

Online Discourse and Cultural Reproduction: The Impact of Social Media Tags on Shaping Identity and Ideology

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Abstract—Digital tags function as important linguistic markers that enhance cultural cohesion and signal ideological perspectives within digital spaces. Although social research on cultural reproduction has examined how conventions and codes persist across generations, few studies have explored the specific discursive mechanisms through which such norms are transmitted or transformed in online contexts. This study adopts a pragmatic approach, drawing on concepts from indexicality, digital discourse, and pragmatics. The dataset consists of 160 English-language social media posts containing 361 hashtags. The analysis focuses on indexicality, framing, pragmatic functions, and presupposition. The findings show that hashtags are used to express identities, ideologies, and shared cultural awareness. They also position users within broader cultural discourses, frequently constructing contrasts between traditional values and modernity. Moreover, hashtags facilitate both the reinforcement and the critique of conventional values, sometimes through mockery or sarcasm, demonstrating their dual role in reproducing and challenging social norms. Overall, the study concludes that hashtags are pragmatically rich linguistic units that contribute to the maintenance of cultural norms in digital discourse and play a central role in shaping social identity and transmitting culture in online communication.

Index Terms—digital pragmatics, ideological positioning, symbolic communication, identity performance, cultural negotiation

I. INTRODUCTION

Cultural reproduction, commonly perceived as the continuous preservation and transmission of principles, beliefs, and perspectives across generations (Archer, 1993; Blaskó, 2003; Alexander & Jenks, 1994; Jæger & Breen, 2013), has long occupied a fundamental place in sociological inquiry. Both traditional and contemporary theorists underscore that no society can persist without mechanisms that link and integrate past and present, tradition and transformation. Conventionally, these mechanisms were primarily associated with social institutions such as the family, religion, and education (Corson, 1995; Samarin, 1994).

In today's era of accelerated digitalization and the integration and convergence of social media, however, a significant question emerges: how can contemporary digital discourse foster cultural reproduction, and what role does language play in this process? This study proposes that language functions as a central resource in the pragmatic reproduction of culture, particularly within digital contexts where brevity, subtlety, and visibility are crucial. Among the most salient linguistic instruments in this context are metadata tags. These are compact, indexical markers that enable language users to position themselves ideologically and to affiliate utterances with cultural identities (Fox, 1994; Lugo, 1990; Shields, 2012; Terry, 2016). Furthermore, hashtags function as tools of social inclusion and judgment, condensing cultural meanings into

transferable and reproducible forms (Christie, 1998; Kashima & Yeung, 2010; Squier, 1998; El Kotni, 2017; Song et al., 2013; Marchie, 2012).

In this sense, hashtags operate as instruments for transmitting principles and ideas across generational and social boundaries. The present article examines how metadata tags, or hashtags, contribute to the active construction of cultural continuity, ideology, and identity, grounding its analysis in theories of social reproduction. It situates hashtags within the domain of pragmatics, with particular attention to their roles in indexical alignment, stance-taking (i.e., evaluative positioning), implicature, and presupposition. To uncover the linguistic mechanisms through which cultural values are encoded in online contexts, the study analyzes a corpus of hashtags associated with themes of tradition, ideology, and identity in digital discourse. By examining how condensed digital structures reflect boundaries of belonging and moral alignment, the paper aims to advance sociological understandings of cultural reproduction as well as pragmatic approaches to meaning in context.

Although previous studies have shown that digital interaction fosters public debate (Michael et al., 2014; Brenner, 2014), relatively little is known about the specific linguistic mechanisms through which social media discourse sustains cultural norms. While metadata tags have been widely examined as resources for identity performance and information retrieval (Li & Xie, 2017; Kim & Oh, 2023; Lamsehat & Patria, 2024; Lozano, 2013), their pragmatic role in mediating cultural transmission has received limited attention. Many existing studies treat hashtags either as isolated sociolinguistic symbols or as structural metadata, often overlooking their multifaceted pragmatic functions. Consequently, the processes through which hashtags reproduce or contest cultural values in digital contexts remain underexplored.

