

The Role of Digital Language in Shaping Social Identity among Arab Youth: A Linguistic Analysis of Social Media Discourse

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دور اللغة الرقمية في تشكيل الهوية الاجتماعية بين الشباب العربي / تحليل

لغوي للخطاب في مواقع التواصل الاجتماعي

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الكلية التربوية المفتوحة

Abstract

This study examines the role of digital language in shaping social identity among Arab youth through a linguistic analysis of social media discourse. With platforms like Instagram, and Facebook becoming key spaces for communication and self-expression, Arab youth are crafting unique linguistic practices that blend Modern Standard Arabic, colloquial dialects, English, and other languages. These digital expressions reflect cultural, regional, and generational identities while mediating between traditional norms and global influences. The research explores how language use on social media fosters a sense of belonging, challenges cultural conventions, and social affiliations. Employing a qualitative methodology, the study analyzes social media content from diverse Arab regions, focusing on linguistic patterns such as slang, and emojis, as well as themes of identity and community. Challenges include the diversity of Arabic dialects, ethical concerns investigating the interplay between language and identity which sheds light on how Arab youth navigate cultural change in the digital age. **Keywords:** Digital language, Arab youth, social media discourse, social identity, linguistic analysis, Arabic dialects, cultural differences, online communities, digital communication.

المخلص

تتناول هذه الدراسة دور اللغة الرقمية في تشكيل الهوية الاجتماعية لدى الشباب العربي من خلال تحليل لغوي لخطاب وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي. ومع تحول منصات مثل إنستغرام وفيسبوك إلى فضاءات رئيسية للتواصل والتعبير عن الذات، يبتكر الشباب العربي ممارسات لغوية فريدة تجمع بين اللغة العربية الفصحى، اللهجات العامية، واللغة الإنجليزية، ولغات أخرى. تعكس هذه التعبيرات الرقمية الهويات الثقافية والإقليمية، بينما تتوسط بين الأعراف التقليدية والتأثيرات العالمية. تستكشف الدراسة كيفية استخدام اللغة على وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي لتعزيز الشعور بالانتماء، وتحدي التقاليد الثقافية، وبناء الانتماءات الاجتماعية. تعتمد الدراسة على المنهجية النوعية لتحليل محتوى وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي من مناطق عربية متنوعة، مع التركيز على الأنماط اللغوية مثل استخدام العامية والرموز التعبيرية، إضافة إلى موضوعات الهوية والمجتمع. تتطرق الدراسة إلى تحديات تشمل تنوع اللهجات العربية والقضايا الأخلاقية، مما يبرز أهمية دراسة العلاقة بين اللغة والهوية و تسلط الضوء على كيفية تعامل الشباب العربي مع التغير الثقافي في العصر الرقمي. **الكلمات المفتاحية:** اللغة الرقمية، الشباب العربي، خطاب وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، الهوية الاجتماعية، التحليل اللغوي، اللهجات العربية، الاختلافات الثقافية، المجتمعات الرقمية، التواصل الرقمي.

1.Introduction

There is a high degree of quantitative and qualitative similarity between current communication systems. It has mostly become a routine to watch TV on portable devices or access the web on a TV at home. But new forms of

