

**EXPLORING DIGITAL EXPRESSIONS ACROSS CULTURES: A COMPARATIVE  
STUDY OF PAKISTANI AND GLOBAL SOCIAL MEDIA DISCOURSE****Muhammad Liaqat**PhD Scholar, University of South Asia, Raiwind road Lahore  
[profliqat123@gmail.com](mailto:profliqat123@gmail.com)**Adeel Anjum**PhD Scholar, University of South Asia, Raiwind road Lahore  
[adeeels@gmail.com](mailto:adeeels@gmail.com)**Sadia Mushtaq**Mphil Scholar. University of South Asia, Raiwind road Lahore  
[sdiamushtaq994@gmail.com](mailto:sdiamushtaq994@gmail.com)**Corresponding author:****Muhammad Naeem ur Rahman**PhD Scholar, University of South Asia, Raiwind road Lahore  
[naeemsiddiqui.saleemi@gmail.com](mailto:naeemsiddiqui.saleemi@gmail.com)**Abstract**

*The digital media has changed the communication practices of the world by initiating new possibilities in communication, identity and expression of culture. Even though online communication is global owing to the digital platforms, it has the local lingual and cultural peculiarities. The following research compares and contrasts the digital expressions in Pakistan and the global by using a qualitative comparative approach. The paper discusses the influence of language choices, code-switching, Roman Urdu, emojis, hashtags, memes, and religious phrases in online communication based on Sociolinguistics and Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis (CMDA). It has been found that the Pakistani digital texts have been marked by an immense amount of Urdu-English code switching, religious allusions and culturally constructed communication patterns, and the global digital texts are more linguistically standardized, and secular oriented. Simultaneously, similarities between the two settings are the use of emojis, hashtag activism, shortenings and the meme culture. The paper has concluded that online communication is a hybrid place where the global technological forces are in co-existence with local cultural identities. The findings can be used to appreciate the relationship between language, culture and technology in the present digital worlds.*

**Keywords:** Digital Expressions, Pakistani Digital Discourse, Global Communication, Sociolinguistics, Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis, Code-Switching, Social Media.**1. Introduction**

The burning advent of the digital technology has changed the manner in which human beings communicate a lot. The social media, messaging, blogs, online forums and content sharing sites have helped people to communicate without the restrictions of geographical and cultural boundaries. Digital communication has therefore emerged to be one of the strongest discourses within the contemporary society. Researchers also believe that digital media has not only transformed the channels of communication, but also affected the language behaviour, development of social communication and identity (Crystal, 2011).

Digital expressions are linguistic, semiotic content, which is used in online communication. Written text, emojis, hashtags, abbreviations, memes, pictures, videos, and other multimedia representations are some of these resources that add meaning to the digital space. Compared to the traditional method of communication, the online discourse is highly interactive, dynamic and it is adaptable to changes in technology (Herring, 2004).

Despite the use of digital platforms to enable communication across nations, local cultural identities are still manifested by language. Digital communication in multilingual societies, such as Pakistan, frequently involves the use of the code-switching, transliteration and culturally relevant phrases. A common use of combining Urdu and English in one message and also the Roman Urdu is a method of communicating via internet are common among Pakistani

internet users. Such uses are indicators of the presence of local speech communities in world systems of communication (Androutsopoulos, 2015).

Furthermore, social identities and cultural identities are bargained through the online communication platform. The use of religious expressions, kinship, local humor and mention of the culture enable Pakistani users not to lose touch with their own culture but engage with the digital global culture. Similarly, the digital resources are used by the users in other parts of the world to express national, ethnic and social identities.

The increasing significance of online communication highlights the need to address the question of how the language practices differ in terms of the diverse cultures. Although there are studies undertaken to analyze the digital discourse, multilingualism and the formation of online identities, comparisons of studies to Pakistan and Australia with that of the world online expression are in some way few. This paper will therefore target to find similarities and differences in these two communicative situations and will also analyse how cultural identity is being defined through the use of digital discourse.

