Language Variations in the Digital Age: The Role of Social Media in Everyday Communication

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Abstract: *This paper examines language variation and change in social media communication, focusing on how digital platforms influence contemporary language use. Language constantly evolves in response to social and technological developments, and social media has become one of the most important spaces where these changes occur rapidly. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok create a unique communicative environment that combines features of spoken and written language and encourages informal, creative, and emotionally expressive interaction.*

The study adopts a qualitative discourse-analytical approach and analyses publicly available posts and comments from major social media platforms. The analysis concentrates on four key aspects of social media language: neologisms, abbreviations and emojis, hashtags, and wordplay. These features are examined in terms of their communicative functions and their role in meaning-making within digital discourse.

The findings show that neologisms are a central feature of social media language. Many new words emerge from platform-specific practices and online behaviours, such as DM, vlog, doomscrolling, *and* ghosting. *Particular attention is given to Georgian social media discourse, where English digital terms are actively borrowed and adapted to Georgian morphological patterns, demonstrating linguistic creativity and structural flexibility.*

Abbreviations, acronyms, and emojis support fast communication and compensate for the absence of non-verbal cues. Emojis function as important tools for expressing emotion and identity, and their use varies across cultural contexts. In Georgian social media, emojis often reflect local cultural values and social identity. Hashtags are analysed as linguistic and ideological tools that organise discourse, express stance, and connect individual messages to wider social, cultural, and political movements, often through hybrid and multilingual forms.

The paper concludes that social media has a dual effect on language. While it promotes innovation, creativity, and lexical expansion, it may also challenge grammatical accuracy and appropriate register use. Overall, social media plays a crucial role in shaping contemporary language and requires balanced and ongoing linguistic analysis.

Keywords: *social media discourse; language variation; neologisms; emojis and abbreviations; hashtags; digital communication; Georgian language*

Introduction

Language is a dynamic system that constantly changes in response to social, cultural, and technological developments. Language variation is a natural phenomenon connected to social groups, communicative situations, and the purposes of language use. In recent years, these variations have become especially visible in digital environments, where rapid communication and new technologies influence how people interact.

Among digital spaces, social media has become one of the most influential platforms for linguistic change and experimentation. Social media is not merely a technical tool for communication; it represents a distinct discursive environment with its own linguistic norms and conventions. As David Crystal notes, digital communication encourages new forms of language use that blur the traditional boundaries between speech and writing, leading to the emergence of hybrid modes of expression (Crystal, 2006, pp. 24-27). These forms are typically informal, concise, creative, and emotionally expressive, reflecting the conversational nature of online interaction.

Furthermore, social media plays a significant role in globalization by facilitating communication at both local and global levels. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter enable interaction among speakers from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. This increased contact between languages results in borrowing, code-switching, and lexical innovation. From a sociolinguistic perspective, such variation is closely related to social identity, group affiliation, and communicative intentions, as emphasized by William Labov (Labov, 1972, pp. 3-7).

The study of language use on social media is therefore central to both sociolinguistics and discourse analysis. Research on computer-mediated communication shows that online language use follows structured and meaningful patterns rather than being random. Susan Herring argues that digital discourse should be analysed within its technological and interactional context, taking into account the specific affordances and communicative goals of online platforms (Herring, 2004, pp. 338–340). Consequently, social media discourse provides a valuable space for examining contemporary language variation and the ongoing evolution of everyday communication in the digital age.

Analytical Framework

This study adopts a qualitative discourse-analytical approach to examine how conversational language is used on social media. The data consist of selected examples of publicly available posts and comments from platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok. The analysis focuses on identifying recurring linguistic patterns and examining their communicative functions within specific interactional contexts.

Analysis of Linguistic Variations in Social Media Discourse

1) Neologisms

One of the most visible signs of linguistic innovation on social media is the use of new words and expressions. These emerge as technology develops, platform features change, and new forms of social interaction appear. In digital communication, neologisms not only expand vocabulary but also reflect changes in users' communication habits, identity formation, and psychological engagement with the online environment.

