

English and Identity in the Digital Age: Social Media, Code-Switching, and Linguistic Hybridity Among Jordanian Gen Z

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of social media on the linguistic behavior of Jordanian Gen Z (born 1997–2012) through the lens of their daily use of colloquial speech as a reflection of sociocultural change. It delineates the dominant linguistic features of the language they use and attempts to address how these linguistic practices reflect the construction of identity and socio-cultural shifts among Jordanian Generation Z. Social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and Snapchat heavily influence Generation Z's vernacular. This study employs a qualitative research approach to analyze pertinent data on code-switching, meme-driven expressions, and abbreviation combinations. Two primary methods of data collection were employed: social media data collection for discourse analysis and semi-structured interviews aimed at identifying the most frequently used expressions among Generation Z. Findings show that the vernacular of Jordanian Gen Z is dynamic, hybrid, and highly integrative in terms of global linguistic resources. This new digital Arabic sociolect poses numerous linguistic and cultural challenges for individuals. These include the necessity for extensive code-switching, the establishment of distinct online linguistic norms, the adaptation to cultural hybridity in language use, and the confrontation of linguistic divergence between generations.

Keywords: generation Z, Arabic-English code-switching, digital vernacular, linguistic hybridity, cultural identity, global English, social media, digital literacy

1. Introduction

Social media has had a significant impact on Generation Z's communication style, especially in terms of shaping their vernacular. The term "Gen Z" represents the generation born between 1997 and 2012. This generation experiences language in a way primarily different from previous generations. In contrast to earlier generations whose linguistic behaviors were shaped by traditional media and in-person communications, the language of Gen Z is increasingly influenced by digital platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and Snapchat. These social media platforms foster a unique language blend that combines formal and informal Arabic with English, internet slang, and emojis. The new linguistic features also act as venues for self-expression and cross-cultural communication.

Gen Z employs an entirely different communication method compared to Millennials and Generation X. The expressions of this generation are known for their simplicity and quickness in a language that is infused with world news, whereas older generations used direct communication and traditional cultural communication methods. Technology for rapid borderless content spreading has produced a worldwide speech system that combines code-switching, memes, and abbreviations. Everyday conversation, which wittily combines local and global elements, proves the integration of digital technology mastery while reshaping cultural identity.

This paper will investigate how social media platforms are transforming language and serving as a framework for analyzing the wider social changes occurring in this generation within the Arab world in general and in Jordan in particular.

The study aims to answer the following questions

1. How does social media shape the daily vernacular and linguistic practices of Jordanian Generation Z?
2. What are the dominant linguistic features (e.g., code-switching, slang, emojis) used by Generation Z in their social media communications?
3. How do these linguistic practices reflect the construction of identity and socio-cultural shifts among Jordanian Generation Z?

Generation Z, comprising those born from 1997 to 2012, has matured in a digital landscape where online interactions constantly influence language and cultural expression. Social media platforms serve as vibrant communication spaces that promote the swift development of slang, phrases, and vernacular. This literature review examines the impact of social media on Gen Z's linguistic identity in the Arab world, highlighting the distinctive features that differentiate this generation's modes of expression from those of preceding generations.

2. Literature Review

The way young people use language has endured complete transformation because of the extensive use of social media platforms such as Instagram, Snapchat, and TikTok. Such applications maintain their status as fundamental elements within the way young people experience their lives. Social media platforms extensively modify the ways Gen Z members interact with each other and present themselves to the world (Poláková & Klínová 2019). (Thus, social media means so much more than mere entertainment to numerous members of their generation. It serves as the ground where people develop their identities through the establishment of friendships along with the simultaneous emergence of real-time cultural movements. It has also seeped deeply into day-to-day activities, which leads to an increase in its impact on both digital and offline verbal exchanges. In this way, language continues to shift and transform to reflect the evolving ways of feeling, thinking, and social belonging (Alzyod et al., 2025).

We can understand the linguistic behavior of Generation Z in digital contexts through the interaction of global and local communicative practices. Robertson (1995) conceptualizes this in his theory of glocalization, suggesting that globalization does not erase local identities but reshapes them through hybrid cultural expressions. This dynamic is evident in the rise of online multimodal communication, where Gen Z users blend global English norms with local linguistic and cultural forms. Danesi (2016) captures this shift in his analysis of emojis and visual symbols, framing them as key elements of a new digital vernacular that transcends traditional linguistic boundaries. In the Arab world, Bassiouney (2015) and Al-Khatib and Sabbah (2008) highlight how social media has become a platform for linguistic innovation, where young users navigate identity through hybridized Arabic-English discourse, reflecting broader sociocultural transformations. Complementing these perspectives, Albirini (2016) offers a comprehensive framework for understanding code-switching and diglossia in Arabic-speaking communities, emphasizing how linguistic variation signals social identity and modernity. Building on this foundation, Yaseen, Sa'di, and Sharadgah (2021) examine Arabic-English code-switching among Jordanian pilots, illustrating how bilingual choices serve as pragmatic tools for precision, solidarity, and self-expression. Together, these studies frame the current investigation of Jordanian Generation Z's online communication, situating their hybrid linguistic practices within a continuum of global connectivity, local identity, and digital creativity.

