

*Language Shift and Endangered Process of Native Languages in Generation Z among British Pakistani Diaspora Due to Interethnic Marriages: The Role of English as a Lingua Franca a Qualitative Descriptive Study*

# Language Shift and Endangered Process of Native Languages in Generation Z among British Pakistani Diaspora Due to Interethnic Marriages: The Role of English as a Lingua Franca a Qualitative Descriptive Study

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## Abstract

Within the British Pakistani diaspora, this study examines the impact of interethnic marriages on language and cultural dynamics among Generation Z. It also emphasizes the significance of English as a lingua franca. Maintaining their rich linguistic heritage presents a number of issues for British Pakistanis, particularly those who marry outside their ethnic group. Through semi-structured interviews and latent theme analysis, this study examines the behaviors of five Manchester, UK households and reveals that the parents are conscious of the need of conserving the regional languages spoken by Generation Z. However, parents are also addressing in this research the variables that lead to a language shift, such as the importance of native languages, the dominance of English, and the lack of support from family and society. This study emphasizes how vital it is to assist these communities, as if we don't, the process of native language engendering will quickly lead to language extinction.

**Keywords:** Language shift, endangered languages, interethnic marriages, English as lingua franca, British Pakistani diaspora

## 1. Introduction:

The British Pakistani diaspora is a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural community based on its diverse linguistic heritage. Within this diaspora, there are six different ethnic groups such as, Punjabis, Pashtuns, Sindhis, Saraiki, Mhajirs, and Baluchi. These distinct ethnic groups speak different languages and also have easy-to-understand dialectical differences. This seems to be happening over time; these languages are going through the endangerment process, particularly among Generation Z British Pakistani in United Kingdom. This endangerment

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process in languages has many causes, as proposed by linguists, like colonization, migration, globalization, urbanization, education policies, media influence, economic pressures, invasion, and some natural and personal ones. Cenry (2010), among all these this study deals with one of the reason, which is interethnic marriages and couples linguistic choice within the British diaspora and its consequences in Generation Z.

According to Merriam-Webster (1994), the term interethnic means to accommodate people of different races in one society and the term relationship means a romantic attachment or state of kinship between two individuals, Webster (1994). When you combine those two definitions together, it creates a new definition of an interethnic relationship. Which means the marriage, cohabitation and interbreeding between two individuals of two different ethnicities. Britannica (2018). So, marriages among these multiethnic or multilingual couples in today's time inevitably force them to abandon each other's languages and choose the language of commonality among the known languages, often English.

This linguistic phenomenon generates among children in Generation Z a language shift, which ultimately leads to the endangerment of their native languages. This study explore, how interethnic marriages among British Pakistani's are becoming the reason for endangerment in native languages as well as the cause of language shift in Generation Z with particular emphasis on the role of English as a lingua franca within the British Pakistani diaspora.

### **1.1 Research Objective:**

To investigate the impact of interethnic marriages on couples language choices within the British diaspora and its effect on language propagation to Generation Z

### **2. Literature Review:**

Language has been the foundation of human communication for millions of years. That is how an individual represents its culture, ethnicity, notions, traditions, and convictions. Inevitably, language is the way to convey emotions and ideas to its native speaker. Language plays a pivotal role in human development; it evolves from the simplest tool of communication to a complex system of sounds and signs. According to Kovecses (2010), language is a true picture of one's culture or ethnicities; without language, culture and ethnicities are unable to exist. Ilyosovna (2020), also states that language is a primary source of communicating ideas, thoughts and opinions, and no interaction is possible without it. It is, in fact, one of the most pernicious aspects of a proudly preserved, promoted, and practiced culture. Consequently, Language is a reflection of a specific culture it portrays the ethnicities, values, customs and colors. Nelde and Ozolins (1996), claim that there are several factors that divide ethnic groups from each other, but language is the only key factor between them that expresses the opposing relationship between these ethnic groups.

According to Nelson (2015), ethnicity means a group of people with the same heritage, customs and values. Whereas, Suyemoto et al. (2020), assert that ethnicity is a constantly complex notion that builds and enhances relations among communities by sharing the same cultural experiences. Pereira (2020), discovers that ethnicity refers to a specific group of people who have similar customs, traditions, beliefs and values. In addition to this, Koos and Neupert-Wentz (2020), proclaim that ethnicity is a socioeconomic distinct community that has its own set of rules and values through which they are leading their lives. Marriages

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among people of diverse ethnic backgrounds are becoming more prevalent among overseas Pakistani's; these unions are referred to as monogamous, intercultural, or multicultural marriages.

Bystydzienski (2011), states that global statistics of interethnic marriage shows that now-a-days people are most expectable about interethnic marriages in terms of culture, religion and racial background. Gaily (2017), also claims that the trend of intra-ethnic marriage is in ascending order in today's time. According to Nayab (2023), the significance of interethnic marriages among British Pakistani's are that they not only create assimilation between two communities but also establish social cohesion and stability. Similarly, language is another outcome of assimilation in the backgrounds of interethnic marriages, which has a great influence on an individual's personal identity, but sometimes this concept gets weaker and becomes divisive when a couple chooses another known language or language of communality for themselves and their children's communication, which is different from their mother tongue. So that's how their native language became endangered, and a language shift happened in a family. The heritage of a language is perpetuated by generations, but in the near future, this legacy of a language will be based on technologically mechanized languages with relatively few spoken languages due to the growing number of interethnic marriages. Nettle and Romaine (2000), states that language cannot survive if it is not transmit to the next generation. Language itself cannot survive until its speaker keep it alive.