Platform-Related Neologisms

A large subset of neologisms directly arise from the affordances of social media platforms. Such terms refer to new kinds of participation, content creation, and engagement:

Vlog – a video blog in which the content is audiovisual based combined with a personal narration.

DM (Direct Message) – a private message exchanged between users on a social media platform.

Subtweet – when an individual criticises or refers to someone on Twitter without explicitly naming them.

Insta-worthy – describes content, particularly photographs, that people consider suitable or aesthetically appealing enough for posting on Instagram.

TikToker – refers to an active user or content creator on the TikTok platform.

Reel – is a short-form video feature of Instagram meant to promote quick and interesting content consumption.

These neologisms show how platform-specific functions produce new lexical items that rapidly become embedded in everyday conversational terminology.

Neologisms describing emotional states, habitual behavioural patterns, and social attitudes of users in online worlds are another important category:

JOMO (Joy of Missing Out) – the feeling of satisfaction or relief from not joining a certain social event or the latest trends online.

Doomscrolling – the compulsive consumption of negative news or content by constantly scrolling through social media feeds.

Stan – an extremely devoted or obsessive public figure or cultural product fanatic.

Ghosting – the sudden and unexplained breaking of communication with someone.

Thirst trap – an image or a post that has been made purposely to attract attention or admiration, often of a sexualized nature.

Numerous online games and digital subculture also play animating roles in making recent neologisms and these have expanded beyond their own social space into internet speech space:

Pog (from Play of the Game) – an expression of excitement or approval, commonly used in gaming forums and internet memes.

Noob – a new or inexperienced player in online games.

AFK (Away From Keyboard) – indicating temporary absence or unavailability.

Lag – a delay or slowdown due to technical or network issues in online interaction.

Social Media-Induced Neologisms in the Georgian Language

The influence of social media on the Georgian language is clearly reflected in the emergence of neologisms that originate from English digital terminology and are subsequently adapted to Georgian morphological and syntactic patterns. These neologisms mostly arise from platform-specific actions and technological practices, and they demonstrate the capacity of Georgian to integrate foreign lexical material while preserving its structural integrity.

Common examples include:

- **დალაიქება (dalaikeba)** – the act of liking a post or comment on a social media platform.
- **დაფოლოვება (dafoloveba)** – subscribing to or following a user or page on a social network.
- **დაშეარება (dasheareba)** – sharing a post or digital content.
- **დასქროლვა (daskrolva)** – scrolling through online feeds or pages.
- **დაანფრენდა (daanfrenda)** – removing someone from a friend list or terminating a digital connection.

From a linguistic perspective, these forms exemplify lexical borrowing combined with morphological adaptation. English verbal bases (*like, follow, share, scroll, unfriend*) are incorporated into Georgian through the use of native verbal morphology, most notably the preverbal prefix **და-** and the verbal noun suffix **-ება**, which allows the borrowed elements to function as fully integrated Georgian verbs and deverbal nouns.

A particularly illustrative example is the verb **„დაიფრენდე“ (daifrende)**, which emerged in response to Facebook's "friend" function. The English noun *friend* is transformed into a Georgian verb through the addition of the verbal prefix **დაი-**, resulting in a form that conforms to Georgian verb formation rules and is widely used in informal speech, especially among younger speakers.

Example: „რა მაგარი ტიპია, დაიფრენდე?“ (*He's such a cool person - why don't you add him as a friend?*)

Another well-established neologism is **„დაგუგლე“ (dagugle)**, derived from the proper

noun *Google*. In this case, the brand name undergoes functional shift and becomes a verb denoting the act of searching for information online. This process reflects the semantic generalization of a commercial name into a common verb, a phenomenon increasingly observed in digital communication.

Example: „ამ თემაზე მეტი ინფორმაცია დაგჭირდება? დაგუგლე!“ (*Do you need more information on this topic? Google it!*)

Similarly, the term **„ჩათაობა“ (chataoba)** represents a hybrid formation combining the English root *chat* with a Georgian derivational suffix, used to denote prolonged or continuous online conversation.

