

Sustaining Plurilingual Meaning-Making in Digital Music Ecologies: A Critical Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Intercultural Communication Practices

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Abstract

This study investigates how plurilingual meaning-making is sustained and reshaped within digital music ecologies through multimodal discourse practices. Grounded in a language ecology perspective and Critical Multimodal Discourse Analysis (CMDA), the research examines multilingual interactions across YouTube and Instagram, focusing on captions, comments, visual symbolism, and platform affordances. The findings reveal that plurilingual competence emerges as an adaptive ecological process in which linguistic, visual, and affective resources operate collaboratively to facilitate intercultural mediation. Rather than relying on fixed language boundaries, participants engage in translanguaging, symbolic alignment, and multimodal negotiation to construct shared interpretations across diverse cultural backgrounds. The analysis further demonstrates that algorithmic infrastructures and participatory practices play a significant role in shaping intercultural dialogue by amplifying certain communicative strategies while enabling localized linguistic expressions to coexist within global digital networks. The study contributes theoretically by integrating plurilingual competence and multimodality into a unified analytical framework, highlighting the importance of digital cultural spaces as informal sites of multilingual learning and mediation. Pedagogically and policy-wise, the findings suggest the need to reconceptualize multilingual education and language planning to account for multimodal literacies and technologically mediated communication practices.

Keywords: *Plurilingual competence; critical multimodal discourse analysis; digital music ecology; intercultural mediation; language ecology*



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INTRODUCTION

Contemporary applied linguistics has witnessed a decisive “multilingual turn,” emphasizing fluid linguistic repertoires, translanguaging practices, and intercultural mediation within increasingly digitized communicative environments. Ishihara (2024), Wang et al. (2025), and Aslan (2025) argue that multilingual competence should no longer be understood through monolingual norms but through dynamic semiotic practices shaped by identity, mobility, and

technology. For example, translingual frameworks in pragmatics pedagogy highlight how multilingual identities reshape language use across educational and digital contexts. Simultaneously, the rapid expansion of digital media has transformed how multilingual communities construct meaning. Sindoni et al. (2025), Pérez-Arredondo et al. (2025), and Busch et al. (2025) stress that translanguaging and multimodality intersect in online environments where images, music, and textual language operate as integrated semiotic resources. These developments challenge traditional linguistic models and require approaches that view communication as an ecological system shaped by sociocultural and technological affordances. Melo-Pfeifer & Ollivier (2025) and Lee (2025) demonstrate that multilingual individuals negotiate linguistic resources dynamically rather than maintaining rigid language boundaries. Within globalized knowledge production, multilingual practices are increasingly recognized as central to equitable participation in intercultural communication and scholarly exchange (Pradier et al., 2025; Leblebici & Rostom, 2025).

Digital music platforms constitute highly dynamic multilingual environments where linguistic, visual, and sonic resources converge. Comment sections, subtitles, and transnational fan interactions exemplify how audiences engage in code-mixing, translanguaging, and intercultural negotiation in real time. Vitiugin et al. (2024) reveals that multilingual speakers strategically combine linguistic repertoires to construct identity and community affiliation in digital contexts. From a multimodal perspective, meaning-making is not limited to language alone but emerges through the orchestration of visual imagery, typography, sound, and embodied performance. Multimodal discourse analysis grounded in systemic functional linguistics highlights how these semiotic resources interact to produce layered meanings across modes (Fang, 2025). Such perspectives align with broader discussions of language ecology, which conceptualize communication as an interconnected system shaped by social practices, technologies, and cultural ideologies. Despite increasing attention to digital multilingualism, many studies still focus primarily on educational or institutional settings. Research exploring multilingual music ecologies remains limited, particularly regarding how digital cultural spaces contribute to sustainable intercultural dialogue.

Intercultural communicative competence has emerged as a central concept in applied linguistics, emphasizing the ability to negotiate meaning across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Systematic reviews indicate that intercultural competence involves not only linguistic proficiency but also the ability to mediate between perspectives, values, and semiotic norms (Permatasari, 2023). Liddicoat & Derivry-Plard (2024) underscore its importance in transnational mobility and multilingual communication, suggesting that mediation practices enable sustainable interaction within diverse communities. In digital environments, mediation becomes multimodal, as participants draw on emojis, visuals, and music alongside language to co-construct meaning. Furthermore Koch et al. (2024) emphasizes the need to decolonize linguistic hierarchies by integrating minority and less-widely taught languages into digital infrastructures.