## 2. Research Objectives

The study aims to:

- Discuss the characteristics of Pakistani online terms.
- Establish the main peculiarities of the digital manifestations globally.
- Compare cultural and linguistic inclination of Pakistani and international online communication.
- Discover how digital communication can be used in identity building.
- Determine the impacts of globalization on the online language practices.

## 3. Research Questions

What would be the characteristics of Pakistani digital manifestations?

How does the Pakistani digital expression differ with the global digital expression?

What is the construction of cultural identity by digital communication?

What is the impact of globalization on online language practices?

## 4. Literature Review

Digital communication study has gained great interest in media studies, communication studies and linguistics in the past 20 years. The effects of digital technologies on the use of language, social interaction, identity construction and cultural representation have been studied by scholars. According to the existing literature, digital communication is not merely a technological phenomenon but a social, and cultural practice due to the linguistic and cultural background of the users.

In his contribution to the linguistic of the internet, Crystal (2011) has made one of the most outstanding contributions ever made on the topic since he writes that there are certain linguistic traits which are exclusive to online communication and which are not related to spoken and written language. According to Crystal, digital discourse is informal, creative, abbreviated, acronymed, emoji'd, and has innovative spelling patterns. Those are the traits, which are now widespread in the social media and Internet societies worldwide.

Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis (CMDA) has also contributed to the knowledge on the digital communication. According to Herring (2004), the online interactions are to be understood as socially situated discourse as opposed to the technological relationships. Her model stresses the significance of researching on the use of language in the context of certain social, cultural, and technological situations. The viewpoint is especially useful in comparative studies since it acknowledges the influence of culture on practices in online communication.

Multilingualism studies online indicated that social network sites promote linguistic intermingling and fusion. Androutsopoulos (2015) gives the reasoning that the multilingual users tend to confuse the different languages in the same interaction as a form of negotiating

identities, cultural affiliation, and maintenance of social relations. This is more common in bilingual societies where the speakers are forced to move between two or more languages simultaneously.

The topic of language and identity in relation to discourse has received wide attention in discourse studies. Gee (2014) states that discourse is one of the tools that help people to create and act out social identities. Things like hashtags, memes, emojis and the language that is used are all linguistic and symbolic means of identifying oneself in a specific social group in the Internet and a digital world. Digital communication thus is an active location of identity construction and representation.

The study carried out within the framework of South Asia has already suggested the increased significance of the Roman Urdu within the framework of the internet communications. Roman Urdu enables its users to write in Urdu over English alphabet, which means that they can create a hybrid form of linguistics, which is locally contextual, and simultaneously, has a global influence through technology. This wide use of Roman Urdu proves the potential of online communication to promote language innovation without the influence of culture.

Scholars have also pointed out that religious expressions continue to prominently feature in Pakistani digital discourse. The use of such common terms as *InshaAllah*, *Alhamdulillah* and *MashaAllah* are frequent terms of online communication and represents a religious and cultural identity. These expressions are employed to articulate how the local values and beliefs dominate despite the growing exposure to practices of global communication.

The digital communication has been brought to be talked about within the framework of the concept of globalization. Thurlow et al. (2004) claim that digital media promote the spread of global communication behavior, including hashtags, memes, emojis, and internet slang. These international forms are however adjusted to the local cultural conditions. It also refers to glocalization and describes the co-existence of global communication technologies and the local identities and traditions.

Despite the growing literature on digital discourse, multilingual communication, and identity construction on the Internet, there are few studies that explicitly contrast the Pakistani digital manifestations with other digital practices in the world. The current research puts this gap in the context of a comparative study of linguistic and cultural pattern in Pakistani and global digital communication. The research contributes to the growing body of knowledge on the connection between language, culture and technology in the contemporary digital environments with such an analysis.

## **5. Theoretical Framework**

The current study is founded on the two theoretical paradigms, which are complementary: Sociolinguistics and Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis (CMDA). These theories provide a feasible method of interpreting language, culture and identity in digital mode of communication.