Example: „მთელი საღამო ჩათაობდა და არ მპასუხობდა.“ (*He was chatting all evening and didn't reply to me.*)

Overall, these neologisms show how global digital practices interact with the Georgian language, creating new forms that are easy to use and grammatically acceptable. Their frequent use in both online and offline communication suggests that these expressions are becoming normal parts of everyday language. This highlights the role of social media as an important driver of modern lexical change in the Georgian language.

2) Abbreviations, Acronyms, and Emoji Language in Social Media Communication

Abbreviations and **acronyms** are an important feature of social media communication, reflecting the speed and immediacy of the digital environment. As instant communication has become common, users often shorten words and phrases to communicate more quickly and maintain the flow of conversation. These abbreviated forms can also signal digital competence and group belonging, especially among active social media users. In addition, emotion-based language, such as emojis and symbols, has become a central part of online communication, functioning as a semiotic system that complements or sometimes replaces spoken language.

Examples of Abbreviation:

- **"ბმ" -** ბოლოს მოგწერ
- **"კდმ„ -** კარგი, დავამატებ მოგვიანებით
- **IDK** – I Don't Know
- **SMH** – Shaking My Head
- **ICYMI** – In Case You Missed It
- **TTYL** – Talk To You Later
- **BRB** – Be Right Back

Examples of Acronyms:

- **LOL (Laugh Out Loud) -** one of the most common expressions used to signal laughter, amusement, or light-heartedness in digital interaction, e.g.:*"That joke was hilarious, LOL!"*
- **YOLO (You Only Live Once) –** a phrase popular among younger users, typically used to justify bold, spontaneous, or unconventional actions. Linguistically, *YOLO* functions as a motivational discourse marker that frames risk-taking behaviour as socially acceptable or even desirable within peer groups, e.g.: *"Let's go bungee jumping, YOLO!"*

Emojis are widely used in digital communication to support meaning, strengthen communicative intent, or replace prosodic and non-verbal cues that are normally present in face-to-face interaction. They function as important tools for emotional expression, allowing users to convey feelings such as happiness, irony, frustration, or affection quickly and effectively. By accompanying or replacing words, emojis help users express emotions in real time in online environments that often lack tone of voice and facial expressions. As a visual mode of communication, emojis make emotional expression more direct, less ambiguous, and more accessible in digital discourse.

At the same time, emojis are highly context-dependent and often polysemous. A single emoji may carry different meanings depending on the communicative context, the participants involved, platform conventions, and cultural norms. Emojis can be used humorously, ironically,

or emphatically, and their interpretation relies on shared contextual knowledge. This highlights the interpretative nature of emoji use in digital discourse. Cross-cultural analysis also shows that emoji usage varies significantly across linguistic and cultural communities.

In English-language social media, emojis are often used for aesthetic appeal, humour, and conformity with popular digital trends. In contrast, Georgian social media discourse demonstrates a stronger emotional and identity-oriented use of emojis. Georgian users frequently employ emojis related to national food, traditional lifestyles, leisure activities, and culturally significant symbols, using them to express social identity and reinforce cultural belonging.

Examples:

- „გავუფრთხილდეთ ბუნებას! 🌍🌱“
- 🍕❤️ – „მიყვარს პიცა.“
- 🔥🔥🔥 – „ეს საოცარია!“
- „თურმე 🐑 უნდა ვიყო და ყველაფერს ვეთანხმებოდე?“
- 💀 = "That's so funny, I'm dead!“
- "Besties for life 👯💔“
- "Equality for all ✊🌈"

3) Hashtags as linguistic and ideological instruments

Hashtags (#) are distinctive linguistic tools in social media communication. They function as lexical items, discourse markers, and metacommunicative devices. Although they were originally created as a technical tool for organizing content, hashtags have developed into complex semiotic resources that shape meaning, structure discourse, and signal ideological positions. Linguistically, hashtags condense meaning into compact forms, allowing users to highlight key topics and connect individual messages to broader social or thematic discussions.

