



PAKISTANI ENGLISH: FROM THE MARGINS TO THE MAINSTREAM THROUGH MEMES AND FASHION NARRATIVES

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Abstract

This study investigates how Pakistani English (PE), a locally distinctive variety of English mediated by the sociocultural realities within Pakistan, is gaining social validation through on-trend digital spaces: meme communities and fashion dialogues. Based on sociolinguistic and language ideology perspectives, it looks at the role of PE as a communicative and symbolic resource in informal online environments. The study uses a descriptive qualitative approach augmented by quantitative surveys, analyzing 150 memes, and 50 fashion slogans, as well as responses from 250 young Pakistanis. Findings of content and thematic analysis show that PE is widely applied in the comical, hybrid and embedded ways that localize and resonate with local audiences. The survey data also demonstrate that youth perceives PE as representative of their identity and cultural pride, and the memes are particularly useful in the normalization and propagation of the diversity. It is found that meme culture and fashion narratives are not simply sites of entertainment and commercial, but are important sites for active reshaping, recognitions and reclamations of PE by its speakers. This adds to our understanding of how localized Englishers are able to achieve legitimacy via informal, youth-led, culturally-mediated practices.

Keywords: *Cultural Recognition, Digital Media, Fashion Discourse, Language Ideology, Meme Culture, Pakistani English, Sociolinguistics, World Englishers.*

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1. Introduction

The dynamic relationship between language and culture, as well as between language and identity, has been a centuries-old concern among sociolinguists and cultural studies scholars, and highlights how language practices both serve as signifiers of, and generators of, social worlds. In multilingual postcolonial societies, such as Pakistani society, the language is not only a colonial legacy, it is also a sign of socio-economic status, educational level, and modernity (Mustafa *et al.*, 2025). Despite this, the English varieties spoken and written in Pakistan, commonly referred to as Pakistani English (PE), are frequently marginalized in international English discussions which are dominated largely by native-speaker norms.

Recent work in World Englishes and language ideology has also suggested that non-native English varieties achieve social status not only through formal practices and policy but through popular cultural forms and digital media practices (León, 2018). In this context, new domains such as those of meme culture and of fashion narratives are, new, understudied sites where Pakistani English can be reconfigured and revalued, and also possibly socially recognized, within and in relation to the 'center.' As multimodal, fast-moving digital text, memes are sites for linguistic creativity, humor and identity work. In addition, fashion narratives, as these are spoken through the language of advertising, celebrity culture, and street style, are embodied and performative texts that facilitate the production of social meanings of language, ethnicity, and modernity (Titton, 2015).

In this current research, representation, appropriation and social acceptance of Pakistani English within the realm of meme culture and fashion narratives are examined. This two-pronged emphasis responds to the increasing appeals in sociolinguistics to investigate the ways popular culture mediates language ideologies and social identity work (Moon, 2022). Even more importantly, the research intervention in the study fills in a void of knowledge by establishing the connection of these two cultural spaces: the digital movement (in terms of memes) and fashion, which are involving in playing a very crucial role in securing high place for youth in the sphere of identity construction along with mediated communication in digital era Pakistan thanks to (Mukhtar *et al.*, 2024). Through a descriptive study of the linguistic aspects, themes, and reception of PE-carrying memes, and fashion discourses, this study seeks to see how they shape the general public's perception and acceptance of PE as another legitimate variety.

While a number of studies have examined the structural features of PE, much less attention has been paid to its socio-pragmatic roles in the context of postmodern digital

and cultural spaces, where identity and power relations are demanded and re-validated all the time. Meme culture then in this case, especially for phenomenon within the Pakistani context offers space for a rich and vibrant grass root media through local hybridization, code switching and humor through which the local subjectivities can find articulation vis-à-vis global flows of culture (Mukhtar *et al.*, 2024). Pakistani English memes, for example, commonly employ unique lexical conventions: idioms, phonetic reproduction and culturally grounded allusions – that help to undermine the homogenizing norms of English, and to celebrate linguistic variance and cultural differences.

Fashion discourses in Pakistan have also brought local linguistic registers to the fore, mixing English with Urdu and regional languages in its advertising slogans, social media captions, and celebrity endorsements. This hybridized language of fashion not only mirrors Pakistan's plural language ecology but also anticipates an aspirational modernity embedded in local cultural paradigms (Naeem, 2024). Fashion therefore is a site of semiotic resource with which Pakistani English becomes visible and gains symbolic capital as it is donned, spoken and performed in the mundane and representational mediation.

This analysis is theoretically informed by language ideology frameworks, which explores the ways in which an articulated set of beliefs about language practices are linked with social hierarchy and identity politics (Woolard, 2020). By looking at meme culture and fashion discourse as sites of the discursive, the paper explores the ways in which Pakistani English subverts, dominant language ideologies and serves as a sign of social covetousness or resistance. In addition, the research fits into the domain of digital sociolinguistics, exploring how the Internet platforms reshape traditional linguistic practices and new forms of linguistic sociality.

