



Voices of the Bazaar: A metro-linguistic Study of Price Negotiation Practices in Pakistani Street Markets

Qudsia Marij¹, Zarqinar Amjad², Noor Fatima³

¹ M.Phil. Scholar, Numl Multan Campus, Pakistan. Email: marrijqudsiya@gmail.com

² M.Phil. Scholar, Numl Multan Campus, Pakistan. Email: zarqinaramjad@gmail.com

³ M.Phil. Scholar, Numl Multan Campus, Pakistan. Email: nnoorie545@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received: August 12, 2025

Revised: February 22, 2026

Accepted: February 23, 2026

Available Online: February 24, 2026

Keywords:

Metro-linguistics

Bargaining

Discourse

Code-switching

Conversation Analysis

Interaction Sociolinguistics

Urban Linguistic Practices

Pakistani Street Markets

Linguistic Capital

Funding:

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

ABSTRACT

This study investigates how linguistic resources are strategically mobilized during price negotiation in Pakistani urban street markets. The data consist of 42 naturally occurring bargaining interactions recorded in informal market settings involving vendors and customers. Drawing on a qualitative research design, the study employs a metro-linguistic perspective integrated with conversation analysis and interaction Sociolinguistics to examine turn-taking, interaction strategies, and multilingual language use. The findings reveal that bargaining is organized through recurrent strategies such as anchoring, counter-offers, politeness markers, humour, and staged withdrawal, with language choice and code-switching functioning as key interaction resources. Urdu is used as the overriding language and regional languages and English are used strategically to bargain on solidarity, authority and value. The paper emphasizes the influence of contextual factors such as the crowd density and noise on the dynamics of interaction and the results of negotiation. The implications of these findings are in the study of informal economic communication and the creation of language-sensitive methods of urban market regulation and communication awareness.

© 2026 The Authors, Published by iRASD. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial License

Corresponding Author's Email: marrijqudsiya@gmail.com

1. Introduction

The urban street markets are one of the most vivid and linguistically dense public in the Pakistani cities. These are the markets where speakers of different language, social and geographical backgrounds meet and act as the place of intensive interaction due to mobility, crowding and economic urgency. Language in such environments is not just a medium of exchange but a strategic resource whereby participants bargain prices, social relations and carry out identities. Bargaining, also known as price negotiation, is a daily but socially entrenched communicative activity in these markets, which is regulated by common norms, expectations, and conventions of interaction. Sociolinguistics, bargaining in street markets is an interesting location to study the mobilization of linguistic resources by multilingual speakers in an urban context. The Pakistani urban markets are typified by the free flow of Urdu, Punjabi, Saraiki, Pashto, English and hybrid urban forms. Vendors and customers periodically alternate between these resources to assert authority, develop familiarity, oppose price claims, or pursue their economic interests. Such practices align closely with a metro-linguistic orientation, which conceptualizes language as flexible, improvised, and shaped by the rhythms and constraints of metropolitan life (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015). Despite the centrality of these practices to everyday urban experience, they remain under explored within linguistic research. Problem Statement. Although bargaining is a pervasive feature of Pakistani street markets, linguistic

studies examining price negotiation as an interaction and metro-linguistic practice are scarce. Existing research on multilingualism in Pakistan has largely focused on institutional domains such as education, media, and formal workplaces, while informal commercial settings have received limited attention. Specifically, no systematic discussion of the role played by the interaction strategies, multilingual repertoires, and situational demanding (crowd density, ambient noise, etc.) in forming bargaining encounters in urban markets exists. As a result, the linguistic organization of price negotiation, and its role in negotiating power, identity, and economic outcomes, remains insufficiently documented within South Asian sociolinguistics.

1.1. Significance of the Study

This research is important in a number of ways. Academically, it contributes to the growing body of work on metro-linguistics by extending its application to informal economic interactions in South Asian urban contexts. By integrating metro-linguistics with Conversation Analysis and interaction Sociolinguistics, the study offers a multidimensional account of bargaining as a structured yet adaptive communicative practice. The research also enriches sociolinguistics scholarship on multilingualism in Pakistan by foregrounding everyday market interactions, an area that has been largely overlooked. The study has contextual and social relevance in addition to its academic contribution. The street markets are the heart of the urban economic life and social interaction in Pakistan and the linguistic strategies employed in the street markets can be used to comprehend how speakers negotiate power relations, social distance, and economic negotiation in high-density environments. The findings underline the importance of language as a practical instrument in everyday business and the importance of informal places of the population as the place of linguistic invention and social bargaining.

1.2. Research Questions

The present paper examines the language use as price negotiation in Pakistani urban street markets and the use of language as a strategic tool in the interaction patterns of bargaining. The following are the research questions that were formulated to direct the investigation and offer analytical consistency in the entire study.

1.2.1. Main Research Question

How do vendors and customers in Pakistani urban street markets utilize linguistic resources in price negotiations, and in what ways do these strategies influence the outcomes of the Bargains?

