

CODE-MIXING AND SLANG IN PAKISTANI MEMES: A SOCIOLINGUISTICS STUDY OF HUMOR AND RESISTANCE

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Abstract

This research investigates the current Pakistani political memes and youthful slang as potent multimodal texts that express humor, critique, and small daily acts of resistance. The research uses Multimodal Discourse Analysis and Resistance Theory to investigate how visual, textual, and linguistic elements work together to show people who resist underlying stories while expressing their dissatisfaction with the system. The corpus, which includes language from social media platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter, along with popular youth slang expressions such as “scene on hai” (/si:n ɒn he:/ the situation is active / everything is set), “sir ka chamcha” (/sir ka: tʃəmtʃa:/ teacher’s favorite / sycophant), and “program tu war gaya” (/pro:gra:m tu va:r gəja:/he plan got ruined), shows that the digital world is lively, humorous, and full of creativity. In the digital space, young people do not simply accept power structures; instead, they cleverly reshape and challenge them through playful and inventive language. Results indicate that memes and slang denote resistance through irony, exaggeration, semiotic layering, and parody, thus making it possible for the youth to practice dissent in a socially approved and amusing way. The combination of visual, verbal, and color elements with inter-textual references creates an effective message that people can easily and comfortably criticize. The analysis shows that memes and slang from Pakistan function as powerful cultural tools that enable people to build their shared identity while they challenge power structures and express their views in online spaces.

Keywords: *Multimodality, Resistance Theory, Pakistani Digital Culture, Slang, Discourse Analysis.*

Introduction

Pakistan has experienced a drastic growth of digital communication technologies in the past decade. With smartphones becoming widely accessible, internet prices have dropped significantly, and as the entire global digital culture continues to spread its tentacles across the world, social media sites have become the focal point of communication among the urban and semi-urban youths. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter/X, TikTok, and WhatsApp have now entered the linguistic, cultural, and social lives of millions of Pakistanis. In this rapidly evolving digital ecosystem, one of the most widespread and influential modes of expression is the internet meme. These are short, humorous, culturally embedded, and often satirical digital texts that circulate at high speed across online platforms. While Pakistan’s digitally active population continues to grow, memes have become more than just a form of entertainment but dynamic sociolinguistic practices that represent public sentiment, humor, cultural tensions, and political resistance.

Internet memes are the new communicative artifacts through which meaning is created in a non-serious, swift manner by integrating visual and textual elements. Given their complex modal

structure, the images, screenshots, emojis, font types, and linguistic content mix to clearly state what a person thinks or wants to convey in compact and relatable means. Memes have played a pivotal role in shaping the conversations on politics, social norms, gender roles, class distinctions, education pressures, and everyday tussles such as inflation and load shedding. It provides a shared cultural space in which users are both laughing together and collectively commenting on their experiences. Memes go across multiple platforms, creating new linguistic trends, popularizing humor styles, and influencing ways of interaction between Pakistanis in engaging with public discourse.

Code-mixing is generally defined as the mixing of linguistic elements, such as words, phrases, clauses, or morphemes, between two or more languages in a single communicative event (Muysken, 2000; Myers-Scotton, 1993). This happens most prominently in a multilingual society where speakers switch from one code to another to achieve some social, cultural, or stylistic function. In Pakistani society, the most common mixing is between Urdu and English; however, regional languages like Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto, and Balochi also appear in mixed forms. Code-mixing has three major types: intra-sentential, inter-sentential, and tag mixing (Muysken, 2000; Myers-Scotton, 1993). Intra-sentential mixing occurs within a single sentence. An example is "*Yeh idea too good hai*" (/je: aɪ'diə tu: gʊd he:/ – This idea is very good.). Intra-sentential mixing has been considered the most complex as it entails high bilingual competence. Inter-sentential mixing is the one that occurs between sentences or clauses, for example: "I'll call you later. *Abhi time nahi hai.*" Tag mixing refers to the use of fixed expressions, fillers, or tags from one language into another (Androutsopoulos, 2015). These are "You know," "matlab, (/mə'tlæb/ – meaning / in other words)" or "right?" Code-mixing in memes is never random; it serves certain communicative purposes, such as creating humor, showing frustration, signaling group identity, or making satire more relatable. Second only to code-mixing, Pakistani memes commonly employ slang, especially those expressions that are used in youth culture like scene on, biryani mood (/bɪr'jɑ:ni mu:d/ – Feeling celebratory), chill maar (/bɪr'jɑ:ni mu:d/ – Feeling celebratory), masla kya hai (/mɑslɑ:kɪ'jɑ: he:/ – What's the problem?), full tight (/fʊl taɪt/ – Extremely drunk), and bro culture (/brʊ'kʌltʃər/ – Bonding culture). These lexical choices add to the local flavor and place the memes squarely in contemporary Pakistani digital discourse.

This research investigates how Pakistani digital memes and youth slang use Urdu–English code-mixing. The study identifies intra-sentential mixing as the main linguistic pattern that uses English words inside Urdu sentences to create a new way of speaking that Pakistani youth use. The meme captions show inter-sentential switching because they use complete Urdu and English clauses for added humor and emphasis. The researchers found tag mixing through short English insertions that people use in Urdu speech, which includes the phrase "Tension not" (/tɛnʃən nɒt/ – Do not worry). This research studies code-mixing because it functions as a stylistic method that people use to express their identities and maintain social relationships through digital platforms to create humorous content that helps them belong to their groups while challenging social and linguistic boundaries.

Slang is a term that encompasses very informal, sometimes even innovative and transitory expressions, which are made use of by certain social circles to shed light on their identity, give out their membership in the group, exhibit their attitude, or even contest the prevailing norms (Eble, 1996; Munawar, Mansha, & Hassan, 2025). Standard vocabulary may not be as creative, playful, and culturally specific as slang, with the latter being very typical of youth, online communities,

and marginalized groups, whose cultures may be easily made up of and let go of such terms. In Pakistan, slang often fuses Urdu, English, and regional languages, giving rise to terms like “scene on(/si:n ɒn/ – The situation is active / things are happening),” “chill karo(/tʃɪl kə'ro:/ – Relax / Take it easy),” or “ghanta(/gʰən'tʃɑ:/ – Yeah, right / No way),”.