To address this gap, the present study treats hashtags as fully operational linguistic-pragmatic devices that encode presupposition, alignment, and indexical positioning within a compact textual format, rather than as mere labels or descriptors. It examines culturally marked hashtags in discourses surrounding tradition, identity, and generational change, aiming to demonstrate how they function as dense carriers of cultural meaning and ideological positioning. Accordingly, this study pursues two main objectives: first, to identify the pragmatic roles hashtags play in cultural reproduction; and second, to examine how these roles facilitate the discursive construction of identity, continuity, and contestation in digital environments. The central research question asks how hashtags operate as linguistic-pragmatic devices for reproducing cultural norms in contemporary online discourse. In addressing this question, the study offers insights into the ways everyday language practices mediate the symbolic mechanisms through which culture is sustained in the digital age.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Alexander and Jenks (1994) and Shields (2012), the notion of cultural reproduction has long been a critical theme in societal thought, considered an operation that permits societies to preserve continuity, sustainability, shared identity, and social connectedness. It accounts for the cultural transfer of values and practices across various generations. Earlier research studies underscored the role of social structures in sustaining cultural perpetuation. More recent debates, however, highlight the significance of language and communication as the key vehicles through which cultural models are reshaped.

Classical sociologists tended to conceptualize cultural reproduction as the transfer of static patterns across generations. The framework of “meaning-values-norms” suggests that reproduction is less about behavioral imitation and more about the internalization of symbolic meanings. Yet, how these meanings are linguistically conveyed remained largely underdeveloped in early theoretical accounts (Alexander & Jenks, 1994; Archer, 1993; Shields, 2012).

Squier (1998) and Terry (2016) offered a more fluid interpretation by critiquing the assumption that cultural values are fixed entities. They set forth the notion of “cultural orientations,” referring to deeper cognitive and pragmatic frameworks that continue to form social behaviors even when social values are challenged. This approach transferred the focus from normative consensus toward recognizing reproduction as a contested operation involving negotiation, asymmetry, and conflicts.

In contemporary settings, especially in globalized and post-industrial communities, the correlation between tradition and innovation becomes considerably complex. Blaskó (2003) and Christie (1998) differentiated between the “core” and “periphery” of tradition, emphasizing its adaptability. Nonetheless, the precise role of language in these reconstructive processes has often been left implicit.

A decisive shift from structuralist to communicative interpretations is seen in the work of Alexander and Jenks (1994), Archer (1993), and Blaskó (2003). Cultural reproduction is not a neutral transfer of knowledge but the reinforcement of symbolic potential through institutionalized practices, with language serving as the primary vehicle (Christie, 1998; Fox, 1994; Kashima & Yeung, 2010; Lugo, 1990; Shields, 2012). The concept of *habitus* illustrates how communicative experiences shape enduring dispositions that reproduce social hierarchies. Within educational institutions, dominant cultural forms gain legitimacy as they are embedded in linguistic practices unevenly distributed across social groups.

Expanding on this, Lugo (1990), Shields (2012), Squier (1998), Terry (2016), and Willis (1981) distinguished between elaborated and restricted codes as linguistic repertoires linked to class-based communication patterns. Restricted codes, more prevalent among working-class communities, are characterized by contextual dependence and repetition, whereas elaborated codes, associated with middle-class discourse and formal education, favor explicitness and syntactic complexity. This framework showed how unequal access to linguistic resources contributes to differential participation

in cultural reproduction. However, critics argue that such models risk reifying speech norms and overlook individuals' capacity to shift codes and challenge dominant linguistic patterns (Alexander & Jenks, 1994; Archer, 1993).

The application of these notions to digital discourse has revealed both continuity and new dynamics. Research shows that online discursive labels such as hashtags, memes, and comment threads condense cultural meanings, express individual stances, and boost group identities with striking brevity and affective potential (Christie, 1998; Fox, 1994; Kashima & Yeung, 2010). Hashtags, in particular, have evolved from simple indexing tools to multifunctional linguistic vehicles that allow evaluation, alignment, and resistance within digital discourse (Squier, 1998; Terry, 2016; Willis, 1981).

Structurally, hashtags are shaped by the hash symbol # followed by an unbroken range of characters (Eriyanto, 2020; Highfield, 2018; Highfield & Leaver, 2014). While their shape seems to be simple, their pragmatic functions are considerably sophisticated. They act as "searchable talk," serving both as metadata labels and as metadiscursive commentary (Zappavigna, 2015; Androutsopoulos, 2014). Pragmatically, hashtags operate as condensed utterances that presuppose shared cultural knowledge and function similarly to performatives in Austin's (1962) sense. For example, #blessed can simultaneously demonstrate, assess, and signal identity (Klinker, 2016; Laucuka, 2018; Mohammad & Kiritchenko, 2014; Park & Park, 2017). Their multifunctionality and versatility of roles align with the model of language functions. It is due to the fact that they can be expressive, interactional, referential, or poetic depending on context.