Academic studies from diverse disciplines investigate the impact of digital communication on self-expression (Al-Sa'di, 2003). These studies have revealed new linguistic patterns, variations between generations, and platform-specific effects on languages like Arabic. Bani Amer (2024) investigated the language practices and identities that appear among Jordanian users on Facebook and Twitter. He analyzed language usage by users who post on Facebook and Twitter. In his research, Bani Amer selected 400 posts and tweets from Facebook and Twitter. The study adopted systemic functional linguistics theory in its analysis. The findings revealed that social media users adopted multiple language behaviors, including code-switching, emojis, localized linguistic expressions, and identity-based messaging. The users demonstrated multiple language practices through their expressions and identity affiliations, which included racism, patriotism, and feminism. Ultimately, the study indicated that Jordanian Arabic emerges as the dominant language style among Facebook and Twitter users, and the use of multiple language styles proved to be much less prevalent. The study revealed that code-switching represented the most used communication technique.

According to Danesi (2016), use of emojis and internet slang is a form of visual-linguistic change that accords with Gen Z's need for quick and livelier communication. These visual media and digital expressions complement and, in most cases, take the role of traditional speech, creating a unique, playful, and practical language form. Al-Thunibat et al. (2020) observe that Jordanian university students frequently make use of Arabic-English code-switching, emojis, and internet acronyms in their communication on such social platforms as WhatsApp and Instagram. By focusing on these practices, students not only express their identities but also indicate their participation in the broader international youth culture.

Moreover, creative expressions on social media are critical avenues for the users to express their cultural identities. According to Burgess (2007), meme creation and video remixing provide power to youth to revamp old narratives through modern settings. For example, Jordanian members of Gen Z utilize social media tools such as TikTok and Snapchat to produce short videos that blend humor and sociopolitical talk, a practice that aligns with broader patterns of creative media insurgency among Arab youth (Kraidy, 2017). This notion emphasizes the observation of Thurlow and Mroczek (2011), who assert that digital discourse communities foster emergent norms and values, particularly among younger generations.

The impact of social media on cultural expressions consists in the solidification and contemporary transformations of local traditions. Abu-Lughod (1999) indicates that media narratives often mediate between modernity and tradition in Arab societies. Research on youth digital practices in the Arab world shows that visual social media platforms such as Instagram function as spaces for curating heritage and identity for wider audiences. Through aestheticized visual storytelling, young users rework cultural memory within the affordances and norms of platformed media, contributing to dynamic reconfigurations of contemporary cultural identity (Kraidy, 2016).

The generational distinctions highlighted by Al Mu'ani et al. (2024) extend beyond consumer behavior into the realm of communication and linguistic practice. Generation Z's reliance on immediacy and digital connectivity also shapes their expressive habits on social media platforms, where meaning is negotiated through speed, visuality, and creativity. This environment fosters linguistic hybridity, as users blend Arabic and English elements to mirror the fast-paced, globally networked nature of their interactions. Such practices form part of what scholars describe as a digital vernacular, an evolving multimodal mode of expression that encodes cultural belonging while reflecting the sociotechnical affordances of the digital age.

Furthermore, social media functions as an essential catalyst of linguistic innovation and educational relevance. According to Zohail (2023), informal language used on platforms such as Twitter and Facebook is a handy source of information for improving English language instruction provided in ESL/EFL settings. In Jordanian contexts, where fluency in English is closely linked to social mobility, adopting Gen Z's social media expressions in education can make high school-level teaching and global communication more practical.

Scholars caution against overstating the advantages of social media, emphasizing its uneven impact across different social groups. Warschauer (2003) warns that digital divides persist, disproportionately affecting youth from rural or economically marginalized communities who lack equitable access to technology and digital literacy. Such divides risk reinforcing existing social inequalities rather than bridging them. Similarly, Scholars have argued that global digital platforms exert homogenizing pressures that privilege dominant Western norms, often marginalizing localized linguistic and cultural expressions. At the same time, these platforms function as sites of participation and visibility, revealing their capacity to foster both empowerment and exclusion in the negotiation of language, identity, and culture (Blommaert, 2010; Kraidy, 2005).

