

## ETHNOLINGUISTIC VITALITY OF GUJARATI LANGUAGE IN PAKISTAN: SUCCESS, FAILURE AND CHALLENGES IN LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE

**Nimrah Waseem**

Assistant Professor, Department of English  
Federal Urdu University of Arts, Science & Technology  
[n.waseem@fuuast.edu.pk](mailto:n.waseem@fuuast.edu.pk)

**Imran Khan Mahesar**

PhD Fellow, IELL Sindh University, Jamshoro  
[mahesarikm@gmail.com](mailto:mahesarikm@gmail.com)

**Abdul Majeed**

Lecturer, Department of English  
Federal Urdu University of Arts, Science and Technology  
[abdul.majeed@fuuast.edu.pk](mailto:abdul.majeed@fuuast.edu.pk)

### Abstract

*Language is one of the most important identity markers of any ethnic community. Different minorities face multifarious problems in the effort to maintain their identities. This paper investigates the challenges related to ethnolinguistic vitality and the struggle to maintain linguistic identity faced by the Gujarati speech community and the future of the Gujarati language in Karachi, Pakistan. For this purpose, an exploratory qualitative study was conducted through semi-structured interviews to collect data. The sample population included 25 people representing all the sub-groups, with at least 04 participants from each one (Sunni, Bohra, Ismaili, Hindu and Parsi) who speak Gujarati as their first language. The data was analyzed through thematic analysis. The findings are eye-opening and deviate from the findings of most of the previous quantitative research conducted on the Gujarati language. The findings revealed that the original Gujarati script, Abugida, is prone to slow death, but an alternate script (Dawati) written in Naskh is flourishing. Gujarati speakers face various challenges in order to preserve their linguistic identity. Current, educated generation in mainstream Gujarati community code switch in Urdu and English more than ever before.. The study also revealed that the core problem lies with the government's inappropriate language and education policy.*

**Keywords:** *linguistic identity, Gujarati, discrimination, intra-community, ethnolinguistic vitality, bilingualism*

### Background

In a multilingual context, a minority feels empowered and represented if its speech community is able to use and preserve its language (Lindell et al., 2023). Urbanization and globalization have adversely affected small cultures and minority languages. Dołowy-Rybińska et al.(2025),“We understand ethnolinguistic vitality as a dynamic system of mutually influencing factors that condition a group to perceive itself and be perceived as a distinct entity with a common identity and language” As per the theory of ethnolinguistic vitality, there are primarily two aspects which are needed for a language to survive in an intra-linguistic setting: sustainability and strength (Jamallullail & Nordin, 2023). Strength of a language depends on the number of native speakers while a speech community's socioeconomic status and sustainability depend on the usage of language in the domains of education and economy. Baart (2003) finds that local cultures and languages are declining at a fast rate all around the world. Janjua (2005), in this regard, adds that extinction of a language leads to the loss of cultural and linguistic identity of a particular speech community. Undoubtedly, the spread of dominant languages at the cost of local languages is a phenomenon observed worldwide and Pakistan is no exception in this regard. Siebenhütter (2021) says, “language is a salient marker of group membership, the individual may face

linguistic adaptations that may result in subtractive bilingualism". Currently, preserving endangered languages is an important domain of action and research as every language carries a set of exclusive information (Ammosov et al.2025). Pakistan, being home to more than seventy languages, foresees the extinction of several less utilized and less recognized languages in the national stream. The privileged status of both English and Urdu in Pakistan has endangered the linguistic identity of multiple local communities. This has compelled the endangered communities to surrender their language and identity in order to capitalize on the opportunities offered by the dominant languages. Especially under the influence of globalization, minor languages are also affected by English. In addition to using English frequently, people also tend to code switch from their native language to English or Urdu. In the last few decades, English has influenced most of the languages, which has resulted in lexical borrowing, semantic borrowing, or calques (Uban et al., 2022). Similarly, Crystal (2000) also maintains that the world has about 7000 languages and as per research, 50 to 75 percent of presently spoken languages are expected to be lost. Under these circumstances, the ethnolinguistic vitality of a language plays the main role in language maintenance. Gallitto & Montgomery (2022) have explicated that "ethnolinguistic vitality emerges as a critical aspect of the minority language groups and their survival in the dominant group.

According to Issa et al. (2023), "Pakistan is a country known for its rich linguistic diversity, with a multitude of languages spoken throughout its regions." Karachi is the largest metropolitan city of Pakistan. This is a reference to the ethnic and religious diversity of Karachi's population. The city is rich in the existence of every ethnolinguistic community of Pakistan, and Gujarati is one of them. Gujarati language is almost 1000 years old. Parekh (2017) has found that with 55 million native speakers, Gujarati is on the 26<sup>th</sup> rank in the list of most broadly spoken languages in the world. The roots of Gujarati language are intact in the Indian state of Gujrat as it is an Indo-Aryan language, written in Gujarati script, Abugida, which is a variant of Devanagari system of writing. Ali (2017) reveals in this regard, "The diversity related to languages and the cultures associated with these languages can also be witnessed with reference to the varieties many indigenous languages have."