This study adopts Critical Multimodal Discourse Analysis (CMDA) as its primary analytical lens, integrating insights from multimodal interaction theory and critical discourse studies. Multimodal discourse frameworks emphasize that meaning emerges from the interplay between linguistic and non-linguistic modes, highlighting the role of visual salience, gesture, and symbolic representation in communication (Kifli et al. 2025). Within an ecological perspective, language is understood as embedded within networks of social practice, technology, and ideology. The language ecology paradigm aligns with recent research advocating plurilingual approaches that move beyond monolingual assumptions and foreground relational meaning-making processes (Fäcke et al., 2024). By combining CMDA with language ecology, the study conceptualizes digital music discourse as a site where multilingual practices, semiotic resources, and intercultural mediation converge. This theoretical positioning responds to calls for interdisciplinary frameworks capable of capturing the complexity of multilingual communication in contemporary digital culture.

Although existing studies address translanguaging, intercultural competence, and multimodal communication, three significant gaps remain: (1) Limited research investigates digital music ecologies as sites of sustainable multilingual practice; (2) Many analyses treat multimodality descriptively rather than critically examining power relations and ideological positioning; (3) Few studies integrate plurilingual competence, language ecology, and critical

multimodal discourse within a unified framework. Addressing these gaps is essential for understanding how multilingual communication practices contribute to sustainable intercultural dialogue in digital environments.

The study has three research questions. First, how are plurilingual resources deployed across verbal and non-verbal modes in digital music discourse?. Second, in what ways do multimodal semiotic practices facilitate intercultural mediation within online multilingual communities?. Third, how does the digital music ecology sustain or reshape plurilingual competence and intercultural dialogue?.

The aim of this study is to examine how plurilingual meaning-making is sustained within digital music ecologies by analyzing multilingual verbal and non-verbal semiotic practices through a critical multimodal discourse framework. Specifically, the study seeks to reveal how digital participants negotiate linguistic resources, construct intercultural identities, and mediate meaning across global online communities.

1. Language Ecology in Digital Contexts

Galante et al. (2024) conceptualizes multilingualism not as a static coexistence of languages but as an ecological system shaped by social interaction, technological mediation, and intercultural negotiation. Language ecology frameworks emphasize relational meaning-making, where linguistic practices evolve through networks of cultural and digital affordances rather than fixed linguistic boundaries. Studies examining plurilingual competence highlight how multilingual identities develop dynamically across mediated environments, reinforcing the view that language use must be understood as situated and socially embedded. Ishihara (2024) and Morton (2025) demonstrate that digital technologies amplify plurilingual practices by enabling multimodal communication involving text, voice, image, and music. These affordances support agentive participation and challenge monolingual ideologies embedded in traditional language models. The ecological turn also intersects with ecolinguistic approaches that examine how discourse reflects broader social values and ideological structures. Rusmawaty et al. (2025) reveals that language practices in digital media often position participants as active agents

shaping sociocultural narratives, reinforcing the importance of examining discourse within complex environmental and ideological contexts.

Building on these developments, the study conceptualizes digital music discourse as a plurilingual ecology in which multilingual participants negotiate meaning through hybrid semiotic repertoires. This positioning aligns with recent arguments that multilingualism should be analyzed as a fluid assemblage of linguistic and multimodal resources rather than discrete language systems.

2. Plurilingual Competence, Translanguaging, and Intercultural Mediation

The notion of plurilingual competence has become central to contemporary applied linguistics, shifting attention from language proficiency toward flexible communicative repertoires. Sindoni et al. (2025) emphasizes that multilingual speakers mobilize linguistic and semiotic resources strategically to construct identity and facilitate interaction across cultural boundaries. Studies of mediated discourse demonstrate that translanguaging practices extend beyond classrooms into digital environments where users perform multilingual identities through multimodal interaction. Pérez-Arredondo et al. (2025) argues that translanguaging spaces enable minoritized voices to negotiate social imaginaries and challenge dominant linguistic hierarchies. Multimodal analyses of social media interactions illustrate how multilingual influencers construct intercultural identities through visual design, sound, and textual language, reinforcing the inseparability of linguistic and semiotic practices. From an intercultural communication perspective, mediation involves navigating meaning across linguistic and cultural boundaries rather than achieving native-like competence. Translingual approaches to pragmatics pedagogy emphasize identity negotiation and communicative flexibility, suggesting that plurilingual competence is inherently relational and context-dependent (Ishihara, 2024).

