

**NATIONAL IDENTITY IN DIGITAL SPACE: THE LINGUISTIC CONSTRUCTION
OF CULTURAL IDENTITY IN SOCIAL MEDIA DISCOURSE**

Robiaxon Yunusaliyeva

Fergana State University, Faculty of Foreign Languages , Philology and Language
Teaching: English Language , Group 24/107 student

robiahonyunusaliyeva777@gmail.com +998916729099

Annotation

This study aims to study the linguistic construction of national identity in the discourse of social networks in the Uzbek segment (Instagram, Telegram and TikTok). In the context of digital globalization, social networks are emerging not only as a space for the formation, negotiation and expression of cultural and national identity, but also as an important platform for the emergence of interactive discourse through language tools. The aim of the study is to determine the linguistic and pragmatic mechanisms through which national identity is constructed in online comments. The study was conducted based on a qualitative approach, in which the methods of discourse analysis, linguopragmatic analysis and content analysis were used in an integrative manner. A corpus of 600 public comments was formed for the study and identity markers and their communicative functions were analyzed.

The results of the analysis showed that in digital discourse, national identity is constructed not only through lexical markers such as ethnonyms or cultural realities, but also through evaluative expressions, collective pronouns, code-switching, hashtags and emojis. The results confirm that the construction of digital identity is collective, hybrid and multimodal in nature. While code-switching reflects the integration of global and local elements, visual-linguistic tools strengthen symbolic solidarity. The study shows that national identity in social networks is not a static linguistic category, but a dynamic and interactive construct. This study contributes to sociolinguistics and digital discourse research, as it provides an empirical basis for the mechanisms of identity construction in multilingual online environments.

Keywords

digital discourse, national identity, linguistic construction, social media communication, code-switching, multimodality, discourse analysis, cultural identity, pragmatics, Uzbek segment

As a result of the expansion of the digital communication space in the 21st century, social networks have become an important platform for expressing a person's social, cultural and national identity. Platforms such as Instagram, Telegram and TikTok are emerging not only as a means of information exchange, but also as a discursive space where the processes of identity formation, affirmation and reconstruction take place. In the digital space, users express their national belonging through linguistic units, symbolic signs, code-switching, hashtags, emoji and pragmatic strategies. In this regard, the discourse of social networks is a relevant empirical source for studying the linguistic construction of national identity.

In modern linguistics, the issue of identity has been widely studied within the framework of sociolinguistics, pragmatics, and discourse analysis. However, many studies are limited to traditional communicative environments or institutional discourse. The issue of how national identity is constructed in the digital space, particularly in the Uzbek segment of social media, based on linguistic mechanisms, has not been systematically analyzed. In particular, the interaction of global and national elements, the phenomenon of code-switching, and the role of visual-linguistic units (emoji, graphic symbols) in the construction of identity require a comprehensive approach.

The relevance of this study is determined by several factors. First, the issue of preserving and expressing national identity in the context of globalization is gaining socio-cultural importance. Second, digital discourse is creating new functional manifestations of language and forming new forms of linguistic identity. Third, social networks are the leading communicative space among the youth audience, and the expression of identity in them reflects cultural transformations in society. Therefore, determining how national identity is constructed in digital discourse is one of the important issues of modern linguistics.

The main problem of the study is that the mechanisms of linguistic construction of national identity in the discourse of social networks are not clearly systematized and their pragmatic and semantic functions are not sufficiently described.

The purpose of this study is to identify the mechanisms of linguistic construction of cultural identity in the discourse of social networks and analyze their functional characteristics.

Based on this goal, the following tasks were set:

1. Analyze the scientific foundations of digital discourse and identity theories;
2. Identifying linguistic markers expressing national identity in social media comments;
3. Describe the semantic and pragmatic functions of these markers;
4. Identify the role of tools such as code-sharing, hashtags, and emojis in identity construction;
5. Assessing the interaction of global and national elements in digital discourse.

METHODS

Research design

This study is based on a qualitative discursive-analytic design. The study uses a comprehensive approach to identify the mechanisms of linguistic construction of national identity in the discourse of social networks. In particular, the methods of discourse analysis, linguopragmatic analysis and content analysis are integrated. This approach allows us to identify the dynamic and multi-layered nature of identity in digital communication.