### **5.1 Sociolinguistics**

The study of the interaction of language and society is known as sociolinguistics. It discusses the linguistic diversity which can be seen in different social groups and how linguistic preferences can be used to reflect social identities, cultural values and group affiliations (Wardhaugh and Fuller, 2021). Language is not just a system of communication, it is also a social resource whereby people are able to construct and negotiate identities.

In multilingual countries such as Pakistan, language users have a great deal of language mixing and code-switching. Such practices help speakers to communicate with each other as well as to show cultural belonging and social identity. According to Astroutspoulos (2015), it is a good place to develop identity since, on the Internet, multilingual users can express themselves inventively in multiple languages.

The sociolinguistic approach can be particularly applied to the current study as Pakistani online communication is characterized by the widespread use of Urdu, English, Roman Urdu, religious language, and culture-related words. These linguistic options are analyzed to help in the understanding of how the digital users maintain a local identity and participate in the global communication networks.

### **5.2 Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis (CMDA)?**

Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis (CMDA) was developed with the aim of exploring the application of language in the computer world. Online communication can be discussed as a discourse, which is shaped by the technological affordances and social contexts (Herring, 2004).

CMDA cogitates on linguistic and communicative nature of online communication like abbreviations, emojis, hashtags, memes, hyperlinks and multimodal communication. Unlike the traditional discourse analysis, CMDA recognizes that digital communication is characterized by the simultaneous use of the text, visual and symbolic resources in the meaning making processes.

The framework is particularly applicable to the analysis of contemporary digital manifestations as it enables the researcher to explore how users communicate through the social media platform, messaging applications, and online communities. In this study, CMDA offers resources to make comparisons between the way Pakistani users and the rest of the world utilize digital resources to create meaning and identity.

This is a synthesis of Sociolinguistics and CMDA which researches on the social significance of language choices and the technological situation of language choices.

## **6. Methodology**

### **6.1 Research Design**

The study research design is a qualitative research design that is comparative. The qualitative research is suitable since the goal is to investigate linguistic and cultural trends, as opposed to quantifying variables. The study is geared towards acquiring an understanding of the functioning of digital expressions under particular social and cultural circumstances.

### **6.2 Data Sources**

The data are natural examples which are based on:

- □ Social media posts
- □ Facebook comments
- □ Instagram captions
- □ WhatsApp messages
- □ Online advertisements
- □ Hashtags
- □ Internet memes

The examples are common patterns of communications and not an individual user behavior.

### **6.3 Method of Analysis**

These gathered examples were compared to each other to determine similarities and differences between Pakistani and global digital expressions. Special emphasis was put on:

- ✧ □ Language choice
- ✧ □ Code-switching
- ✧ □ Cultural references
- ✧ □ Religious expressions
- ✧ □ Emoji usage
- ✧ □ Hashtag practices
- ✧ □ Identity construction

The principles of Sociolinguistics and Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis were used to guide the analysis.

### **7. Analysis and Discussion of Data.**

#### **Example 1: Language Choice and Code-Switching.**

##### **Pakistani Digital Expression**

"Yar, today's lecture was difficult. Bilkul samajh nahi ayi."

##### **Global Digital Expression**

The lecture this day was a tough one. I was not able to get it.

##### **Analysis**

The case of Pakistani shows alternation of codes in English and Urdu. The practice is reflective of bilingualism abilities and cultural affiliation. The international paradigm is monolingual and more linguistically standardized as well. Code-switching plays a vital role as a sign of identity within multilingual societies (Androutsopoulos, 2015).

#### **Example 2: Usage of Roman Urdu.**

##### **Pakistani Digital Expression**

"Kya scene hai?"

##### **Global Digital Expression**

"What's going on?"

##### **Analysis**

The unique aspect of online communication in Pakistan is Roman Urdu. It has linguistic locality and the Urdu is typed in with the English alphabet. The practice is among the importations of international technology to local language needs.