According to Rehman (2015), there are 3500,000 speakers of Gujarati language in Karachi. Currently, there are only two newspapers issued in Karachi in Gujarati, namely *Daily Vatan* founded in 1942 and *Millat* founded in 1948. There were almost 60 schools in Karachi where Gujarati was taught as a compulsory language until 1984, but the language was removed from the syllabus both as compulsory and as an optional language in the wake of nationalization in the country. Similar to other minority languages, Gujarati lacks the required constitutional and local support. The language is rarely used on social media; if for anything at all, it is undermined to humorous messages. The language is surviving merely through the support of its native speakers who carry diversity for their survival. Kamocki & Witt (2022) opine that it is to be noted that both Language Resource (LR) and Language Technology (LT) of minority languages thrive outside academia. Under these circumstances, the study explores the ethnolinguistic vitality of Gujarati and the challenges faced by the Gujarati community in maintaining their linguistic identity along with the prospects of language maintenance of the language.

### Research Questions

This study outlines the following research questions to be answered during the course of the research:

1. What are the challenges faced by the Gujarati speakers in Karachi regarding their linguistic identity?
2. What is the future of the Gujarati language in Pakistan?

### Problem Statement

For the communities who have suffered the loss of their culture and heritage, language is not merely a medium of communication. It is more of an organic resource of survival for them (Cradewell & Weeks, 2010). Both identity and culture of the people are closely associated with the language they speak. Every language is different from other languages on the basis of a few unique features. People develop their linguistic identity by speaking a certain language which gives them a sense of self-esteem and acknowledgement at a social level. In Pakistan, both English and Urdu enjoy the status of official and national languages and have dominated other indigenous languages. Contrary to several research findings like Abbasi & Zaki (2019), Yousafzai (2018), Mansoor (2003), Rehman (2008) most policy-makers see these minor languages as a threat to unity; in reality, it can work as a bridge towards solidarity. Sallabank & Austin (2022) exemplify that “policy-makers may see linguistic diversity as an expensive or divisive impediment to national unity; if governments support minority language maintenance, it is often through bilingual education as a transition to the national language.”

There are many indigenous languages in Pakistan facing the threat of extinction. Fatima & Nadeem, (2025). Gujarati, like many other indigenous languages, suffers from a moderate risk of slow death (especially the original script) due to its reduced usage in different domains of life at social and official level. Native Speakers of Gujarati face issues and challenges regarding their linguistic identity. The studies conducted on Gujarati language are mostly quantitative survey from students or content analysis of the policy documents. (Abbasi & Zaki, 2019). There is need to look into the experiences and perceptions of each sub-group of native Gujarati speakers to investigate the ground realities and challenges faced by Gujarati speaking community. Hence, this study intends to investigate the challenges faced by Gujarati community of Karachi, Pakistan, regarding maintaining their linguistic identity and the language itself.

### Review of Literature

Chomsky (1975, as cited by Smith, 1999) highlights the significance of a language by suggesting that every language reflects different and unique mechanism of thought, which is a mirror of everyone's mind. Fishman (1996) finds that retention of a culture can be determined from the vitality of a language because disappearance of a language takes away the folk wisdom, style of receptions, music, rituals, way of living, manner of thinking, practice of values, exchange of jokes, narration of folk tales and ultimately the human reality of a social group of the society. Tódor and Vančo (2024), explains that they way community conceives and preserves the concept of identity plays an important role in maintaining Ethnolinguistic vitality of their language.

Baart (2003) outlines in his study that the social and economic nomenclature of Pakistan is posing a serious threat to the rich linguistic heritage of the country. Pakistan is on the verge of losing a number of indigenous languages like many other parts of the world. The loss of a language is closely associated with the socioeconomic factors compelling the local communities to give up their indigenous languages and identities for the sake of survival. It is assumed that empowerment of the local communities through preservation of their language and culture is the ultimate solution of maintaining their existence in a society instead of replacing it. The ethnolinguistic vitality of Gujarati is directly influenced by factors like socioeconomic and educational status of the community (Abbasi & Zaki, 2019).

“Despite the linguistic richness, Pakistan faces challenges related to language preservation, education, and documentation” (Issa et al., 2023, p. 818). Among various factors that play a significant role in the linguistic vitality of different indigenous languages in Pakistan, government policy is the key player (Kazmi, 2023). Khawaja (2021) asserts in

his study on the loss of indigenous languages that the unrealistic or poorly implemented policies of governments for the preservation of local languages have harmed the indigenous languages. Moreover, the extinction of indigenous languages has provided a greater damage to the intergenerational transfer of knowledge.

Liljegren and Akhunzada (2017) explore the significance of language vitality in a multilingual northern area of Pakistan where almost 30 different languages are spoken but only the regional communities and NGOs are engaged in the promotion and protection of the local languages.

Language policy has a direct impact on education policy. Pathan et al. (2018) investigate the impact of language teaching policy in Pakistan on local languages, especially Sindhi. The study argues that both English and Urdu being the languages of the elite in Pakistan, have marginalized other languages of the country. As a result, the marginalized languages have been excluded from the domain of education and economics. Ashraf (2023) explores that “Pakistan’s language policy context, where more than one language has had varying degrees of linguistic capital in homologous fields sociohistorically, has led to social reproduction of inequality.”

### Research Design

This study is designed through the social constructivism worldview. Social constructionism claims that knowledge is not essentially pre-established, but is social in origin. This study uses phenomenology as a qualitative approach because it unfolds the lived experiences of people in order to explore the true sense of the phenomena. In addition, it is inspired from research that uses qualitative data analysis because it “involves organizing, accounting for and explaining the data; in short, making sense of data in terms of the participants’ definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p.480).

