

EXPLORING CODE-SWITCHING IN DIGITAL SOCIOLINGUISTICS: PAKISTANI YOUTH ON INSTAGRAM AND TIKTOK

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Abstract

This study investigates the practice of Code-Switching in digital communication among Pakistani youth on Instagram and TikTok. Influencers use mixed language to attract an audience and humor as well. Audience response is also similar, indicating the same cultural understanding. By applying John J. Gumperz's (1982) Code-Switching Theory, the main idea of contextualization cues, the research explores how language alternation between Urdu, English, and Punjabi works as an identity and emotion on digital platforms. By applying a qualitative research design with a purposive sampling technique, the study examined the selected influencers Ken Doll, Tamkenat, Shahzad Roy, and Dukybehn, whose social media content presents a variety of sociolinguistics practices. The findings reveal that Code-Switching is a meaningful and random act that presents society's linguistic diversity. The study wraps up that Code-Switching in Pakistani digital platforms is the best example of cultural diversity and creativity. These results present that social media has reformed the traditional boundaries of language.

Key Words: Social Media, Instagram, TikTok, Code-Switching, Digital Sociolinguistics

Introduction

Pakistan is a country that possesses a lot of cultural and linguistic diversity. Here, society is also shaped by postcolonial influence, both in language and lifestyle. In today's era, digital media is an essential platform to showcase language identity and culture. For the Pakistani young generation, Instagram and TikTok are not only a mode of entertainment but also a platform of self-expression where people express their identity. Due to multilingualism, they express their emotions and ideas in different regional languages, including English and Urdu. This code-switching is trending among Pakistani youth. Despite many social media platforms, Instagram Pakistan is a country with a lot of language and culture diversity. Here, colonization also shapes society's influence on language and lifestyle. In today's era, digital platforms are essential to showcase language identity and cultural values. For the Pakistani young generation, TikTok and Instagram are not only a mode of entertainment but also a platform of self-expression where people express their ideas and identity. Despite Reels and TikTok are playing a dominant role among the Pakistani young generation. In this age of globalization, youth interact with different cultures, and through code-switching, people express their identities and linguistic hybridity.

In recent years of globalization use of the English language as a mode of communication has increased; it is very common the mix English with other languages. This phenomenon is common among young adults (Kainat, Moon & Gull, 2025). Social media platforms introduce new patterns in language. Instagram often encourages captions, emojis, and hashtags. Each style carries its own semiotic meaning; on the other hand, TikTok is a video-oriented application. In digital sociolinguistics (Androutsopoulos & Jaffermans (2014; Lee (2017) explained that code-switching often represents cultural diversity and identity, especially in a post-colonial perspective. English

is a symbol of novelty, literacy, and connection with the world. Adoption of two or more languages in a sentence indicates complex identities located between local and global (Bolmaert, 2010). For example, a TikTok or an Instagram reel might be captioned as “Scene on hai, Stress off hai”.

Code-switching is a topic that has long been studied in sociolinguistics. This topic is of more importance when it comes to multilingual societies, where people use different languages to express social identity. When it comes to Pakistan, that is a multi-lingual society, where language mixing and code-switching are natural in daily life linguistic practice (Rahman, 2010). Researchers have also observed cod-switching in educational institutes, the workplace, and the media (Mahboob, 2020; Mansoor, 2004). Digital platforms like Instagram and TikTok are creating a new kind of linguistic community (Hymes, 1972), by using both languages, both generations are not only creating fun but also connecting with international communities. Although, is increasing on digital platforms like TikTok and Instagram, there is not much research on these short video platforms. Studies are mostly focused on Facebook and WhatsApp (Naveed, 2018; Rehman & Ahmad, 2022).

From a sociolinguistic perspective, using Gumperz's theory, we can observe how people express feelings on digital platforms to spread their message. Each action of code-switching presents a different function, such as pointing out or emphasizing specific trends on social media platforms (Gumperz, 1982) shows how the audience perceives messages from digital platforms. People are influenced by algorithms, memes, and other kinds of trends through which people can perceive different meanings on social media apps.

Literature Review

Code-switching that demonstrates active interplay between language choice and identification. Code-switching was presented as a systemic and firm language process instead of an indication of insufficiency in early fundamental work by Gumperz (1982). Further, this idea was extended by later research that focuses on bilinguals and how they use a collection of languages to achieve practical and social goals in specific groups (Auer, 1998). The sociolinguistics perspective points out that language choice is socially and culturally direct than random.

