



DOI:10.29013/EJLL-26-3-43-46



SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE AZERBAIJANI LANGUAGE: EMERGING TRENDS IN YOUTH COMMUNICATION

*Nilgun Mammadova*¹

¹ Azerbaijan Technological University

Cite: Mammadova N. (2026). *Social Media and the Transformation of the Azerbaijani Language: Emerging Trends in Youth Communication*. *European Journal of Literature and Linguistics* 2026, No 3. <https://doi.org/10.29013/EJLL-26-3-43-46>

Abstract

Social media is a principal environment in which young Azerbaijanis produce and evaluate language. Instagram, TikTok, Telegram, YouTube, and messaging applications encourage rapid, informal, multimodal interaction, affecting vocabulary, spelling, style, and language choice. Through a qualitative review of sociolinguistic research and recurrent patterns in public on-line discourse, this article examines borrowing, code-switching, orthographic simplification, abbreviations, expressive spelling, and emojis. These practices show creativity and adaptation, but unstable spelling, borrowing, and weak register awareness may affect standard writing. A balanced response should combine digital literacy, accessible terminology resources, and attractive Azerbaijani-language content. Social media is not replacing Azerbaijani; it is creating a dynamic digital register whose long-term influence depends on education, technology, and users' choices.

Keywords: *Azerbaijani language, social media, youth communication, digital discourse, code-switching, language change*

1. Introduction

Digital communication has changed not only how information is distributed but also how language is created and socially valued. For many young people, everyday writing now occurs more frequently in comments, captions, group chats, and short videos than in letters or extended formal texts. These platforms reward speed, visibility, emotional impact, and interaction. Consequently, users shorten words, combine languages, imitate speech, employ visual symbols, and develop expressions that can spread through a peer

group within hours. Social media thus functions simultaneously as a communication channel, an informal learning environment, and a laboratory of linguistic innovation.

This article aims to identify the main tendencies through which social media is influencing contemporary Azerbaijani youth communication and to consider their cultural and educational implications. The study asks three questions: Which linguistic features are becoming prominent? What social purposes do they serve? How can institutions support standard Azerbaijani without

suppressing natural linguistic creativity? Rather than treating every new form as an error, the discussion distinguishes temporary digital fashion from changes that may become established in wider usage.

2. Methodological Approach

The article uses a qualitative, literature-based sociolinguistic approach. It synthesizes research on computer-mediated communication, multilingual practices, and code-switching, with special attention to studies concerning Azerbaijan. It also considers recurring phenomena visible in public Azerbaijani-language social media, such as mixed-language captions, non-standard Latin spelling, compressed words, hashtags, emojis, and conversational particles. These examples are treated as illustrative patterns, not as a statistically representative corpus. This limitation is deliberate: reliable claims about frequency would require a platform-specific dataset, ethical procedures, demographic information, and systematic coding.

3. Lexical Innovation and Borrowing

Vocabulary is the most visible area of transformation. English-derived words connected with platforms and digital culture enter Azerbaijani rapidly: post, story, reel, trend, like, follower, blogger, content, challenge, and hashtag are common examples. Some are adapted through Azerbaijani grammatical endings, producing hybrid but structurally integrated forms such as “postu paylaşmaq,” “storyyə baxmaq,” or “like etmək.” Such constructions show that borrowed roots can be absorbed into Azerbaijani morphology and syntax rather than remaining completely foreign elements.

Borrowing is not automatically harmful. Languages have always expanded through contact, and new technologies often arrive together with new terminology. The concern arises when a foreign word replaces a clear and familiar Azerbaijani equivalent merely because it appears more fashionable or prestigious. Parallel use of “content” and “məzmun,” for example, may enrich stylistic choice, but habitual preference for the foreign form can gradually reduce the visibility of the native term. Terminological inconsistency also creates difficulties for education,

public communication, search systems, and language technologies.

4. Code-Switching and Hybrid Identity

Code-switching, the alternation between languages within a conversation or utterance, is a central feature of multilingual digital discourse. Research in Azerbaijan indicates that education, social environment, and identity are important factors in language switching (Soltanova, 2023). In youth communication, Azerbaijani may provide the grammatical frame while English, Russian, or Turkish supplies a phrase associated with humour, emotion, professional knowledge, or popular culture. Switching can mark membership in an urban, educated, global, or platform-specific community.

However, frequent switching may become problematic when speakers cannot retrieve Azerbaijani equivalents or maintain one language consistently in formal contexts. The essential distinction is between choice and dependency. Deliberate switching demonstrates communicative repertoire; involuntary switching caused by limited vocabulary may indicate a competence gap. Language education should help students recognize this difference and select a register appropriate to academic, professional, and informal situations.