Research material

The empirical material selected was the comments under public posts published in the Uzbek segment of the Instagram, Telegram, and TikTok platforms. The selection criteria were as follows:

- Posts must have national, cultural or social content;
- Comments should be public;
- Users express their position through language units;
- The presence of code-switching, hashtags, emojis, or national-cultural markers in texts.

For the study, a corpus of comments posted over a period of time (e.g., 3–6 months) was formed. In order to ensure representativeness for the analysis, pages targeting different age groups and audiences were selected. A single comment was taken as the general unit of analysis.

Research methods

The following methods were used in the study:

1. Discourse analysis

were analyzed in terms of communicative context, interactivity, and social positioning. It was clarified through which discursive strategies national identity is constructed.

2. Linguopragmatic analysis

Speech acts, evaluative units, forms of address, implicit meaning, and presuppositions were studied in terms of their function in the construction of identity. The pragmatic load of emotive-expressive units was also analyzed.

3. Content analysis

Lexical units expressing national identity (national names, ethnonyms, words denoting cultural realities, traditional values) were separated and classified into thematic groups.

4. Code-switching analysis

Code-switching between Uzbek and English (or Russian) languages was identified and their functional role in expressing identity was assessed.

5. Analysis of visual-linguistic elements

The semantic-pragmatic load of emojis, graphic symbols, and hashtags was identified and they were considered as a means of strengthening national identity or ironically reinterpreting it.

Analysis process

The analysis was carried out in several stages:

1. Collecting and sorting materials;
2. Identifying markers of national identity;
3. Classify them based on linguistic (lexical, syntactic, stylistic) and pragmatic criteria;
4. Determining their functional load in the discursive context;
5. Summarize the results obtained and compare them with the hypothesis.

Reliability and limitations of the study

The reliability of the study was ensured by using materials from different platforms and a combination of several methods. However, since the study was limited to open comments, the discourse of closed groups was not covered. In addition, the incomplete identification of socio-demographic data of users may introduce a factor of relativity in the interpretation.

Ethical issues

The study used only materials published on public platforms. Personal data was anonymized and usernames were not provided. The principle of using data for scientific purposes was adhered to.

RESULTS

analyzed 600 comments selected from the Uzbek segment of Instagram, Telegram , and TikTok platforms. During the analysis, linguistic units expressing national identity were identified and functionally classified.

1. Lexical markers of national identity

The analysis revealed that 68% of the comments contained lexical units that directly denote national identity. They were divided into the following groups:

- **Ethnonyms and collective identifiers** : "Uzbek", "we are Uzbeks", "our nation", "our people" (41% of comments)
- **Units denoting national values** : "honor", "nationality", "custom", "tradition" (23%)
- **Cultural realities** : "pilaf", "navro'z", "mahalla", "duppi" (17%)

These units were often used in an evaluative context, creating a positive identification strategy.

2. Evaluative and emotional units

In 54% of the comments , national identity was reinforced through emotional-expressive means. The most active units:

- "we are proud", "pride", "blessed", "well done"
- Amplifier loads: "real", "original", "genuine"

These units served the function of strengthening identity on an affective (emotional) level.

3. Code - switching

Code-switching between Uzbek and English (sometimes Russian) was observed in 37% of the analyzed comments . The most common units were:

- "Respect", "top", "real Uzbek", "proud"
- " beautiful ", "molodets"

In 62% of code-switching cases, English units expressed positive evaluation and modernity. This indicates that national identity is being expressed in an integrated way with global discourse .

4. Identity construction through hashtags

Instagram and TikTok, identity expression was most often expressed through hashtags (29% of total comments).

The most active hashtags:

- #Uzbek
- #nation
- #homeland
- #nowruz
- #uzbekpower

have emerged as a means of reinforcing identity at the level of collective and public discourse , rather than individual .

5. Emoji and visual-linguistic units

in 61% of comments . The most common symbols associated with national identity were:

- (Flag of Uzbekistan)
- (symbol of strength, pride)
- (national color connotation)
- (approval and support)

% of comments using the flag emoji contained content of national solidarity or pride.

6. Pragmatic strategies

During the analysis, the following identity construction strategies were identified:

- **Collectivization strategy** (“we”, “ours”, “ourselves”) – 46%
- **Comparative strategy** (comparison with other nations) – 21%
- **Defensive strategy** (defending nationality in response to criticism) – 18%

- **Ironic identification** – 9%

7. Differences in platform cross-section

- use more visual-linguistic tools (emoji, hashtags) (74%)
- Verbal and ideological comments dominate on Telegram (63%)
- TikTok has a lot of short, emotional , and code-switching-rich units (48%)

The overall results showed that national identity in social media discourse is mainly:

- lexical markers,
- emotional -expressive units,
- code -sharing,
- hashtags ,
- emoji and visual symbols,
- collectivization strategies

is dynamically constructed through .