In conclusion, the literature reveals that social media is a significant motivator in shaping the vernacular and cultural expressions in societies. It enables hybrid linguistic practices, cultivates novel forms of cultural expression, and functions as a nexus where tradition and modernity converge. This study focuses on the linguistic practices of Jordanian Generation Z, as pertaining to their vernacular in real time on social media platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and Snapchat. This study pares back earlier work that either examines formal language changes or cross-cultural comparisons to examine how the socio-cultural specifications of localities impact global linguistic trends to arrive at a willing dialect for the context-specific analysis of Jordanian youth. Additionally, while previous studies have highlighted code-switching and slang, this research examines the use of meme-driven expressions, innovative abbreviations, and the integration of graphics like emojis into the evolving language system. In addition, this study emphasizes the cultural and linguistic challenges that come along with this digital linguistic transition, the worry around keeping traditional Arabic alive, and the answer to the need to have an international identity.

Overall, this study adds to the body of literature by looking at the linguistic practices of the Jordanian Gen Z in a qualitative way, which fills a gap in previous research and lays the groundwork for more studies into how digital media forms of communication affect language change and identity in Arab societies.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design to explore the impact of social media on the linguistic practices of Gen Z speakers in Jordan. In particular, the study focuses on their regular vernacular and how it portrays other socio-cultural changes. The use of a qualitative approach is suitable for providing in-depth insights into the multiple layers of the intersection between language, identity, and digital communication among Jordanian youth.

Two primary methods of data collection were utilized to gather data relevant to the study's research questions: social media data collection and semi-structured interviews. In the first method, a total corpus of 500 public social media posts, captions, and comments created by Jordanian Generation Z users was randomly collected from TikTok, Instagram, and Snapchat. This sample was analyzed carefully to identify linguistic patterns, features, and thematic trends in their online communication. Data collection was conducted over three months (December 2024 - February 2025). The content was deliberately chosen for its relevance to the daily communication of Gen Z, specifically focusing on examples of hybrid language use (Arabic-English code-switching), slang, emojis, and other creative linguistic features pertinent to the study's objectives. In the semi-structured interview method, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 78 participants who met the study's criteria. These interviews were intended to discuss participants' perceptions, motivations, and experiences regarding their language use on social media and its relation to their identity and views on socio-cultural shifts. Each interview lasted between 5 and 10 minutes and was conducted face-to-face in a venue of one of the Jordanian schools. With the participants' informed consent, all interviews were audio-recorded to ensure accurate transcription and analysis. Interview questions were crafted to obtain detailed responses about their reasons for using hybrid language and specific online linguistic features, their feelings about their identity in relation to language, and their perspectives on how social media influences their communication style and broader culture.

The participants in this qualitative study were 78 Jordanian Generation Z individuals. More specifically, there were 31 males and 47 females aged between 15 and 18 years at the time of data collection. Participants were selected using a purposive sampling method, with key inclusion criteria being their identification as belonging to Generation Z, their age within the specified range, and their status as active users of social media platforms, particularly TikTok, Instagram, and Snapchat. Recruitment was conducted primarily through one international secondary school located in Amman, the capital of Jordan. While initial recruitment aimed to include diversity across gender and socio-economic background, recruitment exclusively from an international school in an urban setting means the final sample predominantly represents an urban segment of Jordanian Gen Z, likely from specific socio-economic backgrounds. Efforts were made to ensure gender diversity within this recruitment context. These participants provided qualitative data through the semi-structured interviews.

In this study, the term "hybrid sociolect" refers to the distinctive linguistic blend that merges Arabic and English forms within social media communication, characterized by code-switching, lexical innovation, and stylistic mixing that signal generational identity and shared sociocultural positioning. On the other hand, "digital vernacular" denotes the informal, creative, and multimodal linguistic

repertoire used by Generation Z across online platforms, encompassing features such as emojis, abbreviations, nonstandard spellings, and pragmatic markers of affect or stance. These definitions were operationalized through clear indicators in the codebook, allowing coders to consistently identify and classify posts exemplifying each construct.

Ethical approval was obtained from the University Research Ethics Committee. Participants were provided with an information sheet explaining the purpose of the study and signed informed consent forms. All data were anonymized, and participants' privacy and confidentiality were strictly maintained. Social media data was only collected from publicly accessible profiles and posts. Moreover, this study will be limited to Gen Z individuals in Jordan, which may affect the generalizability of findings to the wider Arab world.