interconnected communication are changing the way people communicate and making it possible to tailor conversations to each individual's needs and wants (Karacor, 2009, p.121). Online social networks allow users to communicate with one another and share information about interests and hobbies. A person may join a social community, make a profile, and then post photos and updates about themselves and their friends (Calik, 2010, p.4). "Every culture in the world is becoming closer to every other culture as a result of the rapid development of communication technology. Every civilization on Earth has become more interdependent because of this (Karacor, 2009, p. 121). With the proliferation of the Internet in the modern period, new media—characterized by its openness and interactivity—has become an essential platform for individuals to maintain relationships and develop their identities. A person's sense of self-identity is formed by their perception of themselves in relation to the world and society at large (Giddens, 2020). In order to establish oneself, the person requires the help of others. Emotional, social, political, and bodily connections of solidarity, a feeling of safety, and a sense of belonging to a larger whole are all aspects of one's identity that have a psychological component. Emotional, social, political, and bodily connections of solidarity, a feeling of safety, and a sense of belonging to a larger whole are all aspects of one's identity that have a psychological component. In addition to variety, identities carry compatibilities and incompatibilities with them. In unfamiliar contexts and with several levels of communication, people may see themselves differently. Every additional level of communication appears to necessitate a distinct persona; every new classification will either muddy the waters or shed light on them, depending on the others. Reflective identities emerge as a result of the variety that virtual networks provide to society. There is a high probability of stereotyping since members of the same group will have similar identities (Gunduz & Pembecioglu, 2014, p.39). "Self-presentation," according to Hernandez-Serrano et al. (2022), is the process of presenting oneself in a way that makes one feel secure. Using new media to promote one's profile allows people to be more authentic and proud of their uniqueness. According to Goffman (2002), individuals must first demonstrate to the world that they are respectable human beings. By appealing to the performer's baser instincts, he outlined a strategy for managing one's outward look. When people reach self-integration, the last stage of development, they are able to express themselves completely. People should take stock of themselves in light of their current context and the views of others around them right now [Erikson, 1994]. The accessibility and participatory nature of new media platforms can facilitate self-integration. According to Zillich and Riesmeyer (2021), users absorb the prevailing social norms on these platforms by comparing their profiles to others' and reading the advice and criticism supplied in the comment and like sections.

2.The Social Media and the Arab Youth Identity

The influence of social media on 'youth identity' in the Middle-east is a fairly unexplored topic. Middle-eastern youth are different, almost unique, in their cultural, religious and societal make up. Currently literature exists surrounding the broader impact of media on youth but is primarily focused around Western nations encompassing starkly different population dynamics. While youth in the Western countries have been born and raised in nations that are governed by democratic administrations, Arab youth has lived under monarchies and dictatorial regimes. The Western countries have more liberalized societies when compared to communities in the Arab region (DeLong-Bas, 2014). Concepts such as freedom of speech and gender equality are fairly new in the Middle-eastern region while have a long-standing tradition in the West. As such, the Arab youth should, ideally, have been acclimatized to non-democratic governments and conservative society (Fitouti, 2011). There are two key theories of the development of identity and self-perception. The Social Cognitive Theory by Albert Bandura (1986) and the Social Comparison theory by Festinger (1954) have been used extensively to analyze the impact of mass media and communications on consumers. Also, there are studies that specifically concentrate on the effects of social media on its users, employing each of the two theories under consideration. However, the unique aspect of Arab youth identity and its relationship to social media is yet to be investigated through the lens of these theories. Certainly, the growth of social media offers immense opportunities for the growth of businesses across various contexts. In one instance, social media has exhibited alluring opportunities for improving marketing schemes of a variety of business endeavors. Ultimately, this has contributed to an increase in dividends of participating business, which is tightly coupled to the subsequent boost in economy (Al-Deen& Hendricks, 2012, p. 82). (Ali,M. (2018).Social Media and Its Impact on Arab Youth IdentityCanadian Center of Science and Education,11(1): 1.)However, some people, either because they have been victims of harassment, because of their activist stances or for any other reason may find it useful to create profiles corresponding to a fake identity (boyd, 2011). "Being online makes it easier for people to explore new forms of identities, such as fantasy avatars, and to shift identity or secure multiple identities with relative freedom", (Foresight Future Identities,

2013: 25). One important way of conceptualizing user-generated comments that online Arab media facilitate is to examine their linkages to the construction and maintenance of a new online public sphere. Scholars concur that user-generated comments promote a vibrant public sphere although question of how inclusive and public these deliberative spaces are has been a subject of frequent critique elsewhere. Lines of criticism such as these focused on Habermas's original public sphere concept as being male dominated, emphatically rational, and "western-centered" (see Fraser, 1990; Warner, 2002). Fraser and others have convincingly argued that the public sphere is made up of discrete units, instead of Habermas's ideologically coherent construct. In liberal democracies, argues Fraser, the "public sphere" can include previously marginalized social groups who form "subaltern-counter publics" (Fraser, 1990).

