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**Digital Mediation of Translingual Practices and the Formation  
of Cultural Identity: Visual Representation of Online  
Engagement of Pakistani Youth on Instagram**



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**Abstract**

Pakistan is a diverse country based on multiple languages being used for communication purposes. Social media scholars have replaced traditional code switching with more versatile concepts like translingual practices. To further elaborate on the use of translingual practices in the digital realm, this study aims to explore the role of translingual practices in the construction and negotiation of the cultural identity of Pakistani youth. In order to achieve the goal, this study is based on the theory of translingual practices proposed by Canagarajah (2013). A series of interactions of Pakistani social media users on Instagram posts have been used as a primary source of data collection. This research describes and elaborates on the use of multilingual repertoires incorporated in online platforms, which form an inclusive online community and hybrid identity. The comment analysis analyzes the construction of cultural identity and how translingual practices help negotiate the hybrid identity of Pakistani youth. This study encourages future researchers to explore the communicative practices of Pakistani youth on other social media platforms and apply the theory of Canagarajah (2013) in non-English-dependent countries.

**Keywords:** Translingual practices, translingualism, translanguaging, cultural identity, code switching, code mixing, digital mediation, Instagram.

**Introduction**

Language is considered to be an important medium of communication. Language not only works as a medium of communication, but it also constructs the national identity of individuals (Edwards, 2009); in fact, language is considered to be the reflection of culture (Kramsch, 2014). As the world is moving ahead at a fast pace, humans do carry their language and culture along. Just like many other countries, Pakistan is also a diverse country with multiple languages and cultures. Urdu is, although the national language of Pakistan, yet English is regarded as the official language both at formal educational institutions and informal market places (Rahman, 2006). Because of the diverse linguistic backgrounds, people find it difficult to communicate and understand each other. On the other hand, people use many other mediums to communicate with

each other, like social media platforms.

Research from a variety of contexts has emphasized that youth is the one who is being influenced by any popular culture because their style of communication and their distinct repertoires are dominated as they respond and alter their sense of communication in accordance with online texts (Williams & Zenger, 2012). There have been many other terms that are interchangeably used in place of translingual practices like code-switching, translanguaging, and translingualism. On the basis of competence, these translingual practices have been termed 'performative competence' by Canagarajah (2013) and 'translingual competence' by Anderson (2018). Garcia (2019) defines the term 'translanguaging' as an act of bilinguals who use various linguistic features or different modes of autonomous languages in order to have maximum communicative potential. The prefix in 'translanguaging' or 'translingual practices' *trans* has highlighted that languages have no boundary between them and codes are being shared as a whole linguistic repertoire between speaker and listener.

According to Masood (2018), the language people learn at home is formative of our identity; they cannot quickly change it or replace it. Considering the fact that language use forms our identity in various social contexts, it also reflects our beliefs, race, ethnicity, status, gender, and nationality. According to Honorary (2021), language is a system of conventional spoken, manual (signed), or written symbols by means of which human beings, as members of a social group and participants in its culture, express themselves. People with multiple languages tend to have a benefit on many levels, whether it is about having a chance to interact with many people or getting good opportunities, making multiculturalism a part of their identities.

Translanguaging not only promotes the use of different linguistic and semiotic resources, but it also promotes the idea of new pedagogy used by teachers in the future within the premises of classrooms. There is no denial that students belong to diverse backgrounds and have different language preferences. That's why translanguaging promotes the use of diverse linguistic resources for students to make them feel included and allow them to make meaning of the concepts and conversation by using available resources. In 21<sup>st</sup> century classrooms, it is evident that students belong to diverse educational backgrounds and are more than ever present with different linguistic repertoires (Gutierrez, Lopez & Alvarez, 2011).

The latest studies from sociolinguistics showed that language is not a discrete system that is used for communication but rather is based on rich linguistic features of multilingual usage across national borders or cross-cultural communicative norms. Translingual practices have played a vital role in the communicative norms. Translingual practice is the use of different languages and other semiotic modes (Canagarajah 2018; Li 2018). Translingual practices are different from traditional code switching, in which speakers navigate between or within different languages (MacSwan, 2017). Translingual practice is not the simple case of alternating and borrowing from different languages; the speaker uses all repertoires or linguistic resources to work for better communications.

Pakistan is home to people of different ethnic identities, religions, and languages, which supports the development of the English language so that Pakistan can rise internationally (Ashraf, 2018b; Shamim, 2008). Pakistan has almost 77 different languages spoken across the country with different cultures and ethnicities (Edberhard et al., 2020). English still remains the medium of instruction in many private institutions in Pakistan (Ashraf, 2018a; Channa, 2017; Das et al., 2006; Halai, 2007; Khalid, 2016; Mansoor, 2004; Rahman, 2004; Shamim, 1993). Many other studies show that use of language impacts many students belonging to different social classes, cultures, and language backgrounds based on multilingualism.