### Research Instruments

The data was collected through semi-structured interviews, one of the main tools used under the approach of the phenomenology. Wang (2006) refers to Patton and Hatch (2002) in saying that, “the advantage of this formal, semi-structured, and in-depth interview allowed me to come to the interview with guiding questions and meanwhile remain open to following the leads of informants and probing into areas that arise during interview interactions.”

### Population

All the individuals of the Gujarati-speaking community residing in Karachi are considered as a target population for this study.

### Sample

The sample comprised 25 people representing all the sub-communities who speak Gujarati as their native language in Karachi, extracted through purposive sampling technique. The sample included males, females, educated, uneducated, self-employed, students, job-oriented and housewives. Following are the groups of native Gujarati Speakers:

- (a) Sunni Gujarati
- (b) Bohra Gujarati
- (c) Shia Gujarati (Ismaili, Asna-e-Ashari, Khoja Alavi, etc.)
- (d) Parsi Gujarati
- (e) Hindu Gujarati



### Data Collection and Data Analysis

First, semi-structured interviews were conducted using various mediums as per the convenience of the participants. The responses were transcribed later leading to thematic analysis of the data.

### Findings

Gujarati is widely spoken in Karachi and there are almost 3.5 million native speakers. The future of Gujarati is at moderate risk in Pakistan. At least, the original script form, Abugida, is in danger of slow death. As a result of government policies, Gujarati is no longer taught in the schools of Karachi. However, no discrimination on the basis of language is reported by any of the participants.

Gujarati community in Karachi is proud of their sociolinguistic identity. As the community lives in colonies and their children mostly go to community-based schools, they speak Gujarati within domestic settings and social settings. Gujarati speakers use Gujarati frequently during official interactions because the business community in Karachi largely consists of Gujarati, Memon, Kathiawari and Kutchi, which are mutually intelligible languages to some extent.

A small number of aged people can read and write Gujarati in the mainstream Gujarati community. There is a great power distance between English and Gujarati speakers, but Gujarati speakers do not feel inferior while talking to Urdu speakers. The young, educated generation of mainstream Gujarati community is becoming increasingly bilingual and shifting to English. They are not enthusiastic about learning and speaking Gujarati and in fact, frequently code-switch into English and Urdu. On the other hand, only a small number of people read Gujarati newspapers.

In the intra-community gatherings people stick to Gujarati as a lingua franca; this is true for all the five sub-groups of Gujarati community. Shia Muslim Gujarati, Parsi, and Hindu communities are active in preserving and promoting Gujarati in Karachi. The Bohra Community is 100 percent Gujarati-literate. Everyone can read and write a dialect of Gujarati known as *Lisan al Dawah* or simply *Dawati*. There are *madaris* and Gujarati teaching institutions run by Bohri Jamat Khana, Parsi temples and Hindu temples that are running without the government's support.

In the absence of institutional support, some conscious native speakers are now trying to promote the use of native language among the young generation. Initiative taken by parents, educational, or religious institutions can play a vital role in the maintenance of a language while cultural organizations can also significantly promote the language of a particular speech community. (Veettil, Binu & Karthikeyan, 2020).

A lack of resources along with a lack of motivation are the two main reasons for the language deprivation within the mainstream Gujarati community. There are no job opportunities for Gujarati-only speakers in the public sector. In the private sector, on the other hand, although the situation is no different, yet people can easily survive in the market being bilingual in Gujarati and Urdu.

### Discussion

Gujarati is considered to be one of the main indigenous languages in Karachi. Gujarati speakers have contributed to every field in Pakistan, e.g., politics, banking, business, sports, medicine, social work, etc. Pakistan is proud to raise a long list of names of Gujarati-speakers who have served the country: the current Deputy Chair Senate, Saleem Mandviwalla, the renowned cricketer Javed Miandad, famous scientist Dr. Pervez Hoodbhoy, famous physician Dr. Ejaz Vohra, top industrialists Mohammed Ali Habib and Dawood Habib, and world-famous social worker, Moulana Abdus Sattar Edhi, are a few to name.

The 25 participants who represented all the five groups of Gujarati Speakers in Karachi included doctors, businessmen, teachers, housewives, uneducated workers, students, teenagers, editor of a Gujarati newspaper, a woman from the cottage industry, head of a local Ismaili Jamat Khana, member committee Shri Ram Dev mandir and a representative of Ghanchi Jamat Khana. The in-depth thematic analysis of the data has produced various themes and some important sub- themes have also emerged. The important aspects explored are as follows.

### 1. Demography

Gujarati is widely spoken in Karachi as the community residing here has been around for very long. They settled in Karachi for the sake of trade and business. Parsi, Khatri, Khoja and Kutchi are the oldest residents of Karachi. After the Great independence, a great number of Gujaratis migrated to Karachi, including a vast majority of Dawoodi Bohra community.