The major types of slang observed in Pakistani digital discourse include social, group, regional, occupational, and meme-based slangs, each serving to signal identity, establish belonging, and convey humor or resistance (Eble, 1996; Munawar, Mansha, & Hassan, 2025). (1) **Social-group slang**, which is used for the mixing and bonding of groups, e.g., “lowkey(/'loʊki:/ – secretly / quietly / not openly),” “bakra, (/bɑ:kra:/ – fool / gullible person)” “simp,(/sɪmp/ – someone who is overly submissive or attentive to impress someone, usually romantically)” “lunda(/'lʊnda:/ – used insultingly or comically in informal contexts).” People belonging to youth, gamers, or students, and so on, are the main groups involved in this type of slang. (2) **Regional slang**, which originates from a certain ethnic or linguistic community, like that of the Punjabis who use words like (“patakha(/pə'tɑ:kʰɑ:/ – Firecracker / used to describe someone attractive or lively),” “chuss(/tʃʊs/ – sometimes used jokingly or in teasing contexts”), Pashto slang (“mastana (/mas'tɑ:nɑ:/ – Carefree/fun-loving / cheerful”), or Karachi-based slang that is a blend of Urdu-English mixing. (3) **Occupational slang**, which is born in professional groups like media workers, drivers, or cricket fans who use the informal terms like “googly,” “no-ball scene,” or “zabardasti ka lecture(/zəbər'dɑ:sti kɑ: 'lɛk.tʃər/ – A forced lecture / being lectured unwillingly)” that are specific to their profession. (4) **Internet and meme slang**, which are the phrases that the digital world gave birth to and are now commonly used, such as “ratio,” “cringe,” “NPC,” “based,” or even the local meme phrases like “matka phat gaya(/'mɑt̪kɑ: pʰɑt gə'jɑ:/ – The pot has broken / something has gone completely wrong)” or “ghabrana nahi hai(/gʰɑb'rɑ:nɑ: nɛ'hi: hɛ:/ – Don't worry / No need to panic).” The various slang types serve their main function because they operate as informal speech, and they function as effective instruments for creating humor and demonstrating covert opposition, establishing personal identities, and performing cultural analysis. The study of Pakistani memes and their social language use needs to be examined because they show how people use hidden speech patterns in their communication. Memes are based on humor, hence popular and useful in exchange of ideas. People can express feelings and critical thoughts, which may not be said openly, through jokes and funny content. Humor helps people to bond with others, to overcome stress, and display their linguistic competence. In Pakistan, memes are commonly made with reliance on common life events, including coping with financial issues, the shifting climate, power cuts, slow internet, school stress, social demands, and politics. Memes that manipulate language to make people laugh include language playing, whereby individuals take their frustrations and transform them into humorous moments (e.g., the use of exaggerated comparisons, speaking two different languages in an insane manner, usage of clever wordplay, the use of a strong punchline etc.). This kind of humor, especially when it involves mixing languages and using slang, acts as a cultural tool that helps people make sense of and deal with life in modern Pakistan.

Resistance is typically manifested in digital communication and meme scenarios through humor, creativity, or subtlety, like ridiculing policy makers, highlighting social hypocrisy, or even questioning cultural practices. Memes, through the use of mixed language, satire, and slang, become the platform for the marginalized to communicate their dissent in a manner that is non-confrontational yet very powerful. Their potential for masking critiques behind humor further

cements their usefulness in articulating dissent in environments where critique may be socially discouraged or politically unpalatable. Memes challenge linguistic hierarchies through the mockery of overt emphasis on English language proficiency or the unattainable expectations of the elite. They make comments about political governance through the use of satire on unfulfilled promises, inflation rates, failed public services, and shifting political allegiances. They handle gender stereotypes through comedic methods, which break social expectations and show how people behave differently in real life. Memes use their humor to create different ways of showing national issues and public events, which people can use to resist societal pressure. The capacity to challenge authority through memes functions as a minor form of resistance, which permits people to express common social complaints without facing social backlash.

Research Significance

The research is significant in terms of scholarship and culture. It contributes to the increasingly developing intersection of digital discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, and Pakistani cultural studies. It expands sociolinguistics academically by considering memes as novel locations of language innovation, not only the conventional speaking or writing. Through the analysis of code-mixing and slang, the study shows Pakistani internet users playing with language to generate humor, identity, and resistance to prevalent language forms. The results have provided fresh insights into the mechanism of bilingualism and mixed language use in informal online platforms that remain under-researched in the field of South Asian linguistics, culturally speaking. The findings have captured the voice of the digital generation currently active in Pakistan, whose memes tend to be used as a means of subtle resistance, satire, and self-expression. The results will also be of use to teachers, media theorists, and sociolinguists working on the areas of language development, online communication, and identity politics in multi-linguistic societies. Lastly, this study leads to a deeper insight into the relations between common daily digital communication and the larger social organization and demonstrates that memes are not just funny pieces of art, but effective linguistic areas of resistance, identity, and cultural negotiation in contemporary Pakistan.

Research Objectives

- To identify the patterns of Urdu-English code-mixing used in Pakistani memes
- To investigate the role of slang in shaping social meanings, group identity, and cultural belonging within Pakistan's online meme communities
- To examine how memes operate as sites of sociopolitical resistance, where humor and linguistic creativity challenge dominant ideologies, linguistic hierarchies, and social norms
- To interpret the interplay between humor, language, and power using insights from sociolinguistics and the multimodality model.

Research Question

1. How do Pakistani memes create humor and cultural identity through their use of Urdu-English code-mixing?
2. How does the use of slang reflect social belonging, generational identity, and the linguistic shift?
3. How does the linguistic shift show resistance against social power and norms?
4. How does the Multimodal Discourse Analysis theory help us to analyze the underlying motives in the social spaces?

