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DIGITAL MULTILINGUALISM AND THE EXPERIENCE OF IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION: A GROUNDED THEORY STUDY

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Abstract

The conceptualization of multilingualism and multilingual identity in Pakistan has always remained a challenge and the emergence of multilingual practices in the digital social spaces has posed an added complexity to this challenge. In context of Pakistan, an excessive and unavoidable scholarly focus on language politics and their implications for the identity construction processes has halted the emergence of alternative perspectives to look at the multilingual phenomenon and imagining multilingual identity differently. This phenomenon, thus, requires a fresh scholarly focus for its explication in relation to the digital space. In order to do that, this study adopts a qualitative mode of inquiry and adheres to the constructivist grounded theory method as its analytical framework. It opts for online observation and interviews as data collection tools and collects data from faculty members belonging to Pakistani HEIs with different ethnic backgrounds. It analyzes the subjectivist perspectives of these individuals for an in-depth understanding of their experiences in relation to the phenomenon under study. The findings of the study comprise three thematic categories including living ethnicity through multilingual practices, addressing linguistic marginalization and revitalization of local languages, and re-envisioning ethno-linguistic differences in digital multilingual ecology. The findings on one hand contribute in highlighting the problematic nature of rigid conceptualizations of multilingual identity in context of Pakistan. On the other hand, they offer a revisionist perspective to look at languages as shared linguistic

resources for identity construction instead of being ideologically confining abstract systems which exacerbate the language based identity conflicts amongst Pakistani people.

Keywords:
Digital space, multilingualism, identity construction, grounded theory

Introduction

Up until the 20th century, multilingualism has been interpreted in the scholarly debates as an inevitable aberration resulting from the contact between different cultural and linguistic communities. Towering scholars in the studies of multilingualism such as John Edwards and Joshua Fishman have been entertaining to this traditional view of multilingualism in society by exploring the historical reasons for language contact situations, the emerging multilingual or multiethnic environments having conflicting linguistic identities based on one's puritanical association with ones ethno-linguistic community (Edwards, 2009; Fishman 1972, 1997). In Pakistan too, multilingualism has long been understood in this essentialist way, creating fissure lines between different ethnic communities, their linguistic and socio-political priorities and their understanding of their linguistic identity (Rahman, 1997, 2003). Such perspectives, on one hand, highlight the ideological influence of monolingual majority, and on the other hand, the impact of political elites' policies on the marginalized languages in a multilingual environment (Fishman, 1972, 1997; Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2012; Rahman, 1997). However, with the emergence of digital social world, not only the language and identity construction practices are changing, but it can also be observed that people's subjective perspective on these debates are also shifting. By adhering to the inductive mode of reasoning to explicate this phenomenon, this paper argues that the online multilingualism and multilingual identity practices by Pakistanis offer an avenue for understanding multilingualism and multilingual identity afresh as these digital practices cater less to the subtractive perspectives of multilingualism and demonstrate greater inclination towards blurring the sharp boundaries of linguistic differentiation in the process of identity construction. This position helps in understanding how Pakistanis are reframing their multilingual identity through their lived experience in

the fluid digital space. This understanding of identity poses a contrast to the dominant narratives on multilingualism as an unresolved problem in the country and highlights how the digital space emerges as a parallel space for the re-envisioning of multilingual identity where it's not a bone of contention rather an expansion of Pakistani multilingual identity.

This paper is divided into three main sections. The first part in the following sections offers the theoretical underpinnings of the study through a brief review of existing literature. The second part explicates the methodology and its relevance for the present study. The third part presents the findings of the study which primarily comprise the three thematic categories that emerged from the inductive coding method of CGT analytical framework (Charmaz, 2006). Lastly, it offers the discussion and conclusion of this study that have theoretical significance on the phenomenon of study in context of Pakistan.