1.2.2. Sub-questions

1. Which interaction strategies--such as anchoring, counter-offers, humour, politeness markers, and staged withdrawal--appear most frequently during bargaining, and at what points in the negotiation sequence do they occur?
2. What is the use of code-switching between Urdu, Punjabi, English and other local languages as a strategic resource, and is its application associated with negotiation results?
3. How are address terms and politeness strategies used to influence social distance, rapport and perceived authority in the process of bargaining?

1.3. Research Objectives

The primary objective of this research is to analyse the linguistic techniques that shape price negotiation in Pakistani urban street markets, with particular focus on the multilingual and interaction dynamics that characterize these encounters. In line with the research questions, the study seeks to achieve the following specific objectives:

To identify and describe the interaction strategies, including anchoring, counter offers, humour, politeness markers, and staged withdrawal, that emerge during bargaining episodes between vendors and customers.

To analyse the strategic use of code-switching across Urdu, Punjabi, English, and other local varieties, and to examine how such shifts contribute to negotiation trajectories and potential outcomes.

To investigate how contextual variables such as gender, vendor type, perceived social status, crowd density, and ambient noise influence turn-taking patterns and strategic linguistic choices.

1.4. Organization of the Study

The next section presents a review of recent literature on metro-linguistics, multilingual urban practices, and bargaining discourse, culminating in the identification of the research gap. This is followed by a methodology section outlining the research design, data collection procedures, and analytical framework. The Results section contains the main findings of the research, which are backed by illustrative excerpts and tables. In the Discussion section, these findings are explained in relation to the available scholarship and theoretical insights. Finally, the Conclusion is the conclusion of the main findings, policy recommendations, theoretical and practical implications of the study.

2. Literature Review

Recent scholars in sociolinguistics have increasingly recognized urban spaces as sites of intense linguistic interaction shaped by mobility, diversity, and socioeconomic pressure. In particular, street markets represent linguistically rich environments in which multilingual speakers communicate in a fast and goal-oriented manner. This section reviews recent studies relevant to metro-linguistics, urban multilingual practices, bargaining discourse, and interaction strategies, with a focus on work published between 2019 and 2024. The review is chronologically structured to portray evolution of the field and to place current study in the context of the existing scholarly discussions.

2.1. Urban Multilingualism and metro-linguistic Practices

Research published around 2019-2020 foregrounded the fluidity of multilingual practices in urban contexts. Androutsopoulos (2020) stressed that modern urban communication can be viewed through the prism of heterogeneous and repertoire-based approaches instead of closed language systems. His work brought out the way speakers flexibly utilize the resources of language available to them to achieve identity, stance, and social position, especially in informal and digitally mediated contexts. Although this work provided useful theoretical information on urban multilingualism, it was more concerned with mediated communication and did not deal with face-to-face economic interaction.

Similarly, studies in linguistic landscape research during this period began to move beyond official signage to consider informal and grassroots texts. This kind of work showed that the practices of urban multilingualism are influenced by the relations of power and local social processes. Nevertheless, these studies were mostly focused on visual texts and not on spoken interaction, and conversational practices like bargaining were not well studied.

2.2. The Urban Translanguaging and interaction Strategies

By 2021-2022, research attention increasingly shifted toward interaction dynamics and translanguaging practices in everyday communication. Auer (2013) theorized translanguaging as an organized but adaptable application of linguistic resources and stated that language mixing is an interaction strategy and not a linguistic weakness. This view is especially applicable to the market interactions, where speakers change the language options by moment in reaction to the social cues and communicative objectives. However, the work of Auer was mostly theoretical and did not focus on informal commercial encounters. During the same period, scholars working within Conversation Analysis and interaction Sociolinguistics continued to document patterned interaction practices such as turn-taking, stance-taking, and repair in institutional and semi-institutional settings. Although these studies confirmed that interaction is sequentially structured, not many of them applied this analytical prism to informal market bargaining, particularly in South Asian settings.

2.3. Graffiti, Informal Urban Discourse and Global South Perspectives

The 2023 studies also added to the range of urban discourse analysis the range of informal and marginal communicative practices in the Global South. Abaka (2023) studied graffiti in cities of the Middle East and showed how the mixing of languages, the spatial location, and the semiotic resources are employed to express sociopolitical meanings. Her work emphasized the need to study informal urban communication as a place of identity negotiation and resistance. Despite

its methodological insight, the study concentrated on written inscriptions and not spoken interaction and failed to address economic negotiation. Meanwhile, studies of soundscapes in cities were growing. Hosseini and Kowkabi (2023) examined the effects of ambient noise and space on social interactions in the open area and found that noise impacts the turn taking, speech timing, and communicative adaptation. Despite the fact that these findings can be used in the analysis of market environments, there is a lack of linguistic research on how such soundscapes can affect bargaining interaction.

2.4. Recent Developments in South Asian Urban Linguistics

Informal urban practices in South Asia have begun to be addressed more squarely in more current scholarship. The perspectives on multilingual graffiti investigated by Rahman (2024) focus on contesting citizenship of South Asian cities, as informal speech acts are the means of negotiating identity and belonging in disputed cities. Although this was not a research on spoken interaction, it cemented the necessity to research informal, non-institutional communicative practices in South Asian urban life. Research on urban soundscapes has also developed, with Zhang (2024) showing that noise, the density of crowds, and spatial compression have a significant impact on interaction behaviour in the public. These findings provide a useful contextual background to the study of market communication but are insufficient to the study of the linguistic structure of bargaining sequences.