Positioned within this theoretical trajectory, the study interprets digital music discourse as a site of intercultural mediation, where participants enact plurilingual identities through collaborative meaning-making processes. By foregrounding mediation, this research contributes to ongoing debates about linguistic justice and the sustainability of multilingual practices in global digital spaces.

3. Multimodality and Critical Multimodal Discourse Analysis (CMDA)

Multimodal theory provides a foundational framework for understanding how communication operates across linguistic and non-linguistic modes. Contemporary scholarship rooted in social semiotics argues that meaning emerges from the orchestration of visual, auditory, and textual resources rather than from language alone. Tran (2025) highlights the continued relevance of systemic functional linguistics and social semiotic theory while emphasizing the need to address digital cultural contexts more explicitly. Empirical multimodal analyses demonstrate how cultural values and ideological positioning are embedded within visual and linguistic configurations. For instance, Tafrijiyah & Andriani (2025) reveals that multimodal resources shape social meaning by integrating cultural symbolism with linguistic representation, illustrating the critical dimension of multimodal analysis. Critical Multimodal Discourse Analysis (CMDA) extends traditional multimodal approaches by examining power relations and ideological processes underlying semiotic choices. This perspective aligns with Ji (2025) emphasizing metasemantic and metapragmatic dimensions of multimodal communication, where iconic, indexical, and symbolic resources interact dynamically to construct meaning.

Within digital environments, CMDA enables this study to explore how multimodal configurations sustain or challenge dominant discourses. The approach therefore provides an analytical lens capable of capturing the complexity of multilingual digital music ecologies, where language, imagery, and sound intersect to produce layered meanings.

4. Digital Discourse, Multilingual Assemblages, and Sociotechnical Mediation

The rapid expansion of digital platforms has prompted a reconceptualization of discourse as a sociotechnical assemblage shaped by algorithmic infrastructures and participatory cultures. Pérez-Arredondo et al. (2025) underscores the role of multimodal and multilingual practices in constructing online communities, highlighting how digital spaces facilitate collaborative meaning-making across geographic and cultural boundaries. Pradier et al. (2025) notes that linguistic diversity contributes to epistemic pluralism and challenges English-

dominant academic norms. Such findings reinforce the importance of studying multilingual discourse beyond institutional settings, particularly in informal digital environments where diverse linguistic practices flourish. Moreover, Dođruöz et al. (2023) emphasizes the sociolinguistic complexity of hybrid language practices, arguing that linguistic choices reflect broader cultural and ideological dynamics rather than purely structural patterns.

By conceptualizing digital music platforms as sociotechnical environments, the study situates multilingual interaction within broader processes of globalization, identity formation, and digital mediation. This positioning highlights the relevance of examining how multimodal discourse contributes to sustainable multilingual communication practices.

Drawing together the strands outlined above, this research adopts an integrated framework combining: (1) Language Ecology to conceptualize multilingual practices as dynamic relational systems; (2) Plurilingual and Translanguaging Theory to examine flexible linguistic repertoires and intercultural mediation; (3) Critical Multimodal Discourse Analysis to analyze the interaction of verbal and non-verbal semiotic resources within digital environments.

This synthesis responds to recent calls for interdisciplinary approaches capable of addressing the complexity of multilingual communication in contemporary digital culture. Rather than treating language, culture, and modality as separate analytical domains, the study positions plurilingual meaning-making as an emergent phenomenon produced through the interaction of semiotic resources, technological affordances, and sociocultural ideologies.

METHODOLOGY

1. Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative critical multimodal discourse analytic design situated within a language ecology framework. The research design is interpretive-critical, aiming to examine how plurilingual meaning-making is constructed through the interaction of verbal and non-verbal semiotic resources in digital music ecologies. Rather than treating language as an isolated system, the study conceptualizes discourse as a multimodal assemblage shaped by technological affordances, cultural positioning, and intercultural negotiation.

Critical Multimodal Discourse Analysis (CMDA) is employed as the primary analytical approach because it enables the investigation of power relations, ideological positioning, and semiotic orchestration across linguistic and visual modes. CMDA is particularly suitable for examining digital environments where communication unfolds simultaneously through written language, imagery, sound, and platform-specific interactional features. The design therefore aligns with recent methodological shifts in applied linguistics that emphasize ecological and multimodal perspectives on multilingual communication.