Language in its conventional sense of speech and writing is only one of many meaning- and sense-making resources that people use for everyday communication. The past decade, in fact, has seen a gradual increase in the number of second language scholars theorizing about translingualism. The word comes from *trans*, which means beyond and *lingual*, having to do with the languages. This suggests that a paradigm shift may be occurring in the way we think about language study, language teaching, and language use. Pakistani youth engage in translingual practices on social media platforms, and these practices contribute to the construction and negotiation of their cultural identities. Scholars have been identifying these linguistic patterns to understand the extent to which these practices are useful in shaping the cultural identities or to intact their individual identities. This research seeks to contribute to the current discussion of the sociolinguistics of globalization by revealing youth's linguistic diversity from the perspective of the online mixed language practices of

Pakistani youth on Instagram. This research aims to identify the dominant linguistic and cultural discourse markers present in the digital communicative practices of Pakistani youth on social media and how these markers relate to the formation and representation of their cultural identity.

This research mainly focuses on the communicative practices of Pakistani youth because there has been a minimum amount of research conducted on the integration of cultural identity and communicative practices in Pakistan. Not only cultural identities are explored online, but through linguistic analysis of diverse translingual practices, there will be an in-depth investigation of different modes used online, like other symbol systems and semiotic modes that give an impression of their online community identity. This research will explore the useful ways in which youth of Pakistan are interacting with different cultural identities on social media and how their own cultural identity is being presented online. This research will open immense ways for other researchers to explore more semiotic analysis or content analysis of adults in online discussion that may prove to be inclusive or exclusive. Because of this research, sociolinguistics studies can introduce more translingual practices in daily everyday conversation or how beneficial it can be to incorporate these practices in classroom settings or other educational institutions to promote language inclusivity. Language policy makers and other educationists can further perform experiments of introducing translingual practices.

In order to get more clarity, this research aims to find answers to the following research questions:

- How do Pakistani youth engage in translingual practices on Instagram?
- What are the dominant linguistic patterns and cultural markers present in the online engagement of Pakistani youth on Instagram?
- How does using these translingual practices online affect the cultural identities of Pakistani youth?

### **Literature Review**

The use of several languages has expanded due to digital platforms, with English being the most commonly used language. Rich communication norms and creative interactions have resulted from this (Lee, 2016). A dynamic language system known as bilingualism allows people to employ various translanguaging techniques that go

beyond the languages that bilinguals and multilinguals are familiar with (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Gracia & Wei, 2014). Multilingual communication is made possible by translational behaviors, which can be impacted by internet platforms such as code-switching and code-mixing. There are variety of ways to communicate online. Through the use of rap features and a variety of rhyming lyrics, hip-hop culture in Nepal helped to introduce English as a diversified language and helped Nepalis to adopt global culture on the internet (Harris, 2015 & Sharma, 2012). People interact more on social media platforms and engage in communicative practices. The Internet is the place of diverse linguistic people, which makes monolingualism's existence difficult (Ke, 2010). Though not extensive work is done on linguistic diversity or use of translanguaging by Pakistani youth on social media platforms, which becomes the focus of this research.

Language learning is not an easy task because it's not just the language rules but a whole new way of learning the process of knowledge and the world around without threatening or competing with the already acquired languages (Becker, 1995). As language learning is an important investment that has some requirements, learners, as part of the learning process, should utilize all cognitive abilities as well while engaging with the language to be learned (Norton, 2000). Translanguaging enables the language learners to produce models for their understanding of the languages to be learned so that they can participate in the process of learning a language by creating an academic identity of their own (Lee, Bonnet, & Raley, 2011). Translanguaging doesn't ask learners to learn a new language because it goes beyond the structures of a language; rather, it allows learners to make their own linguistic repertoires, which help them in meaning-making. The more learners are going to make use of their linguistic resources, the more the language learning process will be easier for them; this process is called *natural language learning* in the classrooms (Williams, 2012). While engaging with other learners, students can use their diverse linguistic repertoires, which are not available in the classroom, to make communication more productive and easy on their part (Lewis, Jones & Baker (2011a).

With the advancement of many tools, technologies, and mediums of communication, there has been a shift in the terminologies and concepts related to language. There is a shift in the paradigm of multilingualism because linguists are

focusing on new dimensions to explore, like translanguaging. With these new concepts, Wiley and Garcia (2016) state that translanguaging refers to the process of instructional strategies in foreign language teaching. In short, translanguaging can be defined as the process of using all linguistic resources available to gain knowledge, make sense, articulate one's thoughts, and communicate about using language (Li, 2011). That's why Garcia (2011) also states that language classrooms in the twenty-first century are moving from monolingualism towards translingualism, encouraging flexible concurrent language use rather than continuing to keep students' linguistic knowledge separate or treating prior languages as non-existent or purely negative influences. Translanguaging can only be beneficial for the learners who know how to use other linguistic resources available to negotiate meaning; learners who lack these properties will be deprived of the facility of translanguaging.

There are studies that show the beliefs or attitudes of students towards translanguaging as a pedagogical view because it is important to know whether students themselves want to be taught by this pedagogy, as there has been a reference like "getting into the minds of folk" (Preston, 2011). Many students believe that language mixing can be appreciated when it comes to conversation, but academic writing may not accept this notion due to many restrictions. On the other hand, there are studies showing that translating can be a part of academic writing without breaking any standards. Marshal and Moore (2013) also suggest that this translating pedagogy includes peer and instructor feedback that allows students to question their choices, think critically about these choices and their assessment, and develop metacognitive awareness.

