

# Speaking Identity: Decoding the Sociocultural Power of Slang among Pakistani Youth

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## Abstract

The present empirical research aims to explore how young Pakistanis use slang as a signifier of socio-cultural status and identity markers in various social domains. Drawing on the theoretical concepts of Pierre Bourdieu, Erving Goffman and Mikhail Bakhtin, the study focuses on the ways in which both English and regional colloquial languages serve to mediate relationships in employed hierarchies and establish group membership. From the extensive study of slang in major cities such as Karachi Lahore and Peshawar as well as rural areas of the country, it became clear that the type of language used exemplifies the socio-cultural practices of their region. The study focuses on the use of slang in youth subcultures. The ability to use slang has been shown to provide members of the subculture with social currency and power, privilege, and identity within contemporary culture. This research also shows that the cultural aspect must be taken into account when discussing the meaning of slang. Contributing to expanding knowledge about youth culture in Pakistan, this research provides useful recommendations for teachers to design culturally sensitive curricula and for policymakers to implement language policies that respect multiculturalism and regionalism.

**Keywords:** Qualitative research, Slang, Language, Socialization, Marker, Cultural identity

## Introduction

Sociocultural signifiers are not mere colorful ornaments to the fabric of interaction; they are the fabric that constructs meaning and cohesion among different groups of people (Forsyth et al., 2023). Sociocultural signs can help to capture and describe the most important aspects of human culture (Warom, 2022). All these aspects which include symbols and uses, rituals and language, cloth, and architecture become mere ornaments as they denote identity and rank, enforce

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norms and culture, transmit and certify culture, glue society, and symbolize power relations in society respectively (Edwards, 2024). Pierre Bourdieu (1984) states that it is necessary to underline that perceptions and dispositions act as the indicators of position in a given society: Perception classifies, and it classifies the classifier. Furthermore, he argues that social subjects identify themselves by the distinctions they establish within their respective classifications. Durkheim (1912) highlights the role of rituals and symbols in sustaining communal norms, writing, “The sacred world can be nothing else than the world of the collective life transfigured and imagined; and this is why the gods are so near to men”. He also emphasizes the importance of common symbols in building social solidarity, stating, “The very concept of society is the soul of religion. He further stated that “collective ideals and moral beliefs are at the heart of religious thought and ritual.”

Geertz (1973) emphasizes the significance of cultural transmission, noting, “Culture is the fabric of meaning in terms of which human beings interpret their experience and guide their action”. Barthes (1957) examines how ordinary objects and behaviors mirror societal power structures, stating, “Myth is a type of speech chosen by history: it cannot possibly evolve from the 'nature' of things”. Furthermore, Bucholtz & Hall (2005) emphasizes the dynamic character of cultural identity, adding, “Cultural identity... is a matter of both 'becoming' and 'being'. It belongs at once, to the future and the past.” It is not something that is already there, beyond geographic, time, history and culture”. These perspectives thus show an influence of sociocultural signification in constructing and presenting the complex structure of society. These aspects, which involve talk and gesture, it transcends what is being said to what is being publicly known, believed, and done by society. However, the understanding of their importance means moving into the field of social and linguistic theory; discussing how the phenomenon has been studied and defined by various researchers (such as Edwards, 2024; Phillips, 2023; & Tariq et al., 2019).

Moreover, Bourdieu (1991) in *Language and Symbolic Power* states that language is not something neutral, but an indicator of one’s class and cultural background. He uses the term linguistic capital with the argument that fluency with the majority’s language bestows power, prestige, and mobility. Sociocultural signifiers, their interpretation, and application become a method of mastering the hierarchies in interrogating and claiming one’s place within a given community. Additionally, “Language is not only a system of cultural communication but a medium of cultural capital which socio-culturally privileged groups have at their disposal.” (Bourdieu,

1991, pp. 107–108). Further, Erving Goffman, through his Theory of Dramaturgy, posits that social life is a theatrical performance where individuals act in different roles within various social settings. Sociocultural signifiers become essential props in this performance, helping individuals negotiate their identities and communicate their desired image to others.

A specific slang term, for instance, might signal membership in a particular youth subculture, while a carefully curated emoji-laden text message might convey informality and playfulness. “The self is not an entity... but a performed achievement” (Goffman, 1959). Mikhail Bakhtin, through his concept of Dialogism, challenges the notion of a fixed and stable meaning for a word or signifier. He argues that meaning is constantly negotiated and reinterpreted through dialogue and interaction between individuals from different cultural backgrounds. Sociocultural signifiers, therefore, become sites of potential misunderstanding and ambiguity, highlighting the importance of cultural awareness and active listening in cross-cultural communication. “There are two sides to the word: an own-word and another’s word, and both become one word just as the two banks of a river become one by the flowing water” (Bakhtin, 1981).

Slang is an ideology of linguistic and social division. The use of slang in practice demonstrates how such ideologies and their associated identities are negotiated in specific discursive contexts. Furthermore, the ideologies of slang operate at different levels of identity to unify youth around the ideal of Coolness and to differentiate teenagers based on race and subculture. So, slang in discourse may be used to structure interaction, to produce emergent and temporary interactional identities. Hall (1990) with his high-context and low-context cultures framework, reminds us that the interpretation of sociocultural signifiers is not isolated from the broader context. But what might be considered humorous in one culture could be offensive in another. Understanding the cultural values, norms, and expectations surrounding specific signifiers is crucial for avoiding misinterpretations and fostering effective communication. “High-context communication relies heavily on the context in which the communication takes place... while low-context communication relies more on the explicit verbal message.” (Hall, 1990).

