

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL MEDIA LANGUAGE OF GEN Z AND GEN ALPHA IN PAKISTAN AND UK

Amina Atique

*MPhil Scholar, English Linguistics and Literature, Comsats University
Islamabad*

Email: rajaamina199@gmail.com

Dr. Muhammad Asif Javed

Assistant Professor, Comsats University Islamabad

ABSTRACT

The use of online communication has become a major part of how young people interact, with social media platforms significantly influencing their language choices. Although previous research has examined digital language use, there is still limited research comparing Generation Z and Generation Alpha in different cultural contexts such as Pakistan and the United Kingdom. The aim of this study is to compare how these two generations use slang, abbreviations, and code switching in YouTube vlogs. This is a qualitative study guided by Communication Accommodation Theory (Giles, 1973) and Digital Native Theory (Prensky, 2001). The findings show clear differences across both generations. Gen Z uses slang confidently and trend aware, while Gen Alpha uses simpler, more emotionally direct slang. Gen Z also employs abbreviations more frequently than Gen Alpha, with Pakistani Gen Z using them for practicality and British Gen Z for social connection. Code switching is common and intentional among Pakistani Gen Z, while Pakistani Gen Alpha naturally mixes languages, and UK participants remain fully monolingual. Overall, the study concludes that youth language on social media is not only generation specific but also strongly shaped by cultural setting, bilingual context, and access to digital technology.

Keywords:

Generation Z, Generation Alpha, Social media language, Code switching, Slang, Digital communication, Cultural comparison.

Introduction

Social media has become an important part of everyday life especially among younger generations. It forms how people communicate their ideas, express their emotions and identities through informal language. Younger generations are more active on social media and they don't use it only for fun but also for expressing themselves and learning new words. Among them generation Z (born in 2000) generation alpha (born after 2010) are two closely linked yet different generations with different digital experiences. The language use of these generations on social media is also affected by their culture and exposure which makes the significant difference between Pakistani and British generations. Therefore, this study aims to explore the language difference of Gen Z and Gen Alpha in Pakistan and UK on social media.

Research Problem

Social media plays an important role in shaping identity of people, expressing their ideas and interacting with others online. The main focus of this study is on language use of Generation Z and Generation Alpha in YouTube vlogs across two different contexts Pakistan and UK. It is a comparative analysis that shows how these generations use language on YouTube it shows similarities and differences in their communication styles. This study also helps in understanding how culture, age and exposure effect social media language use.

Significance

The increasing use of social media has changed everyday language, especially among younger users who use digital platforms to communicate. While many studies have explored Gen Z language practices, Gen Alpha, on the other hand, remains unexplored. This study is important as it shows the similarities and differences between Gen Z and Gen Alpha in Pakistan and the

UK. It also highlights how culture and digital exposure affect the linguistic choices of these generations.

Research Questions

What are the differences in the use of slang between Generation Z and Generation Alpha on social media in Pakistan and UK?

What are the differences in the use of abbreviations between Generation Z and Generation Alpha on social media in Pakistan and UK?

What are the differences in code switching between Generation Z and Generation Alpha on social media in Pakistan and UK?

Objectives

- To examine differences in the use of slang between Generation Z and Generation Alpha on social media in Pakistan and UK.
- To examine differences in the use of abbreviations between Generation Z and Generation Alpha on social media in Pakistan and UK.
- To examine differences in code switching between Generation Z and Generation Alpha on social media in Pakistan and UK.