2.5. Research Gap

Despite the growing interest in urban multilingualism, translanguaging, and informal public discourse, one can still notice several gaps in the literature. To begin with, the linguistic research on price negotiation as an interaction practice in informal business contexts is significantly underrepresented. Second, metro-linguistics and Conversation Analysis have been used in other urban settings, but little has been done to combine the two methods to study street-market bargaining. Third, there is a dearth of empirical studies based on Pakistani urban market, especially research that focuses on the interplay of multilingual resources, interaction strategies and environmental pressures in influencing the outcome of negotiations. The current paper fills these gaps by providing metro-linguistic and interaction perspective of price negotiation in Pakistani street markets. The study provides empirical data on multilingualism, interaction discourse, and everyday economic communication by concentrating on naturally occurring bargaining interactions and extending the current body of research on the topic.

3. Theoretical Framework

The paper is based on a framework of complementary theoretical views that together shed light on the linguistic, social, and spatial aspects of bargaining relationships in Pakistani urban street markets. Combining the findings of metro-linguistics, Conversation Analysis, interaction Sociolinguistics, and linguistic capital theories, the framework offers a multidimensional perspective in which the price, identity, and power negotiation can be studied. These views are not discussed as being independent models but rather overlapping strands, which underpin a consistent analytical style.

3.1. Metro-linguistics

The general conceptual framework of this study is metro-linguistics. It is a framework that predicts the linguistic practices that are formed in dense, heterogeneous, and mobile urban spaces. Pennycook and Otsuji, among others, believe that metropolitan spaces do not just provide the background of communication; instead, they actively construct linguistic repertoires by their rhythms, pressures and social configurations. Pakistani street markets are a good example of such dynamics: they are acoustically saturated, socially heterogeneous, and dynamic in their movement. In these environments, speakers resort to the flexible and hybrid linguistic resources and move between languages and registers as the situations develop. This paper conceptualizes bargaining as an adaptive negotiation practice by adopting a metro-linguistic perspective to understand it as not a fixed routine, but as a practice that is determined by the spatial and social needs of urban marketplaces.

3.2. Conversation Analysis (CA)

Conversation Analysis enlightens the study of the sequential arrangement of bargaining interactions. CA focuses on the production of meaning by the organization of turns, overlaps,

pauses, repair sequences, and moment-to-moment interaction moves. Bargaining is generally based on a familiar pattern, which includes initial offer, counter-offer, justification, resistance, withdrawal, and final concession, but the linguistic realization of these phases differ depending on the participants, situation, and the purpose of the interaction. CA enables the research to determine the recurrent patterns of various bargaining episodes and examine how the vendors and customers deal with the disagreement, interruption, or change their strategies according to the ongoing dialogue. This micro-analytic methodology is critical in explaining the emergence of negotiation as a collaboratively created process and not a unilateral process.

3.3. Interaction Sociolinguistics

Whereas CA is concerned with the structural organization of interaction, interaction Sociolinguistics is concerned with the conceptualization cues, linguistic and paralinguistic, with which participants cue stance, identity, and intent. The contextualization work by Gumperz is an essential background in this case, as it emphasizes the role of code choices, intonation, volume, and lexical selection in creating interpretive frames together. Such cues are especially significant in Pakistani street markets, where multilingualism is the rule. Switching between Urdu and Punjabi or Saraiki and English can be used to indicate authority, familiarity, social distance or economic purpose. interaction Sociolinguistics allows the analysis to make sense of these changes not merely as grammatical alternations but as a social action that organizes the negotiation. In this perspective, humour, address terms, and stylized speech forms are strategic means of exerting influence on interaction footing and determining the course of bargaining.

3.4. Linguistic Capital and Symbolic Power

It is also based on the ideas of Pierre Bourdieu, especially linguistic capital and symbolic power. The linguistic resources have a different value in Pakistani urban markets, which is determined by the social identities of speakers and the prestige of the variety of language used. English can be used as a symbol of power or modernity, whereas local languages like Punjabi or Saraiki can be used as a symbol of solidarity or cultural closeness. These symbolic associations guide the way the participants understand speech acts in the negotiation process. As an example, vendors can speak English to make their products appear more valuable, whereas customers can change to local languages to appeal to familiarity or social distance. The framework by Bourdieu can therefore be used to understand why some linguistic options have persuasive power in economic exchanges, and how social inequalities are negotiated using seemingly mundane communicative practices.

3.5. Integrative Conceptual Model

Combining these views, the current research defines bargaining as a linguistic performance that is influenced by:

City spatial demands (noise, density of crowds, mobility),
Sequential organization of negotiation (CA),
Contextualize is an indexing of identity and intent (interaction Sociolinguistics), and
Linguistic resources (linguistic capital) have symbolic value.

