

EXPLORING THE EFFECTS OF GRADUATE STUDENTS' RELIGIOUS IDENTITY ON THEIR LINGUISTIC IDENTITY IN A PUBLIC SECTOR UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

This study explores the effects of religious identity on the linguistic identity of graduate ESL learners at Kohat University of Science and Technology within the multilingual and multicultural context of Pakistan. Drawing on Pugh's (2007) constructs of identity and Hemming and Madge's (2011) conceptualization of religious identity, the study investigates how religion influences language use, communication practices, and identity formation among postgraduate students. Using a qualitative research design, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with ten MS/MPhil scholars from the Department of English and analysed thematically. The findings reveal that religious identity significantly shapes linguistic identity through the use of religious expressions, ethical speech patterns, and participation in religious practices. Participants employed different languages such as Pashto, Urdu, English, and Arabic to express ethnic, social, academic, national, and religious identities, demonstrating that linguistic identity is fluid, layered, and context dependent. This research also emphasizes how language practices and identity building are shaped by family, society, history, politics, and nationalism. Furthermore, the results demonstrate the dynamic character of identity negotiation by demonstrating how religious language practices vary across social contexts and degrees of religious participation. The study advances sociolinguistics, applied linguistics, and identity studies by relating language, religion, and identity within the Pakistani ESL context. It also provides insights for educators, policymakers, and researchers operating in multilingual and postcolonial contexts.

Keywords: Religious identity, linguistic identity, ESL learners, multilingualism, identity construction

Introduction

Language is considered one of the fundamental elements of a person's identity (Yadav & Gulati, 2024). It is not merely a means of communication but plays an important role in the formation, expression, and development of identity, and is considered a marker of identity (Souza, 2016; Stelmakova & Zabrodskaia, 2024). When language is spoken, it reflects religious and socio-cultural identities within the social contexts of its speakers (Yadav & Gulati, 2024; Gul et al., 2022).

Andrews (2010) explains, "language forms part of the identity kit of an individual and transmits information such as gender, ethnicity, geographical origin, occupation, and social class" (p. 86). The idea of the "identity kit," first introduced by Gee (1989), points to the way language becomes part of how people shape and express their identity. Similarly, Edwards (2009) explains that "the language we use forms an important part of our sense of we are—of our identity (p.1)." Furthermore, the intersection between language and the individual and/or community results in the formation of linguistic identity (Pugh, 2007).

Bucholtz and Hall (2005) define identity as the social positioning of self and other, implying that identity is constructed in specific communities based on one's role and interaction with others. Norton (2013) asserts that the roles individuals perform in social groups and settings significantly influence the development of their identity. Similarly, language identity is

developed through social interactions, where linguistic choices, such as accent, tone, dialect, code-switching, and social class, shape an individual's language identity (Edwards, 2009).

According to Pugh (2007), identity is shaped not only by language but many other factors. He suggested five broad categories that shape individual identity: family, sociology, psychology, history/politics, and nationalism. These dimensions affect the formation process of individual identity.

Many scholars have examined language identity from various perspectives, including its relationship with gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, culture, and social class (Zenker, 2018; Preece, 2016; Shakeel et al., 2025). Among these, religion has emerged as a significant dimension in language identity.

In the past couple of decades, scholars have turned their attention to exploring the interplay between religion, language, and identity, and how these factors influence one another (see Omoniyi & Fishman, 2006; Spolsky, 2003; Darquennes & Vandebussche, 2011; Silva-Alfonso, 2020; Souza, 2016; Er-Ragragi, 2022). Numerous studies have investigated this relationship across diverse contexts, including the works of (see Peek, 2005; Rosowsky, 2006; Joseph, 2006; Kouega, 2008; Mukherjee, 2013; Chew, 2014; Hemming & Madge, 2011; Souza, 2016). All these studies have been conducted in the global context, but less attention has been paid to the Pakistani context.

The current research study intends to explore the effects of religious identity on language identity in the context of Pakistan. Further, Pugh's (2007) constructs of identity and Hemming and Madge's (2011) definition of religious identity are used as a theoretical framework to study linguistic identity.