4. Results and Discussion

This section aims to present and discuss the results of the study according to the three research questions:

1. How does social media shape the daily vernacular and linguistic practices of Jordanian Generation Z?
2. What are the dominant linguistic features (e.g., code-switching, slang, emojis) used by Generation Z in their social media communications?
3. How do these linguistic practices reflect the construction of identity and socio-cultural shifts among Jordanian Generation Z?

4.1 The Role of Social Media in Shaping the Vernacular and Linguistic Practices of Jordanian Generation Z

Based on the data gathered through interviews and analysis of social media communication, social media platforms serve as a primary force shaping the daily vernacular and linguistic practices of Jordanian Generation Z in several interconnected ways: by introducing and normalizing new vocabulary (Table 1), facilitating extensive code-switching, establishing distinct online linguistic norms, fostering cultural hybridity in language use, and contributing to linguistic divergence between generations.

Primarily, social media acts as a conduit for the rapid introduction and integration of global, primarily English, vocabulary and slang into the daily language of Jordanian Gen Z. Table (2) highlights the dominance of terms like 'Vibe' (310 mentions), 'Mood' (280 mentions), 'Lit' (259 mentions), 'Salty' (175 mentions), 'I'm Dead' (245 mentions), and 'Flex' (186 mentions). These terms, largely originating from Western internet culture, are not merely understood but are actively incorporated into their daily communication, displacing or complementing traditional Arabic expressions. For instance, "vibe" is used broadly to describe moods or settings ("uni vibe," "Petra vibes"), indicating its widespread adoption into the vernacular for nuanced expression. The word "ghetto" is in a context like "شفتي كيف؟" "الحقة كانت؟" "It's ghetto." In the same manner, Gen Z replaced Arabic expressions such as رائع/بحسن with the word "slay."

Phrases like "Make it make sense" are used to convey confusion or disbelief when something illogical occurs ("راحوا رحلة العقبه بدوني؟" "make it make sense!" "They went on the Aqaba trip without me? Make it make sense!"). Asserting an opinion or shutting down debate can be done with "Don't at me," while enthusiastic approval is often expressed with "Yasss." Phrases like "living rent-free" describe something that occupies one's thoughts persistently ("أغنية التخرج لسا" "living rent-free بيالي," "The graduation song is still living rent-free in my mind"), and "this is my 13th reason" humorously references feeling overwhelmed or annoyed ("صحيت متأخر وخبصت بالامتحان؟" "This is my 13th reason," "Woke up late and failed the exam? This is my 13th reason"). Expressions like "I can't even" convey an inability to process a situation due to being overwhelmed ("شفت كمية الواجبات اللي علينا؟" "I can't even." "Did you see the amount of homework we have? I can't even"). Phrases like "You had me at hello" can playfully express intrigue ("أول ما حكيت عن الأكل الصحي،" "You had me at hello," "As soon as she started talking about healthy food, you had me at hello"), and "We're not the same" is used to assert different standards or capabilities ("انت بتنام ٥ ساعات باليوم؟" "We're not the same," "You sleep 5 hours a day? We're not the same"). The phrase "That's a whole mood" expands on "mood" to express strong relatability to a feeling or situation ("يوم الخميس بعد الدوام... that's a whole mood," "Thursday after work... that's a whole mood"). Some phrases derive directly from specific viral moments or media, such as "Catch me outside" or "I'm not a regular mom; I'm a cool mom," used as humorous references. These expressions function as a form of linguistic shorthand, often carrying humorous or ironic connotations and signaling shared understanding of internet culture. Their use allows Gen Z participants to participate in broader online cultural conversations and employ humor or irony as a means of expression and social bonding within their peer group.

The table below shows the most frequently used expressions along with their respective frequency of mentions:

