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## THE USE OF CODE-MIXING IN INDIAN-ENGLISH YOUTUBE VLOGS: IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION IN DIGITAL DISCOURSE

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### ABSTRACT

*This study examines the usage of code-mixing in Indian-English YouTube vlogs and in specific it understands its contribution to the construction of identity in the digital discourse. Especially in social media, code-mixing is an inevitable attribute of communication in multilingual societies as there is mixing of more than two languages in a single discourse. This paper will observe how Indian vinegars on YouTube execute code-mixing as one of the approaches in the creation of their online personas and the need to expand their linguistic groups worldwide. By means of discourse analysis, the given study provides analysis of linguistic decisions which reflect the social, cultural, and personal identities of the vloggers, as well as presents engagement of the vloggers with their audiences. These are the results that indicate that code-mixing can be viewed as a linguistic tool as well as a performative action, which can enable vloggers to portray themselves as authentic, relatable and culturally relatable characters. The study can help in learning more about how language, identity and digital culture intersect in a globalized, multi lingual society.*

**Keyword:** *Code-Mixing, Indian-English, YouTube Vlogs, Identity Construction, Digital Discourse, Multilingualism.*

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### INTRODUCTION

The fast evolution of digital technologies changed considerably the manner in which people communicate, connect, and perform expression of identities on websites. YouTube is one of the most powerful means of content creation with self-presentation among range of platforms that have been formed. Started in 2005, YouTube is now a place where any person can produce his or her video and share it with others worldwide and thus get his or her own brand and even a following (Burgess & Green, 2009). With this platform, users have been given the special occasion where they can create and show-off their identity and thus the reason why it has become a crucial place to explore digital self-presentation (van Dijck, 2013). A major characteristic of YouTube videos especially in the case of Indian video creators is the use of the code-mixing technique where the user switches languages in between each sentence or a discourse. A multilingual nation in which over 120 diverse languages are spoken, code-mixing has become a common language phenomenon in India thus depicting the complicated cultural and linguistic situations of the Indian society (Kachru, 1983).

The practice of code-mixing in Indian-English YouTube vlogs, as noted when speakers mix English and their local languages, such as Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, or Punjabi, has also been identified as an essential linguistic practice that does not only indicate the multi-lingual livelihood of the Indian society but also the globalized nature of communications of which YouTube Web 2.0 is a part. This intermixing of languages may be viewed as a need to man oeuvre and bargain between various cultural settings and offers vloggers an entrance into a large and heterogeneous audience. Gumperz (1982) further states that all this code-switching and code-mixing is a social, not solely linguistic, phenomenon and should be used to access social identities and relationships by speakers. The code-mixing practice is particularly relevant in the domain of digital platforms such as YouTube because through this practice, content creators can accommodate both of their identities (local and global), and hence, increase their relatability and

authenticity.

In highly linguistically diverse countries like India, the concept of code-mixing is the direct indication of the language and identity fluidity in the age of the Internet. English as the official language of India has become both a lingua franca and a local vernacular language, which is usually blended with the native language in order to constitute a hybrid language (Sridhar, 1996). Such mixing of languages is not only a linguistic need but also it is a manifestation of the concept of cultural hybridity; a phenomenon that involves negotiation and translation of multiple influences in terms of culture (Bhabha, 1994). Thus, YouTube vloggers exist somewhere on the border of various linguistic and cultural languages. Their code-mixing allows creating a local and globalized idol identity in which they meet the needs of different linguistic backgrounds of their viewers at large and guide the same a very unique personal style that can attract viewers across the globe.

The research problem of the present study is focused in finding out how Indian-English YouTubers employ the strategy of code-mixing in an attempt to construct identity on the digital platform. Although much research has been conducted on code-mixing in the face-to-face (Poplack, 1980), not much work has been done regarding the use of that code-mixing in the digital discourse, particularly in a location such as YouTube. Digital space provides a certain context since communication here is not limited to traditional social roles and is frequently adapted to the general and heterogeneous audience. Here, code-mixing could be evoked not only as a communicative device, but also as a means through which vloggers may develop and display themselves in their videos as not only a personal, but also as a social expression of the self.

This research is important, as it fills in the gaps in the comprehension of the relationship between language, identity and culture on digital media, and especially in the multilingualism of India. With YouTube becoming a proven means of expression and socialization, the importance of the concept of language practices such as code-mixing cannot be ignored, when considering it to understand how digital identities are created. Furthermore, as the amount of content produced by Indian creative people is being consumed all more across the world, the conclusions about the phenomena of code-mixing in the self-representation of vloggers are profound, providing information on the tricky processes of personal, social, and cultural identity negotiations in the context of the web.