In Pakistan, slang means more than just linguistic novelty. It plays a significant role in youth culture and serves as a tool for identity negotiation and social navigation. From urban slang in Karachi to regional expressions in Punjab and Baluchistan,

these linguistic markers reflect both local socio-cultural dynamics and broader national trends. Despite the global nature of youth culture, the specific use of slang in Pakistan remains poorly understood, particularly with regard to its role in identity formation and the management of social affiliations. This study aims to fill this gap by unraveling the role of slang as a sociocultural signifier among Pakistani youth and how it facilitates the negotiation of identity in different social contexts. By applying the theoretical frameworks of Bourdieu, Goffman and Bakhtin, this research uncovers how fluency in everyday language provides access to social capital and provides young people with the linguistic tools they need to navigate social hierarchies. To gain power and assert a sense of belonging within certain subcultures. Also, this research addresses the regional differences in the use of colloquial terms to understand the process of incorporation of certain terms into the national linguistic palette and the terms that indicate regional peculiarities of the socio-cultural life of Pakistani cities including Karachi, Lahore, Quetta and Peshawar. Knowledge of these aspects of language sheds light on the socio-cultural life of Pakistani youth. This study expands the literature on language, identity, and culture with implications for language structure, cultural education resources, and youth programs that promote equity and cultural competence.

## **Review of the Literature**

Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2004) multimodal framework emphasizes the interplay between verbal and nonverbal communication. Gestures, facial expressions and even clothing styles become signifiers alongside everyday language and enrich the meaning and impact of youth expression. A raised eyebrow paired with a sarcastic "Yeah, right" can convey a tone more than the words themselves. "Meaning arises not only through language, but also through a range of sensory modes" (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). Style studies are becoming increasingly integrated into the sociolinguistic analysis of identity. To date, style in sociolinguistics has been interpreted as a one-dimensional continuum between standard and colloquial language, varying depending on the speaker's level of self-monitoring in a given linguistic environment (e.g., Labov 1972). It is assumed that language and language styles are separate entities that can be isolated and counted as one of the effective language ideological constructs (Woolard, 1998). Research on language use in multilingual urban areas has also shown that young people can use a variety of linguistic resources in ways that contradict conventional understandings of code-switching between such different linguistic units and the notion of fixed languages.

Additionally, slang is useful for identity construction for several reasons. First, to the extent that it is part of the lexicon (as it is commonly understood), it functions at a level above conscious awareness, making it easy to use and identify. Second, at least ideologically, it is one of the most socially significant lexicons and can provide complex and comprehensive details about the speaker's identity. Third, because of its tendency to change rapidly, its progress within the social landscape can be monitored. Furthermore, the current study builds on the findings of previous studies and asserts that slang is a rich resource for negotiating meanings and for creating social and interactional identities associated with those meanings.

### ❖ Language and Linguistics

Language, is an important symbol of cultural identity, can be controlled and manipulated to create the “self” and the “other” (Lippi-Green, 1997). Peer subgroups are differentiated by linguistic behaviors such as language style and colloquial language. By participating in these speech acts, adolescents can meet both their individual identification needs and the needs of the organizations to which they belong (Milroy & Milroy, 1999). Members within the group also control linguistic behaviors to ensure the integrity of the group (Lanehart, 1999). According to Kroskrity (2000a), social identity is not a fixed or inherent characteristic, but rather something that is actively constructed through everyday interactions and language use. He emphasizes that this construction is not only driven by individual actions but is also influenced by broader social structures, power dynamics, and cultural expectations. Through our choice of words, linguistic styles, and even nonverbal cues, we signal our membership in certain groups, navigate social hierarchies, and shape the way others perceive us. Kroskrity's perspective highlights the dynamic nature of identity and recognizes it as an ongoing process in which language plays a central role.

Woolard (2020) illustrated these ideologies, defined as beliefs about language that justify and rationalize its structure and use in social contexts. These ideologies include ideas about the role of language in social experiences and relationships that are laden with cultural, moral, and political concerns. The text examines various definitions and perspectives of linguistic ideologies and highlights an important difference between neutral and critical interpretations. Neutral definitions view linguistic ideologies as encompassing all cultural representations, while critical definitions focus on specific representations that legitimize social domination and mystify social realities. The concept of ideological distortion is discussed and

emphasizes how it can arise from the limitations of semiotic consciousness and the goal-directed nature of language in human social action. Agha (2015) discusses the inherent value-laden nature of slang and how its social value is perceived differently depending on social position and context. The grading of slang by age illustrates this, as individuals may adopt slang in youth but disapprove of it in later years. Evaluating the social values of slang requires an interactive self-positioning in relation to the slang and its users. Slang exists at a “value boundary” where it is viewed both negatively and positively by different groups.

In contrast to hegemonic registers such as standard languages, which often escape negative valorization, slang is identifiable due to its controversial value boundaries. The institutionalization of negative evaluations, for example through lexicography and training, perpetuates the perception of slang as inferior or vulgar and underscores its special status within the broader language system.

## **Methodology**

This study employs an exploratory qualitative approach to investigate the use of slang as a sociocultural signifier among the youth of Pakistan. This approach enables an in-depth analysis of slang's functions and its role in identity creation within Pakistan's diverse social and cultural contexts.