Among the 3,500,000 Gujarati Speakers in Karachi, there are five main groups in the Gujarati Speech Community who speak three main dialects: standard Gujarati, Surati, and Kathiawari. Other dialects like Gamadi, Amdawadi, Mahesana, Kakri, Mehoni, Kharwa, Charotari, Vadodara and Tarimuki are not spoken in Karachi. The natives of Kutch (Indian Gujrat) living on both sides of the border speak Kutchi, which is mixer of Gujarati and Sindhi but in Pakistan, instead of Gujarati, this community associates themselves more with the Sindhi and Memon communities. Similarly, Kathiawari has been developed as a distinct variant of Gujarati, thus they maintain a separate identity in Karachi. Therefore, Kutchi and Kathiawari are beyond the scope of this research. The five groups of Gujarati Speech Community in Karachi are:

- (a) Sunni Muslim Gujarati (Ghanchi, Surati, Patani, Hansoti (Pathan), Malik, Patel, Sheikh, Chauhan (Rajputs), Khatri, Miyan Bhai, Chunrigar, Charoter, Chippa and Vohra)
- (b) Bohra Dawoodi
- (c) Shia Muslim Gujarati (Asna-e-Ashari, Ismaili, Alavi, Bohra Khoja)
- (d) Parsi (Surati dialect near to standard Gujarati)
- (e) Hindu

All of the dialects of Gujarati are mutually intelligible, though there are minor differences in a couple of phonemes like *se* (સે) *Ichhe* ("છી") and in vocabulary, too. (Desai & Brijball (2004). As confirmed by all the Bohra participants including a religious scholar working in Jamat khana in Karachi, the Dawoodi Bohra community is 100 percent literate and everyone in this community can read and write Dawati. Dawati is a dialect of Gujarati which is emerged in the last few decades to fulfill the religious needs of the community, both in India and Pakistan. Dawati is written in the Arabic script *naskh* style (jatin et al.2022). The vocabulary is loaded with Arabic, Urdu and Persian words. This is the reason researchers of this study have considered Bohra Community, as a separate sub-group of Gujarati Speech community though they also belong to the Shia school of thought. As mentioned in, alvibohra.org, 2012, "Bohras use a particular form of Gujarati language permeated with Arabic, some Persian words, and some Urdu words and write in the Arabic script called as lisan ud-dawat." (pg 14).

### 2. Government Policies

Gujarati was being taught in schools in Karachi since long before the country's independence. From 1971-74 all the schools were nationalized and Gujarati was thrown out of the schools. Till 1984, there were yet 21 public sector schools and 5 private schools (Yousafzai, A. 2018) in Karachi where Gujarati was taught either as a compulsory or an elective subject. As respondent no. 3 says, "This city has witnessed bank cheque being

written and accepted in Gujarati.” In 1992, the option of Gujarati as an optional/additional language was also removed from the local education boards. Participant no.7 says in this regard, “It is our fault, the community didn’t raise its voice, though we have a great share in economy, yet the government policies are as if we are non-existent.” In the last census conducted in 2017, Gujarati was removed from the census form, too. Abbasi & Zaki (2019) have found that “the language was included in the ‘other language’ category during the Census (2017) and the exact number of the total number of speakers of Gujarati is not known.”

### 3. Self-perception and Public Image

The Gujarati community has a proud, clear and high self-perception. Participant no.14 says in this regard, “Of course I am proud of my identity.” Whereas participant no. 1 says, “I am Gujarati and instead of sharing my religious identity, I proudly tell people that I am a Gujarati.” Participant no. 6 replied enthusiastically, “I love my language. Why shouldn’t I be proud of my identity? How could you think like that? We are a business community; we have served Pakistan.”

### 4. Decline in Gujarati Literacy

It has been more than 30 years that Gujarati has been eliminated from schools. It has left an adverse effect on Gujarati literacy. Only less than half of the older ones can read or write in Gujarati and most of the young generation can only speak Gujarati. Parents want their children to learn Gujarati, but younger ones are least interested in learning Gujarati formally. Participant no. 25 says, “My son argues that when he cannot use it in his university or office, why should he invest his time in learning it.... He has other subjects to deal with.” Participant no. 1 says, “I can read Gujarati but can’t write properly and there is no institution nearby where I can send my kids to learn it,” while participant no. 9 says, “The new generation is interested in English only, so is my daughter.”

### 5. Linguistic Discrimination

There is absolutely no discrimination on the basis on language. Not a single participant reported that he or she has ever faced any discrimination on the basis of language. Participant no. 9 says, “No, I do not have any experience of discrimination.” Participant no. 11 says, “Never! but I must say, in my childhood my peer used to tease me because of my surname Patel, singing, *Ganju Patel teri Khopri me tail*, but it was not bullying for sure.” Participant no. 2 adds apropos to this, “No, I have never been discriminated but people at times tell me jokes based on stereotype calling me miser. I tell them that Gujaratis are more miser than memons!” Participant No. 17 says, “I never experienced hatred or discrimination on the basis of my language, even the stereotypes shown on TV shows are mostly positive characters.”

### 6. Discrimination against Hindu Gujaratis

Hindu Gujaratis complained that although they are not discriminated on the basis of their language, yet surely on the basis of religion. The Hindu participants claimed that they have been alienated by the other Gujarati speakers. Participant no. 11 says, “I do not disclose my identity at my workplace, as there are a lot of Hindu Gujaratis too. They will start talking to me in Gujarati and might think that I’m one of them.” The Hindu participant says in shaky voice, “No matter how polite we are, and speak the same language, but most of the Muslim Gujarati speakers tend to keep a distance.” Another Hindu participant says, “It is painful to see that the Muslim Gujaratis respect Parsis, but they do not mingle with us”. Participant no. 23 says, “I think it is not because of religion but the socioeconomic status that makes the difference, you can see that there are several Hindu Gujarati doctors whom Muslim Gujaratis like to associate with.” It is evident from the responses that the Hindu community is

discriminated, but it is largely owing to the socioeconomic status while some are discriminated on the basis of religion as well.

