

## Digital Multilingual Practices and Identity Negotiation on Social Media From a Critical Discourse Perspective

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** This study aims to examine how digital multilingual practices are employed on social media to negotiate identity from a critical discourse perspective. It focuses on how language choice, code-switching, and multimodal resources function as strategic tools for self-presentation, audience management, and identity construction in digital environments.

**Subjects and Methods:** The study adopts a qualitative design grounded in Critical Discourse Analysis. The data consist of 120 publicly accessible multilingual social media posts collected from Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), and Facebook over a three-month period, as well as 15 semi-structured interviews with active multilingual social media users. Data were analyzed through a multi-stage procedure involving linguistic categorization, functional discourse analysis, identity indexing analysis, multimodal analysis, and thematic analysis of interview data.

**Results:** The findings reveal that multilingual practices are patterned and intentional rather than random. Intra-sentential code-switching emerges as the most prominent practice, reflecting integrated multilingual expression. English is predominantly associated with professional, global, and aspirational identities, while local languages are used to express emotional authenticity, cultural belonging, and relational closeness. Users construct hybrid identities by strategically combining linguistic and visual resources. Interview data indicate a high level of metalinguistic awareness, highlighting the role of audience orientation and platform norms in shaping language choice.

**Conclusions:** The study concludes that digital multilingual practices function as socially meaningful and multimodal resources for identity negotiation, shaped by power relations, language ideologies, and global-local dynamics in contemporary social media discourse.

### INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital communication technologies has profoundly transformed the ways individuals interact, express themselves, and construct social meanings (Hanandini, 2024; Lin, 2014). Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), TikTok, and WhatsApp have become central spaces for everyday communication, enabling users to transcend geographical, cultural, and linguistic boundaries (Javed et al., 2025; Akhmedova, 2024). Within these digital spaces, language use is no longer constrained by traditional norms but is instead fluid, hybrid, and dynamic.

One of the most salient features of communication on social media is the widespread practice of multilingualism. Users frequently draw on multiple languages, dialects, and semiotic resources within a single interaction. This phenomenon, often referred to as digital multilingual practices,

reflects not only linguistic competence but also social positioning, cultural affiliation, and ideological orientation. In online environments, multilingualism functions as both a communicative strategy and a symbolic resource (Ivkovic, D., & Lotherington, 2009; Androutsopoulos, 2015; Canagarajah, 2021).

Digital multilingual practices differ significantly from conventional multilingual communication found in offline contexts. On social media, language choice is shaped by platform affordances, audience design, algorithmic visibility, and norms of digital culture (Schreiber, 2017; Duffy & Meisner, 2023; Haroon et al., 2025). Yousif (2025) said that, the integration of emojis, hashtags, memes, abbreviations, and code-switching further complicates the linguistic landscape, creating new forms of meaning-making that challenge traditional linguistic boundaries.

These multilingual practices are closely linked to processes of identity construction and negotiation. Identity in digital spaces is not fixed or singular but continuously produced through discourse and interaction. Yau et al. (2020) said that, social media users actively negotiate who they are, how they wish to be perceived, and which social groups they align with through their linguistic choices. Language thus becomes a central site for the performance and negotiation of identity.

Identity negotiation on social media occurs within complex power relations. Users do not operate in a neutral communicative environment; instead, their discursive practices are shaped by broader social structures such as ideology, nationalism, globalization, and linguistic hierarchies (KhosraviNik, 2018; Holborow, 2007). Certain languages are often associated with prestige, modernity, or global mobility, while others may be marginalized or stigmatized (Eid et al., 2025; Rahman et al., 2025). These inequalities are reproduced and contested through digital discourse.

From a critical discourse perspective, language is understood not merely as a tool for communication but as a form of social practice that both reflects and constructs social realities. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) provides a theoretical and methodological framework for examining how power, ideology, and inequality are embedded in language use (Fernandez, 2007). Applying CDA to digital multilingual practices allows researchers to uncover the underlying social meanings and power relations that shape online interactions.

The digital environment amplifies the role of discourse in shaping identities. Unlike face-to-face communication, social media interactions are often persistent, publicly visible, and subject to surveillance and algorithmic regulation (Chambers, 2017; Lewis, 2018). These characteristics influence how users strategically deploy languages to position themselves, gain legitimacy, or resist dominant discourses. Identity negotiation thus becomes a conscious and strategic process mediated by digital technologies (Bozkurt & Tu, 2016).

