

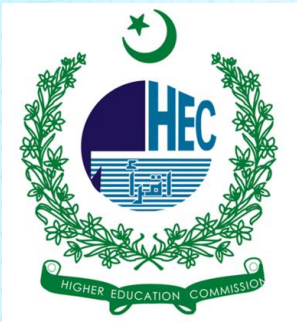
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**Code-Switching and Pragmatic Meaning in Pakistani Social
Media Discourse**



¹Unsia Javed

²Uzma Safdar

^{*3}Irsa Javed

¹Principal Superior Colleges Shahdara. Ph.D Scholar, Deptt of English, University of South Asia, Lahore. Email: zahidunsia@gmail.com

²Visiting Faculty, LUMS, FAST NU. PhD Scholar. Department of English. University of South Asia, Lahore. Punjab, Pakistan Email: uzmasafdarzeem@gmail.com

^{*3}Lecturer, Center of Skills Development and Learning, University of Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan Corresponding Author Email: irsa.javed@csdl.uol.edu.pk

Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between code-switching and pragmatic meaning in Pakistani social media discourse, focusing on how multilingual users strategically alternate between English and local languages such as Urdu and Sindhi in digital communication. Situated within the theoretical framework of sociolinguistics and pragmatics, the research examines the communicative, social, and cultural functions of code-switching in online interactions across platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, X (formerly Twitter), and Instagram. In multilingual societies like Pakistan, code-switching is not merely a linguistic phenomenon but also a pragmatic resource employed to negotiate identity, express emotions, establish solidarity, convey humor, and achieve contextual appropriateness in communication. Using a qualitative content analysis approach, the study analyzes selected social media posts, comments, and conversational exchanges produced by Pakistani users. The data are examined through the lens of speech act theory, politeness theory, and conversational implicature to identify how pragmatic meanings are constructed and interpreted through language alternation. The findings reveal that code-switching functions as a significant discourse strategy that enhances expressive power, indexes cultural identity, softens or strengthens interpersonal meanings, and reflects social positioning within digital spaces. Furthermore, the study demonstrates that users employ code-switching intentionally to create intimacy, sarcasm, emphasis, humor, and group affiliation in online interactions.

Keywords: Code-switching; Pragmatics; Pakistani Social Media Discourse; Digital Communication; Sociolinguistics; Speech Acts; Politeness Strategies; Conversational Implicature

Introduction

The emergence of digital communication has transformed the ways individuals interact, negotiate identities, and construct meaning across multilingual societies. Social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter) have become significant spaces where language users employ diverse linguistic resources to communicate effectively and creatively. In multilingual

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contexts like Pakistan, online communication frequently involves code-switching, a phenomenon in which speakers alternate between two or more languages within a single conversation, sentence, or discourse context. This linguistic practice reflects not only bilingual competence but also pragmatic and sociocultural intentions embedded in communication (Gumperz, 1982).

Code-switching has long been examined within sociolinguistics as a communicative strategy influenced by social identity, context, and interpersonal relationships. According to Myers-Scotton (1993), bilingual speakers switch languages strategically to negotiate power relations, solidarity, and social meanings. In Pakistan, where English functions as an official and prestigious language alongside Urdu and regional languages such as Sindhi, Punjabi, Pashto, and Balochi, code-switching has become a common feature of both spoken and written communication (Rahman, 1996). The increasing use of social media has further expanded opportunities for multilingual speakers to engage in hybrid linguistic practices that blend English with local languages for expressive and pragmatic purposes.

From a pragmatic perspective, code-switching serves various communicative functions beyond grammatical alternation. Speakers use language switching to express emotions, emphasize ideas, soften criticism, create humor, establish intimacy, and perform identity-related functions in discourse (Auer, 1998). Pragmatics, which concerns the interpretation of meaning in context, provides a useful framework for understanding how bilingual users employ code-switching to achieve specific communicative goals in online interaction (Yule, 1996). On social media platforms, where communication is often informal, immediate, and audience-sensitive, code-switching becomes a valuable pragmatic resource for negotiating meaning and social relationships.

