

URDU-ENGLISH CODE-SWITCHING AS A RESOURCE FOR EMOTIONAL INTIMACY AND SURROGATE KINSHIP IN H. M. NAQVI'S HOME BOY

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Abstract

This paper examines Urdu-English code-switching in H. M. Naqvi's *Home Boy* (2009) as a linguistic resource for expressing emotion and constructing surrogate kinship among Pakistani diasporic characters. The paper is extracted and analytically reorganized from a qualitative thesis that applies Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model to selected dialogues and narrative passages. The analysis focuses on unmarked and marked code choices, with particular attention to Urdu expressions such as *yaar*, *bhai*, and *tum log*. The findings indicate that unmarked Urdu insertions in familiar and friendship-based interactions provide emotional comfort, humor, reassurance, solidarity, and relational stability. They also transform friendship into kinship-like relationships by communicating loyalty, care, moral obligation, and brotherhood. Marked switching, by contrast, becomes salient during emotional pressure, conflict, fear, vulnerability, or relational strain. Such switching does not necessarily dissolve kinship; rather, it exposes moments in which relationships are tested and renegotiated. The paper argues that code-switching in *Home Boy* functions as an affective and relational practice rather than merely a stylistic feature of bilingual fiction.

1. INTRODUCTION

Language occupies a central position in the representation of diasporic experience because it provides a medium through which individuals negotiate belonging, displacement, cultural memory, identity, and interpersonal relationships. In diasporic literary texts, the coexistence of more than one language frequently reflects the complex social worlds inhabited by characters who move between cultural, geographical, and linguistic spaces. Language choice may therefore signal not only what

characters communicate but also how they position themselves in relation to others. In particular, shifts between a dominant language and a heritage language can evoke cultural familiarity, emotional attachment, shared memories, solidarity, and a sense of belonging that may not be fully available through the dominant language. Code-switching consequently becomes an important textual resource for representing the psychological and relational dimensions of diasporic life.

H. M. Naqvi's *Home Boy* (2009) provides a particularly productive context for examining

these linguistic and relational processes. Set against the social and political atmosphere of post-9/11 New York, the novel follows Pakistani characters whose experiences are shaped by migration, cultural displacement, racialization, friendship, uncertainty, and their negotiation of belonging in an increasingly hostile social environment. Within this setting, English and Urdu do not simply function as alternative linguistic codes. Their use is embedded in particular social relationships, cultural memories, emotional experiences, and communicative situations. English is frequently associated with the broader public and institutional environment in which the characters live, while Urdu can evoke cultural familiarity and interpersonal closeness. Nevertheless, these associations are not fixed or absolute. The significance of a particular language choice depends on the relationship between speakers, the communicative situation, the emotional circumstances, and the social expectations governing the interaction.

The Urdu-English bilingual practices represented in *Home Boy* are therefore significant because they enable characters to negotiate more than linguistic meaning. Through the strategic insertion of Urdu expressions into English discourse, characters can establish familiarity, reinforce solidarity, communicate affection, invoke shared cultural knowledge, and create a communicative space in which emotional expression becomes more intimate. Such linguistic practices are especially significant among characters who develop relationships that extend beyond ordinary friendship. In a diasporic environment where biological family members may be geographically distant and conventional structures of community may be disrupted, interpersonal relationships can acquire family-like functions. Friendship may consequently become a form of surrogate kinship through which individuals provide emotional support, loyalty, protection, companionship, and a sense of cultural continuity.

The thesis on which the present paper is based identifies Urdu-English code-switching as one of

the important linguistic mechanisms through which these relationships are represented. Rather than treating bilingual expressions as incidental insertions or merely decorative markers of Pakistani identity, the study interprets them as socially and emotionally meaningful choices. Expressions such as *yaar*, *bhai*, and *tum log*, for example, can carry meanings that extend beyond their literal lexical definitions. Depending on context, such expressions may index familiarity, affection, camaraderie, brotherhood, collective identity, or emotional dependence. Their presence within predominantly English discourse can consequently establish a shared interpersonal space in which cultural identity and emotional intimacy intersect.

The central concern of this paper is therefore not the quantitative frequency of Urdu-English switching but its **social, affective, and relational significance**. A frequency-based approach could establish how often Urdu expressions occur, but it would not necessarily explain why a character chooses Urdu at a particular moment or what that choice accomplishes within an interaction.

The present study instead asks what code-switching does within the fictional social world of *Home Boy*. It examines how particular language choices contribute to emotional reassurance, humor, intimacy, solidarity, conflict management, vulnerability, and the construction or renegotiation of interpersonal relationships. Such an approach recognizes code-switching as situated linguistic behavior whose meaning emerges from the interaction between linguistic form, social context, and character relationships.

Methodologically, the source study adopts a qualitative textual sociolinguistic approach. Rather than attempting an exhaustive enumeration of every bilingual occurrence in the novel, it focuses on selected dialogues and narrative passages in which code-switching is particularly relevant to emotional experience, interpersonal interaction, friendship, cultural identity, nostalgia, fear, tension, or vulnerability. This selective approach allows the analysis to move beyond the identification of Urdu lexical

items toward an interpretation of their contextual and relational functions. Each selected instance is considered in relation to the surrounding discourse, the identities of the participants, the nature of their relationship, and the emotional or social circumstances represented in the scene. Code-switching is consequently treated as purposeful language use embedded within specific relational and situational contexts.

The study is particularly concerned with the distinction between **unmarked and marked code choices**. In bilingual interaction, speakers do not necessarily switch codes randomly; their choices may correspond to socially recognized expectations concerning relationships, identities, and communicative situations. An unmarked choice generally represents the expected linguistic behavior associated with a particular interaction and therefore tends to reproduce or maintain an existing relationship. A marked choice, in contrast, departs from the expected linguistic pattern and may draw attention to a change in social positioning, emotional stance, interpersonal distance, authority, or relational expectations. In literary discourse, such shifts can be especially revealing because they may signal changes in a character's emotional condition or in the relationship between characters.

The present paper therefore investigates two closely interconnected dimensions of Urdu-English code-switching in *Home Boy*. First, it examines how code-switching functions as a resource for expressing and regulating emotional relationships. Urdu insertions may provide emotional comfort, familiarity, humor, reassurance, and solidarity, particularly when characters interact within close friendship networks. Second, it examines how code choice contributes to the construction of kinship and relational belonging. Repeated use of culturally meaningful Urdu expressions can reinforce relationships that function beyond conventional friendship and approximate the emotional obligations of family. Through linguistic practices of address, shared cultural reference, and affective communication, characters may

construct a surrogate family within the diasporic environment.

These two dimensions are theoretically connected through Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model, which provides the principal analytical framework for the study. The model conceptualizes language choice in relation to socially expected rights-and-obligations (RO) sets that characterize particular interpersonal relationships. Speakers generally select an unmarked code when they wish to maintain the expected relationship and its associated rights and obligations. A marked choice, however, may be used when speakers seek to renegotiate those expectations, redefine social distance, emphasize a particular identity, or alter the interpersonal relationship. Applied to *Home Boy*, the model makes it possible to examine how movement between English and Urdu reflects changing relational expectations rather than simply linguistic variation.