Research Gap

Researchers have conducted extensive studies on code-mixing and slang usage in Pakistan, but they have not yet analyzed how these two linguistic elements work together in digital meme culture. The existing research base contains a gap as scholars have studied how young Pakistani people use hybrid language on social media platforms only through formal environments and traditional media. Researchers study memes by using superficial humour descriptions, which fail to analyze the linguistic elements that create humour and the hidden political resistance that exists in slang and mixed-language usage. Limited research has been conducted to show how users create non-confrontational identity negotiation and authority critique through their use of Urdu-English language blending and local slang. This lack of linguistic, cultural, and multimodal analysis creates a clear gap that the present study addresses by investigating how code-mixing and slang jointly construct humour and resistance in contemporary Pakistani memes.

Literature Review

The study of digital political discourse points out that memes are a powerful “language game” in contemporary society that has a much broader scope than the sole aspect of entertaining, thus becoming effective communication devices for the spread of ideology and the determination of power relations (Bhatti, Khatoon, & Ashraf, 2024). In particular, the scrutiny of political memes in Pakistan informs the fact that the said artifacts resort to both visual and linguistic aspects to convey political meaning by altering the perception of the audience, a procedure that is best illustrated via Van Leeuwen’s Multimodal approach (Bhatti, Khatoon, & Ashraf, 2024). The dialectical method of looking at the social semiotics asserts that the language of these memes not only reflects existing meanings but rather it “constructs meanings” in the political context thus making the examination of their linguistic and visual composition very important for deciphering how resistance, ideology, and power are expressed in the fluid digital environment (Bhatti, Khatoon, & Ashraf, 2024). The examination of Pakistani political memes, which is a fresh and trendy thing in the quickly digital world, indicates that they are a very strong means of mass commentary and participation, letting citizens be creative and safe to show their discontent and mock politicians where direct criticism is hard (Anwar, Malik, & Khalid, 2024). A very practical discourse-analytic method uncovers the memes’ power of communication in the areas of authority resistance and social awareness raising, which is based on the strategic, indirect use of language and humor (Anwar, Malik, & Khalid, 2024). To be more precise, the elicitation of humor and irony, which is a kind of implicit resistance, mainly results from the intentional infringement of the Gricean maxims and the use of indirect speech acts to create conversational implicature, thus allowing the politically tinged messages to be sent in a socially acceptable way (Anwar, Malik, & Khalid, 2024). Besides, the interplay between the visual and verbal elements or multimodal irony works hand in hand to produce not just the humorous effect but also the complex socio-political meaning, thus making these memes a significant source of passing both entertainment and digital activism (Anwar, Malik, & Khalid, 2024). The literature presents internet memes as important parts of the culture, that have undergone an evolution of “units of culture” (Dawkins, 1976), and have been characterized by their circulation and transformation through various users as one of the most advanced forms of digital communication (Shifman, 2014). In socio-political situations, particularly in oppressive countries such as Pakistan, memes are powerful weapons of resistance, enabling open criticism that mocks and lures power with humor and parody (Dynel, 2021; Milner, 2016; Rehman, 2021). Besides political commentary, memes have great cultural and ideological

significance, breaking up the mainstream, changing gender roles, and even getting rid of conservatism by the youth who are disenchanted with society and through the deeper cultural cracks that they have been shown (Ahmed & Wahid, 2020; Highfield, 2016).

The literature employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 1995) to uncover the hidden power structures and the concept of Multimodality (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006) to understand the meaning construction through the combination of visual and textual elements (Zeb, Malik, & Hussain, 2025) in the case of this complicated phenomenon. It has been stated by Gul (2025) that sociolinguistic research investigates the issue of humor in Pakistani comedic shows via the strategic application of code-switching, mainly between Urdu and Punjabi.

Theoretical Framework

The present study is based on a qualitative, multi-modal, and interpretive design that led to the discovery of memes' humorous and resistant aspects through the combination of linguistic and visual strategies. Rather than quantifying the different meme types and slang, the research aims to interpret how the different modes, verbal and non-verbal, are coupled to create the meaning in the Pakistani digital milieu. The analytical process is supported by two perspectives:

Multi-modal Discourse Theory

This theory provides researchers with the means to analyze how the interplay among visual features, words, layout, colors, symbols, and language culminates in the creation of meaning. Memes, being multi-modal by nature, do not rely solely on words for their comic effect; instead, it is the synergy of images and certain language forms code-mixing or slang, that gives rise to the comedy. Multi-modality thus assists in highlighting this interaction.

Memes are undoubtedly the most multi-modal digital communication forms created in contemporary culture. A meme can contain an image from a movie scene, a caption in code-mixed Urdu-English, emoji expressions, and bold fonts all together creating humour or critique. Traditional linguistic theories treat only the verbal element, thus overlooking the visual triggers and symbolic cues that are so important in determining the meaning of memes. Multimodal Discourse Theory (MDT) is selected due to the following reasons:

- It shows the process of how pictures and words together create meaning, which is a must since the joke of memes frequently relies on the visual context.
- It gives the possibility to analyze the communication aspects that are not expressed verbally, like facial expressions, setting, gestures, and arrangement of the objects in the space.
- It considers digital communication as one that is always multi-modal, which is the same as the way memes operate on social media.
- It allows the examination of the cultural imagery in the visuals, which is a very important factor since the memes from Pakistan often make reference to famous people or scenes from popular dramas.
- It helps in identifying humour techniques (like irony, exaggeration, and parody) that are both visually and textually created through a systematic approach.

Therefore, MDT is the only option as it is in perfect harmony with the complexity and the different layers that the humour in meme discourse has.

Resistance Theory

Resistance Theory is enlightening when it comes to the everyday discourses jokes, satire, slang, memes being the subtle acts of opposition to the authority, social norms or the ideological

expectations. Some of the subjects on which Pakistani memes tend to criticize humorously include inflation, gender norms, political dissatisfaction and generational tension. The theory treats memes as texts that are socially tinged and not entertainment. The combination of the two theories is what determines the qualitative design and ensures holistic approach to the reading memes as linguistic, social, and even visual artifact.

Although memes may look funny, they usually have some social or political commentary hidden in them. The youngsters in Pakistan often make use of memes as their lively medium, which allows them to vent their discontent, criticize the ruling class, and ask questions about cultural norms as well as sharing their economic hardships. So, Resistance Theory basically points out how common and simple expressions become the soft and gentle tools of dissent in the above-mentioned contexts, which are restrictive or highly sensitive. It is the key to peeling away the psychological and ideological layers that were humorously covered up. It also shows how the use of slang and code-mixing assists the youth in forming a minority identity, which would in turn defy the imposed authority, language hierarchy, or norms of traditionalism. RT recognizes that humor is a very effective coping strategy and, at the same time, a subtle protest tool.