This investigation enriches a growing field of sociolinguistic analysis and elucidates the cultural processes by which Pakistani English achieves social acceptability outside of the purview of formal language institutions (Hasan, 2020).

2.Literature Review

The exploration of Pakistani English (PE) in the realm of World Englishes has long been an area of interest among scholars. The main influential study in setting the stage for the recognition of locally determined uses and trajectories of English in postcolonial locations such as Pakistan is Kachru's (1992) model of the three concentric circles of English use. PE fills the expanding circle and has structural and sociolinguistic

characteristics that set it apart from native and other L2 varieties (Prinsloo, 2018). SLA studies have widely reported the unique linguistic features of PE and the impingement of indigenous languages, culture-specific notions, and social pragmatics.

Despite these varieties, Pakistani English has historically been stigmatized and marginalized as an inferior variety within local and international English hierarchies. The overwhelming hegemony of British English norms in schools, universities and the media and the promotion of the dominant narratives of the equivalence of the “correct” English and the Western elements serving as the two dominant forces in the discourse as described by (Cartland, 2017) led to the negative attitudes towards the PE.

PE as a marker of identity and social stratification in Pakistan has also been profiled in research on language attitudes and language policy (IU Khan *et al.*, 2021).

2.1. Language Ideologies and the Politics of Recognition

Language ideology which is perceived as the attitudes, sentiments and conceptions of language form and use, is deeply implicated in the valuation and disavowal of varieties such as Pakistani English (Mahboob, 2015). These dichotomous discourses of language (and identities) are, of course not neutral in any sense of the word; in effect, they are implicated in the promotion of power and social dominance, social hierarchies and identity politics.

Several of these works emphasize that the othering of PE is not due to linguistic deficiency, but due to ideological constructions of what constitutes linguistic ‘correctness’ that is congruent with Western norms. Such ideologies frequently consider regional Englishers as not legitimate or “flawed,” leading to social marginality and linguistic anxiety among speakers (May, 2017).

And this ideological conflict is never more pronounced but in digital and popular culture sites such as the Internet where non-elite language users resist such hegemony, manifesting themselves as a convergence of innovative language usage. (Huc-Hepher, 2021) discussed how language ideologies might change in response to the visibility and symbolic capital of stigmatized varieties in emergent communicative spaces.

2.2. Meme Culture as a Site of Language Innovation and Identity

Memes, cultural contagion transmitted quickly through digital media, constitute a major concern for present-day sociolinguistics and media studies. Memes serve as

vernacular media, mirroring and impacting shared beliefs and language ideologies, and often subverting hegemonic discourses through spoof and satire (Mukhtar *et al.*, 2024).

In the Pakistani setting, meme culture has become a way to negotiate the social, political and cultural circumstances of the country, especially among youth. A linguistic analysis of Pakistani memes appears to be part of a distinctive hybrid style which features Pakistani English, Roman Urdu, codemixing and phonetization to emphasize local humor and cultural references (MK Khan & Nawaz, 2019). Memes are found to play a role in the normalization and social validation of localized varieties of English by virtue of their wide circulation and promotion of collective participation (Almaghrabi, 2023).

Although there is an increasing awareness of the importance of memes, there is little empirical work on the Pakistani-English memes. The majority of the previous research however loosely deals with digital practices of language or political memes, without detailed linguistic or sociocultural analysis of the language varieties of English (Mukhtar *et al.*, 2024). This lacuna points to the importance of descriptive studies that systematically investigate how PE is performed and un-described in meme culture.

2.3. Fashion Narratives and Language: Embodied Discourses of Identity

Linguistic hybridity in fashion discourse including the utilization of English combined with indigenous, also mirrors larger sociolinguistic trends, globalization and all these local/regional properties (Aliyeva, 2017). Fashion has become a prominent site in Pakistan where English indexes cosmopolitanism, trendiness and upward mobility. In Pakistani fashion and content, Pakistani English is used to appeal to the urban youth, who are living in a world of conflict between the traditional cultural values and the global aesthetics. This strategic linguistic use attempts to both naturalize PE, turning it into a commodity, and to enhance the boundaries between in- and out-groups in fashion subcultures.

The impact of language on fashion has been explored in more in-depth ways which show the manner in which these same forms of writing structures, including stylized spelling, casual syntax or code-switching are present in perpetuating the “voice” of brands and fashion personalities and how this works to ultimately make the talk seem “real” and “happening” (Le & Vinh, 2021).

There is abundant literature on fashion communication within Western contexts but oftentimes literature pertaining to the linguistic aspects of the Pakistani fashion industry is deprived (Kirk, 2016). The available studies mostly focus on consumer's

behavior or media representation without thorough analysis of Pakistani English use. This is an important void that the present study seeks to problematize by looking at fashion narratives as instances of language ideology and identity construction.