Hanauer (2012) recommends that learning a language is part of a process of widening and deepening the ways an individual can understand, interpret, feel, and express her or his personally meaningful understandings to themselves and within social settings. Park (2013) explains how autobiographical writing, particularly via poetry, can contribute to a theoretical understanding of an individual who went through the process of constant negotiation in many positions. The supporting researcher Wei (2011) also asserts that translanguaging is transformative in nature; it creates a social space for the multilingual language user by bringing together different dimensions of their personal history, experience, and environment.

Multilingual individuals can use multiple repertoires to express themselves with the help of translingual practices. Individuals have diverse and rich linguistic resources, and translingualism promotes the individuals to assert cultural identities in order to stop language marginalization. Translingual practices promote an inclusive and equitable environment. Individuals can create their hybrid cultural identity based on their diverse experiences and linguistic resources. He focuses on 'linguistic inclusivity'. According to him, there is no 'homogeneous community'. Pratt (1991) also suggests that we inhabit contact zones where languages and cultures always interact, whether they are social contexts or digital spaces. On the basis of that, we develop at least receptive proficiency in different languages.

Rashi (2014) explains translingualism as the idea that languages are not as disparate as they are made out to be and that in an increasingly globalized world we see an intermeshing of languages in authentic contexts of language use far more than we see their separation and translingual identities as experiences of multimembership, wherein those who function in and across multiple language contexts create areas of continuity on the peripheries of the different languages and language contexts. Speakers need to take ownership of their constructs as translinguistic selves to create one identity across borders (Jain, 2013). Rudolph (2012) has also worked in Japan on the postsecondary context while examining how four Japanese professors negotiated their translinguistic and transcultural identities in the field of English language teaching. Jain (2014) further concludes in her work that she needs to step out of the classroom regularly to work with fellow practitioners in the field to raise awareness about the world of English that students bring into the classroom and to learn from scholars about emerging theorizations around translingualism. She can then bring those critical insights back into the classroom to make the English language teaching and learning enterprise a more affirming one for my students. When she does that, she can say that she is truly working with a social justice perspective towards making the linguistic landscape more equitable for learners and users of global English.

Digital conversations are playing an increasingly relevant role in the networking of relationships and have therefore become a major agent of socialization in the contemporary world (Moustaoui et al., 2019). In further clarification of translingual identities, Wei (2011) explains that translanguaging space is particularly

relevant to multilinguals not only because of their capacity to use multiple linguistic resources to form and transform their own lives, but also because the space they create through their multilingual practices, or translanguaging, has its own transformative power. It is a space where the process of what Bhabha (1994) calls 'cultural translation' between tradition takes place; it is not a space where different identities, values, and practices simply coexist but combine together to generate new identities, values, and practices. Thus making the digital platforms another source of communication and identity construction.

According to Bres (2015), social media platforms present endless opportunities for digital literacy practices around the world. In a similar way, Lee (2016) explained that hybrid and playful deployment of linguistic resources on the internet, or digital code play, allows the writers to display not only their linguistic competence and metalinguistic awareness but also their multivocal identities. Users participate in the global space through English (even if their knowledge of English is limited) without giving up their local identities and local languages. According to Biro (2020), the use of multiple languages does not necessarily represent a certain (linguistic) identity; it rather acts as a tool or strategy to express translocal or global identities and grants a certain linguistic freedom, which indicates new possibilities of meaning-making in the digital space.

Gross (2006) suggests that code-switching can function to identify the speaker as someone having a mixed cultural identity; code-switching between two different languages may also represent a neutral choice between two opposing identities symbolized in two languages (Romaine, 1995). The concept of neutral identity is also explained by Chung (2006). As a form of indexing dual/multiple identities, translanguaging was also used by the students as a bridge to display a neutral identity, which is the seamless connection between two linguistic and cultural worlds. These research works show that language has a direct relation with the identity of an individual, but how much language use can affect the identities has yet to be given more focus. This research aims to fill the geographical gap, which means there is a wide range of research work missing in the context of Pakistan. The second gap is investigating how much translingual practices affect the cultural identity of Pakistani youth in the realm of digital platforms like Instagram.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Canagarajah (2013) focuses on linguistic inclusivity. Language cannot be only treated as a tool for communication but it is expression and negotiation of diverse cultural identities. Multilingual individuals can use multiple repertoires to express themselves through the help of translingual practices. Individuals have a diverse and rich linguistic resources and translingualism promotes the individuals to assert cultural identities in order to stop language marginalization. Translingual practices promote an inclusive and equitable environment. Individuals can create their hybrid cultural identity based on their diverse experiences and linguistic resources. He shows that Translingual practices are different from code-switching and code-mixing because it is based on code meshing that not only require systematic languages but also codes of semiotic system that can be incorporated in any given situation. Translinguals build create meaning by adopting diverse linguistic resources and symbol systems in their social interactions. He has been able to construct negotiation strategies that may help international students to voice their worlds through translingual practices. Individuals can create new ways to express themselves in order to avoid any misunderstanding. It depends on individuals who belong to different cultural backgrounds and diverse experiences to cooperate in order to accomplish alignment of communication.