Multilingual practices on social media are also deeply connected to processes of globalization. The increasing mobility of people, ideas, and cultural products has led to the circulation of global languages alongside local and indigenous languages. Social media serves as a key site where global and local linguistic resources intersect, resulting in hybrid forms of expression that reflect transnational identities (Christiansen, 2017; Kim, 2018).

At the same time, digital multilingualism can function as a form of resistance. Users may deliberately employ local languages, vernaculars, or mixed codes to challenge linguistic dominance and assert cultural authenticity (Dovchin, 2015). Such practices highlight the agency of social media users in negotiating identity and resisting homogenizing forces of global communication.

The negotiation of identity through language on social media is particularly salient among younger generations, who are often at the forefront of digital innovation. Youth users tend to experiment with linguistic forms, creatively mixing languages and semiotic resources to express individuality, group belonging, and social stance (George, 2020; Stamou et al., 2012). These practices contribute to the emergence of new linguistic norms and identities in digital culture.

Despite the growing body of research on multilingualism and digital communication, studies that integrate multilingual practices, identity negotiation, and critical discourse analysis remain relatively limited (Rafi, 2017; Paspali, 2025). Much existing research focuses either on linguistic

features or on identity performance, without sufficiently addressing the power dynamics and ideological dimensions underlying digital discourse.

Furthermore, many studies adopt descriptive approaches that overlook the broader socio-political contexts in which digital multilingual practices are embedded. A critical discourse perspective enables a more nuanced analysis by situating language use within historical, cultural, and ideological frameworks (Scollo, 2011). This approach is essential for understanding how identities are not only performed but also constrained and enabled by social structures.

Social media platforms themselves play an active role in shaping multilingual practices and identity negotiation (Rojas, 2025; Blackledge & Pavlenko, 2001; Kusumaningputri, 2024). Platform policies, interface design, and algorithmic systems influence which languages are visible, valued, or suppressed. These technological factors intersect with social power relations, making digital discourse a site of both opportunity and control.

Examining digital multilingual practices through a critical lens also contributes to broader discussions on linguistic justice and inclusivity (Kubota et al., 2022). Understanding how language hierarchies operate in online spaces can inform efforts to promote more equitable digital communication environments, where diverse linguistic identities are recognized and valued.

Dubravac & Skopljak (2020) said that, in multilingual societies, social media becomes a particularly important arena for negotiating national, ethnic, and cultural identities. Users navigate complex linguistic landscapes, balancing local identities with global aspirations. Their discursive choices reflect ongoing tensions between tradition and modernity, local belonging and global participation.

This study seeks to explore how digital multilingual practices are employed on social media to negotiate identity from a critical discourse perspective. By analyzing language use in online interactions, the study aims to reveal how power relations, ideologies, and social inequalities are enacted, reproduced, and challenged through digital discourse.

Ultimately, this research contributes to the fields of sociolinguistics, digital discourse studies, and critical discourse analysis by offering a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between multilingual practices and identity negotiation in social media contexts. By foregrounding the critical dimension, the study underscores the importance of examining digital communication not only as a linguistic phenomenon but also as a deeply social and political practice.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

This study adopts a qualitative research design grounded in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to investigate how multilingual practices are employed on social media for identity negotiation. The study is informed by a social constructionist perspective, which views language as a social practice embedded in power relations, ideology, and identity construction. CDA is particularly suitable for this research as it enables an examination of linguistic choices not only at the textual level but also in relation to discursive strategies and broader sociocultural contexts shaping digital communication. To capture both observable language practices and users' reflexive understandings, the study integrates digital discourse analysis with interview-based qualitative inquiry. This mixed qualitative approach allows for triangulation between naturally occurring online data and participants' metalinguistic awareness, thereby strengthening the analytical validity of the findings.