2.4. Popular Culture, Language Recognition, and Identity Politics

The linkage between popular culture and language identification is a common claim in sociolinguistic literature. Institutional language ideologies are thus contested as popular culture provides marginalized linguistic communities with outlets for visibility, empowerment, and identity expression. In multilingual and postcolonial contexts, popular culture forms such as music, film and digital media are crucial sites for contestation of linguistic hierarchies and the legitimation of vernacular language practices (Helland, 2015).

Digital youth culture is a strong force for language innovation and social change in Pakistan. Sites such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok support content creation and dissemination of a hybrid of English, Urdu, and the regional languages, thus enabling hybrid linguistic repertoires and identities. These aspects lead to continuous social acceptance of Pakistani English, as it intertwines with mass media, popular culture and routine life (Ali, 2023).

In addition, fashion and memes are components of popular culture that have intersecting audiences and serve as complementary forms of linguistic and identity practice. Another is in the countering of the stigmatization of PE as being humorous, stylish, and socially critical with it being used for that which generates pride and self-reckoning. This reflects what is implied from theories that consider language a “lived” and dynamic practice, developed through and across cultural and social practices (Sinha, 2015).

Current studies highlight the need to investigate these cultural forms socio linguistically, and this work not only parallels those calls but also attends to language ideology, multimodality, and popular culture’s role in the formation of language attitudes (Helland, 2015).

3. Methodology

The study used a descriptive qualitative research design supplemented with quantitative elements to facilitate an intricate probing into the social recognition of PE by means of meme culture and fashion discourses. The descriptive qualitative methodology

affords the opportunity to closely analyze and interpret cultural texts and discourses, particularly how PE, as a language device, is realized and socially constructed in online and fashion contexts. This method offers the possibility for a deep understanding of the context of language use, identity, and social meaning (Wastell, 2024).

A stronger focus on quantitative research, especially surveys and descriptive statistics, may also be useful for triangulating evidence to include young people's perceptions and attitudes towards PE. The mixed-method approach offers the virtue of depth and breadth: qualitative findings reveal how language is being practiced and represented on memes and fashion slogans, while the quantitative findings provide quantifiable evidence of social recognition among the target audience. This mixed approach is in line with current sociolinguistic research, which capitalizes on mixed methodological strategies to deal with complex language phenomena (Kircher & Hawkey, 2022).

3.1. Sampling

For this research, the information was triangulated and obtained on purposive basis from three separate though interlinked sources.

3.1.1. Meme Collection

Memes were purposively selected from leading social media sites: Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter, where the Pakistani youth is posting and making memes using Pakistani English. These platforms were chosen based on popularity and their role in shaping the culture of memes. 150 memes with English text mixed with Romanized Urdu and culturally specific references were collected, spanning a three-month period. Memes were chosen for inclusion according to the linguistic variables and popularity (likes, shares, comments).

3.1.2. Fashion Narratives

The study also examined fashion slogans, marketing posts, and brand interviews of top Pakistani fashion brands such as Khadi, Nishat Linen and Sana Safinaz. These two sources offer valuable reflections on the business and aesthetic use of Pakistani English in the marketing of fashion and brand. A repository consisting of 50 slogans and marketing headlines along with 10 released brand interviews on their marketing strategies and language was collected and analyzed (Epure, 2018).

3.1.3. Data from Surveys and Group Discussions

The views of language users and consumers were added through the survey response information and the focus group discussion of the Pakistani young generation of 18-30 years age group. This is the audience and creator of meme-driven culture and fashion. The survey was a structured online questionnaire circulated on Google Forms, with the aim to get a response from at least 200 respondents who are living in various urban centers. Furthermore, we conducted two focus groups of 8–10 participants to capture more in-depth qualitative data on attitudes, perceptions and personal experiences around Pakistani English in memes and fashion.

3.2. Tools & Instruments

The investigation called for a hybrid of content analysis methods, survey instruments, and qualitative coding approaches to examine systematically the array of data:

3.2.1. Content Analysis Checklist

The content analysis checklist was also rigorously developed for the memes, fashion slogans, and marketing posts. The checklist comprised categories such as language cutting, cultural references, brand mentions, humor and semiotics. This was a device to provide systematic, objective analysis of textual and visual data (Nazri & Kassim, 2023).

3.2.2. Online survey (Google Forms)

The survey tool was created on Google Sheets for easy spread and response. The survey comprised closed questions about demographic profile, frequency of interaction with memes and fashion content, and attitudes towards Pakistani English as well as Likert type scales on social recognition, identity association and language attitudes.

3.2.3. Thematic Coding

Thematic coding was applied to qualitative data from focus groups, open-ended survey responses, and textual content. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used and solely qualitative data were analyzed and an inductive coding approach was adopted to determine new themes that emerged on language identity, social acceptance, cultural mixing/hybridity, and language creativity. Codes were refined through iterative cycles of analysis to ensure validity and depth.