### 7. Power Distance with English-language Speakers

All the participant groups claimed that they feel overshadowed in the presence of people speaking English other than participants from the Parsi and Bohra communities. Both the communities are educated and have considerable proficiency in English, therefore, they can easily communicate in English. Gujaratis belonging to mainstream, Ismailis, Asna-e-Ashari, Khoja and Hindu feel comfortable with people speaking Urdu, even if they are not proficient in Urdu. On the contrary, if they find anyone speaking English, they feel powerless or inferior. Participant no. 5 says, “*Baji, bhaley se koi bhi zaban boley apan ko koi masla nai...pura din market me, Sindhi, Memoni, Gujarati, Kathiawari, Urdu sub se deal kerta hun...bus English thori samejh leta hun lekin bol nahi sakta....tu kia kersakta hun baji, apan ka kam he, kuch log show bhi marty hen. Me kehta hun, Jā'ō anē tamāruñ kāma karō*”. Participant no. 1 says in this regard, “I think it’s not only with us; all Pakistanis who are not proficient in English feel the same way. This is the reason I am too concerned about my children’s education and their English speaking skills.”

### 8. Intra-community Gatherings

Most of the participants stated that Gujarati is the only lingua franca within intra-community gatherings where everyone, irrespective of their educational or financial status, speaks Gujarati. This is true for gatherings at Jamat Khana, social gatherings or weddings in all groups. “Everybody only speaks Gujarati in gatherings,” says participant no. 10. Participant no.7 says, “No, people will not switch to other language, it’s a norm to speak Gujarati.” Every group gave the same response except Parsis.

On the contrary, Parsi participants claim that they might code-switch to English occasionally. One of the Parsi participants says, “Everyone speaks Gujarati... But please try to understand...we are an educated community and English is like our second L1....it is not a status symbol for us as everyone can speak it. We are almost equally comfortable in both the languages, yet Gujarati is the dominant code in our gatherings.” Another Parsi participant says, “We are proud Gujaratis, and we proudly speak the language, but we do not judge any of us for speaking English.”

### 9. Relationship of Code-switching with Educational and Socioeconomic Status

The senior participants complained that the younger generation tends to talk to their peers in Urdu or English. Participant no. 3 says, “They talk to us and with their grandparents in Gujarati, but whenever they meet their cousins or friends, they usually talk in Urdu and English.” Participant no. 7 says, “They speak in no language. It’s neither Gujarati, nor Urdu or English, it is like *mix-plate*.” One of the participants informed that the educated and elite class Gujaratis tend to speak English. Interestingly, they are not proficient in Urdu. Participant no. 11 says, “The more educated and rich they are, the more they speak English. They can speak Gujarati decently, but they don’t, and their Urdu is pathetic.” Participant no. 6 says, “I talk to my daughter in Gujarati and she responds in Urdu, but she speaks English with her friends.” These responses reveal the flaws in the education system of our country and the way most of the speech communities value their native languages. Clement & Norton (2021) refer to research in SLA that “acquisition of a second language can result in the development of competence in an additional language without threatening the maternal language or cause the replacement of the maternal language with the newly acquired idiom.”

### 10. Lack of Resources and Motivation

The leadership among groups of Gujarati community claims that there is a lack of resources to teach Gujarati. As Gujarati is not offered in schools, it has become very difficult



for the Jamat Khana to make institutes in every vicinity. Parents do want to teach Gujarati to their children but as they are already burdened with schoolwork, tuitions and *Qari Sahab* (teacher of religion), it becomes almost impossible for them to learn Gujarati. Participant no. 3 says, “Resources are not a problem because Gujarati community is a rich community. Lack of motivation is the problem. People tend to support financially but they do not want to invest their time and energy.” Participant No. 22 says, “Elders are not serious in transferring their language to young ones as there are no job opportunities in Gujarati and young ones consider it useless for their academics, jobs and definitely for their ‘cool’ image.” It is thus evident that ethnolinguistic vitality of a language is directly related to the ideas and actions of the members of the speech community. Indawati & Puspani (2022) exemplify this in their work: “A language does not live on its own, and the capability of language users to endure as a discrete homogeneous group probably encode the vitality of a language itself.”

### **10. Ethnolinguistic vitality of the Gujarati language and Contribution of Bohra, Parsi and Hindu Communities**

It seems that the Gujarati language is on decline in Karachi and the script is endangered; however, there is a bright side to the picture as well. Though the mainstream Gujaratis are negligent of their responsibilities towards their native language, yet efforts are being made at different levels. To improve the readership of Daily Vatan and Millat, editors are printing these newspapers in Gujarati with Urdu translation. Ghanchi Jamat Khana is running various programs under the *Gujarati Bachao Tehreek*. The Bohra, Parsi and Hindu communities are playing an active and eager role in preserving and promoting the Gujarati language.