The existing research lacks the necessary studies to explain the process through which code-switching and mixing directly contribute to the resistance within the internet memes' particular format. The existing literature addresses three issues individually: switching languages for humor in formal settings like TV sitcoms (not memes) memes as a political resistance tool with general strategies like irony or visual hints, and switching languages for identity on social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok (but not focusing on resistance). The most significant gap is a comprehensive study that demonstrates how the very act of code-switching (e.g., Urdu, Punjabi, and English) in memes transforms them into a political arsenal.

Methodology

The approach taken in this research deals with the fact that memes are not only funny pictures but also multi-layered sociolinguistic artifacts and they express different forms of digital cultural commentary and resistance besides their humour. One of the main characteristics of memes is their multi-modality (i.e., the use of different modes such as language, imagery, typography, colour, and cultural metaphor) that needs a research approach that is capable of capturing these meanings at different levels. This is especially true for Pakistani memes, which are very much dependent on code-mixing, slang, and visual laughter, thus a regular linguistic analysis is not sufficient. The study adopts a qualitative, interpretive framework with strong multi-modal discourse principles and sociocultural resistance perspectives.

Population and Sampling

The population consists of Pakistani memes and slang that can be publicly accessed and are displayed on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook. These platforms have been selected because of their being the most active ones for meme sharing among the Pakistani youth. The collection of data was a process in which forty memes were chosen deliberately from the public digital playgrounds of Pakistan's online youth, that is, where the youth linguistic creativity is at its best. Memes using the latest slang phrases, which are the most talked-about expressions on the internet like "scene on hai(/si:n ɒn hæ:/ – The situation is active)" "chill kro(/tʃɪl kə'ro:/ – Relax)," "bas yar enough(/tʃɪl kə'ro:/ – Relax)," "lit hai (/lɪt hæ:/ – It's amazing)," "kya scene hai(/kɪ'jɑ: si:n hæ:/ – What's going on?)," and "tension not, take hosla(/'tɛnʃən nɒt teɪk 'hɒslɑ:/ – Don't worry)," were given the most consideration. The reason for picking these phrases is that they are the writing style

of the Pakistani digital culture practices, which are informal, funny, and socially coded. Their use in digital communication is so frequent and versatile that they can be regarded as strong indicators of youth who create humour, battle for identity, and convey their feelings in a light-hearted but significant manner. Thus, memes with such slang were very important for the depicting the true linguistic behavior of the urban and semi-urban youth communities on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter.

Sampling Method

To make the memes and slang fit the research objectives, a purposive sampling technique was used. The slang and memes that fulfilled the following were selected:

- Code-mixing (Urdu-English or regional mixing) was present.
- Slang (internet slang, youth slang, borrowed slang) was visibly used.
- Humour was one of the elements.
- Social commentary or resistance was being signaled.
- The memes were publicly accessible.
- They were culturally relevant and were being circulated again.

In the end, 60 memes and 20 slangs were gathered; after refining the selection, 40 memes and ten slangs were chosen for the final analysis.

Instruments of Data Collection

The primary instrument of data collection for this research was a purposive sampling of Pakistani social media memes collected from platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter (X). A structured observation checklist was developed to record linguistic features (e.g., code-mixing patterns, slang types) and multimodal elements (images, captions, emojis, layout, and visual symbolism). Screenshots of selected memes were archived and categorized thematically to ensure systematic analysis. Additionally, a coding framework based on multimodal theory and resistance theory was used to classify humor strategies, identity markers, and forms of subtle social critique present in the data.

Data Collection Procedure

1. Platform Scan: Meme pages, trending hashtags, and public groups were investigated.
2. Selection & Screenshot: The relevant memes and slang were saved manually, securing accurate context.
3. Coding: The coding sheet was used for linguistic and visual components coding.
4. Multi-modal Analysis: Memes and slang were examined from both MDT and Resistance Theory perspectives.
5. Pattern Identification: Linguistic forms, humour styles, and resistance themes that occurred frequently were recognized.

The thoroughness of this systematic process contributed to the final data set being rich, clear and contextually appropriate.

Ethical considerations

Ethics were ensured by:

- Only employing public memes from the accounts which are visible to the public.
- Not using private content, slanderous material, or memes related to sensitive harms.
- Observing fair use and confidentiality.
- Memes were regarded as cultural texts rather than personal data.

Limitations

The analysis is based on subjective interpretation, which is a natural drawback in qualitative multimodal research. Memes are very contextual to the culture that produced them. Their meaning is dependent on the amount of social knowledge, contemporary events, and the cultural aspect of political figures or youth slang that the interpreter has. So, meanings may not be universally fixed or applicable. What was resilient in one case may be seen as apolitical or humorous in another, which creates a problem of interpretation. The research is limited to Urdu-English, it does not adequately represent memes in other Pakistani languages. Only three platforms Facebook, Instagram and X were considered; TikTok and YouTube Shorts are not included in the scope. The data picked up from Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter is selective by its nature. Algorithms give precedence to content of certain types that are usually funny, exaggerated, and viral. This leads to the dataset being biased towards extremely performative or theatrical memes, which might not represent the entirety of political discourse on the internet. The hidden identities of meme creators make it difficult to determine when users were born, why they created their content, and which political beliefs they hold. The absence of such details leads to evaluations that depend only on the visible aspects of the memes through their text and visual elements. Another constraint is the speed of the digital culture. Memes grow enormously fast; that is why political narratives do not stand any longer. The meme that is presently relevant to people will be worthless in just a few days. The current modification of a phenomenon is depicted by every analysis that merely gives a single picture. The brief lifespan of meme culture raises the question of long-term conclusions and indicates that the more recent data sets can indicate other patterns of resistance or humor. The audience reception analysis is not provided in the research. Users develop their own interpretation concerning memes that are used as a means of resistance. Other individuals may view memes as apolitical senses or mere forms of entertaining content. There are no surveys and interviews with the audience, which causes an unproven assumption of audience resistance. The political impact of memes would become more understandable through audience studies. The research suffers from multiple constraints which affect its validity. The study considers slang as a linguistic resource for revolt but slang is not equally comprehended by all social groups. Youths from different social backgrounds will understand and use the same expressions in different ways according to their class and education and location.