From this perspective, Urdu-English code-switching becomes particularly important for understanding surrogate kinship. When Urdu is used naturally within close friendships, the choice may constitute an unmarked linguistic practice that confirms solidarity and relational closeness. The repeated use of intimate forms of address can normalize a relationship in which care, loyalty, emotional availability, and mutual obligation become expected. Conversely, when switching becomes more salient during conflict, fear, emotional pressure, vulnerability, or relational uncertainty, it may constitute a marked choice that reveals a disruption in the established rights-and-obligations relationship. Such moments do not necessarily indicate the breakdown of kinship. Rather, they may demonstrate that the relationship is being tested, emotionally renegotiated, or temporarily repositioned.

This perspective is particularly relevant to the diasporic context of *Home Boy*, where questions of home, identity, cultural belonging, and social exclusion intersect with interpersonal relationships. The characters' linguistic practices

reveal that belonging is not produced solely through geographical attachment or formal community membership. It can also be constructed through everyday interaction, shared language, emotional recognition, and interpersonal solidarity. Urdu, when embedded within English discourse, can thus function as a symbolic and affective link to cultural familiarity while simultaneously strengthening relationships among characters who experience displacement or social uncertainty.

Accordingly, this paper argues that Urdu-English code-switching in *Home Boy* should be understood as an affective and relational practice rather than merely a stylistic characteristic of Pakistani English fiction. The linguistic alternation between Urdu and English enables characters to negotiate emotional intimacy, solidarity, cultural familiarity, and relational obligation. It also provides a means through which friendship can acquire the characteristics of kinship and through which moments of emotional tension can expose the fragility as well as resilience of these relationships. By applying Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model to selected passages from the novel, the study demonstrates how seemingly small linguistic choices can carry significant implications for emotion, identity, belonging, and surrogate family formation in diasporic fiction.

Literature Review

Code-switching has increasingly been conceptualized as a socially, culturally, and affectively meaningful bilingual practice, rather than as evidence of inadequate proficiency in either language. Early interactional approaches established that alternation between linguistic codes can communicate contextual, interpersonal, and social meanings. Gumperz (1982) demonstrated that code-switching may function as a contextualization cue through which speakers signal changes in footing, topic, participant relationships, and communicative intent. This perspective remains particularly relevant to literary sociolinguistics because it

encourages researchers to interpret language alternation in relation to the social circumstances in which it occurs rather than treating inserted words or phrases as isolated linguistic features. Contemporary scholarship similarly recognizes code-switching as a resource for constructing identity, negotiating relationships, expressing emotion, and managing social interaction (Auer, 1998; Gardner-Chloros, 2009).

In multilingual contexts, code-switching is therefore better understood as a form of **strategic linguistic and social practice** than as evidence of linguistic deficiency. Myers-Scotton (1993) argues that bilingual speakers make language choices according to social expectations, interpersonal relationships, and the rights and obligations associated with particular interactions. From this perspective, switching between languages can reproduce existing relationships, establish solidarity, create social distance, or renegotiate interpersonal expectations. Such an understanding is especially appropriate for literary texts in which multilingual dialogue is deliberately constructed to represent social identities and relationships.

Urdu-English Code-Switching in the Pakistani Context

The sociolinguistic relationship between Urdu and English in Pakistan provides an important context for understanding the linguistic practices represented in *Home Boy*. English occupies a powerful position within Pakistani education, administration, professional communication, and socioeconomic mobility, while Urdu functions extensively as a national lingua franca and remains strongly associated with everyday interpersonal communication and cultural identity (Rahman, 2002, 2010). However, the two languages do not operate within completely separate domains. Pakistani bilingual speakers frequently combine Urdu and English within the same interaction, sentence, or discourse according to topic, audience, communicative purpose, social relationship, and situational context.

Research on Pakistani bilingualism demonstrates that Urdu-English code-switching is associated with multiple communicative and social functions, including identity construction, emphasis, clarification, humor, emotional expression, solidarity, and interpersonal accommodation (Siddiqui, 2018; Sardar et al., 2021). Rather than representing an inability to communicate effectively in one language, such switching reflects the speakers' access to a broader multilingual repertoire. The coexistence of Urdu and English allows bilingual speakers to select linguistic resources that correspond to different dimensions of their social and cultural identities. This observation is particularly important in the context of Pakistani diasporic literature. Characters who live between Pakistani and Western cultural environments may use English as the principal language of communication while retaining Urdu expressions that encode cultural familiarity and interpersonal intimacy. The insertion of Urdu into English discourse can therefore represent a continuing connection with cultural and linguistic heritage. At the same time, it can distinguish members of an intimate social group from outsiders who do not share the same linguistic repertoire.

Recent research on Pakistani English literature similarly indicates that code-mixing and code-switching can contribute to the representation of Pakistani cultural identity. Sardar et al. (2021), for example, demonstrate that the incorporation of Urdu expressions into English literary discourse can function as a mechanism for representing Pakistani cultural practices, social relationships, and identity. Jadoon (2017) likewise shows that Pakistani English fiction incorporates localized linguistic features to represent cultural meanings that cannot always be adequately conveyed through standardized English. These findings support the argument that Urdu-English switching in *Home Boy* should be examined as a meaningful literary and sociolinguistic resource.

Code-Switching, Emotion, and Affective Meaning

An increasingly important dimension of bilingualism research concerns the relationship between language choice and emotional experience. Pavlenko (2005) argues that multilingual individuals may associate different languages with different emotional experiences because languages are acquired and used across distinct interpersonal, cultural, and experiential contexts. Consequently, a bilingual speaker may perceive one language as more emotionally intimate, personally significant, culturally authentic, or appropriate for particular affective experiences. Language choice may therefore influence not only what is communicated but also how an emotional experience is framed and perceived.

This perspective has significant implications for the interpretation of Urdu-English switching in *Home Boy*. Urdu expressions may carry emotional and cultural associations that exceed their literal meanings. Words such as *yaar* and *bhai*, for instance, can communicate familiarity, affection, solidarity, companionship, and emotional closeness depending on the context in which they are used. Their incorporation into predominantly English discourse can therefore create an affective space in which characters recognize shared cultural experiences and establish interpersonal proximity.

The relationship between bilingual language use and emotion has also received increasing empirical attention. Recent research suggests that emotional states can interact with bilingual language-control processes and influence switching behavior (Jiang et al., 2024). Such findings reinforce the broader proposition that bilingual language choice cannot always be separated from affective experience. In multilingual communication, language switching may be connected to emotional intensity, interpersonal positioning, and the speaker's psychological orientation toward a particular interlocutor.

The emotional significance of code-switching is consequently not necessarily determined by the linguistic code itself. Instead, it emerges through the interaction of language, context, memory, identity, and interpersonal relationships. English may be associated with public or institutional communication in one situation but may become emotionally intimate when shared between close friends. Similarly, Urdu may function as an ordinary conversational resource in one interaction but acquire heightened emotional significance when used during moments of nostalgia, vulnerability, affection, or conflict. This contextual perspective is particularly useful for interpreting literary dialogue because it prevents the analysis from assigning fixed meanings to particular languages.

Code-Switching, Identity, and Diasporic Belonging

Code-switching is also closely associated with the construction and negotiation of identity. In multilingual and diasporic communities, speakers frequently use more than one language to position themselves simultaneously within different cultural and social worlds. Auer (1998) and Gardner-Chloros (2009) emphasize that code-switching can index social identity, group membership, interpersonal alignment, and changes in conversational positioning. Language alternation can consequently enable speakers to negotiate identities rather than simply express identities that already exist.