3.3. Data Analysis

Using thematic analyses for qualitative data and descriptive statistics for quantitative survey data, the study incorporated triangulation and methodological rigor:

3.3.1. Thematic Analysis

The Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis approach was employed for the analysis of qualitative data, which included memes, fashion narratives and focus group transcripts (Daly & Reed, 2022). This included becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes and defining themes, as well as writing the final analytic report. The study considered how Pakistani English is produced and positioned socio linguistically within discursive and semiotic practices, tracing patterns of language play, humor, identity work, and cultural translation in meme culture and fashion marketing.

3.3.2. Descriptive Statistics

Responses to the survey were analyzed using descriptive statistics in order to measure the respondents' encounters with memes and fashion stories that involve Pakistani English as well as their beliefs about its social status. Demographic data, language preferences, and perceptions were summarized using frequencies, percentages, and graphic presentations (bar graphs, and pie charts). This quantitative analysis supplemented the qualitative results by documenting social identity patterns in the youth population.

4. Analysis and Results

This chapter discusses the results of an investigation of the linguistic and cultural location of PE in memes, fashion slogans, brand strategies and people's understandings. The approach was a mixed methodology including quantitative analysis of language in visual media and survey data, as well as qualitative data from interviews and focus groups.

4.1. Linguistic and Cultural Features in Memes

Table 1: Linguistic and Cultural Features Identified in 150 Pakistani Memes

Feature Category	Frequency (n=150)	Percentage (%)
Code-switching (English-Urdu)	105	70.0%
Roman Urdu Usage	0	0.0%

Use of Pakistani English Lexicon	77	51.3%
Cultural References (local jokes, events)	150	100.0%
Humor via Puns/Wordplay	24	16.0%
Identity Assertion (e.g., desi pride)	40	26.7%

Note: Frequencies exceed 150 as memes may exhibit multiple features simultaneously

An examination of 150 Pakistani memes collected from social media platforms, namely Instagram, Twitter and Facebook uncovers linguistic and cultural discoveries that represent digital creativity and socio-cultural belonging. One of the pervasive trends in these memes is the occurrence of code switching in English and Urdu (in 70% of samples). This linguistic mix is indicative of the bilingual nature of Pakistani urban discourse, particularly the younger generation that is at ease in swinging between the two conversations.

Surprisingly, there are no documents that are written in Roman- Urdu that is a hint that the writers prefer either a complete native script or Romanized languages that is more alike to the English orthography. Moreover, Pakistani English terminology is used in more than half of the memes (51.3%), representing a developing ease with localized usages of English.

Cultural cues are the most common characteristics across all the memes, present in 100% of all memes. Such references may be facetious jokes, extravagant commentary, or funhouse and visual bits based on local happenings, tradition and pointing figures or visual gags or phenomena which were in the wheelhouse of target audiences. In addition, there is 16% of the meme content being pun or word-play based jokes, which shows a sort of witty, linguistic style in the humor of the meme creators. Desi identity assertion, of which expressions of “desi” pride and culture authenticity are part, is seen in 26.7% of the content, which shows memes’ use to articulate a collective identity.

4.2. Language Practices in Fashion Slogans

Table 2: Language Usage in Fashion Slogans (n = 50)

Language Style	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Localized English (with/without rhyme)	21	42%
Code-switching (Urdu-English)	27	54%
Stylized English only	1	2%
Roman Urdu with English keywords	1	2%

By analyzing 50 fashion slogans in Pakistan, this study offers valuable understanding of how brands negotiate the tension between local and global languages and aesthetics. The most common technique found is mixed language, code-switching between Urdu and English (54% of slogans). This may indicate that Pakistani fashion brands are purposefully injecting bilingualism into their slogans to evoke inclusivity and engagement with a broader spectrum of people.

Close behind is the use of localized English (42 percent of the slogans). This also encompasses English expressions 'shaped' with local cultural features, often with a rhyme or rhythm reminiscent of traditional Urdu poetry. This practice is illustrative of how brands are forging a new linguistic identity that straddles Western branding conventions and South Asian sensibilities.

In comparison, entirely stylized English slogans and with English keywords (in Roman Urdu) only occur once and together make up 2% of the dataset. This subdued usage seems to indicate that brands are cautious of extremes in the linguistic spectrum, that is, of maximum English or pure Roman Urdu, as maybe, they are based on considerations of relatability or readability across audiences at large.

4.3. Branding Intentions: Interview Insights

Table 3: Fashion Brand Language Intentions from Interviews (n = 10 Brands)

Theme	No. of Brands Mentioning
Intentional use of Pakistani English to increase relatability	9
Use of local humor/slang in campaigns	4
Concern about global intelligibility	0
Perception of local English as part of identity branding	10

From interviews with ten well known and followed fashion brands of Pakistan. Ninety percent of the brands mentioned the deliberate use of Pakistani English to become more relatable to their audience. This strategic choice is evidence of the increasing acknowledgement by health and wellness marketers that hyper-localized language use isn't just more comfortable for consumers but also promotes feelings of inclusiveness and kinship.