Literature Review

Social media platforms like TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram have significantly changed the way young people communicate, shaping both what they say and how they express themselves. Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012, grew up as early digital natives with smartphones and social networking, while Generation Alpha has been immersed in technology from birth, experiencing online communication as a central part of daily life. Understanding their language practices helps explore how identity, peer interaction, and cultural values are expressed in digital spaces. Early studies highlighted the concept of “written orality,” where online writing combines spoken and written features (Barton & Lee, 2013), and showed that visual elements like emojis convey tone and emotion in ways that words alone cannot (Danesi, 2016). Digital platforms encourage creative, hybrid communication that mixes text, images, memes, GIFs, and videos. Although earlier research worried about online language harming literacy, more recent studies show it fosters innovation and new forms of expression (Crystal, 2020). Generation Z frequently experiments with slang and hybrid forms, while Generation Alpha heavily relies on multimodal communication as a natural way to express ideas (Stahl & Literat, 2023; Huss & Eastep, 2024). In Pakistan, young people blend global trends with local identity, creating hybrid Urdu-English phrases such as “scene on hai” (Rafi, 2022). These trends show that digitalization accelerates language change and supports more interactive and playful communication. Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) provides a useful framework to understand these changes. CAT explains how individuals adjust their language to align with or differentiate from others, reflecting identity, power, or social belonging. Online users show convergence or divergence through text, emojis, and memes (Giles, Edwards & Walther, 2023). In Pakistan, multilingual youth adapt English and Urdu use depending on social context, balancing clarity, politeness, and group identity (Bashir, Ashraf & Khaliq, 2023). This theory helps explain why Gen Z and Gen Alpha adopt innovative forms while navigating online spaces. Language practices also vary across generations and cultures. Younger users often see emojis, GIFs, and abbreviations as legitimate communication, while older generations may perceive them as informal shortcuts (Sherman, 2024). Cross cultural comparisons indicate that Pakistani youth use code-switching to express group identity, while trends in the UK may differ due to cultural and linguistic contexts (Hussain, Nayab & Zahra, 2025; Joseph & Devi, 2025).

Methodology

This research employs qualitative research design to learn about the ways Gen Z and Gen Alpha use language in Pakistani and UK in YouTube vlogs. The population consists of both generation and country vloggers, and 40 publicly available vlogs were chosen with an equal representation of the vlogs of each generation and country. The choice of vlogs was based on purposive sampling that included recent, relevant, and natural speech and interaction. The chosen vlogs were transcribed manually to detect linguistic elements in the form of slang, abbreviations, and code switching. The digital Natives Theory (the influence of growing up in a digital environment on communication style) and the Communication Accommodation Theory (people adapt their language based on audience and context) are the theories that guide the research. The analysis of data was done through a linguistic and semantic framework where the linguistic features, slangs abbreviations and code switching were identified first and the meaning of these features were interpreted based on the context and lastly the patterns of the data across generations and countries were compared to show the difference and similarity in the way they all communicate online.

Analysis of British Gen Z and Gen Alpha Slang Use in YouTube Vlogs

British Gen Z and British Gen Alpha slang are analyzed using the YouTube vlogs, where vloggers talk in a natural manner as they share their daily lives, individual experiences, and views with their subscribers. Since vlogs are informal and conversational, they serve as a rich source of information on the use of slang in real life digital communication. The results show that despite the frequent use of slang by both generations, their patterns of slang use, intent, and the depth of emotions are quite different.

The Usage of the British Gen Z Slang in YouTube Vlogs

Slang is a significant aspect of British Gen Z vloggers as a means of storytelling and self expression. Slang in YouTube vlogs makes the vloggers sound natural, self confident, and engaged with their viewers. Bet, flex, drip, no cap, glow up, snatched, vibe and tea are slang words that are used to show agreement, pride, honesty, fashion awareness, mood, and individual experiences. For example, a Gen Z vlogger mentioned in one of the vlogs **We are going away this weekend, bet that sounds fun**, the word **bet** shows agreement and excitement, which makes the communication appear friendly and spontaneous. Likewise, in another vlog the phrase **Check out this little outfit I put together straight drip** emphasizes the self assurance in personal style and indicates how vloggers employ slang to attract those viewers that are concerned with fashion and trends. Gen Z vloggers also use slangs to provide emotional expression and humor. Bruh, yeet, I am dead, etc. are words that show surprise, excitement, or exaggerated response to daily life. **For example, I spilled couscous everywhere, I am dead** transforming a minor error into a comic situation which the target audience can identify. Ghosting in vlogs, like in one of the vlogs one vlogger said **I have not heard from my friend in a week, total ghosting**, brings about an emotional meaning and makes it easier and more effective to explain social experiences. Moreover, Gen Z vloggers tend to speak in terms of slang in order to share their personal development and success story. Such words as glow up and flex are used in their vlogs which enable vloggers to talk about progress or success in an informal manner, while snatched and slay are used to focus on self esteem and confidence. In general, the use of Gen Z slang in YouTube vlogs is more elaborate and multi layered because, in many cases, a single slang word expresses emotion, personality, and social meaning simultaneously.