Table 1. Term Frequency Summary

Num	Term	Meaning/Definition	Freq.
1	Vibe	The atmosphere or feeling of a situation.	310
2	Mood	Used to describe something relatable.	280
3	Lit	Something that is exciting or excellent.	259
4	"I'm dead"	Used to express that something is extremely funny or relatable.	245
5	Cap / No Cap	"Cap" means to lie; "no cap" means to tell the truth.	241
6	Lowkey	"Lowkey" means subtly or quietly.	240
7	Bet	Used to agree or confirm something; similar to saying "okay" or "sure."	225
8	That's a whole mood	Expression of relatability or resonance.	223
9	Tea	Refers to gossip or interesting news.	215
10	Slay	To compliment someone who is doing something really well.	210
11	"It's giving..."	Used to express the vibe or energy something is giving off.	209
12	"Yasss"	Enthusiastic approval or excitement.	195
13	Highkey	Highkey means openly or obviously.	194
14	W	A term for a win or something positive.	190
15	"That's sus"	Short for suspicious; something seems off.	188
16	"I'm just vibing"	To express being relaxed and enjoying the moment.	187
17	Flex	To show off or boast about something.	186
18	GOAT	Greatest of All Time; used to praise someone highly.	185
19	Drip	Refers to stylish clothing or accessories.	185
20	"I can't even"	To express being overwhelmed or unable to handle a situation.	185
21	"Make it make sense"	Expressing confusion or disbelief.	180
22	Salty	Indicates being upset or bitter about something.	175
23	Bussin'	Used to describe something that is really good, often food.	170
24	Stan	To strongly support or be a fan of something or someone.	170
25	"You do you"	Encouraging self-acceptance and individuality.	170
26	FOMO	Fear of Missing Out; anxiety about missing an exciting event.	160
27	"Let him cook"	Expression of support for someone's effort or idea.	160
28	L	A loss or failure; the opposite of W.	160
29	Shook	Being surprised or shocked by something.	150
30	Gucci	Slang meaning "cool" or "all good."	150
31	Finesse	To handle a situation with skill and style.	130
32	"We're not the same"	Used to assert different standards or levels.	130
33	Bougie	Acting fancy or rich, often pretentiously.	130
34	Simp	Someone who is overly attentive or submissive to someone they like.	130
35	"Don't at me"	Telling someone not to argue with your opinion.	125
36	Snatched	Looking fabulous or flawless.	120
37	It's giving 'I'm not interested' vibes	Used to indicate something uninviting.	105
38	"This is my 13th reason"	Humorous expression of being overwhelmed.	100
39	It girl	A trendy, stylish girl who gets attention.	95
40	Stay salty	Phrase encouraging someone to stay annoyed.	95
41	Woke	Socially conscious (evolved meaning).	90
42	Sneakerhead	Someone who loves collecting sneakers.	90
43	"Catch me outside"	Playful challenge to settle something privately.	85
44	"You had me at hello"	A playful way to indicate immediate interest.	75
45	"I'm not a regular mom..."	Humorous reference to being fun or relatable.	70
46	Demure	Used to describe someone who is modest or reserved in a charming way.	60
47	"Catch these hands"	A playful way to challenge someone to a fight.	59
48	"Throwing shade"	Making a subtle criticism.	55
49	"Living rent-free"	When something occupies your thoughts often.	54
50	Delulu	Short for "delusional"; used humorously to describe irrational hopes or beliefs, especially in fandoms or dating	42

The data points to a fast-developing selection of vocabulary for Jordan's Gen Z, which is largely due to their use of global social media networks. Reflecting just how important it is for people to feel genuine and real, the phrases 'vibe' (freq. 310), 'mood' (freq. 280), and 'slay' (freq. 210) are among the most widely used. Another interesting aspect revealed by the data is that humor-based likes and situational affirmations are both very popular, proving that Gen Z's language links strongly to shared cultural images and memes. At the same time, 'Flex,' 'Ghost,' and 'FOMO' demonstrate how digital communication changes the way people assert their identity, interact with others, and regard their status. These fun terms, such as 'Demure,' 'I'm not a regular mom,' and 'Catch me outside,' are still remembered, though they may not be commonly used anymore. In general, this list of slang terms reflects a dynamic mix of Arabic and English, strongly influenced

by online discussions, humor, and the creation of identity.

Furthermore, social media environments normalize and encourage significant code-switching between Arabic (both Modern Standard and dialectal forms) and English. Table (2) below indicates that "code-switching" is the most frequently mentioned theme (617 mentions), with participants explicitly stating its use for "blending Arabic and English for relatability and precision." The example quote, "نستخدم 'vibe' و 'slay' ما يفهموا بس الأهل نوصل أفكارنا،" ("We use terms like 'vibe' and 'slay' to express ideas, but our parents don't accept it"), demonstrates how social media provides the context where this mixing is not only acceptable but perceived as more effective for conveying certain ideas or nuances than purely Arabic.

Table 2. Interview Theme Frequency Summary

Thematic Codes	Frequency
Code-Switching	617
Meme-Driven Expressions	430
Abbreviations & Acronyms	289

Moreover, social media facilitates the adaptation of global linguistic trends to local Jordanian contexts, resulting in a form of cultural hybridity. Global terms like "vibe" and "FOMO" adapt to local contexts (e.g., critiques of Amman materialism). "While terms may originate globally, their specific application and meaning are shaped by the socio-cultural realities of Jordanian youth, reflecting local concerns and experiences through a global linguistic lens.

