Language and Identity Construction in Short-Video Culture: A Study of Gen-Z TikTok Users in Bangladesh

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Abstract

In this study, the focus is on the process of self-construction and negotiation of identity for the users of Gen-Z TikTok in Bangladesh in relation to the usage of language in short video culture. The results of this study are based on qualitative research which analysed 30-40 Bangla, English, Banglish, slang, regional dialects, emojis, user profiles, TikTok videos, captions and hashtags and commentaries, to explore the role of Bangla, English, Banglish, slang, regional dialects, emojis, user profiles, TikTok videos, captions and hashtags and commentaries in creating identity. It is helpful to have a theoretical framework that will enable us to understand language as a tool that is constantly used to socially position and express ourselves. In this regard, the theoretical framework used in this study is an integrated framework that includes Social Identity Theory, Goffman's Self-Presentation Theory, Sociolinguistic Theory, and Performativity Theory.

Results show that code switching and code mixing between Bangla and English are found to be important dia-semiotic devices which represent local identity and global modernity in terms of digital space. In-group identity is established through slang and meme culture, and cultural authenticity and local belonging through regional dialects. English use is associated with education, confidence, social status; humour and hashtags are used as means of

performing identity and becoming visible. TikTok's audience engagement, such as likes, comments, and shares, also co-creates and reconfigures the online identities, indicating the collaborative aspects of TikTok communications.

The overall findings suggest that language on TikTok is not just communicative, but also performative, as well as multimodal and interwoven in the construction of identity for Bangladeshi Gen Zs.

Keywords: Identity Construction, TikTok and Short-Video Culture, Digital Communication, Code-Switching, Discourse Analysis, Social Media

Introduction

Over the last several years, short-video platforms have changed the ways in which young people communicate, perform identity and partake in digital culture. Of these platforms, TikTok has emerged as one of the dominant forces in user-generated audiovisual content. Through music, filters, captions, hashtags, voiceovers, comments and duets/stitches (split screen up to 60s long) as well as algorithmically recommended feeds allowing users to create /edit/share/circulate short videos. TikTok integrates spoken language, written captions, visual gestures, facial expressions, background sound and trends unique to the platform — unlike the limited form of communication we knew from earlier text-back social networking sites (Kaye, Chen & Zeng,2021). Hence, the term language on TikTok does not only refer to the verbal system since it serves as a part of larger multifaceted performance whereby users display themselves, derive social time and space with others, and warrant meaning.

Generation Z is broadly understood to be the cohort of a population born into an already-formed digital world and has had the biggest hand in cultivating this short-video culture. When it comes to online language with Gen-Z users, the golden rule is fast, creative and hybrid (with no single definition of such usage being possible without context). Their code-switches between Bangla English, Romanized Bangla, local dialects, abbreviations, emojis,

hashtags used layman definition output meme expressions popular trending audio and informal slang. These linguistic targets are not arbitrary. Instead, they show how young users dimension themselves relative to peer groups, the mass of popular culture, education systems, class and gender boundaries within localities and global youth phenomena. Thus users can deploy standard Bangla to convey relatability and cultural authenticity, English to signal modernity or education, regional dialect for local belonging and so-called Banglish — a pattern of mixing Bangla with English words — as an idiom of flexible urban youth identity. Hence, TikTok works as a digital stage that uses language to embody varied and oftentimes contesting identity.

This is particularly important in the Bangladeshi context. Bangla is firmly entwined with national identity, memory and collective belonging through a long history in Bangladesh. But now, the same contemporary Bangladeshi youth exists in a new digital globalisation where many English words, internet slang, Korean pop culture and Bollywood references intermingle with Islamic expressions, next-door regional speech forms and local meme cultures. This is where all the various linguistic resources come together in a space that TikTok provides. Bangladeshis amongst Gen-Z users do not just regurgitate global trends, they 'deshify' them through Bangla captions, deshi humour, regional pronunciation, cultural references and mundane social context. As such content on Bangladeshi TikTok embodies a simultaneous global reach with the assertion of local identity.

The importance of investigating language and identity construction among gen-Z TikTok users from Bangladesh is that it provides insight on how the young generation convey their selves by typing abstractly digital interconnected platforms about how they define themselves and how they would like to be identified. This also helps to explain the ways in which online youth language challenges existing boundaries between formal and informal lexis, local and global culture, and private or public self-presentation. Using the example of linguistic practices on TikTok, this project investigates how Bangladeshi Gen-Z users have

constructed identities through short-video culture and how language as resource has become a meaning-making tool for belonging, creativity, visibility, and social significance in digital life.

Background of the Study

The advent of digital media has completely transformed modes of communication and interaction among young people. The short-video culture has become a powerful mode of online interaction in recent years especially among younger generations. Short-video platforms blend speech, music, text captions, visual effects like emojis and augmented reality filters; gestures (like tapping and swiping) on-screen reactions to short clips. TikTok is no stranger to Bangladesh, especially youth — students, young professionals, creators and regular users from urban and semi-urban backgrounds. TikTok allows the users with new avenues of creativity, self-expression, social commentary, humor, fashion, music, education and cultural performance. Via short clips, they showcase their everyday existence: relationships, feelings and emotions, socio-political views, religion, education.. TikTok offers a vibrant space where local youth culture meets global digital convergence in Bangladesh.