British Gen Alpha Use of Slang in YouTube Vlogs.

Slang is also very common in British Gen Alpha YouTube vlogs, but it is used in a more simplified, playful, and emotion oriented manner. Their slang language is primarily applied to

respond to situations, celebrate something, or talk about ordinary experiences in a humorous and overstated manner. Widely used words in Gen Alpha vlogs are bruh, cool, crazy, no cap, rizz, delulu, cooked, and skibdi. As an example, a Gen Alpha vlogger says in one of the vlogs, **Bruh, that was amazing**, the slang is full of excitement in a straightforward and natural manner. Cool is also used frequently in Gen Alpha vlogs e.g., **I got cool Christmas presents**, where it merely expresses enjoyment and happiness. In one more vlog, **It is going to be such a crazy fun day**, the word crazy is stressed and underlines excitement and anticipation. Gen Alpha vloggers also use slang to present the simplest issues in an entertaining manner. As an example, **I am just so cooked having maths as the last period** makes a school related challenge a funny and relatable moment. Likewise, the word **delulu** is used in a lighthearted manner to confess unrealistic expectations, and the word **skibdi** is a lighthearted confession of confusion or messiness. These words show that Gen Alpha vloggers apply slang primarily to exchange emotions and make the content enjoyable. Words such as bro and pookie are used as titles to address friends or loved ones making the vlogs warm and close. Slang words like rizz and slay are confident and positive but simple and emotionally charged. In general, Gen Alpha slang in YouTube vlogs is less complicated, direct, and expressive, with more moment to moment reactions and less identity or social image.

Slang and Informal Expressions in Pakistani Gen Z and Gen Alpha Vlogs

The Pakistani Gen Z vloggers use slangs and casual language to explain situations, feelings, and human relations in a non formal and relatable way. These language options enable vloggers to outline experiences in a very concise way, add some humor, and use a conversational style of speech as they would with peers in everyday life. Scene is one of the most common slang terms whose use is generalized to describe a situation, event, or issue. It works in a full fledged manner to justify absence, explain changes or emphasize on complexity as in **تھا، بڑا scene ہے** scene, **کیا scene** scene, and **تension** tension. The term also facilitates storytelling as it allows vloggers to present personal stories in an informal and easy to understand manner. The Pakistani Gen Z vloggers also use metaphoric and emotional slangs to enhance meaning and convey subjective experiences. Physical pain especially through weather is commonly blown out of proportion by phrases like **melting**, which are used to show extreme heat in a humorous way. The emotional and psychological states are usually characterized by such words as slump and burnout, which indicate low motivation and fatigue due to academic stress or the constant production of content. As an example, A vlogger used the phrases like **I was in a slump and daily upload** **burnout** **کے چکر میں** are vulnerable in a basic, relatable way, which creates a greater relationship with the youth audiences.