3.Literature Review

In this themed issue titled "The Potential and Limits of Arabic Digital Humanities," the authors investigate how to enhance our present knowledge of social and cultural development in the Arab world and how to more easily bring about behavioral changes or transformations. Using digitized books, periodicals, and printed ephemera, the articles in this special issue deepen our understanding of the influential figures in the Arab world's written history during a pivotal phase in modern Arab history. When put together, these sources will shed light on the global informal and formal networks of the people who created these writings and their intellectual journeys. At a pivotal juncture that prepared the path for Arab modernity, we use computational analysis and topic modeling to delve into pertinent theme debates among prominent Arab-Islamic intellectuals about the conceptualization of race, language, culture, and identity. In this case, topic modeling is a statistical approach for dealing with large datasets (hundreds of pages of Al-Manar and Al-Risala) that are nearly hard to handle using traditional methods. Text segmentation, cultural pattern discovery using topic model calculations, topical association or regularity assessment, coherence value capture, and traditional close reading for valence and quality round out the process. That is why it's so useful for tagging aspects or variables in models used in the social sciences. In order to close the Arabic gap, this project will utilize the knowledge and resources of NLeSC and CLARIAH to create a suite of tools for computational analysis and text mining in Arabic. These tools will serve as the basis for our case studies. This initiative created the first smart Arabic platform. It stores several thousands of documents. Researchers in the social and humanities fields are anticipating the project's platform, which is both large and intelligent, to be an invaluable resource. This initiative significantly advanced the field of comparative cultural studies by challenging long-held assumptions about the West's relative position to "the East," and vice versa. This project sought to theoretically and pragmatically intervene in long-running debates about race/ethnicity, the public sphere, social movements, citizenship, collective memory, and identity by using a transcultural lens that draws attention to the fault lines in canonical, Western-centric ideas and theories. Several researchers from other continents and academic traditions have contributed their knowledge to this project, making it very collaborative from a methodology standpoint. The nature of this special issue makes it quite interdisciplinary. It brings together experts in computational linguistics, social science, and the humanities to strengthen the body of knowledge in the area of Arabic digital humanities and to contribute to the advancement of knowledge in sociology, art history, cultural studies, and other related disciplines. Professionals will be able to talk about the paradigms they're using for ongoing projects at this gathering. In order to better grasp this contemporary phenomena in Arab culture, we will analyze their works for how well they served their respective disciplines and how much they contributed to our understanding of Arab culture. Using the aforementioned theoretical framework, this special issue examines cultural and political conceptions of empire in relation to Arab world minorities, with a focus on Egypt. Hegemony and imperialist logic are the subjects of several of the pieces that examine their methods and claims in this issue. They investigate cultural factors using computational methods, looking at how Arab Jews, for instance, adopt different models and techniques. According to Edward W. Said's Culture and Imperialism, the most important aspects of culture and empire as a political and economic entity are the sum of gender, class, race, etc. Said draws a direct line between racism and colonization in the aforementioned literary, cultural, and intellectual movements. As cultural goods, literary and artistic works have always had some connection to society at large. In order to examine and place post-Arab Spring digital feminism in the Levant within a critical discourse framework, the study titled "Social media discourses of feminist protest from the Arab Levant: digital mirroring and transregional dialogue" suggests the idea of digital mirroring. Through digital mirroring, we can see how modern Arab feminist groups shape their online personas in response to the horizontal practices of other feminist movements in the area and the vertical dimensions of their own sociopolitical circumstances. The research is conducted on a multimodal corpus of social media postings made by 32 feminist organizations in

Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine (both formal and informal) from 2011 to 2019. Modern sociolinguistic research on Arabic diagnosis and multimodality provides the theoretical foundation for an examination of visual and verbal tactics employed by MENA feminist groups. The results show how Levantine women's transregional networking, local resistance, and digital self-representation interact intricately. If we want to understand the transregional breadth of social media discursive strategies—a key component of modern Arab feminism and emancipatory discourses more generally—we need to look at digital mirroring from both a vertical and horizontal contextual perspective, we say. The findings highlight women's autonomy while revealing the persistence of stereotypical views of women as caregivers and victims of sex-based violence. Specifically, it appears that the representational technique of the woman in protest is fundamental to the majority (if not all) of organizations. To further idealize the movement as more varied and intersectional, a wide range of artworks stylize Arab women protesting. Protesters from countries like Sudan and Lebanon who made widely publicized movements, like the "Nubian Queen" and the "Kick Queen," have become symbols of female empowerment and rebellion, and their influence has spread well beyond the borders of their own countries. It compares and contrasts in a few ways with an earlier research (KhosraviNik & Zia, 2014) that looked at how the competing Iranian nationalist discourse on Facebook was constructed and represented instances.

4. Methodology: Model of Analysis

The qualitative approach is a research method which focuses on studying social and cultural phenomena by analyzing words, expressions, and behaviors to understand the meanings that individuals attach to their experiences. This approach relies on approaches such as text analysis, interviews, and discourse studies, and is intended to describe phenomena and not quantify them. In the article "The Role of Digital Language in Shaping Social Identity among Arab Youth", The qualitative approach helps in the analysis of social and linguistic facts about how Arab youth employ digital language. By close analysis of the cultural markers that crop up in digital language and research on the application of foreign words, colloquial forms, and classical Arabic, we are able to uncover how the youths' online language represents their social selves. This instrument is best suited to study the social and cultural changes that are taking place among Arab youth in the virtual world since it facilitates understanding of the components of identity and cultural belonging through analyzing the social circumstances of these interactions.

5. Data Analysis

During the course of conducting the research "The Role of Digital Language in Shaping Social Identity among Arab Youth," a sample of Facebook and Instagram comments were collected to study the manner Arab youth use digital language in their communication. These comments were analyzed qualitatively with emphasis on understanding the linguistic norms and social implications present in digital texts. The focus was laid on youth incorporation of standard Arabic, local dialects, and foreign words in their daily usage, reflecting the convergence of local and global cultural forces. This approach also allowed for examination of the cultural symbols and common terms that represent social identities and group allegiances. Such utterances demonstrate the manner in which adolescents speak within differing social contexts, and employ language as a means of communicating greater feelings of belonging and identity online.

Example 1: (أريد تسون لايكات على الصورة وتسون شير)

Description

Linguistic analysis of the phrase: The phrase is written in colloquial Arabic, which reflects the local linguistic identity of the speaker. Choosing this dialect instead of classical Arabic reflects the trend towards fast and informal communication that characterizes interaction on social media. Using "تسون" instead of "تقومون عمل" reflects linguistic economy and fluency in conversation. Repetition (تسون لايكات وتسون شير): Repetition here may indicate an emphasis on the importance of the two verbs in achieving the desired goal (spreading the picture). Using words such as "likes" and "share" instead of the Arabic alternatives (likes and sharing) reflects the cultural influence of the English language on Arab youth.

Analysis

Social context: The phrase shows the user's desire to activate the spirit of group and cooperation among members of the virtual community, which reflects the importance of building collective identities on social media. The words indicate a focus on enhancing digital presence and increasing interaction, which is part of the digital identity of young people who seek social recognition through numbers (likes and shares). The speaker here expresses a specific goal that he seeks to achieve, which is to gain interaction and support from friends or followers. This call contributes to enhancing the sense of belonging to a larger social network. The use of this

direct and informal formula reinforces the idea that Arab youth tend to express themselves in simple and popular ways, which reflects the nature of the open and inclusive social identity on the Internet. Cultural affiliation: The use of colloquial language reflects local identity, while quoting foreign terms expresses global influence. This blend promises a hybrid identity for young Arabs, merging local origins with global modernity. A share and like are social and virtual representations of appreciation and engagement, and an essential part of young individuals' new virtual self. The phrase exemplifies linguistic and social trends communicating Arab youths' digital identity. It is an amalgamation of global and local cultural forces, and illustrates the importance of virtual communication as a way of expanding social presence and membership in virtual societies.