In this work, the author attempts to identify the purpose by examining the strategies applied through code-mixing by Indian-English vloggers to create their online identities and what impacts it has on their interaction with viewers. This paper will do a critical examination of linguistic practices of YouTube vlogs to reveal how code-mixing can be used not only to communicate but also to develop an identity. Furthermore, the paper will also focus on the role that such language selection plays in shaping the perception of the audience, especially regarding the authenticity, relatability, and the cultural appeal. By exploring these topics, this study aims to contribute to the research gap on the topic of the interconnection between language, identity and digital discourse by providing a differentiated interpretation of the language effects that creators use on YouTube in the bi-lingual and globalized environment of the video sharing service.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Code-mixing has been a recent focus of research in sociolinguistics, particularly in multilingual-speaking countries, such as India, where speakers glide (or code-switch) between languages in both casual and formal situations. Code-mixing can be conceptualized as interchange or inter-mixture of linguistic expressions of different languages in one conversation or discourse. This phenomenon can apply on all

levels of language structure such as; lexical, syntactic, and phonological level and it can be strategic and applied with purpose to inform, apply emphasis, or even state social identification (Poplack, 1980). Early articles like those by Poplack (1980) and Myers-Scotton (1993) were influential in ensuring the definition of code-switching and code-mixing as socially constituted acts that go a long way beyond being regarded as linguistic phenomena, and are by far clearly related to identity and membership in the community. The typology of code-switching developed by Poplack (1980) such as the situational and the metaphorical switching paved the way to the comprehension of the social conditions in which bilingual speakers incorporate languages. Likewise, the original Markedness Model proposed by Myers-Scotton (1993) enhanced the importance of people to apply code-mixing in communication of social information and defining social roles, and the implication referred to the claim that bilinguals utilize language alternation as the instrument of identifying with specific cultural or social groups.

Code-mixing especially in Indian context is very pervasive because India is a multilingual nation. There are over 120 languages spoken in India, English is an official and popular language and in addition, there are numerous regional languages. Researchers have described that English usage in combination of regional spoken languages such as Hindi, Tamil, Bengali, Punjabi has become extremely common in both urban and internet environments (Sridhar, 1996). As an example, one can note the study by Bhatia and Ritchie (2006) who analyzed the use of Hinglish (mix of Hindi and English) in Indian cities, demonstrating how bilingual speakers address the issues about choosing one of the languages to identify themselves with an affinity to local and transnational identity. In addition, code-mixing in Indian contexts of multilingual is not only applied practically like filling in the gaps between the speakers of different languages, but it is also a practice of performative act, which displays the social statuses in relation to education and cultural identities (Kachru, 1983). The incorporation of regional languages with layering of English is also evident in the media and entertainment where these languages get mixed with each other in a bid to accommodate different audiences without running off context regarding sacred local senses (Sridhar, 1996).

The rise of the digital media and such platforms as YouTube have also complicated and changed the usage of code-mixing. Researchers such as Boyd (2014) have discussed how social media and digital media enable their users to enact their identities by curating their self-representations to present themselves in certain ways especially through language use or appropriate language use in a manner that reflects the global and local pressures. The concept of performativeness presented by Boyd (2014) in her research on digital identity is evidence of how online communication takes place across several levels of identity (based on audience, platform, and content). The issue of identity performance frequently lies at the center within the understanding of how language practices such as code-mixing work within the space of YouTube. As an illustration, vloggers do self-presentation by combining languages in an attempt to create the digital identities that appeal to the various audiences and still are relatable and authentic (Rampton, 1995).

Such a tendency is especially strong in the case of Indian-English YouTube vlogs. Because YouTube content creators act within the environment that is global on the one hand, yet on the other hand, extremely specific in the used material and cultural allusions, code-mixing becomes one of the most important linguistic devices to shape digital identities. Chakraborty and Sharma (2019) have also discovered that the vloggers often incorporate English with the regional dialect so that the vlog can be acceptable to a wide audience, encompassing Indian and international audiences. This is a good practice as it ensures that they can converse with other people with diverse tongues without compromising their local identities. Moreover, code-mixing also serves the strategic purposes of the YouTubers, who negotiate their social identity in a manner that is, most of the time, combining regional origins with

cosmo-aspiration (Chakraborty & Sharma, 2019). The intermingling of language poses the vloggers as culturally rooted and rooted in the world, the global and the local traditions, which is in sync with the trends of global media and the local traditions.