How multilingual individuals negotiate digital platforms where spoken, written, and visual means of communication combine has become the subject of sociolinguistic research, increasing progressively in the last 20 years. The way in which bilingual and multilingual people perform identity and manage social relationships is being transformed by new sociolinguistic ecologies developed through platforms like Instagram and TikTok, which are vital for young contemporary societies. Code-switching is established as an integral component of everyday life, technological interaction among Pakistani youth, where Urdu and English overlap in a multifaceted postcolonial linguistic structure. Recent investigations employ Gumperz's (1982) communicative code-switching theory as an umbrella to examine how Pakistani youngsters use language alternation to negotiate spectatorship on Instagram and TikTok. This study in question is a part of the developing area of digital sociolinguistics.

A framework to comprehend switching codes as a crucial interactional process was established by J. Gumperz in his 1982 book Discourse Strategies. In contrast to metaphorical switching, which employs alternation as a symbolic cue to convey social meanings irrespective of outside shifts, situational switching, in which language change involves contextual modifications such as topic or participant, was defined by his theory. Language is an effective means for

participation, self-construction, and communication. In multilingual societies such as Pakistan, code switching—the changing use of two or more languages during a conversation has become frequent (Kainat et al., 2025). The technique of shifting between two or more languages or types of language during a single conversation or discourse is referred to as code-switching.

This might happen when you switch between languages in the middle of a discussion, during a phrase, or even when you switch between dialects of the same language. A Pakistani YouTuber, for example, might communicate in Urdu and English continuously in the same sentence. On the contrary, borrowing is the process of importing phrases, vocabulary, or grammatical structures from one language into another. This could entail using jargon from one language in another or even translating grammatical structures from one language into another. An example could be a Pakistani YouTuber who expresses Urdu using English words and expressions or in English using Urdu grammar (Khan et al., 2023).

Influencers on social media play a major role in offering their followers enjoyment and information. Incorporating code mixing into their videos and blog posts enables them to interact with their audience in a more authentic way that is obvious to all. They may interact with their followers more personally as a result, which strengthens their bonds with them. Additionally, by speaking about subjects in many languages and dialects, code shifting allows influencers to reach a larger audience (Azhar et al., 2023). Using audience bilingualism, a combination of references to pop culture and cultural idioms heightens the hilarious effect. Similar switching is used in memes and online comments to parody and sarcasm, frequently referencing social or political commentary (Jehan et al., 2025).

As a result of social media's major contribution to the internationalization of language utilization, the entire world has become a more diverse and globalized society. The concept of bilingualism has developed in essentially every aspect of life, and the outcome of this commonality is seen in the usage of many languages through speech and in writing. Many writers use intricate vocabulary to keep to the progressive concept. Numerous literary works make heavy use of code-mixing and code-switching. Multilingualism has grown increasingly popular, even in Pakistani culture (Wirasa et al., 2025). Considering the earlier-mentioned element, it is focused more on investigating the three types of code-switching: inter-essential, intra-essential, and extra-essential based on Poplack's theory.

Based on his research, the intra-essential code exchanging is most commonly employed by Facebook English Youth Community members, as seen by their online discussions and comments. The members constantly shift between different varieties of language based on word, phrase, and even clause levels (Jakob, 2020). YouTube is a social network that allows users to generate and share videos. Podcasts, in which the host invites experts or guests who are absolutely relevant to the topic at hand, are currently the most popular type of video on YouTube. One of the YouTubers or artists widely recognized for his podcast content is Deddy Corbuzier (Kabilin, 2012). Studying code-switching in the context of TikTok and Instagram presents an original perspective on the versatility and transformation of language in the twenty-first century. It focuses on the range and complexity of human interaction in the age of information, illustrating the intricate connections among sociolinguistic patterns, linguistic inventiveness, and the development of identities in the social media era. Thus, this approach offers an engrossing look into the diverse realm of linguistic expression, showing how code-switching reflects the shifting contours of identities and languages in a technologically connected global society (Daulay et al., 2024).

These findings are becoming increasingly significant in Pakistan. In digital settings, English-Urdu hybridity represents postmodern personal identity, social class, and gender negotiation in addition to linguistic diversity. Users creatively appropriate global digital trends while incorporating local cultural allusions, as seen by the widespread use of hybrid language styles on web-based platforms. Translanguaging, or the flexible use of languages as integrated communicative resources, is a broader sociolinguistic tendency reflected in this (Garcia & Wei, 2014).