Canagarajah (*ibid.*) promotes language inclusivity because translinguals are not following the native norms of communication; rather, they are making new communicative norms and negotiation strategies. He shows that to get things understood academically, one should give up the idea of mastering. In order to foster any academic understanding, it is important to provide justification for incorporating translingual moves. It may include symbols and atypical codes. Translingual practices can also be proven useful when communicating on an everyday basis with diverse cultural or multilingual individuals, and there will never be a need for a mediator who can act as a bridge in order to convey meaning. Individuals do not stress themselves over using prestigious forms or varieties of languages; rather, they feel pride in expressing themselves effectively. Translinguals take help from bits and pieces of different languages to construct meaning rather than relying on whole languages.

As multilingualism promotes diverse cultures, it also promotes improved cognition.

Translingual practices also promote cognition traits. Translinguals are developing new codes and new grammars from different linguistic resources that are available in the environment. Canagarajah (2013) also promotes the vision of accepting diversity by making alignment between values and norms of different languages, and this can be done by striving for common goals during shared interactions. There is another theoretical framework that resonates with this research study: sociocultural theory (1962). There has been much evidence that supports the idea of language development through social interaction. A similar idea was given by Lev Vygotsky in his theory that a child develops language and cognition by staying social.

As a part of society and making social relations, we interact with each other, and through that interaction, we intend to understand the thoughts and beliefs of a particular person. "Language is the reflection of culture," which shows that every person displays his cultural values and norms through the medium of communication. But if we believe in this school of thought, then what about those individuals who speak multiple languages well? In that case, they will portray multiculturalism because of the influences of different languages.

This research study focuses on the translingual practices of Pakistani youth on Instagram and how they interact cross-culturally. That's why both of these theoretical frameworks are adopted to find out more about communicative practices. There have been many studies showing support and even opposition to the idea of neutral identity development among users of translingual practices. No doubt translanguaging has proven a useful tool for negotiation of meaning making in classroom settings and breaking the norms of dominant languages, but on the other hand, there is no specific way shown or invented for language assessment in translingual classrooms.

This study does not explore the realm of the education field, where there are language policies and some predefined criteria for measuring language acquisition. This study focuses on the digital realm, where people express themselves freely without any language policies. That freedom of expression comes in the domain of translanguaging.

### **Methodology**

The qualitative method is used to explore a concept or to understand how individuals feel and behave towards a particular phenomenon. Qualitative method has been

applied that has brought out beneficial results in terms of finding the solutions to this study's research questions. Qualitative tool is used in the form of a series of interactions from Instagram posts. These online comments are primary data because they are directly coming from the Pakistani youth. Comments have the actual representation of what communicative practices are from the target population of this research study. There are so many posts on Instagram; that's why data include posts from three categories like politics/religion, sports/education, and lifestyle/fashion industry. Each category has a folder, and all the screenshots have been stored in these separate folders. From mobile, Instagram was accessed, and then different posts were searched to get the comments' screenshots.

As comments include different languages, symbols, and emoticons, that's why multimodal semiotic analysis is used. In simple words, multimodal semantic analysis is a means of seeing meaning in visual displays (Kress et al., 2005). What is said through language or any symbols will be analyzed. As comments are not just text there are many other modes that can be used to convey meaning and their analysis can be a bit different from textual analysis. All comments combined are analyzed after making a rubric of symbols, emoticons, language switches, code meshing, and cultural markers. 30 comments are selected from each of three categories, like politics, sports, and lifestyle, for analysis. Purposive sampling is used where comments are selected on the basis of translingual practices used as communication by Pakistani youth. It was even difficult for the researcher to find out these comments were actually done by Pakistani youth.

The comments come from youth based in Pakistan. These comments contain multiple linguistic resources in which symbols, emoticons, and multiple languages are included. The purpose of these comments is either to express opinions or to interact with people of different cultural backgrounds. To ensure the security of the owners of these comments, the researcher has hidden the user name and profile pictures. The identities of these participants are kept anonymous because of ethical considerations and privacy matters. Comments are collected from one of the social media platforms, i.e., Instagram. It's a digital platform where reels, mini-videos, and pictures are uploaded ranging from different categories. According to the World Population Review, there are 18.6 million Instagram users in Pakistan, which makes it one of the

most used apps. Instagram is also one of the social media platforms that can provide enriched content and opportunities for people to engage in communication with people of different cultures.

### **Analysis**

Kress and Leeuwen (1996, 2021) point out that language analysis is more than just textual analysis. Language is beyond words and sentences. It includes the analysis of many other factors in which non-verbal cues are also very apparent. But this research has collected the digital data of Pakistani youth on Instagram in the comment section. The comments include many different languages and other visual modes like emojis and signs. For the analysis, Kress and Leeuwen's (2001) analytical framework "Multimodal Semiotic Analysis" is being applied. The concept of visual grammar given by Kress & Leeuwen is also used to analyze the language, color, text layout, design, symbol, and many other aspects. Visual grammar will help the readers and audiences to navigate through elements that are actually arranged to give a visual representation of the message being conveyed.