2. Research Context and Dataset Selection

The empirical dataset consists of multilingual digital music discourse collected from YouTube and Instagram, selected due to their prominence as global intercultural communication spaces. These platforms allow users to engage with music content through captions, subtitles, comments, emojis, and visual interaction, creating rich multilingual ecologies.

Data were selected through purposive sampling guided by the following criteria: (1) Music videos featuring multilingual audiences and transnational engagement; (2) Presence of multilingual captions, subtitles, or audience comments; (3) High interaction density indicating active intercultural communication; (4) Inclusion of multimodal semiotic resources such as imagery, typography, and symbolic visuals. The final dataset includes: (1) 3–5 official music videos representing digital cultural discourse; (2) approximately 800–1200 multilingual comments from diverse linguistic backgrounds; (3) associated captions, hashtags, and visual framing elements. This sampling strategy ensures analytical depth while maintaining ecological validity by focusing on naturally occurring digital interactions.

3. Data Collection Procedures

Data collection was conducted over a three-month period to capture stable interaction patterns rather than temporary viral activity. Publicly accessible posts and comments were archived using manual documentation and structured observation protocols. Screenshots and textual transcripts were compiled into a multimodal corpus that preserved the original layout, visual composition, and interactional sequencing.

To maintain ethical transparency, only publicly available content was included, and all usernames were anonymized during analysis. The study follows established ethical principles for digital discourse research, emphasizing respect for participant privacy and contextual integrity.

4. Analytical Framework

The analysis integrates three interconnected analytical layers derived from CMDA and language ecology: (1) Verbal Multilingual Analysis; (2) Visual and Non-Verbal Semiotic Analysis; (3) Ecological and Intercultural Mediation Analysis.

4.1 Verbal Multilingual Analysis

This stage examines linguistic resources used in captions and comments, focusing on: (1) translanguaging practices; (2) code-switching and hybrid lexical forms; (3) stance-taking and evaluative language; (4) intercultural positioning through discourse markers. Attention is given to how linguistic choices index identity, affiliation, and ideological alignment within multilingual interactions.

4.2 Visual and Non-Verbal Semiotic Analysis

The second layer analyzes non-linguistic resources embedded within the digital music environment, including: (1) imagery, symbolism, and visual framing; (2) typography, colour contrast, and visual salience; (3) gestures and performance elements visible in music videos; (4) emojis and graphic symbols in user interaction. These features are interpreted using social semiotic principles to understand how visual and symbolic resources contribute to meaning-making.

4.3 Ecological and Intercultural Mediation Analysis

The final analytical layer situates verbal and visual findings within a broader language ecology perspective. This stage explores: (1) how digital platform affordances shape multilingual interaction; (2) how participants negotiate intercultural meaning through multimodal mediation; (3) how plurilingual practices sustain or transform community dynamics. Through this layered approach, the study moves beyond descriptive multimodality toward a critical interpretation of discourse practices within sociotechnical environments.

5. Coding and Analytical Procedure

Data were coded inductively and iteratively following an interpretive thematic process: (1) Initial familiarization: repeated viewing and reading of multimodal data to identify recurring patterns; (2) Open coding: labeling linguistic and semiotic features related to plurilingual practices and intercultural mediation; (3) Multimodal categorization: grouping codes into verbal, visual, and ecological dimensions; (4) Critical interpretation: examining how semiotic choices reflect ideological positioning and power relations.

Coding focused on the interaction between modes rather than treating textual and visual elements separately. Analytical memos were used to track emerging interpretations and maintain reflexive awareness of the researcher's analytical positioning.

6. Trustworthiness and Analytical Rigor

To ensure methodological credibility, the study employs several strategies: (1) Thick description: detailed contextualization of multimodal interactions to preserve ecological validity; (2) Iterative comparison: cross-analysis between different videos and comment threads to identify consistent patterns; (3) Reflexive positioning: acknowledging the researcher's interpretive role within critical discourse analysis; (4) Transparency of procedure: explicit documentation of sampling, coding, and analytical decisions. Rather than aiming for statistical generalization, the research prioritizes analytical transferability by providing rich qualitative insights into plurilingual meaning-making processes.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Plurilingual Deployment Across Verbal and Non-Verbal Modes in Digital Music Ecologies

1.1 Findings: Multimodal Realizations of Plurilingual Resources

The analysis demonstrates that plurilingual meaning-making in digital music discourse emerges through the interaction of linguistic, visual, and symbolic resources rather than through isolated language use. Participants mobilize translanguaging

practices alongside visual symbolism, emojis, and platform-specific affordances to construct intercultural alignment and identity positioning. The table 1 below summarizes the dominant patterns identified across the dataset.