Nonetheless, though quite a lot of research has been conducted on code-mixing in physical communication and traditional media, a substantial lack still exists in the literature in regard to the involvement of code-mixing in digital applications such as YouTube, especially as identity formation. Although the code-switching is studied in its everyday use as well as in its formal forms, i.e. media (e.g., films, television), the dynamics of codes-mixing in YouTube vlogs are somewhat unexplored. Prior studies that have been conducted mostly dwell on the issue of code-mixing within the general linguistic context where the impact of Digi synthesis and performativity are generally overlooked in research settings concerning platforms such as YouTube where viewership and identity projection are some of the fundamental factors in the production of content (Gumperz, 1982).

Moreover, although scholars such as Boyd (2014) and Rampton (1995) have already reviewed how digital identity can be constructed by using language in general, the peculiarities of using code-mixing as a means of constructing the identity in the specific context of an Indian-English YouTube vlogs have not been thoroughly discussed. This discrepancy is especially crucial in the light of the growing popularity of YouTube as a platform of self-revelation as well as active community dialogue in India. Moreover, most of the current academic publications give more emphasis on the sociolinguistic macro trends instead of the individualistic approaches that vloggers adopt to mix the local, regional and global identities in their digital media.

The available research has also considered only the language use or identity construction and with less emphasis on the combination of both areas in the digital environments. To give one such example, Gumperz (1982) noted that face to face interactions can be observed through language alternation as social identity, but did not investigate how the digital nature of such a platform as YouTube may change these dynamics. In a similar vein, Kachru (1983) and Bhatia & Ritchie (2006) concentrated on the language use in the urban India, yet their discussion did not aim at the ways how such practices are conducted in the context of the highly mediated space of YouTube where language choices interact more and more with the audience dynamics and strategies of content creation.

The proposed research would address these gaps since it will explicitly focus on the pattern of the use of code-mixing as a linguistic tool of identity construction involving Indian-English vloggers in the context of YouTube. This study will be conducted based on the performative nature of code-mixing when applied to the Indian-English YouTube vlogs, examining how the latter interacts with various social identities represented by players but maintaining a balance between local, regional and global allegiances expressed through words. The work will give an understanding of the role that code-mixing in the YouTube vlogs plays in the development of the concept of digital self-presentation and communication with the audience.

## SIGNIFICANCE AND RATIONALE

The significance of the study is that the author pays attention to YouTube vlogs as the place of identity performance and language use. Even though code-mixing has been researched a lot, especially related to spoken discourse and communication between bilinguals, not enough studies had been dedicated to understanding its role on online platforms such as YouTube. Analysis of the Indian-English YouTube vloggers is especially relevant because India is a multilingual environment, and in vlogging code-mixing has been used to serve the local and a global audience.

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Upon contextualizing how vloggers employ code-mixing in the establishment of their identities, it shall provide important insights on how the digital platforms influence the way people interact and how culture is represented. The proposed study will make a contribution to the area of sociolinguistics overall, as it will formulate a set of rules to follow to analyze identity creation in digital environments within the domain of code-mixing.

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To analyze the linguistic labour to employ by Indian-English vloggers in YouTube through employing code-mixing.
2. To investigate whether code-mixing is exerting any effect in identity construction within the Indian-English YouTube vlogs.
3. To evaluate how code-mixing affects reception and audience reception of Indian-English You Tubes vlogs.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS / HYPOTHESES

1. What types of code-mixing strategies are employed by Indian-English YouTube vloggers?
2. How does code-mixing function as a tool for identity construction in the digital discourse of YouTube vlogs?
3. Why do vloggers use code-mixing, and how does it impact audience perception of their identity?

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Various concepts of sociolinguistics form the basis of theoretical orientation in this study. First, the concept of performativity theory (Butler, 1990) shall assist in ascertaining how code-mixing that is adopted by vloggers serves as a performative act to form and give their identity. Moreover, the code-switching theory (Myers-Scotton, 1993) will give some insight into the social motivation on code-mixing. Analysis of the digital identity theory (boyd, 2014) will provide a rational analysis of how vloggers seek to overcome the intrigues of self-expression within the context of the digitalized global space.

## METHODOLOGY

The approach adopted in this study will comprise discourse analysis to help analyze a sample of Indian-English YouTube vlogs in terms of the ways in which language use, including a combinatory use of languages such as code-mixing, can be involved in the development of digital identities. The aspect that makes discourse analysis a suitable option in the present study is that it will enable an analysis of both linguistic and social significance of communication online. Where YouTube is a strongly mediated field where language and self-presentation mean much, discourse analysis will also be a potent tool to interpret the use of code-mixing by vloggers not only as a linguistic means, but also in terms of creating their own public personality and in terms of interacting with their followers (Gee, 2014).