Research on digital discourse has shown that online communication encourages linguistic creativity and flexible language practices. Androutsopoulos (2015) argues that social media environments facilitate multilingual discourse in ways that challenge traditional language boundaries. Pakistani users frequently switch between English and Urdu in online conversations to convey sarcasm, politeness, group affiliation, and cultural identity. Such switching patterns are not random; rather, they are contextually motivated and pragmatically meaningful. For instance, English

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expressions may be used to project modernity, education, or professionalism, while Urdu or regional languages may index emotional closeness, cultural authenticity, or humor.

The concept of pragmatic meaning is particularly relevant in understanding digital multilingual communication. Pragmatic meaning involves implied meanings, speaker intentions, and contextual interpretations derived from language use (Levinson, 1983). Through code-switching, speakers often communicate meanings that extend beyond literal interpretation. A switch into Urdu, for example, may signal intimacy or emotional intensity, whereas English may function to mitigate face-threatening acts or convey authority. These pragmatic functions align with Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, which emphasizes how speakers strategically manage interpersonal relationships during interaction.

In the Pakistani context, studies on code-switching have primarily focused on classroom interaction, media discourse, and spoken communication; however, limited research has explored the pragmatic dimensions of code-switching in social media discourse. As digital communication continues to shape linguistic behavior among Pakistani youth and educated communities, there is a growing need to investigate how code-switching contributes to meaning-making in online environments. Examining these practices can provide deeper insights into contemporary multilingual communication and the evolving nature of Pakistani English within digital spaces.

Therefore, this study seeks to explore the relationship between code-switching and pragmatic meaning in Pakistani social media discourse. By analyzing online interactions through the lens of pragmatics and sociolinguistics, the research aims to identify the communicative purposes, contextual meanings, and social functions associated with language alternation in digital communication. The study contributes to ongoing discussions in pragmatics, discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, and World Englishes, particularly within the Pakistani multilingual context.

Statement of the Problem

Code-switching has become a common linguistic practice in Pakistani social media discourse, where users frequently alternate between English, Urdu, and regional languages to communicate in online environments. Although previous studies have examined code-switching from sociolinguistic and structural perspectives, limited

attention has been given to its pragmatic dimensions, particularly in digitally mediated communication. In Pakistan's multilingual context, social media users employ code-switching not only as a linguistic habit but also as a communicative strategy to express emotions, negotiate identities, establish solidarity, convey humor, and achieve contextual appropriateness. However, there remains insufficient scholarly understanding of how these language alternations generate pragmatic meanings in online discourse.

Furthermore, the rapid growth of digital communication platforms has transformed patterns of interaction, making online discourse an important area for linguistic and pragmatic investigation. Existing studies on Pakistani code-switching have largely focused on classroom settings, television media, or spoken interactions, while the pragmatic functions of code-switching in social media communication remain underexplored. As a result, there is a need to investigate how Pakistani social media users strategically employ code-switching to construct meaning and manage interpersonal relationships in digital spaces. This study therefore seeks to analyze the pragmatic meanings associated with code-switching in Pakistani social media discourse through the framework of pragmatics and sociolinguistics.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it contributes to the growing body of research on pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and digital discourse in multilingual societies. By examining code-switching in Pakistani social media communication, the research provides insights into how bilingual and multilingual users utilize language strategically to convey implied meanings, emotions, and social identities in online interaction. The study expands scholarly understanding of pragmatic meaning in computer-mediated communication and highlights the dynamic role of multilingualism in digital spaces.

The research is also important in the context of Pakistani English and World Englishes, as it demonstrates how English interacts with Urdu and regional languages in everyday online discourse. The findings may help researchers understand the evolving linguistic practices of Pakistani social media users and the sociocultural factors influencing digital communication. Additionally, the study may benefit scholars and students in pragmatics, discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, media studies,

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and English Language Teaching (ELT) by providing empirical insights into contemporary language use.

Moreover, the study has pedagogical significance for ELT practitioners and language educators. Understanding the pragmatic functions of code-switching can help teachers recognize how multilingual learners use language in authentic communication contexts. This may encourage more inclusive and context-sensitive approaches to language teaching that acknowledge the realities of multilingual communication in Pakistan.

