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SLENG ORQALI IDENTITET SHAKLLANISHI: RAQAMLI DAVRDA O‘ZBEK YOSHLARI

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Annotatsiya

Ushbu maqolada raqamli davrda o‘zbek yoshlari nutqida sleng orqali identitet shakllanishi tahlil qilinadi. Tadqiqot ijtimoiy tarmoqlar va messengerlar yoshlarning til amaliyotlari va o‘zini ifodalashiga sezilarli ta’sir ko‘rsatadi degan g‘oyaga asoslanadi. Zamonaviy O‘zbekistonda yoshlar nutqi o‘zbek, rus va ingliz tillari hamda global raqamli madaniyat ta’sirida shakllanmoqda. Sleng birliklar, qisqartmalar, gibridd shakllar va kod almashish yoshlar tomonidan ijtimoiy identitetni qurish, guruhga mansublikni ifodalash va boshqa avlodlardan farqlanish vositasi sifatida qo‘llanadi. Maqolada sleng nostandart til hodisasi emas, balki ijtimoiy-madaniy ahamiyatga ega bo‘lgan kommunikativ resurs sifatida talqin qilinadi.

Kalit so‘zlar: yoshlar slengi, identitet, o‘zbek tili, raqamli diskurs, ijtimoiy tarmoqlar, kod almashish, innovatsiya, yoshlar madaniyati.

ФОРМИРОВАНИЕ ИДЕНТИЧНОСТИ ЧЕРЕЗ СЛЕНГ: УЗБЕКСКАЯ МОЛОДЕЖЬ В ЦИФРОВУЮ ЭПОХУ

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Аннотация

В статье рассматривается роль сленга в формировании идентичности узбекской молодежи в цифровую эпоху. Исследование основывается на предположении, что социальные сети и цифровая коммуникация оказывают значительное влияние на языковые практики и самовыражение молодых пользователей. Сленг рассматривается как важный инструмент конструирования социальной идентичности, выражения принадлежности к группе и дистанцирования от других поколений.

Ключевые слова: молодежный сленг, идентичность, узбекский язык, цифровой дискурс, социальные сети, код-свитчинг, инновации

IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION THROUGH SLANG: UZBEK YOUTH IN THE DIGITAL ERA

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Abstract

This article deals with the issues based on how slang contributes to identity construction among Uzbek youth in the digital era. The study is based on the assumption that digital communication environments, particularly social media and messaging platforms, play a central role in shaping linguistic practices and self-representation among young speakers. In contemporary Uzbekistan, youth language is influenced by a complex interaction of Uzbek, Russian, and English, as well as by global digital culture. Slang expressions, abbreviations, hybrid forms, and code-switching patterns are analyzed as key tools through which young users construct social identity, express group belonging, and differentiate themselves from other generations.

Keywords: youth slang, identity construction, Uzbek language, digital discourse, social media, code-switching, linguistic innovation, youth culture.

In the digital era, language has become one of the most powerful tools through which young people construct and express their identities. The rise of social media, messaging applications, and online communities has created new spaces where linguistic creativity, experimentation, and innovation are not only possible but expected. In these environments, youth language often diverges from standardized norms, giving rise to dynamic forms such as slang, abbreviations, hybrid expressions, and multimodal communication. In Uzbekistan, this phenomenon is particularly significant due to the country’s multilingual context and rapid digitalization.

Slang, traditionally viewed as informal or non-standard language, has gained renewed importance as a key element of digital communication. Among Uzbek youth, slang is not simply a set of lexical items;

it is a social practice that reflects identity, group membership, and cultural orientation. Young speakers actively use slang to signal belonging to peer groups, align themselves with global youth culture, and distinguish themselves from older generations. In this sense, slang becomes a symbolic resource that allows individuals to position themselves within complex social and cultural frameworks.

The multilingual environment of Uzbekistan adds another layer of complexity to youth slang. Uzbek, Russian, and English interact in digital discourse, creating hybrid forms that combine elements from multiple linguistic systems. English contributes global trends, technological vocabulary, and internet culture expressions; Russian often provides colloquial nuance and urban identity markers; Uzbek serves as the primary base for local identity and everyday communication. This interaction results in a unique form of digital slang that reflects both local and global influences.