Example 2: (طيب ماهي نفس الفكرة حطيمهم في الحلة واعلمهم مكس وكدا مع بعض)

Description

The phrase is written in a local colloquial dialect, which reflects the nature of informal and common communication in the context of digital communication among young people. such as "and so on" reflects spontaneity and speed of expression in digital conversations. Cultural influence "الحلة" and "مكس" express an overlap between traditional Arabic vocabulary (الحلة, meaning pot) and borrowed words from English (مكس, meaning mixing). This blending reflects the influence of other cultures on the language used by young people. The sentence takes on the character of direct guidance in a friendly manner, which is a common pattern in digital conversations that take place between peers. The phrase illustrates the nature of young people in relying on simple and spontaneous expressions in digital interaction, which enhances the sense of belonging to a community that shares the same culture or style of speech. The use of everyday examples (put them in the pot) indicates the way young people bring concepts closer in a practical and simple way that suits quick understanding.

Analysis

This phrase expresses young people's tendency to communicate in an informal and fun way, which creates a digital identity based on simplicity and openness. The combination of traditional and modern terms in the phrase creates a state of rapprochement between local and global cultures, which enhances the hybrid digital identity of Arab youth. The phrase highlights the phenomenon of overlap between Arabic and English like (Mix) (مكس) which is a common pattern among Arab youth on social media, reflecting their openness to global influences. The use of "الحلة" as a traditional symbol indicates adherence to some local values and customs even in the context of modern speech. The phrase represents a model of digital communication among Arab youth, as the blending of local language and foreign vocabulary reflects the impact of globalization on cultural identity. It also highlights the importance of simplicity and spontaneity in building a shared social identity on the Internet.

Example 4: أنا هاد رأيي بكل الماركات

Description

The statement highlights the speaker's engagement in a broader social phenomenon where consumer opinions become a medium for self-expression and identity construction. By addressing "ماركات," the speaker connects their identity to contemporary consumer culture, which is heavily influenced by branding, marketing, and societal perceptions. The informal tone and colloquial language further demonstrate how digital platforms serve as spaces for casual yet impactful expressions of individuality and group belonging.

Analysis

The statement "أنا هاد رأيي بكل الماركات" employs colloquial Arabic, reflecting an informal and personal tone that facilitates casual connection with the audience, a hallmark of social media discourse. The phrase conveys a definitive opinion, signaling the speaker's confidence and willingness to generalize their perspective on brands. The emphasis on "أنا" highlights a self-centric communication style, often used to project individuality in digital spaces. By engaging in brand-related discourse, the speaker connects with consumer culture, where preferences reflect personal taste, lifestyle, and values.

Such expressions invite public engagement, fostering interaction and community-building. Furthermore, the statement shapes identity by projecting individuality and aligning or contrasting the speaker with specific social groups, illustrating the role of digital language in constructing affiliations and cultural belonging.

Example 6: (جبت الغسالة الاوتوماتيك وتركت العادية لانها تنظف احسن ومحاب الاوفن والميكرويف احب الطباخ العادي احب روبوت الكنس خط أحمر)

Description

The phrase " (محاب الاوفن والميكرويف) (أحب) and left the regular one because it cleans better. (اشتريت الغسالة الاوتوماتيك) " reflects the nature of everyday discussions about household appliances in the context of modern life. It shows the balance between adhering to traditional appliances and adopting modern

technologies. The phrase is written in colloquial dialect, giving it a personal and informal character that reflects personal experiences and individual preferences. It contains elements of acceptance (automatic washing machine, sweeping robot) and rejection (oven and microwave) based on values and practical performance.