Academics and theorists also underscore the indexical dimension of hashtags, demonstrating how they situate users in relation to ideological, emotional, or group affiliations (Mohammad & Kiritchenko, 2014; Park & Park, 2017; Scott, 2018). In activism, hashtags such as #BoycottNestlé or #QuickFashionKills have moved beyond topic markers to perform discursive acts of protest or solidarity (Scott, 2018). This reflects the concept of indexical order, where linguistic signs convey not only reference but also layers of social meaning.

Because hashtags simultaneously categorize content, signal community belonging, express stances, and frame interpretations (Eriyanto, 2020; Highfield, 2018; Highfield & Leaver, 2014; Klinker, 2016), they can be described as "performative signposts" of cultural meaning. Their power lies in replicability, which allows utterances to enter larger socio-cultural conversations. From a pragmatic perspective, they function as presuppositions, stance-taking devices, and identity markers (#prideinmeamerican, sadtruth), while also engaging in indexical mapping of users into imagined communities (Highfield, 2018; Laucuka, 2018; Mohammad & Kiritchenko, 2014).

Significantly, hashtags function as contested spaces where cultural norms are confirmed, reinterpreted, or satirized. For instance, #traditions may transfer positive connotations in one community but be deployed ironically in another digital environment. It shows that cultural perpetuation is a continuous interactional process shaped by pragmatic debates and discussions. As a result, hashtags can be considered hybrid linguistic units. They are syntactic, pragmatic, and sociolinguistic units at once, whose semantic contents emerge dynamically through usage. Their study underscores how everyday linguistic practices, especially in digital environments, drive both the continuity and transformation of cultural values. Pragmatic choices such as framing, lexical selection, and stance-taking thus become substantial mechanisms of cultural reproduction (Eriyanto, 2020; Highfield, 2018; Highfield & Leaver, 2014; Klinker, 2016; Laucuka, 2018; Mohammad & Kiritchenko, 2014; Park & Park, 2017; Scott, 2018; Haddad & Khalil, 2025; Al-Shboul, 2025; Goswami & Shougrakpam, 2025).

Scott (2015) examined hashtags as pragmatic instruments in Twitter discourse, emphasizing their function in inference and conversational style. Employing a relevance-theoretic framework, the study performed qualitative discourse analysis on a corpus of tweets featuring creative and contextual hashtags. The analysis showed that hashtags do more than just label topics. They also help readers make the right inferences, frame interpretations, and add style to interactions. For example, humorous or critical hashtags were found to express stance, highlight implicit semantic content, and facilitate audience engagement in online discussions. The results indicate that hashtags are critical pragmatic vehicles, enhancing communication by providing cues that help audiences to extract both explicit and implicit messages.

Pérez-Hernández (2018) examined the function of hashtags in storytelling, emphasizing their use by institutions to integrate ideology and values into their digital narratives. The research examined more than 700 hashtags from four prominent beverage brands, gathered from Twitter in 2017. The researcher classified hashtags in terms of form and function using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The results indicated that hashtags function beyond mere organizational roles. They function as potent pragmatic vehicles that aid in the framing and dissemination of the narratives. They represent values like happiness, energy, youth, or solidarity, which help people build their identities. Hashtags let brands bring people into shared ideological spaces by combining emotional, performative, and interactive elements. This strengthens consumer loyalty and cultural participation. The study stresses the strategic and pragmatic part played by hashtags in contemporary advertising discourse and their impact on consumer ideologies.

Irshad (2022) examined hashtags in offline settings, particularly in advertisements and printed media, to assess their pragmatic significance beyond digital contexts. Using a qualitative content investigation method, the study analyzed a set of printed ads that employed hashtags. The investigation showed that offline hashtags work typically the same as inferential tools by bringing up common cultural assumptions and leading readers to short explanations. Advertisers utilized hashtags to draw attention to slogans and get people engaged by making it seem like they were conversing about the brand online. The results demonstrate that hashtags, even outside of digital environments, serve pragmatic functions via connecting explicit textual contents with implicit ideological significances.