### **Data Sources and Corpus Construction**

The primary dataset consists of 120 publicly accessible social media posts collected from three major platforms: Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), and Facebook. These platforms were selected due to their distinct communicative affordances, audience configurations, and norms of self-presentation, which provide a rich comparative context for analyzing multilingual practices. Data collection was conducted over a three-month observation period, ensuring sufficient temporal coverage to capture recurring discourse patterns. In addition to social media texts, 15 semi-

structured interviews were conducted with active social media users who regularly engage in multilingual communication online. Interviews were used to elicit participants' perspectives on language choice, audience awareness, platform norms, and identity expression. This combination of data sources enables methodological triangulation, allowing the study to examine multilingual practices both as discursive phenomena and as consciously negotiated social actions.

### **Sampling Strategy and Participant Selection**

A purposive sampling strategy was employed to select social media posts that explicitly demonstrate multilingual language use and identity-related content. Posts were included if they contained clear instances of code-switching, code-mixing, or translanguaging and addressed themes such as professional self-presentation, personal reflection, cultural affiliation, or social interaction. This sampling approach ensures that the dataset is analytically aligned with the research focus on identity negotiation rather than general language use. Interview participants were selected based on three criteria: (1) regular use of more than one language on social media, (2) active engagement across at least one of the platforms studied, and (3) willingness to reflect on their language practices. Participants represented diverse professional and social backgrounds, allowing for variation in experiences while maintaining analytical coherence.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Social media data were collected through systematic observation and manual archiving of posts that met the inclusion criteria. Only publicly available content was analyzed to ensure ethical compliance. Identifying information was anonymized to protect user privacy, and excerpts used in the analysis were slightly modified where necessary without altering their linguistic structure or meaning. Interviews were conducted online and lasted between 30 and 45 minutes. An interview guide was used to ensure consistency while allowing flexibility for participants to elaborate on their experiences. Interview questions focused on language choice, perceived functions of different languages, audience considerations, platform-specific norms, and the relationship between language and visual presentation.

### **Analytical Framework and Data Analysis Techniques**

Data analysis followed a multi-stage qualitative analytical procedure consistent with Critical Discourse Analysis. First, all social media posts were subjected to linguistic categorization, identifying instances of intra-sentential and inter-sentential code-switching, code-mixing, and translanguaging. Frequency patterns were noted to identify dominant forms of multilingual practice across platforms. Second, a functional discourse analysis was conducted to examine how language choice corresponds to different communicative purposes, such as professional identity construction, emotional expression, cultural affiliation, and informal interaction. Posts were coded according to their dominant communicative function, enabling systematic comparison between language use and discourse goals. Third, an identity indexing analysis was applied to identify the social identities constructed through multilingual practices. Drawing on CDA and sociolinguistic theories of indexicality, posts were analyzed for how linguistic choices signal global, local, professional, youth, and cultural identities. Particular attention was paid to hybrid identity constructions where multiple identities were indexed within a single post. Fourth, a multimodal discourse analysis was conducted to examine the interaction between language and visual elements. Images, emojis, and visual styles were analyzed in relation to language choice to understand how multimodal resources jointly contribute to identity performance and meaning-making in digital contexts. Interview data were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using thematic analysis. Themes were identified through iterative coding, focusing on participants' awareness of language choice, perceptions of English and local languages, audience orientation, and platform-specific practices. These themes were then compared with patterns observed in the social media corpus to identify points of convergence and divergence.

### **Trustworthiness and Analytical Rigor**

To ensure analytical rigor, the study employed data triangulation across platforms and data types. The integration of discourse analysis and interview data enhances credibility by linking textual patterns with users' reflexive accounts. Coding decisions were refined through repeated readings

of the data to ensure consistency and depth of interpretation. Reflexivity was maintained throughout the research process, particularly in interpreting identity-related discourse, to avoid essentializing language–identity relationships. The methodological design prioritizes transparency and coherence, ensuring that analytical procedures are clearly aligned with the research questions and findings.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Corpus Description and Data Overview

The dataset analyzed in this study consists of 120 publicly accessible social media posts collected from Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), and Facebook over a three-month observation period. In addition, 15 semi-structured interviews were conducted with active social media users who regularly employ more than one language in their online interactions. The posts were selected using purposive sampling based on explicit multilingual usage and identity-related content (e.g., self-presentation, work, cultural affiliation).