Finally, the unique linguistic practices fostered by social media contribute to a noticeable linguistic divergence between Generation Z and older generations. The respondents reported that "Parents' confusion over slang creates cultural tension." The vocabulary and expressions normalized on social media are often not understood by parents or older relatives, highlighting how social media is actively shaping a vernacular that is distinct and, at times, unintelligible to previous generations.

4.2 Dominant Linguistic Features in Gen Z's Social Media Communication

The data identified several dominant linguistic features commonly used by Jordanian Gen Z in social media communication: code-switching, slang, emojis, abbreviations, and memes. Each of these features contributes significantly to the development of the unique linguistic repertoire of this generation. The study points out that Gen Z has a hybrid, dynamic, and innovative language where traditional linguistic norms mix with new forms to produce a dynamic digital vernacular.

Moreover, social media platforms contribute to the emergence of distinct linguistic norms that differ from offline communication. The theme "Digital vs. Offline Persona" highlights this, with participants reporting switching between the slang and linguistic styles used online and the dialect used in face-to-face interactions, particularly at home. The quote, "بالبيت بنحكي 'Yasss queen' عالسوشال ميديا بنكتب،" ("Online we write 'Yasss queen,' but at home we speak normally"), illustrates that social media fosters a linguistic space where certain expressions and practices thrive, creating a noticeable difference from more traditional, offline vernacular.

Furthermore, social media facilitates the adaptation of global linguistic trends to local Jordanian contexts, resulting in a form of cultural hybridity. Global terms like "vibe" and "flex" adapt to local contexts (e.g., critiques of Amman materialism). "While terms may originate globally, their specific application and meaning are shaped by the socio-cultural realities of Jordanian youth, reflecting local concerns and experiences through a global linguistic lens.

The social media communication of Jordanian Gen Z is characterized by a rich and constantly evolving lexicon of slang and internet abbreviations, many of which are borrowed or adapted from English and global online culture. Analysis of social media data samples demonstrated a high frequency of these terms (total mentions exceeding 300). Dominant slang terms identified include 'Vibe' (37 mentions), 'Mood' (34), 'Salty' (32), 'I'm Dead' (31), 'Lit' (21), 'Flex' (20), 'Ghosted' (16), and 'Shook' (15). These terms are integrated into Arabic sentences and used in diverse contexts. For example, 'shook' is used to describe being affected by something, such as economic hardship ("من الأسعار I'm shook □", "I'm shook from the prices □"). In contrast, the term "flex" refers to showing off, often in a critical way, within the context of materialism ("يسيارته flex عم ب□", "He's flexing with his car □").

Further examples illustrate the varied application of these terms: 'Vibe' is used to describe atmospheres ("غير شكل الجامعة بالليل الها", "The university at night has a different kind of vibe"); 'mood' captures relatable feelings ("مودي اليوم بس بدي أنام□", "My mood today is I just want to sleep □"); 'salty' expresses irritation or bitterness ("لش انت هيك salty اليوم؟ صار شي؟", "Why are you so salty today? Did something happen?"); and 'I'm Dead' conveys extreme humor or relatability ("شفت الميم الجديد؟ I'm dead □", "Did you see the new meme? I'm dead □"). Terms like 'lit' (21 mentions) describe exciting events ("الليلة امبارح كانت lit! فشخ□", "The party yesterday was lit as hell!"), while 'Ghosted' (16 mentions) is used for abruptly cutting communication ("ghosted، بعته مسج مباح وما رد، شكلني عملي□", "I sent him a message yesterday and he didn't reply; it looks like he ghosted me"). Medium-frequency terms like 'Slay' (12 mentions) denote success or confidence ("ال presentation، slayed□", "You slayed the presentation"), and 'Bussin' (10 mentions) is used for strong approval, particularly for food ("ال المنسف bussin□", "The Mansaf is bussin□"). The use of 'Cap' or 'No Cap' (10 mentions) adds a layer of truthfulness critique ("الكتور حكي الامتحان سهل، بس□", "The doctor said the exam was easy, but no cap it was hard").

This extensive use of slang allows for concise expression, adds humor, provides a means for social commentary, and fosters a sense of in-group belonging. The adaptation of terms, even while borrowing from English, reflects a process of cultural hybridity where global language is localized and integrated into the daily digital vernacular.

4.3 How Do These Linguistic Practices Reflect the Construction of Identity and Socio-Cultural Shifts Among Jordanian Generation Z?