These factors are dynamically interacting. The spatial conditions affect the turn-taking and clarity, whereas the linguistic capital shapes the code-switching strategies. Interaction moves are directed by sequential bargaining structures and are then contextualization using contextualization cues inherent in multilingual speech. By combining these frames, it is possible to perform a layered analysis to get into the complexity of bargaining as a lived, situated and socially consequential practice in the Pakistani urban marketplaces.

4. Methodology

4.1. Research Design

The current research design is a qualitative research design to investigate the price negotiation in Pakistani urban street markets. The research is based on a metro-linguistic orientation and considers language as a situational and flexible resource that is influenced by urban conditions, mobility, and social interaction. In order to describe the fine-grained organization of bargaining encounters, the analysis relies on Conversation Analysis (CA) and interaction Sociolinguistics, which allow paying close attention to turn-taking, sequential organization, and contextual meaning-making in naturally occurring interaction. It is a descriptive

and interaction-oriented study that seeks to record the process of mobilization of linguistic resources in the daily commercial interactions.

4.2. Data and Sample

The data used in this research are the price negotiation interactions between vendors and customers in the urban street markets in Pakistan that occur naturally. The participants are market vendors and customers who are involved in regular bargaining. These interactions occur in open-market, informal environments that are characterized by high foot traffic, ambient noise and social diversity. No personal data was gathered and the participants are identified by anonymize labels to ensure confidentiality.

4.3. Data Size

The sample size is 42 documented bargaining episodes, which were obtained in various market environments. The length of personal contacts depends on the character of the negotiation, and it can be short-term contacts or long-term bargaining. The sample is rich enough in terms of interaction to determine the recurring linguistic and sequential patterns and to permit variation among the participants and contexts.

4.4. Data Sources

The data were gathered using audio recordings and field observations in some of the urban street markets. The videos record natural interactions in price negotiations in markets that sell daily products like clothing, vegetables, and household products. The data were collected within a specified time to provide contextual consistency. To supplement audio data, field notes were utilized to record aspects of the environment that might affect interaction like crowd density, background noise, and spatial arrangements.

4.5. Analytical / Estimation Methods.

The interactions were transcribed selectively according to the conventions that are generally applied in Conversation Analysis, and the focus was on turn-taking, pauses, overlaps, emphasis, and code-switching. The analysis was done in a number of steps. To begin with, bargaining sequences were recognized and divided. Second, the repetitive interaction strategies, including anchoring, counter-offers, humour, politeness markers, and staged withdrawal were discussed in terms of their sequential positioning. Third, the language choice and code-switching were examined to identify the strategic deployment of multilingual resources. During the analysis, interaction patterns were understood within the context of their immediate conversation and the wider urban environment.

4.6. Definition and description of variables.

To facilitate analysis, a number of important variables were operationally defined. Linguistic resources are the languages and varieties used in interactions, such as Urdu, Punjabi, English, and other local forms. Communicative practices that are part of interaction strategies are anchoring, counter-offers, humour, politeness expressions, address terms, and withdrawal moves. Contextual variables include situational factors which include the density of crowds, ambient noise, perceived social distance and spatial proximity. Negotiation outcome is the acceptance, rejection or renegotiation of a price in the interaction.

4.7. Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues were monitored during the research. The data were gathered in open market environments where interactions are publicly available, and no personal identifiers were taken. The anonymity of the participants was ensured by using pseudonyms and descriptive labels. The research was conducted in accordance with ethical standards of qualitative research of naturally occurring interaction.

4.8. Operational Definitions and Delimitation

4.8.1. Operational Definitions

In order to be analytically clear, the important terms in this study are operational. A bargaining episode is a natural phenomenon where a customer and a vendor negotiate the price of a product or service, starting with the opening price request and ending with a mutually agreed price or the end of the interaction. Linguistic strategy refers to any conscious or habitual

communicative action, such as anchoring, counter-offers, humour, politeness markers, and staged withdrawal, which is employed in order to control the course of negotiation. Code-switching refers to the use of two or more languages or varieties during one interaction, whether pragmatically, effectively or strategically. Such terms as kinship-like or honorific terms like *baji*, *bhai*, *ustaad*, or *boss* are used to address and indicate relational position and help to manage social distance. A successful concession is any situation where one party alters the price offered to the other based on the communicative strategies of the other party.

4.8.2. Delimitation

This paper is specifically concerned with street markets in a large Pakistani metropolitan city, and thus does not involve data on rural markets, shopping malls, or fixed-price retail settings. The discussion is restricted to in-person interactions and fails to consider the online bargaining practices. Moreover, although the research involves multilingual interactions, it focuses on Urdu, Punjabi, and English since they are common in the chosen locations. The results are not supposed to be a reflection of all the linguistic behaviors in Pakistan, but are meant to provide an understanding of the bargaining behaviors in similar urban business environments.

5. Analysis and Findings

This part offers the results of the research by analyzing the language practices that organized the bargaining relationships observed in the Pakistani urban street markets. It combines Conversation Analysis (CA) with the analysis of sequential organization and interaction Sociolinguistics with the interpretation of contextualization cues, code-switching, address terms, and stance-taking devices. There are four exemplary passages of the corpus that depict major interaction strategies. The section ends with a short quantitative summary, which points to the general trends in the data.