Khokhlova (2014), explains that language death is a phenomenon linked to endangered languages, i.e., when a language at risk falls out in the next generation or a language shift happens. According to the UNESCO project in 2013, 50% native languages of the world are on the verge of extinction, and one of the reasons is the growing rate of interethnic marriages. This rate is quite alarming, which indicates that we are transmitting very few living languages to Generation Z. As a result, this generation is not only be deprived of the cultural values associated with these endangered languages, but they are also reach their ends with their related languages.

### **3. Research Methodology:**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This study clearly uses semi-structured interviews and purposive sampling techniques in order to qualitatively understand the impact interethnic marriages on native languages and language shift among Generation Z in United Kingdom. Participants in this study have been asked pre-planned, open-ended questions during semi-structured interviews through purposive sampling. The present study is descriptive in nature, as its aim is to explore how interethnic marriages among British Pakistani's are becoming the reason for endangerment in native languages as well as the cause of language shift in Generation Z with particular emphasis on the role of English as a lingua franca within the British Pakistani diaspora.

The study employs of 5 families from the interethnic residences of Manchester, United Kingdom and investigates the primary meanings and essential themes in the interview data through this analysis. The aim of the analysis is to discover trends in language use, cultural integration, and generational impacts. This technique enables a thorough understanding of how interethnic marriages may affect language dynamics and cultural identity among Generation Z.

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### **3.2 Theoretical Framework**

The content of this study is derived from the semi-structured interviews. So, in the context of examining endangered native languages among Gen Z in Pakistani British interethnic marriages, Fisherman's (1991) revised language shift theory provides a relevant framework for understanding the variables that are influencing the language shift and maintenance. Those key variables are the social networks of speakers, the domains of language use, and the intergenerational transmission of language. These variables relate in a quite complex way when they are used into the context of interethnic marriages.

### **4. Data Collection and Interpretation**

Multiple weeks of interviews were conducted to provide a thorough grasp of the participants' language dynamics for data collection. All of the interviews were audio recorded, and the linguistic patterns in each exchange were examined. Based on the results of semi structured interviews with 5 U.K based interethnic families the following data has been obtained: firstly, there is lack of parental awareness regarding significance of maintaining regional languages as mother tongues in early childhood. Even while they know these languages are crucial for their children's basic linguistic development, parents still struggle to put this knowledge into practice, particularly when they are living abroad. These obstacles are the source of language extinction as a parent they themselves are unable to integrate into their own daily life. This issue is aggravated by a lack of familial support and societal reinforcement, leading to a drop in the use of these languages among newer generations. Second, the study's findings indicate that four out of the five participants believe that a person can learn their mother tongue from their family, community, and surroundings. In contrast, one participant believes that a person can learn their mother tongue from the words spoken around them, whether or not those words are spoken at home. The diverse perspectives of the participants demonstrate how cultural and geographic factors influence the concept of mother tongue, which is not static. Thirdly, all parents, according to interviews, discuss the importance of regional languages, but in practice, their words don't correspond with reality. The study demonstrates the discrepancy between their professed convictions and their actual behavior. The interviewee learns from speaking with kids that parents themselves do not speak their native tongues with their kids at home. This discrepancy between awareness and action underscores the difficulty faced in conserving linguistic diversity, notably at multicultural context where more common language like English has been utilized. Last but not least, maintaining their regional languages presents significant challenges for all of these people in interethnic marriages. As this research focuses on families in the United Kingdom, English is the language that has been used in this context. Schools and other ethnic institutions do not offer any support to preserve cultural and ethnic differences, which further contributes to language endangerment and language shift in future generations, which this research concludes. Married couples who live outside of their community are more likely to adopt the language of the current environment. This study highlights a serious threat to the British Pakistani diaspora's ability to maintain its linguistic diversity, especially for the children born into interethnic marriages where English is often the dominant language.

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## 5. Conclusion

According to the study's findings, most parents discuss the value of regional languages, but there is a discrepancy between what they claim to know about their home tongue and what they actually do particularly with relation to marriages between different ethnic groups. Different opinions regarding what constitutes a mother tongue among Generation Z demonstrate how cultural background and upbringing may have an impact on a person's sense of language identity. British Pakistani Generation Z's reliance on English as their mother tongue is largely due to the lack of cultural and familial support for the native tongues of the countries to which their parents are native, which also puts these kids at risk for language shift and endangerment. Another factor escalating this trend is living outside of the region and the inadequate reinforcement of cultural and ethical norms in foreign educational and social organizations. Finally, the results of this study highlight the importance of concentrating on particular initiatives meant to preserve diverse languages within these kinds of communities. The phenomena of languages changing will continue if there is no desire to grasp it and take action, which could have major consequences such as the complete extinction of local languages in future generations.

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