Literature Review

Multilingualism as a sociolinguistic concept refers to one's association with multiple languages in relation to one's linguistic repertoire and linguistic identity. In sociolinguistic research this concept has long been interpreted through essentialist frames. Towering scholars in the studies of multilingualism such as John Edwards and Joshua Fishman have been entertaining to a traditionalist view of multilingualism in societies by exploring the historical reasons for language contact situations, the emerging multilingual or multiethnic environments and the presence of conflicting linguistic identities based on one's puritanical association with ones ethno-linguistic community. These theoretical stances offer traditionalist sociolinguistic models to interpret multilingual identity that hinges upon explaining the presence of multiple languages in one's linguistic repertoire as subtractive, additive or neatly measurable monolingual systems (Bloomfield, 1933; Weinreich, 2010). Such perspectives can be found in research on multilingualism offering psycholinguistic, cognitive, sociological or educational angles in studying the phenomenon (Edwards, 2002; Fishamn, 1997; Bailystok, 2001; Baker, 1988; Grosjean, 2013). However, in one way or the other, these stances hinge upon perceiving languages through a monolithic lens.

In light of these stances, multilingualism appears as an anomaly or a derivation from the normal practices of monolingualism

(Blommaert 2016; Blommaert et.al. 2012). This line of thought, particularly in context of ethnicity based studies on multilingualism, accentuates the idea that "normativity is an intrinsic feature of every multilingual situation [and] it can be seen as an attempt to bring order to the potential disorder of multilingualism and heteroglossia and sometimes also as an attempt to delineate linguistic practices from each other in an attempt to demarcate languages and 'purify' them, as part of a modernizing project" (Pietikainen & Kelly-Holmes, 2012, p. 194). This normative stance is quite paradoxically dangerous and protective; dangerous if coming from a linguistic and cultural hegemony and protective if offered by a linguistic minority because for them only through a stable language norms the community will be able to protect the language and its people (Pietikainen & Kelly-Holmes, 2012). For Blommaert et al., however, such prescriptive approaches on multilingualism are based on the "systemic and structural features of the sociolinguistic system of high modernity" (Blommaert et al., 2012, p. 1). According to them, it is not only the ethnic communities but also the governments which have been entertaining to this understanding of multilingualism, generating dangerous divides of us and them, and creating the unresolved tensions between high modernity and late modernity on multilingualism. This according to them is dangerous multilingualism which necessarily creates problematic social hierarchies (Blommaert et al., 2012, p.2). A fixed and rigidly stable understanding of multilingualism also reinforces problematic assumptions which view language use and group identity on a "linear and one-on-one relationship, and in which modern subject is defined as monolingual and monocultural" (Blommaert et al., 2012, p. 2).

After the post-structuralist turn in theorization on multilingualism, however, the phenomenon is understood not "as marked or unusual" rather as "the normal mode of communication that… characterizes communities throughout the world" (García & Wei, 2015, p. 255). Latest debates on multilingualism propose that the concept of negotiation between multiple linguistic elements in a social context is more relevant now to address issues concerning multilingualism and multilingual identities (Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2001, p. 243). This linguistic negotiation in multilingualism can be defined as a "process, in which individuals attempt to evoke, assert, define, modify, challenge and/or support their own and others' desired self-images" (Ting-Toomey, 1999, p. 40). Multilingual identity in light of this understanding is viewed as reflective self-

images, constructed, experienced, and communicated by individuals within a culture and within the context of a particular interaction (Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2001, p. 244). Moreover, multilingual practices and multilingual identity in relation to this understanding emerge as constructed social practices instead of being necessary social givens.

A necessary outcome of this post-structuralist position on multilingualism is to understand a multilingual subject as one who is able to accommodate a linguistic heteroglossia in his linguistic repertoire and sense of identity. This understanding facilitate the emergence of groundbreaking concepts to understand multilingualism afresh which include metrolingualism, polylingualism, language crossing and translanguaging (Otsuji & Pennycook, 2010; Jorgensen et al., 2015; Rampton 2017; Garcia, 2009). If concepts such as language crossing and metrolingualism focus on the creative multilingual practices in emergent urban settings, the concept of polylanguaging focuses on language features. In that, it postulates that the multilingual individuals utilize in their language practices linguistic features from languages they might or might not have mastered. These features can be dubbed as resources and should be the focus of sociolinguistic analysis contemporarily. Translanguaging offers a similar stance by implying the treatment of languages as multiple communicative resources informing the communicative repertoire of multilingual individuals who live in the superdiverse environments of the globalized societies.