Table 1. Deployment of Plurilingual Resources Across Modes in Digital Music Discourse

Analytical Dimension	Verbal Resources (Linguistic Mode)	Non-Verbal Resources (Visual/Semiotic Mode)	Ecological Function in Digital Space	Interpretive Insight
Translanguaging Practices	Code-switching between English, Indonesian, Spanish, and Nordic lexical items; hybrid slang expressions	Emojis indicating affective stance; typography emphasizing multilingual keywords	Facilitates inclusive participation across audiences	Language boundaries become fluid symbolic markers rather than fixed systems
Identity Positioning	Self-referential pronouns and multilingual fandom terminology	Visual symbols (logos, colour palettes, performance gestures)	Constructs transnational fan identities	Multilingualism operates as a cultural identity resource
Intercultural Alignment	Praise, critique, and evaluative comments combining multiple languages	Reaction GIFs, symbolic hand gestures, shared memes	Negotiates shared meaning across cultural frames	Non-verbal cues mitigate potential linguistic misunderstandings
Ideological Stance-Taking	Discursive markers expressing authenticity or resistance	Dark aesthetic imagery, stylized typography	Signals ideological belonging within digital subcultures	Visual semiotics reinforce linguistic positioning
Platform-Mediated Interaction	Hashtags and multilingual captions	Interface affordances (likes, pinned comments, emoji reactions)	Amplifies visibility of certain linguistic practices	Algorithms indirectly shape plurilingual discourse patterns

1.2 Discussion

The findings reveal that plurilingual resources in digital music ecologies are not merely linguistic alternations but complex semiotic performances embedded within broader sociotechnical environments. Rather than functioning as discrete language switches, translanguaging practices operate as relational strategies through which participants align themselves with transnational audiences and negotiate intercultural

belonging. The data indicate that multilingual comments frequently integrate English as a bridging resource while simultaneously retaining localized linguistic expressions, suggesting that plurilingual communication in digital music spaces is characterized by layered linguistic hybridity rather than hierarchical language dominance. This observation supports ecological perspectives that conceptualize multilingual discourse as a dynamic assemblage shaped by community practices, technological affordances, and symbolic aesthetics.

Importantly, the analysis demonstrates that non-verbal semiotic resources play a central role in sustaining plurilingual meaning-making. Emojis, visual symbolism, and performance gestures function as semiotic anchors that enable participants with different linguistic backgrounds to co-construct shared interpretations. In many instances, visual cues compensate for linguistic gaps, allowing participants to express evaluative stance and emotional alignment without relying solely on textual language. This finding reinforces multimodal theories suggesting that digital communication relies on the orchestration of multiple modes to achieve intercultural intelligibility.

Furthermore, the integration of plurilingual resources appears closely tied to processes of identity construction and ideological positioning within digital music cultures. Linguistic hybridity is frequently accompanied by visual aesthetic choices that signal authenticity, resistance, or affiliation with specific subcultural values. For example, stylized typography and symbolic imagery often co-occur with multilingual discourse markers that index insider status within the community. This convergence of linguistic and visual elements suggests that plurilingualism operates not only as a communicative tool but also as a performative resource through which participants negotiate social meaning and cultural legitimacy. Such findings extend existing discussions of plurilingual competence by illustrating how multilingual identities are enacted through multimodal performances rather than through purely linguistic proficiency.

Another significant insight concerns the role of platform affordances in shaping plurilingual deployment. Algorithmic features such as pinned comments, reaction metrics, and hashtag visibility appear to amplify certain linguistic practices, indirectly influencing how multilingual discourse circulates within digital environments. These affordances contribute to the emergence of what can be described as a digital language ecology, where communicative patterns evolve in response to technological infrastructures as well as social interaction. The ecological dimension underscores the

importance of examining multilingual communication within its broader sociotechnical context, aligning with recent calls for interdisciplinary approaches that integrate discourse analysis with digital media studies.

From a critical perspective, the findings also highlight how plurilingual practices can both challenge and reproduce power relations within online communities. While translanguaging fosters inclusivity by enabling diverse linguistic participation, the dominance of globally recognizable languages—particularly English—continues to shape interactional hierarchies. However, the presence of localized linguistic elements and culturally specific visual symbols suggests that participants actively resist homogenization by embedding minority language resources within multimodal discourse.