It is language that is at the core of this short-video culture. Bangladeshi Gen-Z TikTokers communicate in a blend of Bangla, English, Banglish, regional dialects, slang, emojis/captions/hashtags/memes/comments. Their use of language is frequently informal, innovative and creative. They switch between Bangla and English within the same sentence or video, this phenomenon is known as code-mixing/code-switching. That is, they might use Bangla to signify emotion and cultural proximity; English to indicate modernity or education; run a little Banglish to strike a casual youth-oriented tone. So-called regional dialects are also masked in humorous skits or narratives, contributing to the global aspect of TikTok as a platform where all kinds of self- and local-related linguistic identities take shape.

Captions and hashtags also provide further context, extend exposure, and bridge users to trends or communities. For example friendship, love, study life, fashion, religion or national

identity hashtags help users situate their post within larger social conversations. Also, memes, trending audio and comment interactions help shape meaning because people will default to the cultural reference shared among each other when viewing video-related things as a common type of humor. Communication can be multimodal and participatory, not just spoken words as it is in TikTok.

It is paramount to see the language use of Gen-Z TikTok users in Bangladesh, because this will be a way to still understand how new generation youths build identity through digital alternates. They use their choices of language to signal belonging, creativity, class, gender, locality, education and global cultural influence. (boyd, d.,2014).This context emphasizes TikTok as an important ground to study the Bangladeshi youth language use as performative identity shaping out their presentation in social media (van Dijck ,2013).

Literature Review

1. Language and Identity

Language is one of the most significant means of expression, negotiation and enactment of identity. In sociolinguistics, identity is not considered to be fixed or natural, but rather it is created in the process of interaction, social context, and repeated communicative practices. Bucholtz and Hall suggest that identity is formed by language usage, positioning and social relations. This can be seen in how people talk, write, joke, respond, and how they alternate languages, which can show how they want to be perceived by others (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). Language may indicate age, class, gender, education, religion, locality, cultural identity and social attitude. Language is even more important for young people, as their youth identity is often experimental, performative and peer-oriented. Language has emotional, social and political connotations in the context of Bangladesh where Bangla is closely associated with the country's history and culture. Thus, the language users choose to use in their communications

on TikTok are not just expressions of casualness, but they are also components of identity-making processes when Bangladeshi Gen-Z users communicate on the platform.

2. Digital Identity Construction

Digital identity are the means by which people create and reveal themselves in digital environments. Digital communication is different from real life interaction because users can edit, filter, repeat and craft their presentation. The concept of self-presentation by Goffman is helpful here as the Internet users play different versions of themselves according to the audience, platform and purpose. TikTok users build their identity with their profile names, bio descriptions, videos, captions, hashtags, voiceovers, comments, music, facial expressions, clothing, and editing. Digital identity is also interactive in that audiences like, comment on, share, duet and stitch. These responses may confirm, question or reframe the user's self-presentation (Jenkins, 2008). Digital identity is a flexible concept for the Gen-Z users. They can be perceived as funny, fashion, religious, romantic, educated, rebellious, patriotic or socially conscious depending on the content they create. So, on TikTok, identity is personal, social and performative.

3. Language of the Youth and Social Media

The emergence of social media has led to the development of new youth languages which are quick, imaginative, informal, and highly adaptive. Young people may develop language styles that differentiate them from older people, and facilitate their sense of belonging to a peer group. Social media language is comprised of abbreviations, emojis, reaction words, memes, hashtags, transliteration, code-mixing and platform-specific slang. These forms are not indicative of linguistic weakness, but rather linguistic creativity and digital literacy (Androutsopoulos, J. ,2015). Gen-Z users interact in a variety of ways through spoken communication in videos, captions, comment threads, emoji reactions and shared audio trends. Bangladeshi youth frequently use Bangla, English, Romanized Bangla, and Hindi words from

entertainment media and regional languages together in their social media conversations. This blend is a reflection of the social realities of the young people of Bangladesh who are shaped by local culture, English-medium education, global media and mobile internet. Thus, the analysis of youth language on TikTok can be used to understand the role of youth in the digital culture and their role in the creation of new communicative norms.

4. TikTok and Short-Video Culture

TikTok has emerged as a big platform in the short video era. TikTok differs from the classic social networking platforms by offering video content that is short and algorithm-driven, which is circulated between users.Unlike classic social media platforms, TikTok is a platform of short, algorithm-driven, audiovisual content circulated among users. It's designed to facilitate rapid consumption, innovative imitation, remixing and involvement in trends. Users can create meaning using language and performance through features like trending sounds, filters, captions, duets, stitches, hashtags and comment sections. The short-video culture is particularly appealing to the Gen-Z users due to its speediness, entertainment and visual expressiveness, and social interaction. Moreover, TikTok provides opportunities for the normal users to get visibility even without being a celebrity or having professional production skills. In Bangladesh, TikTok is a platform that is popular among young people for entertainment, comedy, lip-syncing, fashion, dancing, religious content, education, lifestyle, relationship tips and social commentary. This has created a digital public sphere in which Bangladeshi youth enact identities and create social meanings by making short, creative and often humorous videos.