With the emergence of digital media and digital social spaces of interactivity, the study of multilingualism has acquired a heightened complexity. The most pervasive impact of this complexity on human societies and their identities can be gauged after the emergence of Social Networking Sites (SNSs) in the digital domain. It is this development in the digital social arena that has most evidently blurred the boundaries between the so-called rigid linguistic systems. Thus, the concept of multilingualism now is multifaceted, making the digital multilingual world not only mobile, but also a complex world offering greater challenges for the understanding of linguistic identities constructed therein (Al Zidjaly, 2019; Blommaert, 2010, 2016; Coupland, 2010). Owning to the new challenges for conceptualizing multilingualism in the digital age, Jannis K. Androutsopoulos develops upon the theoretical underpinnings of the term and coins the term “networked multilingualism” to encapsulate multilingual practices on the SNSs

and their implications for identity construction. This term implies that the multilingual practices are shaped by digital connectivity with different people and the embeddedness of such practices in social space of the World Wide Web (Androutsopoulos, 2015). Through this perspective, the debate on metrolingualism (Otsuji & Pennycook, 2010), translanguaging (Creese & Blackledge, 2015; García & Wei, 2015), and polylingualism (Jorgensen et al., 2011) gets extended in relation to the multilingual language and identity practices in the computer mediated environments. In light of this development, what we need to understand is not only the linguistic repertoire of multilingual individuals in the offline world, but also the digital multilingual repertoire which is laced with "non-normative innovations" and has implications for our overall understanding of this phenomenon in today's world (Blommaert & Varis, 2013).

On account of these conceptual developments in the field of multilingualism and identity research, it is pertinent to explicate these concepts in context of Pakistan afresh. The trends of research on multilingualism and multilingual identity in Pakistan have mostly followed the essentialist mode of thinking to explain these phenomena. These perspective reflect the continuation of the politically inclined stances on multilingualism and linguistic identities in Pakistani contexts which unfortunately further accentuate the fault lines of identity politics in an ethno-linguistically polarized country (Baig et al., 2019; Rahman, 1997, 2003; Torwali, 2022). It is interesting to note that the conspicuous incline of the research body produced from Pakistan on multilingualism, identity and its understanding in the age of digital social media too reiterates the importance of the distinctiveness of ethno-nationalistic, gender or religious identities, their digital preservation and openness of the online spaces for accommodating marginalized identity discourses (Manawar, 2014, Khan et al., 2021; Mir Hazar, 2021; Ali, 2020; Mughal, 2021). Some of these researches perceive the issue through the standpoint of linguistic and political imperialism of dominant languages, the resulting marginalization of small languages and communities, and the use of ethnic languages in the digital multilingual space as acts of resistance. This position attempts to challenge the traditional narratives on linguistic identity and magnify the need of activism and community action through digital social networking forums. This too has been highlighted that the new technologies enable the people, particularly the younger generations "to reassess and reaffirm their emerging hybridity set within a new

discourse of equal rights and respect for cultural and religious values within a transnational context" (Manawar, 2014). Although these frames of research carry weight, the need to explore changing perspective on multilingualism, multilingual identity and online linguistic hybridity in a greater depth still looms large.

Keeping in view the hybrid linguistic practices in the digital multilingual space, an emerging body of research in Pakistan focuses on the code-switching patterns of Pakistanis, particularly on the online code-switching practices of the youth. These code-switching practices of youth in the digital discourse perform "multiple functions, primarily identity expression, emotional articulation and social alignment" (Syeda, 2026, p.215). However, in these stances, the focus has been laid on how languages are used to symbolize different identities; for example, English is used to highlight the modern identity and Urdu is preferred to highlight "cultural belonging and emotional connection" (Ali & Akram, 2026, 1096). Thus, these stances too primarily focus on the differential aspects of multilingualism in the digital space. A few fresh perspectives on multilingual phenomenon in Pakistan in the age of digital media and AI also highlight the challenges including "unequal access to digital resources, limited support for regional languages, and the reinforcement of linguistic hierarchies…highlighting tensions between technological efficiency and cultural linguistic identity" (Sarwar et al., 2025). While these stances too are valuable in their own right, there is this need still to study identity construction and multilingualism in context of the individuals' own perspectives that emerge from their experience of digital globalization, and can play a role in mitigating the sharp divisions based on ethno-linguistic differences particularly in the digital arena of interactivity.