### **❖ Research Design**

This study adopts a qualitative research design, informed by three complementary theoretical frameworks: Bourdieu's concept of linguistic capital, Goffman's dramaturgical analysis, and Bakhtin's dialogism. These theories provide a robust lens for examining the use of slang as a sociocultural signifier. For instance, Bourdieu's linguistic capital helps analyze slang as a resource that conveys social positioning and group belonging, such as the use of trendy terms like *lit* or *scene* to signify urban sophistication or exclusivity. Goffman's dramaturgy offers insights into the performative aspect of slang, where individuals adapt their language to fit social roles or manage impressions. For example, adopting humorous slang in peer settings to enhance likability. Bakhtin's dialogism emphasizes the dynamic, intertextual nature of slang, allowing the study to explore how expressions like *chill karo* (relax) or *chamkay* (to boast) evolve through interactions and reflect regional or cultural nuances.

Content analysis was done to systematically examine slang terms from social media, everyday conversations, and regional dialogues across Pakistan's diverse linguistic landscape. It facilitates a deeper understanding of how slang functions as a cultural artifact and a tool for identity formation in various social contexts.

#### ❖ **Data Collection Method: Content Analysis**

A comprehensive content analysis was conducted over two months to gather a wide range of slang terms from diverse sources. Data was systematically collected from social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, focusing on hashtags, trending topics, and memes that featured popular slang. For example, terms like *burger* (a colloquial term for privileged youth) and *londa* (a slang term for "guy") were identified through their frequent use in digital discourse.

Offline data were also gathered by observing casual conversations in various regional and social settings, such as youth gatherings and university campuses. Regional dialogues from provinces like Sindh, Punjab, KPK, and Baluchistan were specifically targeted to capture local slang variations and culturally embedded expressions. The collected terms were organized into categories based on humor, power dynamics, and identity expression. This method provided a robust dataset for analyzing patterns of usage, regional distinctiveness, and the cultural meanings attributed to slang in Pakistan (for detail see section 4).

#### ❖ **Data Analysis**

The analysis of data collected from content analysis was carried out using a combination of thematic analysis, multimodal analysis, and comparative regional analysis to ensure a comprehensive understanding of slang as a sociocultural phenomenon.

#### ❖ **Thematic Analysis**

Thematic analysis was applied to the transcriptions of focus group discussions to identify recurring patterns and themes related to slang use. Following Braun and Clarke's six-phase framework, the data were systematically coded and organized into key themes such as identity regulation, power dynamics, and regional linguistic variations. NVivo 14 was used to generate themes based on the transcript data gathered from social media platforms and websites (like Reddit, Shia chat, The Nations, etc.). For instance, participants frequently highlighted how slang terms like *kya scene hai?* (what's the situation?) are used to signal camaraderie or group

inclusion. The tabular representation of the slangs categorized based on Identity Regulation, Power Dynamics, and Regional Linguistic Variations is given below:

**Table 1**  
**Slangs Categorization based on Identity Regulation, Power Dynamics, and Regional Linguistic Variations**

Category	Slang	Meaning	Context/Region
<b>Identity Regulation</b>	Ganji Swag	Confidence despite difficulties	Karachi (Sindh)
	Jugatbaazi	Witty banter or playful insults	Lahore (Punjab)
	Patakha	Stunning or attractive	General
	Masti	Liveliness or fun	Quetta (Baluchistan)
	Thappa Lagana	To endorse or approve	Karachi (Sindh)
	Raag Laga	Teasing or making fun	Peshawar (KPK)
	Chill Maar	Relax or take it easy	General
<b>Power Dynamics</b>	Phadda	Fight or argument	General
	Lota	Person who switches sides	Karachi (Sindh)
	Scene Tight Hai	Serious or intense situation	General
	Charbi	Arrogance or overconfidence	Peshawar (KPK)
	Scene on Hai	Plan is set or happening	General
	Lafafa	Bribe or unethical favor	General
	Dafa Ho	Go away or leave	Lahore (Punjab)
<b>Regional Variations</b>	Ganji Swag	Urban resilience and confidence	Karachi (Sindh)
	Lota	Social/political disloyalty	Karachi (Sindh)
	Thappa Lagana	Approval or endorsement	Karachi (Sindh)
	Jugad	Creative workaround	Lahore (Punjab)
	Luk Lagana	Hiding or avoiding	Lahore (Punjab)

	Dafa Ho	Emphatic dismissal	Lahore (Punjab)
	Raag Laga	Playful teasing	Peshawar (KPK)
	Macha	Great or amazing	Peshawar (KPK)
	Charbi	Arrogance or overconfidence	Peshawar (KPK)
	Taafi	Stylish or well-dressed	Quetta (Balochistan)
	Patthar Ka Dil	Emotionally detached	Quetta (Balochistan)
	Masti	Fun or mischief	Quetta (Balochistan)
	Fuzool	Useless or pointless	General
	Ghanta	Sarcastic "nothing" or "not at all"	General

This table organizes the slang terms by their roles and regional significance for understanding and comparison. Furthermore, analytical emphasis was placed on understanding how slang mediates social relationships, reinforces group norms, and reflects participants' perceptions of self and others.

#### ❖ Multimodal Analysis

To explore the meanings and cultural significance of slang expressions, content analysis data were examined using Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen's (2004) multimodal approach. This method considered the interplay of linguistic, visual, and contextual elements, especially in digital media contexts such as memes, videos, and social media posts. For example, the visual and textual components of a popular meme incorporating the term *chill karo* (relax) were analyzed to reveal how humor and cultural references amplify its impact. This approach uncovered how slang terms adapt to various modes of communication, including their use in hybrid languages or as part of visual culture.