5.1. Overview of the Corpus

The last corpus was comprised of 42 recorded bargaining episodes, two to nine minutes long, and 12 brief interviews with vendors and customers. The interactions were gathered in clothing stalls, mobile accessories stands, and street food vendors. Most of the exchanges were in Urdu, with a lot of switching to Punjabi and some to English. Most of the interactions were made at the time of the evening peak hours when the noise levels and the crowd density were maximum. These environmental conditions affected turn-taking and tended to result in overlaps, compressed utterances and more use of non-verbal cues. It consists of several segments which are sequentially arranged and anchored. The initial passage shows how bargaining is usually structured in a sequential manner, starting with the anchoring move of the vendor:

Excerpt 1: Clothing Stall

Vendor: Ji *baji*, yeh 2,200 ka hai.

Customer: Na, nahi *bhai* itna mehnga ni 1,200 laga dein.

Vendor: 2,200 toh bilkul final hai. Dekhain quality bhi achi hai.

Customer: Fine quality lekin, budget nahi he 1,500 kar dein.

Anchoring can be seen in the first high price (2,200) of the vendor, which sets the maximum limit of negotiation. The customer responds with a much lower offer, which is the anticipated asymmetry of bargaining sequences. CA demonstrates that the two participants have short, clipped turns, which means that they are efficient in a crowded environment. The vendor appeals to the quality of the product to maintain the anchor, and the customer appeals to budgetary constraints- a typical justification strategy. The anchoring was found in all 42 interactions, which proves that it is universal as an opening move in Pakistani street markets. The anchor was often defended by the vendors with references to longevity, fashion or origin ("imported piece" or fresh stock) and defended by the customers with references to financial prudence or competition (next shop had it cheaper).

The following passage is an excerpt of the book, which discusses code-switching as a strategic resource.

The code-switching became one of the key linguistic strategies, frequently employed to mark the stance or indicate the negotiation footing changes. The passage below illustrates the use of English as a symbolic resource:

Mobile Accessories Stall: Excerpt 2

Vendor: Boss, Yeh original quality hai. Very good piece. Waterproof bhi hai.

Customer: Original? But too high a price. 800 theek. Vendor: No, no finishing dekhien , top-notch! 1,300 final. Customer: Oh! ho ya to local he , 800 se zyada ka nahi he .

In this case, the English terms like original, very good piece, and premium quality present the picture of technological credibility and quality enhancement. The vendor uses English during the decisive moments of establishing the value of the product, which is in line with the Bourdieu concept of linguistic capital. The customer, in his turn, revolts against the symbolic elevation returning to Urdu, which makes the interaction based on the local evaluative norms. This inversion of the situation creates the effect of the interaction tension: English raises the price, and Urdu is the possibility of negotiation in the frames of the known socioeconomic situations.

Vendors have spoken English in 31 of 42 of the interactions, mostly at product description or key persuasive turns. English was much less commonly used by customers (only 9 times were noted), and was usually used to dispute overstated statements or ridicule exaggerated prices.

5.2. Politeness, Address Terms, and Social Positioning- Excerpt 3

The address terms were also discovered to be very instrumental in determining relational stance. An example of how honorific and kinship-like terms can be used to smooth out disagreement is as follows:

Excerpt 3: Footwear Stall

Customer: Bhai, yeh chappal achi lag rahi hai, but rate acha dein.

Reprobate: Baji, kam rate kaise doon? Pehle hi sasta laga diya hai.

Customer: Ohh, 1,000 hi kar dein, hamesha aap ki shop se leti rahi hun.

The repetition of the bhai index by the customer creates familiarity and alleviates the face threat of lowering the price. The vendor returns with baji, which means respect and relationship intimacy, despite holding the quoted price. These address terms serve as contextualization signals that put the interaction in a friendly context and not an adversarial one.

Address terms were used in 38 out of 42 interactions, which is almost ubiquitous. Their presence tended to be associated with less confrontational negotiation processes, less confrontation and more chances of concession. Such terms, according to the vendors interviewed, are said to keep the mood light and make the customers feel at ease, which supports their practical purpose.

5.3. Excerpt 4: Joking, Mimicking, and Faking Retirement

Humour proved to be a very useful tactic in changing the balance of negotiation, which resulted in compromises. There is the following example:

Excerpt 4: Accessories Stall

Customer: Bhai, 300 ka hi de dein. Ziada mat sochain.

Vendor: (Laughing) (empire) aap ke de dein toh meri dukaan toh band hojaye gi!

Customer: Chalo phir 350 kar dein, dukaan bhi chalti rahe and my budget bhi.

Vendor: Theek hai, 350 de dein

The humour in this case relieves the possible tension and re-frames the interaction as a fun game instead of a strict negotiation. The hyperbolic reaction of the vendor (my shop will close) encourages a humorous tone from the customer in response, which builds rapport. The ultimate compromise is packaged as a gesture of goodwill and not a defeat in the transaction.

Humour was used in 24 out of 42 interactions, and it was mostly used in the middle stages of negotiations when first offers were not working. It was highly associated with concession-making, particularly in the case of younger vendors or customers.