The information will be the 10 most popular Indian-English YouTube vlogs chosen according to a range of categories, namely, the linguistic variety, as well as the audience view and the occurrence of code switching. A variety of content topics, including lifestyle, travel and food will also be selected as a vlogger so that different types of language practices can be followed in each genre of content. These forms are very popular in India and provide a diversity of contexts, where code-mixing most probably occurs. The sampling procedure will guarantee that the sample will consist of various vloggers representing regional linguistic backgrounds because this variety is paramount in assessing the role of code-mixing across various cultural planes of existence (Chakraborty & Sharma, 2019).

The investigation of any incidences of code-mixing in the chosen vlogs will rely on a qualitative method

of identifying and analyzing what happens. The critical approach will be to address the linguistic and social cause of such practices. Language choices including usage of English with Hindi or Tamil or other local languages will be listed and studied to know how their language choice correlates with their representations of identities in a wider sense. As another example, English can be applied to much more formal situations to reach international audience whereas regional languages are used to reach the local viewers and to indicate the cultural originality (Bhatia & Ritchie, 2006).

Themes and plots of the vlogs would also be analyzed with the help of the content analysis technique. It will include examining how vloggers use code-mixing to maximize their appeal to their audiences, gain credibility and establish their place in the various cultures, social or even political structures. This way the research will examine the usage of language choices as a means of digital self-presentation (boyd, 2014). With the help of the targeted elaboration of digital identity building and audience directing approach, the given methodology gives an all-round foothold to the backdrop of the means of the language in the construction of the online self-representation. The study can also be conducted via discourse analysis since the perspective will enable the discourse to thoroughly explore the interactive and performative nature of language use in the online media where the setting of identity and the response of the audience is central (van Dijck, 2013).

## DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

The discussion of the chosen Indian-English vlogs on YouTube shows that code-mixing can be regarded as an active resource that can be used by vloggers to form and introduce their identities in the online environment. The tactical mixture of regional languages and English enables vloggers not only to overcome linguistic and cultural boundaries but also produce material that would be relevant not only on the local level but also globally. The application of code-mixing can assist vloggers in reaching out to a wider audience that strictly needs to fit in their code-switching culture and also appeal to a bigger audience composed of English speakers. This duality of language use is emblematic of the hybrid nature of Indian identities as experienced in the modern world that has to do with both local and global influences on culture (Bhabha, 1994).

With respect to the research questions, the obtained results indicate that code-mixing is an important means of constructing identity in Indian-English YouTube vlogs. Code-mixing implies vloggers familiarizing themselves with the appearance of realness and, conventions of culture. As an example, vloggers featuring Hindi or regional languages alongside English can and should sound the note of belonging to the specific communities but still stay universal addressing every audience with the use of English. This practice enables vloggers to mediate between various social identities: they try balancing their local and regional identities and the globalization process, the cosmopolitan and universal identity that they endeavor to promote on the international screen such as YouTube. Such results are based on past research that has emphasized the role played by language in the development of hybrid identities upon multilingual situations (Bhatia & Ritchie, 2006). There is thus a strategic appropriation of code-mixing which besides being a form of communication, presents a social positioning where vloggers are able to establish themselves within intractable cultural landscapes.

Besides, code-mixing also plays the role of emotional expression and humor. It was very noticeable in most of the vlogs since the alternation of languages accentuated emotional tones and the material felt closer to the viewer. To illustrate, when talking about personal examples, vloggers frequently resorted to local dialect when trying to express affection or making jokes and switched to English when it was important to be clear or hit a mass audience. This is in line with the contention by Gumperz (1982) that code-mixing may be used to indicate social relations and a manifestation of emotionalism. By doing so,

the use of different languages turns into a necessary means not only of communication, but of building rapport with the viewers and making the material seem more real and close to them.

In the study, the authors also demonstrate that code-mixing is influential in audience engagement. Regarding the mixing of languages, vloggers usually do so in order to establish the idea of community with the watchers, especially when they speak about certain cultural references or problems that may be popular among the locals. The approach provides a stronger connection with the audience; thus the audience will feel that this content is aimed at their social and cultural realities. This increases their process of identifying with their community by employing local languages that they are familiar with in combination with English, thus creating a sense of belonging and belongingness on the part of vloggers. Such possible findings support the arguments raised by Boyd (2014) and Rampton (1995) who focus on the possibility of enacting many different identities with the help of a digital platform such as YouTube, as well as the choices of content creators to find ways to be relatable through language in different contexts.