#### **Example 3: Religious Expressions**

##### **Pakistani Digital Expression**

"InshaAllah sab theek ho jayega."

##### **Global Digital Expression**



"I hope everything will be okay."

##### **Analysis**



Pakistani users tend to use religious phrases in their everyday conversations. Such expressions are indicators of religion, cultural affiliation and social identification. The language, which is utilized in the international terms, is more secular.

#### **Example 4: Emoji Usage**

##### **Pakistani Digital Expression**

"Exam clear ho gaya  Alhamdulillah "

##### **Global Digital Expression**

"I passed my exam!  

Emojis are applied in both instances to depict the positive feelings. However, the situation with Pakistani is not the same, emojis are intertwined with religious lines, which proves the more prominent impact of the cultural values on the online communication.

#### **Example 5: Hashtag Practices**

##### **Pakistani Digital Expression**

#PakistanZindabad

#JashnEAzadi

##### **Global Digital Expression**

#ProudToBeAmerican

#IndependenceDay

##### **Analysis**

Hashtags can be regarded as identity formation and group interaction. In both situations, they propagate national identity and cultural unity.

**Example 6: Meme Culture**

**Pakistani Digital Expression**

Memes related to cricket, university examinations, inflation, and political developments.

**Global Digital Expression**

Memes focusing on celebrities, gaming culture, movies, and international trends.

**Analysis**

Although memes are a global language, they are likely to include local insights and social problems.

**Example 7: Greetings**

**Pakistani Digital Expression**

"Assalam-o-Alaikum. Umeed hai aap khairiyat se hon ge."

**Global Digital Expression**

"Hi, hope you're doing well."

**Analysis**

The modes of invitation in the Pakistani greetings usually involve the religious and respectful means of address. These words cement the social relations and cultural norms.

Look at the words of this song to understand how he shows his gratitude.

**Pakistani Digital Expression**

JazakAllah for your assistance.

**Example 8: Expressions of Gratitude**

**Pakistani Digital Expression**

"JazakAllah for your help."

**Global Digital Expression**

"Thank you for your help."

**Analysis**

Pakistani appreciation of gratitude in digital messages tends to be religious. These language decisions help in identity formation and cultural heritage.

**Example 9: Educational Discussions**

**Pakistani Digital Expression**

"Paper bohat tough tha, especially subjective portion."

**Global Digital Expression**

"The exam was challenging, particularly the essay section."

**Analysis**

Urdu-English mixing is common in educational discourses in Pakistan. This trend depicts the concurrent existence of regional lingo usage and international educational terms.

**Example 10: Sports Discussions**

**Pakistani Digital Expression**

"Babar Azam ne zabardast innings kheli."

**Global Digital Expression**

"LeBron James delivered an outstanding performance."

**Analysis**

Discourse of sports indicates local cultural interests. Cricket takes a spotlight in the Pakistani digital communication as compared to other sports which take the centre stage in discussions in the rest of the world.

**Example 11: E-commerce Reviews.**

### **Pakistani Digital Expression**

"Product acha hai lekin delivery late thi."

### **Global Digital Expression**

"The product quality was excellent, but shipping was delayed."

### **Analysis**

Pakistani digital communication displays linguistic hybridity in its consumer discourse. When considering products and services, users will often alternate between Urdu and English.

### **Example 12: Expressions of Sympathy**

#### **Pakistani Digital Expression**

"Inna Lillahi wa Inna Ilayhi Raji'un."

#### **Global Digital Expression**

"My sincere condolences."

### **Analysis**

Sympathy in Pakistan is highly shaped by religious traditions. These expressions do not just express emotional support but also common cultural and religious values.

### **Interim Discussion**

The twelve examples presented in the beginning illustrate some of the common patterns. Multilingualism, code-switching, the use of Roman Urdu, and references to religion typify Pakistani digital expressions. These attributes are the difference between the Pakistani digital discourse and a considerable number of communication practices in the world. Meanwhile, similar digital tools like emojis, hashtags, and memes are used in both settings. The results corroborate the thesis that online communication is a hybrid zone into which local identities are mixed with global technology practices (Thurlow et al., 2004).