Research Questions

1. How is code-switching used in Pakistani social media discourse?
2. What pragmatic meanings are conveyed through code-switching in Pakistani social media interactions?
3. How does code-switching contribute to identity construction and interpersonal communication in Pakistani digital discourse?

Literature Review

Code-switching has remained one of the central areas of inquiry in sociolinguistics, pragmatics, and bilingual discourse studies. In multilingual societies, speakers frequently alternate between two or more languages to fulfill communicative, social, and psychological functions. The phenomenon has gained increasing scholarly attention in recent decades, particularly with the expansion of digital communication and social media platforms. In the Pakistani context, where multilingualism is deeply embedded in everyday interaction, code-switching between English, Urdu, and regional languages has become a common linguistic practice in both spoken and online discourse. This literature review examines the theoretical and empirical studies related to code-switching, pragmatics, social media discourse, and Pakistani multilingual communication.

Code-Switching: Concept and Theoretical Perspectives

Code-switching refers to the alternation between two or more languages or language varieties within a conversation or utterance (Gumperz, 1982). Early sociolinguistic studies viewed code-switching as a socially meaningful practice rather than a sign of linguistic deficiency. Gumperz (1982) argued that bilingual speakers use code-switching as a contextualization cue to signal social meanings, interpersonal

relationships, and conversational intentions. Similarly, Myers-Scotton (1993) proposed the Markedness Model, which explains that speakers strategically choose linguistic codes to negotiate rights, obligations, and social identities during interaction. Auer (1998) further emphasized the conversational dimension of code-switching by examining how speakers use language alternation to organize discourse and achieve communicative goals. According to Auer, code-switching is interactionally meaningful and context-dependent, as speakers switch codes to indicate topic shifts, emotional emphasis, or group solidarity. These theoretical perspectives highlight that code-switching is not random but serves pragmatic and sociocultural functions in communication.

In multilingual postcolonial societies such as Pakistan, code-switching is often associated with social prestige, education, and identity construction. Rahman (1996) explains that English occupies a significant position in Pakistani society due to its colonial legacy and institutional importance in education, administration, and media. Consequently, bilingual speakers frequently mix English with Urdu and regional languages to project social status, modernity, and educational background.

Pragmatics and Meaning in Communication

Pragmatics is concerned with how meaning is constructed and interpreted in context (Levinson, 1983). Unlike semantics, which focuses on literal meaning, pragmatics explores implied meanings, speaker intentions, and contextual interpretation. Yule (1996) defines pragmatics as the study of speaker meaning and contextual communication. Within pragmatic theory, concepts such as speech acts, implicature, politeness, and deixis are central to understanding how language users achieve communicative purposes.

Austin's (1962) speech act theory and Searle's (1969) classification of speech acts explain how utterances perform actions such as requesting, apologizing, promising, or warning. In multilingual discourse, speakers often switch languages to strengthen or soften speech acts depending on contextual and interpersonal factors. Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory further suggests that speakers strategically manage face-threatening acts through linguistic choices. Code-switching can therefore function as a politeness strategy that mitigates criticism, expresses solidarity, or creates social intimacy.

Grice's (1975) theory of conversational implicature also contributes to understanding the pragmatic functions of code-switching. Speakers may deliberately switch codes to imply hidden meanings, sarcasm, humor, or emotional nuance that cannot be fully expressed in a single language. In online communication, such pragmatic implications become particularly significant because users rely heavily on linguistic creativity to convey attitudes and interpersonal meanings.

Code-Switching and Pragmatic Functions

Several studies have explored the pragmatic functions of code-switching in bilingual and multilingual communication. Malik (1994) identified various motivations for code-switching, including lack of facility, emphasis, habitual expressions, and emotional expression. Similarly, Holmes (2013) observed that bilingual speakers switch languages to signal identity, group membership, and social relationships.

Research indicates that code-switching often performs discourse-related and interpersonal functions. According to Appel and Muysken (2005), language alternation may serve referential, expressive, directive, phatic, and metalinguistic purposes. Expressive functions are particularly evident in emotionally charged discourse, where speakers shift into their native language to communicate feelings more effectively. In South Asian contexts, bilingual users frequently switch between English and local languages to create humor, irony, or emphasis in interaction.