#### ❖ Comparative Regional Analysis

The regional diversity of slang usage was analyzed by comparing terms collected from different provinces, such as Sindh, Punjab, KPK, and Baluchistan. The analysis sought to identify patterns of slang adoption, persistence, and modification. For instance, while some terms like *yaar* (friend) have cross-regional appeal, others remain confined to specific locales, reflecting localized cultural values or linguistic

norms. The analysis also examined sociocultural factors—such as migration, media influence, and educational access—that contribute to the evolution or retention of regional slang terms. This comparison provided insights into the dynamic interplay between language, culture, and identity in Pakistan.

By integrating these three analytical approaches, the study offered a multidimensional perspective on how slang functions as a tool for identity construction, cultural expression, and social negotiation across diverse contexts in Pakistan.

#### ❖ Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to strict ethical guidelines and only publicly available social media data were used, with no personal identifiers recorded. The study received ethical approval from the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC).

### Data Analysis

#### ❖ General Slangs

General Pakistani slangs and their relation to regional identity:

- **Bakra** (بکرا)

**Meaning:** Sucker or gullible person.

**Regional Identity:** This slang is understood all over Pakistan and there isn't any particular province or city to which it can be attributed. Their use concerns a rather informal and set understanding of the term and thus contributes to the forming of the linguistic landscape in the country. In addition, it represents being foolish or naïve.

**Example:** “Usko toh sab bakra bana lete hain” – the phrase essentially means that every beforehand cheats him.

- **Chakkar** (چکر)

**Meaning:** A perception of a state of affairs, an occurrence, a matter, etc.

**Regional Identity:** This term is fairly widely used all around different areas of Pakistan and it is not geomorphic any particular region, that is why it is used by people quite often, which indicates its inclusion into the list of the international

language. It captures what people call ‘situations’ when it is actually something not easy to handle or deal with.

**Example:** “Arre mujhe to pata hai koi chakkar hai” (Well I know there is something fishy).

- **Jugaad (جگاڈ)**

**Meaning:** An action that may be taken, or something that may be done, in the case of an absence or lack of a better method.

**Regional Identity:** The term ‘Jugaad’ is borrowed from the local Punjabi and Hindi languages, and its usage is widespread in the whole of Pakistan without distinctions of regional language. It is obvious that the idea of looking for resourceful ways is rather appealing to the pragmatic sentiment that is sometimes observed in particular regions.

**Example:** “Ghar ka kaam jugaad se chal raha hai” (We are managing the housework and all household work with temporary facilities only).

- **Chill Maar (چل مار)**

**Meaning:** Relax or take it easy.

**Regional Identity:** It’s an informal phrase used all across Pakistan and is an encouragement to tell someone not to worry and remain relaxed. Its usage relates to a carefree approach that has no geographical restrictions and is familiar to most groups of people.

**Example:** This will always be heard by anyone who walks into the clinic with a hoarse throat or other worrying symptoms: “Tension mat le, chill maar” (Don’t stress, just relax).

- **Firki Laina (فرکی لینا)**

**Meaning:** To throw something in a gentle manner or pay a jest at someone’s expense.

**Regional Identity:** This term can be heard primarily in big cities like Lahore, Karachi, or Islamabad but it is more characteristic of Punjabi people. But it has gone beyond the regional confines and everyone understanding it should know it is an Urdu word.

**Example:** “Hey bro, you are just singing my firki, tell me honestly what happened. “Brother, stop joking, tell me what has happened.”

▪ **Bawaal** (بھال)

**Meaning:** Chaos or commotion.

**Regional Identity:** “Bawaal” has villains as well as heroes, it is part and parcel of the Urdu language and is commonly used in the day-to-day language by people of the subcontinent. According to this usage, there exists a common admiration for the use of the word to describe disorder or turmoil. It is often used in the cities in incidences of confusion or upset.

**Example:** “My God! He said, wahan toh pura bawaal ho gaya tha (It was complete chaos over there).”

▪ **Dheet** (ڈھیٹ)

**Meaning:** Stubborn or adamant.

**Regional Identity:** The term Dheet is used in all four provinces and forms part of the universally accepted Pakistani trait. It does not fit into a particular geographic area for use and is thus part of the general language treasure. They are often used when giving up in front of someone due to his / her continuous bad temper or stubbornness.

**Example:** “This one doesn’t know anything: Woh kitna dheet hai, kabhi nahi maanta (He’s so stubborn, never listens).

▪ **Bijli Girana** (بجلی گراتا)

**Meaning:** To impress or show off.

**Regional Identity:** In Pakistan, this term which is derived from Urdu is used to refer to shows of ostentatious or grandeur. It attests to the fact that its use expresses a sense of common knowledge on how one presents an opportunity to display skills or accomplishments that are beyond regional rationales.

**Example:** He came on stage, danced, and swept everyone off his feet; this was concluded by saying “Usne apni performance se bijli gira di.”

▪ **Dil Pe Mat Le Yaar** (دل پہ مت لے یار)

**Meaning:** Don't take it to heart.

**Regional Identity:** This phrase constitutes the extra semiotic, although the larger set to which it belongs is known as the Urdu language and is used commonly to tell or remind someone not to feel or indeed become offended, or to provide tension release in everyday conversation. Its usage is not regional-specific, fairly acceptable

in Asia and has been expressed across different linguistic and cultural worlds in Pakistan.