This dimension is particularly relevant to *Home Boy*, which represents Pakistani characters negotiating their identities within post-9/11 New York. The novel portrays experiences of migration, cultural displacement, racialization, suspicion, and belonging, making linguistic identity an important dimension of its broader representation of diasporic experience. Recent scholarship on the novel has highlighted its treatment of multicultural conflict, identity negotiation, displacement, and the experiences of Pakistani immigrants in the aftermath of 9/11 (Aziz & Nadeem, 2024; Jain, 2021).

The post-9/11 context intensifies the significance of these linguistic negotiations. The characters are situated within an American environment in which their Pakistani and Muslim identities may become subject to suspicion and racialized categorization. Their linguistic practices consequently provide a means of maintaining cultural affiliation while simultaneously participating in the dominant English-speaking environment. Code-switching can thus be interpreted as a form of linguistic negotiation between cultural continuity and diasporic adaptation.

Recent scholarship on *Home Boy* has similarly explored the novel's representation of migrated identities, psychological borders, cultural displacement, and belonging. Jain (2021) situates Pakistani English fiction within broader questions of home, nation, and transnational identity, while recent studies of Naqvi's novel emphasize the socio-cultural conflicts experienced by Pakistani characters in post-9/11 America (Aziz & Nadeem, 2024). Mehta (2025), meanwhile, examines mobility and racialized experience in *Home Boy*, further demonstrating the importance of movement, identity, and social perception in the novel.

Although these studies contribute significantly to understanding the novel's diasporic concerns, they generally emphasize **identity, migration, racialization, and cultural conflict** rather than the micro-level linguistic mechanisms through which characters construct emotional intimacy. The present study extends this scholarship by examining how Urdu-English switching functions within interpersonal relationships and how linguistic choices contribute to the creation of emotional and relational belonging.

Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model

The present study is theoretically grounded in Myers-Scotton's (1993) Markedness Model, which provides a particularly useful framework for examining the relationship between language choice and interpersonal expectations. According to the model, linguistic choices are associated

with socially recognized rights-and-obligations (RO) sets that characterize particular relationships. Speakers normally make an unmarked **choice** when they select the code expected within a particular social interaction. Such a choice generally maintains the existing relationship and confirms the rights and obligations associated with it.

A **marked choice**, by contrast, involves a departure from the expected linguistic pattern. Such a departure can signal a desire to renegotiate social distance, authority, identity, interpersonal alignment, or relational obligations (Myers-Scotton, 1993). The significance of markedness is therefore relational rather than purely linguistic. A linguistic form becomes marked because it differs from what participants conventionally expect in a particular interaction.

This distinction provides an effective analytical framework for *Home Boy*. When Urdu insertions occur naturally within close friendship interactions, they may represent an unmarked choice because they correspond to the expected degree of intimacy between the characters. Such choices can maintain solidarity and confirm the relational bond. Conversely, a sudden or contextually unexpected shift between English and Urdu may constitute a marked choice if it signals emotional intensity, interpersonal tension, confrontation, or a change in relational positioning.

The Markedness Model also prevents an overly simplistic assumption that Urdu is inherently intimate and English inherently distant. The social meaning of a linguistic choice depends on the interactional context and the relationship between participants. English may be an unmarked code among characters who habitually communicate in English, whereas Urdu may become marked if introduced unexpectedly into a particular interaction. Similarly, Urdu may constitute the unmarked choice within an intimate friendship group but become marked when used strategically in a conflictual or emotionally charged context.

Address Terms, Solidarity, and Surrogate Kinship

Another important dimension of the present study concerns the relationship between linguistic address and kinship. Sociolinguistic research has demonstrated that kinship terms can extend beyond biological relationships and function as resources for expressing solidarity, respect, affection, social proximity, and group membership. In South Asian contexts, kinship terminology is particularly productive in everyday interpersonal interaction because terms associated with family relationships may be extended metaphorically to friends, peers, acquaintances, and members of wider communities.

The Urdu expression *bhai* is particularly relevant to this discussion. Although literally associated with "brother," its pragmatic meaning may extend to friendship, solidarity, trust, affection, and social affiliation. Similarly, *yaar* can express friendship and familiarity while also carrying affective meanings that depend heavily upon context and interpersonal relationship. When such expressions occur within English discourse, they can therefore function as linguistic markers of social proximity and shared cultural identity.

This phenomenon is relevant to the concept of surrogate kinship, understood here as relationships that are not biologically familial but acquire emotional, moral, and relational characteristics associated with family. In diasporic environments, surrogate kinship may become particularly significant because geographical displacement can separate individuals from parents, siblings, extended relatives, and established community networks. Friendships may consequently assume functions commonly associated with family, including emotional support, protection, loyalty, companionship, and moral responsibility.

The use of culturally meaningful kinship expressions can reinforce these relationships by linguistically constructing interpersonal closeness. In *Home Boy*, Urdu address forms can therefore be interpreted not merely as indicators of

Pakistani linguistic identity but as resources through which characters enact and reaffirm relationships of brotherhood and solidarity. The repeated use of such expressions may contribute to the transformation of friendship into a relationship that resembles family in emotional and moral terms.

Code-Switching as Relational Management

The literature on code-switching further suggests that language choice can function as a mechanism for relationship management. Speakers may alter their linguistic behavior to accommodate interlocutors, establish solidarity, create distance, emphasize particular identities, or manage conflict (Auer, 1998; Gardner-Chloros, 2009). From the perspective of the Markedness Model, these choices may reflect the maintenance or renegotiation of rights and obligations within interpersonal relationships (Myers-Scotton, 1993).

This concept is particularly valuable for analyzing emotionally significant scenes in *Home Boy*. Unmarked Urdu-English switching may contribute to relational stability by reinforcing familiarity and mutual recognition. Marked switching, in contrast, may become salient when characters experience anger, anxiety, fear, vulnerability, disagreement, or emotional pressure. A change in code can consequently provide a linguistic signal that the interpersonal equilibrium has been disturbed.

Importantly, relational strain does not necessarily imply the disappearance of intimacy. In fact, moments of linguistic disruption can reveal the strength and complexity of an underlying relationship. When an established pattern of language use changes during conflict or vulnerability, the change itself becomes analytically meaningful. It can demonstrate that characters are reassessing their relationship, testing existing expectations, or attempting to restore an earlier degree of closeness.

Code-Switching and Surrogate Family in Diasporic Fiction

The concept of surrogate kinship is particularly significant when considered alongside theories of diaspora and transnational identity. Diasporic subjects often construct communities that provide emotional and social support beyond biological family structures. Such communities can become "homes" in a symbolic and relational sense, especially when geographical displacement prevents continuous participation in the individual's original family network.

In this context, shared language can contribute to the formation of an imagined or socially enacted community. Urdu does not merely communicate propositional information; it can invoke shared memories, cultural knowledge, humor, values, and interpersonal histories. When bilingual characters use Urdu among themselves, the language can establish a temporary social space in which cultural difference is reduced and familiarity is restored. The communicative environment thereby becomes a source of emotional continuity within an otherwise uncertain diasporic experience.

The significance of this process is evident in the broader scholarship on Pakistani diasporic fiction. Jain (2021) emphasizes the importance of home, nation, mobility, and transnational desire in Pakistani cultural narratives, while Clements (2013) examines changing affiliations and transnational relationships in contemporary South Asian fiction. Such scholarship provides a conceptual basis for understanding diaspora not simply as physical displacement but as an ongoing negotiation of social and emotional belonging.