5. Code Switching and Multilingualism

Code-mixing and code-switching are the typical characteristics of multilingual communication. Code-mixing is the use of elements of two or more language(s) in the same speech unit and code switching is the alternation between two or more language(s) across

speech units, typically sentences. The use of Bangla-English code mixing is quite common in the communication, education, advertising, media and social networking among urban youth in Bangladesh. The Banglish language is a combination of Bangla and English, and is used by Gen-Z TikTok users to give a modern and informal tone to their content. In the case of Ajke mood ta fully off, the user requires to use Bangla grammar with English vocabulary. This type of language can be modern, humorous, educational, class-oriented, or digital youth identity. English can communicate with the world and social prestige while Bangla can communicate intimacy, emotion, and culture. Regional dialects also have a significant role, as they help users to link with local identity and local humor. In this context, multilingualism is a key element of the construction of hybrid identities among the youth in Bangladesh.

6. Slang, Humor, and Meme Language

Language of Gen-Z is heavily influenced by slang, humour and meme language. Slang can be used to form an in-group identity and to indicate a youth's generation or online community. Meme language relies on intertextual references, exaggeration, repetition and irony, and shared cultural knowledge. On TikTok, humor is frequently achieved with captions, facial expressions, trending music, local jokes, over-exaggerated pronunciation and surprising code-switching. Common social scenarios, such as family pressure, exam stress, love relationships, friendship, campus life, religious events, food culture, and social class differences are the sources of humor for the Bengali audience on TikTok. Meme language is a powerful tool because it is able to shorten and encapsulate complex social experiences into a short and recognisable expression. Many users may understand the reference, and a phrase, sound or caption may be meaningful. In this way, slang and memes help Gen-Z users to create community, criticize and negotiate identity in entertainment.

7. Gendered Language and Online Self-Presentation

Another aspect of the construction of language and identity on TikTok is gender. Different language, tone, caption, gestures and visual performances can be used to present oneself online by both male and female users. Gendered language is not static, however, but is influenced by social norms, cultural values, audience reactions and platform trends. Issues of modesty, beauty, fashion, confidence, romance, religion, respectability, and social judgment are all potential concerns related to gendered self-presentation on TikTok in Bangladesh. Female users might be under more pressure to look a certain way, talk a certain way, and be in public in a certain way, while male users may be under pressure to be confident, funny, manly, or vulnerable. Captions and comments also provide clues to audience reactions to gendered performances. Some comments may be supportive and appreciative, others may be critical, stereotyping and/or policing behaviour. As such, TikTok is a place of self-expression, as well as a place of negotiation, reinforcement and even contestation of gender identities, all done through language.

Theoretical Framework

The study is grounded in an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that combines Social Identity Theory, Goffman's Self-Presentation Theory, Sociolinguistic Theory and Performativity Theory to explain how Gen-Z TikTok users in Bangladesh construct and negotiate identity through language in short-video culture. These frameworks collectively allow us to understand language not simply as a tool for communication, but as a dynamic social practice through which identities are continually produced, performed, and recognized within digital spaces.

- **Social Identity Theory**

Tajfel and Turner's Social Identity Theory offers a basic explanation of how people come to understand who they are by being part of social groups. In the TikTok context,

language is an important marker of group belonging and social alignment(Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Gen-Z users in Bangladesh often employ linguistic styles like code-switching between Bangla and English, slang, meme-based expressions, and localized urban youth language to demonstrate affiliation to certain peer groups or digital communities. These language choices serve as identity markers that differentiate "in-groups" (e.g., urban youth, trendsetters, English-speaking digital natives) from "out-groups" (e.g., older generations, non-digital users). Thus, language on TikTok functions as a symbolic resource for users to reaffirm social identity, gain acceptance and gain visibility within online communities.

- **Goffman's Self-Presentation Theory**

Erving Goffman's Self-Presentation Theory views social interaction as a performance where individuals are managing impressions in front of an audience. This performance is amplified and highly visible on TikTok, via the platform's algorithmic exposure and audience-driven engagement. Users are not only carefully curating visual content but also linguistic expression – selecting particular accents, captions, voiceovers and expressive turns of phrase – to craft desirable identities (Goffman,1959). For Gen-Z users in Bangladesh, language is a performative "front stage" element to project identities such as humorist, lifestyle influencer, socially aware youth or culturally hybrid individual. Simultaneously, the "audience" is understood as both local and global, which influences how the language is styled to optimize relatability, likes, and shares. Hence identity is not fixed but strategically performed through linguistic and multimodal performance in digital spaces.