Consequently is possible to interpret digital code-switching among Pakistani youth as a cultural positioning act as well as an interaction strategy. It is a representation of digital self-fashioning where aesthetically pleasing, performance, and social ambition are all linked with language choice. Together, these viewpoints show how code-switching in online settings crosses barriers of language and is an essential marker of identity and community in the interconnected, globalized world.

Research Gap

Pakistani creators are active users of digital platforms, often blends English with regional languages and Urdu. Although sociolinguistic studies in Pakistan have analyzed code-switching in classrooms, advertisements, and traditional media, the language practice of young people in short form video platforms remains unexplored. Exploring these practices is essential because they reveal how global and regional linguistic trends merge in digital youth culture, shaping not only communication but also perceptions of modern identity. This study aims to fill the gap by exploring how Pakistani youth employ code-switching in their digital expressions, which serves it reveal about culture.

Research Objectives

1. To explore the frequent trends of code-switching used by Pakistani young people on Instagram and TikTok.
2. To identify the communicative and social functions of code-switching in a digital context.
3. To investigate the sociolinguistics involvement of code-switching for youth identity and cultural expression.

Research Questions

1. What are the frequent trends of code-switching used by Pakistani young people on Instagram and TikTok?
2. What roles does code-switching serve in the digital communication of Pakistani youth?
3. How does the code-switching represent identity, culture, and language preference in online platforms?

Significance of the study

Young Pakistani social media creators are active users of digital platforms. They often blend the English language with regional languages and Urdu. Sociolinguistics has studied code-switching at different levels, like the classroom, advertisement, and traditional media; the language practice in short video content remains unexplored. So it is important to explore how global language trends dominate Pakistani youth on Instagram and TikTok. These linguistic trends shape new trends among young creators. The main purpose of the study is to investigate code-switching among Pakistani youth on Instagram and TikTok in the context of communicative meaning and social trends.

Methodology

A research methodology is a scientific and systematic method used to analyze and interpret data based on research objectives. It is going to focus on Code-Switching among Pakistani Youth on Instagram and TikTok. Qualitative methodology analyzes data from short video audio dialogues and comments.

This study uses a qualitative descriptive design that uses content analysis and digital ethnography approaches. With a focus on the symbolic and functional features of code-switching in digital communication, the qualitative design offers an in-depth examination of spontaneously occurring online interactions. Observing and gathering accessible online content from Pakistani influencers on Instagram and TikTok constitutes the digital ethnographic component. These platforms were selected because of their widespread popularity among young people in Pakistan and their vibrant use of both visual and language expression. Identifying how users develop hybrid cultural identities through Urdu-English code-switching in comment threads, video dialogues, and captions is the main objective of the study.

This study's methodology, which relies on a qualitative research framework, aims to investigate the nuanced sociolinguistic phenomenon of code-switching among young Pakistanis on TikTok and Instagram. Multilingual users combine languages to create social meaning, identity, and a sense of belonging on digital platforms, which have developed into rich environments for linguistic innovation in recent years. A qualitative approach is most suited for this research since it focuses on comprehension, context, and meaning-making rather than statistical generalization, which is how and why linguistic shifts occur in online discourse. Within the framework of interactional sociolinguistics, the study is based on the theory in John J. Gumperz's (1982) Code-Switching Theory, which perceives language choices as contextualization cues that convey social relationships, identity, and posture. An interpretive, context-sensitive methodology is supported by this theoretical framework to figure out how Pakistani youngsters use digital media practices to deal with bilingualism and identity performance.

This data consists of textual and audiovisual materials collected from Instagram and TikTok. Textual data from written comments from selected social media influencers, audiovisual data from spoken dialogues from short videos.

To ensure the inclusion of individuals and information sources that are relevant to the goals of the study, a purposive sampling technique was used. Although it gives priority to proof with an abundant amount of information that can offer profound insight into the topic under study, purposeful sampling becomes particularly well-suited for qualitative sociolinguistic research (Patton, 2002). Pakistani social media influencers, from Instagram and from TikTok, created the sample. They were picked based on the following standard:

Each influencer must be Pakistani and actively engage in code-switching activity.