5. Orthography, Abbreviation, and Expressive Writing

Speed-oriented communication encourages orthographic simplification. Azerbaijani-specific characters such as “ə,” “ı,” “ş,” “ç,” “ğ,” and “ö” may be replaced by more accessible keyboard forms, particularly when users type on devices configured for another language. Punctuation and capitalization are often omitted, vowels may be reduced, and common phrases are compressed. Repetition of letters, capitals, and punctuation can compensate for the absence of voice: an extended vowel may signal excitement, while multiple question marks may express surprise or impatience.

The risk appears when informal habits transfer automatically to university assignments, official correspondence, or workplace communication. Students who rarely produce extended texts may have difficulty orga-

nizing arguments, applying punctuation, or maintaining stylistic consistency. The solution is not to prohibit digital language but to develop register awareness. Young people should be able to write creatively in a private chat and accurately in an academic paper, understanding that these are different communicative tasks.

6. From Private Interaction to Public Performance

Algorithms add another dimension. Forms that generate engagement are repeated more often, regardless of their conformity to linguistic norms. Catchphrases, provocative spellings, and simplified constructions may gain visibility because they are memorable and searchable. Hashtags also reshape word boundaries by combining expressions into searchable units. In this environment, linguistic prestige is no longer determined only by schools, publishers, or professional media; popular creators and peer communities participate directly in establishing usage.

This democratization has positive consequences. Regional vocabulary, accents, humour, and previously underrepresented voices can gain public space. Azerbaijani can be used for educational videos, science communication, civic discussion, and creative storytelling. Digital platforms therefore offer opportunities for language development as well as pressure from globally dominant languages. UNESCO's Global Roadmap for Multilingualism in the Digital Era emphasizes that equitable digital participation requires technologies and content that support linguistic diversity (UNESCO, 2025).

7. Educational and Language-Policy Implications

Universities can address this challenge through critical digital language education. Azerbaijani-language courses should include authentic online examples and ask students to compare a chat message, public post, news

text, and academic paragraph. Activities can examine when borrowing is necessary, how code-switching changes tone, how punctuation prevents ambiguity, and how the same message should be adapted for different audiences. Such analysis transforms social media from a perceived threat into relevant teaching material.

Language institutions and technology companies also have important roles. Open, regularly updated terminology databases can provide accessible Azerbaijani equivalents for emerging concepts. High-quality spell-checkers, predictive keyboards, speech recognition, and machine translation can make correct Azerbaijani easier rather than slower to use. Public institutions, universities, and media organizations should produce appealing digital content in natural contemporary Azerbaijani. A language is strengthened not simply through correction, but through active use in domains that matter to younger generations.

8. Conclusion

Social media is transforming Azerbaijani youth communication at lexical, orthographic, and stylistic levels. Borrowing and code-switching connect users with global culture, while abbreviations, expressive spelling, and emojis make interaction faster. Yet unstable spelling and the transfer of informal habits into formal writing create educational concerns.

Digital practices do not signal the disappearance of Azerbaijani; they reveal its adaptation to new conditions. The central question is whether speakers can choose appropriately among registers and whether technologies adequately support the language. Cooperation among educators, linguists, institutions, developers, and creators can preserve standard competence while allowing innovation. If Azerbaijani is convenient, expressive, and prestigious online, social media can become a powerful space for its continued development.

References

- Androutsopoulos, J. (2014). Mediatization and sociolinguistic change: Key concepts, research traditions, open issues. In J. Androutsopoulos (Ed.), *Mediatization and Sociolinguistic Change* (P. 3–48). De Gruyter.
- Crystal, D. (2006). *Language and the Internet* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

- Soltanova, S. (2023). The main factors leading to code-switching in Azerbaijan. *Path of Science*, – 9(1). – P. 3001–3008. URL: <https://doi.org/10.22178/pos.89-6>
- Tagliamonte, S. A., & Denis, D. (2008). Linguistic ruin? LOL! Instant messaging and teen language. *American Speech*, – 83(1). – P. 3–34. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1215/00031283-2008-001>
- UNESCO. (2025). *Global Roadmap for Multilingualism in the Digital Era: Advancing the Role of Language Technologies*. UNESCO.

submitted 27.07.2026;
accepted for publication 11.08.2026;
published 31.08.2026
© Mammadova N.
Contact: n_memmedova@atu.edu.az