These comments have different semiotic and linguistic elements, which are analyzed to find out the factors that contribute to the overall communicative practices of the Pakistani youth. There are a total 90 comments collected from different posts related to fashion, politics, news, sports, and lifestyle. But for analysis, those comments have been combined together that show a similar layout so that commonalities and differences can be highlighted. For analysis, a rubric is also generated on the basis of the total number of comments. There are many elements in comments that need explanation on the basis of textual, semiotic, and cultural factors. The comments are taken from different posts and the posts that had high engagement of Pakistani youth. Many comments are the latest or recently done, like at the start of July, and these comments have been collected over the time period of 25 days. Following are the comments collected from different posts:

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Avg Pakistani men 😭 ❤️ 🇵🇰

Allhumdruillah 🇵🇰 ❤️

ﷻ ﷺ alhumdulillah

CONGRATULATIONS!!!! This is absolutely amazing 🇵🇰 🎉 🔥

Goosebumps 🔥 🔥 🇵🇰 🇵🇰

Mashallah so so proud of you Girl!!! 😍



As a Pakistani 🇵🇰 I support the victim and beg for the justice 😢 We ain't be Pakistani, Indian, Muslims or Hindu at this point the only thing we need is JUSTICE for DOCTOR 😢 separated by borders, united by hearts 🇵🇰 🇧🇩 she is so so innocent and pyari, she must be in good place now 😢

Proud to our Army chief General syed Asim Munir 🇵🇰 🇵🇰 proud to Pak Army 🇵🇰 🇵🇰

The most beautiful capital city Islamabad in the world 🇵🇰 🇵🇰 🇵🇰

Proud to Pak Army 🇵🇰 🇵🇰

Proud to our Army chief General syed Asim Munir 🇵🇰 🇵🇰 ❤️

يا امام المنتظر، العجل العجل 🇵🇰

😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊



**Figure 1: Comments with Pakistani Flag (Appendix A)**

There are a total 41 comments, and the reason for putting them all together was similar kinds of visual modes. The purpose of analyzing these comments is to look out for specific linguistic, cultural, and personalized patterns of language use by Pakistani youth on Instagram posts.

### **Linguistic Patterns**

Most of the comments are in English, which supports the notion of it being “Lingua Franca” and “Standard Language.” There is another thing being noticed: despite having less knowledge of the grammatical structure of English, Pakistani youth still used it. These comments also have some wrong spellings and the wrong grammatical structure of English. This idea is directly supported by Canagarajah’s (2022) conversation, in which he mentioned that his use of English was considered “broken English” because he belongs to Sri Lanka, and the notion of “linguistic purity” is very much in focus despite having a diverse linguistic world. Although many comments are in English because Canagarajah in his book “Translingual Practices: Global Englishes and Cosmopolitan Relations (Routledge, 2013)” demonstrated that “multilinguals merge their own languages and values into English, which opens up various negotiation strategies that help them decode other unique varieties of English and construct new norms.” There are other comments, including Urdu and Arabic language words and phrases like *Almadullilah* and *Mashallah*. Among these, there is one comment that is purely in Urdu, but it still falls into the category of translingual practice because of the use of semiotic modes as well.

### **Semiotic Mode**

As the word trans means "beyond" it also proves that semiotic resources are actual "creative communicative practices of people to represent their voices and interests." The use of the Pakistani flag shows the national identity of the participants, which makes others familiar with the identity of these commentators. It shows that even if Pakistani youth is involved in translingual practices, their national identity is also constructed online, which makes them stand out among other commentators, and because of these flag emoticons, it was easier to identify people of Pakistan. Urdu is the national language of Pakistan, but the preference is given to the English language online with the incorporation of a few Arabic words. Apart from flag emoticons, there are some other widely used emojis, like hearts. These different color hearts represent different emotions, like red is for love, a purple color heart represents BTS Army (South Korea's famous boy band's fandom, Bangtan Sonyeodan), and a black heart shows sadness, sorrow, or a dull moment.

Then there are some smiley emojis, like 😊 😃 😄 😅 😆 😇 😈 these emoticons, which mean different emotions like happiness, sadness, blessing, laughing, and celebrating. Apart from the Pakistani flag, there are three different countries flags like 🇮🇳 🇧🇩 🇵🇸 and they are used along with the Pakistani flag to show solidarity where it is needed. Like the #justicefordrmoumita shows solidarity with the victim in India. And for Palestine's freedom and Bangladesh's students getting rid of their prime minister, these countries flags are used by Pakistani people online in the comment section. The nature of these posts is either politics or sports, as people are congratulating Pakistan on its win in the Olympics and other sports. There are some other emojis as well, like 🌟 🎉 🎊 🎉 they represent different expressions like something is awesome or lit, clapping for appreciating anyone's efforts, victory sign, and again, a- threshing sign for honoring someone's act and speech.

### **Cultural References**

Commentators have used "from Pakistan" or just the word Pakistan quite a few times, giving reference to their identity. If these flag references, country name references, and Urdu language are not there, then it might become difficult for someone to guess the national identity of the commentator, which supports the idea of "hybrid identity." There are some Arabic words used, giving a hint that it might come from a Muslim

community, either from Pakistan or any country. The comment 'green suit you' also suggests that the person comes from Pakistan. The basic source of identification of culture from these comments is the use of flag emoticons; apart from that, there is only one comment entirely in Urdu that indicates the commentator is from Pakistan.

### **Non-Translingual Comments**

There are some comments that are based on just Emojis, and they don't fall into the category of translingual practices because it involves using various linguistic resources. It shows that not all participants use translanguaging for communicative practices.

