



DIGITAL DISCOURSE PRACTICES OF ENGLISH-SPEAKING YOUTH ON TWITTER: A SOCIOLINGUISTIC PERSPECTIVE

Rustamova Mohimbonu Maxammadjon qizi
Graduate student of Webster University, Uzbekistan

ABSTRACT

This article explores the digital discourse practices of English-speaking Twitter users aged 16–24 through sociolinguistic and discourse-analytic lenses. Drawing on the works of Zappavigna (2012), Ndibe & Nduka (2023), Murugesan et al. (2023), Saidova (2023), and Yo'ldosheva (2023), the study analyzes youth usage of slang, abbreviations, hashtags, emojis, and subjective positioning. The findings reveal the role of digital communication in shaping contemporary linguistic trends and its functional place in processes of individual and group identity formation. A comparative analysis with discourse practices of Uzbek-speaking youth highlights transcultural influences and local linguistic dynamics.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital communication tools has transformed social media—especially Twitter—into not just a platform for information exchange, but also a space for linguistic innovation and identity construction, particularly among younger generations. This microblogging environment offers unique opportunities for examining the social functions of language in contemporary society. The discourse practices of English-speaking youth on Twitter have become a central focus in both linguistics and sociolinguistics.

Zappavigna's (2012) concept of “ambient affiliation,” the mechanism of creating a sense of connectedness and community through linguistic means, serves as the theoretical basis of this study. The ideas proposed by Ndibe & Nduka (2023) regarding the blend of emotional and strategic communication in Twitter discourse are key to understanding the communicative complexity of youth language practices.

In the local context, Uzbek researchers such as Saidova (2023) and Yo'ldosheva (2023) have studied the sociolinguistic features of slang, jargon, and cultural expressions in the discourse of Uzbek-speaking users. By integrating global theoretical frameworks with local perspectives, this article conducts a comprehensive analysis of how English-speaking youth use language on Twitter to modify expression, signal social positioning, and implement communicative strategies.

METHODS

This study is based on qualitative discourse analysis, drawing from a sample of 500 tweets posted by English-speaking Twitter users aged 16–24. Tweets were selected using youth-oriented hashtags such as #GenZ, #mood, #relatable, #fr, and #lowkey.

The tweets were coded according to the following linguistic features: slang, abbreviations, emojis, punctuation use, and hashtags. Zappavigna's (2012) model was applied to analyze hashtag discourse. Ndibe & Nduka's (2023) framework guided the identification of stance-positioning.

A comparative analysis was also conducted using Saidova's (2023) and Yo'ldosheva's (2023) studies of Uzbek-language slang and youth communication practices.

RESULTS

The analysis yielded several key findings:

- Linguistic Innovation and Playfulness:

Abbreviations such as "idc" (I don't care), "tbh" (to be honest), "fr" (for real), and repetitive expressions like "lolol," as well as emoji-text combinations, reflect linguistic flexibility. Murugesan et al. (2023) interpret these as a form of boundary-pushing by youth in language use.

- Identity Construction via Hashtags and Emojis:

Hashtags like #brokeuni and #GenZproblems not only indicate topic relevance but also signal social identity. Emojis such as 🤔 or 😞 reinforce emotional tone and personal positioning (Zappavigna, 2012).

- Stance-Positioning Expressions:

Phrases like "I'm exhausted and done with everyone. periodt." and "Normalize boundaries. Protect your peace." are common. Ndibe & Nduka (2023) argue that such expressions help manage social relationships and inner states.

- Cultural Convergence in Uzbek Youth Discourse:

According to Saidova (2023), slang among Uzbek youth often serves as a means of opposition, identity expression, and emotional communication. Phrases like "Gapi yo'q" or "Oxiri nima bo'ladi?" are widespread on platforms like Telegram and Instagram. Yo'ldosheva (2023) emphasizes the role of translation and localization in cultural adaptation of slang.

DISCUSSION

Twitter, while a microblogging site, functions as a sociolinguistic stage for youth expression. As Zappavigna (2012) noted, hashtags allow users to present themselves in broader conversations without direct interaction—captured by the "ambient affiliation" concept, where individuals express group membership through virtual discourse.

Abbreviations and emotionally charged expressions often convey psychological states or group belonging. Expressions like "fr," "idc," and "deadass" serve not only to transmit information but also to signal emotional reactions and social cues. Murugesan et al. (2023) describe this as "linguistic performance," where the user constructs their persona through language.

These discourse patterns are increasingly found in spoken communication as well. Youth transfer online linguistic styles to school, university, and everyday interactions—requiring new approaches in language teaching, policy-making, and intercultural communication.

The functional similarities in language practices of Uzbek and English-speaking youth are confirmed through this analysis. Slang, abbreviations, and emotional expressions serve similar communicative functions globally, but are embedded differently in local cultural contexts. For instance, the Uzbek phrase "gap yo'q" (lit. "no words") parallels the English "no cap", though their usage and communicative intentions differ.

Moreover, linguistic units created through social media—hashtags and emojis—not only alter language but also visualize it. This highlights the importance of analyzing digital literacy and multimodal competence.

CONCLUSION

The study's findings highlight the breadth and complexity of digital communication among young people who speak English on Twitter. Their linguistic usage reflects broader sociolinguistic patterns in social bonding, emotional expression, and identity formation. Emojis, slang, hashtags, and abbreviations are all useful tools for young people navigating the internet. Understanding how comparable sociolinguistic functions manifest in various languages and cultures is improved by incorporating viewpoints from Uzbek research. As digital platforms change, so will the language strategies youth adopt, keeping this area of research dynamic. Future studies could further investigate cross-language comparisons and the impact of education, media, and globalization on digital discourse.

REFERENCES

1. Ndibe, P. N., & Nduka, P. U. (2023). Sociolinguistic Analysis of Networking on Twitter: Strategic vs Emotional Discourse. *Journal of Language and Media Studies*.
2. Murugesan, A., et al. (2023). Lexical Variation in Online Youth Communication: A Twitter-Based Study. *Computational Sociolinguistics Quarterly*.
3. Saidova, N. (2023). O'zbek hamda ingliz tillarida argo va jargonlar tarjimasining sotsiolingvistik xususiyatlari. *O'zbek tilshunosligi jurnali*.
4. Yo'ldosheva, M. (2023). Tarjimaning sotsiolingvistik aspektlari. *Jahon tillari universiteti konferensiya materiallari*.
5. Zappavigna, M. (2012). *Discourse of Twitter and Social Media: How We Use Language to Create Affiliation on the Web*. Continuum.