#### **(a) Dawoodi Bohra Community**

The literacy rate of the Bohra community is 100 percent. Apart from regular education, they are able to read and write a dialect of Gujarati known as Lisan al Dawah or Dawati. One of the participants says, “We are bound to speak Gujarati in our homes and to teach the same to our children by *Saiyadna* (religious leader). Our children are proficient in reading, speaking and writing Dawati. They are good in English, too, but they speak it in their schools only. But I must admit that our new generation is so weak in Urdu.” Another participant says, “All of our children go to madrassah and learn Dawati there; they are proficient in it and English as well. Their proficiency in Urdu is much worse as compared to previous generations.” A senior Bohra teacher says, “Our language is in no way endangered. Dawati is Gujarati, though the writing script is different. Gujarati is written in Devanagari script across the border as well other than the regular Gujarati script. It does not make any difference, nevertheless.”

#### **(b) Parsi Community**

Most of the Parsis cannot read or write Gujarati but it is spoken in every Parsi household. A Parsi participant says, “We are proud Gujaratis and it is our native language. Apart from the language, we celebrate the Gujarati culture as well.” Another participant shed light on the current situation, “Though it is quite late, but efforts are being made now. The Parsi temple offers religious education in Gujarati language only. My children go the temple every Saturday to learn religion and Gujarati language in its original script.”

#### **(c) Hindu Community**

The Hindu community has always been active in learning and teaching Gujarati. Schools like H. N. Ganathar School, Seth Kooverji Khimji Lohana Gujarati School, T. K. Jiswani Government Girls Secondary School, and others, have been Gujarati medium schools and spreading education in Karachi for over than a century. (Yousufzai, 2018). A Hindu participant says, “We have realized that if we don’t teach our children Gujarati, they will be pushed away from our religion, too. Hence *Sri Ramdev Madir, Soldier Bazar*, Karachi has

founded an institute to teach our religion in Gujarati. Our religious material is in Gujarati". Another participant says, "I am happy that my children are learning Gujarati, we don't have writers here, but we import books from India. In fact, now we have teachers to teach Hindi and Sanskrit, too, and our children are able to read Geeta without translation."

Hence, the young generations in Bohra, Parsi and Hindu communities are pushed by the older ones to learn Gujarati as one of the most important aspects in promoting a language is transferring it to the new generation As suggested by Abad & Abad (2022) that "language exposure, literary piece creation, generational transmission of tradition, and Education continuum as its main components."

### Conclusion

In conclusion, it is evident that the Gujarati community faces various challenges in order to retain their identity and preserve their language. The original Gujarati script is prone to slow death but the parallel script *Dawati* is safe and progressing. Educated and young generation in the mainstream Gujarati community is developing increased tendency towards bilingualism and shifting to Urdu and English. This is not the case with the uneducated ones that are the majority. Majority of the natives still speak Gujarati. Efforts are being made at various levels to preserve Gujarati. Most importantly, a few sub-groups (jamat or castes) in the community are trying to teach and promote the language. The core problem lies with government's inappropriate language and education policy. The undeclared language policy and the Education policy of Pakistan do not promote pluralism. "Every multicultural, multilingual country must find its own unique solution keeping in view the sociolinguistic and psychological contexts of its language use." Al Farabi (2020). The study recommends that all the languages spoken by different communities of the country should be treated equally as basic human right of every individual in order to address the present and future academic challenges effectively. Government should revise the language policy as every person has a right to retain his linguistic identity through promotion and preservation of his mother tongue. In a recent study, Mashwele et al. (2024) states that the role of government in preserving any minority language is pivotal.

### References

- Abad, D. J. V. & Abad, E. M. (2022). Ethnolinguistic Vitality of Manide Tribe: Basis for Proposing Educational Material Plan. *International Journal of Language and Literary Studies*. 4(2).284-302. <http://doi.org/10.36892/ijlls.v4i2.932>.
- Abbasi, M. H & Zaki, Sajida. (2019). Language Shift: Journey of Third Generation Sindhi and Gujrati Speakers in Karachi. *Bahria Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences BUJHSS*. 2(1). 60-88. (ISSN 2616-9808).
- Al Farabi, R. (2020). Identity Crisis of the Linguistic Minorities in The Process of Acculturation with Reference to Secondary Curriculum in the State of West Bengal, India. *Second International Conference on new approaches in Education*. 27-29 March, Oxford United Kingdom. DOI: <https://www.doi.org/10.33422/2nd.icnaeducation.2020.03.148>.
- Ali, S. (2017). Language Shift and Ethnolinguistic Vitality: a Sociolinguistic Study of Indigenous Minority Language Speakers in Karachi. Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/354688079\\_Language\\_Shift\\_and\\_Ethnolinguistic\\_Vitality\\_a\\_Sociolinguistic\\_Study\\_of\\_Indigenous\\_Minority\\_Language\\_Speakers\\_in\\_Karachi](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/354688079_Language_Shift_and_Ethnolinguistic_Vitality_a_Sociolinguistic_Study_of_Indigenous_Minority_Language_Speakers_in_Karachi).
- Ammosov, D., Efendiev, Y., & Grenoble, L. A. (2025). *Identity-based language shift modeling*. arXiv. <https://arxiv.org/abs/2504.01552>