Statement of the Problem

Language identity is a significant aspect of an individual's self-concept, which is shaped and developed by multiple sociocultural factors (Norton, 2013). Numerous scholars have studied language identity from various perspectives and its relationship with different social factors in multilingual global contexts (see; Nasir et al., 2015; Jones, 2016; Omoniyi, 2016). However, there is insufficient understanding in the Indigenous and postcolonial context. Similarly, in the context of Pakistan, religious identity plays a significant role in the construction of identity as evidenced by recent studies (see; Karimpour et al. 2022, Tyng et al. 2023, Sultan, 2025). Most of these studies focused on teachers' religious identity and their influence on the classroom environment at the undergraduate level. It means that less attention has been paid to learners' development of linguistic identity.

In Pakistan, a country which is created in the name of Islam, religion is considered one of the most important sociopolitical forces that significantly impacts an individual's thoughts, beliefs, behaviours, and even language uses (Yasmeen & Umar, 2021; Rahman, 2010). Religion, which is deeply rooted in the multilingual societies of Pakistan, plays a key role in shaping the identity of individuals (Batool & Ghayas, 2021). But many of the research studies concerning language identity neglected the role of religion. Since identity's strong factor is overlooked in identity research studies, there is a lack of understanding regarding the relationship between religion and language identity at the Higher Education level in Pakistan.

In order to fill the existing gap, the present study investigates the influence of religious identity on the formation of linguistic identity of graduate students in the context of Pakistan. The study also intends to explore the role of constructs of identity defined by Pugh in the formation of linguistic identity in the Pakistani context.

Research Questions

- What are the effects of ESL learners' religious identity on their linguistic identity at the graduate level at KUST?

- How can this relationship of religious and linguistic identities be conceptualized given the different identity constructs in the literature?

Research Objectives

- To identify the influence of ESL learners' religious identity on linguistic identity at the graduate level at KUST.
- To investigate the conceptualization of the relationship between religious and linguistic identities in different identity constructs in the literature.

Significance of the Study

This study explored how religious identity influences the development of linguistic identity among graduate students at Kohat University of Science and Technology (KUST) in particular, and among language practitioners in general. Its significance lies not only in examining how religious affiliations and practices shape language learning experiences and the formation of linguistic identity in multilingual contexts, but also in contributing to the broader fields of applied linguistics and sociolinguistics (Souza, 2016).

Furthermore, the study offers valuable insights for language practitioners, policymakers, teachers, learners, and researchers working in sociolinguistics, applied linguistics, religious studies, second language acquisition (SLA), and language and faith (Er-Ragragi, 2022). It contributes to language policy at multiple levels, particularly at the macro level by addressing the relationship between language and religion in global contexts (Souza, 2016). In addition, the study provides an understanding of how religion functions as an identity marker in multilingual and multi-religious societies, especially in relation to the development and maintenance of linguistic identity in migrant and educational contexts such as schools, colleges, and universities (Block, 2007).

Moreover, the study underscores the importance of religious identity for adult learners engaged in second- or foreign-language learning in indigenous and postcolonial settings (Joseph, 2004). It also offers practical relevance for teachers with strong religious identities who struggle to align their beliefs with pedagogical practices (Souza, 2016). Overall, the study enriches the existing literature by integrating the domains of language, religion, and identity within contemporary sociolinguistic research.

Literature Review

In recent years, the idea of identity has gained significant attention in second language acquisition (SLA) and applied linguistics. The essentialist perspective is that the attributes and behaviour of socially defined groups can be determined and explained by reference to cultural and/or biological characteristics believed to be inherent to the group (Bucholtz, 2003). According to the essentialist view, identity is a fixed, unified set of innate traits (Alotaibi & Abahussain, 2024, p. 392). Poststructuralists view identity as a fluid, multi-faceted, and ongoing "project" or "narrative that individuals perform and negotiate within specific social contexts (Drzewiecka, 2017; Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Alotaibi & Abahussain, 2024). Norton (2013) defines identity as "how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is structured across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future" (p. 45). This shift from essentialist to poststructuralist views emphasizes that identity is not an inherent trait but a continuous, socially negotiated process shaped by discourse, power dynamics, and context.

Language and identity are closely linked, as language is considered a core element of a person's identity (Yadav & Gulati, 2024). Linguistic identity refers to the relationship between an individual's use of language and their sense of self within a particular community or social context (Pugh, 2007; Gul et al., 2024). He identifies this intersection between language and the individual and/or the community as the basis of linguistic identity. Block (2014) defined linguistic identity in his book, "Second Language Identities" as "*Language identity may be*

understood as the assumed and/or attributed relationship between one's sense of self and a means of communication which might be known as a language (e.g. English), a dialect (Geordie) or a sociolect (e.g. football-speak)" (p. 40). This underscores the inherent connection between how a person views themselves and how they choose to communicate or are assigned to communicate. Furthermore, Preece (2016) situates linguistic identity research at the crossroads of language and various social factors, including gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, culture, and social class.