- **Sociolinguistic Theory**

Sociolinguistic Theory offers a critical framework for understanding the relationship between language variation and social factors such as age, gender, class, and regional identity (Labov, 1972). The sociocultural diversity in Bangladesh's TikTok environment has a profound effect on linguistic practices. Depending on context, audience and content type, Gen-Z users

switch between standard Bangla, regional dialects and English. Urban youth may employ more English-centric expressions to signify modernity or global affinity, while rural or mixed audiences may use more localized Bangla forms to maintain authenticity and proximity. Gender is also relevant to linguistic styling, e.g. the use of expressive tones, politeness strategies or assertive speech. There are also class differences in vocabulary choice, pronunciation and digital literacy. Sociolinguistic variation on TikTok thus indexes broader social hierarchies, while also enabling users to negotiate identity in fluid and creative ways.

- **Performativity Theory**

Performativity Theory, particularly Judith Butler's work, posits that identity is not inherent but rather performed through repeated actions, behaviors, and expressions. This repetitive performance in TikTok culture is at the core of language. Gen-Z users are constantly remixing different linguistic styles – catchphrases, trending audio dialogues, humorous expressions, stylized captions – which combine to form recognizable identities (Butler,1990). For example, frequent use of funny Bangla-English mix or viral slang builds a "TikTok persona" that others can recognize and engage with. In this sense, identity is not something users have, but something they do, over and over, through language and digital interaction. This performativity is heightened by the algorithmic structure of TikTok, which rewards the repetition of trends, and encourages users to mimic and iterate linguistic behaviours that become visible.

- **Integrated Viewpoint**

Based on the integration of these four theoretical approaches, the present study conceptualizes language use on TikTok as a multidimensional resource for constructing identities. Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1974) explains group belonging and affiliation. Goffman (1959) focuses on the strategic self-presentation. Sociolinguistic Theory (Labov, 1966; Trudgill, 1974) accounts for variation across social categories. Performativity Theory

(Butler, 1990) emphasizes repetition and identity formation through practice. Altogether, they offer a comprehensive framework for understanding the active processes of identity construction, negotiation and performance through language by the Gen-Z users of Bangladesh in the fast-changing short-video ecosystem.

Methodology

- **Research Approach**

This study used a qualitative research framework to examine language and identity construction within the TikTok user community in Bangladesh for Gen-Z participants (Born 1997+). This qualitative approach is especially suitable, as it allows an in depth investigation of the linguistic practices, sociocultural meanings and identity performances that cannot be measured along numerical scales. Qualitative researchers are prompted by the fact that quantitative methods emphasize statistical generalization whereas qualitative research seeks to describe complex, layered digital communication beyond the interpretation of contextual meanings embedded in language use. This is all in line with sociolinguistic traditions that have examined language as a form of social practice grounded in cultural and identity frameworks.

- **Research Design**

This qualitative study investigates how Bangladeshi Gen-Z users negotiate identity on the digital platform TikTok using a micro-level analytical approach that combines digital discourse analysis with sociolinguistic analysis. Digital discourse analysis, in turn, became a subfield of linguistics in order to understand how digitization and the online realm alter linguistic practices. It contains multimodal communication elements—textual, visual and audio signs—which compose the communicative situation of TikTok (Kress, 2010).

The sociolinguistic component looks at the role demographic and social variables (age, gender, linguistic heritage, online community membership) play in digital discourse engagement. The need for both lenses stems from the fact that digital discourse does not comprise language

alone, but consists of visual signs, sounds, symbols and interactional patterns which demand global methods of study. The design is based on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which studies the production of language and ideologies in TikTok, challenges dominant narratives, and constructs activist identities.

- **Data Sources**

This study uses public TikTok content created by Gen-Z users in Bangladesh as the main data source. This study does not only focus on the words spoken in the videos; TikTok is considered a multimodal writing space, as identity finds its construction in various linguistic and visual aspects of communication.

The data sources include:

1. TikTok videos
2. Spoken language used in videos
3. Captions written by users
4. Hashtags attached to videos
5. Comments from viewers
6. User profiles and profile descriptions
7. Visible identity marks, like usernames

These sources matter because identity on TikTok is not strictly a product of speech. For example, captions can elaborate on the message of a video (or perhaps contextualize it), hashtags can link viewers to relevant trends or communities, comments might reflect audience response, and profile descriptions may expose how certain users represent themselves.

- **Sampling Technique**

This study uses **purposive sampling**. Purposive sampling is used here since the study does not pretend to be some statistic about the whole population of TikTok users. Rather, it is a dataset that selects TikTok content relevant to the research topic.

Selection of videos and users will be based on relevance to language use, identity expression and the Bangladeshi Gen-Z digital culture. The chosen excerpts should have explicit instances of language use that demonstrate identity construction.