Table 1. Overview of Research Data

Data Type	Quantity	Description
Social media posts	120	Multilingual posts from 3 platforms
Instagram posts	45	Captions and comments
X (Twitter) posts	50	Tweets and threads
Facebook posts	25	Status updates and comments
Interviews	15	Semi-structured, 30–45 minutes each

The composition of the corpus enables a balanced examination of multilingual practices across different social media environments, each characterized by distinct communicative norms and interactional dynamics. The inclusion of multiple platforms allows the analysis to capture variations in language use shaped by platform affordances, such as differences in audience reach, post length, and interaction intensity. This diversity strengthens the empirical basis of the study by ensuring that multilingual practices are not interpreted as platform-specific phenomena but as broader patterns of digital discourse. The integration of social media texts and interview data provides methodological triangulation, enhancing the robustness of the findings. While the social media posts offer naturally occurring linguistic data, the interviews contribute insight into users’ intentions, awareness, and reflections regarding their language choices. This combination makes it possible to examine not only how multilingual practices are enacted in digital discourse but also how they are consciously understood and negotiated by users themselves.

The purposive selection of posts foregrounding identity-related content ensures that the dataset is analytically aligned with the research focus on identity negotiation. Rather than treating multilingualism as a purely structural feature of language use, the corpus captures instances where linguistic choices are closely intertwined with self-presentation, social positioning, and expressions of belonging. This focus enables a more nuanced analysis of multilingual practices as socially meaningful actions within digital environments. The structure of the corpus supports a multi-layered critical discourse analysis that connects textual features with discursive strategies and broader social contexts. By situating multilingual language use within authentic communicative settings and supplementing it with participant perspectives, the dataset provides a solid empirical foundation for examining how identity is negotiated through digital multilingual practices on social media.

### Frequency and Types of Multilingual Practices

Analysis of the corpus shows that multilingual practices are consistently present across platforms. Three dominant linguistic forms were identified: code-switching, code-mixing, and translanguaging. Code-switching occurs most frequently within sentences rather than between sentences.

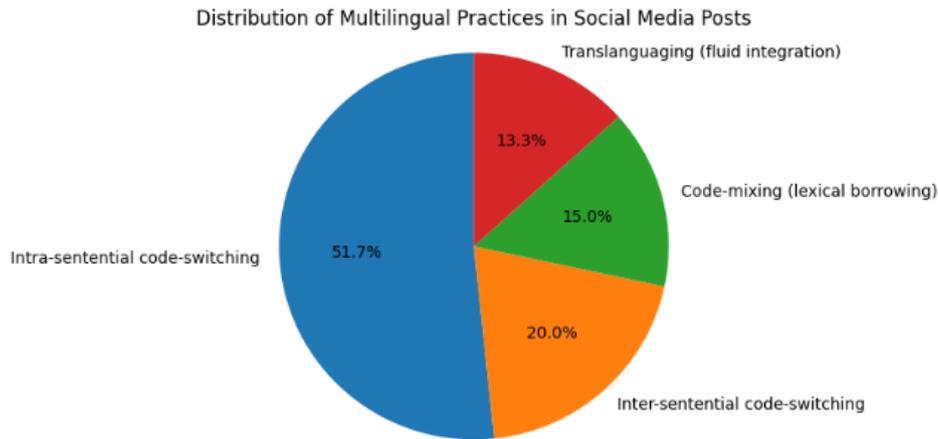


Figure 1. Distribution of Multilingual Practices in Social Media Posts

The distribution illustrated in the diagram indicates that intra-sentential code-switching constitutes the most salient multilingual practice in social media discourse. This pattern suggests that users tend to alternate languages within a single syntactic unit rather than separating languages across sentences. Such practice reflects a high level of linguistic flexibility and indicates that language boundaries in digital communication are relatively fluid.

A representative example of intra-sentential code-switching is found in the following Instagram caption:

*“This journey hasn’t been easy, tapi aku belajar banyak tentang diri sendiri.”*

Although structurally framed in English, the post exemplifies a broader tendency in the dataset where English clauses are frequently combined with local-language expressions within the same sentence to convey nuanced personal meaning. Interview participants confirmed that this form of code-switching is often used to express complex thoughts efficiently while maintaining authenticity. One participant explained that mixing languages within a single sentence feels “more natural” and allows them to express emotions and experiences that cannot be fully captured in one language alone. This indicates that intra-sentential code-switching is not merely a stylistic choice but a communicative strategy shaped by users’ linguistic repertoires and digital interaction norms. The prominence of intra-sentential code-switching shown in the diagram reflects a broader trend of integrated multilingual expression in social media discourse, where linguistic resources are combined seamlessly to support identity expression, emotional engagement, and audience alignment.

