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THE INFLUENCE OF THE LANGUAGE OF THE INTERNET AND SOCIAL NETWORKS ON STUDENTS' SPEECH

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ABSTRACT

This article provides a systematic analysis of the psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic effects of internet and social media language on students' speech. In the modern information society, the primary communication environment for adolescents and school-age youth has shifted from real-life interaction to virtual spaces, resulting in significant changes in both their written and oral speech. The study examines key features of internet language – graphic deformation (leetspeak), abbreviations, emoticons and stickers, transliteration, syntactic simplification, orthographic freedom, as well as phenomena such as "surface literacy" and "clip thinking" characteristic of social media. The article demonstrates how these phenomena lead to errors in dictations and essays, lexical limitations, stylistic decline in students' oral speech, and negative impacts on academic writing in schools and higher education institutions. At the same time, the creative and expressive aspects of internet language – language games, neologism creation, the principle of economy – are objectively assessed. Practical recommendations include fostering "language ecology" awareness among students and developing pedagogical strategies that encourage correct writing even on social media platforms. In conclusion, internet language is an inevitable and undeniable phenomenon, but reducing its negative effects is possible through the development of students' metalinguistic awareness.

KEYWORDS

internet language, social media, student speech, leetspeak, transliteration, emoticons, clip thinking, spelling errors, speech culture, language ecology, digital communication, orthographic competence.

INTRODUCTION

Today, the internet and social media have become not merely tools for information exchange but the primary communication environment for millions of people, especially school-age youth. A student who spends an average of 6–8 hours daily on platforms such as Telegram, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube is, in effect, acquiring a new – digital – variant of their native language. This variant differs sharply from traditional literary language: spelling rules are conditional, punctuation is almost entirely absent, words are abbreviated, Latin and Cyrillic alphabets are mixed, English words are rendered with local pronunciation, and emotions are expressed not through words but through pictograms (emoticons, stickers). The problem is that this "internet language" is gradually becoming normalized in students' consciousness: they begin to perceive textbook texts as they would posts on social media, and they tend to use "network" spelling in written assignments submitted to teachers. The purpose of this article is to systematically analyze the psychological, linguistic, and pedagogical effects of internet and social media language on students' speech, to distinguish between the positive and negative aspects of these effects, and to propose ways to mitigate or reduce them within the educational process. The study focuses on typical phenomena in internet communication in Uzbek, Russian, and English, since Uzbek students often write in several languages simultaneously, further deepening the problem of cross-linguistic interference.

MAIN BODY

The most striking feature of internet and social media language is its adherence to the principle of economy in writing. To write quickly and convey maximum meaning with minimal characters, students learn to abbreviate words, omit vowels, and even use numbers and symbols in place of letters (leetspeak: "2" for "to" or "too," "4" for "for," "k4k" for "kak" [like] in Russian, etc.). This habit, initially confined to virtual communication, later transfers to school notebooks. Observations show that when writing dictations, students may write "bilaman" (I know) not as "bilaman" but as "bilm" or "2lan," and they may completely omit punctuation marks. The most dangerous aspect is that the student does not recognize such errors as errors – because in their mind, the norm of "fast and convenient writing" has come to supersede the norm of "correct writing." In psychology, this is called "normative shift": a person internalizes an action that is repeated frequently, even if incorrect, as an internal norm because it is pragmatically convenient.

The second important feature is transliteration and alphabet mixing. Uzbek students primarily use the Latin alphabet on social media, but this Latin alphabet does not fully correspond to the standard Uzbek Latin alphabet. Many replace letters such as "o'" and "g'" with numbers or other symbols ("o'" as "o" or "u", "g'" as "g" or "'g'"). Students familiar with Cyrillic retain Cyrillic spelling when writing in Latin (for example, writing "mashyna" instead of "mashina" for "car"). Furthermore, under the influence of English, Uzbek words are adapted to English pronunciation and spelling ("salom" as "salom", "rahmat" not as "rahmat" but as "thx" or "10q"). As a result, the student's mind contains multiple orthographic variants of a single word, and which one is "correct" depends on the situation: in class – the literary norm; on the network – free style. The problem lies in the interference between these two modes. Research indicates that students who spend more than five hours daily on social media exhibit "orthographic incontinence" – a weakening of spelling control, such that they hesitate even when writing the simplest words and often choose the incorrect variant.