Interlanguage pragmatics research has also highlighted how bilingual speakers transfer cultural norms and pragmatic strategies across languages. Kasper and Blum-Kulka (1993) argue that pragmatic competence involves the ability to use language appropriately according to social and cultural contexts. In multilingual digital communication, users employ code-switching to navigate multiple cultural identities and communicative expectations simultaneously.

Social Media and Digital Discourse

The emergence of social media has transformed patterns of human communication and language use. Computer-mediated communication allows users to engage in rapid, informal, and interactive discourse that often blends spoken and written linguistic features. Crystal (2006) observed that internet communication promotes linguistic innovation and hybrid language practices. Social media platforms encourage users to experiment with language creatively, particularly in multilingual communities.

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Androutsopoulos (2015) introduced the concept of “networked multilingualism” to explain how multilingual speakers use digital spaces to negotiate identities and linguistic practices. Social media users often combine multiple languages in posts, comments, hashtags, and memes to create contextually meaningful discourse. Such language mixing reflects not only bilingual competence but also social positioning and audience awareness.

Tagg (2015) explains that online discourse is shaped by informality, immediacy, and audience interaction, which encourage flexible language use. In multilingual contexts, code-switching becomes an important communicative strategy through which users establish solidarity, humor, and emotional closeness. Studies on digital pragmatics suggest that online communication intensifies the pragmatic functions of language because users rely heavily on contextual cues, linguistic choices, and symbolic expressions to convey meaning.

Code-Switching in Pakistani Context

Pakistan represents a linguistically diverse society where Urdu functions as the national language, English as an official language, and numerous regional languages coexist. This multilingual environment creates favorable conditions for code-switching in everyday communication. Rahman (1996) notes that English in Pakistan symbolizes education, prestige, and professional identity, while Urdu and regional languages maintain strong cultural and emotional associations.

Research on Pakistani code-switching has largely focused on educational settings, television media, and spoken discourse. Mansoor (2004) observed that Pakistani bilingual speakers frequently mix English and Urdu to negotiate social status and identity. Likewise, Rasul (2006) found that code-switching among Pakistani youth reflects changing linguistic attitudes and globalization influences.

In media discourse, code-switching has become increasingly common in television programs, advertisements, and political speeches. Ahmed and Ali (2014) argue that Pakistani media utilizes English lexical items to attract urban audiences and project modernity. However, limited research has examined the pragmatic dimensions of code-switching in Pakistani social media discourse. Existing studies mainly address structural patterns rather than contextual meanings and communicative intentions associated with language alternation.

With the rapid expansion of social networking platforms in Pakistan, online communication has emerged as a significant site for multilingual interaction. Pakistani users frequently switch between English and Urdu in Facebook posts, WhatsApp conversations, and X posts to express humor, sarcasm, intimacy, and cultural identity. Such practices indicate that code-switching functions as an important pragmatic resource in digital communication.

Research Gap

Although substantial research exists on code-switching and bilingual communication, limited attention has been paid to the pragmatic meanings associated with code-switching in Pakistani social media discourse. Most Pakistani studies have focused on classroom interaction, media language, or sociolinguistic aspects of bilingualism, while the contextual and pragmatic functions of code-switching in online communication remain underexplored. Moreover, there is insufficient research investigating how Pakistani social media users employ code-switching strategically to construct identity, negotiate interpersonal relationships, and convey implied meanings in digital spaces.

Therefore, the present study seeks to address this gap by examining code-switching through the lens of pragmatics and digital discourse analysis. The study contributes to contemporary research in sociolinguistics, pragmatics, and World Englishes by exploring how multilingual Pakistani users create pragmatic meaning through language alternation in social media communication.

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design to investigate the pragmatic meanings associated with code-switching in Pakistani social media discourse. Qualitative methodology is considered appropriate because the research aims to explore contextual meanings, communicative intentions, and discourse functions embedded in multilingual online interactions. The study is grounded in the interpretivist research paradigm, which focuses on understanding how individuals construct meaning through language in social contexts. Data for the study consist of purposively selected social media posts, comments, chats, and conversational exchanges collected from popular digital platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter). The selected data include instances where users

alternated between English, Urdu, and regional languages within the same discourse. Ethical considerations were maintained by anonymizing users' identities and excluding private or sensitive information from the analysis.