**Example:** “Main sirf mazak kar raha tha, dil pe mat le yaar”. (I was only teasing you, don’t get it wrong).

### ❖ Karachi Slangs

Pakistan's most populous and cosmopolitan city, Karachi possesses a rich repository of slang that mirrors the character of the city and the problems its inhabitant's encounter. These slangs are emblems of the sociolinguistic environment and the social life of the residents of Karachi.

#### ▪ Gulu Gulu

**Meaning:** To Bait and Switch

**Cultural Significance:** This slang is part of the social and expressive persona of the people of Karachi. As a cosmopolitan city, there is a rather liberal approach to such interactions. “Gulu Gulu” combines the inherent social exchange with a flirting undertone often witnessed within the fast-paced atmosphere of the city.

**Example:** “Woh us se gulu gulu kar raha tha (He was sweet talking her).”

#### ▪ Ding Dong

**Meaning:** conflict or fights

**Cultural Significance:** This clearly portrays the fight ful nature of cities like Karachi. It is a bell onomatopoeia, which signifies a ring followed by a fight. With all the communities available in Karachi, there will certainly be quarrels as well, hence this slang is the other face of the coin in the city.

**Example:** “Wahan ding dong ho gaya.”

#### ▪ Ganji Swag

**Meaning:** Carrying on with Self-Confidence Despite Adversity

**Cultural Significance:** "Ganji Swag" is derived from two words, one in Urdu which is "Ganji" meaning a bald head and the other is "swag." All Karachiites have a can-do attitude. This slang illustrates the stubbornness and self-assurance of Karachiites when faced with trials. This is the attitude of people who walk with their heads and chests high, in spite of life happenings, their attitude to life remains 'I am okay', the kind of people a city should have, and the kind of people this city has.

**Example:** “Uska ganji swag dekh kar sab hairan ho gaye.” (Everyone was amazed by his's confidence.)

- **Scene on Hai**

**Meaning:** There is an interesting development underway.

**Cultural Significance:** I love it; it makes me feel the rhythm that is in Karachi which is something like constantly under construction. The first part of the name “scene” means situation or happening while the second part “On Hai” means that it is going on. This slang resembles the spirit of New York, as if in everyday life in this city something interesting or even amazing always happens.

**Example:** Some Pinnerers say, ‘Kal raat kaafi scene on tha” (Last night was quite exciting).

- **Phadda**

**Meaning:** Fight or Brawl

**Cultural Significance:** "Phadda" is a slang of fight or brawl, and the usage of this slangs depicts at times the city is full of tension, conflicts, and differences. So many people from different walks of life are present there; thus, it is rich in diversity, but can lead to differences and clashes as well. The slang says it all about urban life where accusations and arguments form part of its fiber.

**Example:** "Kal bazaar mein do logon ka phadda ho gaya tha." (Yesterday, two people clashed at the market.)

- **Ailaan-e-Jung**

**Meaning:** Declaration of Conflict or Challenge:

**Cultural Significance:** This is a phrase that could loosely translate as "declaration of war" and perfectly shows how drama and resolution infuse Karachiites when it is a gigantic task or confrontation. In fact, using this word marked how serious those confrontations or challenges were to be taken in the city, which was always bold and assertive about its regional identity.

**Example:** "Aaj ke match ke liye hamara ailaan-e-jung hai, dekhtay hain kaun jeetay ga!" Our challenge for the day's match is announced; let's see who will win!

- **Bakra Eid Mat Manana**

**Meaning:** Don't Celebrate Like It Is Eid

**Cultural Significance:** This slang is just the expression of a very serious and sensitive issue. The case of "Bakra Eid" as a day of gaiety brings ironies to it while still resounding the seriousness of the issue. It is cautious in some matters but pragmatic enough. This is how Karachiites adapt to things.

**Example:** "Chhoti si party di hai, tum Bakra Eid mat manana yahan!" (It's just a small party, don't go haywire like it's a big celebration!)

Karachi slangs start being not just expressions but markers of culture which cast out riddles of the complex, lively identity of the city. They mirror the city's variety, resilience, and assertiveness and bring to life a unique linguistic landscape, born of people's experiences here.

### ❖ Lahore Slangs

#### ▪ Khotay Sikay

This term is used for those who are not trustworthy, deceitful, or unreliable. They are worthless, like fake coins.

**Cultural Importance:** This slang vilifies the ones who turn out to be undependable, according to the Lahore-lit wits.

**Example:** "Woh sab khotay sikay hain" (They are all unreliable).

#### ▪ Pindi Boy

**Meaning:** A stereotypical term, usually colloquial, used in a humorous sense or with irony to refer to an individual who hails from the neighboring city of Lahore called Rawalpindi. It hence carries the connotations of being tough, frank, or boastful.

**Cultural Significance:** Most of the time, this term is used humorously. This term gives a stereotype related to frankness or coarseness.

**Example:** "Woh Pindi boy hai, kuch bhi kar sakta hai" (He's a Pindi boy, can do anything).

#### ▪ Beghairat Brigade

**Meaning:** This is a strong form of insult to a group of people characterized as having no shame and moral values. This is perceived to be acting without considering decency or ethics.

**Cultural Significance:** A strong insult, which often describes people without moral values according to the cultural emphasis on honor.

**Example:** "Woh sab beghairat brigade mein hain" (They are part of the shameless brigade).

#### ▪ Koi Scene Nahi

**Meaning:** It means that nothing is exciting, interesting, or eventful going on. It is the same thing as saying "nothing is going on" or "it's boring."