Religion is not a construct that can be adequately described as simple, static, and unchanging, but rather as multifaceted, contradictory, and in constant flux (Hemming & Madge, 2011, p. 39). Scholars have understood it from many perspectives across different contexts and have defined it in various ways. Geertz (1966) characterized religion as the conviction in a supernatural entity that wields authority over our moral conduct on this planet and offers the assurance of an existence after death. Hemming and Madge (2011) proposed, "a four-fold definition of religious identity that includes (1) affiliation and belonging; (2) behaviours and practices; (3) beliefs and values; and (4) religious and spiritual experiences (p. 40). Souza (2016) further elaborates that the way an individual labels him/ herself, how often s/he attends a place of worship, what s/he believes in, and how s/he expresses and experiences his/her beliefs contribute to religious identity (p.5). Therefore, by exploring all four dimensions simultaneously, researchers can gain a comprehensive understanding of religious identity.

Religion, language, and identity are interconnected and influence one another. Certain scholars contend that in the absence of language, religion would not exist, as language is the fundamental structure that shapes religious practice (Jensen & Rothstein, 2000). Religion exerts an indirect influence on language identity, and, reciprocally, language can influence religious identity. Both language and religion are profoundly rooted and regarded as essential components of an individual's identity, often from birth. Frequently, individuals are born into specific linguistic and religious communities. Language and religion cannot be studied separately, as Mukherjee (2013, p. 1) explains, "both religion and language are markers of identity that evolve and change according to the needs of society." Religion significantly influences the selection, acquisition, and preservation of language within a community (Er-Ragragi, 2022, p. 9). Pandharipande (2006) illustrates that religion is one of the main determinants of language choice, while in the Islamic context, Arabic occupies a distinctive position due to its status as the only language permitted for canonical prayer, conferring "functional transparency" (Omoniyi & Fishman, 2006, as cited in Er-Ragragi, 2022, p. 9). Historical examples show that the spread of religion often brings its sacred language, transforming the linguistic makeup of communities.

Conversely, the language that an individual speaks or chooses to learn can deepen or define their religious identity (Er-Ragragi, 2022). Skerrett (2017) demonstrates that limited exposure to a language can constrain understanding of religious practices, while immersion in another language can reinforce a different religious identity. Similarly, Qur'anic Arabic literacy is highly valued among Muslim communities, reflecting how religious identity influences language preservation (Souza, 2016, p. 2). Identity is where language and religion intersect, as individuals shape and position themselves through language and religion in socio-cultural settings (Omoniyi & Fishman, 2006). Liturgical language further strengthens identity by integrating ethnoreligious markers into communication and encouraging participation in religious contexts (Er-Ragragi, 2022, p. 26). Overall, the relationship among religion, language, and identity is dynamic and context-dependent rather than static, particularly in multilingual contexts such as South Asia, where individuals navigate sacred, national, and international languages while actively negotiating and reshaping their identities.

Methodology

Theoretical Framework

This study used Pugh's (2007) constructs of identity and Hemming and Madge's (2011) conceptualization of religious identity as a theoretical framework to examine how linguistic identity is constructed among graduate students in the ESL context. Hemming and Madge (2011) describe religious identity and propose four dimensions of religious identity: (1) affiliation and belonging; (2) behaviours and practices; (3) beliefs and values; and (4) religious and spiritual experiences. Affiliation and belonging describe how individuals identify with a particular faith and their sense of connection to a religious community. Behaviours and practices include engaging in religious rituals, attending events, visiting places of worship, and celebrating festivals. Beliefs and values refer to the specific beliefs and core values that shape their religious identity. Religious and spiritual experiences pertain to how individuals personally and privately express and experience their faith.

Pugh (2007) argues that the construction of identity is influenced by a wide range of factors, which he calls extralinguistic factors. These factors are Family, Sociology, Psychology, History/politics, and Nationalism which are constituent parts of the complex and sensitive process of identity construction.