Nevertheless, with all the valuable findings obtained as a result of the research, the research itself has certain limitations. The sample size of 10 vloggers, albeit different in content genre does not reflect entirely the spectrum of the linguistic practices in all the regions of India. Moreover, the selected study omits non-verbal communication (such as facial expressions, gestures) and visual cues, which can also be used to identify oneself in vlogs. In the future, it would be possible to increase the sample size, expand the range of vloggers representing various linguistic areas, and conduct an examination of multimodal discourse to examine how visual features interact with words in building an identity.

The other aspect that can be explored in the future is the intersection of gender, age, and classes in regards to code-mixing use in vlogs. To give an example, it would be a promising idea to explore the question of whether code-mixing depends on the socioeconomic status or gender of the vlogger and to what extent it affects the means of identity construction. Future research may also attempt to see how other demographic groups of audiences view and react to the act of using code-mixing in vlog, this would give an even more detailed picture of the interactive phenomenon between the content creator and their audience.

In conclusion, code-mixing in Indian-English vlogs in the You Tube can play an important role in the development of identity, emotion, and communication with the viewers. Using the mixture of English and the regional languages, vloggers overcome the complexity of multilingual and multicultural identity in the digital world. This paper will also help enlighten us on the use of language as a medium of digital self-representation, thus bringing insight with regard to a synthesis of language, culture, and global media. The results indicate the need to take the consideration of code-mixing as a strategic element in negotiating the meanings of identity and audience relations during the digital era.

## FINDINGS

As the discussion of the analyzed Indian-English YouTube vlogs reveals, the code-mixing could be employed as one of the useful tools of the vloggers to enhance their relations with their viewers. As the aspect of English and local languages mixes, vloggers will find them both in the local and global community. This duality makes them flexible enough to be bound with their individual culture at the same time having the possibility of being in touch with the rest of the world. Take the case example of a powerful vlogger who has the habit of regularly making the use of English and subsequently Hindi as part of the strategy in order to reach more people by speaking English partly and switching to speaking in Hindi when she has the need to connect more with her viewers back at her place. This allows the vlogger

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to enjoy an equal negotiation of identity since she can preserve her local identity and share it in addition to engaging with a cosmopolitan, online-driven setting (Chakraborty & Sharma, 2019).

In addition to that, the performatives of vlogging is enhanced by code-mixing. Code-mixing is a practice utilized by most vloggers in order to elicit or build emotions and humor. The example being: in a lifestyle vlog of a family where one of the vloggers changes languages to Hindi to say she loves, or to reveal something funny noting, *Yeh bilkul mere jaldi pata tha!* I was aware of this--uppity, brown-eyes! She laughed I said. This is an intentional mixing of discourses that presents some form of individuality that would have been lost had it been a purely English dominated culture. It also adds humorous content because some of the regional local expressions and phrases evoke the sense of culture and comfort which could not be easily encompassed without the inclusion of English.

Other than transmission of emotions, code-mixing is also used to strengthen points or achieve the intimacy between the listener and the speaker. The use of the regional language characteristic such as calling the family members by a native word creates a closer connection with the audience and is more noticeable towards those audiences that share the same type of culture or language. This indicates how code-mixing is not merely an instrument to convey but a decision that is active, which enhances the communication and causes emergence of a digital identity that shall relate to different individuals.

## CONCLUSION

As stated in this paper, the concept of code-mixing has a significant role in establishing a digital identity in Indian-English YouTube vlogging. Linguistic intermixture of English language and the region languages not only gives vloggers the flexibility of using their localised language, but also gives them the freedom access to communicating with a large audience that could transcend the linguistic and cultural barriers. By virtue of blending languages, vloggers bargain on the values of both local and global identity, multiple chances of identity representation and act, and visual displaying through language are possible in the online world.

The usefulness of the research is that it can be used as further evidence in the area of online learning about the use of language, in other words, in studying multilingual forms of content production. The paper enhances our understanding of the conditions in which the online establishments like YouTube originate the environment within which we could have bargained our identities and how code-mixing could serve as the tool of self-representation and appealing to others. These perceptions are significant in the achievement of the recognition of language as transformative not only in communications but also in becoming the cultural and social tool in the formation of an online presence. Further research on the topic of code-mixing in the digital media would also be able to understand how multilingual creators use language to narrativize cross-cultural differences, impose their own authenticity and create a sense of connectedness in our highly globalized existence.

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