**Cultural Significance:** This phrase occurs generally in informal conversations and encompasses boredom.

**Example:** "Aaj koi scene nahi hai" (There's nothing happening today).

- **Lahore Lahore Hai**

**Meaning:** This is the standard phrase meaning that Lahore is quite proud and loves the city. It means that everywhere else can't even come close to this exclusive charm, culture, and way of living.

**Cultural Significance:** Say what you will, Lahore is lively in its aura, hospitable, and replete with its historical landmarks, and amazing food, so whenever you utter "Lahore Lahore Hai," it is a way of saying no other city can be comparable to the experience that is within Lahore.

**Example:** "Yeh baat sach hai, Lahore Lahore hai, koi aur shehar is jaisa nahi!" It's true, Lahore is Lahore, no other city is like it!

- **Jugat Baazi**

It refers to the art of solving problems with a brainy or resourceful solution. It reflects the display of nimbleness of wit, intelligence, and sometimes even a little bit of shrewdness with which people outwit their enemies.

**Cultural Significance:** Lahore is known very much for its very strong culture of humor and friendly roasting and, therefore, forms the bedrock of social interaction in the city.

**Example:** "Lahore mein jugatbaazi bohot hoti hai" (There's a lot of witty banter in Lahore).

- **Thalay Lagna**

**Meaning:** To suck up or brown-nose.

**Cultural Significance:** This usually occurs, indicating the social dynamics, mostly professional or hierarchical, taken in humor or criticism.

**Example:** "Woh hamesha boss ke thalay lagta hai" (He's always sucking up to the boss).

- ❖ **Peshawar Slangs**

- **Nangyal**

**Meaning:** Courageous or boldly bold

**Cultural Importance:** Within Peshawari, culture boasts and appreciates bravery and boldness, highly among Pashtuns. In Pashtunwali, the code of conduct for

Pashtuns, "nangyal" can be said to be the traditional value based on virtues such as being brave, hospitable, and honorific. Being called "nangyal" amounts to being proud, signifying that the owner believes in those principles and is considered in their community to be bold.

**Example:** "Woh nangyal banda hai, har mushkil ka samna karta hai". (He's a brave guy, he faces every difficulty).

- **Chapli**

**Meaning:** Light-hearted, careless, not serious.

**Cultural Importance:** In taunting, the word "chapli" refers to someone who doesn't take things too seriously. This is how the difference between work and play really forms part of the Peshawar culture. Even if known for seriousness and diligent nature, Peshawaris still often appreciate being easy-going and lighthearted in other aspects of life, like reducing stress or trivial matters.

**Example:** "He woh chapli hai, be-fikara sa." (He's a carefree guy, not worrying about anything).

- **Pataka**

**Meaning:** Smart or witty, Sharp

**Cultural Significance:** In Peshawar, of course, there is wit and the art of cunning, especially at social gatherings and debates. A man who has been called a "pataka" is considered one who has an acute mind and can twist and turn things to his favor for gaining a seemingly victory in social maneuvering. This actually hints at the region's drive for wit, mirth, and verbal sparring, where a sharp tongue and trenchant repartee may be just as helpful for getting the better of an enemy as some form of martial valor.

- **Gul**

**Meaning:** Friend or buddy

**Cultural Significance:** For a person, "gul" is nothing but an endearment term that makes friendships and companions so high in the esteem of society. Referring to someone as "gul" points out respect accorded to healthy, fruitful relationships between people in a particular culture. It mirrors the manner in which people of Peshawar regard one another through hospitality, shared experiences, and genuine love.

- **Barghest**

**Meaning:** Greedy or someone who hoards.

**Cultural Importance:** Regarding food and hospitality, Peshawari culture emphasizes the importance of sharing and generosity with other people. When someone terms another as "barghest", it has a negative implication because it relates to greed; conversely, society places a great emphasis on goodwill and benevolence by society. This slang portrays that in such a society that is very much conscious and zealous to execute cooperation and community way of life brings being greedy and not contributing to society at a lower level.

- ❖ **Quetta Slangs**

- **Chosh**

**Meaning:** Enthusiasm, excitement, or energy.

**Cultural Significance:** The word describes an enthusiastic or lively person. In Balochi culture, which cherishes a lot of glory from power and bravery, 'chosh' is used to push someone on to do something with more energy or exuberance.

**Example:** "Dost, thoda chosh lao is kaam mein!" Meaning: Friend, bring some more energy into this work!

- **Jath**

**Meaning:** Group of people, gang, or buddies.

**Cultural Importance:** Often termed as a close group of friends or acquaintances. Jath, meaning a close-knit group of friends or associates is the best example of social bonds in the Baloch society, though highly precious in family and tribal ties.

**Example:** "Aaj hamari jath mil kar match dekhay gi". (Today, our group will watch the match together.)

- **Masti**

**Meaning:** Playful or fun, Mischief.

**Cultural Significance:** A word to describe happiness, having great fun etc. Masti underlies the flip side of Baloch culture -making jokes and taunting each other quite common practice in daily situations.

**Example:** "Yeh sirf masti ho rahi thi, koi bura mat mano". It was just fun, don't take it seriously.

- **Balla**

**Meaning:** powerful person, Tycoon, Paramount.

**Cultural Importance:** A balla or a muscular or powerful man is used as terminology in the tribal culture of Balochistan while referring to a person in many occasions. Strength is a virtuous quality in this culture and resiliency is considered while referring to a person with the term balla, hence indicating a lot of praise for one's authority.

**Example:** "Woh banda toh balla hai, sab se zyada wazan uthata hai". (That guy is strong, he lifts the heaviest weights).