### Language Distribution and Functional Use

To further examine how multilingual practices operate beyond structural patterns, the analysis focuses on the functional distribution of language use across different communicative purposes. Rather than treating language choice as arbitrary, this section investigates how specific languages are systematically associated with particular types of social meaning and interactional goals. By categorizing posts according to their dominant communicative function, the analysis highlights recurring associations between language selection and the ways users present themselves, express emotions, and engage with audiences in digital environments. The following table summarizes the distribution of dominant language use across these communicative functions.

Table 2. Functional Distribution of Language Use

Communicative Function	Dominant Language Used	Number of Posts
Career / professional identity	English	38
Personal reflection / emotions	Local language	42
Cultural or national identity	Local language	27
Self-branding / motivation	English	33
Humor / informal interaction	Local language	29

For example, a post related to professional identity reads:

*“Excited to start this new role as a project coordinator—semoga bisa berkembang dan belajar lebih banyak.”*

The pattern illustrated in the table indicates that language choice is closely aligned with the communicative intent of social media posts. Posts oriented toward professional self-presentation and achievement tend to privilege English as the primary medium, reflecting its perceived appropriateness for formal, career-related communication. The example provided demonstrates how English is used to frame professional milestones, while the inclusion of a local-language clause allows the user to express personal aspirations and emotional nuance that complement the professional narrative. In contrast, posts centered on personal reflection, humor, and cultural expression predominantly employ local or national languages. This suggests that users associate these languages with intimacy, authenticity, and shared cultural understanding. The qualitative data indicate that local languages enable users to convey affective meaning and relational closeness more effectively, particularly when addressing familiar or culturally specific audiences.

Interview responses further corroborate these patterns. Participants reported that they consciously adjust their language choice depending on the type of message they intend to communicate. English was frequently described as “appropriate,” “safe,” or “expected” in professional and motivational contexts, while local languages were perceived as more suitable for emotional expression and informal interaction. This indicates that language choice in social media discourse is not random but guided by socially shared norms regarding the symbolic value of different languages. The findings show that functional considerations play a central role in shaping multilingual practices. Language selection operates as a strategic resource through which users manage self-presentation, align with audience expectations, and negotiate multiple dimensions of identity within digital environments.

### **Identity Categories Indexed Through Multilingual Practices**

The data indicate that multilingual practices index multiple identity categories. Each post may index more than one identity type simultaneously. Five dominant identity categories were identified through discourse analysis.

Table 3. Identity Categories Indexed in Multilingual Posts

<b>Identity Category</b>	<b>Number of Posts</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Global/cosmopolitan identity	54	45.0%
Local or national identity	49	40.8%
Professional identity	46	38.3%
Youth/digital-native identity	31	25.8%
Cultural/traditional identity	28	23.3%

An example of hybrid identity indexing is illustrated in the following tweet:

*“Working with international clients is challenging, tapi bangga tetap membawa nilai lokal.”*

The distribution of identity categories in the dataset demonstrates that multilingual practices function as flexible semiotic resources for indexing layered and intersecting identities. Rather than signaling a single, fixed identity, language choices allow users to position themselves simultaneously within multiple social and cultural frameworks. The example provided illustrates this hybridity, where English indexes professional and global engagement, while the local language affirms cultural attachment and national belonging within the same utterance. Interview data reinforce this observation by revealing users’ conscious awareness of identity layering in their language use. Several participants explained that mixing languages enables them to “show both sides” of themselves being globally connected while remaining rooted in local values. This suggests that multilingual practices serve as a means of negotiating complex identity alignments rather than simply reflecting linguistic competence.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that identity indexing through language is context-sensitive and audience-oriented. Participants reported adjusting their linguistic choices depending on

whom they imagined as their primary audience, such as international colleagues, local peers, or mixed networks. This strategic orientation highlights the role of multilingualism in managing visibility and belonging across diverse digital communities. The results show that multilingual practices are central to identity negotiation in social media discourse. By combining linguistic resources associated with different social meanings, users construct hybrid identity positions that accommodate global mobility, professional aspirations, and cultural affiliation within a single communicative act.