Research Method

The present studies adopted qualitative research methods; the process of collecting and analysing non-numerical data in order to explore and understand the experiences, opinions, and perspectives of individuals, which they ascribe to the construction process of linguistic identity (Kamal, 2019). The purpose of this method is that it thoroughly searches for answers by analysing different social environments and the groups or individuals who live in these environments (Lune & Berg, 2017). Further, the theoretical frameworks are constructs of identity by Pugh (2007) and Hemming and Madge's (2011) concept of religious identity will be employed.

Data Collection

This study used semi-structured interviews to collect data from graduate students. Through interview method, a researcher has access to the socially situated world of research participants and can collect broad and rich data by prioritizing the participants' viewpoints (Kharchenko, 2023). Initially, data were collected to identify the role of Pugh's constructs of identity (family, society, ethnicity, nationality, history, politics, social class) in the formation of linguistic identity, and then the influence of religious identity, which is defined by Hemming and Madge, on linguistic identity in particular.

Population and Sample of the Study

The entire student who are enrolled in the MS in English program at Kohat University of Science and Technology (KUST) is the study's target demographic. Ten MS/MPhil scholars from the English department at KUST Kohat were chosen at random to participate in this study.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data were analysed by conducting a thematic analysis of the interviews. Thematic analysis is a method employed to recognize and interpret themes within qualitative data, often generating new insights and meanings (Naeem et al., 2023;). It involved six steps: transcript creation and familiarization with the research data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, and finally formulating the report (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). All these steps provided a structured roadmap for processing qualitative data carefully, thereby improving the precision of the research procedures and the depth of the research findings (Naeem et al., 2023).

Analysis and discussion

Religious identity as a source of belonging

Religious identity plays an important role in shaping an individual's sense of self within a broader social community. Belonging, a socially constructed phenomenon, develops through social interaction, shared ritual practices, and collective values. In the present study, the participants' responses consistently emphasized the fundamental role of religious affiliation in promoting a sense of social connectedness and belonging, particularly within the Muslim community. The participants demonstrate it through active involvement in communal religious events, commitment to shared ideas, and a strong emotional attachment to the religious group. These activities enhance the interpersonal relationships, reinforce community unity, and build up collective identity of participants. P1, for instance, clearly states that active engagement in such religious practices gave a sense of identity, support, and guidance. This implies that lived experience and collective engagement are closely associated to religious belonging and lived experience. P2 further draws attention to the ethical and emotional aspects of belonging and suggests that religion acts as both a social and psychological framework that supports emotional well-being and moral orientation. This idea is explained by Peek (2005), who stated that religious identity provides a framework for developing self-understanding and a sense of belonging. King and Boyatzis (2015) also describe the role of religious identity that act as both a social anchor and a source of personal meaning. Furthermore, Language use reflects a sense of belonging, as those individuals who hold stronger religious connection often employed religiously inflected phrases and greetings in their communication. This observation shows that language functions as identity marker that continuously reinforces shared community values.

Use of Religious Expressions in Daily Communication

The use of religious expressions and phrases in everyday conversation indicates that religion is deeply embedded in linguistic practices. These expressions are not only confined to formal settings, but they are reflected in informal and daily communicative practices that highlights the strong role of religious beliefs and affiliations in language use. For example, P2 explains that they use Arabic expressions such as Alhamdulillah, Insha' Allah, and Masha 'Allah on routine basis, while also trying to maintain polite and respectful speech due to religious teachings. This highlights the concept about language functions that it acts as a medium for expression of religious beliefs and identity rather than merely a means of communication. Similarly, P5 further added that the frequent use of such expressions becomes habitual, reflecting the role of early socialization in family and community contexts, where these phrases and expressions are learned and reinforced from an early age that become normal and socially accepted linguistic behaviours.

P8 and P9 further demonstrate that religious expressions are used in both formal and informal contexts to convey emotions such as gratitude, hope, and trust, showing that religious language is an integral part of daily interaction. Regular religious practices, such as prayer and Qur'an recitation, also increase awareness of speech, encouraging polite, respectful, and ethically guided communication, while naturally incorporating Arabic and Islamic phrases into everyday language. Overall, the findings indicate that religious expressions are normalized in daily communication and act as markers of identity, reinforcing social cohesion and cultural values. This supports studies that view religious discourse as a tool for identity formation and ethical communication (Verkuyten, 2018; Ysseldyk et al., 2010).