The collected data were analyzed through qualitative content analysis and discourse analysis techniques within the framework of pragmatics and sociolinguistics. The study particularly draws upon Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969), Politeness Theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987), and Conversational Implicature (Grice, 1975) to examine how code-switching contributes to meaning-making in online communication. The analysis focuses on identifying the pragmatic functions of code-switching, including humor, emphasis, politeness, identity construction, emotional expression, and group solidarity. Patterns of language alternation were interpreted in relation to contextual and sociocultural factors influencing digital communication in Pakistan. Through thematic interpretation, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how multilingual social media users strategically employ code-switching as a pragmatic resource in contemporary online discourse.

Data Analysis/Results

The collected data from Pakistani social media platforms were analyzed qualitatively using thematic discourse analysis. A total of 120 social media interactions, including Facebook comments, WhatsApp chats, Instagram captions, and X (formerly Twitter) posts, were purposively selected for analysis. The data revealed that code-switching between English, Urdu, and regional languages was a frequent and meaningful communicative practice among users. The analysis identified several recurring pragmatic functions of code-switching in online discourse, including emotional expression, humor and sarcasm, identity construction, politeness strategies, and group solidarity.

1. Code-Switching for Emotional Expression

One of the most dominant themes identified in the data was the use of code-switching to express emotions and personal feelings. Participants frequently shifted from English to Urdu while communicating anger, affection, excitement, or frustration. For example:

“I am seriously tired of this workload yaar, bas ab aur nahi hota.”

In this example, the speaker begins the statement in English but switches to Urdu to

intensify emotional expression. The Urdu phrase “bas ab aur nahi hota” conveys frustration more naturally and emotionally than its English equivalent. The findings suggest that users associate local languages with emotional authenticity and personal intimacy, whereas English is often used for informational or formal communication.

The analysis indicates that code-switching serves as an expressive pragmatic strategy that allows speakers to communicate emotional depth more effectively. This finding aligns with Malik’s (1994) view that bilingual speakers switch codes to achieve emotional emphasis and contextual appropriateness.

2. Humor and Sarcasm through Code-Switching

Another major finding was the use of code-switching to create humor and sarcasm in online interactions. Many users employed Urdu expressions within English discourse to produce comic effects and culturally recognizable meanings. For example:

“Bro thinks he is a celebrity, lekin ghar walay hi usko seriously nahi lete.”

Here, the humorous effect emerges from the contrast between English and Urdu. The Urdu clause intensifies sarcasm and creates relatability for Pakistani audiences. The findings demonstrate that code-switching enables users to produce culturally embedded humor that may lose its pragmatic impact if expressed in only one language.

This pattern reflects Grice’s (1975) concept of conversational implicature, where implied meanings are communicated indirectly through contextual linguistic choices. The switching behavior also indicates audience awareness, as users rely on shared cultural understanding to interpret humor.

3. Identity Construction and Social Positioning

The data further revealed that code-switching plays a significant role in identity construction and social positioning. English was frequently associated with education, professionalism, and modern identity, while Urdu and regional languages reflected cultural belonging and interpersonal closeness. For example:

“Presentation went really well today Alhamdulillah, sab ki support ka bohat shukriya.”

In this instance, English is used to discuss academic achievement, while Urdu expresses gratitude and emotional connection. The inclusion of the Arabic expression “Alhamdulillah” further reflects religious and cultural identity. Such examples indicate that multilingual users strategically switch languages to represent multiple

social identities simultaneously.

The findings support Myers-Scotton's (1993) Markedness Model, which explains that speakers choose linguistic codes intentionally to negotiate social meanings and group affiliations. Pakistani social media users appear to utilize code-switching as a symbolic resource for balancing modernity, cultural identity, and social relationships.

4. Politeness and Relationship Management

Code-switching was also found to function as a politeness strategy in online discourse. Users often shifted into Urdu when making requests, apologies, or criticisms in order to soften the tone of interaction. For example:

“Can you please send the assignment today? Agar possible ho toh jaldi bhej dena.”

The Urdu segment reduces the directness of the request and creates a more polite and cooperative tone. Similarly, speakers frequently used Urdu honorifics and culturally respectful expressions when addressing elders or authority figures online.