From this perspective, the friendship networks represented in *Home Boy* can be examined as alternative structures of belonging. The characters' relationships may provide forms of emotional security that compensate, at least partially, for the absence or geographical distance of conventional family networks. Urdu-English code-switching becomes significant within this process because it helps linguistically construct

the familiarity, solidarity, and cultural recognition on which such relationships depend.

Research Gap

The existing literature establishes several important foundations for the present study. First, sociolinguistic research has demonstrated that code-switching is a meaningful social practice rather than evidence of linguistic deficiency (Auer, 1998; Gumperz, 1982; Myers-Scotton, 1993). Second, research on bilingualism has established important connections between language choice, emotional experience, identity, and interpersonal relationships (Pavlenko, 2005). Third, research on Pakistani bilingualism demonstrates that Urdu-English switching can contribute to cultural identity, solidarity, interpersonal communication, and the representation of Pakistani cultural practices (Jadoon, 2017; Sardar et al., 2021). Finally, scholarship on *Home Boy* has examined migration, racialization, identity, displacement, multicultural conflict, and post-9/11 belonging (Aziz & Nadeem, 2024; Jain, 2021; Mehta, 2025). Despite these contributions, a significant research gap remains at the intersection of code-switching, emotion, and surrogate kinship in Pakistani diasporic fiction. Previous studies have generally examined either the sociolinguistic functions of Urdu-English code-switching or the broader thematic concerns of *Home Boy*. Comparatively limited attention has been given to the ways in which specific bilingual choices participate in the construction of emotional intimacy and family-like relationships among diasporic characters.

The present study addresses this gap by shifting analytical attention from the frequency of code-switching to its relational and affective functions. By applying Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model to selected dialogues and narrative passages, the study investigates how unmarked and marked code choices contribute to emotional comfort, solidarity, intimacy, relational tension, and the renegotiation of interpersonal obligations. It further examines culturally meaningful Urdu expressions such as *yaar*, *bhai*, and *tum log* as

linguistic resources through which friendship may acquire characteristics of surrogate kinship. Accordingly, the study contributes to the existing literature by connecting **micro-level linguistic choices with macro-level diasporic experiences**. It argues that Urdu-English code-switching in *Home Boy* is not merely a stylistic representation of bilingualism or Pakistani identity. Rather, it is an affective and relational practice through which characters maintain cultural continuity, express emotional attachment, negotiate vulnerability, and construct alternative forms of family and belonging within the diasporic environment.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The present study adopts a qualitative textual sociolinguistic research design to investigate the social, emotional, and relational functions of Urdu-English code-switching in H. M. Naqvi's *Home Boy* (2009). A qualitative approach is appropriate because the primary objective is not to determine the numerical frequency of Urdu-English switching but to understand how particular linguistic choices acquire meaning within specific interpersonal, emotional, and cultural contexts. The study consequently treats code-switching as a socially situated communicative practice through which characters construct identities, express emotions, negotiate interpersonal relationships, and establish forms of belonging.

The analysis is informed by the assumption that literary language is not socially neutral. In multilingual fiction, linguistic choices can contribute to characterization, cultural representation, interpersonal positioning, and the construction of social relationships. Consequently, Urdu expressions embedded within predominantly English discourse are examined not simply as lexical alternatives but as potentially meaningful indicators of intimacy, solidarity, cultural affiliation, emotional intensity, and relational negotiation.

The study employs close textual analysis as its principal methodological procedure. Selected

dialogues and narrative passages from *Home Boy* are examined in detail to identify instances in which Urdu-English code-switching coincides with emotionally or relationally significant situations. This approach permits attention to the immediate linguistic environment of each switch as well as the broader narrative circumstances in which it occurs.

3.2 Text and Data Source

The primary textual data consist of H. M. Naqvi's novel *Home Boy*, published in 2009. The novel provides an appropriate corpus for the present investigation because its Pakistani diasporic characters operate within an English-dominant American environment while retaining linguistic and cultural connections with Urdu. The coexistence of these linguistic resources provides opportunities for examining how bilingual language practices contribute to representations of identity, intimacy, friendship, cultural memory, and belonging.

The data are drawn specifically from dialogues and narrative passages containing Urdu-English code-switching. Attention is given to instances in which language alternation appears particularly relevant to the emotional or relational development of the characters. The selected material includes interactions involving friendship, companionship, humor, reassurance, nostalgia, fear, anxiety, conflict, emotional vulnerability, and interpersonal tension.

The study does not attempt to treat every occurrence of Urdu in the novel as analytically equivalent. Instead, individual instances are considered in relation to their narrative and interactional contexts. This contextualized procedure is necessary because the same lexical item may perform different functions depending on the speaker, addressee, situation, relationship, and emotional state represented in the passage.

3.3 Selection of Data

A **purposive textual selection strategy** is employed. Passages are selected because they provide direct evidence relevant to the study's

research questions rather than because they represent a statistically predetermined proportion of the novel. The selection focuses on linguistically and thematically salient instances in which code-switching contributes to interpersonal or emotional meaning.

The selection criteria include:

1. the presence of Urdu-English code-switching or Urdu lexical insertion within predominantly English discourse;
2. interaction between characters whose relationship is relevant to friendship, intimacy, solidarity, or kinship;
3. passages containing explicit or implicit emotional content;
4. instances involving culturally meaningful address terms or expressions;
5. passages in which a shift in linguistic code appears to correspond with a change in interpersonal positioning;
6. instances occurring during humor, reassurance, nostalgia, fear, conflict, vulnerability, or emotional pressure; and
7. passages that contribute to the representation of cultural identity or diasporic belonging.

Particular attention is paid to expressions such as *yaar*, *bhai*, and *tum log*. These expressions are examined contextually rather than treated as having fixed meanings. Their interpretation considers how they function within particular relationships and how their use contributes to solidarity, familiarity, brotherhood, collective identity, or emotional positioning.

3.4 Unit of Analysis

The primary **unit of analysis** is the individual code-switched expression or linguistic sequence together with its immediate conversational and narrative context. However, the analysis does not isolate individual words from the larger discourse. Each selected expression is examined within the sentence, turn, exchange, scene, and character relationship in which it occurs.

For example, an Urdu lexical insertion is considered in relation to:

- who produces the expression;

- who receives it;
- the existing relationship between the participants;
- the linguistic code being used immediately before and after the switch;
- the topic of the interaction;
- the emotional condition represented in the scene;
- the social expectations governing the interaction; and
- the potential effect of the switch on interpersonal distance or solidarity.

This multi-level analysis prevents the interpretation from becoming purely lexical and allows linguistic form to be connected to social and emotional meaning.

3.5 Analytical Framework

The principal theoretical framework is Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model (1993). The model is particularly appropriate because it conceptualizes language choice in relation to social relationships and the rights-and-obligations (RO) sets associated with those relationships.

Under the model, an **unmarked choice** represents the code expected within a particular interaction. It generally confirms the existing social relationship and maintains the rights and obligations associated with it. In the context of *Home Boy*, an Urdu expression occurring naturally within a close friendship may therefore be interpreted as an unmarked choice when it

corresponds to the established bilingual practices of the characters.

A marked choice, in contrast, involves a departure from the expected linguistic pattern. Such a departure may signal an attempt to renegotiate interpersonal distance, authority, identity, emotional positioning, or relational obligations (Myers-Scotton, 1993). A sudden movement from English to Urdu, or from Urdu-oriented interaction toward English, may therefore become particularly significant when it occurs during conflict, emotional pressure, fear, confrontation, or vulnerability.