Supporting this point of view, all 10 brands believed that they see Pakistani English as part of a national brand identity. And for some speakers, the use of local linguistic styles is not just a course in style but a schooling in culturally-grounded communication.

Such apparent belief reveals that use of Pakistani English is not simply about the efficiency of communication but includes a symbolic claim to national and regional identity.

Significantly however, no brand we spoke to expressed anxiety about being intelligible on the world stage, despite relying on local vernacular and humor.

4.4. Exposure to Pakistani English in Media

Table 4: Frequency of Exposure to Pakistani English

Item	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Rarely	Never
Memes in Pakistani English (Q1)	64	62	31	38	5
Fashion slogans/ads using Pakistani English (Q2)	48	64	45	38	5

The results summary is presented in Table 4 reveals how frequent the participants come across PE in two widely circulating cyber genres, i.e., memes and fashion slogans/advertisements. And many respondents are regularly being confronted with the memes as indicated in the responses that 64 (out of 200) feel that they see the memes once a day and 62 are see them weekly. This means these memes are very popular, much shared and strongly pertinent to the linguistic practices of digital Pakistani discourses. Monthly and infrequent ratings are lower at 31 and 38, respectively, and no participants claim to never see this type of content, indicating the broad dissemination of Pakistani English in the context of meme transmission.

Exposure to Pakistani English in fashion-oriented media is also notable, but less common, than memes. Around 24% of the respondents (48/200) declared to be exposed on a daily basis to Pakistan English in fashion slogans or advertisements, and 32% (64/200) on a weekly basis. This indicates that Pakistani English is on the rise on print advertising in general, and specifically in fashion advertising. But in a monthly exposure survey (n = 45), we find that it is a little less omnipresent in fashion media than in memes, possibly because fashion content may be more curated.

Overall, the findings suggest that Pakistani English has become a dominant and potential linguistic presence in web-based genres and subgenres.

4.5. Audience Perceptions of Pakistani English

Table 5: Perceptions of Pakistani English

Item	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
PE Reflects Cultural Identity (Q3)	28	94	43	31	4
PE in Memes Relatable (Q4)	30	94	42	30	4
Fashion PE Authentic (Q5)	24	91	50	31	4
PE Valid Variety (Q6)	54	64	45	30	7
Proud of PE in Media (Q7)	54	74	45	19	8
PE Limits Communication (Q8)	6	34	34	84	42
PE Memes Strengthen Bonds (Q9)	60	64	35	26	15
PE Influences Purchases (Q10)	44	54	44	38	20

The percentages listed in Table 5 give a picture of the real facts of public opinion on Pakistani English (PE). Substantial majorities of the participants, 122 of 200 (61%) strongly agreed or agreed that, so PE is a sign of cultural identity showing a general acceptance of the fact that PE is a point of local identity and linguistic differentiation. PE's representation in memes was also viewed as relatable with 124 (62%) participants agreeing, or strongly agreeing.

The fashion world, however, was not so black and white. Overall, 115 (57.5%) agreed or strongly agreed that PE in fashion slogans or advertisement was somehow/or felt sincere, 50 (25%) were neutral and 35 (17.5%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. This spread points to debates that are probably still unresolved, around whether PE belongs in the more styled or commercial components of fashion, where definitions of 'professional' or 'polished' may diverge.

These sentiments are also indicated in the responses for the statements "PE is a legitimate style" and "Proud of PE in media." A firm majority, 118 (59%), agreed or strongly agreed that PE is really English, and 128 (64%) felt proud of PE's status in media. Attitudes towards potential communicative restrictions differed widely: 126 participants (63%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that PE limits communication, meaning that the local variety is not deemed restrictive in most cases. Another 124 participants (62%) also

agreed or strongly agreed that PE depicted in memes promotes social joining, emphasizing also its function to unite a community. Attitudes toward the influence of PE on purchasing was less clear; whereas 98 participants (49%) agreed or strongly agreed, which indicates the PE system is an emotive and cultural artefact, its effect on customer behavior is less categorical. Overall, the findings demonstrate robust emotional and cultural acceptance of PE while also showing the modulating effects on its use of social, practical, and market considerations.

4.6. Thematic analysis of Open-Ended Responses

Table 6: Open-Ended Response Themes

Emergent Theme	No. of Responses	Percentage (%)
PE reflects cultural pride and identity	88	35.2%
PE is humorous, relatable, and youth-centric	82	32.8%
Preference for PE over Standard English in advertisements/memes	54	21.6%
Concern over formality, professionalism, or global image	26	10.4%

In addition to the quantitative results, 250 open ended responses were analyzed to identify patterns and underlying attitudes in PE content in digital world. These responses were thematically coded to summarize dominant feelings regarding PE use in memes and fashion advertisements. Table 6 indicates the emergent categories and their frequency and percentage. Four main thematic constructs were identified: PE as a mark of cultural pride and identity, its playful and relatable resonance particularly with the youth, desirability of PE over Standard English in content that is contextually localized, and apprehensions about PE's appropriateness in formal or international settings.