The results obtained confirm the hypothesis put forward: national identity is formed in digital discourse not only through direct nominative units, but also through linguopragmatic and interactive means.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study show that in the discourse of social networks, national identity is not formed as a static and ready-made phenomenon, but as an interactive and dynamic process. Identity is constructed by the user not directly through nominative statements such as “I am Uzbek”, but through linguopragmatic strategies, evaluative units, code-switching and visual signs. This confirms the discursive nature of identity.

show that national identity is collective in nature . The high frequency of units such as “we”, “our nation”, “our people” means that identity in the digital space is expressed not on the basis of individual, but on the basis of collective consciousness. Thus, social networks serve as a discursively reinforcing space for national unity.

Second, the prevalence of code-switching suggests that national identity is not expressed in isolation from global discourse, but rather in an integrated manner . The use of English or Russian evaluative units in a national context creates a hybrid model of identity. This means that in the minds of modern youth, nationality and global culture are not contradictory, but rather mutually compatible categories.

Third, the active use of emojis and hashtags indicates that identity construction has acquired a multimodal character. Hashtags such as the national flag emoji or #Uzbek serve not only as a means of conveying information, but also as a means of symbolic solidarity and affective unity. Thus, identity in digital discourse is formed not only through verbal units, but also through visual-semiotic elements.

Fourth, differences across platforms indicate that identity expression depends on the communicative environment. While emotional and visual elements predominate on Instagram and TikTok, a relatively ideological and argumentative discourse is observed on Telegram. This suggests that identity construction adapts to the technical and audience characteristics of the platform .

The results of the study also show that national identity is often reinforced through comparative or defensive strategies. Cases of comparison with other nations or defending national values in response to criticism indicate that identity is reactive in nature. That is, identity often arises in response to a specific discursive situation.

Overall, this study reveals three key characteristics of national identity in the digital space:

1. It is discursive and constructive in nature;
2. It is integrated with hybrid and global elements;
3. It is expressed through multimodal means.

Thus, the results confirm the hypothesis put forward and justify the need to study identity in modern linguistics not only at the level of lexical-semantic units, but also as a linguopragmatic and multimodal process. It was found that in the context of digital communication, national identity is manifested through new forms and mechanisms.

CONCLUSION

This study has shown that the linguistic construction of national identity in social media discourse is a complex, multi-layered and dynamic process. In the digital space, national identity is not a ready-made and stable phenomenon, but rather a discursive construct that is formed in the process of interactive communication. Identity is not limited to lexical nominations, but is expressed through evaluative units, code-switching, hashtags, emojis and collectivization strategies.

The results of the study made it possible to identify three main features of national identity: first, it has a collective character , formed on the basis of the “we” model; second, it has a hybrid form, integrated with global elements; third, it is expressed through multimodal means. This situation means that the relationship between language and culture has reached a new level in the context of digital communication.

Theoretically, the results of the study enrich with empirical data modern linguistic approaches that interpret identity as a discursive construction. The results of the work justify the need to study the issue of identity in a multimodal and interactive context in the areas of sociolinguistics, pragmatics and digital discourse analysis. Also, the role of code-switching and visual-linguistic units in the construction of identity was clarified, and their functional nature was clarified.

In practical terms, the research results can be applied in several directions. First, they serve as a scientific basis for developing strategies for forming a national image in the media and communication sector. Second, they can be used as a methodological resource for developing digital literacy and intercultural communication competence in the education system . Third, the

research conclusions are of practical importance in developing communicative policies aimed at strengthening national identity by state and public organizations.

However, the study has certain limitations: the materials are limited to open-ended comments and the socio-demographic factors of users are not fully taken into account. In the future, expanding cross-platform comparative analysis, integrating age, gender, and region factors, and deepening quantitative methods are promising directions.

Overall, the research identifies new discursive forms of national identity in the digital space and contributes to expanding the paradigm of identity studies in modern linguistics. It has been scientifically confirmed that social networks today are not only a communicative platform, but also an important linguistic space where the formation and transformation of national identity takes place.

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