Recent studies on digital discourse emphasize that social media platforms are not neutral communication channels but active environments that shape language use. Features such as hashtags, emojis, character limits, and algorithmic visibility influence how language is produced and interpreted. As a result, slang evolves rapidly in digital contexts, spreading quickly across networks and adapting to new communicative needs.

Literature Review

Recent scholarship shows that the study of youth language in Uzbekistan is gradually moving from general observations about informality toward more focused analyses of digital discourse, multilingualism, and lexical innovation. One of the most relevant local contributions is Normurodova's study [5] of code-switching and translanguaging on social media. The article argues that Uzbek digital discourse is characterized by fluid movement across Uzbek, Russian, and English, and that this movement reflects not confusion but communicative competence within a multilingual environment. This finding is important for the present topic because youth slang in the digital era is rarely monolingual; instead, it emerges from contact, mixing, stylization, and context-sensitive language choice. In this respect, Normurodova's work [5] supports the view that slang is part of a wider multilingual repertoire used by young speakers to perform identity, establish in-group solidarity, and signal cultural positioning.

Mamurova's 2026 analysis of Instagram discourse [4] provides a platform-specific perspective that is particularly valuable for studying slang. Her findings suggest that online youth language in Uzbekistan is inseparable from the affordances of social media itself. Slang, hashtags, abbreviations, emojis, and hybrid expressions function together as components of a multimodal digital style. This means that slang should not be studied only as vocabulary; it should also be understood as part of a broader discourse system that includes visual emphasis, symbolic compression, and platform-shaped self-presentation. Mamurova's work is especially useful because it demonstrates that the social meanings of youth speech are closely tied to the communicative architecture of digital platforms.

Polvannazirova's corpus-based study of English-derived neologisms in Uzbek [6] adds another crucial layer. Her analysis shows that social media and online corpora are active channels through which borrowed items spread, stabilize, and begin to integrate into Uzbek usage. This is highly relevant to youth slang because many slang expressions circulate first as borrowed or semi-borrowed forms before they become locally adapted. In digital youth discourse, English-origin items often index trend awareness, technological literacy, irony, and cosmopolitan identity. Polvannazirova's study therefore helps explain how lexical borrowing becomes part of identity construction rather than merely a process of vocabulary expansion.

Kuriyozov, Vilares, and Gómez-Rodríguez [3] contribute from the computational side through the development of BERTbek, a pretrained language model for Uzbek. Although their work is not directly about slang, it is methodologically important because it expands the technological capacity to analyze Uzbek digital texts at scale. Research on youth slang increasingly requires corpus-based and computational methods, especially when dealing with large volumes of noisy online data. The availability of language-specific models such as BERTbek suggests that Uzbek digital discourse can now be studied with greater empirical precision than before.

Veitsman and Hartmann's broader survey of Turkic Central Asian language [7] processing confirms this development. They show that Uzbek is among the better supported languages in the region in terms of emerging resources, though it still remains under-resourced compared with major world languages. For studies of youth slang, this matters because digital identity work often appears in fast, informal, mixed-language contexts that are difficult to capture without robust tools and annotated corpora. Their review thus supports the need for future youth-language corpora focused specifically on slang,

multilingualism, and social media discourse.

Overall, the local scientific literature suggests that Uzbek youth slang in the digital era must be approached as a socially meaningful and technologically mediated phenomenon. The strongest current studies examine multilingual switching, platform discourse, lexical borrowing, and language technology. What remains insufficiently developed is a fully integrated model connecting all of these dimensions directly to identity construction. That gap is precisely where the present article is positioned.

Foreign scholarship offers a strong theoretical and methodological foundation for analyzing slang as a resource of identity construction in digital youth communication. One of the most influential contributions is Androutopoulos's concept [1] of networked multilingualism, which explains how multilingual practices on social media are shaped by digital connectivity, audience structure, and the wider media environment. His work demonstrates that online language use is highly individualized, genre-sensitive, and embedded in layered repertoires rather than fixed linguistic boundaries. For the Uzbek context, this is especially relevant because youth slang often combines local expressions, Russian urbanisms, and English digital vocabulary in ways that reflect both peer-group belonging and participation in global online culture.

