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**HYBRID DIGITAL IDENTITIES: HOW ENGLISH AND LOCAL  
LANGUAGES CO-CREATE CROSS-CULTURAL YOUTH  
COMMUNICATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MIANWALI**



**Saamia Dua<sup>\*1</sup>, Sehla Nawaz<sup>2</sup>, Rukhsar Raza<sup>3</sup>**

*<sup>\*1</sup>Scholar of Mphil Linguistics, University of Mianwali*

*<sup>2</sup>Lecturer Presently Incharge Department of English*

*<sup>3</sup>Bachelor of English language and literature, University of Mianwali*

*saamiadua96@gmail.com<sup>\*1</sup>, sehlanawaz@gmail.com<sup>2</sup>,  
rukhsarraza2004@gmail.com<sup>3</sup>*

### Abstract

*This study scrutinizes the ways through which undergraduate and postgraduate students of University of Mianwali interact on official social media e.g Facebook by using multiple languages at the same time. Their language usage is not merely a linguistic phenomenon but also a social process. The process of using amalgamated languages produces a hybrid personality of a person. This research mainly focuses on how language use affects students' personality on some digital platforms specifically Facebook. In addition, this study follows qualitative research methodology in order to get the deeper insight. The research will collect 100 facebook comments from official page with the help of purposive sampling technique of data collection. By keeping in view the ethics of research data will be extracted from public comments, there will be no harm to the privacy of an individual. This research uses CAT (communication accommodation theory as a theoretical framework to detect the process of modification of students' language according to variation in context. Data is displayed and analysed with the help coding sheets. The main goal of this study is to reveal how students use English language for modernity, aspiration and global belonging and deliberately utilizes local languages like Saraiki and Urdu for the sake of social bonding and intimacy. This study aims to show that students' digital communication is neither purely global nor utterly local but instead a hybrid form of interaction that reflects their complex cross-cultural personalities in a digital web of the universe..*

**Keywords:** *hybrid identity, multilingualism, digital platforms, Facebook comments*

### Introduction

In the synchronous digital age, students actively appear on digital platforms in order to fulfill their academic requirements. Confronting multilingualism, students shift their languages according to the demand of contexts. In the realm of South Asian context, specially in Pakistan, day-to-day communication is an amalgam of English as well as local languages which give birth to the unintentional use of hybrid communication styles and resultantly hybrid personas are fabricated. Young people seem to architect their hybrid personalities with the balanced use of linguistic diversity. As a globally recognized language, English is affiliated with elegance, and literacy, while local languages like Urdu, Saraiki and Punjabi echo the cultural connectivity, sentimental ventilation, and inclusion. Majority of students at University of Mianwali belong to multilingual backgrounds, thus their engagement in digital platforms mirror their linguistic hybridity. This study scrutinizes how students at University of Mianwali advantageously utilize different languages to redefine their identity in dynamic contexts. The researcher deliberately opted for digital platforms as they are easily accessible and openly provide communication practices of students by which researchers will be able to analyze the interesting collaboration in global and local languages used among university students.

To analyze an individual's identity, two elements should be under observation; participant relationship and language patterns (Kiesling, 2013). Depending on these factors, an individual modify his language and come up with a different identity. Thus, language plays a crucial role in building the social identity of an individual. The rapid advancement in the use of social media has

drastically made people dependent on social media to share their views, to redefine and to recreate their identity. In normal routine, it is habitual to mix languages during communication, the homogenization of English with local languages is an acceptable communicative ability nowadays. These intertwined languages mirror the hybrid personalities in virtual platforms. Although plenty of research has already been done on global digital identities, the researcher felt the need to scrutinize an underdeveloped area of Pakistan; Mianwali.