Findings and Discussion

Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) was employed to conduct the research. The analysis examined how text elements, which included slang and code-mixing and humor devices, interacted with visual elements, which included images, facial expressions, symbols, and layout design. The researchers applied thematic coding to detect repeating patterns, which showed how people use humor, build their identities, and demonstrate their small acts of defiance. The analysis showed that intra-sentential code-mixing represented the most common spoken language pattern, while irony and exaggeration ranked as the two most commonly used humor methods. The research results show that memes operate as online platforms that enable youth to comment on cultural matters while they use digital content to display their social identity and access their authority through fun yet significant multimodal communication.

Humor

Humor has been the main tool of these memes in the dataset and has played a role in cultural performance and societal coping at the same time. Pakistani digital humor is rooted in the local

language practices, cultural references, and political concerns to the point where the memes are of the same time entertaining and insightful socially. Humor in these memes is seen through a multimodal lens; it is not only present in the language but also in the visual contrasts, intertextual cues, and the scenarios that the audience has to imagine. The audience engages with the imagery even when there are no explicit images because of the layered humor that is characteristic of the Pakistani meme culture. This culture is based on satire, irony, linguistic play, and emotional hyperbole. The prevailing kind of humor is that which is based on political satire. A good number of memes make fun of political figures by putting them in ridiculous or inconsistent situations, like a frantic rigging scene suggested by the caption “time kam reh geya hai” (/taɪm kʌm rɛh gɛjɑː hɛː/ – Very little time is left), or depicting a political leader as a cheap fake of Quaid-e-Azam bought from a “chor bazaar” (/tʃɔːr bəˈzɑːr/ – Thieves’ market / black market). These funny analogies depend on the audience’s knowledge of intertextuality, the viewers are immediately aware of the cultural significance of the picture of the founder and the ridiculousness of equating political leadership with a cheap imitation. The humor is further accentuated by the mental images of mismatched clothes, funny looks, or poor-quality crafts, even if those images are not displayed. Through MCDA, such humor is perceived as a semiotic game played between the text and the imagined images, allowing the viewers to see the satirical difference that the meme only alludes to. Linguistic incongruity is one of the sources of humor. Combining a casual tone in Urdu with unexpected moral appeals, like someone asking for liberation from the “corrupt mafia” (/kəˈrʌpt ˈmɑːfiə/ – Organized criminal network involved in corruption),” creates a comic effect by putting sacred language close to the political frustration. The public notices the irony of the politician’s hidden uneasiness when the commitment to religion is too close to the allegations of corruption. The humor based on the language is multimodal since it involves not only the spoken words but also the expressions, gestures, and the guessing of locations, possibly a prayer mat, a surprised politician, or signaling, each of which adds to the overall comic effect.

The economic humor in the dataset is another example of a different cultural register. Memes inquiring about the validity of crumpled currency notes and a little about the fears that average Pakistanis have during inflation. The comedy is coming from the presentation of trivial concerns, doubt, panic, and overthinking piled onto the sensory images of wrinkled notes, nervous hands, and baffled shopkeepers. In this case, humor is playing the role of an emotional outlet and making economic uncertainty sound like a thing to be laughed at together. MCDA demonstrates this through the combination of tactile imagery (the feel and look of money), textual exaggeration, and audience recognition. Cross-border humor, especially the ones that over-exaggerate India’s mythical fear, is among the most significant aspects of the whole matter. The mention of a Mughal emperor controlling India’s “sarsarahat” (/sə.rə.səˈrɑː.hət/ – Rustling” and “thartharahat” (/θərˈθərəːhət/ – Shivering or trembling)” resorts to bodily metaphors for making people laugh. The use of such memes is not only through historical references and hyperbole but also by allowing the viewers to turn the geopolitical anxiety into a more playful competition. Humor not only lessens fear but also changes conflict into caricature.

Cricket humor, which is another major source of Pakistani memes, depicts the fans’ frustrations and emotional ups and downs in a very exaggerated manner. Memes saying that the cricket team increases blood pressure “haramkhor BP barha hi dete hain” (/həˈrɑːmkʰɔr biːˈpiː bərˈhɑː dɛtɛ hɛn/ – These scoundrels increase blood pressure)” or that fans now want to “go underground” after repeated losses change the shared sadness into jocular hyperbole. In terms of MCDA, the humor

is located not only in the textual exaggeration but also in the implied gestures, including hands on heads, fans fainting, frantic TV screens, etc., that the audience automatically visualizes. These memes revive an emotional script that is common: Pakistan's national character overlapping with its cricketing victories and defeats. Humor that is associated with wars mixes absurdity and anxiety. Memes depicting family members starting to clean the house the moment war is announced (“*inko mauqa milna chahye* (/ 'ɪŋko: 'mo:kɑ: 'mɪlnɑ: tʃɑ:hje/ – They should be given a chance)”) or refusing to join the war unless given the “front seat” reduce the gravity of the situations by associating them with everyday domestic routines. This association generates laughter by bringing the national crisis and family absurdity very close together. Through the different modes of communication, the humor conjures up pictures of brooms, dusting cloths, and family members suddenly working hard, visuals that are in stark contrast to the severe discourse on war.

