionnaire, with modification according to local requisites, took some

aspects of the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) series and mainly ISSP (2013) – National Identity III Basic Questionnaire, Archive-Study-No. ZA5950. Based on survey findings, 15 follow-up interviews were also conducted to investigate further and authenticate the credibility of perceptions and attitudes towards national identity. This research mainly intended to explore the link between national language and national identity in Pakistan with a strong emphasis on the impact of national language towards national identity formation, considering it as the central identity marker.

### **Respondents' Selection**

As the linkage between language and identity was the core of this study, the participants' selection was focused mainly because of their representation of one ethnic group with close relevance to the main theme of this study. Keeping in view the statement of Adam Lerner, '... a nation exists in the minds of the people than in the real world...', we may determine that national identity is the outcome of all many various perceptions and theories of self with varied variables that mark identity individually and collectively like ethnicity, religion, language, territory, culture, demography, etc. In his classic book, 'National identity' Smith argues that 'nations must have a measure of common culture and a civic ideology, a set of common understandings and aspirations, sentiments and ideas, that bind the population together in their homeland' (Smith, 1991: 11). All of the selected respondents represented one of the major ethnic group with more than ten million speakers of each language as their mother tongue. Besides, due to foreign exposure with a high-level educational approach, they had far more insight and scholarly outreach than the general public. The participants surveyed were 491 Pakistani students, currently enrolled in different universities in China, including 280 males 57% and 211 females 43%. Out of these 280 males, 167 were doctoral degree students while 113 students were doing their masters in varied disciplines. Out of 211 females, 80 females were doctoral while 131 were master candidates. Whereas interviewed respondents were 15 doctoral degrees, Pakistani students, with a ratio of 3 students from each ethnic group consisting of 10 males and 5 females, all from a Chinese university. The research participants fell between the ages of 22 to 36 and belonged to the mentioned above top five major ethnic groups in Pakistan.

### **ANALYSIS**

The results of this study are depicted in two sections: the first part of survey questionnaire deals with the national language and national identity perceptions of each ethnic group separately with comparative gender differences, while the second part with face-to-face

interviews presents overall national identity considerations of all the participants amongst other identity variables. The results evolve the affirmation of Urdu as the sole national language, detection of Urdu language as the symbol of national identity, and promotion of Urdu language as the unifying factor amongst all the divisive units. National language symbolizing national identity serves as a unifier of individuals into groups and representor of a nation based on cultural, traditional and national values. This need for national identification arises when people from multi-ethnic settings come across each other in socialization.

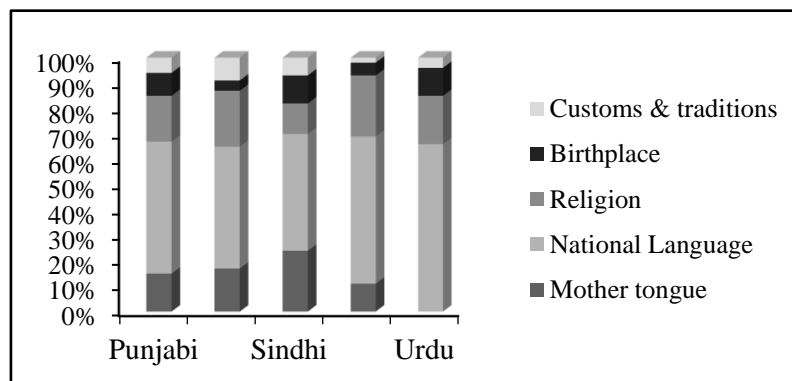


Figure 2. Ethnic groups with their national identity perceptions by %

The data illustrates that all the respondents showed a positive attitude towards the national language as the central identity marker. The respondents from all the ethnic groups collectively favored the national language as the central identity marker. Religion has always been at the priority in Pakistan when it comes to face to face with any other factor in comparison, but surprisingly not that many participants overall regarded religion as a central identity marker. Thus, nationalism, with unification and identification, is purely a secular doctrine. Customs and traditions and birthplace, both the variables had an almost equal number of respondents. Considering the current situation of Urdu language in Pakistan, facing a great rivalry from the regional and local languages combined with English, the most shocking response is concerning mother tongue as a relatively small number of respondents, from all the ethnic groups except Sindhi, advocated any link of mother tongue to the national identity. The overall results show that a majority of respondents from all of the ethnic groups collectively, considered national language, as the central marker of national identity. Such responses from the speakers of all the ethnic groups are a clear indication of the recognition of national language as the sole marker of national identity.