Theoretical Framework

This research uses John J. Gumperz's Code-Switching Theory (1982), which relies on the larger framework of interactional sociolinguistics, to examine this occurrence. This theory presents an extensive understanding of how language choice functions as a contextualization cue that forms social relationships, identity, and meaning in encounters. It is possible to investigate how Pakistani young people use code-switching to establish hybrid identities and build social connections in online groups by applying this concept to digital spaces. Gumperz (1982) considered code-switching as a socially rooted communication practice rather than just a language

alternation between two codes. Different language codes are used by speakers as contextualization cues, or indications that assist listeners in understanding the social meaning and intent of a speech, according to his Interactional Sociolinguistic approach. These signs, which direct how individuals create common understanding during the conversation, can include changes in vocabulary, tone, prosody, or style. Situational and metaphorical code-switching are the two main categories that Gumperz differentiated. While metaphorical code-switching suggests a change in topic, posture, or identity within the same communicative context, situational code-switching happens when the language change reflects a change in scenario or participants. Gumperz's method presents an angle that allows us to view the ways individuals use languages to project desired identities and fit in with particular social classes.

The findings of this study, code-switching is a performative act that Pakistani youngsters use to express and negotiate their social identities online, drawing on Gumperz's theory. On TikTok, performers can switch between languages to add humor, increase relatability, or appeal to a bilingual audience; on Instagram, users can utilize Urdu instead of English in captions to convey cultural pride or emotional authenticity. By indexing defining qualities like gender, class, education, and regional belonging, each switch is a communicative act. Additionally, audiences actively interpret digital language in a way that Gumperz referred to as conversational inference. In light of common sociocultural knowledge, followers interpret language choices, interpreting an Urdu proverb as an indicator of local solidarity or an English phrase as cosmopolitan. Code-switching is, therefore, a type of social signaling that allows young people to identify certain online communities and create dynamic, context-dependent identities.

Data Analysis

The ability to switch between two or more languages in the form of conversation or text is called code-switching. It is observed that Pakistani digital creators randomly use code-switching when they express their opinions on Instagram and TikTok. Although English is the official language in Pakistan so along with regional and Urdu, English is also a language that is mostly spoken. So, young digital creators in Pakistan used to switch languages along with their regional languages. So it is possible that Pakistani Instagram influencers and TikTokers randomly use code-switching between two languages. Both platforms offer extensive demonstrations of identity performance and informal communication in multimodal situations.

Active public accounts that frequently post bilingual or multilingual content were chosen from each platform to present a representative sample of young digital conversation. The study emphasized randomly occurring occurrences of code-switching across a range of posts and short videos, including humorous sketches, lifestyle updates, and opinion-based content, without any particular thematic limits on data selection. The study dealt with the social meanings that are communicated by the linguistic alternation between Urdu, English, and regional languages. Patterns of audience orientation, creative performance, and identity negotiation were found by tracking when and how producers switch between languages. A better understanding of digital code-switching as a social act is made possible by the multimodal nature of Instagram and TikTok, where verbal choices are frequently supported by gestures, visual aesthetics, and sound design. Pakistani influencers are well known for code-switching in their short video content. They mostly switch languages between English and Urdu, which are widely spoken in Pakistan.

Amos Moses, known as Dukybehn, is a Pakistani content creator on Instagram, is well-known for his witty video clips featuring observational humor about Pakistani culture and routine.

He is recognized for adopting code-switching and borrowing in his vlogs, which tend to occur in multilingual environments. The two commonly spoken languages in Pakistan are English and Urdu, which he commonly switches between. He frequently employs terms and expressions from both languages in his work and speech. Code-switching can be utilized in a variety of communication strategies, including highlighting a point or interacting with different audiences. It might also convey the speaker's identity and the social and cultural context of the discourse. A wide range of communication approaches, such as reinforcing a point or engaging with various audiences, are capable of code-switching. It may also communicate the discourse's social and cultural setting as well as the speaker's identity. In Amos Moses utilizes code-switching in his posts to captivate people, make his posts more approachable and enjoyable, and portray the linguistic and social environment of his workplace.

So here are some examples of code-switching from his content:

1. *"Assalam o Alaikum, beta, what a pleasant surprise."* This is a dialogue from an Instagram clip in which he was humorously representing elite people.

To emulate the exquisite pattern of speech associated with the upper class, the speaker in this conversation switches between Urdu and English, using the culturally personal greeting "Assalam o Alaikum, beta" before transitioning to English, "what a pleasant surprise". Gumperz's (1982) theory of metaphorical code-switching states that rather than indicating a situational transition, this type of alternation communicates social meaning. In this particular case, code-switching serves as a hilarious contextualization cue that indicates social sophistication, politeness, and class recognition (Gumperz, 1982).

2. In another video, he said, *"Assalam o Alaikum and welcome to Delulue airline."* In this, code-switching helps to connect with a wide range of audiences and makes his content more relatable.