**Figure 2: Non Translingual Comments (Appendix B)**



Canagarajah (2022) said "translingual scholars have expanded their focus beyond words to other semiotic resources that participate in communication." These two comments, although they cannot be identified, are from Pakistani youth or some other nationals. And they also do not fall into the category of translingual practices, but they show the creative use of semiotic mode to convey message. The first gif shows affection, and the second one shows that the person is shocked. As there are other ways to know the national identity of a commentator either through the username or profile display where different pictures are uploaded, but again, there are issues while identifying the national identity, like there are many fake names or pseudo names used and accounts can be kept private. That's why only those comments are added, about which the researcher was sure that these are from Pakistani youth. Where the doubt arises, it is better not to assume things unless or until there are some reference- or inference-based cues available in the comments. There is another collage of comments from different posts that do not include Pakistani flag emoticons that will

give direct reference to Pakistan. Following are the comments:

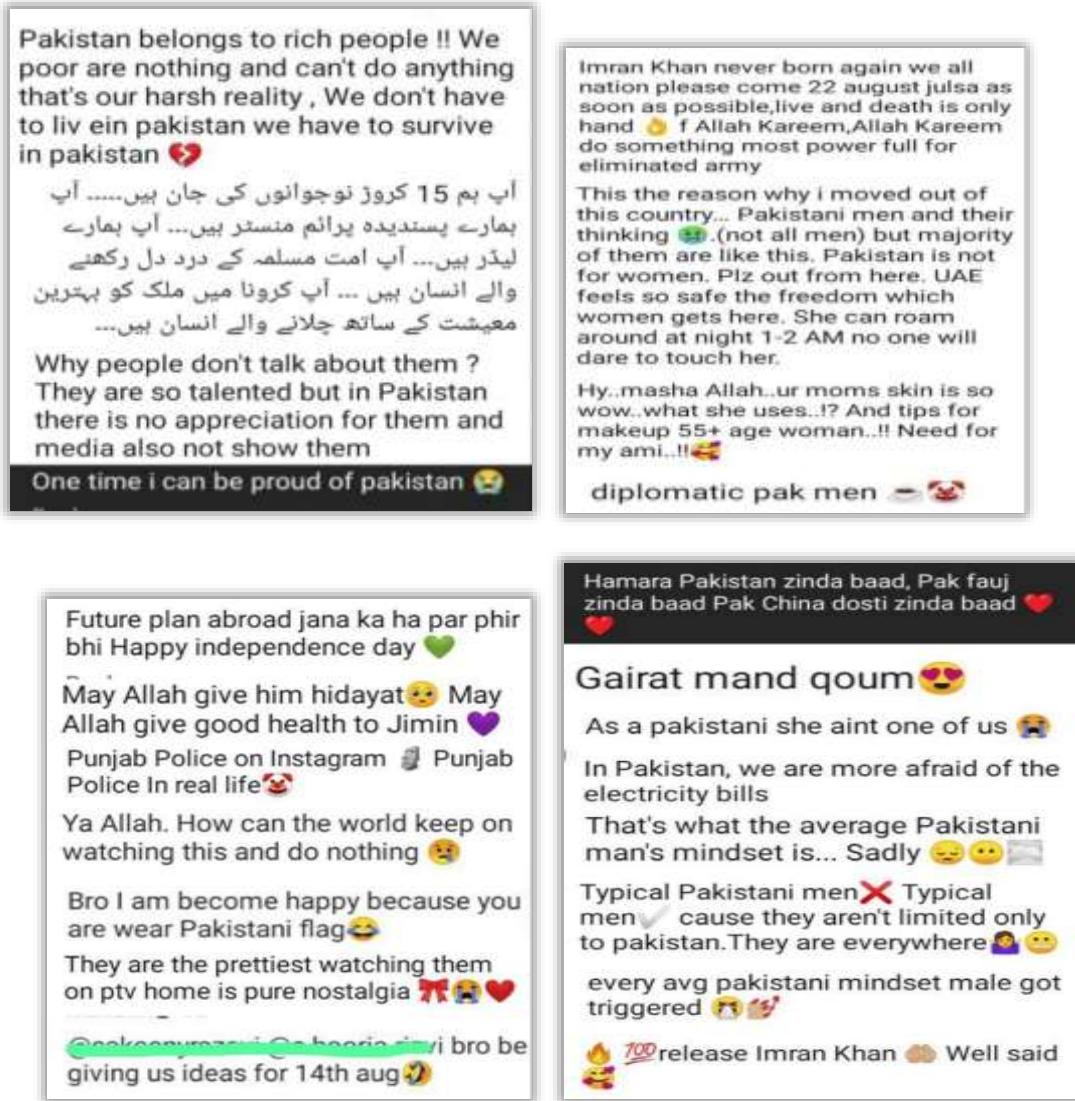


Figure 3: Comments without Pakistani Flag (Appendix C)

### Linguistic Patterns

There are a total 24 comments. Many of the comments use the word Pakistan, which shows the commentators' national identities. There are two comments that do not fall into the category of translational practices because either it's totally in Urdu or in English, but they are included for comparison of language choices by Pakistani youth as the participants in the interviews expressed their language preference. There are some comments that do not include the word Pakistan, but they still indicate their relativity to the country based on some linguistic elements like Ami, Imran Khan, Hidayat, 14 Aug, Punjab police, Ya Allah, Ghairat mand, and PTV (Pakistan Television Corporation) home because they are culturally or religiously linked to

Pakistani youth's language use.