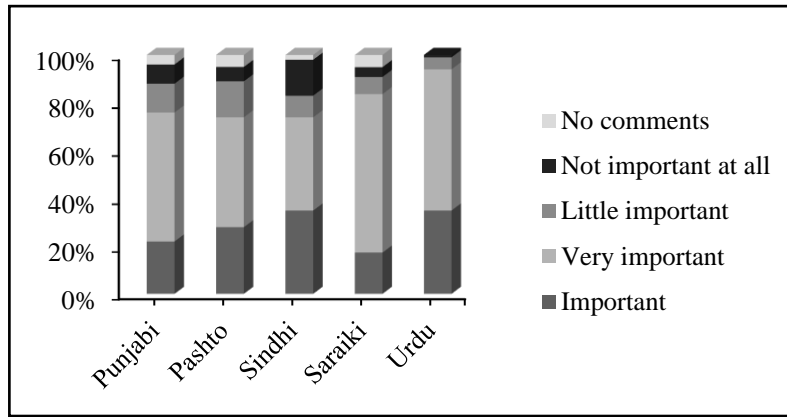


Figure 3. Importance of Urdu as defining national identity by %

When it comes to the closest interconnection to national identity, the data in Figure 3 portrays that national language was given considerable importance as a vital identity marker. Fishman argued that language is often seen as the most salient collective symbol for national identity because ‘the unity of language is viewed as more enduring than other symbols’ (Fishman, 1972: 49). Therefore, ‘linguistic differentiation is often used to highlight the separateness of people, whereas linguistic similitude is often used to highlight the unity of a people’ (Fishman, 1972: 49-50). Language has been considered as a protector and a preserver of identity collectively because, through its communicative expansion, the threat of cultural and lingual hegemony of a more dominant culture can be guarded against. Cobban (1970) argued that a nation is the outcome of a collective will of the inhabitants to dwell together with linguistic, cultural and racial commonality.

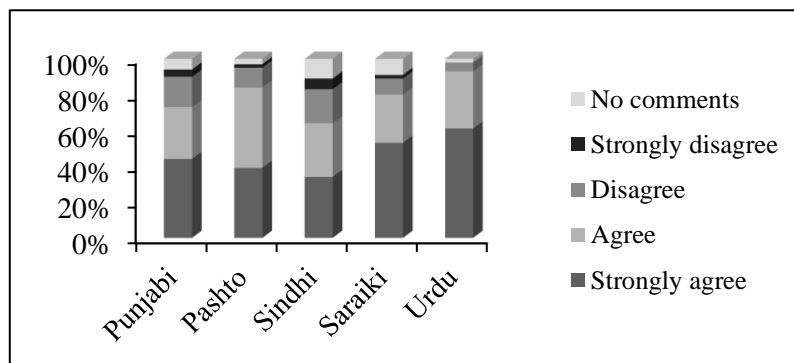


Figure 4. Importance of speaking the national language to be a true Pakistani

Figure 4 consists of the respondent's notions, pertaining conformity of speaking the national language to be a true Pakistani. The majority of speakers from all the ethnicities collectively

strongly agreed or agreed on the importance of being fluent in the national language to be a true Pakistani. However, 6% of the participants from Sindhi strongly disagreed and 11% showed a sign of reluctance in responding and standing being neutral. Altogether, the participants amongst all the ethnic groups strongly agreed and agreed that it is very important to speak national language Urdu to be a true Pakistani, while some disagreed and a few of them remained neutral with no comments. The overall results demonstrate that participants consented to the usage of the Urdu language as an integral symbol of national identity.