### Interview Findings: Users' Awareness of Language Choice

Interview data show a high level of metalinguistic awareness among participants. Most respondents explicitly acknowledged that their language choices on social media are intentional and context-dependent.

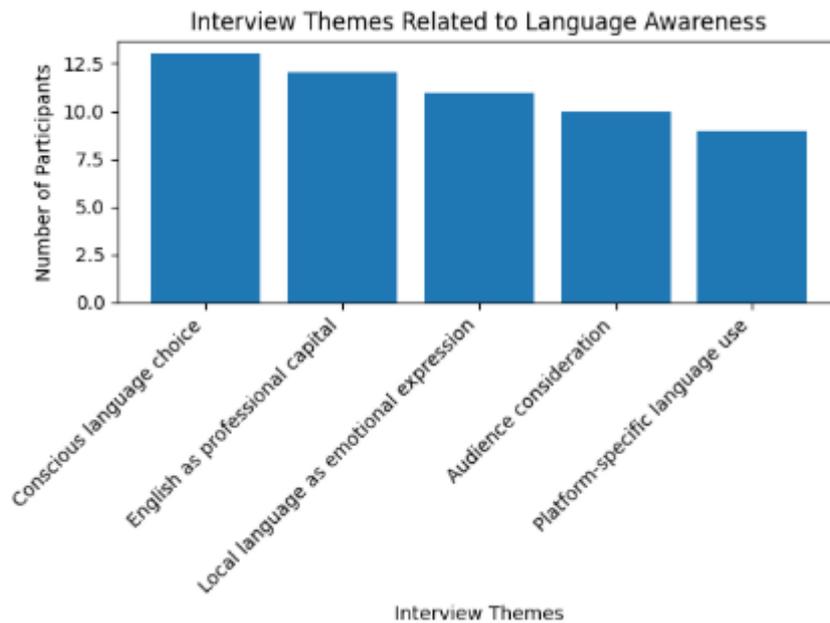


Figure 2. Interview Themes Related to Language Awareness

One interview participant stated:

*"I'm very aware of when to use English and when to use my own language. On LinkedIn and Instagram for work, English is safer."*

Another participant noted:

*"When you're sharing your feelings or sharing personal stories, it feels more honest to use the local language."*

The interview findings indicate that participants possess a strong metalinguistic awareness regarding their language choices in digital communication. Rather than using multiple languages spontaneously or unconsciously, participants described their language practices as deliberate and strategically adjusted to situational contexts. Language selection was frequently framed as a form of self-management, enabling users to align their online presence with particular social expectations and communicative goals. Participants consistently associated English with professionalism, credibility, and public visibility, particularly on platforms oriented toward career development and networking. In contrast, local languages were described as more suitable for expressing personal emotions, sincerity, and relational closeness. These perceptions suggest that users attribute distinct symbolic values to different languages, which guide their communicative decisions in online environments.

Audience orientation emerged as a central factor shaping language choice. Participants reported actively considering who might read their posts and how different audiences might interpret specific language choices. This awareness reflects the complexity of social media communication, where posts often reach diverse and overlapping audiences, prompting users to employ

multilingual strategies to manage inclusivity and interpretation. Participants highlighted platform-specific norms as influencing their linguistic behavior. Different platforms were perceived to carry different expectations regarding formality, reach, and self-presentation, leading users to adapt their language practices accordingly. Together, these findings demonstrate that multilingual practices on social media are underpinned by conscious decision-making processes, reinforcing the view that language choice functions as a strategic resource for identity negotiation and social positioning in digital contexts.

### Multimodal Patterns in Multilingual Posts

Multimodal analysis indicates that language choice is systematically aligned with visual presentation. Posts using English tend to display professional or minimalist visual styles, while posts in local languages are often accompanied by casual or culturally specific images.