The researches discussed above highlight the issues, perceptions and challenges in relation to the questions related to multilingualism and multilingual identity in the digital age in context of Pakistan, however, there is still this need to re-evaluate the conceptualizations of subtractive multilingual identity which consider different languages as ideologically confining abstract systems and accentuate the language based differences amongst Pakistani people. Hence, the contribution of the present is in highlighting these issues by focusing on the perspectives based on re-envisioning multilingualism and multilingual identity of Pakistani individuals, locating a negotiation between different linguistic resources in the digital space and addressing identity construction issues in the

multilingual ecology of the digital space in a way that it minimizes the impacts of essentialist mode of thinking.

Methodology

This research paper adopts a qualitative approach for gaining an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study. For this purpose, it adheres to the constructivist grounded theory (CGT) method for data collection and analysis. As a qualitative methodology, the most significant aspect of CGT is that it is emergent in nature (Creswell, 2007). In this methodology neither data nor theories are discoverable objects, rather, they are constructed by the researchers themselves through their constant interaction with their participants (Charmaz et al., 2018, p. 730). These methodological stances on CGT in relation to this research imply that the research process is contingent upon the recursive observations of the participants in the phenomenon under study, analyzing their subjective perspectives on the phenomenon and allowing the emergence of thematic categories from the data based on the participants' perspectives. In this way, this research explicates the phenomenon through a bottom-up approach to study multilingualism and the construction of identity in the digital space.

This study is a part of a broader research study which works with a larger cohort of participants and an extensive data set. For the purpose of this paper, five participants were purposely chosen keeping in view the main objective of this study i.e. to look into Pakistani individuals' understanding of multilingualism and multilingual identity practices as they are constructed and performed in the digital social space. The participants were selected from the higher education institutions' setting. All participants fell into the age bracket of 35-55 and included both males and females. The focus was laid on this age group in order to delve deeper into the experiences of individuals who can better relate with the traditionalist and newly emergent practices of multilingualism and identity alike. In that, this study utilizes semi-structured interviews and online observation of the selected participants' online posts on their Facebook and X (Twitter) accounts. The observation was done for the period of one year and a total 9 interviews were conducted with participants in recursive cycles of data collection.

Data analysis was also done in recursive cycles of thematic coding to keep up with the methodological spirit of CGT and for the conceptually valuable categories to emerge from the data. All the

interviews were transcribed by the researchers and then coded to acquire major thematic categories. The qualitative rigor of the study was ensured through the characteristic constant comparison method in the CGT coding process. The triangulation of findings from online observation and thematic categories acquired from the semi-structured interviewed helped the researchers in ensuring the credibility of the findings (Creswell 2007; Charmaz 2006, 2014). The next section offers the findings of this study in form of the three thematic categories which emerged from the data analysis.

Findings

The online language and identity practices of the study participants revealed their actual orientation towards multilingualism and multilingual identity in the digital space. A constant online observation of their posts on the chosen social networking sites and the CGT analysis of interview data led to the emergence of three major thematic categories which encapsulate the empirical explication of their perspectives. These inductively emerged thematic categories give insight into their thoughts and feeling on how they interpret their experience of multilingualism and multilingual identity in the digital space.

i. Living Ethnicity through Multilingual Practices

The findings of the study show that in the multilingual environment of the digital space, Pakistani individuals opt for multiple linguistic resources to construct their multilingual identity. The findings imply that in actual contemporary practices of Pakistanis, multiple languages emerge as negotiatory resources in the space of digital multilingual ecology. Resultantly, the multilingual practices on the digital social platforms, operate beyond rigid understanding of linguistic boundaries. Thus, in the phenomenon of digital multilingualism, ethnic language can be considered as one of the many linguistic resources and not an absolute and defining marker of one's linguistic identity. One of the participants' expresses her deep sense of association with her ethnic identity along with her preference to opt for other linguistic resources available to her during communication online:

> I think identity cannot be completely separated from your native or ethnic language be it online or offline. However, when I use other languages online, it's not like I'm adopting different identities by abandoning my native identity. If I'm using English it doesn't mean that I have become a British or with

> Pashto I have become a Pathan. I think it has more to do with the flexible norms of the online multilingual space where all languages co-exist in a mutual dialogue without a heightened sense of prestige with any specific language the way we usually experience it in the offline space in Pakistan.