The results show that both, resistance and acceptance of national identity, are reliant on self-consciousness individually or collectively as the multi-ethnic setting gives birth to the need for personal identification or confronting sentiments to national identity. Considering the results of this study, it is evident that the participants' responses from all the major ethnic groups of the country, without any gender differences, are approving national language as a salient marker of national identity. These illustrations support the idea that only national language bears the sole right of dominance in all the governmental domains without any ethnic rivalry or resistance and that the Pakistani nation should promote and revitalize Urdu to secure their national identity.

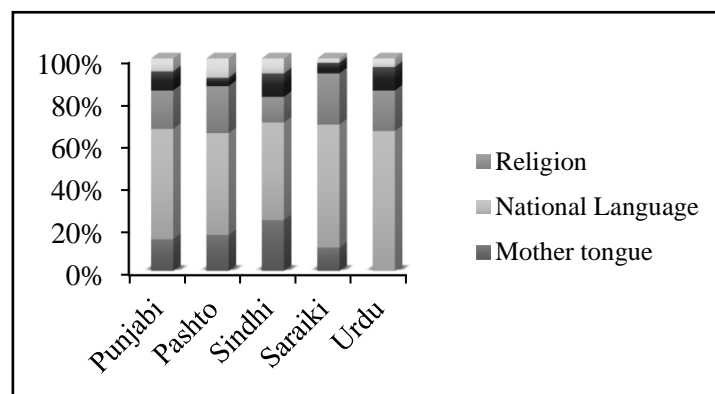


Figure 5. Attitudes towards national language (Urdu) as a national identity marker

Since survey results indicated religion, mother-tongue and national language as the major variables to be the constituents of national identity, the follow-up face to face interview questions mainly focused on these. The results are presented and discussed in light of the respondents' excerpts that will focus on the ideological construction of the national identity.

Both language and religion, considered as constituents of national identity, have been regarded as the 'domains of categorically differentiated cultural practice that simultaneously unite and divide' (Brubaker, 2013). However, with 96% Muslim population (GoP, 2017), Pakistan is divided into different many sects<sup>iv</sup> based on religious practices and certain Islamic

beliefs which have made it quite problematic to decide, who in real a Muslim is (Iqtidar, 2012). Islamic teachings regard every Muslim as truly a brother to every other Muslim, whereas in practice these minor differences have reached to a level where some sects have pronounced others as Kafirs<sup>v</sup> even with an attempt for a constitutional amendment (Malik, 2011: 37). In such extremist leveled sentiments, it is altogether impossible that Islam can play a unifying role in symbolizing national identity. Besides, research respondents viewed religion as a personal trait- a characteristic of self-identity.

‘In the current scenario in Pakistan, where different ethnic and sectarian prejudices are at their peak, the national language is the only best available platform for unification and national integration. You can see that even different sects while following the same religious practices, have declared others as to be the out of the religious boundary of Islam whereas all are still agreed upon being Pakistanis’.

Respondents’ comments suggest that ‘being a Muslim’ has less to do with being a true national. For example, a student noted, “Being only a Muslim doesn’t justify as a nationalist nor does ethnicity do because religion has global impact whereas ethnicity has only local or provincial, only national language rightly justifies the notion of being national as it binds anyone from any corner of the country into one bond of Pakistani”.

Thus, Islam has been considered not only a religion but a polity and doctrine regulating the society ethically and socially transcending ethnic, linguistic and territorial prejudices.

As far as the ethnicity is concerned, a student remarked, “I belong to the largest ethnic group of Punjabi in Pakistan, but I cannot claim that the Punjabi language is my identity to national or international levels because by claiming so I am detaching myself from the origin of being Pakistani as the speakers of 70 other spoken languages around are also Pakistanis”.

“If national identity means what represents me the best as a Pakistani, in or out, then I think a national language can be the most suitable representative. And if a language that can be spoken and understood by the majority of the population is a better option as a national language then I am sure only Urdu comes fit to this definition”.

“Mother-tongue can be a classifier to a certain ethnic group, an identical feature we are born with, but it cannot represent national identity regardless of the number of speakers a language has. Only Urdu can better symbolize national identity since it is spoken or understood by all ethnicities belonging from any religion or sect in Pakistan”.