The presence of interpersonal closeness and friendliness is strengthened by words such as bro, which is used as an address, such as, **bro** **گھنٹی کیوں بج رہی ہے**, and soft warning, such as, do not be dumb, which does not sound threatening. Humorous self consciousness is manifested in expressions such as **full humble**, as in one of the vlogs vloggers **said** **چل full humble آپکی بہین** **but** Urdu slang words such as garbar can be understood as confusion or disorder at first sight. Equally, cringe refers to embarrassing or awkward situations, usually in the sense of self depreciation, which adds to the genuine quality. These words are used in Pakistani Gen z vlogs. Moreover, Pakistani Gen Z vloggers are fond of honesty, mood, and social feeling slang usage. The use of words such as real shit and reality underlines the sense of roughness and reality and indicates that vlogs reflect real life and are not highly edited content. Common slang terms vibe or vibes are used to convey a sense of atmosphere, comfort or social energy, such as concert vibes or card dekh ke vibe aa **جاتی ہے**. University based slang like ragging and positive evaluative language like cool and energy demonstrate the common student experience and anxieties, and enjoyment, excitement, and liveliness. All of these slang options are an example

of how Pakistani Gen Z vloggers create a casual, expressive, and community based form of communication.

Conversely, the informal language use in Pakistani Gen Alpha vlogs reveals a different trend of informal language that is playful, expressive, and age appropriate as opposed to trendy and identity seeking. Children do not employ slang to display modernity or internet identity but their informal language is the representation of everyday life, feelings, and immediate events. One major characteristic of Gen Alpha speech is repetition to be exciting and emphasized, e.g. **dance dance, chalo chalo chalo, aww, or yummy**. This repetition makes narration vibrant and reflects both the natural child speech and the exaggerated speech typical in children's online material **array, yaar, lo, oops, and wow**. Such expressions aid children to reveal their surprise, excitement or curiosity and make their narration lively and interesting. Code mixing is also quite widespread and English words like fun, party, channel, video, finally, careful, reel, fit check, passenger, and princess naturally mix into Urdu sentences. Gen Alpha communication is unconscious mixing influenced by bilingual exposure in school, family, cartoons, YouTube, and mobile applications as opposed to a conscious style decision. Such terms as **pagal, bahana, gupshup, mast, and mazay ka** are used in light matter and simple instructions are used, such as **چلو, بیٹھ جاؤ, or apply مت کرنا**. These expressions are culturally well known child behavior and are useful in keeping a non serious tone of friendliness. Gen Alpha vlogs tend to be dramatic and digitally mediated, with exaggerated phrases like **big dangerous reel, hero, shot, grand kareng**, or 2000 years later, reflecting the impact of cartoons, TikTok videos, and YouTube stories. Informal addressing is also used by the children in Gen Alpha vlogs, who refer to their **friends, guys, yaar, dosto, and bhai** to create a feeling of familiarity with their audience. The vlog is not authoritative but interactive because of such imperative phrases as **chalo let's go, careful hona, like kar dena, and share kar dena**. There is high emotional transparency through Gen Alpha speech. **Wow, fun ho gaya, thora dar laga, bura haal ho gaya, or party start ho chuki hai** are openly used to express feelings and therefore their communication is genuine, expressive, and easy to associate with by viewers. Pakistani Gen Z Vlogs Slang Analysis.

Code Switching and Code Mixing in Pakistani Gen Z and Gen Alpha vlogs

Pakistani Gen Z vloggers show that they code switch between Urdu and English (often and flexibly) to build identity, convey emotions, and communicate with audiences. They switch in and between sentences displaying high bilingual competence. English is primarily used to provide clarity, structure, confidence, and compliance with the global digital trends, while Urdu adds emotional potential, cultural proximity, humor, and intimacy of the storytelling. The trend illustrates how Gen Z is juggling between local and global online standards. The English language is widely used in Gen Z vlogs, including in greetings, updates, instructions, and transitions, and according to the tradition of YouTube, one can hear such expressions as **Hi everyone welcome back, Let's go, See you in the next vlog**. Feelings, reactions and personal experiences are better expressed in Urdu. The use of mixed expressions such as **I was in a slump and clueless** ایک اور وجہ یہ کہ **I got sick, It is just that time** **بی نہیں تھا** **I was busy and I am starting a jewellery business** **کافی busy تھی** explains how English provides information and Urdu adding tone and emotional significance. Switching is also used to create humor and exaggeration as in **Breaking news guys** **پاپا ہے** **یہ تو رو رہی ہے** and **I am gonna quit** **جوب میں** **rod** **رہی ہوں**, where English creates the drama and Urdu creates relatability to the culture. Even weather, traveling and day to day routines are also explained in blended sentences like **Even though monsoon** **کا** **season** **لیکن** **چل رہا ہے** **we are literally melting** **and It is a sunny day** **عصر** **ایکھا** **بعد سورج**. These patterns make speech sound animated and expressive. Another role of code switching, which is shown in university and