Another major line of foreign research concerns youth language in computer-mediated communication. Verheijen's corpus-based work on Dutch youths' written CMC shows that the language of young users is characterized by patterned deviations from standard norms across spelling, typography, syntax, and lexis. Importantly, these features are not random mistakes but adaptations to the communicative conditions of new media. This insight matters greatly for the study of Uzbek youth slang. Many forms that appear "non-standard" in digital Uzbek are better understood as strategic shorthand, performative styling, or community-based innovation. Verheijen's later work also questions alarmist assumptions that digital youth language necessarily harms literacy, instead encouraging a more differentiated view of register variation.

Research in digital discourse and social media corpora further strengthens this perspective. A recent overview in *Research in Corpus Linguistics* emphasizes that CMC and social media corpora are central for studying identity, ideology, affiliation, politeness, humor, and group formation. This literature is methodologically important because youth slang is most visible not in isolated examples but in repeated, high-frequency interactional patterns across platforms. The corpus approach allows scholars to trace how innovations spread, which communities adopt them, and how specific features become markers of identity.

Studies of youth, identity, and digital media from a broader communication perspective also support the argument that young people use digital language to experiment with belonging, self-presentation, and social distinction. Earlier foundational work on teenage blogs showed that adolescents use online language to reveal personal information, display emotion, and manage self-representation. Broader youth media research similarly argues that digital environments enable unprecedented exploration of identity through communicative experimentation. These findings align closely with the sociolinguistic role of slang: slang allows youth not only to speak differently, but to be socially recognizable in particular ways.

Recent international work on code-mixing in digital media also has direct relevance. Verheijen's work on manifold code-mixing in CMC [8] shows that young users combine languages and styles in sophisticated ways that are shaped by medium, context, and audience. This supports the argument that slang should not be isolated from multilingual practice. In many youth communities, slang emerges precisely through the intersection of borrowing, code-mixing, orthographic play, and genre-specific discourse conventions.

The foreign literature therefore contributes three major insights. First, slang is a central mechanism of youth identity work rather than a peripheral or "incorrect" variety. Second, digital media accelerate linguistic innovation and make slang more visible, more mobile, and more multimodal. Third, rigorous analysis of youth slang increasingly requires corpus, discourse, and computational methods, since online language practices are too dynamic and large-scale to be captured solely through anecdotal observation. These international perspectives provide a strong comparative framework for understanding Uzbek youth slang in the digital era and show that the Uzbek case should be included in the wider field of digital sociolinguistics.

Discussion and Analysis

Youth slang in Uzbekistan functions as a powerful instrument of identity construction in digital environments because it allows young speakers to align themselves with peers, differentiate themselves

from older generations, and position themselves within both local and global symbolic worlds. In the digital era, identity is not simply expressed through content; it is performed through style. Slang is one of the clearest stylistic resources through which this performance takes place. A young user's lexical choices, abbreviations, hybrid expressions, emoji-supported utterances, and mixed-language formulas can index group belonging, social attitude, emotional stance, and generational affiliation all at once. International digital sociolinguistic research consistently shows that youth language online is closely connected to affiliation, identity, and self-presentation, and the Uzbek case reflects the same broader tendency.

One major feature of Uzbek youth slang is its multilingual character. Young speakers in Uzbekistan do not rely only on Uzbek lexical innovation; they also draw on Russian and English resources to construct nuanced online identities. Russian-origin items may signal urban informality, irony, emotional tone, or familiarity, while English-origin items often signal digital competence, trend participation, cosmopolitanism, and closeness to global youth culture. Uzbek, however, usually remains the central anchoring code that makes the discourse locally meaningful and socially recognizable. This means that slang among Uzbek youth is not merely a list of special words; it is a flexible repertoire shaped by multilingual layering. Studies of code-switching and translanguaging in Uzbek social media confirm that such hybrid use is systematic and meaningful.

Another important aspect is the platform-dependent nature of slang. The structure of digital platforms influences which slang forms emerge and how they circulate. Instagram captions and comments encourage compressed, image-oriented, performative language; messaging apps encourage quicker, more intimate, conversational slang; short-form social platforms favor novelty, repetition, and viral catchphrases. Mamurova's Instagram-focused analysis suggests that hashtags, emojis, abbreviations, and stylized expressions are central to discourse construction, not optional extras. This shows that slang is not only lexical but multimodal. It works through the combined effect of wording, script, rhythm, punctuation, visual reference, and platform logic.