The selection criteria may include:

1. User-generated content from Bangladeshi Gen-Zers
2. Bangla, English or Bangla-English mixed language that is employed visibly
3. Use of identity-slurred or related slang, hashtags, captions or comments
4. Youth culture, lifestyle, humor, education and videos regarding class, gender and/or regional identity
5. Publicly accessible content

- **Sample size**

Approximately 30–40 TikTok videos of 10–15 Gen-Z (18–26 years) users from Bangladesh. They are similar to qualitative studies of digital discourse that typically interview 10-40 TikTok videos using purposive sampling methods. The user range allows for enough variation in linguistic practices but robust analytic coverage of each speakers discourse.

Data were selected if—

1. TikTok account was active and there had been at least 10 posts.
2. The content included Bangla, English or Banglish (Bangla-English code-mixing)
3. Identity performance is visible within it (often through linguistic choices),and
4. Community engagement indicators were observable in comments/shares.

- **Data Collection Procedures**

Data Collection Observation and Content – Systematic observation, through online or content collection. This is a QRM in which the researcher carries out structured observations of TikTok posts, noting linguistic features, discourse patterns and identity markers while

avoiding any direct contact with the content producers. An observational research strategy is suitable because TikTok is a public platform wherein the information collected can be linked to an individual but not personally identifiable.

Collection phases:

1. Identifying content using hashtag searches (#Bangla TikTok, #GenZ Bangladesh, #Banglish), and algorithmic browsing;
2. Entering systematic records of documenting URLs/capturing screenshots of captions/hashtags/comments/transcribing spoken language content;
3. Creating metadata about identifying profiles/frequencies of posting/data on engagement for contextualization.

- **Data Analysis Methods**

The research used two complementary methods of analysis:

1. Thematic Analysis: Organizes data by distinguishing similarities or themes It points to the recurrent linguistic, rhetorical and socio-pragmatic phenomena, such as hashtags, abbreviations, internet slang / code-mixing patterns; irony; parody; persuasion; positioning; alignment or dissent. Hierarchy — Themes and sub-themes are hierarchical where the themes are larger in scope than the sub-themes.
2. Discourse Analysis: This involves the language that is used in a social context and how meanings are shaped through socially determined visual, audio and textual combinations. The parts of the analysis is on: emoji/filter/visual icon use; spoken-written text integration; language choice variation; and correlation between actual practice with user identities. Discourse analysis is a qualitative approach that could be used to examine how satirical, vernacular codes and emotional appeals and participatory memes deliver communicative dynamics and identity construction.

- **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations are quintessential in this study due to the use of real TikTok users and their online behaviour. Though the study will involve publicly accessible content, user privacy and dignity must always be observed.

This study will abide by the following ethical principles:

1. Privacy

This will only run on publicly available TikTok data. It will also not be collecting any private messages, restricted content, or information from private accounts.

2. Anonymity

Such disclosures of usernames, profile names and identifiable personal details will be anonymised. During this time, you will not show any data that can personally identify an individual user to the researcher.

3. Use of Public Content

We hope to be able to analyse publicly available or accessible contents, but we will do it with care. The researcher will not assume that making public the data removes the requirement for ethical responsibility.

4. Sensitive Content

Given the nature of this, we would be particularly careful when looking at content around gender, class, religion, sexuality, mental health and political identity or other sensitive topics. The goal of this study is not to evaluate specific users but rather to learn how aggregate patterns create language and identity.

Data Analysis and Findings

In this context , a qualitative methodology is used to analyse selected TikTok videos, captions, hashtags comments and user profile information. The study explores Bangladeshi Gen-Z users' discursive construction of personal, social and cultural (digital) identities in short-

video culture. Data were analyzed thematically and discursively. Thematic analysis spotted certificates of repeated designs in language use, and discourse evaluation defined the make-up and purposes of linguistic alternatives operating inside unique social and digital contexts.

The results show that TikTok does not use language purely for communication. Instead, it serves as a supercharged vehicle for identity performance. Gen-Z users in Bangladesh express their identity with languages like Bangla, English, "Banglish," slang-speaking or regional dialects and also captions, hashtags and comments in order to show they are modern, funny, educated or relatable. TikTok allows users to articulate potential identities through spoken language, written text, sound, gesture, facial expression and visual style over a short-video format.

- **Process of Data Analysis**

The TikTok content that we collected was analyzed in multiple steps. For starters, the video entries that were nominated are thoroughly analyzed to see what it is about, the way they converse linguistically, the tone of its discussion and the context in which it is presented. Language was observed in the spoken, captions, hashtags, comments and profile descriptions of each video. Transcription and English translation of speech content was done where available while keeping the meanings for Bangla and Bangla-English expressions.

The first stage includes Initial codes of answering a question were formed from the repeated linguistic patterns. These codes comprised of Bangla-English Mixing, youth slang, regional accent, humorous identity, modern lifestyle, university identity, gendered expression Religious or cultural identity, romantic language, class performance and comment interaction. These codes offered insights into the ways language is mobilized in service to expressing belonging, difference, aspiration, confidence, emotion, and social positioning.