- Ashraf, H. (2023). The ambivalent role of Urdu and English in multilingual Pakistan: a Bourdieusian study. *Language Policy* (2023) 22:25–48  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10993-022-09623-6>.
- Baart, J. L. (2003). Sustainable development and the maintenance of Pakistan's indigenous languages. In *Proceedings of the Conference on the State of the Social Sciences and Humanities* (pp. 26-27). Retrieved from [https://www.academia.edu/1992375/Sustainable\\_development\\_and\\_the\\_maintenance\\_of\\_Pakistans\\_indigenous\\_languages](https://www.academia.edu/1992375/Sustainable_development_and_the_maintenance_of_Pakistans_indigenous_languages).
- Budhani, A.A., Gazdar, H. Kaker, S. A. and Mallah, H.B. (2010). The Open City: Social Networks and Violence in Karachi. Crisis States Research Centre. ISSN 1749-1800 (online). Working Paper no. 70. Retrieved from <https://www.researchcollective.org/Documents/WP70.2.pdf>.
- Cardwell, M., & Weeks, P. (2010). Fight to revitalize Canada's Indigenous languages. *University Affairs*, 51(10), 12-17. Retrieved from <https://www.universityaffairs.ca/features/feature-article/fight-to-revitalize-canadas-indigenous-languages/>.
- Clement, R. & Norton, B. (2021). Ethnolinguistic Vitality, Identity and Power: Investment in SLA. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology* 2021, Vol. 40(1) 154–171.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0261927X20966734>.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research methods in Education* (6th ed.). New York, NY: Taylor & Francis. Retrieved from <https://gtu.ge/Agro-Lib/RESEARCH%20METHOD%20COHEN%20ok.pdf>.
- Crystal, David. 2000. *Language Death*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Retrieved from <https://www.cambridge.org/core/books/languagedeath/E02594D0218AD1AB99259F0C717DF256>.
- Desai, U. & Brijball, M.R. (2004). Tracing Gujarati Language Development Philologically and Sociolinguistically. *Sabinet African Journals*. n 11.2 (2004) 308 - 324 ISSN 1023-1757. Retrieved from [https://journals.co.za/doi/pdf/10.10520/AJA10231757\\_350](https://journals.co.za/doi/pdf/10.10520/AJA10231757_350)
- Dołowy-Rybińska, N., Kotnarowski, M., & Mętrak, M. (2025, March 24). *Ethnolinguistic vitality model: Merging sociolinguistic approach with psychometric methods* [Manuscript submitted for publication]. SSRN. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4765680>
- Fatima, S., & Nadeem, M. U. (2025). Family language policy and heritage language transmission in Pakistan-the intersection of family dynamics, ethnic identity and cultural practices on language proficiency and maintenance. *Frontiers in psychology*, 16, 1560755. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2025.1560755>
- Fishman, J. (1996). What Do You Lose When You Lose Your Language?. In G. Cantoni (Ed.). *Stabilizing Indigenous Languages*. Retrieved from <https://www2.nau.edu/jar/SIL/Fishman1.pdf>.
- Gallitto, E. & Montgomery, C. (2022). The Role of Coping and Ethnolinguistic Vitality in Predicting Franco-Ontarian Adolescents' Perceived Stress. *Minorités linguistiques et société / Linguistic Minorities and Society*, (18), 155–174.  
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1089183ar>.
- Indawati, N. L.K.M. & Puspani, I.A.M. (2022). The Balinese Lexicon of Prapen and Memande as an Evidence of Domain Shift and Ethnolinguistic Vitality. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 18(1), 697-713. Doi: 10.52462/jlls.213.
- Issa, M., Khan, H.K., Hussain, S & Ali. A., (2023). Language erosion: an overview of declining status of indigenous languages of Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan. *International Journal of*