Flood and rain humor, on the other hand, has a darker side of comedy. Memes ridiculing governmental explanations that are basically the same in all contexts (“*jab zyada barish hoti hai toh zyada paani ata hai* /dʒʌb 'zɛ:dɑ: bɑ:rɪʃ 'hɑ:ti hɛ: to: 'zɛ:dɑ: pɑ:ni ɑ:tə hɛ:/ – When it rains heavily, a lot of water comes)”) and telling stories of students risking their lives by wading through floods to get to classes are examples of humor revealing the incompetence in the system while still being funny. The humor comes from the absurdity of the statements that are so simple yet so brilliantly logical being passed as official wisdom, which makes the audience laugh at their naivety. Humor of everyday life finally incorporates culture and social norms through light-hearted satire. The mothers who bargain (“*5000 ka... 500 ka de do* /'pɑ:nʃ 'hʌndrəd 'θɑʊzənd kɑ: hɛ: 'pɑ:nʃ 'hʌndrəd kɑ: dɛ: do:/ – It costs 50,000, give 500”), the beds that attract and distract the students, and the memes about being too tired to do anything (*oxygen waste krne aye hain* /'ɒksɪdʒən weɪst kər 'ne a:ɛ hɛn/ – They have come to waste oxygen). These are examples of shared, everyday frustrations. The relatability of these memes is the source of their humor; everyone has gone through more or less the same situations, and the visuals that go with them are the other reason.

Resistance

Along with humor, resistance forms the foundation of the memes in this dataset. Through the application of Resistance Theory, it is possible to classify these memes as one of the “hidden transcripts”, subtle, coded, and indirect challenges to political powers, national narratives, institutions, and cultural norms. Satire wraps around the criticism, and these memes give dissent a socially acceptable outlet in places where direct critiquing might be censored, dismissed, or considered socially risky. Resistance through textual and visual modes does not come from explicit statements but rather through the combined use of text, implied visuals, sarcasm, intertextuality, and collective audience interpretations.

The most notable type of resistance is political. The memes depicting frantic ballot stamping, inefficient election monitoring, or dynastic corruption narrate the grievances regarding the democratic process in Pakistan. Resistance is present in hyperbole; electoral malpractice is shown to be chaotic, theatrical, and absurd. These memes, by mocking the serious charges, oppose the purified versions of events that are commonly propagated by political actors or state institutions. The visuals of officials stamping ballots in haste, sweating, or being panic-stricken would indirectly support the criticism and create a visual “memory” in the audience’s mind, even without a direct image provided. A new meme that likens a politician to an inferior imitation of the founder

of the nation is, at the same time, resistant to its symbolism. It is through the ostentatious and modern that they gain the power of the past, the meme of the bygone leaders. The wit of the meme and the sarcasm involved in it dull the criticism: through mockery, the meme takes away the veneration that the politicians exercise over the people. Resistance theory, therefore, classifies this as ideological resistance, symbolic inversion, and satirical imagery being the means through which the official narratives of political power are challenged.

Religion is also one of the major channels through which the opposition manifests itself. A meme that shows a person praying for the “corrupt mafia (/kə' rʌpt ' mɑ:fiə/ – Organized criminal network involved in corruption)” to be removed, and at the same time, jokingly implying that a politician is taken aback by the prayer, is one of the critiques pointing at the moral contradictions of political leadership. The resistance here is of a moral and ethical kind: the use of religion reveals the gap between the public’s religiousness and the politicians’ behavior. MCDA demonstrates this by showing that the sacredness of the prayer mixed with the anxiety of the politician creates a split that the audience interprets as a moral criticism. Economic resistance comes forth in memes that emphasize inflation, devaluation, and currency instability. The jokes about crumpled money and financial uncertainty resist the economic hardship being regarded as a matter of course by showing the emotional burden that the citizens are experiencing. This resistance is not direct but very strong, it changes the picture of economic instability to something one can laugh at rather than being resigned to, thus creating a communal feeling of injustice.

On the other hand, the resistance to the government’s failure is even more pronounced. Memes asserting that the country functions better without a prime minister or that blackouts are fewer during leadership vacuums represent performative resistance: absurd humor is used to challenge the claim that stability is a result of leadership. The humor highlights disillusionment with political performance and, at the same time, engages audiences to question the difference between official narratives and lived experience. Geopolitical resistance appears through memes that reference India. These memes, even if they are presented in a funny way, are still somehow able to reveal the anxieties of the nation, critique the supposed threats, or ridicule the foreign aggressors. The resistance is shown through the display of symbolic superiority, “fear” of India represented by historical figures or even imagined heroes being conquered. The method of resistance is very much dependent on the imagined visuals of the enemies who are trembling or the heroes who are triumphant, who are countering the geopolitical vulnerability.

Cricket memes are another example of resistance narratives. They are humorous but quietly resist the emotional pressure on the fans and the failures of the sports institutions that are an ongoing concern. By saying that, whichever way the cricket team performs, memes will continue, the meme actually resists the cricket nationalistic burden and lets the fans reclaim their emotional agency. Resistance is through emotional humor: one’s own heartbreak and the institutional disappointment are lessened through laughter. War memes are the first signs of more profound layers of resistance. The meme that states ‘war threats reduced to internal home cleaning’ refers indirectly to the families who are cleaning up during the war, it also fights fear by making it less serious. Such a scenario is described by the resistance theory as psychological resistance, where the distressed or anxious groups resort to humor as a means of power demarcation with fear. Another meme, which satirizes the front-line patriotism and depicts going to war only if one has a “front seat,” is a way of resisting militaristic expectations, thus mocking the romanticized narrative.

Resistance against the government is expressed in memes that critique the communication during floods as being extremely poor. The explanation that sounds like a circular argument and goes “when it rains more, more water comes” turns into a satire that condemns the government’s inefficiency. The resistance is in making people laugh who, like the officials, may be unaware of the obvious, and hence revealing the incompetence of the government. The MCDA brings out the flooding, the soaked people, and the powerless infrastructure that the audience mentally reconstructs, thus deepening the critique. Gender memes neither reinforce or support cultural stereotypes as they use double standards and bring the issue to a humorous extent, e.g., girls ghosting but boys labeled as extreme. The comedic effect here uncovers the transgendered characters’ ridiculousness and, hence, the resistance got created through humor, which is much more acceptable than moralizing.

In the end, the micro-defiance of the everyday life memes is what helps them resist social pressures. By claiming beds “fall in love” with students, they negate the productivity culture. Mothers’ memes about bargaining in shops fight against the capitalist pricing system. “Oxygen waste karne aaye hain” fights against the societal requirement of keeping one’s purpose all the time. These very small acts of humor that people can relate to are everyday resistance—rebellion not against the state but against cultural pressures, expectations, and emotional burdens. In all instances, resistance is a complex and varied discursive force. Humour is not just a source of entertainment; it is a method of reclaiming political voice, expressing emotional fatigue, challenging institutions, confronting fears, and unsettling power structures. The memes, along with the various modalities—imagined visuals, intertextuality, sarcasm, and audience engagement create different political and social narratives, and oppose the dominant discourses with creativity rather than through direct confrontation.