As Zappavigna notes, hashtags create "searchable talk," enabling users to link their posts to shared topics and online communities (Zappavigna, 2015, pp. 274-276). In this way, hashtags are not simply indexing tools but active meaning-making elements that influence how messages are interpreted within wider discourses. From a discourse-analytic perspective, hashtags can also express evaluation, stance, irony, emotion, or ideological alignment without relying on full propositional statements.

For example: **#ThrowbackThursday** – a nostalgia-signaling reminder and reflecting the post.

#StayHome – communicates a public health message and connects the user to the group's collective responsibility.

#Blessed – works evaluatively, expressing gratitude or a positive self-presentation.

The power of hashtags has also extended to political, cultural and marketing discourses. Hashtags, as Scott (2015) has argued, "are very effective tools in digital branding and persuasion as they "translate slogans into linguistic tokens (interactive) inviting participants to participate and replicate" (pp. 36–38). Campaign-based hashtags such as **#MeToo**, **#BlackLivesMatter**, or **#SaveThePlanet** demonstrate how linguistic minimalism can embody the ideologies within social constructions, thus inspiring solidarity and collective action. In multilingual non-English-using domains as in Georgian social media discourse, hashtags are often hybrid in nature and involve not only the use of English lexical material but also local linguistic and cultural references. For instance: **#GeorgianFood**, **#TbilisiLife** – weave local identity into global digital conversation. **#სახლში_დარჩი** ("stay at home") - shows how global hashtags are localized in Georgian language.

In addition to using hashtags in a single language, social media discourse often reflects examples of linguistic mixing, including the mixing of languages (i.e., hybrid hashtags) which combine elements of multiple languages into one unit. This point is evident in the case of Georgian social media discourse. For instance:

"Nature, culture, and adventure! **#თუშეთიAdventures''**

"Experience the true taste of Georgia! **#ქართულიWine".**

"დღეს ხაჭაპურს ვამზადებთ! #Foodie #GeorgianCuisine"

4) Wordplay (Puns)

Wordplay (especially puns) is a characteristic stylistic and pragmatic aspect of social media discourse. Puns are also used in digital communication to express and respond to social, cultural and economic issues in an enjoyable and humorous manner. By taking advantage of lexical ambiguity, polysemy and metaphorical meanings, wordplay offers a way for users to present common life situations from a creative and often critical standpoint. Semantic ambiguity, a typical device used in social media puns, is when a single lexical item carries multiple meanings: For example:

"I used to be a baker, but I couldn't make enough dough." In this sentence, the word dough simultaneously refers to bread dough and money. This dual meaning enables a humorous yet socially resonant commentary on financial success and business sustainability. Such puns are frequently used in social media contexts related to entrepreneurship or economic challenges.

Similarly, metaphorical reinterpretation plays a crucial role in digital wordplay: "**A boiled egg in the morning is hard to beat."** Here, hard to beat operates both literally (an egg that is hard-boiled) and metaphorically ("very good" or "excellent"), creating a playful and memorable message suitable for informal online communication.

A bakery's Instagram post: **"Life is what you bake it."** This pun creatively takes up the idiomatic phrase "Life is what you make it," substituting make with bake to ground the message in the bakery's professional realm.

Facebook Post from a Fish Market: **"It's so fishy here, you'd think we were hooked!"** The words "fishy" (which is both "related to fish" and "suspicious") and "hooked" (which means "caught" and "captivated") all have a multi-semantic function: at the same time, they're promoting products while entertaining listeners.

Instagram post by a florist: **"Stop flor-ishing and bloom where you're planted!"** That example mixes flor- (flowers), and helps keep it consistent with the thematic message of flower growing and success.

Twitter post from a coffee shop: **"Espresso yourself before you regret it!"** The pun combines express yourself with espresso and makes a clever call to action that is funny all while being about the brand.

Facebook post from a construction company: **"We nail every project!"** The verb nail serves physical (for nails) and metaphoric (to do something or to achieve something) purposes that convey business skills in lexical obscurity.

Such examples serve, from a linguistic point of view, many functions, in social media discourse: it provides memorability, emotional resonance and subtly, and not so clearly, in social and often commercial terms. Puns offer an effective way for users and brands to easily convey complex messages, while keeping a relaxed and playful tone.