5.4. Effect of Market Soundscape on Turn-taking

Turn-taking was influenced by crowded market environments in significant aspects. Ambient noise levels were high, leading to:

Increased overlaps
Shortened turns
Raised volume
Repeated lexical items
Dependence on pointing, gestures and handling of objects.

The condition of the physical environment proved the influence of the linguistic performance by the participants, repeating price figures several times in 19 interactions as a result of auditory interference. Sellers tended to expect noise disturbances by anticipating them by increasing volume or exaggerated prosody (do hazaar ka!).

CA found that noisy environments cut off the negotiation sequences, driving the participants to faster resolutions.

Table 1: Quantitative Summary

A brief summary of coded strategies across the corpus is provided below:

Anchoring	42	Universal opening move
Code-switching by vendors	31	Often English; tied to value assertion
Code-switching by customers	9	Usually resistance or challenge
Address terms	38	Strong rapport-building function
Humor/teasing	24	Correlates with concessions
Staged withdrawal	17	Customers exiting or pretending to exit
Budget justification	29	Common customer strategy
Product quality justification	33	Common vendor strategy

These frequencies demonstrate that bargaining is a patterned interaction practice shaped by culturally embedded routines, strategic multilingualism, and the spatial demands of urban markets.

5.5. Summary of Findings

- The analysis shows that bargaining in Pakistani street markets is a linguistically diversified practice, which is preconditioned by:
 - serial structures that are foreseeable.
 - strategic code-switching
 - address terms and politeness relational work.
 - Humour as a negotiating accelerator.
 - Environmental pressures determine turn-taking.
 - The discursive power of the English in pricing.
 - These findings are a direct response to the research questions and the basis of the interpretive discussion that ensues.

5.6. Results

This part gives the empirical results of the analysis of 42 naturally occurring price negotiation episodes observed in Pakistani urban street markets. The findings are structured around the common patterns of interaction that are found throughout the data, such as bargaining strategies, language choice and code-switching, politeness practices, and negotiation outcomes. The results are described in a descriptive manner, and tables are employed to generalize trends in interactions.

5.7. Interactions and Bargaining Strategies

The data analysis showed that there were various repetitive interaction strategies used by vendors and customers in price negotiation. These strategies were found in comparatively stable sequential positions in interactions. Anchoring was the most common strategy in which one of the parties presented an opening price to frame the negotiation. Counter-offers were frequent and usually came in quick succession. Strategic humour and light teasing were used to soften refusals or face threats, and staged withdrawal (where customers indicated their intention to leave) was used to coerce vendors into lowering their prices.

Table 1: Frequency of Interactions and Bargaining Strategies

Strategy	Occurrence
Anchoring	High
Counter-offers	High
Humour / Teasing	Moderate
Politeness markers	Moderate
Staged withdrawal	Low–Moderate

Source: Author's field data

5.8. Language Choice and Code-Switching Patterns

The selection of language in bargaining interactions showed that there was flexibility and strategic use of multilingual resources. Urdu was the language of interaction, especially in the early interactions. Punjabi and other regional languages were often used to create familiarity or solidarity particularly among participants that were perceived to have a regional or social background. The code-switching between Urdu and English was noted to be mostly in the case of price justification and evaluative commentary where English lexical terms were employed to index product quality, modernity, or authority. These switches were not arbitrary but were at certain points in the negotiation chain.

Table 2: Language Use and Code-Switching in Bargaining Interactions

Language Practice	Observed Pattern
Urdu	Dominant
Punjabi / Regional language	Contextual
Urdu–English code-switching	Strategic

5.9. Politeness and Address Terms

Address terms and politeness strategies were significant in determining the bargaining interaction. Kinship terms and honorifics were often used by customers to decrease the distance between them, and vendors used respectful address forms to keep the customers interested. Markers of politeness were frequently exaggerated during times of disagreement or price rejection, and served to reduce the possible conflict. Address terms were sensitive to perceived age, gender, and social status and seemed to affect the overall tone of negotiation, but not necessarily a particular price result.

Table 3: Use of Politeness Strategies and Address Terms

Feature	Observed Use
Honorifics	Frequent
Kinship terms	Moderate
Politeness markers	Frequent

Source: Author's field data

5.10. Negotiation Outcomes

The results of negotiations were different in all interactions, and the majority of bargaining situations led to either partial price decrease or acceptance of the first offer of the vendor. Effective negotiations did not only rely on the application of particular strategies but were a result of a mixture of linguistic options, timing of interaction, and situational conditions like the number of people in the crowd and time constraints.

Table 4: Outcomes of Bargaining Interactions

Outcome Type	Frequency
Price reduced	Moderate
Price maintained	High
Negotiation abandoned	Low

Source: Author's field data

6. Discussion

This section is an interpretation of the findings in the Results section, especially the patterns summarized in Tables 1-4. The discussion places these findings in the context of the current scholars on urban multilingualism, metro-linguistics, and interaction of negotiation practices, and how linguistic strategies, code-switching, and contextual influences determine the price negotiation outcomes in Pakistani street markets. Analyzing these findings in the context of the existing literature on bargaining discourse and multilingual interaction in urban contexts (Androutsopoulos, 2020; Auer, 2013; Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015), the discussion reveals both similarities with the existing literature on the topic and context-specific dynamics that arise due to informal commercial interactions in South Asia.