Afterwards , finite codes that were similar in scope were combined into broader themes. The findings of the analysis went on to reveal that these themes can be summarized as: code-

switching and modern identity; slang and youth belonging; regional language & cultural identity; symbolic capital associated with English; humor based disguise/self-presentation and hashtags plus comments functions as sites of identity negotiation. The following discusses these a priori themes as the study's major findings.

- **Modern Gen-Z Marker: The Use of Code-Switching**

One of the more noticeable findings was how commonly code-switching occurred from Bangla into English. Most of the TikTok user switch from Bangla to English in a single sentence, push or comment. And this language mixing is not arbitrary; it corresponds with a style of identity grounded in the idea of performance. Users who do code-switching often portray themselves as modern, educated and urban, confident and informed young people connected to an international capitalist youth culture.

For example, a user can start a video in Bangla but use English words such as "vibe," "mood," "crush," "toxic," “bestie", “confidence”, “attitude” or ”relatable” to convey emotions. For more abbreviations in specific digital meaning which cannot be fully represented with standard Bangla, these English words got mingled and gradually integrated into some sentences. And so too, English comes to fold into the vernacular of daily Gen-Z discourse.

The analysis suggests that the use of code-switching, especially Bangla-English medium as here in Mohammadpur & Manchester allows the users to create a hybrid identity. They neither completely refuse the use of Bangla nor fully switch to English. Rather, they mix both languages and self-identity as Bangladeshi and cosmopolitan. This hybrid style of language corresponds to the duality of their real life, which is characterized as a global virtual frontier and yet a local linguistic place where the international pop culture retains its allure while entrenching lines connecting with localistic language and social live.

- **Use of Slang and Informal Language to 'Fit in' with Youth**

Another big discovery is the large amount of slang, colloquialisms and internet language. In Gen-Z TikTok, content creators frequently employ casual words and phrases to invoke a familiar treatment from their audience. Slang makes users sound normal, relatable friendlier, and humorous. It also writes them into a youth community.

This slang includes Bangla youth terms, short forms of English words, internet slangs and some fun stressers. Wrote like bro, apu, vai, bestie, cringe, sigma, red flag, green flag and vibe write captions & comments almost every social media anywhere. They create a common parlance between members of the TikTok user base. The ones who get these places in that place are placed in parallel with the same digital generation.

The results show that slang is an indicator of boundary. It has set itself apart from other generations, especially for its generation gap with older people and more formal ways of communicating. For humorous or lifestyle videos, standard Bangla or formal English is not used as it could sound too serious or distant. Rather, informal language enables users to build up a relaxed and youthful identity. This implies that the TikTok language is closely related to peer culture, entertainment, and membership in the society.

- **Regional Language and Local Cultural Identity**

This is a common practice while mixing Bangla and English, though regional language also plays an important part in identity making. Others include regional dialect, accent or local expressions in testimony as a sign of their cultural heritage. Regional speech is particularly present in comedy, folktales, local family videos and videos with topics from home.

Regional language comes into play as it allows users to sound both authentic and grounded in culture. It also questions the hegemony of standard Bangla and urban speech registers. The users could use a Sylheti, Chittagonian, Noakhali (Noakhali) or North Bengal

accent to make any type of fun or local love. This way of expressing oneself signifies that TikTok offers a setting in which regional identities can appear and become prominent.

The analysis also indicates that regional language can be used in a stereotypical manner from time to time. Some dialect videos produce comic effects but in doing so might reproduce social beliefs about certain geographical regions. However, many users are familiar with regional language and want to use it for reaching out a similar community. So, while regional speech serves an entertainment purpose on TikTok, it also serves as a cultural flag.

- **English as a Symbol of Education, Confidence, and Status**

English in TikTok posts can sometimes have a symbolic meaning. English doesn't always have to be used to communicate fully; rather it's used to communicate in a certain way. Many users write English phrases in their captions, bios, motivational videos, fashion content, relationship content or lifestyle videos. This implies that English is connected with education, confidence, modernity and social status.

Some of the English words found in profile descriptions include “dreamer,” “content creator,” “fashion lover,” “student,” “self-love,” and “positive vibes only.” These phrases enable users to develop a professional online profile. English captioning is also prevalent in videos, where the viewers are looking to look stylish, emotional, inspirational or cosmopolitan.

Meanwhile, users frequently use English as well as Bangla to make it more accessible. A complete English might alienate the local audience and a complete Bangla might not necessarily have the right global or stylish quality. That’s how mixed language is a viable and symbolic option. It enables users to interact with locals and to be a modern digital identity.

- **Topology: Humour as Performance of Identity**

Humour is one of the key things about our Bangladeshi Gen-Z TikTok culture. Questions are posed, identity is constructed using mock language, sarcasm, hyperbole (which includes acting absurdly), imitative language and silly subtitle captions in many of the videos

Users portray an image of themselves as witty, socially aware, self assured and relatable by use of humour.