Social Media and Language: Positive and Negative Effects

Social media has become a powerful force shaping modern language. On the one hand, it encourages linguistic creativity and innovation. On the other hand, it challenges established language norms and traditional rules.

Positive Effects

Lexical enrichment is often seen as one of the positive effects of social media on language. The fast creation and spread of new words and expressions in digital communication expand a language vocabulary and reflect ongoing social and technological change. According to Crystal (2006, pp. 17-19), the Internet provides a rich space for lexical creativity, where new forms and meanings can be tested and may eventually become part of the language system. Social media supports linguistic creativity through the use of emojis, symbols, abbreviations, and playful language. These semiotic resources often replace paralinguistic cues such as intonation and facial expression, helping to increase emotional expression in written text.

Rather than indicating language decline, Herring argues that such practices represent adaptive strategies suited to computer-mediated communication (Herring, 2004, pp. 343-345). In

addition, social media creates new communicative contexts and genres with their own conventions. Digital advertising, celebrity communication, memes, and influencer content favour brevity, immediacy, and audience interaction. As Tagliamonte notes, these environments give rise to new discourse forms that combine features of spoken and written language in socially meaningful ways (Tagliamonte, 2016, pp. 5-7).

Negative Effects

Although social media offers many linguistic benefits, some researchers also point to its negative effects on language use. One common concern is the increase in grammatical and spelling inaccuracies. The speed and brevity required in online communication often encourage users to simplify sentence structures and ignore traditional grammatical rules. Crystal notes that while these deviations are often context-dependent, their frequent use may weaken users' awareness of standard language norms, particularly among younger speakers (Crystal, 2006, pp. 151–153).

In addition, the dominance of informal digital discourse can lead to register confusion, where language features typical of social media appear in formal or academic contexts. Overall, social media can be seen as a double-edged phenomenon in linguistic development. While it promotes creativity, innovation, and contextual diversity, it may also challenge grammatical accuracy and appropriate register use. A balanced linguistic assessment must therefore consider both the productive and potentially destabilizing effects of social media on contemporary language use.

Conclusion

Social media is one major space of communication in which natural language shift and innovation is developed and occurs very rapidly. New words, slang expressions, emojis, abbreviations, and hybrid forms also crop up incessantly on digital platforms. All of these features enable communication, bringing people from different languages and cultures into direct contact with each other. As a result, social media has become an essential environment for linguistic creativity and linguistic development in the digital age. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter are making communication faster, more varied and more global. They are not only used to convey personal opinions and daily messages, but also to fashion and disseminate linguistic trends fast. Thus, social media can strongly impact modern spoken behavior and language usage in different cultures. On the one hand the influence of social media on language is dual. It encourages creativity and speedy language developments, but can also reduce traditional language practices and risk linguistic identity, particularly in smaller or less dominant languages. And for this reason we must evaluate digital communication in a balanced way. In closing, digital technologies have not only changed the way we communicate. They also define the future shape of language. Further systematic and interdisciplinary research is therefore required both to figure out the linguistic aspects of social media effects as well as help maintain linguistic diversity in the face of rapidly changing global communication and digital communication environments.

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ენობრივი ვარიაციები ციფრულ ეპოქაში: სოციალური მედიის როლი ყოველდღიურ სასაუბრო კომუნიკაციაში

ნახუცრიშვილი ეკატერინე
ძამიაშვილი ელენე
იაკობ გოგებაშვილის სახელობის თელავის სახელმწიფო უნივერსიტეტი

აბსტრაქტი

ნაშრომი იკვლევს თანამედროვე ენობრივი ვარიაციების გამოყენების საკითხს სოციალურ მედიაკომუნიკაციაში, ყურადღებას ამახვილებს ციფრულ პლატფორმებსა და მათ გავლენაზე. ენა წარმოადგენს დინამიკურ სისტემას, რომელიც მუდმივად ვითარდება სოციალური და ტექნოლოგიური ცვლილებების ფონზე, ხოლო სოციალური მედია ჩამოყალიბდა ერთ-ერთ უმნიშვნელოვანეს საკომუნიკაციო სივრცედ, სადაც აღნიშნული პროცესები განსაკუთრებით ინტენსიურად და დაჩქარებული ტემპით მიმდინარეობს. ისეთი პლატფორმები, როგორიცაა Facebook, Instagram, Twitter და TikTok, ქმნიან სპეციფიკურ დისკურსულ გარემოს, რომელიც აერთიანებს ზეპირი და წერილობითი ენის მახასიათებლებს და ხელს უწყობს არაოფიციალურ, კრეატიულ და ემოციურად ექსპრესიულ კომუნიკაციას.