- Multicultural Education*. Vol. 25, No. 2.:  
<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/374951265>.
- Jamallullail, S.H., & Nordin, S.M., (2023). Ethnolinguistics Vitality Theory: The Last Stance For A Language Survival. *Sciendo*. ISSN 2335-2019 (Print), ISSN 2335-2027 (Online) Darnioji daugiakalbystė | Sustainable Multilingualism | 22/2023  
<https://doi.org/10.2478/sm-2023-0002>.
- Janjua, F. (2005). *Political and sociocultural factors in language loss: A study of language shift in North Pakistan* (Doctoral dissertation, National University of Modern Languages, Islamabad). Retrieved from  
<http://pr.hec.gov.pk/jspui/handle/123456789/4855>
- Jatin C. Modh, Jatinderkumar R. Saini and Ketan Kotecha, "A Novel Readability Complexity Score for Gujarati Idiomatic Text" *International Journal of Advanced Computer Science and Applications (IJACSA)*, 13(5), 2022. <http://dx.doi.org/10.14569/IJACSA.2022.0130553>
- Kamocki, P. & Witt, A. (2022). Ethical Issues in Language Resources and Language Technology – Tentative Taxonomy. *Proceedings of the 13th Conference on Language Resources and Evaluation (LREC 2022)*, pages 559–563. Retrived from  
<https://aclanthology.org/2022.lrec-1.59.pdf>.
- Kazmi, S.S., (2023). Institutionalization of National Language in Pakistan: Policymaking and Practices. *Pakistan Languages and Humanities Review Jan-Mar 2023*, Vol. 7, No. 1. [12-19]. P-ISSN 2708-6453. O-ISSN 2708-6461. [http://doi.org/10.47205/plhr.2023\(7-1\)02](http://doi.org/10.47205/plhr.2023(7-1)02).
- Khawaja, M. (2021). Consequences and remedies of Indigenous language loss in Canada. *Societies*, 11(3), 89. Retrieved from [https://www.mdpi.com/2075-4698/11/3/89?type=check\\_update&version=1](https://www.mdpi.com/2075-4698/11/3/89?type=check_update&version=1).
- Alvibohra, org. (2012). Languages in Contact. Retrived from  
<https://www.alavibohra.org/lisaan%20dawat%20research%20paper%2011-2011.pdf>
- Liljegen, H., & Akhunzada, F. (2017). Linguistic diversity, vitality and maintenance: A case study on the language situation in northern Pakistan. *Multiethnica. Meddelande från Centrum för multietnisk forskning, Uppsala universitet*, (36-37), 61-79. Retrieved from <http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1155268/FULLTEXT01.pdf>.
- Lindell, M., Näsman, M., Nyqvist, F., Björklund, S., Nygård, M., & Hemberg, J., (2023) The role of ethnolinguistic identity, vitality and trust in perceived language climate change: the case of Swedish speakers in Finland, *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, DOI: [10.1080/01434632.2023.2227141](https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2023.2227141).
- Mansoor, S. (2003). Language Planning in Higher Education Issues of Access and Equity. *Lahore Journal of Economics* Vol.8, No.2. Retrieved from  
<https://lahoreschoolofeconomics.edu.pk/assets/uploads/lje/Volume8/sabiha-final.pdf>
- Mashwele, Rhulani S., Mandende, Itani P., & Sebola, Moffat. (2024). Ethnolinguistic vitality in Thulamela Local Municipality: A case of Xitsonga. *Literator (Potchefstroom. Online)*, 45(1), 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.4102/lit.v45i1.1966>
- Parekh, R. (2017, January 27th). Situationer: The future of Gujarati Language in Pakistan. *Dawn*. Retrieved from <https://www.dawn.com/news/1309537>.
- Pathan, H., Shah, S. W. A., Lohar, S. A., Khoso, A. R., & Memon, S. (2018). Language Policy and Its Consequences on Sindhi Language Teaching in Sindh. *Pakistan. International Journal of English Linguistics*, 8(5). Retrieved from  
<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/9cf4/4aa3cf8c47f64e474b4153b0eb6337e26f99.pdf>.
- Rahman, Tariq. (2008). Language Policy and Education in Pakistan. 10.1007/978-0-387-30424-3\_28.



- Rehman, Zia Ur (18 August 2015). "With a handful of subbers, two newspapers barely keeping alive in Karchi." *The News International, Karachi*. Retrieve from <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/57104-with-a-handful-of-subberstwo-newspapers-barely-keeping-gujarati-alive-in-karachi>.
- Sallabank, J. and Austin, P.K. (2022). Routledge Handbook of Applied Linguistics, 2nd edition. Endangered Languages by Li Wei, Zhu Hua and James Simpson (eds.) [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/364238364\\_Endangered\\_Languages](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/364238364_Endangered_Languages).
- Siebenhütter, Stefanie. (2021). Multiple identities of multilingual minorities: Values and practices influencing social, national and personal identity formation. *Journal of Languages and Culture Vol.12(1)*, pp. 13-26, January-June 2021 DOI: 10.5897/JLC2020.0548.
- Smith, N. (1999). Chomsky, Ideas and Ideals, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/231751081\\_Neil\\_SmithChomsky\\_ideas\\_and\\_ideals\\_Cambridge\\_Cambridge\\_University\\_Press\\_1999\\_Pp\\_viii268](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/231751081_Neil_SmithChomsky_ideas_and_ideals_Cambridge_Cambridge_University_Press_1999_Pp_viii268).
- Tódor, E.-M., & Vančo, I. (2024). Ethnolinguistic Vitality in Minority Schoolscape. *Languages*, 9(11), 353. <https://doi.org/10.3390/languages9110353>
- Uban, A.S.(et al. 2022). CoToHiLi at LSCDiscovery: the Role of Linguistic Features in Predicting Semantic Change. *Proceedings of the 3rd Workshop on Computational Approaches to Historical Language Change*, pages 187 - 192 May 26-27, 2022 ©2022 Association for Computational Linguistics. Retrieved from <https://aclanthology.org/2022.lchange-1.20/>.
- Veettil, R.P., Binu, P.M., & Karthikeyan, J. (2020). Language Maintenance and Language Shift among Keralites in Oman. *Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) Volume 11. Number4 December 2020 Pp.319-327 DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol11no4.21*.
- Wang, H. (2006). *An Implementation Study Of The English As A Foreign Language Curriculum Policies In The Chinese Tertiary Context*. Retrieve from [https://www.academia.edu/4065684/AN\\_IMPLEMENTATION\\_STUDY\\_OF\\_THE\\_ENGLISH\\_AS\\_A\\_FOREIGN\\_LANGUAGE\\_CURRICULUM\\_POLICIES\\_IN\\_THE\\_CHINESE\\_TERTIARY\\_CONTEXT](https://www.academia.edu/4065684/AN_IMPLEMENTATION_STUDY_OF_THE_ENGLISH_AS_A_FOREIGN_LANGUAGE_CURRICULUM_POLICIES_IN_THE_CHINESE_TERTIARY_CONTEXT).
- Yousafzai, A. (2018). Teaching No Gujarati. *The News Sunday, April 8, 2018*. Retrieved from <https://www.thenews.com.pk/tns/detail/565277-teaching-gujarati>.
- Sultana, A., Piplai (Mondal), D., & Roy, I. (2025). Shaping the status of indigenous languages through policy: Kurukh in Bengal. *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14664208.2025.2478353>