Table 4. Alignment Between Language and Visual Style

Language Dominance	Visual Characteristics	Number of Posts
English-dominant	Professional, neutral, minimalist	41
Local-language dominant	Casual, personal, cultural symbols	47
Mixed language	Hybrid visual styles	32

Emojis were found in 68% of posts, with national flag emojis and culturally specific icons frequently appearing alongside local-language expressions. The observed alignment between language choice and visual presentation indicates that multilingual practices on social media are embedded within broader multimodal identity performances. Language does not operate in isolation; instead, it interacts with visual elements to reinforce particular meanings and self-presentations. English-dominant posts are typically accompanied by visuals that project formality, professionalism, or neutrality, suggesting a deliberate effort to construct a polished and globally oriented identity. In contrast, posts written primarily in local languages tend to feature informal, personal, or culturally recognizable imagery, emphasizing closeness, familiarity, and cultural rootedness. Interview data provide further insight into these patterns. Participants reported being consciously attentive not only to the language they use but also to how it aligns with images, emojis, and overall aesthetic choices. Several respondents explained that visual elements help “set the tone” of a post and ensure that the intended message is interpreted correctly by the audience.

For example, professional visuals were described as reinforcing the seriousness and credibility of English-language posts, while casual or culturally symbolic images were seen as complementing the emotional and relational meanings conveyed through local languages. The frequent use of emojis, particularly national symbols and culturally specific icons, further illustrates how users integrate linguistic and visual resources to strengthen identity expression. Emojis function as affective and symbolic markers that amplify the meaning of multilingual text, enabling users to signal belonging, emotion, or stance without relying solely on verbal language. This multimodal orchestration underscores that identity negotiation in digital spaces is a holistic process, where linguistic choices are strategically coordinated with visual and symbolic cues. These findings demonstrate that multilingual practices are inseparable from multimodal design in social media discourse. Users actively combine language and visual resources to construct coherent identity narratives, manage audience perception, and align their online self-presentation with specific social and cultural contexts.

### Discussion

This study demonstrates that multilingual practices in social media discourse function not merely as linguistic alternation but as strategic semiotic resources for identity negotiation, audience management, and meaning-making in digital environments. The findings reveal that language choice, switching patterns, and multimodal design are systematically aligned with communicative intent, social positioning, and users’ reflexive awareness of their online presence. These results support and extend previous scholarship on digital multilingualism by foregrounding the intentional, context-sensitive, and identity-oriented nature of language use in social media.

### Multilingual Practices as Integrated and Flexible Discourse Strategies

The predominance of intra-sentential code-switching indicates a shift away from rigid language compartmentalization toward integrated multilingual expression. Rather than treating languages as separate systems, users combine linguistic resources fluidly within single utterances to convey nuanced meanings, emotions, and stances. This pattern aligns with contemporary perspectives on translanguaging, which conceptualize multilingualism as the dynamic deployment of a unified linguistic repertoire rather than the alternation between bounded codes. In the context of social media, such practices appear particularly functional, allowing users to balance efficiency, expressiveness, and authenticity within the constraints of digital communication. The frequent use of intra-sentential switching also suggests that digital spaces normalize hybrid linguistic forms. Social media platforms provide interactional environments where conventional norms of language separation are relaxed, enabling users to experiment with linguistic hybridity as a socially acceptable and even expected mode of expression. This finding challenges deficit-oriented views of code-switching and instead positions it as a communicative competence shaped by digital discourse norms.

### **Functional Differentiation and the Symbolic Value of Languages**

The functional distribution of language use highlights that multilingual practices are structured by shared social meanings attached to specific languages. English consistently indexes professionalism, global orientation, and aspirational self-presentation, while local languages are associated with emotional expression, humor, intimacy, and cultural belonging. These patterns reflect broader sociolinguistic hierarchies in which English operates as symbolic capital in globalized digital contexts, granting visibility, legitimacy, and perceived credibility. At the same time, the continued use of local languages for affective and relational purposes demonstrates resistance to linguistic homogenization. Rather than replacing local linguistic resources, users strategically mobilize them to maintain emotional depth and cultural specificity. This dual orientation illustrates how multilingual users navigate global and local pressures simultaneously, leveraging different languages to fulfill distinct communicative functions. Language choice thus emerges as a socially informed practice that mediates between global norms and local identities.