The third phenomenon is the shift of emotional expression toward non-verbal means. Emoticons, stickers, GIFs, and memes are beginning to replace words in students' speech. Instead of writing "I am happy," they insert a single smiling sticker; instead of "unfortunately," a crying emoji – this is very fast and understandable. However, this weakens the student's ability to express emotions verbally. In psycholinguistics, this is termed "lexical emotional deficit": a person may not know or may not be able to recall the word that names a particular feeling because they have become accustomed to expressing that feeling through symbols. How does this manifest in oral speech? The student struggles to describe their internal state, resorting to simple phrases like "I'm not fine" or "I was offended by what he said," unable to express subtle nuances of emotion (hope, dissatisfaction, irony, astonishment, doubt). This, in turn, negatively affects the student's psychological literacy and ability to understand others.

The fourth and perhaps most complex phenomenon is syntactic and grammatical simplification. Complex compound sentences are almost entirely absent from social media communication. Students write in short, simple, often one-clause sentences. Instead of conjunctions, they use line breaks or new lines. This has been dubbed the "Telegram style." Such writing is fast and fluid, but it undermines the development of logical thinking. Constructing a sentence as a complex syntactic structure is not merely a grammatical skill but the ability to express cause-and-effect relationships, conditions, contrasts, and qualifications. If a student becomes accustomed to writing in fragmented form ("went. saw. wrote. laughed."), they will have difficulty constructing or understanding complex texts (such as paragraphs or essays). This phenomenon, known as "clip thinking," has been extensively studied in internet psychology: a brain accustomed to receiving quantitatively large but qualitatively short and disconnected information becomes unable to "digest" long, logically chained texts. The student loses attention in the middle of the first paragraph, switches to another topic, and fails to connect the beginning

and end of the text. This affects not only native language classes but also the skill of working with texts in subjects such as history, biology, and physics.

The fifth aspect is the excessive proliferation of neologisms and loanwords. Because social media are a rapidly changing environment, they constantly create new words or assign new meanings to existing ones. Words such as "like," "subscribe," "bot," "trend," "check," "screenshot," "hate," "cringe," "lols," "wow" have entered the Uzbek social media lexicon. Some of these words have full equivalents in Uzbek (e.g., "like" – "yoqtirish," "subscribe" – "obuna"), yet students prefer to use them in their original English form. As a result, code-switching becomes a normal occurrence in both oral and written speech. A student may tell a teacher: "That post was so cringe for me" without noticing anything unusual. However, this leads to the student's inability to draw upon the synonymic richness of their native language and to express their thoughts clearly and expressively using only the resources of Uzbek. In linguistics, this is called "lexical erosion": only the simplest, most loan-prone layer of the language is used, while the rest of the richness (synonyms, metaphors, phraseological units) becomes passive or entirely forgotten.

The sixth issue is the crisis of spelling and punctuation. On social media, capitalizing the beginning of a sentence, using periods, commas, dashes, and colons is perceived as "unnecessary" or "too formal." Many students write their messages without capital letters or punctuation marks. This "low-case writing" is a global trend. The problem is that punctuation marks serve not only aesthetic purposes but also as tools for distinguishing meaning. A student who cannot distinguish between "The boy came, and my brother left" and "The boy came my brother, and left" cannot fully comprehend a text. Teachers often encounter the following situation in class: a student writes an entire page without a single period but does not consider the absence of punctuation to be an error because for them, "content is what matters." However, in linguistics, content and form are inseparable: the absence of punctuation makes content ambiguous and open to interpretation. The student may not even clearly understand the meaning of their own sentence when re-reading it.