This research paper has demonstrated that the price negotiation process in the Pakistani urban street markets is not a simple economic exchange but a complex communicative process that is structured through patterned linguistic practice, multilingual repertoires and social relations of the urban public space. The discussion interprets the key findings in relation to the research questions and theoretical frameworks and demonstrates how bargaining may be considered the reflection of the bigger metro-linguistic environment of the metropolitan centers in Pakistan. The first theme of importance is the sequential form of bargaining. Anchoring, counter-offers, justification and staged withdrawal were observed throughout the corpus, and it can be assumed that bargaining has a familiar interaction script. This tendency is in line with the Conversation Analysis, which dwells upon the systematic organization of interaction. These stages are predictable, and this allows the vendors and customers to anticipate the actions and align their strategies to them. One such area is anchoring that sets the limits within which the negotiation process takes place, and justification that gives the moral or economic justification that is needed to maintain or to denounce the boundaries. These tendencies underline the idea that bargaining is not just a socially acceptable process but an interaction performance, which is informed by the expectations of both parties.

The second theme is the strategic use of code-switching. The data showed that vendors tended to speak English when they were forced to claim the value or credibility of the products. The English in this instance is a linguistic capital in Bourdieuan terms, which enables the vendors to align their products with prestige, modernity, or authenticity. The discriminating nature of the English used by the customers, which is typically in opposition or confrontation, proves that code-switching is not only reactive but a deliberate instrument of redefining the power relations. These changes can be interpreted in terms of interaction Sociolinguistics as they are reflective of stance: English is the language of authority or expertise, Urdu and Punjabi are the languages of solidarity, informality or scepticism. These findings prove the view that multilingualism in urban Pakistan is not incidental, but very strategic. The third theme is related to politeness strategies and address terms, which were nearly everywhere in the interactions. Relational cues such as *bhai*, *baji*, *ustaad* and *boss* were used, and they regulated the social distance and minimized the face threats. Their application is similar to the politeness theory of Brown and Levinson, which says that speakers use relational markers to save face during a potentially confrontational interaction. This kind of relational labour is required in the hectic, typically stressful environment of street markets. The frequency of the use of the terms resembling kinship is also high, which also points to the South Asian standards of interaction when the social harmony is provided by the verbal signs of familiarity and respect. These findings indicate that the linguistic forms that appear to be normal possess much pragmatic worth during the negotiation process.

The other significant conclusion is the use of humour and teasing in making concessions. Humour re-packaged the negotiation as an interactive play, even a playful game, which down-emphasized the importance of the conflict and minimized the stress of the opposite. Vendors were inclined to dilute refusals by amusing exaggeration and to make their prices affordable and customers were inclined to question exaggerated statements. This can be compared with the works of affective stance taking in urban discourse where humour is used as a means of tension management and preservation of interpersonal contact. Performative process of bargaining is also highlighted with the help of humour: the parties are not merely bargaining about prices, but are playing the roles that perpetuate the social order of the marketplace. The paper has also discovered the influence of urban soundscapes on turn taking. Noise, compression of markets in terms of movement and space affected interaction pacing whereby participants made shorter turns, repetitive phrases and high volume. These adaptations demonstrate that the linguistic form and structure is strained by the physical environment. metro-linguistics provides a

pragmatic approach to the explanation of these findings because it is concerned with the role of urban conditions on communicative behaviour. The interaction is not only accompanied by the crowded environment, but it is in fact, an organization of the environment, forcing the speakers to modify their strategies in response to the environmental constraints.

When put together, these findings show that bargaining in Pakistani street markets is a socially and linguistically complex activity that is predetermined by the patterned interaction, strategic multilingualism, relational work and spatial pressures. The study contributes to the existing body of knowledge in that it demonstrates the intersection of these aspects in a single communicative event. It is also involved in the more general sociolinguistics literature both in the accentuation of the interaction complexity of the everyday commercial transactions, and in the demonstration of the mobilization of linguistic resources in response to the pressures of the urban environment. It also fills a severe gap in the metro-linguistic research of South Asia that has largely overlooked informal commercial situations even though they are very popular in the urban culture. Finally, the findings have implications beyond the academic research. They underline the flexibility and creativity of the speakers of the everyday language, who navigate their path through the diverse linguistic resources and environmental needs with a phenomenal nimbleness. They also highlight the significance of the street markets as the point of the intersection of linguistic capital, cultural norms, and economic practices. The dynamics that are observed can be applied in future research on multilingualism, urban communication and linguistic features of economic behaviour.

6.1. Limitations

Although this study provides certain valuable data regarding the linguistic behaviour that characterizes price negotiation in Pakistani urban street markets, several limitations should be identified so that the findings can be put into perspective.

One, the study is based on a qualitative corpus, which embodies a single metropolitan area, which restricts the geographical scope of the results. The interaction patterns in other cities might not be the same as those in the market, particularly those that have a different language make-up or commercial organization. The findings can therefore be considered as being representative of such urban environments and not all Pakistani markets.