Larionova and Demkina (2021) analyzed hashtags in Spanish political discourse, specifically in governmental communication during the COVID-19 crisis. Their dataset included hashtags disseminated on official government websites, which underwent interdisciplinary investigation, combining cognitive, pragmalinguistic, semantic, contextual, and discourse methodologies. The study demonstrated that hashtags serve as linguo-cognitive tools. They are autonomous discursive vehicles that form political narratives, direct interpretation, and affect public perception and evaluation. Hashtags were sorted into groups in terms of their types, such as event-based, metaphorical, and imperative. The findings showed that political hashtags often reflect emotionality and syntactic simplification, which make them more persuasive and manipulative. For example, imperative hashtags like #QuédateEnCasa drive people to be together, follow the rules, or be one. Hashtags work as political messaging instruments by turning notions into short, easy-to-remember phrases. They boost government priorities and shape the way people think as a group. The study concludes that hashtags are critical pragmatic tools in modern ideological communication. Finally, critical discourse perspectives show that the ability to formulate cultural meaning through language is unevenly distributed.

III. RESEARCH METHODS

A. Research Problem and Questions

Digital discourse, particularly through hashtags, plays an increasingly central role in shaping, reproducing, and contesting cultural norms. Despite prior studies on social media and identity, little is known about the specific pragmatic mechanisms through which hashtags sustain or challenge cultural values in online environments. This study addresses this gap by investigating the ways hashtags function as linguistic-pragmatic devices in cultural reproduction. The research is guided by the following questions:

1. How are hashtags employed as pragmatic tools to convey cultural values, identity, and ideology in digital discourse?
2. What linguistic mechanisms (e.g., stance-taking, alignment, presupposition) underlie the use of hashtags in reinforcing or contesting cultural norms?
3. How do hashtags mediate social positioning and intergenerational, ideological, or community-based distinctions within online interactions?

B. Research Design

The present research article embraces a qualitative, discourse-analytic orientation with a pragmatic focus. It explores the ways hashtags serve as pragmatic tools to reinforce cultural norms within online interaction. Since the central concern lies in analyzing the interplay between language use and cultural reproduction, the methodological framework utilizes digital discourse analysis (Frolova et al., 2020; Jiang, 2019; Li et al., 2018; Li, 2022; Müller & Stegmeier, 2018; Recuber, 2016, 2017), linguistic pragmatics (Bühler, 1986; Noveck et al., 2002; Senft, 2007), and indexicality theory (Mulligan & Smith, 1986; Nunberg, 1992; Oshima, 2006). Research design is exploratory in nature, aiming to define recurrent functional roles and cultural directions embedded in hashtag practices.

C. Data Collection

The dataset included social media posts where hashtags serve essentially as interactive and affiliative labels within discourse. The period from 2019 to 2024 is chosen as it is marked by active discussions surrounding cultural identity, value transmission, and online activism. To ensure comparability, only English-language posts were taken into consideration in this research article. The dataset was compiled using a purposive and theoretically informed sampling strategy designed to capture culturally oriented hashtag use in naturalistic digital contexts. Posts were collected primarily from publicly accessible platforms, including Twitter/X and Instagram, as these platforms make extensive use of hashtags as communicative tools. Data retrieval was conducted through manual collection supplemented by platform search functions rather than automated scraping tools in order to focus on contextual interpretation and to comply with platform terms of service. Searches were guided by a set of predefined keywords and thematic hashtags related to tradition, identity, and cultural values (e.g., #familyfirst, #culturalheritage, #honortradition, #GenZ), which were identified through preliminary exploratory searches. Only publicly available posts in English with sufficient accompanying contextual information were included. No private accounts or personal identifying information were accessed, and all data were anonymized to ensure ethical use. Since the study relied exclusively on publicly posted content, formal participant consent was not required; nevertheless, ethical guidelines for digital discourse research were strictly observed to protect user privacy and confidentiality.

D. Analytical Procedures

Initially, each post was examined both textually and visually, and then posts were inductively coded for the pragmatic function of the hashtag, such as stance-taking, alignment, or presupposition. The cultural values are recorded, and the positional stances of the writers (affirmative, ironic, nostalgic, or oppositional) are examined. Subsequently, within the framework of the indexicality theory (Noveck et al., 2002; Mulligan & Smith, 1986; Nunberg, 1992; Oshima, 2006), the researcher examined the hashtags for their contextual presuppositions (shared cultural background assumed in communication) and their deictic associations to identity and ideology. The final stage applied frame and alignment

analysis, Nunberg's (1992) concept of frame, and Recuber's (2016) framework of identity positioning. Hashtags were analyzed as framing devices that shape discourse and assign social roles, such as contrasting generational positions (older vs. younger) or ideological stances (traditionalist vs. progressive).