This understanding of the participant reflects that the flexibility of choosing language resources online also can also have its constructive impact on their multilingual repertoire and identity construction for their offline identities too. Another participant offers a similar and broadened perspective on this matter:

> I have realized that all the languages I know construct my identity. I cannot confine myself to one language only. The kind of a complex of languages I experience in the digital space, make me realize that I am using multiple languages more comfortably now. I have been using the mixture of languages in certain contexts and I have been code-switching a lot. If I use only English, some people would not like it. If I use Urdu, some people don't like that either. If I use only Pahari, some do not like that at all. So as far as my linguistic choices are concerned as a multilingual individual in the digital space, I use many languages and they also contribute into my identity construction.

Similar thoughts on ethnic linguistic identity as part of the multilingual identity are very comprehensively expressed by another participant:

> I think no single language makes my linguistic identity. We like it or not, we need to accept that multilingualism is a cognitive reality and we are multilingual beings, and more so now. I see that some of us are still stressing hard only on only Punjabi or Sindhi or Pashtun or Balti identity. But what would you do when all these languages have come together in a melting pot of the online world? So now I might feel a little close to some of the linguistic units which I was not familiar with earlier on and through which I perform my identity. I do not stick to any single language because the way we use language now is important. I move across two to three languages and the digital space offers the experience and comfort of this linguistic flexibility.

When triangulated with the observation of the online practices of these participants, it was found that these individuals, based on their lived experience in the digital social space, have started to

consider multilanguaging and identity constructed through this practice as an acceptable phenomenon instead of taking it as an aberration wherein different languages and identities exist in mutually exclusive linguistic compartments of their mind.

ii. Addressing Marginalization and Revitalization of Local Languages

The study's findings reveal that almost all the participants share great concern over the survival of local language, culture and identity in the constantly in flux and fluid environment of the digitized society. However, as they also demonstrate willingness to participate in the changing multilingual environment, most of them shared a pragmatic approach to address the matter concerning the survival and revitalization of local languages, cultures and identity as opposed to offering only an ideologically constraining and overtly sentimental stance on the matter. One of the participants offers a very elaborate commentary on the whole phenomenon in the following statement:

> To some extent our languages have been marginalized in this digital multilingual ecology but I have some otherwise observation as well in relation to social media spaces. There are different social media groups that create and post video based content in our Pahari dialect. Most of it is usually humorous. However, I feel that even in this light-hearted humorous mode, my language is being documented through these activities on social media. Moreover, it's reaching out to the people living in different parts of the world. The children of the people from my community who left Pakistan long ago, are able to interact with this content even if they do not understand it fully. I look at it as opening of avenues for the survival of my language.

Similar thoughts were shared by another participant who postulated that he cannot help but acknowledge the potential of social media platforms and the facilities offered by them to accommodate as many linguistic resources as possible and thus play a role in revitalization of these languages. He shared a significant development in relation to his language:

> Yes I am very concerned about my language and identity but I cannot deny that digital media has given an outlet to the marginalized languages in its multilingual space. These languages were not previously known to the external world in a real sense of the word. The people outside Pakistan can better know about our languages now. For example recently we have

> achieved a milestone in this regard as we have made Burushaski available on social media through a dedicated group of local scholars. It was not possible in a physical form mainly because of the scarcity of resources in the offline setting.