The elevating use of the online ecosystem among students has altered the communication styles to a great extent. Language hybridity is mostly imposed in informal settings where ungrammatical structures give rise to meaningful conversation. These practices are yet to be explored in backward areas of Pakistan where unauthorized languages are continuously being used with the national and official language of Pakistan i.e English and Urdu. In addition, previous collections of research lay emphasis over the superiority of English language and orthodoxical communication styles of code mixing and code switching in western spaces. There is a scarcity of research focusing on how cross cultural communication creates hybrid identities in semi urban areas like Mianwali. Most studies neglected semi urban areas due to face saving aptitude. Therefore, the underlying problem addressed by this study is to grasp scholarly attention towards the ways via which hybrid identity is produced through language diversity by students of University of Mianwali. Without delving into this problem, it will be difficult to comprehend virtual interaction across the cultures.

## **2 a. Research Questions**

1. In what ways does the use of hybrid languages contribute to the edifice of hybrid digital identities in the comment section of the official Facebook page?
2. How do students utilize English and local languages whilst interacting on official digital spaces of University of Mianwali?
3. How does linguistic shift lead to the change of personality shift?

## **2 b. Research Objectives**

1. To probe the role of linguistic hybridity in expediting the construction of hybrid digital identities among students.
2. To explore the students' attitudes toward English and local languages at a specific official social media platform of University of Mianwali.
3. To scrutinize the students' degree of convergence, divergence and maintenance at the official Facebook page of University of Mianwali .

## **3. Significance of the Study**

This substantial study explores youth identity construction with the help of language shift whilst interacting with manual writings in the comment section of official pages of University of Mianwali. It probes a sociolinguistics perspective to inspect how students not merely utilize language but they reshape their whole identity by using amalgamated languages. This study further shows that students do not merely shift languages, they shift their mode of expression, they shift confidence, they shift their mindset, in short they shift their whole identity due to linguistic diversity. By analyzing real life language use, Esp (English for special purposes) trainers can develop effective pedagogical strategies. Overall this research will provide a lens to future researchers to see language hybridity as a blessing not as threat to identity. To some extent, this study will help the language policy makers to comprehend the strategies by which students shift their language often in digital spaces. Moreover, this study follows the practical use of

communication accommodation theory to analyze construction of hybrid identities in an explicit way. Correspondingly, it will further help the educational institutes to modify their pedagogical approaches according to the needs of students. By extension, the curriculum design strategies can be updated by keeping this study into account.

#### **4. Literature review:**

Digital multilingualism plays an important role in the construction of hybrid identities. Different scholars shared different views over it which are as follows. Leppänen.S and Sultana.S (2023) vented about digital multilingualism as a root cause of youth's freedom as well as revolt to deal with linguistic diversity in virtual spaces and associated some paradigmatic approaches to this study. They concluded that the future study of digital multilingualism is not easy to deal with; it is pretty challenging. Britta Schneider (2025) shed light on the growing dominance of artificial intelligence on multilingualism, focused on how language practices are being shaped by varying advancement in technology and digital platforms. Sirpa Leppänen and Saija Peuronen (2012) highlighted the importance of internet in the growth of a global ecosystem and resultantly, the birth of multilingualism. Omer Eren (2024) struggled to generate awareness about multilingualism and its usage in day to day communication with the help of telecollaboration. Fina,De.A.and Paternostro,G.(2025) scrutinized how migrants utilizes digital multilingualism as a tool of communication and explored the concept of digital translingua and polycentricity for migrant community who tried to survive in a non native community.This theme mainly relate with the thematic concerns of this study; the usage of language at social media.In the current global age ,it is so easy for the people to access non native languages and to exercise in real world communication. Scotton,M.C.(2017) produced a book to describe multiple aspects of code switching in linguistics knowledge of a person.Nilep,C.(2006) explored the practice of code switching in multiple fields of linguistics like sociolinguistic in addition with anthropology of linguistics.Lin,A.(2013) analyzed the strategies of code switching in educational context like classroom.He explored how students developed their language over past thirty years ,what type of hardship they confronted and how they tackled those hardships.Heller,M.(2007) investigated the degree of code switching practices usage in the field of politics and probed how speakers switch codes according to the specific situation.Poplack,S. and Sankoff,D.(2009) scrutinized the core reasons behind the phenomenon of code switching and analysed grammatical structures for code switching practices. Chloros,G.P.(2020) identified code switching as an important grammatical feature that exists along creole and pidgin, following the phenomenon of borrowing words from other languages and generating translanguage resultantly. Franceschini,R.(1998) audit the element of code switching in the spoken discourse of bilinguals and mixing it up with linguistic relativity to induce linguistics hybridity and linguistics elasticity in cognitive processes.Ultramodern researches on code switching practices manifest that individuals casually utilize more than one language in day to day communication according to varying situational context.English language has been declared as international language after colonization over one third of the world which compelled the colonizers to adopt and adapt English language on priority to have successful future ahead. Abbas,S.(1993) evaluated the excessive usage of an international language like English in Pakistan after the world war and Afghan war. Diaz,A.,Cochran,K. and Karlin,N.(2016) assessed how the field of English language teaching and learning influenced by the perception of English language, carries both the pros as well as cons. The teacher who speak English more fluently are termed as efficient teachers while those teachers who are not good at English are termed as deficient teachers. Thus the relation of a language with the power dimensions also affects it's usage and make it flourish in far flung areas .Evans and Davids,(2014) exposed that language and identity are not two separate identities, dependent on one another. Use of dominant