To connect to a linguistically diverse audience and present a relatable mixed persona, the speaker, in this case, blends Urdu "Assalam o Alaikum" with English "welcome to Delulue airline". The switch serves as a contextualization cue that conveys inclusivity and involvement in accordance with Gumperz's (1982) theory. In this instance, Urdu preserves cultural warmth and authenticity while English highlights modernity and humor, exhibiting metaphorical code-switching (Gumperz, 1982).

Another Pakistani influencer from social media is Tamkenat, also known for his funny videos. She also used to make hilarious videos to reflect our society's customs. This practice is the reflection of his unique way of content creation. In addition, it helps her to portray further aspects of the Pakistani language and culture in her work, giving the films a further level of relatability and authenticity. Tamkent's videos frequently shift between English and Urdu, allowing her to interact with younger audiences while still maintaining her mature and reflective tone. Her language switching serves as a contextualization cue, indicating empathy, commentary, and social positioning.

1. *"Mountains are calling, and they are saying chawlo ghar bhwoo."* This dialogue is taken from a reel that is made to spread awareness among people.

In this interaction, the speaker begins in English, "Mountains are calling," a well-known phrase, and then switches to Punjabi "chawlo ghar bhwoo," meaning let's go home or go back home, adding humor and local flavor. This alternation shows metaphorical code-switching, in which the shift is not related to a change in situation but rather represents a movement in

significance to society and tone. By combining English and a regional tongue, the speaker uses code-switching as a contextual cue to connect emotionally with a local audience while mocking worldwide social media trends. The switch jokingly reinterprets an English travel phrase as a culturally grounded, awareness-driven statement that reflects shared values and collective identity (Gumperz, 1982).

2. *"Then I realize yrr ye log kitny piyary lag rahi hn"*. She is talking about styling and fashion sense among Gen Z.

The expression "Then I realize yrr ye log kitny piyary lag rahi hn" is a natural form of metaphorical code-switching across digital platforms. The speaker begins in English with "Then I realize," using a reflective tone common in online narrative, and then switches to Roman Urdu "yrr ye log kitny piyary lag rahi hn" to convey emotional engagement and connection. According to Gumperz's (1982) theory, this shift functions as a contextualization cue, helping listeners understand the speaker's attitude and emotional posture. The Urdu phrase expresses warmth, closeness, and cultural authenticity, but English conveys cognitive reflection and a sense of global unity. They work together to create a bilingual brand that speaks to people who are negotiating both local and global influences. Such code-switching helps speakers to present multiple identities, young, expressive, and socially aware, while appealing to a multilingual audience on social media. Additionally, the use of discourse markers such as "yrr" emphasizes informality and mutual respect, developing in-group harmony and shared cultural knowledge. This example represents intra-sentential switching, where Urdu and English merge in this phrase (Myers-Scotton, 1993)

3. *"Aajkal aik ajeeb hi krmus mujaa hua h, being somebody who suffers from anxiety, I can completely understand how all of this can be so overwhelming"*. In this reel chunk is talking about mental well-being.

The line, "Aajkal aik ajeeb hi krmus mujaa hua h, being somebody who suffers from anxiety, I can completely understand how all of this can be so overwhelming" represents a sophisticated example of metaphorical code-switching in the context of mental health discourse. The speaker begins in Urdu by explaining her current emotional situation, "Aajkal aik ajeeb hi krmus mujaa hua h", conveying urgency, genuineness, and a culturally rooted expression of emotion. She then switches to English when discussing anxiety and self-awareness, employing psychological jargon consistent with globalized and clinical discourses on mental health.

According to Gumperz's (1982) theory, such adjustments serve as contextualization indicators, indicating changes in attitude and interpretive frame. The Urdu section reflects emotional experiences grounded in personal and cultural context, but the English portion establishes credibility and aligns with larger, international discourses on mental health. This alternation enables the speaker to balance emotional intimacy with intellectual reflection, forming an identity that is both empathetic, educated, and culturally grounded.

The next influencer whose content is investigated in this study is Ken Doll, a well-known Pakistani social media figure noted for his witty, exaggerated performances and mixed language style. His videos, which frequently circulate on Instagram and TikTok, combine English and Urdu in distinctive ways to create satire and social commentary, notably regarding modern Pakistani lifestyles and the relationships between classes. Ken Doll's speech style illustrates performative code-switching, in which language shifts serve as an intended comic and identity-building strategy rather than a spontaneous conversational element. Through his clever use of bilingualism, he not only entertains his audience but also reflects the sociolinguistic reality of Pakistan's urban youth,

who have to handle local cultural norms and global digital influences. Analyzing his speech patterns using Gumperz's (1982) theory of contextualization cues shows how shifting language creates humor, implies social distance or intimacy, and supports group identity in digital settings.