These participants also shared their concern over major languages' potential to marginalize the smaller languages in the digital multilingual space. For example, they showed concerns over the overpowering presence of English in the digital space. However, almost all the participants talked about a little less onerous presence of English in the digital multilingual space owing to the freedom of linguistic choices social media spaces afford for these participants. A participants shared her thoughts on the matter in the following way:

> We just need to enrich, empower and strengthen our own linguistic foundations. We have this fear that we cannot stop our kids from using the big languages or the new expressions in their online language practices. We just need to adapt the change and do for our languages what we can by focusing on the potential of this space for revitalizing our languages…See the thing is that it's all about perspectives. You can get threatened by whatever is happening around you or you can take inspiration from whatever is happening and enhance your linguistic capacity.

Through these findings, it can be inferred that addressing the issues concerning the marginalization and revitalization of local languages and identity is very much possible by utilizing the potential of digital multilingual space. In light of these participants' perspectives, the findings do not imply an erasure of ethnic linguistic identity in the digital multilingual landscape. Rather, they highlight an inevitable shift in the perceptions of these Pakistani multilingual individuals in relation to the questions of survival and revitalization of ethnic languages and identities by offering a perspectival expansion of these social categories in digital multilingual space.

iii. Re-envisioning Ethno-linguistic Differences in the Age of Digital Multilingualism

In line with the conceptual understanding developed in the categories above, a concomitant thematic category is re-envisioning the ethno linguistic conflicts in the age of digital multilingual practices in context of Pakistan. The findings report that the multilingualism in the digital space as experienced by these participants enables them to review their essentialist stances in relation to their ethnic languages and sense of identities which

resultantly enables them to have a consensual stance on language based difference in Pakistan. One of the participants offers a succinct commentary on this aspect: "As we experience languages in the digital space, I feel things are going to change in relation to our mutual differences...this change might occur in the coming decades…but we can see this gap already filling between the people of our generation and that of the coming generation".

Some of the participants were still skeptical about the positive impacts of online multilingualism in relation to palliating the conflicts among different linguistic communities in Pakistan. One of the participants opined that the people in Pakistan are still divided along the ethno-linguistic or nationalist lines despite the fact that a lot of changes are occurring in the digital spaces in relation to our understanding regarding ethnic language and identity. He shared that many people in our provinces still think that linguistically they are absolutely different from each other and ignore the historic reality of having language contact and converging linguistic grounds particularly along the provincial borders. He also suggested that our living in different times and experiencing different patterns of evolution of language and identity through the medium of digital space should enable us to acknowledge the unavoidable exchange of linguistic features between languages and their likely influence on our identity.

Another participant in offering an extension to the perspective shared above opines that consciousness of one's ethnic language and identity should not necessarily mean its conflicting existence with other or parallel languages and identities in a vastly multilingual environ, be it the online space or the offline one. In stressing upon the need to adopt an alternative and inclusive perspective he postulates that:

> Every year we celebrate the mother tongue festival here in the capital city. Even in this festival all the people who come to celebrate 74 languages of the country talk about their own language. My language, my literature, my geography, my poets. This too much focus on mine only shows that you are not really familiar with the language of the other people around you. With this attitude you are showing that you do not like diversity and you are promoting uniformity. I for one never raise the only-my-language slogan; I always prefer to go with the idea of all-our-languages.

One of the study participants expresses the most pragmatic approach on the contemporary state of affairs in relation to the issues related to ethnic association and linguistic identity construction on the basis of such association. She stretches the scale of understanding multilingualism and identity from the individual level to the communal level. Her stance reflects a fine balance between the multilingual orientation of the times before the emergence of digital multilingualism and a pragmatic acceptance of the gradual changes which are occurring in the digital age now. She states that:

> I think that our experience of multilingualism in the digital space has broadened our sense of linguistic community and it has connected us with a lot many communities. This space has created forums for knowledge sharing by people having different linguistic backgrounds and to have dialogues, debates and discussions with each other through a shared digital experience. So I take it very positively now. It is empowering especially for those people who have not been formally educated in a certain language. I think these forums give us a lot of space to talk on our languages and our identity and how we can talk about these things with the younger people.

These findings reveal that ethnic language, despite being a significant symbolic resource with deeply embedded socio-cultural and historic association for meaning-making and identity construction, is now being considered as one of the many meaning-making and identity construction linguistic resources available to Pakistani individuals in the digital multilingual space. The participants' acknowledgement of different languages as multiple linguistic resources available in the shared digital space enables them to look beyond the long-standing ethno-linguistic differences.