The data gathered from social media discussions and interviews with Jordanian Generation Z indicates that their vernacular significantly influences their identities and reflects the ongoing socio-cultural transformations within Jordanian society. The fact that many global digital expressions like “lit,” “vibe,” “slay,” and “I’m dead” are frequently used shows a strong alignment with global digital youth culture. These terms function as markers that can identify in-group belonging and also separate them from the elderly, whose language is shaped by traditional media and face-to-face interaction. By using such globalized linguistic trends, Gen Z constructs a linguistic identity that is dynamic, performative, and closely tied to their online presence. They use language to express their thoughts, make others laugh, challenge rules, and unite with others.

In addition, switching from Arabic to English frequently, using trendy memes, and making up catchy abbreviations reveal how Gen Z’s vernacular demonstrates a linguistic adaptation to cultural hybridity. Jordanian Gen Z is now adapting to a digital sociolect, which makes them rethink and reshape their identity as Arab youth in a globalized, networked world. Their use of language mirrors a broader cultural shift: young people now identify with various groups and accept norms from the internet rather than inherited customs. This not only challenges conventional ideas of preserving language purity and generational authority but also signals Gen Z as active mediators in cultural transformation, declaring their voice through a sociolect that is global in form but local in meaning.

5. Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to investigate the conventions of social media platforms regarding linguistic practices and identity construction among Jordanian Generation Z. The research employed qualitative methods, including interviews and content analysis. The results revealed a shifting language landscape characterized by a blend of traditional language rules and global digital influences.

The results offer substantial insights into vernacular transformations, linguistic innovation, and identity negotiations within the communicative practices of Jordanian youth in the digital age. This study concludes with one of the most significant findings: that social media serves as a catalyst for linguistic change. As exposure to global content has been uninterrupted and platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and Snapchat are participatory, new linguistic forms have been adopted and localized rapidly. The involvement of Jordanian Generation Z users goes beyond merely consuming language; they actively engage with it, remixing, repurposing, and hybridizing it to serve their social communicative purposes within various cultural contexts.

The rise of digital and vernacular in this phenomenon resembles what Androutsopoulos (2014) discusses as fluidity and innovation via multiplicity. There is a central theme with respect to the pervasiveness of code-switching between Arabic and English in both written and spoken interactions. Code-switching is common in multilingual communities, but Jordanian Gen Z code-switching is unique due to identity performance and social positioning. English was seen by many participants as a language of modernity, education, and global connection, while Arabic was still regarded by them as a language of cultural heritage and local attachment. The interplay of linguistic repertoires creates hybrid repertoires that enable Jordanian youth to embody both local and global identities (Robertson, 1995).

Furthermore, the study shows the continuation of a visually symbolic form of communication, exemplified in the form of emojis, memes, and hashtags. These are powerful elements to express emotion, speak about the society, or send signals about identity, enriching the richness and immediacy in online communication. These multimodal features align with Danesi’s (2016) concept of emoji and visual language as crucial elements of digital communication, providing a natural means of overcoming linguistic and cultural differences. The findings extend beyond the use of language to the broader socio-cultural conditions of Jordanian youth. The linguistic practices of the participants also reflect evolving perspectives on tradition, authority, and cultural norms. Many young people use language as a form of soft resistance to older generations, challenging traditional expectations and advocating for new ways of expressing oneself with authenticity, creativity, and an ability to make choices. This viewpoint resonates with Sadiq’s (2020) point that social media allows generational renegotiation of values and identities in the Arab world.

The study revealed underlying tensions and ambivalences among the participants. While they welcomed linguistic hybridity and innovation, some expressed concerns that this blending of languages might result in a decline in formal Arabic proficiency and a loss of cultural craftsmanship. This ambivalence suggests that Jordanian Gen Z is navigating a complex identity negotiation, torn between their desire to embrace aspects of global youth culture and their attachment to their cultural roots.

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Authors’ contributions

Dr. **Maha S. Yaseen** and Dr. **Rami Sa’di** were responsible for the study design, methodological framework, and overall supervision of the research. Dr. **Amer Al-Adwan** carried out the data collection and initial analysis of social media content, while Dr. **Razan Al-Zyod** conducted and transcribed the semi-structured interviews. Dr. **Maha S. Yaseen** drafted the manuscript, and Dr. **Rami Sa’di** and Dr. **Amer Al-Adwan** critically revised it for intellectual content. All authors read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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Appendix 1. the most commonly used expressions by Gen Z in Jordan