### **Semiotic Modes**

Apart from that, there are many emoticons used. Many of them are universally used with the same meaning and intention, like crying, laughing, emotional, nauseated, and loving emojis. Others, like the clown emoji, nail painting, and different color heart emojis, are giving the same meaning as they give in any scenario. The emoticons above used by the Pakistani youth do not have any other hidden meaning associated with them, either culturally or linguistically. These are universal emotions expressed across the world.

### **Cultural References**

Even without the use of Pakistani flag emoticons, the comments were easy to identify because of many other factors and textual features. Like the words, Pakistan itself has been used many times to indicate the origin. There are other words like Punjab police, pak fouj (Pakistan Army), Ami (mother), PTV (Pakistan Television Corporation), and many other words or the thought behind the comments indicate that these comments are done by Pakistani people.

There are other comments that fall into both categories mentioned by Canagarajah's (2013) translingual practices, which are "multiple linguistic resources" and "hybrid identity." These comments are difficult for anyone to identify that they are from Pakistani youth because there is no indication or reference to culture or national identity. Only the person who knows the context can identify such a comment.

"Pani b ban jati hai na" 😢 has steal the show..!

Male doctors should join them. More power to Lady doctors of Ganga Ram  
🚩🔥

Wth is wrong with the guys in comment section 🚫

I thought only my brothers called me that 😢. 😢. 😢

We can't breathe anymore under the weight of oppression 🤕. 🤕. 🤕

She is teething! Give her teething toy instead of calling her chudail 😢

#istandwithpalestine 🍉. 🇵. 🍋

I heart is bleeding !!! Humanity is dead!!! We failed to rescue you !! How helpless we are 🤕. 😢 ya rab send help

But now nano house is no more nano house 😢

my unspoken words to one of my classmate 😢. 😢

money can buy everything 💔

To hummh theka Lia 😢. 😢. 😢. 😢. 😢. 😢. come on

You deserve more my grull ✨. ✨. ✨

#ceasefirenow #gazaunderattack

#stopgenocide #freepalestine 🇵

DEATH TOLL 13000

All are beautiful but the woman in the top right corner 😢. 🔥

Beauty with grace 😢. 😢. 😢. 🔥. 🔥.. masha Allah

Awwww sooo cuteee 🌸. 💜. ✨...thiss one is really cuteee 😢. 😢. 😢. 😢. 😢. 😢. ✨

This naat is so close to my heart!! 😢. 😢

Imagine looking like a wedding guest at your own wedding 😢...the dupatta would've really brought the whole look together!! ✨

DRINKING WATER IN THAT HAS ANOTHER TASTE IDK WHY 😢

**Figure 4: Comments with No Cultural Reference (Appendix D)**

These are a total 20 comments. They were selected on the basis of the context of the post, usernames, and profile pictures posted. Otherwise, they can be done by any person belonging to a different nationality. Although the dominant language is still English and there are two comments with a bit of Urdu that can also be considered Hindi words, that's why, on the basis of emojis and linguistic elements, it is not possible to identify.

**Linguistic Patterns**

These comments express general feelings of appreciating someone, expressing their individual opinions, and showing solidarity without indicating nationality. There are some words that can be taken as hints but still not with surety; they reflect any national identity, like Masha Allah, which is an Arabic word and it can be used by any Muslim person belonging to different countries; a word like Naat, which can be used by either a Pakistani person or an Indian Muslim; the word dupata can also refer to a Pakistani person but it can also be used by any other person; Ganga Ram, although it's a hospital present in Lahore, the city of Pakistan, but it could be used by any person to urge the doctors to take action. There are comments with wrong spellings and grammatical structure like grull, I heart is bleeding, has stolen, which show that it's breaking norms and bringing new norms, as mentioned by Canagarajah (2022). Hashtags are also used to show solidarity with Palestine; the basic ones are #CEASEFIRENOW, #ISTANDWITHPALESTINE, #STOPGENOCIDE, #FREEPALESTINE, and #GAZAUNDERATTACK.

**Semiotic Modes**

There are many emoticons that show general emotions, like heart emojis and smileys, but there are some that have recently emerged as a trend. For example, the  emoji has been used in place of the Palestine flag for showing solidarity. In the face of oppression, people still find creative ways to express themselves. Watermelon is used because it has similar colors as in the Palestine flag. Many people use their country flag and Palestine flag to show unity and support. In the comments mentioned above, there are many other universally used emojis that express different emotions.

The amount of emojis used shows that Pakistani youth, rather than voicing their emotions, use a lot of emojis. There are some emojis that are used three to four

times in a single comment; it may be to emphasize the humorous mood. After finding out many linguistic, semiotic, and cultural elements in the comments that gave insights about the communicative practices of the Pakistani youth.

### **Findings**

Some ground data discussion reveals a deep understanding of the communicative practices of Pakistani youth on Instagram posts and how these communicative practices help in the formation of their cultural identity. The comments provide an elaborative series of interactions online done by Pakistani youth and the history of language variation among them. The comments also reveal an extensive use of semiotic modes and other textual elements that support the point that using translingual practices can help in the formation of cultural and online identities.