Our work does show that humour is frequently context-bound in the sense of shared social experience. University life, exam worries, pressure from family, romance and friendship, unemployment anxiety, differences between social classes and daily struggle issues. Through the words, users express these experiences to transform them into fun content. Captions might take a situation that is teetering on the edge of emotion and push it over the edge, while comments may ride the joke into the night with memes, slang usage or even sarcastic replies.

Besides, humour also enables users to talk about something serious in an indirect way. They then frame topics like academic stress, relationship problems, parental expectations, gender norms and economic pressure using light or funny words. So TikTok humor is not only entertainment, this illustrates how young people use it to vent frustration, navigate social normative experiences, and build a sense of commonality.

- **Hashtags, Captions as Sites of Identity Construction**

The captions and hashtags on TikTok prepare the videos meaning. A brief caption can also affect how audience understand the information presented in a video. Often, captions provide emotional context, humorous framing, or identity labels. So, a basic video maybe described as "student life" or "middle-class struggle," "toxic friendship," "single life," and "Bangladeshi parents," through captions and hashtags.

Hashtags link single videos to broader social networks. Tags about Bangladesh, university life, fashion, dating and relationships, Islamic identity or regional identity or just any global trends help users contextualize themselves to a certain social strata. Using There are several benefits that hashtags provide, which include heightened visibility and the ability to join trending discussions.

The results are in: hashtags function as identity markers. Users can assert their group memberships by using certain hashtags. To do this, hashtags such as "Gen Z," "Bangladesh," "Dhaka"," student life, " relatable content" can be stitched together to give viewers a sense of identification with one another through shared experiences. So, just as speech is important to building the identity on TikTok, written language too plays a crucial role.

- **Identity Negotiation in Comments**

Identity is also established and navigated in the comment section—perhaps another of the more vital spaces where we find identity, during a social media climate when this is such a touchstone subject. People react with jokes, agree, disagree, use emojis and slang words or talk about their own experiences. These comments are often either affirmations of, or challenges/extensions to, the identity performed by the creator.

By commenting “so relatable,” or “same bro,”,“this is me” or “ Bangladeshi parents like this”, viewers forge a collective identity. Such responses indicate that TikTok identity is not built solely by the creator. It wokrs according to audience interaction aspect as well.

Yet, commentary can also disrupt a creator's performance as an identity. Some will critique diction, accent, appearance, gender expression or perceived social class. It illustrates TikTok is not a neutral actor or ally. The bargaining, endorsement and even opposition that unfolds on-platform shows how identity is constructed. In a sense, therefore, the comment section is keeping up with broader social arguments about language and class, gender (though this language is often less explicit), modernity, authenticity of culture.

- **Gendered Language and Self-Presentation**

The study also discovered a relationship between language and gendered self-presentation. Language of confidence, beauty, self-love and friendship/independence used by female users. Male users behavior: They use attitude, humor, confidence, or masculinity-related wording and subconscious emotional control over their audience. But these patterns are

not rigid. The language used by many Gen-Z users also subverts established norms around gender using playful, ironic or emotionally intense expressions.

There are, for instance, users who post self-affirmative captions talking about confidence or independence to fight against the anguish of social judgment. Others use humour to challenge stereotypes about masculinity, femininity and expectations around relationships with families. In this way, gender identity is both reproduced and subverted through language on TikTok.

- **Overall Findings**

In sum, the results reveal language as core to identitarian formation among Bangladeshi Gen-Z TikTok culture. Users weave identity out of Bangla, English, slang, regional dialects where captions or hashtags become additions to identity through comments a profile description. Their linguistic practices are situated within frameworks of local cultural belonging and global digital cosmopolitanism.

Discussion

This research reveals that language in TikTok is not just a means of communication but a key tool in the process of identity formation of Gen-Z Bangladeshis. The analysis indicates that the use of language is not only used in multimodal, performative and socially interactive contexts, but is also deeply embedded in settings where identity is continually produced, negotiated and re-performed. The findings are in accordance with the theoretical framework which integrated Social Identity Theory, Goffman's Self-Presentation Theory, Sociolinguistic Theory and Performativity Theory, which is the fact that language does not have a fixed structure and it is a dynamic social resource.

One of the major conclusions is that code switching and code mixing (Bangla–English–Banglish hybrid forms) are predominant. Users often switch between Bangla to English in a single sentence, caption and narration. This practice is not arbitrary, but rather has a social

context. The introduction of English lexical items like ‘vibe’, ‘crush’, ‘mood’, ‘relatable’, and ‘confidence’ are well placed within Bangla discourse, to mark modernity, emotional expressiveness and cultural alignment with the rest of the world. Meanwhile, Bangla is at the heart of emotional stability, cultural familiarity and authenticity. This is a hybrid linguistic style, as the study finds that it is a dual identity performance, being local (Bangladeshi) and global (digitally cosmopolitan). The findings reflect the fact that users do not give up on Bangla or completely shift to English, but rather create a seamless “Banglish” identity reflecting the socio-digital environments in which they live.