The analysis demonstrates that code-switching contributes to face-saving strategies, supporting Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory. Users strategically alternate languages to maintain interpersonal harmony and avoid sounding overly harsh or formal.

5. Group Solidarity and In-Group Communication

The findings additionally revealed that code-switching strengthens group solidarity and social intimacy in digital communication. Many users switched languages to signal shared cultural experiences and in-group belonging. For example:

“That lecture was impossible to understand, scene hi off tha.”

The mixed expression combines English with Urdu slang commonly understood among Pakistani youth. Such hybrid language use creates familiarity and reinforces social bonds among group members.

This finding suggests that code-switching functions as a marker of collective identity in online communities. The use of culturally specific phrases and slang establishes a sense of belonging and shared understanding among multilingual speakers.

Findings

The overall findings of the study indicate that code-switching in Pakistani social media discourse is not random or accidental; rather, it is a purposeful pragmatic

strategy used to achieve various communicative goals. Pakistani multilingual users strategically alternate between English, Urdu, and regional languages to express emotions, create humor, negotiate identities, maintain politeness, and strengthen interpersonal relationships. The findings highlight the dynamic and context-sensitive nature of digital multilingual communication in Pakistan.

Moreover, the study demonstrates that social media platforms encourage flexible and hybrid language practices where users creatively combine linguistic resources to produce contextually meaningful discourse. English often functions as a language of modernity and formal expression, whereas Urdu and local languages convey intimacy, emotional authenticity, and cultural identity. The integration of multiple languages within digital communication reflects the evolving nature of Pakistani English and multilingual discourse in technologically mediated environments.

The results contribute to pragmatics and sociolinguistic research by illustrating how code-switching serves as an important meaning-making resource in online interaction. The findings also reinforce the idea that language choice in digital discourse is deeply connected to social, cultural, and pragmatic considerations.

Discussion

The findings of the present study demonstrate that code-switching in Pakistani social media discourse functions as a significant pragmatic resource through which users construct meaning, negotiate identities, and manage interpersonal relationships in online communication. The analysis revealed that bilingual and multilingual users strategically alternate between English, Urdu, and regional languages to achieve various communicative purposes such as emotional expression, humor, politeness, solidarity, and identity representation. These findings support the sociolinguistic perspective that code-switching is not a random linguistic phenomenon but a socially and pragmatically meaningful communicative practice (Gumperz, 1982).

One of the major findings of the study was the use of code-switching for emotional expression. Participants frequently shifted from English to Urdu or regional languages when expressing emotions such as frustration, affection, excitement, or disappointment. This finding aligns with Malik's (1994) argument that bilingual speakers often switch languages to communicate emotions more effectively and

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naturally. Urdu and regional languages appeared to carry stronger emotional and cultural associations for Pakistani users, whereas English was commonly employed for informational or formal communication. The results also support Holmes' (2013) claim that speakers select linguistic codes according to the emotional and social context of interaction.

The study further found that code-switching plays an important role in creating humor and sarcasm in online discourse. Users frequently inserted Urdu phrases into English discourse to produce culturally recognizable comic effects and indirect meanings. This finding corresponds with Grice's (1975) theory of conversational implicature, which explains that speakers often communicate implied meanings through contextual and indirect linguistic strategies. In Pakistani social media interactions, sarcasm and humor were more pragmatically effective when expressed through mixed linguistic forms because shared cultural knowledge allowed audiences to interpret intended meanings more easily. These findings also reflect Androutsopoulos' (2015) notion of networked multilingualism, where multilingual users creatively exploit digital spaces for expressive and socially meaningful communication.

Another important finding concerns identity construction and social positioning. The analysis showed that English was often associated with modernity, education, and professionalism, while Urdu and regional languages indexed cultural belonging, intimacy, and authenticity. This supports Myers-Scotton's (1993) Markedness Model, which suggests that speakers consciously choose particular linguistic codes to negotiate social identities and interpersonal relationships. Pakistani social media users appeared to balance global and local identities simultaneously through code-switching practices. The blending of English with Urdu demonstrates the hybrid linguistic identity that characterizes Pakistani digital discourse in the age of globalization.