Major findings are: English is the most preferred language for communication on Instagram posts among Pakistani youth. English is widely understood and has become a mode of communication among people of different backgrounds. According to Li & Lin (2019), "English has been burgeoning as an additional language for those whose first language is not English." in the comments of the Instagram posts, it is visually represented that English has taken up a large portion of the language use of Pakistani's. One more thing that has been concluded from the comments is that not all participants have good command of English grammar and structure, but it has been widely used or incorporated in comments done by Pakistani youth. According to Canagarajah (2022), who shared his experience when he was teaching English at some international school, he was asked by one of the delegates from New Zealand, "You teach your English?" which shows that even participants have their "broken English," still it is considered "creative" and "norm-altering," at the same time making it a part of translingual practices.

The second point, is that despite getting involved in translingual practices, which makes use of all linguistic resources available in your language to make easy interpretation of meaning, participants can still preserve their national identity by using flag emoticons or other cultural references, which takes us away from the notion of "hybrid identity" entirely based on creative use of language resources. There is a distinction between "Hybrid Identity" and "national identity," as both versions are available in the comment analysis segment. So it entirely supports the idea of creative

use of language in which the choices made by participants' beliefs and thinking on language use reflect either of the identities.

Third point: translingual practices can promote local and minor languages, as Canagarajah (2022) demonstrated that "translingualism is a way for monolingual or privileged people to still have clues for understanding them and appreciating their voices." But because of English as the dominant language or preferred language, other local languages are not given much space in the language use of Pakistani youth. There have been many same emoticons used in comments by Pakistani youth that support the notion of Canagarajah (2022) stating that when the communicative practices of people become regularized and repeated over time, certain linguistic and semiotic features become routine and patterned in specific ways.

### **Future Implications**

In the future, research may be conducted on other social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. This study explores the communicative practices of Pakistani youth on Instagram posts in the comment section in order to understand the impact of translingual practices. It could also investigate the other digital contents by Pakistani youth in the form of reels, posts, or videos. It will give rich data of participants' practices online. This research should be carried out in non-English-influenced countries; this might help to gain a better understanding of the translingual practices.

### **Conclusion**

This research has somehow shown the linguistic choices of Pakistani youth online. It has been proven that language is subjective, although it is affected due to many reasons and factors like privileged languages, beliefs regarding some languages, finding roots and culture in your own language use, and developing trends in language preferences. There are many states that are still very rigid in their language policies. Pakistan is one of the states where English is given more preference than its national language, which is Urdu. Because Pakistan is rigid in its language policy, Pakistani youth do not show much support for the notion that translingual practices can help in the promotion of other local languages. According to Canagarajah (2022), "more research is needed in non-English-dominant communities where diverse local vernaculars and lingua franca are involved." But translingual practices can help in the

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promotion of the creative use of language and promotion of local languages.

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## **Appendix A**

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/DAVcCmJOgdk/?igsh=bzcwbnpoejVvZzRi>

<https://www.instagram.com/p/C-GSrMRthYS/?igsh=MTduM2xvMm15dm8ybA==>

<https://www.instagram.com/p/C-fYmV3oI2o/?igsh=bnN5bnhvZnp2eDRh>

[https://www.instagram.com/p/C\\_CtOV-SpJk/?igsh=eTdsMmlvcXVsZWty](https://www.instagram.com/p/C_CtOV-SpJk/?igsh=eTdsMmlvcXVsZWty)

<https://www.instagram.com/p/C9nLKHJuQKQ/?igsh=MWY1aWQ2YzZ0ejhoOA==>

<https://www.instagram.com/p/C-wi7fTo-ER/?igsh=YXAxNDVoMjRnNDlo>

<https://www.instagram.com/p/CuKfITAsCD/?igsh=MWRubnV6YWI3aXhyYg>

## **Appendix B**

[https://www.instagram.com/p/C\\_Yu7FjM56J/?igsh=eHpydHUwenBocm16](https://www.instagram.com/p/C_Yu7FjM56J/?igsh=eHpydHUwenBocm16)

<https://www.instagram.com/p/C6bxf4IuCdp/?igsh=ODMweDFrNW1icWFo>

## **Appendix C**

<https://www.instagram.com/p/C6Qk5RLCmvL/?igsh=MTZtYWp4djZzeHZv>

<https://www.instagram.com/p/C-bDLzuyE5x/?igsh=Mm04a3h1ZnhkeTFs>

<https://www.instagram.com/p/C9cTxYzIYqG/?igsh=MTdrbWdjcxpnZmgycg==>

[https://www.instagram.com/p/C\\_hqPzmNb\\_/?igsh=MWFnaWRuYm9tdWJmdw==](https://www.instagram.com/p/C_hqPzmNb_/?igsh=MWFnaWRuYm9tdWJmdw==)

<https://www.instagram.com/reel/DAQ0octt7k7/?igsh=MXdsYjRyNHpkODZkZg==>

<https://www.instagram.com/p/C8tFTeHPQMk/?igsh=ZXJxMGh2NWdoa2R1>

## **Appendix D**

<https://www.instagram.com/p/C98XE1GuHvI/?igsh=OHM4ZTQzbTI5N3By>

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DAU1Z2BoyR4/?igsh=MXJyN2FpdTNpN3gzZA==>

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DAUZj3wIRGD/?igsh=M2diNHF3ZW1rbHls>

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DARLWcwsfKg/?igsh=NHo5YWt3OGRuZm9>