Humour and resistance, together, form a pair that cannot be separated: humour lays the critique’s sharpness, while resistance renders humour still alive. These memes picture that satire in Pakistan’s digital public sphere is not simply for amusement rather it is a means of survival, dissent, and collective self-expression.

Slangs as source of Resistance and humour

The chosen slang expressions “Scene on hai (/si:n ɒn he:/ – The situation is active)” “Chill kro (/tʃɪl kə'ro:/ – Relax),” “Screw dhela mat kro (/skru: dʰe:la: mat kro:/ – Don’t slack off),” “Mummy Daddy bacha(/'mʌmi 'dædi 'bətʃɑ:/ – Spoiled child / pampered kid),” “Lit hai(/lit he:/ – It’s amazing),” “Bachi set ho gai(/'bətʃɪ sət hu: gɑ:i/ – The girl is all set / ready),” “Kya scene hai(/kɪ'jɑ: si:n he:/ – What’s going on?),” “Sir ka chamcha (/sɜ:r kɑ: 'tʃʌmtʃɑ:/ – Teacher’s pet / yes-man),” “Program tu war gaya (/'prɒgræm tu: wɑ:r gɑ:jɑ:/ – The program is messed up / ruined),” “Bas yaar enough(/bəs jɑ:r ɪ'nʌf/ – That’s enough, man),” and “Tension not, take hosla(/'tɛnʃən nɒt teɪk 'hɒslɑ:/ – Don’t worry)” are employed as important semiotic resources in the Pakistani meme culture. Here memes are made possible through the visual exaggeration, linguistic hybridization, and humor that is situated in the culture to reveal the subtle forms of social resistance. The memes with “Scene on hai (/si:n ɒn he:/ – The situation is active)” and “Lit hai (/lit he:/ – It’s amazing)” often show up with the use of bright colour palettes, lively poses, or messy visuals to signal excitement and spontaneity. It is the reflection of youth resistance against conservative restrictions on self-expression. The humor produced here makes fun of the idea that young people need to be calm and predictable; on the contrary, the visuals amplify the unpredictability and the thrill, which thus become markers of the resistance of the generation. The slangs “Chill kro (/tʃɪl kə'ro:/ –

Relax),” and “Tension not Take hosla (/’tɛnʃən nɒt teɪk ’hɒslɑː/ – Don’t worry)” would usually appear with the imagery of calmness and carefreeness characters who are relaxing, animals sleeping, or one who has totally disconnected from the drama, this is to defy the cultural norms that associate seriousness with maturity or success. The pairing of visual and textual produces an emotional resistance, where humor is turned into a weapon for rejecting societal pressure, anxiety, and hyper-responsibility.” Mummy Daddy bacha (/’mʌmi ’dædi ’bətʃɑː/ – Spoiled child / pampered kid)” is mainly based on multimodal caricature pictures of very pretentious people, very polished kids, or very self-conscious body language, etc, and it thus critiques the class privilege. The visual extravagance and the casual slang label acting as polar opposites unveil the hypocrisy of the lower and the upper class, thus humorously dismantling the elite cultural behavior and enacting it as class resistance. Likewise, “Sir ka chamcha(/sɜːr kɑː ’tʃʌmtʃɑː/ – Teacher’s pet / yes-man)” employs the visuals of extreme obedience on the part of a student, who is appreciating the teacher by giving him presents that are so big they can hardly be seen or acting in such a way that he is a fawning puppy, to critique boss-employee loyalty in both schools and workplaces. With its multimodality, the comedy of the situation being up to par with the extreme, the questioning of power through humour and mocking of the effort put in to please the ones in charge comes out to be the institutional resistance here. The phrases “Bachi set ho gai(/’bətʃi sɛt huː gɑːi/ – The girl is all set / ready)” and “Kya scene hai(/kɪ’jɑː siːn hɛː/ – What’s going on?),” which are usually pronounced with flirtatious glances, reaction shots, or comical portrayals of young lovers, demonstrate the young people’s negotiation of gender roles, relationships, and public behavior. By ridiculing the interactions of the romantic couples that are considered too much or too taboo, such memes not only resist the conservative moral policing but also challenge the restrictions placed on young people’s socialization, thus, becoming an expression of an ever-changing cultural and gender-based resistance. The phrases “Screw dhela mat kro(/skruː dʰeːlɑː mat kroː/ – Don’t slack off)” and “Program tu war gaya (/’prɒgræm tuː wɑːr gɑːjɑː/ – The program is messed up / ruined)” usually present chaotic or defeated visuals disordered people, hanging bodies, or funny situations of collapse to show the way stress, over-involvement, or constant planning can yield. These visuals raise the bar that people need to be productive, calm, and socially available at all times; on the contrary, the memes actually declare it to be perfectly normal to disconnect or allow things to go into chaos, which is nothing but acting against the mainstream behavior. The expression “Bas yaar enough(/bəs jɑːr ɪ’nʌf/ – That’s enough, man)” frequently illustrates boundary-setting through visuals of explosions, dramatic exits, or characters walking away, thus standing up to a cultural pattern of tolerance that often pressures individuals to sacrifice their limits. Humor in all such instances serves as a shield allowing the criticism to be implicit and not through direct confrontation, thus coinciding with resistance theory’s interpretation of metaphorical, symbolic dissent. The memes’ multimodal structure enhances the resistant position by combining slang already a form of linguistic rebellion with a visual attack that amplifies the punchline. This blend eliminates any sole speaking for the Pakistani youth, who now can, through memes, oppose the cultural rigidity, class hierarchy, academic authority, emotional suppression, and generational control, while humor still remains the socially acceptable disguise.