The examples also demonstrate that the digital discourse plays the role of a significant place where identity is constructed. Language preferences, cultural allusions and symbolic resources are used by users to convey social identities and cultural ideals. These results can be compared to the argument by Gee (2014), who claimed that discourse is a tool that allows people to create and enact social identity.

### **Example 13: Family-Oriented Communication**

#### **Pakistani Digital Expression**

"Ammi ki tabiyat ab theek hai."

#### **Global Digital Expression**

"My mother is feeling better now."

### **Analysis**

The example of Pakistani makes use of kinship term Ammi, which has emotional and cultural connotation in addition to the literal meaning. These words are indicative of the collectivism characteristic of the Pakistani society wherein family relationships take center stage in social interaction. Conversely, the world-wide example is more standardized in expression. The fact that indigenous kinship terms are still used in digital communication proves that the cultural identity is retained in digital environments.

### **Example 14: Digital Activism**

#### **Pakistani Digital Expression**

#JusticeForZainab

#### **Global Digital Expression**

#BlackLivesMatter

### **Analysis**

Digital activism has emerged as a significant aspect of the online communications today. The two cases show that hashtags can be used as a means of mobilizing people and creating awareness of social problems. The communicative role is similar, although the topics vary

depending on the local contexts. This shows how world-digital practices are adjusted to local issues.

Jesus said, It is not I who speak, but the Father; He glorifies me and you glorify Him.

#### **Example 15: Expressions of Success**

Pakistani Digital Expression

"Alhamdulillah, coursework complete ho gaya."

Global Digital Expression

"I am proud to have completed my coursework."

#### **Analysis**

The Pakistani example lends success to divine blessing by using Alhamdulillah, and the global one stresses on personal success. This opposition is indicative of larger cultural variations in terms of understanding of success and individual achievement.

#### **Example 16: Abbreviations and Acronyms**

Pakistani Digital Expression

"AOA everyone, kal assignment submit krni hai."

Global Digital Expression

"FYI, the assignment is due tomorrow."

#### **Analysis**

Abbreviations are used in both digital communities in order to communicate effectively. The Pakistani abbreviations, however, like AOA (Assalam-o-Alaikum), tend to be cultural and religious, as compared to global abbreviations, which tend to be practical and secular.

#### **Example 17: Festival Greetings**

Pakistani Digital Expression

"Eid Mubarak to everyone and their families."

Global Digital Expression

"Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays."

#### **Analysis**

The ways in which digital communication strengthens cultural and religious traditions can be seen through the greetings at the festival. Though both examples are used to the same social end, they are representative of different cultures and values.

#### **Example 18: Food-Related Posts**

Pakistani Digital Expression

"Aaj Ammi ke hath ki biryani dinner mein thi."

Global Digital Expression

"Homemade pasta for dinner tonight."

#### **Analysis**

Communication about food is commonly used as the indicator of cultural identity. The digital discourse of Pakistan is often centered on relationships in the family and traditional cuisine, and the global examples can be more individual.

#### **Example 19: Political Commentary**

Pakistani Digital Expression

"Awam ko behtar policies ki zarurat hai."

Global Digital Expression

"Citizens deserve more transparent governance."

#### **Analysis**

The political discourse of both settings reflects the interests of the citizens and political participation. Nonetheless, Urdu-English code-switching is a common feature of Pakistani political communication, which demonstrates the impact of multilingualism on the language of the people.

### **Example 20: Travel Experiences**

Pakistani Digital Expression

"Hunza ki beauty waqai outstanding hai."

Global Digital Expression

"The Swiss Alps offer breathtaking views."

#### **Analysis**

Digital manifestations of traveling show how local and international destinations are depicted by the users. The Pakistani example is a mixture of English adjectives and Urdu sentence structure, and this is indicative of linguistic hybridity.