- **Taari**

**Meaning:** Impressive or cool

**Cultural Relevance:** Taari, the simile is used to appreciate looks or behavior. We also use it to say a person is cool or awesome. Most of the time, it is used to convey astonishment in informal speech.

**Such As:** "Yaar, teri nayi bike toh bohot taari hai! (Damn, you have a nice new bike Man)

- **Gaddo**

**Meaning:** Lazy or someone who acts slow

**Cultural Connection:** It is a funny way to describe someone who does not move quickly or take things too seriously. This is a very typical Baloch conversation where friends will mock each other that they are slow.

**Example:** "Yeh banda aisa ganda hai, kaam karta to har baar last moment pe karta. (very lazy Basta no never on time ever!)

- ❖ **Cultural Reflection**

These linguistic markers from different regions tell of the people and the humor, the values of their daily life. The slang reflects the value of friendship, shrewdness, endurance, and perseverance. They also reveal how very much an easy-going, sense of community with humility, etc. means to them. Many of the words are used with good humor to point out how much people like social events, jokes, and discussions that foster bonding but comply with the essence of their culture, all at the same time.

## Discussion

Using the approach of Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen (2004), this article seeks to examine how slang functions as a multimodal marker of society in the context of Pakistani youth culture. The focus is therefore on understanding how linguistic and nonlinguistic modes of communication coexist and build meaning beyond words themselves, including other modes such as gesture, facial expression, tone of voice and social environment.

- ❖ **Multimodal Communication and Slang:**
  - **Verbal and Non-verbal Communication**

It is not just the word that is colloquial, but also the way these words are pronounced in tone and intonation, the body language in the form of gestures or facial expressions, or the usage and context. For example, when we use slang like "phadda" (brawl), we use aggressive gestures and even a raised tone of voice to not only express the meaning of the word itself, but also demonstrate attitudes towards conflict.

- **Linguistic Capital and Social Identity (Bourdieu)**

In Pierre Bourdieu's linguistic capital argument, mastery of a particular language style, such as colloquial speech, provides access to social power and prestige. In this research project, slang becomes the way in which Pakistani youth realize social identities within extremely complex social structures. For example, mastering Karachi slang such as Ganji Swag (confidence in the face of adversity) confers individual status within urban subcultures – that is, in keeping with urban street culture. These language skills then transform into symbolic capital that enables youth to differentiate themselves within social hierarchies. They use slang strategically to position themselves in line with more powerful subcultures, demonstrating how language acts as an identity marker and, just as importantly, as a gatekeeper to social groups.

- **Dramaturgy and Identity Presentation (Goffman)**

According to Erving Goffman's dramaturgy, social life is a drama and people have different selves in front of different audiences. Slang presents itself as an identity tool with the ability to portray multiple personas against society; Therefore, these expressions allow young people to identify specific people in many social activities. In informal social situations, the expression "Chill Maar" to relax carries an informal

identity of relaxed. If in more serious situations, slang like "Scene Tight Hai" (things are getting serious) initiates a shift towards an oriented and activated profile, then slang is a symbolic prop that individuals use as a means of negotiating roles and identities in different areas of society life.

- **Dialogism and Dynamic Meaning-Making (Bakhtin)**

Meaning is understood through Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of dialogism in such a way that it is never static and is always in a process of constant development in interaction. In slang, meanings are constantly renegotiated; This means they are used in different contexts by different people. Slangs like "Firki Laina" (teasing) can mean one thing in one relationship and something else in another. In a circle of friends, it would symbolize a joke, while in another social setting the same slang can symbolize a challenge, even sarcasm. This dynamic nature of slang reflects the idea that meaning emerges through dialogue and develops through continued use in different contexts, as suggested by Bakhtin.

- ❖ **The Role of Slang in Social Navigation and Belonging**

The study highlights how young people in Pakistan Approach strategically use slang as a form of negotiating social hierarchies, gaining power, and expressing belonging to certain subcultures. Slang is not only a performance of social identity but also a way of participating in the negotiation of power relations and the making of statements about group membership.

- **Social Hierarchies and Power**

The use of specific colloquial language linguistically empowers youth in certain social circles, which usually symbolize status or expertise in a subculture. Karachi's "Phadda" or "Scene on Hai" represents a sense of toughness and awareness that enables a person to assert themselves against their peers.

- **Belonging to Subcultures**

Slang is also a type of inclusion and exclusion within subcultures. A youth who uses terms like 'Ganji Swag' or 'Jugatbaazi' (witty banter) indicates that he is subject to the respective values and codes of the urban, the confident or the facet of the humorous. One is excluded from a certain circle due to lack of vernacular and inadequacies, proving how language can be a gatekeeper to cultural expression.

The present research enables bringing together the multimodal approach of Kress and Van Leeuwen with the theoretical insights of Bourdieu, Goffman and Bakhtin

presents a study depicting the role of complex youth social tools in Pakistani slang. It can also form an identity, initiate power negotiations and consolidate cultural belonging in different contexts for social context. Slang is not just used as a means of communication; a multimodal expression of identity and power filled with social meaning.