4.6.1. Theme 1: PE Reflects Cultural Pride and Identity

Many people (35.2%) also felt that PE is not only a communicative tool but also a cultural conscript that represents the national pride. For most, the localized content of English peppered with Urdu vocabulary, expressions and syntax is an affirmation of linguistic sovereignty.

Respondents pointed out that the use of the language in this way promotes a sense of belonging and identity, as it eschews linguistic snobbery and embraces a language that can be understood by a wider range of speakers.

4.6.2. Theme 2: PE is Humorous, Relatable, and Youth-Centric

The second most widely-entrenched idea (32.8%) highlighted the fun and humor of PE for a young audience. The fusion of English and Urdu (which is usually done in an informal, chatty manner) is also to make memes and advertisements more emotive, respondents said. Several pointed out that PE can create a sarcasm, an exaggeration, or some other comic effect more difficult to produce with Standard English. This type of comedy is based upon common cultural references, and therefore anything name dropped will be instantly accessible and appreciated for all.

To many of the young people, PE represented a “cool,” casual way of talking that approximates their daily speech on Instagram and Twitter. This renders PE no longer just effective but attractive for youth-focused digital content, enhancing relevance and reach to creative people aged 15-25.

4.6.3. Theme 3: Preference for PE Over Standard English in Advertisements/Memes

21.6% of respondents had a strong preference for PE in terms of localized digital content. A lot of people contended that PE feels more connected to the local audience; they use the language as they speak it in daily life. When it comes to advertisements and meme culture, there are frequent references to formal or Standard English as being far removed from everyman Pakistani experience. On the other hand, PE was enjoyed as colloquial and with the ability of expressing in the more genuine and natural way.

The names with PE in slogans or advertisements seem to be particularly relatable, in judging from respondents, and seemed to understand the values of the locals better.

4.6.4. Theme 4: Concern Over Formality, Professionalism, or Global Image

Although overall opinions about PE were positive, a significant minority (10.4%) worried that it would not be as formal or globally relevant. The use of PE, especially in marketing as well as the public media, might result in the degradation of the image of Pakistan in international professional world, according to these respondents. There were some who linked PE with casualness, regarding it as a damper that could obscure clarity and hamper professionalism when dealing with an international audience.

Some respondents also expressed concerns about PE becoming increasingly normalized in professional environments, which they felt could lead to the erosion of academic or business communication norms.

4.7. Focus Group Findings: Collective Sentiment

Table 7: Thematic Coding Summary from Focus Group Transcripts

Major Theme	Frequency (out of 2 groups)	Representative Quote
Pakistani English as identity expression	2/2	“PE is our mix of Urdu and English, super desi.”
PE adds humor and relatability to memes	2/2	“Memes make PE fun and relatable, everyone gets it.”
Local English in ads feels more ‘real’	2/2	“Fashion ads using PE make it feel like our culture is trendy.”
Concern about international professionalism	2/2	“It hinders us in professional settings; sounds too casual.”
Memes are more effective than fashion in promotion	2/2	“Both make PE more visible, but memes are better.”
PE reflects youth culture and bonding	2/2	“It helps us connect with other youth, like a shared language.”
Mixed views on formal recognition	2/2	“Promote it for youth culture, but don’t make it official.”
Standard English preferred for global contexts	2/2	“Standard English is better; PE feels too slangy.”

To complement the quantitative and open-ended survey data, two focus group discussions were held, comprising 6–8 participants each, of different linguistic and social profile. As themes of the data were used, the transcripts were coded to find out the common views about the use and reception of PE in digital media. The overall themes that characterized the focus group data and accompanying quotes portraying the participants' responses are provided in Table 7. Of particular interest is that all eight themes emerged across both focus groups, indicating high consensus around the benefits and limitations of PE in memes, fashion content, and broader communicative contexts.

4.7.1. Theme 1: Pakistani English as an Identity Expression

In both focus groups, PE was identified as a strong cultural identifier. English structure peppered with Urdu syntax, idioms, and proverbs made PE uniquely “desi” and a potent symbol of contemporary Pakistani culture. Participants felt this reflects the way they talk to their friends- both practical and emotional. This “mongrel” character of the language was interpreted as linguistic self-confirmation of the sense of the national identity as a distinct voice of culture.

4.7.2. Theme 2: PE Adds Humor and Relatability to Memes

Both groups of participants stressed the humor levels and memes-relevancy that profit due to the PE. They also indicated that PE is more colorful and animate style that more aptly captures sarcasm and cultural references, which Standard English cannot.

Members of focus groups said that PE's hybrid is a good analogue for their everyday conversations, which shifts the memes from feeling like something generic and more personal and authentic. It was clear that PE, was a major player in how meme culture in Pakistan is being developed, and allowing friendly laughs over shared cultural experiences.

4.7.3. Theme 3: Local English in Ads Feels More 'Real'

Responses indicated that when fashion brands adopt PE as part of slogan or campaign, it communicates cultural relevance and approachability. The regional language made products appear more attuned to daily Pakistani values and experiences.