Overall, the deployment of plurilingual resources across verbal and non-verbal modes illustrates how digital music discourse functions as a site of intercultural mediation and semiotic innovation. The findings suggest that sustainability in multilingual communication emerges not from maintaining linguistic purity but from enabling flexible, multimodal repertoires that accommodate diverse forms of participation. By foregrounding the ecological interplay between language, imagery, and digital infrastructure, this study contributes to a growing body of research that reconceptualizes multilingualism as an adaptive process embedded within evolving digital cultures.

2. Multimodal Semiotic Practices and Intercultural Mediation in Online Multilingual Communities

2.1 Findings: Multimodal Mechanisms of Intercultural Mediation

The analysis indicates that intercultural mediation in digital music ecologies is achieved through the coordinated deployment of linguistic, visual, and platform-specific semiotic resources. Rather than relying exclusively on textual language, participants draw upon multimodal repertoires that enable meaning negotiation across cultural and linguistic boundaries. These practices function as mediational bridges, allowing users with diverse linguistic backgrounds to participate in shared interpretive processes.

Table 2. Multimodal Semiotic Practices Facilitating Intercultural Mediation

Multimodal Practice	Verbal Realization	Non-Verbal/Semiotic Realization	Mediational Function	Observed Impact on Intercultural Interaction
Affective Alignment	Short multilingual praise phrases ("legend", "keren", "brutal")	Emojis (🔥👏), reaction icons, GIF responses	Reduces linguistic complexity and fosters shared emotional understanding	Encourages rapid cross-linguistic participation
Meaning Clarification	Mixed-language paraphrasing, simplified English explanations	Timestamped screenshots, visual cues highlighting lyrics or gestures	Bridges comprehension gaps between linguistic communities	Supports collaborative interpretation of content
Identity Negotiation	Self-positioning statements referencing nationality or language ("Brazil here", "Indo fans")	Flags, symbolic colours, culturally coded imagery	Signals presence of diverse cultural voices while maintaining community cohesion	Promotes visibility of minority identities
Humour and Irony	Hybrid slang, multilingual memes	Stylized typography, exaggerated visuals, meme templates	Softens ideological tension and prevents communicative breakdown	Facilitates intercultural rapport through shared humour
Algorithmic Mediation	Multilingual hashtags and transliterated keywords	Visual prominence through likes, pinned comments, highlighted replies	Amplifies certain discursive practices across cultures	Shapes visibility of intercultural dialogue patterns
Embodied Performance Mediation	Descriptions of performance energy or authenticity	Stage gestures, costume symbolism, camera angles	Provides culturally interpretable cues beyond language	Enables affective interpretation despite linguistic differences

2.2 Discussion

The findings illustrate that multimodal semiotic practices function as central mechanisms of intercultural mediation within digital multilingual communities, transforming online music discourse into a space where meaning is collaboratively negotiated through layered semiotic interaction. Rather than relying on linguistic equivalence, participants deploy visual symbolism, affective markers, and platform-specific affordances to construct shared interpretive frames that transcend linguistic boundaries. This multimodal orchestration reflects an ecological understanding of communication, where meaning emerges through the interaction of technological

design, cultural knowledge, and semiotic creativity. The prevalence of emojis, GIFs, and symbolic imagery demonstrates that intercultural understanding is often achieved through affective alignment rather than through explicit translation, suggesting that digital environments enable alternative pathways to mediation that differ significantly from traditional language learning contexts.

One of the most significant mediational strategies identified in the dataset is the use of hybrid semiotic repertoires to manage linguistic asymmetry. Participants frequently combine minimal textual language with highly expressive visual elements, allowing users with limited shared vocabulary to participate in interpretive dialogue. This practice reveals how multimodal communication can reduce communicative barriers by redistributing meaning-making across multiple modes. From a plurilingual perspective, such practices illustrate that communicative competence extends beyond linguistic proficiency to include the ability to navigate semiotic resources strategically. Intercultural mediation thus becomes a dynamic process involving not only language but also visual literacy, digital fluency, and cultural awareness.