language will give confidence to an individual while the use of minority language will lead a person to confidence loss and eventually the identity loss. Tartaglia, S. and Rossi, M. (2015) analyzed that which the advancement of globalization, global cultures came into being and thus the creation of dual and bipolar selves came into being. It shows that how the use of local languages as well as dominant language leaves a great impact on the process of individual's social and linguistics personality construction. Asnaldo, U. (2010) inspected the role of language use on identity of an individual and analysed how the use of different grammatical structures leads to the construction of different social identities of a person. The use of multimodal features in digital spaces is common nowadays and a lot of research has been done on it. Sara, P., Barry, B., and Carey, J. (2013) assessed the use of paralinguistics in digital spaces and analyzed the interwoven connection of technology and language usage in communication practices. Lalonde, M., Castro, C.J., and Pariser, D. (2016) evaluated the use of identity construction in the envelope of multimodality by children and adolescents. O'Halloran, K. (2015) inspected the use of technology in cross cultural communication by using non verbal language like signs and emojis. Sands, Z.K. (2009) scrutinized the communication styles by which Muslim reveal their religious identity with the use of rhetorical devices and that reflects religious beliefs. Previous studies laid emphasis on multimodality, use of technology in communication and the phenomenon of multilingualism in the realm of dominant languages and linguistics patterns of user residing in urban areas thus ignoring the natural use of language in rural areas.

## **5. Research Gap**

In semi urban areas like Mianwali, a few studies are available on discourse of students at official digital platforms such as Facebook page of University of Mianwali to comprehend youth aptitude towards cross cultural communication. Previous research dealt with quantitative or mixed methodology but there is scarcity of pure qualitative research to analyze hybrid identities on virtual platforms. This study fills the gap and addresses digital linguistics hybridity of underdeveloped areas from a sociolinguistics lens with the help of qualitative methodology and mirrors how hybridity is a blessing in disguise rather than linguistics incompetence. The researcher is planning to apply communication accommodation theory in this study as a theoretical framework. There is a meagre use of this theory, CAT, in cross cultural communication and digital spaces, thus this study fills this gap.