People saw PE-saturated ads in Asia as a cool break from the formality and Western influence of the advertising.

4.7.4. Theme 4: Concern about International Professionalism

Although there is cultural pride in PE from both focus groups, there were concerns all around about PE in international and professional contexts. Some participants suggested that PE may be too informal or colloquial for academic, corporate, or international communication. Many respondents were concerned that the repeated use of PE might contribute to negative attitudes regarding language skills or professionalism within the profession.

4.7.5. Theme 5: Memes Are More Effective Than Fashion in Promotion

Both groups concluded that memes were more effective vehicles than fashion advertising for disseminating and normalizing PE. Respondents perceived memes as a way to help PE spread in a more unplanned and viral fashion, to a wider and younger audience.

This observation implies that memes is a language structure used to convey information from bottom to top level of the cultural spectrum. Fashion ads, on the other hand, tend to be intentionally curated brand messages, while memes are a medium for IRL users to speak out.

4.7.6. Theme 6: PE Reflects Youth Culture and Bonding

Another common theme was the notion that PE served as a 'linguistic glue' holding Pakistani youth together.

At focus group discussions, language was depicted as more than a means of communication, but a badge of belonging. In the multimodal, mixed-code PE style, young people share with peers in coded drawn from their creative selves as well as their collective online identity as part of a global shrinking world.

4.7.7. Theme 7: Mixed Views on Formal Recognition

While participants adopted PE in the informal spaces, significant resistance occurred to the formalization of the PE. They all agreed that PE should be endorsed in youth media, memes and local branding but should not become standardized or official variety for formal education or government communication. The split perspectives illustrate a significant distinction that users make between cultural respect and language control.

4.7.8. Theme 8: Standard English Preferred for Global Contexts

Lastly and not the least, respondents unanimously preferred Standard English in global or academic communication. Where PE was welcomed for regional use, Standard English was considered necessary for respectability, comprehensibility and competitiveness on the world stage. As found across groups, the belief that PE “sounds too slangy” implied that code-switching should be contextually regulated.

5. Discussion

The results presented in Table 1 on the linguistic, and cultural dimensions of Pakistani memes go a lot to show how internet humor functions as a reflector of hybrid identity among the Pakistani youth of today. The most prominent linguistic feature observed is code-switching between English and Urdu and it is found in 70% of studied memes. This finding is consistent with contemporary research on South Asian online discourses (Ali, 2023) highlighting code-switching as a such marker of identity and (un-)sharedness in cyberspaces. Memes in the context of Pakistan, respect a language hybridity that makes it easy for the users to switch between global and local identities. Moreover, they strategically switch between English and Urdu to create comic effect as well as demonstrate in-group membership and socio-linguistic know-how.

The present findings underscore the growing recognition of PE as a legitimate and culturally significant variety, as evidenced by its pervasive use in memes (e.g., 70% code-switching, 51.3% PE lexicon, Table 1) and its perception as a marker of cultural identity (61% agreement, Table 5), positioning meme culture as a key site for PE's social validation among Pakistani youth.

The cultural embedding of the memes is arguably the most striking result, 100% containing local referentiality, humor or imagery. This popularity serves to demonstrate the central idea of memes as highly potent cultural products, which echo (Oswald *et al.*, 2023)'s description of memes as being participatory/sociably situated texts. The use of humor via puns or wordplay (albeit in a lower proportion, 16%) attests to the creative and linguistic versatility of members, as it has been demonstrated to be the case in online meme communities worldwide (Dyner, 2016). Almost 27% of posts exhibited identity assertion content, such as expressions of desi pride. This demonstrates how memes function as more than mere entertainment, and a subtle form of resistance, pride and self-definition.

When we look at the analysis of textual practices in Pakistani fashion slogans (Table 2), we present a slightly different but complementary picture. The pervasive practice of code-switching rears its linguistic head once more, employed in 54 per cent of slogans, confirming its place as a vital language-based practice within Pakistani branding and media.

The incidence of localized English, found in 42% of slogans, also provides support for the argument that in Pakistan, English is not just a borrowed linguistic code, it is now indigenized to reflect local values and aesthetics.

On the other hand, the fact that only 2% of the sample utilize solely stylized English or Roman Urdu with English keywords. This may indicate that full English slogans can seem too "foreign" to local audiences, and full Roman Urdu slogans can seem colloquial or visually noisy. These results are consistent with the observations made by (De Mooij, 2021), who concluded that operative advertising in Pakistan wants a very delicate balance of global appeal and local originality.

The implications of the findings in table 3 and 4 provide important knowledge about the strategic and cultural placement of PE in the fields of branding, media, especially in the fashion industry and in the meme culture. In the broader educational context, these findings resonate with recent studies which stress the increased credibility and strategic domain of English around the localized varietal English across postcolonial contexts (Kanwal *et al.*, 2024).