### **Multilingualism and Hybrid Identity Construction**

The identity analysis reveals that multilingual practices enable the construction of layered and intersecting identities rather than singular, fixed self-representations. Posts frequently index global, professional, and local identities at the same time, illustrating how users position themselves within multiple social worlds. This hybridity reflects the lived realities of digitally connected individuals who participate in transnational networks while remaining embedded in local cultural contexts. By combining English with local languages, users enact what can be described as hybrid identity performances. English signals mobility, professionalism, and global engagement, whereas local languages affirm cultural continuity and belonging. This combination allows users to avoid an either-or positioning and instead articulate both global participation and local rootedness. The findings thus support post-structuralist views of identity as dynamic, negotiated, and discursively constructed rather than stable or essentialized. Audience orientation plays a critical role in this process. Users' awareness of their heterogeneous audiences leads them to adopt multilingual strategies that accommodate multiple interpretive frames. In this sense, multilingualism functions as a tool for managing visibility and inclusivity, enabling users to address diverse audiences without fully privileging one identity position over another.

### **Metalinguistic Awareness and Strategic Language Choice**

Interview findings underscore that multilingual practices on social media are underpinned by high levels of metalinguistic awareness. Participants' explicit reflections on when, where, and why they use particular languages demonstrate that language choice is a conscious and strategic act. This challenges assumptions that digital multilingualism is largely spontaneous or unreflective. Instead, users actively evaluate platform norms, audience expectations, and communicative goals before selecting linguistic resources. The perception of English as "safe" or appropriate for professional contexts highlights how language ideologies shape digital behavior. Users internalize broader discourses that associate English with authority and legitimacy, particularly in public-facing or career-oriented spaces. Conversely, the preference for local languages in personal

contexts reflects an ideology of authenticity, where emotional truth and sincerity are believed to be better conveyed through one's first or community language. These ideologies guide users' linguistic decisions and reinforce the patterned nature of multilingual practices observed in the corpus.

### **Multimodality and Holistic Identity Performance**

The multimodal findings demonstrate that language choice is closely coordinated with visual design, reinforcing the argument that identity construction on social media is a holistic process. Visual elements such as imagery style, layout, and emojis work in tandem with linguistic choices to project coherent identity narratives. English-dominant posts align with professional and minimalist visuals, while local-language posts are paired with casual or culturally specific imagery, creating semiotic coherence across modes. The strategic use of emojis further enhances this multimodal orchestration. Emojis function as affective and symbolic cues that amplify the meanings conveyed through text, particularly in multilingual contexts. National flags and cultural icons, when combined with local languages, strengthen expressions of belonging and identity alignment. This integration of linguistic and visual resources supports multimodal discourse theories that view meaning-making as distributed across multiple semiotic modes rather than confined to language alone.

### **Implications for Digital Multilingualism Research**

Taken together, the findings suggest that multilingual practices in social media discourse should be understood as socially situated, functionally differentiated, and multimodally constructed phenomena. Language choice operates as a strategic resource through which users negotiate identity, manage audiences, and navigate global–local dynamics in digital spaces. This study contributes to the growing body of research on digital multilingualism by providing empirical evidence that integrates structural, functional, identity-based, and multimodal perspectives. By combining corpus-based analysis with interview data, the study demonstrates the value of methodological triangulation in capturing both observable discourse patterns and users' reflexive understandings of their practices. Future research may build on these findings by examining longitudinal identity shifts, platform-specific affordances in greater depth, or comparative contexts involving different linguistic and cultural settings.

### **CONCLUSION**

This study demonstrates that multilingual practices on social media function as strategic and socially meaningful resources for identity negotiation rather than as random or purely linguistic phenomena. The findings show that users deploy code-switching, code-mixing, and translanguaging in patterned ways that are closely aligned with communicative functions, audience expectations, and platform norms. English is predominantly used to index professionalism, global orientation, and public credibility, while local languages are mobilized to express emotional authenticity, cultural belonging, and interpersonal closeness. Multilingual practices enable users to construct hybrid and layered identities that simultaneously accommodate global engagement and local rootedness. Interview data further reveal a high level of metalinguistic awareness, indicating that language choice is a conscious and strategic process shaped by perceptions of symbolic value and social appropriateness. Additionally, the alignment between linguistic and visual resources underscores the inherently multimodal nature of digital identity performance. The study highlights the role of digital multilingualism as a dynamic practice through which individuals negotiate identity, manage visibility, and navigate sociocultural hierarchies within contemporary online environments.

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