## **6. Methodology**

In order to deeply analyze the construction of hybrid identities on social media platforms of a specific university, this study complies with qualitative and descriptive research methodology. Except of dealing with statistical data, this study employs qualitative methodology as it is a more appropriate interpretative method to explore communication styles across multiingual cultures. Following the ethics of research, this study will extract data from comment section of official pages of University of Mianwali where students leave comments enveloped in linguistics hybridity. This study proceeds with purposive sampling by choosing selective but relevant public comments where students co-created hybrid identity by the deliberate use of local language with English language according the need of communication. Moreover, coding sheets are used to organize, to digitalize and to thematically analyse data. The researcher will use 100-150 public comments as a sample under purposive sampling to answer the research problem. The comments will first be transcribed in English language, and further will be analysed and displayed accordingly with the help of coding sheets.

This study implements a sociolinguistic theory, communication accommodation theory (CAT) to analyse the data in an empirical manner. This theory mainly focuses on the attitude of students by

which they mold and accommodate their language according to the situational context i.e, they diverge, they converge, and they maintain language in order to fit in that very society. This theory further reveals the role of awareness of language use due to which students use English in formal context and Urdu and local language in informal contexts and leads to the construction of hybrid personas. The selection of the theory; Communication accommodation theory, will assist the researcher to answer the research problem in a more explicit way.

## **7. Research Ethics:**

This study does not violate any research ethics. The researcher is going to use public comments which will not hurt the privacy of any individual. Additionally, it includes no human sample, thus shrinking the chances of falsification and vague linguistic manipulation. The data will be displayed anonymously by hiding the usernames and Facebook ID. These factors make this research more ethical and valid. As there are no interruptions of numerical data, the rate of authenticity increases. The collected data is not misinterpreted in the following study. The data is analyzed by objective interpretation which is pure of subjectivity. In short the study respects the privacy of participants. No cultural harm has been done and no minority language is humiliated in this research. The data is securely stored in encrypted folders and will be deleted permanently once the data has been transcribed.

## **8. Discussion:**

This study delves into a sociolinguistic study which analyses how students of local University of a rural area use different languages and construct different identities at the same time. Majority of Mianwali inhabitants are simultaneously bilingual as well as simultaneous multilingual inhabitants ; learning English Urdu and Saraiki from early childhood. It makes them use more than one language. The researcher converted the digital text like comments in the form of written text .There are some transcribed comments as follows.

### **8a. Degree of Convergence**

This data under this category is collected to analyze the extent of convergence use by pupils at comment sections of the official Facebook page of University of Mianwali.

**C1 : Kisi k pas BS ki first Merit list hai to share krden please.  
(please share first merit list of BS if anyone has)**

Fig:1.1

The above transcribed comment reveals that C1 user; a former student of University of Mianwali, used a mixture of two languages i.e, English and Urdu. The user used such amalgamated language in order to fit in the society, to feel connected to the people of his area. The study reveals that C1 student creatively converged with the help of language which is clearly displayed in the above mentioned comment .The lexical choices like first merit list and share portray the use of English language in order to give communication a modern touch. On the other hand, terms like kisi k pas show the cultural nuances of C1 students by which the user intentionally used Urdu language in the format of Roman Urdu.

**C2: MashaAllah, UOM ko leader mil gya  
(ma sha allah uom got the leader)**

Fig:1.2

The above mentioned comment is named as a comment of C2 user. It reveals that an undergraduate student uses hybrid language in the comment section of Facebook page. It includes

terms like (Ma sha Allah) which is giving the touch of religious beliefs in a Muslim community. The comment is posted in hybrid language which is representing two different personalities within a same individual. It clearly reveals how an individual wears the mask of a variomultilingual person on social media platforms. The given data also reflects how a C2 student of University of Mianwali converged according to the situational context.

**C3: Main akha phly pata kr rkhan khuda na khwasta kam thi wenda hy tan  
nawa admission ghin rkhan**

**(I thought I should make confirmation on priority so that if it wills I will take  
admission )**

Fig:1.3

This comment is again transcribed for the sake of a better interpretative approach in solving the research problem. It clearly displays how an educated person uses local language i.e, Saraiki in digital areas. It reflects convergence by which a C3 student feels comfortable in using local languages to portray emotions and feelings in a far better way. In the above comment posted by C3 student, Saraiki information is being used in the envelope of English alphabets, thus creating a hybrid language. When a student use such a creative combination of local and international language, it leads to construction of hybrid identities at Facebook, it is clearly exhibited in the given piece of collected data.