Interviewee responses from fashion brands (table 3) indicate that PE is deliberately and strategically used as a branding tool. 90 % of brands employed PE intentionally in order to increase the sense of relatedness), and 100 % of brands linked PE with identity branding. This strategic adoption by fashion brands significantly contributes to the social recognition of PE as a legitimate variety of English. By prioritizing PE to foster relatedness and embody cultural identity (Table 3), brands validate its communicative power and cultural relevance, as reflected in audience perceptions where 57.5% find PE in fashion authentic (Table 5, Q5) and 39.2% associate it with cultural pride (Table 6). This commercial endorsement, alongside PE's prominence in meme culture (Section 4.1), underscores fashion's role as a vital domain for reshaping language ideologies, promoting PE as a symbol of modern Pakistani identity. This trend also appears in (Larina, 2015) revealing that regional linguistic styles, inflected with cultural expressions, are more warmly received by the target population. These results indicate a growing awareness among Pakistani brands of the cultural capital of PE as a "linguistic brand" with which to signal identity, unity, and separate them from international competition.

Looking at the exposure data (Table 4), the results additionally suggest the normalization and dissemination of PE, particularly via digital means such as memes and fashion advertisements. Daily/weekly exposure to memes in PE was experienced by 73 participants (63%), 65 (56%) for fashion slogans. These figures are in line with the findings of (Ahmad, 2022) who observed that Pakistani digital sub-culture is serving as an opportunity for linguistic experimentation and cultural commentary, widely using PE as a type of nonce communication. As dynamic and socially adaptable texts, memes function not only as entertainment but also as tools to reify a collective identity, particularly among urban youth, who are fluent in Urdu and English.

The discoveries presented in the Table 5 and Table 6 of the article give a nuanced picture of PE with reference to perception and usage in digital media. Most respondents agreed that PE recently in memes and in fashion is very appropriate, genuine, and relatable. This is aligned with (Umrani, 2016) who found that when English is hybridized with the local languages in Pakistan, it connotes cultural authenticity and enables people to assert their social and linguistic realities.

These views are also supported by the open-ended question responses. Around 40% of respondents depicted PE as an emblem of cultural pride. Likewise, the humorous and youth-oriented framing of PE seen in digital networks, highlighted by 32.8% of the respondents, puts the onus behind interpretations such as those made by (Lee, 2024),

suggesting that digitally-mediated spaces, by fostering playful, hybrid linguistic repertoires, are extremely locale-specific.

A thematic interpretation of focus group interviews: Table 7 synthesizes the analysis of the focus group interviews. The results here give an insight to the complex and detailed understanding of the PE in context to the new media. These qualitative findings, while in no way proving that the numbers suggested above could not easily be different, complement, and resonate with, trends gleaned from the quantitative and open-ended survey responses, as well as broader literature on localized varieties of English and digital youth cultures.

This portrayal of PE as reflection of cultural identity is consistent with (Halo *et al.*, 2024), who argue that Pakistani English has developed as a localized variety reflecting the linguistic and cultural representations of the native peoples.

The claim that PE contributes humor and relatability to memes also reflects recent research on digital writing. (Swanström, 2020) notes that digital vernaculars are commonly characterized by playful code-switching and cultural intersexuality, features which participants consistently identified as central to PE's appeal within memes.

Participants also indicated that local English language creates authenticity in marketing which is found in (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019) who discovered that the use of local language in branding could drive trust and emotional engagement of consumers.

Lastly, the exclusive endorsement of Standard English in international domains illuminates the strategic multilingualism of the Pakistani youngsters. This discovery is in agreement with (Otheguy *et al.*, 2019) that the latter's idea of "translanguaging" that bilinguals constantly move between languages depending on environment.

6. Conclusion

The results of the study emphasize the crucial contribution of digital media and popular culture in the construction of the image and authenticity of mobility-driven localized varieties such as Pakistani English. Via memes as well as fashion talk, and other analytics we can easily see that PE isn't just employed; it is celebrated as young, jokey, and authentic to the culture. The rapid dissemination and colloquial language of memes make them effective vehicles through which to express collective beliefs and to naturalize PE in public discourses. Fashion stories, though formulated to a greater extent and revelational, are also using PE as part of a transformative approach, to bring the fashion

closer to the local viewer and provide a cultural tie-in. As students find for themselves, however, in the research described above, PE is regarded as an appropriate and naturalized representation of some aspect of the hybrid linguistic realities of young Pakistanis, although they may still have a pragmatic preference for SE for the classroom and in relation to global mobility. A key contribution of the study is that it calls attention to the fact that nontraditional social arenas (in our case the meme-verse and the fashion world) act as alternative systems of language validity that disrupt repressive ideologies that have historically invalidated non-dominant Englishers. Above all, the study highlights how social acceptance of PE does not exclusively hinge on academic or policy changes (e.g., by being recognized only at one level of the language and below a certain vernacular status or restricted to the domains of work and technology) but is also constructed by routine cultural practices and by the agency of language users, who creatively reformulate the norm from the base.

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