Second, the researcher could have influenced the behaviour of the participants in the public market settings in a subtle manner, even though the observer effects were minimized by recording the events discreetly and establishing rapport with them. Certain vendors or customers might have changed their speech, evaded some phrases, or even reduced interaction time because of increased awareness of being recorded.

Third, the research is based on audio information, which is more detailed in linguistic terms but cannot explain non-verbal resources (gestures, position, or space) that are especially important in crowded markets. Although short field notes were used to complement the recordings, the lack of video information restricts the analysis of embodied interaction.

Fourth, descriptive frequency counts give an overview of the recurring strategies but do not make statistical generalizations. These counts are interpretive as opposed to predictive or inferential.

Lastly, the data lacks online bargaining activities, new hybrid marketplaces, and female-only commercial areas, which can potentially provide different metro-linguistic dynamics.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper discussed the linguistic resources which organize price negotiation in Pakistani urban street markets and how vendors and customers use multilingual repertoires, routines of interaction and contextual information to shape negotiation. The study, based on a metro-linguistic perspective, with the help of Conversation Analysis and Interaction Sociolinguistics, proved that bargaining is not an economic exchange but a socially significant communicative act, which is conditioned by the pressures and opportunities of urban life.

The results show that negotiations have a familiar sequential pattern that is characterized by anchoring, counter-offers, justification and progressive withdrawal. Throughout these phases, participants use speech forms that are strategically overlaid, i.e. code-switching, humour, address terms and politeness markers, to establish rapport, negotiate authority and construct concession trajectories. English is a common linguistic capital, and it is mostly employed by vendors to increase the value of the products, whereas Urdu and Punjabi are employed to base the interaction on familiarity. The market environment was also identified as a critical factor in the analysis, as ambient noise and the density of the crowd affect turn-taking and require adaptive communicative behaviour. In general, the research adds to the knowledge about urban multilingualism by placing the bargaining in more general metro-linguistic processes. It highlights the innovative flexibility of everyday speakers and the significance of informal commercial places as the place of linguistic negotiation and identity work.

7.1. Policy Recommendations

According to the results of this research, number of policy-related considerations can be identified. Urban planning and market regulation authorities can gain by acknowledging street markets as linguistically and socially complex spaces, as opposed to informal economic locations. The communicative practices that form the basis of price negotiation and customer-vendor relationships should be considered in policies that seek to regulate or formalize street markets. Second, programs associated with vocational training and small-scale entrepreneurship can include the basic communication awareness, especially in terms of multilingual interaction and politeness strategies, to facilitate more efficient market interaction. Lastly, language-sensitive strategies in urban governance can be used to make the informal commercial spaces more inclusive and culturally responsive.

7.2. Theoretical Implications

The research has a theoretical contribution to the field of metro-linguistics and interaction sociolinguistics in that it shows how price negotiation in street markets of urban areas is a structured and yet adaptive communicative activity. The combination of Conversation Analysis and a metro-linguistic approach to the issue enables the study to demonstrate how multilingual resources, interaction strategies and environmental pressures interact to form everyday economic interaction. The results build on the current body of research on urban multilingualism by preempting informal commercial interactions as important arenas of linguistic negotiation, thus contributing to the body of knowledge on the functioning of language in the context of urban density and economic urgency.

7.3. Practical Implications

Practically, the results emphasize the need to be linguistically sensitive when interacting in the market. The knowledge of the role of language choice, politeness strategies, and interaction timing in negotiation outcomes can be useful to both vendors and customers who work in multilingual urban settings. The study also informs researchers and practitioners who might be interested in documenting and analyzing informal economic interactions, which suggests that close observation of naturally occurring talk can give information about patterns that can be used in communication training, community engagement, and urban social research.

7.4. Future Research Recommendations

Future research can be enhanced by increasing the geographical area to cover markets in other Pakistani cities that have diverse linguistic ecology. Video data may be included in the analysis to add to the analysis by capturing gesture, gaze, and spatial alignment. The comparison of physical and digital bargaining settings can also provide information on the change of communicative strategies between modalities. Lastly, the analysis of gender-specific or women-only marketplaces would further enhance the knowledge of the variation of linguistic practices in terms of social and cultural contexts.

References

- Abaka, E. (2023). Graffiti as urban discourse: Multilingual practices and sociopolitical expression in Middle Eastern cities. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 27(3), 412–430.
- Androutsopoulos, J. (2020). Repertoires, registers, and urban semiotics.
- Auer, P. (2013). *Code-switching in conversation: Language, interaction and identity*. Routledge.
- Hosseini, A., & Kowkabi, L. (2023). Measuring the soundscape quality in urban spaces: a case study of historic urban area. *Sustainability*, 15(5), 4255.

- Pennycook, A., & Otsuji, E. (2015). *Metrolingualism: Language in the city*. Routledge.
- Zhang, L., & Gregory, J. J. . (2024). Urban soundscapes and social interaction: ethnographic perspectives on noise and sociability. *Urban Studies*, 61(9), 1782-1803.