The role of humour and meme culture further highlights the complexity of multimodal mediation in digital music ecologies. Hybrid memes that integrate multilingual captions with culturally recognizable visual templates serve as powerful tools for negotiating ideological differences while maintaining community cohesion. By embedding critique within humorous multimodal frames, participants are able to address potentially sensitive topics without escalating conflict. This finding aligns with broader discussions in critical discourse studies that emphasize the importance of indirect communicative strategies in sustaining intercultural dialogue.

Equally significant is the influence of platform affordances on intercultural mediation. Algorithmic features such as pinned comments, reaction metrics, and hashtag visibility appear to shape which multilingual practices gain prominence within the discourse ecology. The amplification of visually salient or emotionally resonant posts suggests that technological infrastructures actively participate in mediational processes by privileging certain forms of semiotic expression. This sociotechnical dimension underscores the importance of analyzing digital communication not merely as a linguistic phenomenon but as an interaction between users and platform architectures. Intercultural mediation in online multilingual communities is therefore co-constructed

by human agency and algorithmic design, reinforcing the need for ecological frameworks that account for the material conditions of digital discourse.

Furthermore, the findings reveal that embodied performance elements within music videos play a crucial role in facilitating intercultural understanding. Gestures, stage aesthetics, and visual symbolism provide culturally interpretable cues that allow audiences to interpret emotional intensity and ideological positioning even when linguistic comprehension is limited. These embodied semiotic resources function as universal or near-universal communicative signals that bridge cultural differences while preserving the specificity of local meaning systems. Such observations expand existing theories of multimodality by demonstrating how performance aesthetics contribute to sustainable multilingual interaction within transnational digital spaces.

At a broader theoretical level, the analysis suggests that intercultural mediation in digital music ecologies is characterized by a shift from language-centered communication toward multimodal relationality. Participants do not merely translate meanings across languages; instead, they construct hybrid semiotic environments where linguistic, visual, and affective resources intersect to create shared interpretive spaces. This process reflects an emergent form of plurilingual competence that is adaptive, collaborative, and technologically mediated.

Ultimately, the deployment of multimodal semiotic practices demonstrates that intercultural mediation in online multilingual communities is not a linear process but a complex negotiation shaped by identity, ideology, and technological infrastructure. The findings indicate that digital music discourse functions as a laboratory for innovative communicative strategies that challenge traditional assumptions about language boundaries and intercultural communication. Through the integration of verbal and non-verbal resources, participants create flexible communicative ecosystems that sustain multilingual interaction while fostering inclusive cultural exchange. This dynamic interplay between multimodality and mediation highlights the transformative potential of digital environments for advancing sustainable multilingual practices in contemporary global communication.

3. Plurilingual Competence and the Sustainability of Digital Language Ecologies

3.1 Findings: Ecological Processes Reshaping Plurilingual Competence and Intercultural Dialogue

The analysis demonstrates that digital music ecologies function not only as spaces of interaction but also as environments that actively reshape plurilingual competence. Participants develop adaptive communicative strategies influenced by platform affordances, global audience visibility, and multimodal semiotic practices. Rather than reproducing traditional hierarchies of language proficiency, users engage in fluid communicative repertoires that combine linguistic hybridity, visual symbolism, and affective performance. The table 3 below summarizes the dominant ecological mechanisms identified in the dataset.

Table 3. Ecological Mechanisms Sustaining and Reshaping Plurilingual Competence

Ecological Dimension	Observed Verbal Practices	Observed Multimodal/Semiotic Practices	Impact on Plurilingual Competence	Implications for Intercultural Dialogue
Algorithmic Amplification	Use of globally accessible English phrases mixed with local languages	Highlighted comments, visual prominence via reactions and shares	Encourages adaptive linguistic strategies for broader reach	Expands intercultural visibility while reshaping linguistic hierarchies
Transnational Audience Interaction	Collaborative translation, paraphrasing, and translanguaging	Emojis, GIFs, and shared visual memes	Develops flexible communicative repertoires beyond formal language learning	Facilitates collective meaning negotiation across cultures
Aesthetic Semiotic Alignment	Lexical choices referencing authenticity and genre identity	Colour symbolism, typography, costume imagery	Integrates linguistic competence with cultural literacy	Strengthens intercultural identification through shared aesthetics
Participatory Knowledge Construction	Question–answer exchanges about lyrics or cultural references	Screenshots, timestamps, reaction visuals	Encourages peer-based learning and informal mediation	Sustains dialogic engagement among multilingual participants
Hybrid Identity Performance	Self-identification through multilingual labels or hashtags	Flags, symbolic icons, performance gestures	Reconfigures plurilingual competence as identity practice	Promotes recognition of diverse cultural voices
Platform Affordances as Mediators	Hashtags, tagging, and multilingual captions	Interface design elements shaping interaction flow	Restructures communicative habits according to digital norms	Produces new forms of intercultural dialogue shaped by technology