The scrutiny of Pakistani political memes together with youth slang uncovers a rapidly changing digital discourse where laughter, criticism, and symbolic resistance are all combined into a very strong communicative practice. The debate that has arisen from this research brings to light the fact that mainly the younger generation of Pakistanis are the ones who, in a way, turn the visual

and textual artifacts into socio-political commentaries that not only mirror but also influence the public consciousness. This research utilizes MDA (Multimodal Discourse Analysis) to illustrate that pictures, captions, emojis, color contrasts, textual placement, and linguistic choices are all functioning as semiotic resources with multiple layers. These different modes working together to build ironic, exaggerated, or parodic political messages that very subtly challenge the power and at the same time not actually confronting it. Resistance Theory also supports us in viewing an interpretation of memes and slang as soft but significant forms of daily defiance what scholars often term “micro-resistance”. In Pakistan, where there is a possibility of social or institutional consequences for direct political criticism, digital satire is still regarded as a culturally acceptable medium for expressing dissent. The memes that were scrutinized like the imitated photographs of the rulers, the funny writings put on top of the pictures that stressed the incompetence of politicians, and the photos recontextualized and suggesting bribery or double standards—are the proof that multimodal communication strengthens the critique. To give an example, the unsophisticated facial expression of a politician along with a sarcastic caption creates a full story with a slight use of language. The visual exaggeration including faces that are zoomed in, proportions that are distorted, and strong color filters adds up to the emotional framing of the critique, thus making the political message easier to digest. This is in line with Kress and van Leeuwen’s assertion that the ideological implications of images are not just through the representation but also through the layout, the salience, and the visual emphasis. The memes in Pakistan are using these features deliberately; they are not just patterns but tools for depicting political happenings in an exaggerated manner, pointing out the contradictions in the administration, and ridiculing the difference between what politicians promise and what people experience. When the use of youth slang is added to the discourse, it has become clearer than ever. The words “scene on hai (/si:n ɒn he:/ – The situation is active),” “screw dhela mat kro (/skru: dʰe:la: mat kro:/ – Don’t slack off),” “sir ka chamcha (/sɜ:r kɑ: ‘tʃʌmtʃɑ:/ – Teacher’s pet / yes-man),” or “program tu war gaya (/’prɒgrəm tu: wɑ:r gɑ:jɑ:/ – The program is messed up / ruined)” are the examples of such micro-messages that belong to certain cultures, they are social and they convey resistance via the ingenious use of language. The incorporation of these slangs in meme captions not only brings but also multiplies the humor and the indexical meaning of the context. For instance, using the term “sir ka chamcha (/sɜ:r kɑ: ‘tʃʌmtʃɑ:/ – Teacher’s pet / yes-man)” for a political worker is resistance at its finest, as it makes hierarchy laughable by ridicule. In the same way, the phrase “program tu war gaya (/’prɒgrəm tu: wɑ:r gɑ:jɑ:/ – The program is messed up / ruined)” illustrates political defeat in the language of the youth which in turn reduces serious governance issues to comical mishaps. Resistance Theory groups such activities under the category of symbolic resistance; these are daily acts of subversion that mock, delegitimize, or trivialize the authority being criticized. The slangs make the expression bearable but at the same time they sharpen its effect, thus making the critique socially safe and culturally resonant. Moreover, memes play a crucial role in building communities. The young people in Pakistan facing the political chaos, unemployment, crisis in governance, scandals of corruption are using memes for regulating their emotions, sharing their feelings and asserting their collective identity. Humor, frustration and disgust are turned into a shared experience consequently making political grievances less isolating. The multipurpose aspect of memes encourages their rapid spread and various interpretations, hence allowing users to remix political messages according to the latest happenings. In this manner, the memes form a dynamic diskursive ecosystem where meanings are

continuously redefined. Resistance is thereby transformed into a networked phenomenon: every share, repost or comment is a contribution to a political discourse that is decentralized and goes outside the traditional gatekeepers like news media or political institutions. The data indicates that memes turn political figures into caricatures and, in the process, destabilize them. When politicians are mocked or put in different contexts, they lose the power of their symbols, and they are laughed at, not regarded as rulers. This comic degradation is a form of resistance to the dominant culture. It undermines the seriousness of political power and takes away its fear or awe. Even if memes seem to be non-political or just fun, the implicit message is that political power is neither absolute nor sacred.

Conclusion

The research shows that Pakistani memes function as active platforms that bring together language, humor, and resistance to provide valuable knowledge about current digital sociolinguistics research. The study determines key research questions about humor creation and identity display and online resistance through its examination of how Urdu-English code-mixing and hybrid slang function in memes. The analysis demonstrates that people use intra-sentential code-mixing and creative slang for two purposes, which include entertainment and social commentary about political and cultural practices. The expressions "scene on hai (/si:n ɒn he:/ – The situation is active)" and "chill kro (/tʃil kə'ro:/ – Relax)" and "tension not, take hosla(/'tɛnʃən nɒt teik 'hɒslɑ:/ – Don't worry)" show how young people manage their daily stress while "Mummy Daddy bacha(/'mʌmi 'dædi 'bətʃɑ:/ – Spoiled child / pampered kid)" and "Sir ka chamcha (/sɜ:r kɑ: 'tʃʌmtʃɑ:/ – Teacher's pet / yes-man)" slangs demonstrate how people secretly challenge social class systems and authority. Users employ humor as their main method to conceal opposition while they investigate power dynamics and create bonds with their colleagues, which shows how different cultures and age groups resist authority.

The research used multimodal theory for its study because it demonstrated how textual and visual elements combined to create multiple meanings through their combination with linguistic creativity. The research study showed that different modes of communication enhance the comic effect of memes while increasing their capacity to challenge authority. The users used resistance theory to create "hidden transcripts" which allowed them to express their opposition to authority and societal norms through their use of satire and parody and exaggerated performance. Memes function as tools which allow users to express political opinions and social discontent and their youth identity without engaging in direct conflict.

The research establishes that Pakistani memes function as essential elements of social linguistic studies because they contain humor and cultural analysis and anti-establishment content. The platform enables young people to safely explore their identities while they express creativity through their social critique and their fight against both social and cultural constraints. The research results demonstrate that online resistance relies on humor and code-mixing and slang as its main elements which show how digital communication changes how Pakistani youth express themselves and understand cultural norms.

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