To enhance the reliability and transparency of the qualitative analysis, coding was not conducted solely by the author. An additional researcher with expertise in digital discourse pragmatics independently coded a randomly selected 20% subset of the dataset using the same analytical framework. Inter-coder agreement was then calculated through comparison of coding categories and thematic assignments, yielding a high level of consistency. Instances of disagreement were discussed collaboratively and resolved through iterative review and refinement of category definitions. The finalized coding scheme was subsequently applied to the remaining data, ensuring greater rigor, consistency, and replicability in the analytical process.

IV. RESEARCH RESULTS

A total number of 160 English posts were examined in this study, generating 361 hashtags. Generally, each post comprises approximately 2.26 tags, reflecting the prevalent use of multiple metadata tags to convey meaning, categorize content, or establish identity in online discourse. These hashtags were analyzed systematically for their contextual functions, presuppositional meanings, indexical traits, and framing strategies. The study's findings are reported depending on the analytical approach detailed in the methodology section.

A. Pragmatic Functions of Hashtags

The analysis revealed that hashtags have a range of contextual purposes, with many posts employing multiple functions simultaneously. Pragmatic functions were categorized primarily as stance-taking, categorization, and alignment/affiliation, with overlapping uses commonly observed within individual posts. Attitude marking emerged as the most frequent role, identified in 120 out of 160 posts (75%). These hashtags communicated explicit or implicit positions regarding cultural, social, and generational themes. For instance, hashtags such as #HomeEthics, #prideinme, and #Zoomers usually expressed approval, reinforcement, or personal endorsement of certain societal norms or generational standpoints. This observation that social media users often utilize the metadata tags to express their opinions, effectively performing an attitudinal function that aligns them with similar communities while distinguishing them from others.

In 75 posts (46.9%), hashtags function as ideological markers that cluster content under broader categories. For instance, #CulturalHeritage and #RootedInCulture helped to categorize posts within debates related to heritage, social identity, and cultural norms. Classification enables both content organization and retrievability on social media platforms, allowing users to mark the type of discourse they are engaging in and simultaneously linking their posts to wider interactions or communities. Affiliation was reported in 64 posts (40%), with hashtags revealing connection to specific worldviews or ideological stances. Examples such as #ReconnectWithRoots and #DevotedCitizen reflected an identification with traditionalist or nationalist stances, signaling unity with particular communities and shared values. Alignment and affiliation functions often overlapped with evaluative positioning, reflecting the multifaceted role of hashtags in constructing both personal and collective identities online.

Interestingly, many hashtags exhibited polyfunctionality, fulfilling multiple roles simultaneously. For example, #HomeEthics not only showed an attitudinal stance but also indexed traditional cultural identity. Such multilayered hashtags illustrate the complexity of online interaction, in which a single linguistic marker can simultaneously operate at attitudinal, categorical, and affiliative levels.

B. Presupposition and Indexicality

In 128 English posts (80%), hashtags presupposed common cultural content, signaling assumptions about the audience's familiarity with certain norms, beliefs, or moral frameworks. Common presuppositions included:

- [1] - The occurrences of enduring cultural legacy or tradition, as in hashtags like #Ourheritage(s) and #Long-standing ideals. These tags imply an assumption that audiences recognize the significance of historical progression and cultural protection.
- [2] - Binary distinctions between authentic and corrupted values, observed in hashtags such as #realvalues and #currentpandemonium. Such presuppositions generate implicit moral contrasts, formulating cultural or social debates in terms of right versus wrong, authentic versus fake, or traditional versus modern.
- [3] - Implicit evaluative judgments, embedded in hashtags like #nationalway or #uprightness, which imply moral positions without explicitly showing them. These presuppositions motivate audiences to accept certain value judgments as shared verities.