Overall, the interview data confirms that national language is the best platform specifically for a multilingual state like Pakistan to create the feelings of selfism within and otherism outside.

### **Conclusion**

The research investigated the ideological construction of national identity from different perspectives, however, it centralized on the vital role of national language in fostering national unity, being a lingua franca among multi-ethnic groups, and representing national identity at national and global levels respectively. Regardless of a smaller number of speakers as their first language, Urdu is still understood and known by all the citizens of Pakistan and necessitates more concernment to instill wakefulness regarding the love and prestige of national language through campaigns at every forum as a reminder of national identity marker and planned language policies at governmental levels. If we flip through the history, Indonesia with an estimated 600 spoken languages, Indonesian national language Malay, having only 5% native speakers (Paauw, 2003) at the time of independence, served as the uniting factor amongst nearly 250 million people, is a clear notion that only national language has the potential and capacity to promote national identity and national integrity. There is a dire need for Pakistan to promote and revitalize Urdu, the central marker of national identity to strengthen the national integrity and unification amongst the divisive ethnic units. All the local and regional languages should be given constitutional right to exist and expand but within the restricted domain of social setting, and only national language should secure the right to flourish in the educational system and governmental domains. The promotion, expansion, and exaltation of Urdu should not be considered as a menace to any of the vernaculars, but as the basic symbol of national identity and national development. The more the national language empowers, the more sense of unification and integration will increase.

The research thus concludes with some suggestions. First, the ideology of Pakistan<sup>vi</sup> cannot be rejected as it is the base of independent Pakistan on Islamic schism. Secondly, we cannot solely stick to the idea that Pakistan means only to Muslims as non-Muslim minorities cannot be alienated altogether. Thirdly, the vent to an ever-growing spirit of provincialism and even regionalism based on lingual prejudices is a serious menace to national identity as it is leading the masses to categorize themselves into regional, ethnic and cultural identities which are already secured within their territorial boundaries. Fourthly, I am against the inclusion of any local or regional language in the education system as it brings no use other than making the education system more complex, lasting local impact on minds, creating regional differences and lessening the vitality of national language by joining hands with English. Globalization has not only made the nations forge and preserve their national identity but also underscored the necessity of survival by letting aside ethnic and sectarian prejudices.

At the same time, the current research apprises the educationists, policymakers and language planners about the vital role they can play in national language promotion because communicative supremacy and national identity lie primarily at the core of language planning. Language planners through the educational platform cannot only confederate the ethnic divergence but can promote the single national language and uphold national identity as wholeness. For this, successful language policy in full favor of Urdu is much needed to be implemented earnestly and considerably. The current research advocates that a large majority of literates embrace and support the idea that national language is the central marker of national identity so it must be revitalized, promoted and strengthened.

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<sup>i</sup> Before partition in 1947, Pakistan and India combined formed sub-continent under the British rule.

<sup>ii</sup> The Muslims belonging from different sects and ethnic groups gathered for the struggle of independent nation under Two Nation Theory as a unified race.

<sup>iii</sup> The followers of Islam are thus divided into different many sects with a number of different Islamic labeling brands. This division is based on teaching practices and following in successors on the caliphate and not on the core belief of Islam.

<sup>iv</sup> This division into sects like Sunni, Shia, Wahabi, Deobandi, etc., based on certain dissented beliefs among Islamic practices evidently prevails in Pakistan which Cohen (2004) calls '*Pakistan's varied Islam*' (p. 11) and '*sects in Islam*' (p. 183).

<sup>v</sup> The word Kafir is notoriously used in today's Pakistan with the motive of declaring an individual or a sect as 'disbeliever'. From the Islamic point of view, he, who believes in the oneness of Allah and the finality of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is thus a Muslim. However, based on certain self-made beliefs some extremist sects regard others as Kafirs on minor differences in the practices of Islam.

<sup>vi</sup> Pakistan was based on the concept of the Two-Nation Theory that Muslims and Hindus are two different nations and can never stand as one (Jinnah 1948).