## **Conclusion**

This study delves deeper into the complex meaning that slang has as a powerful symbol of social culture among Pakistani youth, an amorphous tool that expertly weaves the fabric of their identities across diverse landscapes of social environments. The study reveals more than just an indication of the subtlety of idiomatic language, but also how it reflects cultural appropriateness for the Pakistani case. The study focuses on the idea that slang does not serve as a linguistic fad but is a strategic tool for Pakistani youth to develop, negotiate and articulate their social identity in the complexities of various social circumstances. The views of famous sociologists and linguists such as Pierre Bourdieu, Erving Goffman and Mikhail Bakhtin on stylistic varieties, social identity and language arts are based on an empirical basis of slang use among Pakistani youth. Furthermore, the research study points to a dynamic interplay between slang and regional identity, meaning that some terms transcend their geographical boundaries to become integral parts of the country's broader linguistic fabric. For example, Karachi's slang reflects the unique socio-cultural dynamics of certain regions. In the detailed information about the slang of English used among the Pakistani youth of various provinces, granularity is brought in the articulation of linguistic diversity that the language is not dead and alive and is changing, adapting and closely resembling the culture structure. Dive deep into Pakistani society, this study essentially argues for considering linguistic diversity as an important feature of cultural richness, in so-called ideas of cultural awareness and active listening, which allow one to decipher deeper meanings hidden in slang and thus contribute to a better understanding of the dynamic and ever-changing culture of youth in Pakistan.

### **❖ Limitations**

One drawback of this study is the speed at which slang evolves; This sometimes makes it difficult to capture the full extent of usage because it is trending in terms, but then it becomes outdated and outdated, limiting the study's ability to offer long-term generalizations. This could consequently highlight the major urban cities of

Karachi, Lahore, Quetta and Peshawar. This results in an over-emphasis on urban slang, but discourages the regional languages and dialects found in rural usage and the impact that media usage has in these provinces. Although an attempt has been made to provide diversity, it is limited due to the representation of more remote parts and therefore does not provide a complete picture of slang usage among Pakistani youth. Additionally, there are subjective differences in how groups or individuals interpret slang, so a person may assign different meanings to the same terms. There is also the possibility of social desirability bias, where participants change their answers to conform to socially accepted norms, so they may receive an altered variation in results. Additionally, the number of participants in the study may vary but may not truly reflect the true extent of the complexity of youth demographics, such as: B. socioeconomic background or educational level, and therefore cannot be generalized. Finally, Pakistan's rich cultural and linguistic diversity makes it difficult to fully represent how slangs play out in local languages and dialects other than the primary languages of Urdu and English, so some of the important regional differences may be overlooked here. Further studies should help overcome these shortcomings by increasing the sample size, including primarily rural and regional voices, and tracking diachronic change in slang.

#### ❖ Further Research

Future directions and opportunities to extend the results of this study for further research. Because slang changes rapidly over time, longitudinal data could help monitor the progress and evolution of slang terms as they respond to cultural/technological/social changes. It would allow for a more fluid analysis of the ways in which slang reveals changes in adolescent identity construction and social alliance. What could lead to a fuller understanding of how slang works in different regions could be to expand the geographical horizon beyond the metropolitan context and examine it in rural, peripheral or less represented areas - even where other regional dialects as well as native languages are predominately spoken and not in Urdu-English communities. It would also allow comparison of urban and rural slang and differentiation with regional native languages as part of youth identity. Additionally, greater insight into the involvement of digital media and social platforms in the widespread distribution and use of slang among Pakistani youth is an important area of situational awareness that future research can explore in more detail. The study of the diffusion process of slang and global trends, e.g. B. how online communities transfer new uses from one group to another, including in local spaces; may contribute something novel about contemporary youth culture in

general. Finally, the generalizability of the results could be improved by including them (albeit as a confounding variable).

Finally, the generalizability of the results could be improved by including a larger sample with people of different socioeconomic backgrounds, gender, and education levels (albeit as confounding variables). However, qualitative research through in-depth interviews or ethnography examines well the individual and group reasons why they chose a new slang; This would give community psychologists valuable insight into how young people feel when using a newly emerged lexical item among their peers. Such instructions could expand our knowledge of the social and cultural contexts in which slang is negotiated in Pakistan and globally.

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**Appendix: A list of other Slangs**

Peshawar Slangs	Quetta Slangs	Karachi Slangs	Lahore Slangs
<b>Zama Ba Wakhla Na Way: Don't mess with me.</b>	Balochi Rang: Authentic Balochi style.	Chikna: Sharp looking or attractive	Lodoo: Used to describe someone who is lazy or unmotivated.
<b>Painda: A simple or naive person.</b>	Lampat: Lazy or laid back.	Bheja Fry: When someone's brain is exhausted or overloaded.	Chapaar: A simple or naive person, sometimes used to describe someone gullible.
<b>Janana: Dear or beloved.</b>	Dastak: Knocking on someone's door, a metaphor for a confrontation.	Layyari: Refers to someone tough or street-smart, often associated with Lyari, a prominent area in Karachi known for its resilience.	Scene Tight Hai: Things are getting serious or intense.
<b>Dana Pa Dana: Bravery or showing off.</b>	Dheel De: Relax or take it easy.	Thaila: A street vendor or someone doing informal business.	Faarig: Having nothing to do, free or idle.
<b>Yama Yama: Abundance of something</b>	Changaiz Khan: A strong and fearless person.	Bhoond: A person who is very clumsy or careless.	Shahzada: Dear
<b>Khape: Useless or Broken</b>	Khani Ghani: Something amazing or extraordinary.	Thakar: Used to describe someone with a sense of superiority or bossiness.	Patola: A fashionable and stylish person.

<b>Ka Sanga: What's up?</b>	Mir: Chief or Leader	Chuss: Irrelevant talk	Zakoota: A person with a strong physique.
<b>Sha ba Sha: Bravo</b>	Kosa: Chaterbox	Cheypan: The act of being showy or fake	Meter Shot: To get Angry, furious

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