informal words of address such as bro enhance intimacy among the audience. Religious phrases, like Alhamdulillah and InshaAllah, are terse, culturally significant fixed forms, e.g. I have graduated Alhamdulillah and InshaAllah آپ دیکھیں گے. The use of abbreviations in everyday language such as CNG and phrases such as A to Z also contribute to keeping the explanations short and concise.

However, this is not the case with Pakistani Gen Alpha vloggers. Digital slang abbreviations such as VIP and LOL are not used by children. They instead depend on real-world slang, numeric, and plain English names. Digital time like 8:00, 9:07 and 2:00 are used to systematize routines and grade names like six or seven are used in place of longer sentences. Single-word descriptions of experiences are used as brand names like KFC. Formulas such as Yes Sir and Present Sir which are common in the classroom serve as verbal shortcuts of discipline and familiarity. There is also a common tendency of gen Alpha to incorporate simple English words (friends, channel, event, game) into Urdu sentences not as a style but as a label, which is also the result of early bilingual exposure. Numbers (one, two, three, start), names of places (Dera Ismail Khan, Abbottabad), names of events (Happy Birthday, Jashn-e-Azadi), and numbers (35,000 feet) are all terse reference points that assist in telling the stories uniquely. Altogether, the use of shorthand by Gen Alpha is not stylistic but rather functional and depends on school routine and everyday life. Comparatively, the abbreviations used in Gen Z are performative and identity-oriented, which convey humor, modernity, and social belonging. Such a difference follows the Communication Accommodation Theory, with Gen Z adjusting language to the standards of the audience, and Digital Native Theory clarifying early exposure in both cases. Gen Z however, is strategic in the use of abbreviations to create a digital identity, Gen Alpha, uses them instinctively to be clear, and their social meaning of short forms changes with age and digital awareness.

British Gen Z and Gen Alpha Vlog Abbreviation

The British Gen Z and Gen Alpha vloggers often incorporate the use of abbreviations to make their vlogs sound informal, friendly, and relatable. These abbreviations can preserve the conversational style and enable vloggers to present the information within a short period of time without appearing formal. Vlogs can be particularly helpful when creators want to speak more naturally, as though they are talking to their friends. The abbreviations that are used by British Gen Z vloggers are related to everyday life, education, healthcare, social media, and lifestyle. Such short forms as uni, GP, PE, NHS, ID, DM, AC, and academic nomenclature (PhD, MS) are also common, as well as informal diminutives like bestie, comfies, fave, sis, probs, fit, fam, and collab. These phrases help in showing a personal bond between the audience, as well as easy and approachable conversations about research, practices, or content production.

British Gen Alpha vloggers, on the contrary, have shorter, more playful abbreviations and are closely related to school life and digital culture. Widely used are cuz, cuzzy, BFF, GOAT, gcss, lit, quid, maths, half 6, IG, fit check, and BRB. These acronyms are in line with the rapid nature of Gen Alpha vlogs and how younger vloggers inherently abbreviate words during speech. A lot of these forms are also present in text on screen where short language can be read more easily and is more appealing to the eye. Even though the two generations share some abbreviations, e.g., BFF, fit, and fam, their application is different. Gen Z tends to employ abbreviations as a way of supporting a balance between the casual storytelling and informative information, while Gen Alpha employs them primarily to make the narration short, lively, and entertaining. In general, the use of abbreviations in both generations helps to make their vlogs sound natural and relatable, and the age and digital usage have an impact on the use of language in online videos.