**C4:May Allah bless the deceased soul with jannah and cast the shadow of mercy  
upon the mourners.**

إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

Fig:1.4

Recently, news related to UOM student death in a road accident was posted on the official Facebook page of University of Mianwali. This news was posted in English language, so all other students posted comments in the same language just to have resemblance with others. Although it was tragic news and local languages might have portrayed emotions in a better way, C4 intentionally utilized the convergence strategy to minimize social distance and to communicate appropriately.

## **8b. Degree of Divergence**

The data under this category reveal the degree by which students diverge in digital platforms of a local University.

**D1: bahun ziada high merit hay.  
(merit is too high)**

fig:2.1

By hiding the username, this public comment of University student is anonymously labeled as D1 comment. The student used code switching in order to communicate according to the context. The user commented on the post where merit lists were being posted by official authorities of University of Mianwali. To give communication a modern touch, D1 student shifted the language from Urdu to English by using two words of same meaning in same comment to lay emphasis on his/her opinion. The lexeme (ziada and high) both are synonymous to one another but student add the term (high) in the comment for the sake of relatable touch as well as to show more civilized

behavior. As a student, the user tries not to be harsh in the comment section thus adding a piece of foreign language to minimize the emotional effect in the local language.

**D2: jewy piara Mianwali**

fig:2.2

In the post of International conference was on air grasped the attention of students and made them leave a comment under the post. The researcher again transcribed the comment by keeping the username and identity a secret as D2. This comment displays the approach of divergence used by students of University of Mianwali, student D2 reflects social identity by using local language Saraiki in the wrapping of English language. D2 was the only student who communicated via Saraiki comment whilst other comments were posted in English language. D2 tried to be different from others thus chose mother tongue to share the opinion.

**D3: Sports gala kitnay dhiaran da hosi  
(how prolonged will be the sports gala?)**

Fig:2.3

In the Facebook post regarding sports gala of University of Mianwali, student which is labeled by the researcher as D3 used Saraiki language for inquisitive purpose. The level of curiosity compelled D3 student to use mother tongue on the post where other students were using English language. It manifest divergence strategy of communication by which student used a local language to be visible and discriminated from other students posting comments in English language. The above mentioned comment clearly displays the use of different languages within a same utterance. It is not just a linguistics shift but a whole personality of language user shifts in the meanwhile.

**D4: Khyr hovny Sir ji ❤️**

fig:2.4

This comment is posted by the user D4. It reflects how casually divergence is being practiced by the students at social media. The data shows to what degree students diverge according deliberately. In the given transcribed comment where student D4 posted comment in Saraiki by using English terms in it. The main idea is portrayed in Saraiki just to have a different social identity as compared to the contemporary comments that were posted in English language. The dominant use of local language by a student shows cultural nuances. The use of red heart emoji add depth to meanings along with verbal message.

**D5: I made a humble request to the UMW administration especially the VC and registrar sahb please issue our transcripts. We are ineligible to apply anywhere without transcripts ☐**

fig:2.5

This comment is anonymously coded as a D5 comment which reflects a divergent approach of a student by which the student uses language to have some discrimination from others. In the exhibits the mental frustration of a graduated student in a formal way to retain the respectful environment in digital spaces. It shows how students use non native language to have a control on emotions, to avoid mental crisis and to stay on the track of modernism. Other student in comment

section of the same post were using Urdu and Saraiki for Catharsis but this student deliberately used an official language to deal with official authority in a well mannered way. The use of sad emoji as paralanguage reveal emotional outbursts and add to the meaning of communication.