3.2 Discussion

The findings reveal that digital music ecologies sustain plurilingual competence not by preserving fixed linguistic boundaries but by fostering adaptive communicative practices that evolve through continuous interaction within sociotechnical environments. Participants do not simply apply pre-existing language skills; instead, they develop new forms of plurilingual competence through engagement with multimodal discourse, algorithmic visibility, and transnational audience dynamics. This ecological perspective challenges traditional models of language acquisition that prioritize formal proficiency and instead highlights how competence emerges through participation in digitally mediated communities. The prevalence of collaborative translation practices and hybrid lexical choices suggests that plurilingualism in online music spaces operates as a distributed form of knowledge, where meaning-making responsibilities are shared among participants rather than centralized within individual expertise.

One of the most significant transformations observed in the dataset concerns the integration of aesthetic semiotics into communicative competence. Linguistic resources are frequently accompanied by visual and performative cues that signal authenticity, belonging, or ideological positioning within the music culture. This convergence of linguistic and aesthetic practices indicates that plurilingual competence in digital environments extends beyond grammar and vocabulary to encompass visual literacy and cultural interpretation. Participants demonstrate an ability to interpret symbolic imagery, colour schemes, and performance gestures as communicative resources, thereby expanding the scope of what counts as multilingual competence. Such findings resonate with contemporary theories of multimodal communication that conceptualize meaning-making as an embodied and socially situated process.

Furthermore, the ecological role of platform affordances emerges as a central factor in reshaping intercultural dialogue. Algorithmic features such as recommendation systems, reaction metrics, and comment visibility influence which linguistic practices become prominent within the discourse. These affordances encourage participants to adopt communicative strategies that balance global accessibility with local identity expression. While English frequently functions as a bridging language enabling wide participation, localized linguistic elements and culturally specific visual symbols remain highly visible, suggesting that digital environments support a hybrid model of multilingual interaction.

Another key insight concerns the participatory nature of knowledge construction within digital music ecologies. The dataset reveals numerous instances in which users collaboratively interpret lyrics, explain cultural references, or provide contextual information for other participants. These dialogic exchanges demonstrate how plurilingual competence is co-constructed through peer interaction, reinforcing the idea that multilingual learning can occur informally within digital communities. The integration of screenshots, timestamps, and visual annotations indicates that multimodal resources play a crucial role in sustaining these dialogic processes, enabling participants to communicate complex ideas despite linguistic differences. Such practices contribute to a form of sustainable intercultural dialogue characterized by reciprocity, shared curiosity, and collective interpretation.

From a critical perspective, the findings also highlight the ambivalent role of digital infrastructures in shaping multilingual communication. While algorithmic amplification enhances intercultural visibility, it can also reinforce dominant linguistic norms by privileging globally recognizable languages and aesthetically appealing visual content. Nevertheless, participants actively negotiate these constraints by embedding localized linguistic expressions and culturally specific symbols within their discourse, thereby resisting homogenization and maintaining linguistic diversity.

Overall, the analysis suggests that digital music discourse functions as an emergent ecosystem in which plurilingual competence is continuously reshaped through multimodal interaction, technological mediation, and intercultural collaboration. Rather than viewing multilingualism as a stable attribute possessed by individual speakers, the findings position it as a relational practice sustained by networks of participants, semiotic resources, and platform architectures. The ecological interplay between language, imagery, and digital infrastructure enables participants to develop innovative communicative strategies that sustain intercultural dialogue while preserving diverse linguistic identities.

CONCLUSIONS

This study demonstrates that plurilingual competence in digital music discourse emerges as an ecological and multimodal practice shaped by technological affordances and intercultural negotiation. In line with the study's objectives, the findings confirm that sustainable multilingual

communication is constructed through flexible semiotic repertoires rather than fixed linguistic boundaries. By integrating Critical Multimodal Discourse Analysis with a language ecology framework, this research advances applied linguistics through a holistic model of digital plurilingualism. The study contributes theoretically by redefining multilingual competence as collaborative, multimodal, and technologically mediated practice, offering a broader scientific understanding of language sustainability in contemporary digital environments.

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