კვლევა ეფუძნება თვისებრივ დისკურსულ-ანალიტიკურ მიდგომას და აანალიზებს ძირითადი სოციალური მედია პლატფორმებიდან შერჩეულ საჯაროდ ხელმისაწვდომ პოსტებსა და კომენტარებს. ანალიზი კონცენტრირებულია სოციალური მედიის ენის ოთხ ძირითად ასპექტზე: ნეოლოგიზმებზე, შემოკლებებსა და ემოჯებზე, ჰეშთეგებსა და სიტყვათა თამაშზე.

კვლევის შედეგები ცხადყოფს, რომ ნეოლოგიზმები სოციალური მედიის ენის ერთ-ერთ ცენტრალურ მახასიათებელს წარმოადგენს. მრავალი ახალი ლექსიკური ერთეული წარმოიშობა პლატფორმების სპეციფიკური გამოყენებისა და ონლაინ ქცევების შედეგად. განსაკუთრებული ყურადღება ეთმობა ქართულ სოციალურ მედია დისკურსს, სადაც ინგლისური ციფრული ტერმინები აქტიურად არის ნასესხები და ადაპტირებული ქართული ენის მორფოლოგიურ მოდელებთან, რაც ენობრივი კრეატიულობისა და სტრუქტურული მოქნილობის ნათელ გამოვლინებას წარმოადგენს.

შემოკლებები, აკრონიმები და ემოჯები უზრუნველყოფს სწრაფ და ეფექტურ კომუნიკაციას და აბალანსებს არავერბალური კომუნიკაციის ელემენტების არარსებობას ციფრულ გარემოში. ემოჯები მნიშვნელოვან ფუნქციას ასრულებს ემოციისა და სოციალური იდენტობის გამოხატვაში, ხოლო მათი გამოყენება მნიშვნელოვნად არის დამოკიდებული კულტურულ კონტექსტზე. ქართულ სოციალურ მედიაში ემოჯები

ხშირად ასახავს ადგილობრივ კულტურულ ღირებულებებსა და კოლექტიურ იდენტობას. ჰეშთეგები განიხილება როგორც ენობრივი და იდეოლოგიური ინსტრუმენტები, რომლებიც გამოხატავს გარკვეულ პოზიციას და აკავშირებს ინდივიდუალურ შეტყობინებებს უფრო ფართო სოციალურ, კულტურულ და პოლიტიკურ საკითხებთან, ხშირად ჰიბრიდული და მრავალენოვანი ფორმების გამოყენებით.

ნაშრომი ასევე მიმოიხილავს სოციალური მედიის გავლენას ენის განვითარებაზე. ერთი მხრივ, იგი ხელს უწყობს ინოვაციას, კრეატიულობასა და ლექსიკური მარაგის გამდიდრებას, ხოლო მეორე მხრივ, შესაძლოა გარკვეულ გამოწვევად იქცეს გრამატიკული სიზუსტისა და სტილისტური ნორმების დაცვის თვალსაზრისით. საერთო ჯამში, სოციალური მედია მნიშვნელოვან როლს ასრულებს თანამედროვე ენის ფორმირებაში და საჭიროებს დაბალანსებულ, სისტემურ და უწყვეტ ლინგვისტურ კვლევას.

საკვანძო სიტყვები: *სოციალური მედიის დისკურსი; ენობრივი ვარიაცია; ნეოლოგიზმები; ემოჯები და შემოკლებები; ჰეშთეგები; ციფრული კომუნიკაცია; ქართული ენა.*