### 8c. Maintenance

This communication style is utilized by the student to deliver formal and informal speech in a natural way.

est of luck for future endeavors

fig:3.1.

The researcher extracted this comment from Facebook post of University of Mianwali where officials have shared a welcome post for new Vice chancellor of the same institute. The above mentioned and transcribed comment depicts that how the student uses English language to stay formal and ethical in the realm of social media. M1 was capable of using native language to portray the emotional depth but he avoid the use of local language for the sake of maintaining a modern identity produced with the use of more sophisticated language such as English language.

re there any seats still remaining in the software engineering department after this merit li  
tell me.

fig:3.2

This comment is shared by the user M2 at the Facebook page of a local University; University of Mianwali. It clearly shows the degree of maintenance attained by students to keep a balance in emotional and intellectual personalities and to keep stability in constructing social identities and relationships. Also, the maintenance approach is utilized by the user M2 to express the identity and to maintain dominance in the formal context. Maintenance assists students to link old and new identity, ultimately leading to the production of linguistically amalgamated self.

The following table summarizes the usage of CAT theory in comments shared by students at official university posts with different contexts.

CAT's Element	Code	Transcribed comment
Convergence	C1	Kisi k pas BS ki first Merit list hai share krden please.
Convergence	C2	MashaAllah, UOM ko leadermil gya
Convergence	C3	Main akha phly pata kr rkhan khuda na khwasta kam thi wenda hy tan nawa admission ghin rkhan 😞
Convergence	C4	May Allah bless the deceased soul with jannah and cast the shadow of mercy upon the mourners. إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ
Divergence	D1	Bahun Ziada High Merit Hay.

Divergence	D2	jewy piara Mianwali
Divergence	D3	Sports gala kitnay dhiaran da hosi
Divergence	D4	Khyr hovny Sir ji ❤️
Divergence	D5	I made a humble request to the UMW administration especially the VC and registrar sahb please issue our transcripts. We are ineligible to apply anywhere without transcripts ☐
Maintainance	M1	Best of luck for future endeavors 😊
Maintainance	M2	Are there any seats still remaining in the software engineering department after this merit list? kindly tell me.

Figure 4: Degree of CAT Theory Usage

**9. Results and conclusion:**

The researcher ethically collected the data, displayed data anonymously by coding sheets and analyzed according to the interpretive approach of the qualitative method. Data is further analyzed in the realm of CAT theory; Communication Accommodation Theory. The collected set of data clearly manifest that users actually shifted their whole identities when they use different languages. While using English language to look modern and sophisticated, they creatively maintain the balance in the use of local language (Saraiki) and official language (English) as the user M1, M2, M3 and M4 did the same practice while communicating on social media. They maintain their personas by using English language as a source of interaction. Other students who tried to look different, used their mother tongue or local language as a tool of communication at digital platforms like Facebook. They found it more appropriate to retain their social identity thus they diverge according to the situational context. Under the lens of Communication Accommodation Theory, the users that are labeled anonymously as D1, D2, D3 and D4 strategically diverge to stay intact with native language and to share emotions more clearly and effectively. In addition, some students accommodate their language according to the participants to which they are having interaction to minimize social alienation and social isolation. This study labeled the comments of such students as C1, C2, C3 and C4. Resultantly usage of multiple languages change the whole personality of a human being like the undergraduates, graduates and post graduates students of University of Mianwali shifted their identities with the dynamic phenomenon of language by borrowing, code switching, code mixing and translanguaging strategies. In short, the use of English and local language to create hybrid identity in the area of cross cultural communication. The researcher found the clear shift in individual’s personality with the shift of language. The research clearly answered the question to the problems and research objective have been attained successfully. The future researcher should be encouraged to practically apply the same study design on different sample size and population in order to understand the connection between language and identity. Mix research methodology may produce more effective results to analyze the hybrid identities of students, the future studies should incorporate technology and artificial intelligence tools for data analysis to produce more up to date researches.

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