The study does not assume that Urdu is inherently unmarked or that English is inherently marked. Instead, markedness is determined contextually and relationally. The expected linguistic behavior of the participants provides the basis against which a particular switch is interpreted.

3.6 Coding Categories

Each selected passage is systematically examined according to several analytical categories. These categories are developed from the research questions, the Markedness Model, and the broader sociolinguistic literature on bilingual discourse.

Analytical category Focus of analysis

Code-switching pattern	Lexical insertion, intra-sentential switching, inter-sentential switching, or movement between Urdu and English
Interactional context	Friendship, familiarity, conflict, humor, reassurance, fear, nostalgia, etc.
Emotional function	Affection, comfort, anxiety, anger, vulnerability, reassurance, humor, emotional intensity
Kinship function	Brotherhood, solidarity, loyalty, care, protection, moral obligation
Identity function	Pakistani identity, cultural affiliation, group membership, diasporic positioning
Markedness	Unmarked or marked linguistic choice
Relational effect	Maintenance, strengthening, distancing, confrontation, or renegotiation of

Analytical category Focus of analysis

relationships

Diasporic significance

Belonging, displacement, cultural continuity, or adaptation

This coding structure enables the study to connect linguistic form with interpersonal and socio-cultural interpretation.

3.7 Analysis of Unmarked Choices

Instances categorized as unmarked are examined to determine how they contribute to the maintenance of established interpersonal relationships. Particular attention is given to Urdu expressions that occur naturally within interactions between close friends or culturally connected characters.

The analysis considers whether such expressions reinforce familiarity, humor, emotional comfort, mutual recognition, or solidarity. When terms such as *yaar* or *bhai* occur within an established friendship, their function is examined in relation to the expected rights and obligations of that relationship. The analysis therefore asks whether the linguistic choice confirms an existing bond and whether it contributes to transforming ordinary friendship into a relationship characterized by family-like emotional expectations.

3.8 Analysis of Marked Choices

Marked choices are examined in relation to moments in which the expected interpersonal relationship is disturbed or renegotiated. Such moments may involve disagreement, fear, emotional distress, anxiety, confrontation, vulnerability, or uncertainty.

The analysis investigates whether a change in linguistic code produces greater emotional intensity, creates interpersonal distance, challenges an existing relationship, or signals a shift in identity or social positioning. A marked switch is not automatically interpreted as negative. Rather, it is understood as a potentially significant communicative event through which

characters respond to changing relational circumstances.

This distinction is important because emotional tension does not necessarily mean that a friendship or surrogate kinship relationship has disappeared. Instead, marked switching may reveal the fragility, complexity, and negotiability of intimacy.

3.9 Analysis of Emotional Function

The emotional dimension of each selected instance is analyzed by examining how code choice contributes to the representation of affect. The study considers several emotional functions, including:

- emotional reassurance;
- affection and intimacy;
- humor and emotional relief;
- anxiety and fear;
- anger and frustration;
- vulnerability;
- nostalgia and cultural memory;
- emotional distancing; and
- restoration of interpersonal security.

The analysis recognizes that the emotional meaning of a linguistic choice is context-dependent. Urdu is not automatically interpreted as emotional, nor is English automatically interpreted as formal or emotionally distant. Instead, the emotional significance of each code is established through the interaction between linguistic choice, character relationship, narrative context, and emotional circumstances.

3.10 Analysis of Kinship and Surrogate Family

A central analytical category concerns the construction of **surrogate kinship**. The study investigates how linguistic choices enable relationships between friends to acquire

characteristics normally associated with biological family.

Particular attention is given to terms such as *bhai*, whose literal kinship meaning can be extended pragmatically to express brotherhood, friendship, loyalty, solidarity, and care. Similarly, *yaar* is examined as a marker of interpersonal familiarity and companionship. The expression *tum log* is considered in relation to collective address and group identification.

The analysis asks whether repeated bilingual practices construct expectations of emotional availability, loyalty, protection, and mutual responsibility. Where such expectations emerge, the relationship is interpreted as moving beyond conventional friendship toward a form of surrogate kinship.

3.11 Identity and Diasporic Context

The analysis also considers the relationship between code-switching and diasporic identity. The characters of *Home Boy* occupy a social environment characterized by movement between Pakistani cultural affiliation and American social experience. Consequently, language choice can provide a mechanism for negotiating this complex identity position.

Urdu expressions may invoke shared cultural memory and Pakistani affiliation, while English provides access to the dominant linguistic environment of New York. However, these functions are treated as flexible rather than absolute. The study therefore examines how characters use both languages to position themselves within particular social relationships and situations.

3.12 Interpretive Procedure

The analysis proceeds through several stages. First, the novel is carefully examined to identify passages containing relevant Urdu-English linguistic alternation. Second, potentially significant passages are screened according to the selection criteria. Third, each selected passage is coded according to its linguistic pattern, interactional context, emotional function,

kinship function, identity implication, and markedness status.

Fourth, the coded passages are interpreted through Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model. The analysis determines whether the linguistic choice maintains an established rights-and-obligations relationship or represents a departure requiring relational renegotiation. Finally, individual observations are compared across passages to identify recurring patterns concerning emotional intimacy, solidarity, surrogate kinship, and relational strain.

The procedure can therefore be represented as:

Textual identification → Contextual selection → Linguistic coding → Emotional and relational analysis → Markedness interpretation → Cross-instance comparison → Thematic synthesis

3.13 Reliability and Interpretive Rigor

Because the study is qualitative and interpretive, rigor is established through **systematic contextualization and theoretical consistency** rather than statistical generalization. Each interpretation is grounded in the linguistic form of the passage, its surrounding discourse, the relationship between characters, and the broader narrative context.

The study also avoids assigning predetermined meanings to particular Urdu expressions. Instead, meanings are inferred from their textual context and interpreted through the theoretical framework. This procedure reduces the risk of treating *yaar*, *bhai*, or other Urdu expressions as automatically intimate or kinship-oriented in every occurrence.

Furthermore, the distinction between unmarked and marked choices is applied relationally rather than mechanically. A switch is classified according to the expectations established within the particular interaction rather than according to the assumption that Urdu or English possesses a universally fixed social status.

3.14 Scope and Delimitation

The study is deliberately limited to Urdu-English code-switching associated with emotional

intimacy, interpersonal relationships, and surrogate kinship in *Home Boy*. It does not attempt to provide a comprehensive grammatical description of the novel's bilingual language practices, nor does it statistically measure all instances of code-switching.

The study is also concerned primarily with the representation of bilingual interaction in a literary text rather than with naturally occurring conversations among Pakistani-American speakers. Consequently, its findings should be understood as interpretations of literary representations of bilingual sociolinguistic behavior, not as direct empirical claims about all Pakistani diasporic communities.

3.15 Ethical Considerations

As the research uses a publicly published literary work as its primary textual source and does not involve human participants, interviews, surveys, or personally identifiable information, conventional human-subject ethical procedures are not applicable. Nevertheless, the study maintains academic integrity by accurately attributing the novel and theoretical sources, distinguishing textual evidence from researcher interpretation, and avoiding unsupported generalizations about Pakistani bilingual speakers or diasporic communities.