#### **8. Findings**

The comparative analysis yielded a number of important results.

To start with, it is noteworthy that Pakistani digital communication is associated with a wide adoption of the Urdu-English code-switching. The users often mix both languages to use linguistic resources in order to communicate ideas effectively and create social identities. The practice indicates the multilingualism of the Pakistani society and complements the information found by Androutsopoulos (2015).

Second, Roman Urdu is also a dominant aspect of Pakistani online communication. The English alphabet is used to reflect Urdu utterances by users, forming a hybrid language system that unites the local language practices and international technologies.

Third, Pakistani digital discourse is highly evident through the religious expressions that include: InshaAllah, Alhamdulillah, MashaAllah, and JazakAllah. These phrases are not just units of language but also of cultural and religious belonging.

Fourth, the communicative characteristics of both Pakistani and global digital expressions such as the use of emojis, hashtags, shortenings, memes, and digital activism have some elements in common. Such similarities signify how the global digital culture affects the communication practices across the globe.

Fifth, cultural identity is deeply rooted in the online communication. The use of kinship terms, local jokes, local terms, and culturally specific allusions are often used by Pakistani users, proving that digital communication does not eradicate cultural specifics.

Lastly, the results confirm the idea of glocalization, in which the global tools of communication are tailored to the local cultural and language conditions (Thurlow et al., 2004). The Pakistani users are also actively involved in the global digital culture and at the same time have a unique culture identity.

#### **9. Conclusion**

This paper has analyzed the similarities and differences between Pakistani and global digital expressions by conducting a qualitative comparative analysis. Using Sociolinguistics and Computer-Mediated Discourse Analysis, the study investigated the importance of language use, cultural allusions, and online sources in online communication and identity building.

The results indicate that Pakistani online discourse has been characterized by multilingualism, the use of Urdu-English code-switching, Roman Urdu, use of religious expression, and culturally specific communication practices. These characteristics are the representations of linguistic diversity and cultural richness of Pakistani society. Conversely, a variety of digital manifestations around the world show more language standardization and comparatively secular communication modalities.

Simultaneously, Pakistani and global users engage in the common digital practices, such as the use of emojis, hashtags, memes, abbreviations, and online activism. These similarities demonstrate the influence of globalization and digital technology on contemporary communication.

The paper notes that digital communication cannot be considered a culturally neutral process. Rather, online talk is a dynamic process between global technologies and local cultures. The Pakistani users interact with the global communication networks and maintain the linguistic and cultural traditions, forming a distinct type of digital expression.

Future studies can explore regional differences in Pakistan, generational disparities in digital communication, and the effects of artificial intelligence on the changing language practices in the digital context. These researches would make their contribution into the complicated connection between language, culture and technology in the twenty first century.

### References

- Androutsopoulos, J. (2015). Networked multilingualism: Some language practices on Facebook and their implications. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 19(2), 185–205.
- Crystal, D. (2011). *Internet linguistics: A student guide*. Routledge.
- Gee, J. P. (2014). *An introduction to discourse analysis: Theory and method* (4th ed.). Routledge.
- Herring, S. C. (2004). Computer-mediated discourse analysis: An approach to researching online communities. In S. A. Barab, R. Kling, & J. H. Gray (Eds.), *Designing for virtual communities in the service of learning* (pp. 338–376). Cambridge University Press.
- Tagg, C. (2015). *Exploring digital communication: Language in action*. Routledge.
- Thurlow, C., Lengel, L., & Tomic, A. (2004). *Computer mediated communication: Social interaction and the internet*. Sage.
- van Dijk, T. A. (2008). *Discourse and context: A sociocognitive approach*. Cambridge University Press.
- Wardhaugh, R., & Fuller, J. M. (2021). *An introduction to sociolinguistics* (9th ed.). Wiley.
- Yus, F. (2011). *Cyberpragmatics: Internet-mediated communication in context*. John Benjamins Publishing Company.