Analysis

The phrase expresses the everyday and spontaneous nature of the discussion, which enhances familiarity in digital communication. The use of words such as "اوتوماتيك", "عادي", and "روبوت الكنس" reflects the balance between preserving traditional methods and adopting modern technology. Emphasis and preference: Using the expression "خط أحمر" highlights the intensity of adherence to a certain opinion and gives strength to the personal position. The sentence highlights the importance of household appliances to daily life and shows how personal taste reflects social and economic requirements. Technology and identity: Adopting automatic washing machines but rejecting new ovens reflects a desire to balance innovation and ease on one hand, with adhering to what the person feels familiar and efficient on the other. The sentence emphasizes the person's need to share their opinion on home technology in the expression of their identity. By presenting a strong individual perspective, the text will be able to prompt discussions and responses from readers, fostering stronger feelings of digital community and belonging. The sentence reflects a balanced view of modern technology, wherein functionality-enhancing innovation (such as the washing machine and the vacuum cleaner robot) is accepted and what is considered unnecessary or less desirable (such as the oven and the microwave) is avoided. The writing conveys the social identity formation processes from interacting with modern habits and traditional traditions, affirming that language in the digital era reflects cultural and individual tastes.

6.Results

1. Conveying a request for social backing: The sentence mirrors a shared social practice on social media where people crave engagement as a method of validating their social worth and strengthening their virtual presence.
2. Structure using colloquial language: Utilizing colloquial language conveys a fresh and informal character, which raises the sense of proximity between the user and their viewers.
- 3.Emphasis on social identity: The appeal shows the importance of sense of belongingness and admiration in the internet, where interaction is an indirect gauge of social acceptance.
- 4.Informal language: The use of colloquial and impromptu style shows the nature of youth in enjoying straightforward and fast language.
- 5.Cultural Interference: The combination of the old ("Halla") and new ("Mix") vocabulary shows the blending of native culture with global influences.
- 6.Highlighting Cultural Identity: The sentence illustrates the young people's retention of certain traditional values and practices in the face of their openness to modern technologies and expressions.
- 7.Giving Individual Opinion: The sentence illustrates how young people express their own opinions as a means of claiming independence and identity.
- 8.Generalization and Confidence: Using an inclusive sentence signals confidence in one's opinion and the ability to influence others.
9. Community Interaction: Opinion sharing over the Internet tends to be a tacit invitation to argument or conversation, and this strengthens the feeling of being part of an internet community.
10. Coexistence between traditional and modern: The sentence conveys teenagers' tendency for balancing innovation with conformity to conventional practice in the sense that technology is only relied on if it meets the standards of efficiency or convenience.
11. Building personal identity: Individual choice expressed states personal positions that reflect the user's experience and personal nature.
12. Prioritizing: The use of the word "red line" reflects the importance of some devices and their role in improving daily life, which reflects the nature of the relationships which young people form with technology.

Conclusion

The interweaving of foreign vocabulary, classical Arabic, and colloquial dialects is noteworthy, pointing to the increasing influence of globalization. Internet slang also indicates the importance of social values such as group involvement, advocacy for individual identity, and guarding tradition in the face of modernity. By examining comments and posts collected from social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, it was revealed that youth employ a hybrid language, which is made up of colloquial dialects, classical Arabic, and foreign vocabulary. Such a language is not limited to plain or informal communication but also signifies the impact of globalization and contact with different cultures. This study indicates the way in which young adults

communicate through their online interactions, ranging from spontaneous references to more specific commands such as requests for participation or declarations of personal belief. By fusing old and new language, young adults negotiate concepts of identity in a dynamic and flexible manner, allowing them to engage in conversation with a range of different audiences, and assert their belonging to their own virtual communities. Moreover, the study shows that digital language is not just a communication channel, but rather a construction mode of a social identity which adapts to local and global changes. Phrases like "red line" or referring to household appliances are matters of personal preference and cultural values, which reinforce the feeling of belonging to particular groups and are directly associated with the values and customs that people follow. Thus, the present research is a contribution to understanding how social media contributes towards the formation of social and cultural identities of Arab youth, and it also illustrates that digital language is a critical tool to understand social interactions during modern times.

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