3.16 Methodological Summary

Overall, the methodology combines qualitative textual analysis, sociolinguistic interpretation, and Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model to examine the affective and relational functions of Urdu-English code-switching in *Home Boy*. The approach moves beyond counting linguistic switches and instead investigates what those switches accomplish within particular relationships and emotional circumstances. By examining linguistic patterns alongside context, emotion, identity, and kinship, the study seeks to demonstrate how bilingual discourse contributes to the construction of intimacy and surrogate family in diasporic fiction.

4. Findings and Discussion

The analysis of selected passages from H. M. Naqvi's *Home Boy* (2009) demonstrates that Urdu-English code-switching performs functions that extend considerably beyond the simple representation of bilingual competence or Pakistani cultural identity. The findings indicate that language choice is closely connected with the emotional circumstances of the characters, the nature of their interpersonal relationships, and their negotiation of belonging within a diasporic environment. In particular, the analysis identifies two broad patterns: unmarked switching, which generally reinforces intimacy, familiarity, solidarity, and relational stability, and marked switching, which becomes more salient when established interpersonal expectations are disturbed.

These patterns are consistent with Myers-Scotton's (1993) Markedness Model, according to which speakers make linguistic choices in relation to socially expected rights-and-obligations (RO) sets. When the selected code corresponds to the expected relationship, it functions as an unmarked choice and tends to maintain existing social arrangements. When the choice departs from those expectations, it may become marked and contribute to the renegotiation of interpersonal relationships. In *Home Boy*, this distinction provides a useful means of interpreting how apparently small shifts between Urdu and English can communicate emotional proximity, solidarity, vulnerability, conflict, and changing relational expectations.

The findings further suggest that code-switching should be understood as an **affective and relational resource**. The significance of Urdu-English alternation is not located exclusively in the linguistic form of the switch but in what the switch accomplishes within a particular interaction. Urdu insertions may establish cultural familiarity, create emotional comfort, reinforce friendship, and invoke family-like solidarity. Conversely, changes in expected language patterns may reveal emotional pressure, disagreement, distance, or the need to renegotiate

a relationship. Thus, code-switching in the novel provides a linguistic mechanism through which characters continuously construct and manage interpersonal relationships.

4.1 Unmarked Code-Switching and Emotional Comfort

One of the most significant findings is the recurrent association between unmarked Urdu-English code-switching and emotional intimacy. In interactions involving close friends and familiar social groups, Urdu expressions frequently appear as natural components of predominantly English discourse. These switches include lexical insertions, short Urdu expressions, forms of address, and intra-sentential alternation. Their occurrence does not necessarily interrupt the communicative flow. Instead, they become part of the characters' shared bilingual repertoire.

From the perspective of Myers-Scotton's (1993) Markedness Model, such linguistic behavior can be interpreted as unmarked when it corresponds to the expected relationship between the participants. If characters have established a pattern of bilingual interaction in which Urdu expressions are routinely used to express familiarity and solidarity, their continued use confirms the existing RO set. The language choice therefore does not require explicit explanation within the interaction. It becomes an ordinary and socially expected feature of communication.

The importance of this finding lies in the distinction between linguistic markedness and emotional markedness. An Urdu expression may be linguistically noticeable to an English-dominant reader but remain socially unmarked for the characters themselves. Within their shared bilingual repertoire, the expression functions as a routine sign of familiarity. Consequently, its emotional force derives not necessarily from novelty but from its capacity to reproduce a familiar interpersonal environment. Unmarked Urdu-English switching is particularly important for the representation of emotional

comfort. Characters living in a diasporic environment may encounter unfamiliar social expectations, cultural dislocation, racialized experiences, and uncertainty concerning their position within American society. Within this context, familiar linguistic practices can provide a sense of continuity. Urdu expressions can evoke shared cultural knowledge and reduce the interpersonal distance that may otherwise emerge within an English-dominant environment.

The emotional functions associated with unmarked switching include reassurance, humor, affection, familiarity, solidarity, and emotional ease. The use of culturally familiar expressions allows characters to communicate meanings that may be difficult to reproduce with equivalent emotional force in a different linguistic code. Pavlenko (2005) argues that languages within multilingual repertoires can acquire different emotional associations because they are connected to different experiences, relationships, and cultural environments. The findings from *Home Boy* are compatible with this perspective because Urdu appears particularly meaningful when characters interact within culturally familiar and emotionally significant relationships.

Humor represents another important function of unmarked switching. Informal Urdu expressions can reduce communicative formality and create a shared humorous space between characters. Such humor may serve an important psychological function because it provides temporary relief from the pressures associated with diasporic displacement and post-9/11 social hostility. Consequently, language switching can become a mechanism through which characters manage difficult emotional circumstances without explicitly discussing them.

The findings therefore suggest that unmarked switching operates as an affective stabilizer. It helps maintain interpersonal equilibrium by reproducing linguistic familiarity and confirming shared cultural identity. Rather than disrupting communication, the switch can make communication more emotionally accessible. The characters' bilingual repertoire consequently

becomes a resource for managing the ordinary emotional pressures associated with diasporic life. This finding also supports Gumperz's (1982) interactional understanding of code-switching. From this perspective, linguistic alternation can function as a contextualization cue that helps interlocutors interpret the social and emotional orientation of an utterance. In *Home Boy*, the use of Urdu can provide contextual information concerning the closeness of the relationship and the emotional stance of the speaker. Language choice consequently contributes to meaning at both the propositional and interpersonal levels.

4.2 From Friendship to Surrogate Kinship

A second major finding concerns the relationship between code-switching and the construction of surrogate kinship. The analysis indicates that repeated bilingual practices among close characters contribute to relationships that extend beyond conventional friendship. Through language, friendship is represented as a form of social belonging characterized by trust, loyalty, emotional availability, mutual support, and a sense of responsibility.

The Urdu expressions *yaar* and *bhai* are particularly significant in this respect. Their meanings cannot be reduced to direct dictionary equivalents because their pragmatic and interpersonal meanings depend upon context. *Yaar* can function as an expression of friendship, familiarity, affection, frustration, or solidarity, while *bhai*, literally associated with brotherhood, can also be employed as a term of camaraderie and interpersonal affiliation. When such expressions occur in interactions between friends, they may construct a relationship that symbolically resembles brotherhood.

This finding is consistent with the broader sociolinguistic understanding that forms of address can establish or reinforce social relationships. Address terms do not simply identify an interlocutor; they can communicate assumptions about social distance, solidarity, respect, affection, and relational obligation. In

the context of *Home Boy*, Urdu kinship-associated expressions therefore perform relational work by positioning friends within a culturally recognizable framework of closeness.

The construction of surrogate kinship is especially important in a diasporic setting. Migration may create geographical distance between individuals and their biological families and may disrupt established community networks. Under such circumstances, friendships can acquire emotional and social functions that approximate those of family. The characters' interpersonal networks may consequently become alternative sources of belonging, security, cultural continuity, and emotional support.

The findings indicate that language contributes directly to this transformation. When characters repeatedly employ shared Urdu expressions, they reinforce a sense of **collective familiarity**. The bilingual repertoire becomes a form of shared cultural capital through which members recognize one another as belonging to the same social and cultural world. This shared repertoire can distinguish insiders from outsiders and strengthen group cohesion.

The significance of *bhai* is particularly clear from the perspective of relational obligation. The term may evoke expectations of loyalty, assistance, protection, and emotional responsibility. Thus, its use can symbolically elevate a friendship from casual companionship toward a relationship involving family-like obligations. Similarly, *yaar* can reinforce an established expectation of emotional accessibility and mutual understanding.