The indexicality analysis revealed that hashtags acted as indicators of social, generational, and ideological identity. In 101 posts (63.1%), hashtags indexed adherence to traditionalism or conservative perspectives. Conversely, 37 posts (23.1%) featured hashtags marking irony, critique, or detachment from these positions. For instance, some tag users recontextualized conventional value labels to criticize or satirize established values and traditions, demonstrating how hashtags can generate subtle social commentary or resistance while maintaining a kind of engagement with broader cultural discourses. Indexical markers also served to reinforce in-group and out-group distinctions. Users using

traditionalist hashtags often implicitly constructed themselves as members of a morally or culturally “correct” community, while those using ironic or subversive hashtags situated themselves in opposition, negotiating identity and social alignment through digital discourse.

C. Framing and Alignment Strategies

Hashtags also played a substantial role in formulating online discourse, shaping the interpretive environment, and positioning the user relative to broader social narratives. Framing strategies observed in the dataset included binary contrasts, construction of social roles, and ironic or critical framing. Binary oppositions were common, often implied through the use of juxtaposed or contrasting hashtags. For example, #HomeEthics might be paired with #CompleteLiberty to create implicit contrasts between traditionalist and liberal social perspectives. These contrasts functioned to define interpretive boundaries, guiding audiences toward particular understandings while signaling the user’s alignment within specific cultural debates.

Construction of social roles and identities was evident in multiple posts, portraying archetypes such as the responsible conservative versus the wayward modernist, or the devoted citizen versus the indifferent globalist. Hashtags served as concise labels that both reflected and reinforced these social constructions, allowing users to communicate complex identity positions through minimal textual input. Sarcastic and parodic frames appeared in 24 English posts (15%), where hashtags linked to conservatism or traditionalism were employed in critical or humorous settings. This type of framing demonstrates the flexibility of hashtags as tools for negotiating meaning, allowing users to simultaneously reference established values while distancing themselves from them or questioning their relevance.

Additionally, hashtag clustering was observed as a reinforcement strategy. Posts with higher ideological density often featured groups of related hashtags, such as #origins, #respect, and #originality, which amplified the framing effect by layering similar value signals. On average, each post contained 2.26 metadata tags, with the densest clusters appearing in the thematic content addressing societal, generational, or normative themes. Generally, the findings show that hashtags operate on multiple communicative interactional levels: they organize content, mark stance and identity, presuppose common knowledge, and formulate a frame for discourse. The interplay of pragmatic function, underlying meaning, referentiality, and framing demonstrates the nuance of social media users in employing these brief textual tags to negotiate meaning, reflect identity, and engage with wider cultural narratives. Hashtags thus function as powerful semiotic devices, providing insight into contemporary social norms, generational attitudes, and cultural alignment in digital discourse.

TABLE 1
OVERVIEW OF HASHTAG ANALYSIS IN 160 SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS

Category	Subcategory / Function	Number of Posts	Percentage (%)	Example Hashtags
Total posts and hashtags	-	160	100	-
	Total hashtags	361	-	-
	Average hashtags per post	2.26	-	-
Pragmatic Functions	Stance-taking	120	75	#HomeEthics, #prideinme, #Zoomers
	Categorization	75	46.9	#CulturalHeritage, #RootedInCulture
	Alignment/Affiliation	64	40	#ReconnectWithRoots, #DevotedCitizen
Presupposition	Cultural heritage/tradition	128	80	#Ourheritage(s), #Long-standing ideals
	Authentic vs. corrupted values	128	80	#realvalues, #currentpandemonium
	Implicit moral evaluation	128	80	#nationalway, #uprightness
Indexicality	Alignment with traditionalist/conservative	101	63.1	#HomeEthics, #DevotedCitizen
	Irony / critique / detachment	37	23.1	#currentpandemonium, #CompleteLiberty
Framing Strategies	Binary oppositions	-	-	#HomeEthics vs #CompleteLiberty
	Construction of social roles/identities	-	-	#responsibletraditionalist vs #misguidedmodernist
	Ironic/parodic framing	24	15	#nationalway (used ironically)
	Hashtag clustering	-	-	#origins, #respect, #originality

V. DISCUSSION

The major aim of this study was to investigate the pragmatic role played by hashtags in the circulation of cultural norms within digital discourse. Drawing on insights and perspectives from cultural sociology and pragmatics, the analysis revealed how tradition-oriented hashtags facilitate the transmission, support, and renegotiation of traditions, identities, and worldviews in online settings. The findings reveal several dimensions and factors of this process, demonstrating that hashtags act as condensed pragmatic vehicles that encode ideological positions and index cultural affiliations.