The other major theme is the use of slang language and informal discourse as markers of belonging as a youth. On TikTok, you'll find numerous terms like “bro,” “bestie,” “cringe,” “sigma,” “red flag” and “green flag” being used in the content. These expressions foster a sense of solidarity and belonging among Gen-Z users and help to differentiate them from those who are older. Thus, slang can be seen as a cross-generational boundary marker. It also makes them more relatable, as they appear to be friendly, funny, and “cool”. Importantly, this helps to reinforce the notion that linguistic innovation is not linguistic decay, but rather linguistic creativity and adaptation on TikTok.

The study also demonstrates that regional dialects and local linguistic variation are also important in the expression of identity. Users use Sylheti, Chittagonian, Noakhali and other local dialects in humorous sketches and stories and for emotional expression. These dialects are used as a symbol of locality and authenticity in the culture. But they have other mixed meanings as well. They can reinforce cultural identity, but can be used in stereotypical or humorous manner, reflecting wider society's view of cultural identity. However, the use of regional languages on the platform of TikTok offers visibility to linguistic diversity that is often left out of formal media contexts.

Further, English is found as a symbolic language of education, confidence and social status. People tend to use English for bios, captions and other 'aesthetic' phrases like “self-love,” “content creator” or “positive vibes only.” This use is not indicative of full fluency, but rather aspirational constructions of identity. English is a sign of modernity and sophistication and Bangla is a sign of emotional depth and culture. Together, these enable users to create socially flexible and contextually adaptive hybrid identities.

The significance of humor as identity performance is an aspect that needs to be taken into particular consideration. Users of TikTok often use sarcasm, exaggeration, parody and meme-based storytelling to depict the challenges of daily life, including school pressure, parental expectations, the dating game, financial woes and more. Humor can help to make potentially serious or sensitive topics one that is socially acceptable and entertaining. This is consistent with Goffman's idea of impression management, and humor is used as a “front stage” tactic of showing oneself as a relatable, intelligent, and emotionally stable person. Humor is also a coping strategy, and can be used to mask frustration.

The hashtags and captions offer another type of identity construction. Hashtags like #studentlife, #Bangladesh, #relatable, and #GenZ are in essence digital identity labels, placing users in specific communities. Captions can help direct the audience's interpretation and emotion of videos. So written language support spoken performance in affirming identity narratives and in making oneself visible in algorithmic systems (Zeng & Abidin, 2021).Ide

In addition, audience commentary in the comment sections also helps to create identity. On TikTok, identity is not a creation that is solely made by creators, but rather it is co-constructed by audience reactions. Expressions like “same bro”, “so relatable” or “this is me” help to build an identity experience. Comments, however, can also be challenging and critical of performances of identity – e.g. gender expression, class signals, accent, perceived

authenticity. This emphasises TikTok as a space of contestation and where identity is continually renegotiated instead of set in stone.

Last but not least, the gendered language practices show reproduction and resistance of the social norms. Female users tend to be more confident, beautiful, independent, and expressive, while male users are more humorous or attitude or controlling emotional display. These patterns are not set in stone though. The space on TikTok can be a place of reinforcement and transformation of gender identities, as many users actively subvert gender expectations in their linguistic performances, often with an ironic, emotional, or non-conforming approach.

The results validate the view of TikTok as a multimodal arena of identity, in which language, image, sound and interaction are combined. Thus, the construction of identity among the Bangladeshi Gen-Z is hybrid, fluid and very performative.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to see how Gen-Z TikTok users in a short-video culture relate to one another and assizes using language, what is their identity forcet. The findings undoubtedly show that language is not just a means of communication but also an integral part in enacting identity and negotiating social standing.

Our research revealed that Bangladeshi Gen-Z users actively employ a medley of Bangla, English, Banglish, slang, regional dialects and even hashtags and memes to create hybrid identities. These discursive practices manifest their real life experience situated in the double world of local cultural heritage and global digital trends. A major type of strategy consisted of code-switching between Bangla and English to convey modernity, emotional meaning, and social belonging while retaining cultural authenticity.

For one, identity on TikTok is highly performative and interactive, the study pointed out. Users do not constitute persistent aggregates; rather, they are in a state of ongoing self-making through videos and captions and comments and back-and-forth with audiences.

Culturally relative and socially legitimate identities are shaped by the need for humor, slang and meme culture as well as regional language use which sustains cultural rootedness.

Crucially, this marks the co-creation of identity through audience interaction and algorithmic visibility. The likes, shares, and comments not only affirm identity but also reform it by the collective act of engagement. Language practices regarding gender also show continuity with the past alongside much change, including a mix of support for tradition and push back against it.

In summary, TikTok represents an important digital domain within which Bangladeshi Gen-Z users take a nuanced approach to identity construction. By revealing the way that short-video sites renegotiate the connection between language, identity and interaction in twenty-first-century youth culture, this research extends studies of sociolinguistics and digital culture.

Conflict of Interest: The corresponding author, on behalf of second author, confirms that there are no conflicts of interest to disclose.

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