1. *"Raat dy 12 wajy ny and about to sleep"*

In the sentence, "Raat dy 12 wajy ny and I'm about to sleep," Ken Doll easily flips between Punjabi/Urdu and English, which is typical of his casual, conversational tone in online performances. The utterance begins with "Raat dy 12 wajy ny." It's 12 o'clock at night, a localized, culturally grounded expression of time, and is followed by the English phrase "I'm about to sleep," which belongs to globalized, digital speech standards. This linguistic alternation indicates metaphorical code-switching, in which the language change reflects a shift in position and tone rather than a topic. According to Gumperz's (1982) method, this alternation serves as a contextualization cue, indicating informality and self-awareness. The speaker's use of Punjabi connects him to his cultural community, whilst the English part reflects modernity and digital fluency. These layers of meaning work together to create a bilingual persona that is honest, hilarious, and cosmopolitan, which relates strongly to Pakistan's urban young people and their unique linguistic realities.

2. *"Main yahan Farhat se milny aya hun, where is she?"*

The line, "Main yahan Farhat se milny aya hun, where is she?" depicts intra-sentential code-switching, in which the speaker switches between Urdu and English within a single sentence. The Urdu part, "Main yahan Farhat se milny aya hun" I came here to see Farhat, highlights a personal, context-based assertion, yet the jump to English "where is she?" adds immediacy and interpersonal dynamic. According to Gumperz's (1982) theory of contextualization cues, language alternation provides interpretive signals indicating shifts in tone, attitude, or interpersonal emphasis. In this instance, the transition to English may emphasize curiosity or mild discontent, giving the speech a slightly dramatic or passionate tone. A combination of languages also has a functional purpose, expressing the speaker's dual cultural orientation rooted in local linguistic conventions but impacted by globalized, digital communication patterns. This brief expression shows how code-switching acts not only as a language habit but also as a social technique to express emotion and personality in online discourse.

3. *"Lo g aaj hum aapko dikhany jaa rahy hnn Altit Fort aur bazar hunza k jo mery hum nawa binye iss safar main, because gonna have an amazing time....."*

Ken Doll expressed his desire to visit Altit Fort and Hunza Bazaar. Because we're going to have a great time," highlights how code-switching may be used as a performative method in digital media to establish identity and engage audiences. By shifting between Urdu and English, he relates his story and creates a bilingual identity that appeals to Pakistan's urban, globally minded young. The Urdu portions highlight cultural identity and inclusivity, whereas the English inserts convey contemporary themes, confidence, and social sophistication. According to Gumperz's (1982) theory, these shifts serve as contextualization cues, assisting viewers in evaluating the speaker's perspective and emotional tone. Ken Doll boosts audience connection by copying the speech patterns of his fans, who habitually blend languages in ordinary communication. This effortless transition across language codes changes his digital character into one representing local authenticity and global perspective, increasing viewer relatability and engagement. As an outcome, Ken Doll's code-switching does not just entertain; it also embodies the negotiation of identity, place, and modern individuality in Pakistan's growing internet culture.

4. *"Meri tarha burj khalifa b bilkul crazy hochuka h, coke studio is live....."*

The line "Meri tarha Burj Khalifa b bilkul crazy hochuka h, Coke Studio is live" illustrates metaphorical and intra-sentential code-switching, which is characteristic of digital influencer discourse in Pakistan. The first Urdu phrase, "Meri tarha Burj Khalifa b bilkul crazy hochuka h" Just like me, Burj Khalifa has gone crazy, expresses comedy and self-personification, developing a compelling and relatable relationship with the audience. The abrupt switch to English "Coke Studio is live" marks an immediate shift in communicative intent, from personal expression to brand promotion. According to Gumperz's (1982) theory of contextualization cues, this move shows a change in footing and interactional frame, leading the listener to view the second half as an informational or marketing message.

By using both Urdu and English, the influencer presents himself at the center of local cultural identity and global media culture. The Urdu half anchors the message in humor and familiarity, whilst English emphasizes elegance, modernity, and worldwide relevance, all of which are associated with Coke Studio and the influencer's cosmopolitan profile. Such bilingual communication encourages engagement because it reflects how Pakistani youth effortlessly switch between languages in cyberspace. Furthermore, this hybrid linguistic style transforms the advertising strategy into an act of identity performance, where humor, cultural reference, and brand language combine to express the multilingual nature of Pakistan's digital culture. Dialogue reflects situational switching (Blom & Gumperz, 1982), switching between Urdu and English, a transition from casual speech to promotional.