The findings also indicate that code-switching functions as a politeness strategy in online communication. Participants frequently shifted into Urdu while making requests, apologies, or criticism to reduce directness and maintain interpersonal harmony. This observation strongly supports Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, which argues that speakers employ linguistic strategies to

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protect face and avoid social conflict. In the Pakistani sociocultural context, the use of Urdu honorifics and indirect expressions through code-switching appeared to soften potentially face-threatening acts and promote cooperative interaction.

Additionally, the study found that code-switching strengthens group solidarity and in-group communication among Pakistani social media users. Hybrid expressions combining English and Urdu slang created a sense of familiarity and shared cultural identity among participants. This finding is consistent with Auer's (1998) argument that code-switching serves important discourse and interactional functions by signaling group membership and social affiliation. Online multilingual discourse therefore reflects not only linguistic competence but also collective identity formation within digital communities.

The results of this study also contribute to the growing field of digital pragmatics by illustrating how social media platforms encourage flexible and innovative language practices. Crystal (2006) observed that internet communication promotes linguistic creativity and hybridization, a phenomenon clearly evident in the analyzed Pakistani social media interactions. The immediacy and informality of digital communication allow users to combine languages dynamically in ways that reflect contextual meanings and audience expectations.

Overall, the findings suggest that code-switching in Pakistani social media discourse operates as a multifunctional pragmatic strategy shaped by sociocultural, emotional, and contextual factors. The study contributes to existing literature on pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and digital discourse by demonstrating that multilingual users strategically manipulate linguistic resources to communicate meanings that extend beyond literal language use. Moreover, the research highlights the evolving nature of Pakistani English and multilingual communication in technologically mediated environments.

Conclusion

This study explored the relationship between code-switching and pragmatic meaning in Pakistani social media discourse. The findings reveal that code-switching is a purposeful and context-sensitive communicative strategy widely used by Pakistani multilingual users in online interactions. Rather than functioning merely as a linguistic alternation between English, Urdu, and regional languages, code-switching

serves multiple pragmatic purposes, including emotional expression, humor and sarcasm, politeness, identity construction, and group solidarity. The study demonstrates that Pakistani social media users strategically employ different linguistic codes to communicate meanings that extend beyond literal interpretation.

The analysis further indicates that English is commonly associated with modernity, professionalism, and educational identity, while Urdu and regional languages convey emotional closeness, cultural authenticity, and interpersonal intimacy. Through code-switching, users negotiate multiple social and cultural identities simultaneously within digital environments. The findings also highlight the role of social media as a space that encourages linguistic flexibility, creativity, and hybrid communication practices among multilingual speakers.

Moreover, the study contributes to the fields of pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and digital discourse by emphasizing the importance of contextual and cultural factors in online multilingual communication. It enriches existing scholarship on Pakistani English and World Englishes by demonstrating how language practices in digital spaces reflect evolving sociocultural realities in Pakistan. Overall, the research confirms that code-switching is an important pragmatic resource that enables social media users to achieve communicative effectiveness and interpersonal connection in technologically mediated discourse.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Researchers should conduct further studies on code-switching in other digital platforms such as TikTok, YouTube comments, and online gaming communities to gain broader insights into multilingual online communication practices.
2. Future research may employ mixed-method or quantitative approaches to examine the frequency, patterns, and sociolinguistic variables influencing code-switching in Pakistani digital discourse.
3. Comparative studies should be conducted between Pakistani social media discourse and other multilingual societies to explore similarities and differences in pragmatic code-switching practices.
4. English Language Teaching (ELT) practitioners should acknowledge code-switching as a natural communicative resource rather than treating it solely as

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language interference. Classroom discussions on multilingual communication may help learners develop pragmatic competence in real-life contexts.

5. Curriculum developers may integrate topics related to pragmatics, digital discourse, and multilingual communication into language and linguistics courses to enhance students' understanding of authentic language use in online environments.
6. Researchers in pragmatics and sociolinguistics should further investigate the relationship between code-switching and identity construction, particularly among Pakistani youth and digital communities.
7. Social media discourse should be recognized as an important area for linguistic research because digital communication increasingly shapes contemporary language practices, cultural expression, and interpersonal interaction in multilingual societies.

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