The findings consequently support the argument that kinship should not be understood exclusively as a biological category. It can also be **socially enacted through repeated interaction**. From this perspective, surrogate kinship in *Home Boy* is produced through everyday communicative practices rather than formally established through genealogy. Code-switching becomes one of the mechanisms through which this relational transformation is linguistically enacted.

Myers-Scotton's (1993) framework is particularly useful here. If Urdu expressions are expected within close friendships, their use constitutes an unmarked choice that confirms the RO set associated with intimacy and solidarity. However, the repeated confirmation of these expectations can gradually strengthen the relationship itself. Language does not merely reflect the relationship; it participates in maintaining and reproducing it.

This finding also contributes to scholarship on diasporic identity. Clements (2013) and Jain (2021) emphasize the importance of affiliation, mobility, home, and transnational identity in South Asian diasporic narratives. The present analysis extends this perspective by demonstrating how these broad themes can be realized at the micro-level of interpersonal language. Characters do not construct belonging only through discussions of homeland or cultural identity. They also construct it through the small linguistic practices of everyday interaction.

4.3 Marked Switching and Relational Strain

Although unmarked switching is primarily associated with relational stability, the analysis also identifies marked code-switching as an important indicator of emotional and interpersonal disruption. Marked switching becomes particularly salient when the established emotional equilibrium between characters is disturbed by anger, fear, anxiety, conflict, vulnerability, sarcasm, disappointment, or moral confrontation.

According to Myers-Scotton (1993), marked choices occur when speakers depart from the code associated with the expected rights-and-obligations relationship. Such departures can therefore signal an attempt to modify or renegotiate interpersonal expectations. Applied to *Home Boy*, marked switching becomes significant because it may indicate that characters are no longer interacting according to the same relational assumptions that governed their earlier communication.

A shift into Urdu during an emotionally intense interaction may increase the affective force of an utterance. Urdu can provide a culturally familiar and emotionally charged repertoire through which anger, frustration, fear, or vulnerability is expressed. The switch may therefore bring an otherwise suppressed emotional position to the foreground. In such circumstances, Urdu functions not simply as a marker of cultural identity but as an emotional intensifier.

Conversely, a movement toward English can sometimes contribute to emotional distance. English may provide a more controlled or publicly oriented linguistic mode when a character seeks to regulate emotional exposure. Remaining within English may allow a character to maintain psychological distance from an emotionally difficult situation or to adopt a more formal interpersonal stance.

However, such interpretations should not be treated as deterministic. English does not inherently signify emotional distance, just as Urdu does not inherently signify emotional intimacy. The meaning of the switch emerges from the established linguistic pattern of the interaction. A change becomes marked because it differs from what the participants normally expect.

This contextual dimension is central to understanding relational strain. When characters who normally interact through a familiar mixture of Urdu and English suddenly alter their linguistic pattern, the change may draw attention to an underlying interpersonal problem. Language becomes an indicator of **relational** instability.

Marked switching may also function as a form of interpersonal confrontation. A speaker may use a culturally familiar expression to emphasize the seriousness of a complaint, invoke shared moral expectations, or remind an interlocutor of the obligations associated with their relationship. In this sense, code-switching can become a means of holding another character accountable.

The findings therefore suggest that marked switching should not be interpreted simply as a

breakdown of communication. Rather, it may represent a strategic attempt to repair, challenge, or renegotiate communication. The speaker may be signaling that the existing relational arrangement is no longer sufficient for the current emotional circumstances.

An important implication follows from this observation: relational tension can make kinship more visible rather than less visible. When relationships function smoothly, expectations of care and loyalty may remain implicit. During conflict, however, those expectations become explicit because characters begin to negotiate what they owe one another. A marked linguistic choice can consequently expose the underlying RO set of the relationship.

The analysis therefore challenges a simplistic binary between intimacy and distance. Marked switching may temporarily produce distance while simultaneously demonstrating the importance of the relationship. A character would not need to renegotiate an interpersonal bond if that bond had no emotional significance. Thus, moments of markedness can paradoxically reveal the depth of underlying attachment.

4.4 Language, Emotion, and Relational Management

The preceding findings can be synthesized into a broader interpretation of code-switching as a mechanism of relational management. The linguistic behavior represented in *Home Boy* exists along a continuum extending from relational stability to relational pressure. At one end, unmarked switching supports familiarity, emotional security, solidarity, humor, and cultural continuity. At the other, marked switching becomes salient when established expectations are disrupted and characters must negotiate emotional or relational difficulties.

This continuum demonstrates that language choice is not simply a reflection of relationships; it can actively participate in their maintenance and transformation. A character who uses a familiar Urdu expression may reaffirm closeness, while a character who unexpectedly shifts codes

may signal that the relationship requires attention or renegotiation. Linguistic choice therefore becomes part of the interactional process through which relationships are continuously reproduced.

The findings correspond with Pavlenko's (2005) argument that multilingualism and emotion are closely connected. Different linguistic codes may carry different experiential and emotional associations, and bilingual speakers may use these resources to position themselves emotionally. In *Home Boy*, Urdu can invoke cultural familiarity and shared emotional history, while English can connect characters to the wider social environment in which they live. The alternation between the two consequently reflects the characters' movement between different emotional and social orientations.

The findings are also compatible with Gumperz's (1982) interactional approach, which views code-switching as a resource for signaling contextual and interpersonal meanings. In the present analysis, code choice provides information about how characters perceive one another and how they wish their utterances to be interpreted. The switch may signal solidarity, emotional closeness, irony, confrontation, or distancing depending on the surrounding discourse.

The relational dimension becomes particularly significant when code-switching is interpreted through Myers-Scotton's (1993) Markedness Model. The model makes it possible to conceptualize linguistic choices as manifestations of social expectations. An unmarked choice confirms the existing RO set, while a marked choice may challenge or renegotiate it. Consequently, the movement between Urdu and English can be understood as a linguistic representation of changing interpersonal expectations.

This perspective also extends the understanding of **surrogate kinship**. If friendship is repeatedly reinforced through shared bilingual practices, it may develop into a relationship in which participants expect loyalty, care, emotional support, and mutual responsibility. The language

of friendship consequently becomes part of the language of family. The use of *bhai*, in particular, can symbolically position a friend within a relationship of brotherhood, while *yaar* can maintain the familiarity and solidarity necessary for that relationship.

The concept of surrogate kinship is therefore not simply thematic. It is **linguistically enacted**. Characters create family-like relationships through repeated communicative practices that establish mutual recognition and emotional obligation. This observation adds a sociolinguistic dimension to existing interpretations of *Home Boy* as a novel concerned with diaspora, identity, displacement, and belonging.

4.5 Code-Switching as Cultural Continuity in Diasporic Space

Another important implication of the findings concerns the relationship between code-switching and **cultural continuity**. The characters inhabit a social environment in which English is dominant, yet Urdu remains available as a resource for expressing cultural familiarity. The continued presence of Urdu within English discourse demonstrates that migration does not necessarily result in complete linguistic assimilation.

Instead, bilingual language use allows characters to maintain elements of cultural identity while adapting to their new social environment. The switching between languages therefore represents a form of **linguistic hybridity**. Characters do not necessarily choose between Pakistani and American identities; rather, their bilingual practices allow them to inhabit and negotiate both simultaneously.