Another notable individual in this study is Shehzad Roy, a well-known Pakistani artist, humanitarian, and social reformer who skillfully uses internet platforms to convey themes of common sense, civic responsibility, and social awareness. Unlike other influences like Ken Doll, who utilizes bilingualism purely for fun and entertainment, and Tamkent, who uses it for empathy and thought, Roy's code-switching works as a didactic and strategic tool. His videos generally blend Urdu and English quickly, resulting in a linguistic balance that reflects Pakistan's mixed reality. This technique allows him to target a varied audience both those with local language traditions and youngsters who are fluent in English, while also making his work accessible, inclusive, and intellectually stimulating.

Roy's use of code-switching suggests an intention to make complex cultural critiques accessible and emotionally engaging. For example, he usually opens his discussions in Urdu to foster cultural connections before shifting to English for analytical or technical focus, therefore establishing legitimacy and logical appeal. This stylistic shift represents what John J. Gumperz (1982) refers to as metaphorical code-switching, in which semantic modifications serve as contextualization cues that guide audience perception and reflect changes in tone or purpose. Roy engages his audience while quietly inspiring societal awareness and critical thinking by mixing humor, seriousness, and rational analysis throughout his bilingual discourse.

Roy's multilingual practice shows how language can be used as both a means of instruction and a symbol of diversity, allowing difficult societal issues to be articulated in an approachable manner. When examined through Gumperz's (1982) viewpoint, his code-switching works as a contextualization cue that indicates changes in tone, function, and communicative intent alternating between empathy, critique, and rational persuasion. Roy's talk reimagines what it means to be a public intellectual in Pakistan's digital age: someone who can maintain cultural authenticity while embracing the linguistic diversity of modern society. Finally, his example

demonstrates that code-switching in social media discourse is more than just linguistic play; it is a determined negotiation of identity, intellect, and societal purpose, strengthening the platform as an effective platform for awareness and transformation.

"In an Instagram reel, Shazaad Roy was talking to a chalid..... hm ny aik dusry ka muzaak urana h...then girl said counsellor khti h mazak urana achi baat nahii. Shazaad Roy said Tmny kaha thaa k video main ana h if you are not going to make fun of me, then you are out of the video... The girl said uhhh.so much English."

In this Instagram clip, Shehzad Roy interacts with a young child in a playful yet socially conscious discussion. The dialogue "Hum ny aik dusray ka mazaak urana h", followed by the child's response, "Counsellor khti h mazak urana achi baat nahin," and Roy's humorous remark, "Tmny kaha tha k video main ana h, if you are not going to make fun of me then you are out of the video," ends with the girl's comment, "Uhhh... so much English." This brief exchange captures a refined yet profound reflection on language hierarchy and acceptance of linguistic variety in Pakistan's multilingual society. Roy's bilingual discourse humorously acknowledges how English proficiency is often seen as a sign of education or social position.

The child's argument highlights the linguistic variation, but Roy's usage of Urdu and English shows code-switching as a contextualization cue that represents transitions between playfulness, critique, and instruction (Gumperz, 1982). In this context, English is more than just a prestige language; it is a source of debate and reflection, harmonizing with the larger concept of World Englishes and the legitimacy of regional speech patterns. Roy's spontaneous alternation between languages serves as a sociolinguistic commentary, asking spectators to rethink linguistic biases and praise bilingual flexibility as a marker of personal identity and expression rather than inequity.

Through such convenient and random encounters, public figures like Roy indirectly add to the social legitimization of multilingual discourse, letting younger audiences see linguistic hybridity as a genuine, dynamic, and expressive way of everyday communication.

In another video girl said Sir aapny wo shows dakha h adolescence.... Then Shahzad corrected her pronunciation.... Then she said aapny WEDNESDAY dakha h he again corrected his pronunciation.....after hearing the girl switch to Punjabi language paiyan tusi ki gal kardy payy oww meri 1st language Punjabi hagi... English meri 3rd language hagi... Then you know the concept of world Englishes.... Shahzad said You mean English She paiyaan hrr juga tusi ni sahi ho sakdy. It means English belongs to everyone.....