Linguistic identity as a multi-layered construct

The results show that participants' linguistic identities are multifaceted and context-dependent, influenced by their cultural, national, intellectual, and religious associations rather than being solitary or stable. Participants strategically employ different languages across domains, which correlate to different identity aspects. For instance, academic and professional identities are represented by the use of English in classes, presentations, and academic debates; social identities are represented by the use of Pashto and Urdu; and religious identities are represented

by the use of Arabic for prayer and Qur'anic recitation. Participants show sociolinguistic awareness and active identity negotiation by being able to switch between different languages with ease. However, because Pashto is linked to tradition, family, and community membership, there is a clear emotional and cultural commitment to the language. Urdu emerges as a bridge language for wider communication, connecting individuals across diverse linguistic backgrounds, while also accommodating religious expressions. English is associated with academic achievement, institutional power, and future goals, serving as an indicator of professionalism and global mobility, but it is predominantly confined to formal contexts. Conversely, Arabic possesses a symbolic and holy significance, predominantly utilised in religious contexts, embodying spiritual identity rather than quotidian discourse. The findings indicate that linguistic identity is multifaceted and perpetually negotiated through the use of Pashto, Urdu, English, and Arabic, with each language embodying distinct facets of self-hood. This confirms the perspective that multilingual repertoires serve as adaptable tools for identity formation and social placement (Pavlenko, 2014; Wei et al., 2025).

Gradual Decline or Fluctuation of Religious Linguistic Practices

According to the participants of this study the use of religious language is not fixed and it can change with the passage of time depending on social environment, personal experiences and level of religious involvement. The usage of religious language in everyday speech is influenced by friend groups, religious or secular environments, and personal spiritual development. People's speech patterns also shift when they participate in different contexts, such as academic settings and religious meetings. This implies that religious language is not a fixed component of identity but rather a changeable mode of communication influenced by audience, environment, and individual experiences. For instance, P6 reported using phrases like "Mashallah" and "Inshallah" less frequently after leaving a religious social circle, demonstrating how the environment has a significant impact on the usage of such phrases. Similarly, P10's answers prove that religion has very little impact on language use since linguistic decisions are influenced more by social and pragmatic factors than by religious identification. P7, on the other hand, believes that as spiritual development progresses, religious language usage may rise. Participants like P8 and P9 reported using more religious phrases during Ramadan and other religious festivals, but this increase did not necessarily remain afterward. These findings clearly demonstrate transient changes in language use.

These results highlight that religious language is context-dependent and changeable, challenging the notion that it is a permanent sign of identity. The social network hypothesis put out by Milroy and Milroy (1992), which contends that linguistic habits strengthen within intimate social groups but may diminish when people move away from such groups, can also account for this difference.

Conceptualizing the Relationship Between Religious Identity and Linguistic Identity:

Pugh's Constructs as an Analytical Framework

According to Pugh's (2007) family construct, early identity development and emotional socialisation take place primarily in the home. The family serves as the starting point for the mutual construction of linguistic and religious identities in the current study. Arabic and Urdu were established as linguistically marked carriers of religious meaning long before any formal institutional encounter with these languages. Participants consistently reported that exposure to canonical Islamic practices, such as Qur'anic recitation, daily prayer, and participation in domestic religious gatherings, was mediated through parental instruction. Hemming and Madge's (2011) concepts of connection, belonging, beliefs, and values are deeply related to this process of religious and linguistic socialization within the family. Children pick up their Muslim identity by imitating the family's regular religious routines, religious terminology, and customs. In a similar vein, Peek (2005) clarifies that religious identity is initially shaped by

familial influence before being reinforced by institutions like educational institutions and religious groups. Participant 9's account shows that regular Qur'an recitation at home gradually introduced Arabic expressions into daily speech. In this process, language not only reflects religious values but also helps transfer them from one generation to another. Urdu becomes the main language for explaining Islamic teachings, while Arabic is understood as a sacred language. At the same time, respectful and polite ways of speaking are naturally learned through family interaction.

Building on the foundational role of the family, the sociological context emphasizes how religious identity is further shaped and reinforced by communal institutions including mosques, religious meetings, and educational settings. Participants' involvement in Jumu'ah prayers, Ramadan activities, and communal gatherings reflects shared religious practices where certain linguistic behaviours become socially accepted. Participant 8 described the mosque not only as a place of worship but also as a space for discussion and social connection. In these settings, Arabic is mainly used for recitation and rituals, while Urdu serves as the common language for sermons and religious teaching. The findings also show variation among participants: those closely connected to religious communities display stronger Islamic communicative practices, whereas Participant 10, who is more engaged in academic and secular circles, shows less religious influence on language use.