This finding is particularly significant in the post-9/11 context of the novel. The characters encounter social conditions in which Pakistani and Muslim identities can become highly visible and subject to racialized interpretation. Within such circumstances, intimate Urdu communication can provide a private or semi-private space of cultural recognition. It enables characters to recognize aspects of themselves in

one another that may not be equally visible within the broader American social environment. The bilingual repertoire consequently becomes a resource for preserving cultural memory. Expressions such as *yaar* and *bhai* carry cultural associations that connect interpersonal communication with broader histories of language, family, friendship, and community. Their use helps reproduce cultural meanings within the diasporic environment.

4.6 Integrative Discussion of the Findings

Taken collectively, the findings demonstrate that Urdu-English code-switching in *Home Boy* performs three interconnected functions: affective, relational, and identity-based.

First, it is affective because it provides linguistic resources for expressing and managing emotional states. Urdu insertions can communicate affection, humor, reassurance, frustration, anxiety, and vulnerability.

Second, it is relational because code choice helps establish, maintain, and renegotiate relationships. Unmarked switching reinforces existing intimacy, while marked switching can signal relational strain or changing expectations.

Third, it is identity-based because bilingual language use enables characters to maintain cultural affiliations while participating in an English-dominant diasporic environment. Urdu becomes a resource through which cultural continuity and group membership can be recognized and enacted.

These three functions are not independent. They intersect in individual interactions. A single Urdu expression may simultaneously communicate emotion, reinforce friendship, and invoke cultural identity. Similarly, a marked switch during conflict may simultaneously express emotional distress, challenge relational expectations, and reaffirm the cultural significance of the relationship.

The findings therefore support a broader understanding of literary code-switching as sociolinguistic evidence of relational meaning. Rather than treating bilingual elements as

ornamental markers of authenticity, the analysis demonstrates that they contribute directly to the construction of the fictional social world.

Most importantly, the findings reveal that **surrogate kinship is constructed through linguistic practice**. Friendship becomes family-like not simply because characters describe themselves as close but because their everyday interactions establish expectations of loyalty, care, emotional availability, and mutual responsibility. Urdu-English code-switching is one of the mechanisms through which these expectations are repeatedly enacted.

The findings also refine the application of Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model to literary discourse. The model is particularly valuable because it shifts analytical attention from language structure to the social motivations underlying code choice. However, its application to literary fiction must remain sensitive to the fact that literary dialogue is artistically constructed. The switches analyzed in *Home Boy* are representations of bilingual interaction rather than recordings of naturally occurring speech. Nevertheless, their patterned distribution and contextual placement provide valuable evidence concerning how the author represents identity, emotion, and interpersonal relationships.

Overall, the study demonstrates that Urdu-English code-switching in *Home Boy* functions as a relational resource through which diasporic characters negotiate emotional security, cultural belonging, friendship, and surrogate family. Unmarked switching creates continuity and intimacy, while marked switching exposes moments in which those relationships are challenged and renegotiated. The alternation between Urdu and English consequently mirrors the broader diasporic condition of movement between cultural worlds while simultaneously demonstrating that interpersonal relationships can provide alternative forms of home.

The findings are broadly consistent with Pavlenko's (2005) account of the relationship between multilingualism and emotion, Gumperz's (1982) interactional understanding of

code-switching, and Myers-Scotton's (1993) theory of socially motivated language choice. They also extend scholarship on Pakistani diasporic literature by demonstrating how broad themes such as displacement, belonging, identity, and cultural continuity are realized through **micro-level linguistic practices**. In this respect, *Home Boy* illustrates that language is not merely a medium through which diasporic experiences are narrated; it is itself one of the principal means through which those experiences are emotionally and relationally constructed.

5. Conclusion

This study concludes that Urdu-English code-switching in H. M. Naqvi's *Home Boy* functions as a significant linguistic resource for constructing emotional, interpersonal, and cultural meaning within the Pakistani diasporic experience. Rather than serving merely as a stylistic feature or an indication of bilingual competence, code-switching contributes to the representation of how characters negotiate intimacy, belonging, solidarity, and relational boundaries. Unmarked Urdu expressions within predominantly English discourse create a sense of familiarity and emotional continuity, particularly in interactions characterized by friendship, humor, reassurance, affection, and mutual support. Culturally meaningful expressions such as *yaar* and *bhai* further intensify interpersonal closeness by invoking culturally recognizable relationships and forms of address that can extend beyond ordinary friendship toward surrogate kinship.

The findings also demonstrate that marked switching becomes particularly meaningful when established relational expectations are disrupted by emotional pressure, conflict, fear, anxiety, vulnerability, or interpersonal tension. In such contexts, a shift in language choice may signal distancing, confrontation, emotional intensification, self-protection, or the need to renegotiate an existing relationship. Importantly, marked switching does not necessarily indicate the breakdown of intimacy; rather, it can reveal the complexity and instability of relationships by

making underlying expectations of loyalty, care, obligation, and solidarity more visible.

Overall, the study argues that bilingual language choice in *Home Boy* is integral to the novel's representation of diasporic life. Urdu-English code-switching helps construct emotional intimacy, brotherhood, care, loyalty, cultural continuity, and relational instability while simultaneously reflecting the characters' negotiation of Pakistani cultural belonging within an English-dominant American environment. The findings therefore support the applicability of Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model to literary bilingual discourse and demonstrate that sociolinguistic analysis can enrich literary interpretations by connecting specific linguistic choices with broader questions of identity, emotion, belonging, and interpersonal relationships.

6. Implications and Future Research

The study has important implications for literary studies, sociolinguistics, and the analysis of diasporic fiction. From a literary perspective, it demonstrates how micro-level linguistic choices contribute to characterization, emotional representation, dialogue construction, and the development of interpersonal relationships. Urdu expressions embedded within English discourse can communicate meanings that may not be fully conveyed through English alone, thereby enabling the narrative to represent culturally specific forms of intimacy, humor, solidarity, and emotional attachment.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, the study demonstrates that fictional dialogue can be examined through frameworks originally developed to explain socially motivated language choice. Applying Myers-Scotton's Markedness Model to *Home Boy* shows how speakers' presumed rights-and-obligations relationships can be represented through shifts between linguistic codes. This approach also highlights the importance of interpreting code-switching contextually rather than assuming that a

particular language automatically carries a fixed emotional or social meaning.

The study further has implications for research on Pakistani and South Asian diasporic literature. It suggests that bilingual practices can function as textual representations of cultural continuity, hybrid identity, emotional belonging, and alternative forms of family within migrant communities. In this sense, code-switching provides a productive bridge between linguistic form and broader themes of migration, displacement, racialization, belonging, and community formation.

Future research could extend this investigation through comparative analyses of other Pakistani and South Asian diasporic novels, particularly works that employ Urdu-English, Punjabi-English, Hindi-English, or other multilingual combinations. Researchers could also examine code-switching through alternative theoretical approaches, including Conversation Analysis, interactional sociolinguistics, and indexicality-based theories, to determine whether different frameworks reveal additional dimensions of emotional and relational meaning. Corpus-based studies could provide quantitative evidence regarding the frequency, distribution, and contextual patterns of bilingual expressions across literary texts, while reader-reception research could investigate how different linguistic and cultural audiences interpret Urdu-English switching and its associated meanings. Such studies would further strengthen understanding of bilingual literary practices as important mechanisms through which diasporic identities, emotions, relationships, and cultural affiliations are constructed and negotiated.

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