In this scene, Shehzad Roy has a funny yet fascinating talk with a girl who inquires, "Sir, aapny wo show dekha h adolescence?" Roy gently corrects her pronunciation, and she continues, "Aapny Wednesday dekha h?" requiring another correction. The girl is amused and turns to Punjabi, adding, "Paiyan tusi ki gal kardy pay o, meri first language Punjabi hagi, English meri third language hagi." Roy answers, "Do you understand the concept of World Englishes?" She continues humorously, "Paiyan, har juga tusi ni sahi ho sakdy, it means English belongs to everyone." This exchange exemplifies code-switching as a communication and ideological act. "English meri 3rd language hagi" represents a Translanguaging moment (Li Wei, 2018).

Reply



"Ami mar jaon min" was epic 😂

Reply



1,124

It's a humorous code-switching comic that resonated with local flavor (Gumperz, 1982).

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That "piyaaan" (bhaijaaan) has my heart



Reply



43

The word "Piyaan" acts as a cultural marker that can be understood by the same community (Gumperz, 1982).



Ufone k adds k baad this is going to be remembered forever! 💙

Reply



912

An example of metaphorical code-switching, Urdu also contextualizes local culture (Gumperz, 1982).

This is the best example of dual audience appeal (Gumperz, 1982).

Humorous language mixing in comments is serving as conversational alignment (Auer, 1998).

Findings

This study investigates how Pakistani influencers on Instagram and TikTok use code-switching in their communication. This practice reflects their local and global identity. The analysis of selected influencers shows that code-switching is random. The study explains that code-switching is primarily utilized as a mixed indicator. To create a contemporary yet culturally grounded self-image, influencers and audiences purposefully combine English with Urdu or Punjabi. While Urdu and Punjabi features reflect closeness, humor, and societal authenticity, English terms frequently express confidence, sophistication, and digital proficiency. The bilingual consciousness of Pakistani youth, who concurrently traverse both local and global linguistic domains, is reflected in this dual use of language.

Ken Doll is a satirical and entertaining influencer. He alternates languages cleverly. Phrases such as "Raat de 12 wajay ne and I'm about to sleep" or "Main yahan Farhat se milny aya hun, where is she?" show metaphorical code-switching, and his audience also responds to him in the same way. Tamkenat, who frequently talks about Gen Z and social issues, uses an interpersonal content style, where language mixing reflects emotional authenticity. Duckybehn, used to mimic the elite class of Pakistani society humorously. He can tackle cultural, social hypocrisy, and gender standards with humor and relevant culture due to her bilingual playfulness.

It shows that code-switching among Pakistani youth in digital environments is a social discourse activity that conveys humor, modernity, and openness rather than just being a linguistic trend. Language alternation on social media functions as a contextualization sign that molds interpersonal meaning and community identity. The changing sociolinguistic realities of Pakistan, where digital media provides a platform for redefining modern cultural expressions and

negotiating multilingual cultural identities, can be seen in this hybrid linguistic behavior. It has been found that code-switching among Pakistani youth on Instagram and TikTok is a socially generated expression of identity, emotion, and belonging that is tightly integrated into the country's digital sociolinguistic landscape. It goes beyond simple language practice. In total, findings show that Instagram and TikTok provide a platform for Pakistani youngsters as they strive to create their language, identity, and self-image to be acknowledged and inspire others.

Conclusion

This study employed John J. Gumperz's (1982) contextualization cue theory to explore the use of code-switching among Pakistani youngsters on Instagram and TikTok. The study found that code-switching is not a random linguistic shift but rather an organized and socially relevant process by examining linguistic trends in influencer content and audience interactions. The shift between Punjabi, English, and Urdu captures Pakistan's multilingual reality and shows how young people maintain their mixed cultural identities online. A comparative analysis of influencers reveals

how specifically they use language to attract their audience. All four show how language alternation performs as a contextual cue that indexes identity, emotion, and solidarity, despite their distinct goals. Despite various objectives, all four highlight how language alternation functions as a contextual cue that counts identity, emotion, and cohesion.

Overall, by underlining the point that language mixing in social media is a sort of cultural innovation rather than linguistic destruction, the research adds to the developing subject of digital sociolinguistics. To fully understand Pakistan's changing multilingual digital identity, future research could expand on this investigation by investigating audience demographics, gendered patterns, or algorithmic influences on language use.

Future studies can be expanded not only to well-known influencers but also to regular social media users to get more clear idea of Code-Switching among Pakistani Youth. Researchers can use a mixed method to study how people switch codes in daily life. It can also be useful to study how gender and regional background affect the way people mix English with regional languages. It can be linked with education, and digital learning can help explain how digital platforms are changing the young generation.

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