Beyond the institutional and communal dimensions, the study also reveals the psychological dimensions of identity formation, providing substantial evidence for Pugh's (2007) psychological construct, as participants revealed how Islamic ideals have influenced their language use and sense of self. Moreover, societal norms and ethical values such as truthfulness, polite conversation, and refraining from harsh language are seen as manifestations of moral and spiritual identity. This reflects Hemming and Madge's dimensions of beliefs, values, religious and spiritual experiences. For instance, P2 stated that "words have consequences", while P9 explains that religious practices and activities increase the awareness of how we use different words or speech in different contexts or with different people. Participants also attached emotional meanings to different languages: Arabic was described as spiritual, Urdu as emotional and practical, and Pashto as natural and connected to home. These views reflect how language is linked to different aspects of identity.

While psychological factors shape individual identity, a broader macro-structural lens is equally necessary, as Pugh (2007) situates identity formation within long-term historical trajectories and political structures a construct of particular salience in the Pakistani context. Since independence in 1947, the constitutional equation of Pakistani nationhood with Islam has produced an institutional and ideological architecture that structurally determines the status of languages within the religious domain (Sultana & Dar, 2018). Arabic is consecrated through the madrasa curriculum, constitutional provisions, and the religious authority of the Qur'an; Urdu is institutionalized as both national language and the privileged medium of Islamic scholarship and inter-ethnic religious communication. These structures shape Hemming and Madge's affiliation and belonging dimension at the societal level, constructing an ideological equation in which Pakistani-Muslim identity entails specific, historically sedimented relationships with Arabic and Urdu. Participants did not construct these relationships autonomously; they were born into a pre-configured linguistic-religious order. At the meso-level, this historical-political conditioning is manifest in the domain-specific linguistic norms that participants navigate such as English governs academic instruction, Arabic governs ritual, Urdu governs religious pedagogy and sermon, and Pashto governs domestic and peer-group interaction. These allocations reflect accumulated language-planning decisions (Fishman, 1972) that have become institutionally normalized over time, constituting the structural horizon within which individual linguistic identities are negotiated. The history-and-politics construct

thus contributes an essential layer of explanation that neither psychological nor sociological analysis alone can adequately provide.

Closely intertwined with these historical and political forces, Pugh's (2007) nationalism construct highlights how language reflects feelings of pride, belonging, and identification with ethnic, national, and religious communities. In the Pakistani context, the findings reveal three interconnected forms of identity. First, Pashtun ethnic identity is strongly linked with Pashto, which participants describe as the language of home, culture, and family belonging. Second, Pakistani national identity is mainly expressed through Urdu, which serves as both the national language and the common medium for religious communication. Third, a broader pan-Islamic identity is represented through Arabic and Islamic expressions, connecting speakers with the global Muslim community (ummah). These findings reflect Hemming and Madge's dimensions of affiliation and belonging, behaviours and practices, and beliefs and values. Overall, the study shows that participants' language choices simultaneously express ethnic, national, and religious identities.

Conclusion

In this study the researcher explores the impact of religious identity on the formation of linguistic identity among postgraduate ESL learners at Kohat University of Science and Technology (KUST). The findings show that religious identity strongly affects how participants use the language when communicating with others, and understand themselves in society and culture. The participants' language use and identity development were significantly influenced by religious terms and phrases, Islamic ideals, familial background, and involvement in religious activities. As participants employed Pashto, Urdu, English, and Arabic to express many identities, including ethnic, national, intellectual, and religious identities, the study also discovered that linguistic identity is fluid and has numerous levels. Additionally, Pugh's theories on identity and Hemming and Madge's perspective on religious identity are supported by the ways in which family, society, history, politics, and nationalism influenced their linguistic identity. Overall, the study finds that in Pakistan's multilingual and multicultural setting, language, religion, and identity are intimately related and constantly formed.

Recommendations

This study establishes a foundation for subsequent inquiries into the relationship between religious and linguistic identities. It is recommended that future research employ larger, more diverse samples from various universities, geographic regions, and academic disciplines to enhance the generalizability of the findings and to include a wider array of sociocultural experiences. Analysing different educational stages, such as primary, undergraduate, and postgraduate levels, would also provide insights into how religious identity affects language use over time. Furthermore, investigators are encouraged to integrate mixed-methods or quantitative methodologies alongside qualitative research to obtain both comprehensive, detailed insights and statistical validity.

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