Findings

The results reveal that Gen Z and Gen Alpha use slang in Pakistan and the UK differently, and this variation depends on the age, culture, and online presence. Both countries Gen z are more confident in their use of slang, more often, and more trend conscious. Nevertheless, the slang style in the two nations varies. Pakistani Gen Z is based on a blend of Urdu and English and reflects daily realities, moods, and interpersonal relationships. They are more casual and local youth-based, while British Gen Z is more influenced by global tendencies on the Internet and Western youth culture. Their phrases revolve around style, humour, confidence and social personality. This makes their communication sound more expressive and trend oriented. The use of slang is easier and more emotional with Gen Alpha. In their slang, the reactions are swift reactions including excitement, surprise, or frustration as opposed to trend following. Pakistani Gen Alpha is influenced by bilingual environment while British Gen Alpha is influenced by school culture, video games, and kid friendly online content. In general, Gen Z slangs are mature and trend conscious and Gen Alpha is natural, playful, and direct with feelings.

The results indicate that Gen Z uses the abbreviation significantly more than Gen Alpha, and they have varied purposes of using the abbreviation based on the cultural background. Pakistani Gen Z uses the abbreviation mostly to communicate. Their abbreviated shapes are associated with education, institutions, lifestyle patterns and daily practices. This makes them easy to communicate clearly and fast, particularly when they are switching between Urdu and English. British Gen Z communicate more casually and socially using abbreviations. Their abbreviated forms are evidence of online habits, friendships, and loose talk patterns. These shortened words make their speech sound more contemporary, friendly, and related to the online youth culture. Gen Alpha uses fewer abbreviations in general. Pakistani Gen Alpha applies a combination of simple or school related abbreviations because of the low exposure to social media. British Gen Alpha employs simple and lighthearted abbreviations, depending on early digital applications, video games, and interactions at school. In general, Gen Z abbreviates to suit quick and digital communication, whereas Gen Alpha abbreviates when necessary, and in a much simpler form. The key distinction between the Pakistani and British Gen Z is that the former use abbreviations to be clear and practical in everyday life, whereas the latter use them to be socially comfortable and digitally connected.

There is clear distinction between Pakistan and UK concerning the aspect of bilingual behavior. Gen Z and Gen Alpha in the UK use the English language in their vlogs and do not engage in the code switching or code mixing. Slangs or abbreviations are the cause of any changes in their speech, rather than language shifts. Bilingual behavior is a significant aspect in Pakistan. Gen Z Pakistani exhibit code switching between Urdu and English. They change languages intentionally based on what they wish to stress. English is applied to make things clear, sound modern, or information structured, whereas Urdu contains emotion, cultural proximity, and informal language. Their trend portrays high bilingual skills and communication style consciousness. Pakistani Gen Alpha, however, does not change language involuntarily. They instead tend to incorporate English words to Urdu sentences spontaneously. This is code mixing, and this occurs since they are exposed to using the two languages in school, home, and through the digital media. Their combination is not stylistic but developmental. The results indicate that the code switching is developmental in Pakistani Gen Z, code mixing is natural in Pakistani Gen Alpha, and they have no code mixing at all in the UK groups, as they are fully monolingual in English.

Conclusion

This study highlights that language use among Gen Z and Gen Alpha is shaped by age, cultural background, and digital exposure. Gen Z shows more intentional and stylistic language patterns, while Gen Alpha relies on simpler and more emotion driven expressions. Differences between Pakistan and the UK reflect the influence of bilingual and monolingual environments, as well as access to digital media. Overall, the findings suggest that technology, culture, and social context work together to influence how young generations develop and adapt their communication styles in the digital age.

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