Results confirm that hashtags fulfill key pragmatic functions previously identified in the literature, with stance-taking emerging as the dominant function (appearing in 75.6% of the analyzed posts). This finding aligns with the work of Corson (1995) and Samarin (1994), who note that alignment and identity are continuously shaped through interactional markers such as stance indicators. Instances like #homeethics and #Zoomers position the speaker within identifiable cultural frameworks, serving as indexical indicators (Archer, 1993; Blaskó, 2003; Alexander & Jenks, 1994; Jæger & Breen, 2013) that activate common emotional and ideological frames. This supports the claim that cultural reproduction is embedded in interactional practices, while also clarifying the given linguistic mechanisms—presupposition, alignment, and framing—that enhance such reproduction in digital environments (Eriyanto, 2020; Highfield, 2018; Highfield & Leaver, 2014).

The presuppositional role of hashtags reinforces Klinker's (2016) pragmatic model. Phrases such as #ReconnectWithRoots or #DevotedCitizen presuppose shared cultural knowledge without explicitly elaborating on its content. Their effect lies in evoking collective memory and reinforcing symbolic continuity with the past. In this way, cultural values are reproduced through implicit meaning-making, reflecting what Levinson termed the "immaterial" components of culture.

A key finding of this study is the mediating role of hashtags in negotiating between tradition and innovation, a tension noted by Laucuka (2018) and Mohammad and Kiritchenko (2014). Rather than simply reproducing inherited norms, hashtags reveal both affirmations and critiques of tradition. Ironical or oppositional tags highlight how digital communication functions as a space for reinterpreting cultural values, echoing Park and Park's (2017) argument that tradition itself is a construct continually reshaped. Binary oppositions in hashtags (e.g., #homeethics versus #CompleteLiberty) exemplify what Laucuka (2018) and Scott (2018) described as frames of conflicts that reflect social and national verities. These conflicts often mirror generational divisions, showing that hashtags act as crucial indexical indicators by categorizing hashtags' users into culturally recognizable positions. Such findings confirm Mulligan and Smith's (1986) claim that creativity builds upon selectively reimagined aspects of cultural progression.

In accordance with Nunberg's (1992) and Oshima's (2006) notion of symbolic impact, the findings reveal that hashtags help reproduce cultural legitimacy, not only in formal institutions but also in everyday digital spaces. Some values are reinforced, while others are marginalized or satirized, reflecting Scott's (2018) argument about linguistic codes as mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. Despite their apparent accessibility, hashtags need cultural literacy to be fully grasped, meaning they can simultaneously include some users while excluding others. Beyond their primary parts of stance-taking, presupposition, and framing, hashtags also reflect pragmatic layering, where one tag enacts several communicative functions at once. For instance, #realvalues and #Zoomers presuppose ideological frameworks while simultaneously signaling affiliation. This multifunctionality underscores the strategic compactness of hashtags, which combine referential, evaluative, and performative meanings. The study also highlights the chronotopic function of hashtags (Alexander & Jenks, 1994), where tags like #ReconnectWithRoots or #CulturalHeritage construct temporal-spatial contrasts, often opposing a glorified past with a declining present. This resonates with Bakhtin's chronotope concept (Samarin, 1994), illustrating how hashtags organize discourse around collective memory and identity.

Ironical hashtags, such as #justtraditionthings, add another layer of pragmatic complexity. By inverting expected meanings, they destabilize cultural values while inviting readers to engage in meta-commentary. This reflects Kashima and Yeung's (2010) account of irony as implicature-based and presupposition-conflict driven. Such ironic uses show that hashtags can both reproduce and critique cultural narratives simultaneously. Another important observation is the semiotic prominence of hashtags. Far from being supplementary, they often frame the meaning of entire posts, functioning like contextualization cues (Christie, 1998). Their placement, usually at the end of posts, gives them summarizing power, shaping interpretation and evaluative stance.

Hashtag clusters also emerged as significant. Sets of related tags (e.g., #origins, #originality, #respect) create pragmatic reinforcement and value intensification. This reflects multimodal pragmatic research (Squier, 1998), showing how repetition and lexical patterning amplify ideological meaning through pragmatic saturation. The intertextual function of hashtags was equally notable. A tag such as #homeethics resonates not only within the immediate post but also across wider political, religious, and media discourses, functioning as what Michael et al. (2014) termed "orders of discourse." This positions hashtags as interdiscursive entry points into broader cultural debates (Shields, 2012; Haddad & Khalil, 2025; Al-Shboul, 2025; Goswami & Shougrakpam, 2025).