Slang also serves a boundary-making function. By using particular expressions, young people mark who is "inside" and who is "outside" a social group. This can be based on age, digital competence, taste, fandom, urban experience, or educational background. In the Uzbek context, slang may distinguish digitally active youth from more traditional speakers, but it can also differentiate among youth groups themselves. Certain expressions may circulate in academic youth discourse, others in influencer culture, others in gaming or entertainment communities. The social meaning of slang therefore depends not only on the form itself but on who uses it, where, and in what interactional frame. Foreign research on youth CMC has shown that age and medium are crucial variables in non-standard language use, and this insight is highly applicable to Uzbek digital discourse.

Finally, Uzbek youth slang should be seen as part of ongoing language change. Digital platforms accelerate the spread of expressions that may once have remained local or short-lived. English borrowings, hybrid phrases, and new semantic shifts can become normalized quickly when repeated across high-visibility networks. Polvannazirova's work on neologisms from English into Uzbek shows that online environments are active channels of lexical diffusion and adaptation. This suggests that some youth slang items may gradually move beyond peer-group speech and enter broader public discourse.

Taken together, these patterns show that youth slang in Uzbekistan is far more than informal vocabulary. It is a living social practice through which young people negotiate identity, belonging, creativity, status, and modernity in the digital era. To study it properly is to study not only language, but contemporary youth culture itself.

Methodological Recommendations

Future research on Uzbek youth slang should begin with the creation of dedicated digital corpora focused specifically on youth-produced content. Existing studies are valuable, but the field still lacks a large, balanced, and annotated corpus that captures slang across multiple platforms and genres. A reliable dataset should include public posts, comments, captions, short-form messages, and hashtag-based discourse from youth-dominated digital spaces. Because slang changes rapidly, the corpus should also be time-sensitive, allowing researchers to track emerging terms, fading expressions, and shifts in meaning over months or years. Corpus-based work on CMC has shown that questions of identity and group formation are best studied through repeated patterns rather than isolated examples.

A second recommendation is to adopt multilayer annotation. It is not enough to collect texts; researchers should annotate them for slang items, code-switching, borrowing, script choice, emoji use, stance markers, discourse function, and probable social meaning. In Uzbekistan, this is especially important

because slang frequently overlaps with multilingual practice. A single expression may contain Uzbek structure, Russian pragmatic coloring, and English lexical material. Without careful annotation, these layers become invisible in analysis. Recent work on Uzbek multilingual online discourse makes clear that youth speech is often hybrid, so annotation should capture that hybridity rather than force data into rigid monolingual categories.

Third, researchers should preserve original orthography and multimodal detail. Many socially meaningful features of digital slang appear through spelling variation, deliberate shortening, repeated letters, punctuation patterns, emojis, and hashtags. If texts are normalized too early, these cues are lost. Following broader CMC methodology, a two-layer approach is advisable: one raw layer preserving the original post, and one normalized layer for search and computational analysis.

Fourth, future studies should combine qualitative and quantitative methods. Qualitative discourse analysis is necessary to interpret the social meanings of slang, while corpus and computational methods are necessary to identify large-scale trends. The growing availability of Uzbek NLP resources, including BERTbek and the broader resource ecosystem described by Veitsman and Hartmann, makes this combined approach increasingly feasible. However, because youth slang is highly context-dependent, machine-based processing should be supported by manually checked training data and expert sociolinguistic interpretation.

Fifth, age, gender, region, and platform should be treated as core variables. Uzbek youth are not a single homogeneous group. Slang used by urban university students may differ from slang used by school-age adolescents, gaming communities, or regional peer networks. International youth-language studies repeatedly show that age group and medium strongly influence digital language practices, and Uzbek research would benefit from the same differentiated design.

Conclusion. Youth slang in Uzbekistan represents a dynamic intersection of language, identity, and digital culture. This article has shown that slang should not be treated as a marginal or purely informal layer of speech. In digital environments, it functions as a central communicative resource through which young people construct belonging, display stance, mark generational difference, and negotiate their place within local and global cultural worlds. Uzbek youth slang is especially rich because it emerges in a multilingual setting shaped by Uzbek, Russian, and English, as well as by the rapid influence of social media platforms and online trends. The discussion also demonstrates that slang is not just a lexical phenomenon. It is multimodal, platform-sensitive, socially stratified, and deeply connected to digital identity work. Local studies on code-switching, Instagram discourse, neologisms, and Uzbek language technology already provide a strong starting point, while foreign scholarship on networked multilingualism, youth CMC, and digital identity offers a broader interpretive framework.

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