The seventh point is the transfer of written forms into oral speech. Abbreviations from social media, as well as words like "ok," "pls," "spas" (short for "spasibo" – thank you), "thx" are now being used not only in writing but also in oral communication. Instead of asking a friend "Are you going this evening?", the student may ask "Eve?" Instead of "Thank you," they say "thx" (from English "thanks"). This leads to stylistic impoverishment of speech. The polite, literary variants of address, requests, expressions of gratitude, and apologies disappear from the student's oral speech, replaced by short, sometimes rude, often imperative phrases. For example, instead of "Could you please give me a pen?", the student says "Give pen." This severely damages the student's communicative competence – the ability to choose speech behavior appropriate to the situation.

The eighth aspect is that the positive and creative sides of internet language should not be denied. Social media offer vast opportunities for language play, neologism creation, renewal of metaphors, and new forms of humor and irony. Students often create very beautiful and sharp phrases and new meanings. For example, personifications such as "the phone stuck to my hand" or hyperboles such as "my brain jumped out" – these are signs that language is alive and developing. Furthermore, the need for abbreviation and rapid writing develops students' ability to create abbreviations. The key is to channel this creative potential not toward conflict with the literary norm but toward their synthesis. Instead of instilling a rigid binary opposition ("network language is bad, classroom language is good"), the student should develop a metalinguistic awareness that "every situation has its own linguistic norm."

The ninth problem is the effect of internet language on students' reading skills. Skimming and scanning predominate on social media. Students are unaccustomed to reading long texts carefully from beginning to end. As a result, when reading literary works, textbooks, or scholarly articles, they tire quickly, cannot maintain attention, and cannot distinguish main ideas from secondary information. This leads to the loss of "deep reading" ability. Neurobiological research shows that constantly reading short, rapidly shifting, attention-switching texts weakens the brain's linear, logical processing system. A student cannot read a ten-page text because their brain, after three or four paragraphs, issues a "escape" command.

Tenth and finally, the most serious problem is the effect of internet language on students' respect for and interest in their native language. Many students begin to perceive the literary language as "old-fashioned," "formal," and "not alive." For them, what matters in language is not precise and correct expression but appearing "trendy" and "modern." This lowers students' linguistic self-confidence: not only do they not feel ashamed of not knowing the literary language, but they actively reject that knowledge as "unnecessary." In linguistics, this is called "passive diglossia": a person knows two variants of a language (literary and network) but avoids using the literary variant because they have not mastered it or have a negative attitude toward it.

CONCLUSION

The influence of internet and social media language on students' speech is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon. On the one hand, this language allows students to communicate quickly, economically, and creatively, helps them adapt to the digital world, and develops their ability to engage in language play and create neologisms. On the other hand, its negative consequences are very serious: a crisis of spelling and punctuation, syntactic simplification, lexical erosion, stylistic impoverishment of oral speech, loss of deep reading ability, weakening of the capacity to express emotions verbally, and, most importantly, a decline in students' respect for their native language. To mitigate these negative effects, the following measures are recommended: first, the introduction of modules on "language ecology" and "digital communication culture" into school and higher education curricula, where students are taught to consciously use different variants of language (literary, colloquial, network) according to different communicative situations; second, the promotion of correct writing even on social media through contests, campaigns, and collaboration with bloggers; third, improving teachers' own qualifications in this area – they should act not merely as "error correctors" but as "language consultants"; fourth, informing parents about this problem, limiting the time children spend on the internet at home, and introducing the practice of reading literary works aloud together with children. In conclusion, internet language is an inevitable reality. It is neither possible nor necessary to eliminate its influence entirely. However, by developing students' metalinguistic awareness – the ability to think about language, to distinguish between its different forms, and to apply them appropriately to the situation – the negative effects can be significantly reduced. This is an important task not only for linguists and teachers but for society as a whole.

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