Additionally, hashtags perform deictic functions comparable to linguistic pointing. Tags like #nowmeansnow and #thisgen locate discourse in sociocultural timeframes, but unlike traditional deixis, their anchoring relies on shared cultural and political knowledge. This highlights the role of hashtags in distributed pragmatic anchoring across digitally mediated interactions. Moralizing hashtags such as #uprightness, #nationalway, and #realvalues further illustrate their function as ethical indices. These tags not only describe but also prescribe norms, paralleling Searle's (1979) view of speech acts as both descriptive and directive. They thus act as micro-acts of norm enforcement, delineating acceptable versus deviant values.

The ritualized function of hashtags was also evident. Tags affirming collective identity (e.g., #DevotedCitizen, #Ourheritage(s)) resemble ritualized speech acts, echoing Kashima and Yeung's (2010) perspectives on ritual as symbolic cohesion. Repetition across posts functions as performative acts of belonging and ideological participation. Finally, hashtags operate within what can be termed algorithmic pragmatics. Users strategically employ them to influence

visibility and reach, addressing both human audiences and platform algorithms simultaneously. This aligns with El Kotni's (2017) work on the algorithmic imaginary, highlighting how users adapt to platform logic while embedding cultural meanings.

Overall, this study reveals that hashtags demonstrate a range of context-based features: multifunctionality, referentiality, irony, moralizing, standardization, and algorithmic reflexivity. These qualities establish hashtags as central vehicles for cultural reproduction and negotiation in digital settings and discourse where subtlety, brevity, and symbolic density are substantial. They are not peripheral add-ons but integral pragmatic resources that formulate the intersection of language, ideology, and identity. The study concludes that hashtags, in their compressed linguistic forms, function as cultural mirrors of reflexivity, confirming or contesting traditions and identities. They exemplify how language actively constructs reality via context-sensitive practices, simultaneously performing referential, evaluative, and performative functions.

VI. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This research aimed at exploring the role of hashtags as contextual linguistic devices in sustaining and reshaping cultural traditions within digital interactions. Rather than dealing with hashtags as incidental indicators, the study conceptualized them as compressed carriers of semantic content, identity, and ideology. By conducting a qualitative-pragmatic analysis of 160 English-language social media posts containing 361 hashtags, the findings manifested that hashtags are not neutral devices; they actively contribute to the reinforcement, negotiation, and contestation of cultural norms.

The results demonstrate that hashtags possess considerable pragmatic potential. They function as resources for stance-taking, affiliation, and cultural categorization, while simultaneously presupposing common knowledge and marking group belonging. Their role extends well beyond simple topic tagging, since they reinforce and anchor online expressions within broader cultural narratives. In this way, hashtags enable cultural continuity by referencing traditions and identities and recontextualizing them within contemporary mediated discourse. The recurrence of oppositional norms, generational identifiers, and ironic usages reflects their dual role in both reinforcing and questioning dominant values—supporting earlier sociological claims that traditions are constantly formulated rather than passively inherited.

Notably, this study broadens conventional approaches to cultural reproduction by stressing the central role of language, particularly contextualized meaning, in the dissemination of values. It demonstrates that online discourse is not merely superficial interaction, but it is a critical sphere where symbolic bases of social cohesion are expressed. Hashtags exemplify how cultural frontiers and moral structures are encoded and circulated in mediated discourses. This high visibility and linguistic brevity contribute to their effectiveness. Thus, this research contributes to the growing field of digital pragmatics by offering clues about how meaning is produced and replicated through succinct, repeatable linguistic forms. It underscores the notion that everyday linguistic activities are substantial to social life, particularly in digital environments where identity and values are continuously negotiated. While this study was limited to English posts and a specific set of value-based tags, the findings open new tracks for further research across other languages, cultures, and timeframes.

In conclusion, hashtags should be perceived as powerful instruments of cultural communication. They operate as pragmatic acts of positioning that sustain, reformulate, or challenge the cultural imagination. Far from being mere technical devices or markers of digital fluency, hashtags function as significant carriers of norms and identities in online discourse.

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