Discussion and conclusion

Keeping in view the findings and their interpretation in the sections above, it can be postulated that the language and identity practices of Pakistani participants in the digital space offer to review the sociolinguistic concepts of multilingualism and multilingual identity in context of Pakistan. The in-depth study of the participants' perspective reveals that their actual language and identity practices in the digital space are in line with the emerging concepts of multilingualism and identity construction in the digital space instead of being ideologically inclined towards the rigid normative perspectives prevalent in the offline space.

The first significant understanding that emerges in context of this study is that for the Pakistani individuals the practice of language in the digital space can be defined as an organization of linguistic resources which collectively informs their linguistic repertoire and identity (Kelly-Holmes, 2019). Since this language use is characterized by "heterogeneity of such resources" in the "networked multilingual" space, only the ethnic language cannot be the absolute marker of one's identity particularly now (Solmaz, 2015, p. 42; Androutsopoulos, 2015). This understanding falls in line with the seminal theoretical work in the study of multilingualism in the digital age (Androutsopoulos & Juffermans, 2014; Sharma, 2012; Solmaz, 2015, p. 42; Tagg & Seargeant, 2014). This heterogeneity of resources in online interactivity compels us to cater to the notion of repertoire in which ones ethnic language is one of the many components of one's linguistic repertoire in which we find "macro and micro level forces are at work" in the process of construction of linguistic identities (Blommaert, 2016, p.247).

The second important observation in context of this study is that the way social media spaces are providing avenues for the utilization of multiple languages with the use of different digital affordances, it is encouraging Pakistani participants to consciously engage with the perspectives and practices that address marginalization of ethnic linguistic resources and give impetus to their digital revitalization. The digital presence of these languages in social media through their daily communication is in itself "an essential component of language revitalization and maintenance" (Belmar & Glass, 2019). In that, this space enables "indigenous communities, content creators, scholars and visionaries" to contribute "to an ongoing decolonization of the digital landscape" and "facilitate preservation, emphasizing their accessibility and engagement" (Meighan, 2021, p.397; Ajani et.al, 2024, p.35).

The third noteworthy observation of the study based on the findings is that the digital practices of languaging and constructing multilingual identity is enabling the Pakistani participants to develop alternative perspectives in relation to the linguistic differences and identity conflicts based on these differences. This now seems possible because from a fixed geographical context, the language practices have moved into "the new social environments in which we live as characterized by an extremely low degree of presupposability in terms of identities, patterns of social and cultural behavior, social and cultural structure, norms and expectations" (De Saint-Georges &

Weber, 2013, p. 14). Moreover, in the participatory environment of the digital social spaces, the identity is constructed during online communication and not always by linguistic pre-givens of one's ethnic community. Thus, this digitally constructed identity is multilayered in nature and is not necessarily marred by rigid ethno-linguistic narrowness (Al Zidjalay, 2019; Androutsopoulos, 2015; Blommaert & De Fina, 2015; Blommaert & Rampton, 2011; Chen, 2013; Schreiber, 2015). Thus, through these practices the online interlocutors construct the social media identity for online "sociality" wherein the "social and normative structures are jointly negotiated" by them (Leppänen et al., 2014, p. 113).

This paper by adopting a bottom-up approach to study digital multilingual phenomenon and the Pakistani individuals' practices therein, highlighted that language and identity are being constructed without any obligatory or normative prescriptions. It proposes that in context of Pakistan, fixed notions to interpret the multilingual phenomenon and identity construction need to be reassessed and reframed as we are living in a parallel digital domain where people from multiple linguistic backgrounds simultaneously communicate and participate in new meaning-making practices in a new kind of a shared context (Blommaert, 2010; Blommaert & Rampton, 2011; Creese & Blackledge, 2015; Otsuji & Pennycook, 2010). This approach can help locating the problems in perceiving multilingualism and multilingual identity construction after the emergence of digital mobility of linguistic resources. By focusing on language and identity through the negotiatory and constructivist perspective in Pakistan, we can sensitize people to the challenges offered by digital multilingual practices and their likely implications for understanding linguistic identities in the contemporary times.

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