Num	Term	Meaning/Definition	Freq.
1	Vibe	The atmosphere or feeling of a situation.	310
2	Mood	Used to describe something relatable.	280
3	Lit	Something that is exciting or excellent.	259
4	"I'm dead"	Used to express that something is extremely funny or relatable.	245
5	Cap / No Cap	"Cap" means to lie; "no cap" means to tell the truth.	241
6	Lowkey	"Lowkey" means subtly or quietly.	240
7	Bet	Used to agree or confirm something; similar to saying "okay" or "sure."	225
8	That's a whole mood	Expression of relatability or resonance.	223
9	Tea	Refers to gossip or interesting news.	215
10	Slay	To compliment someone who is doing something really well.	210
11	"It's giving..."	Used to express the vibe or energy something is giving off.	209
12	"Yasss"	Enthusiastic approval or excitement.	195
13	Highkey	Highkey means openly or obviously.	194
14	W	A term for a win or something positive.	190
15	"That's sus"	Short for suspicious; something seems off.	188
16	"I'm just vibing"	To express being relaxed and enjoying the moment.	187
17	Flex	To show off or boast about something.	186
18	GOAT	Greatest of All Time; used to praise someone highly.	185
19	Drip	Refers to stylish clothing or accessories.	185
20	"I can't even"	To express being overwhelmed or unable to handle a situation.	185
21	"Make it make sense"	Expressing confusion or disbelief.	180
22	Salty	Indicates being upset or bitter about something.	175
23	Bussin'	Used to describe something that is really good, often food.	170
24	Stan	To strongly support or be a fan of something or someone.	170
25	"You do you"	Encouraging self-acceptance and individuality.	170
26	FOMO	Fear of Missing Out; anxiety about missing an exciting event.	160
27	"Let him cook"	Expression of support for someone's effort or idea.	160
28	L	A loss or failure; the opposite of W.	160
29	Shook	Being surprised or shocked by something.	150
30	Gucci	Slang meaning "cool" or "all good."	150
31	Finesse	To handle a situation with skill and style.	130
32	"We're not the same"	Used to assert different standards or levels.	130
33	Bougie	Acting fancy or rich, often pretentiously.	130
34	Simp	Someone who is overly attentive or submissive to someone they like.	130
35	"Don't at me"	Telling someone not to argue with your opinion.	125
36	Snatched	Looking fabulous or flawless.	120
37	It's giving 'I'm not interested' vibes	Used to indicate something uninviting.	105
38	"This is my 13th reason"	Humorous expression of being overwhelmed.	100
39	It girl	A trendy, stylish girl who gets attention.	95
40	Stay salty	Phrase encouraging someone to stay annoyed.	95

41	Woke	Socially conscious (evolved meaning).	90
42	Sneakerhead	Someone who loves collecting sneakers.	90
43	“Catch me outside”	Playful challenge to settle something privately.	85
44	“You had me at hello”	A playful way to indicate immediate interest.	75
45	“I’m not a regular mom...”	Humorous reference to being fun or relatable.	70
46	Demure	Used to describe someone who is modest or reserved in a charming way.	60
47	“Catch these hands”	A playful way to challenge someone to a fight.	59
48	“Throwing shade”	Making a subtle criticism.	55
49	“Living rent-free”	When something occupies your thoughts often.	54
50	Delulu	Short for "delusional"; used humorously to describe irrational hopes or beliefs, especially in fandoms or dating	42
51	Yessir	Enthusiastic agreement or affirmation; often used to hype someone up.	49
52	Period	Used to emphasize a point that ends a discussion; signifies finality	47
53	Yeet	Originally used when throwing something with force; now also an exclamation of excitement or approval	45
54	Delulu	Short for "delusional"; used humorously to describe irrational hopes or beliefs, especially in fandoms or dating	44
55	Rizz	Charisma or charm, especially in the context of flirting or attracting others.	43
56	Ghetto	Low quality	41
57	Hits different	Something feels uniquely emotional or impactful, often unexpectedly.	40
58	Ick	A sudden turn-off from someone you were into; often minor but instantly ruins attraction	40
59	NPC	Non-Playable Character"; used to describe someone who seems generic, unthinking, or unoriginal.	39
60	Boomer	Originally someone from the Baby Boomer generation, now also used to mock outdated or out-of-touch attitudes.	39
61	Ong	Short for "on God"; used to strongly affirm the truth of a statement	39
62	Mid	Mediocre or average, especially when something is hyped but underwhelming.	38
63	Yass	Enthusiastic support or approval, especially in queer or drag communities.	38
64	Aura	The vibe or energy someone gives off, often intangible but powerful.	37
65	Sigma boy / Alpha	*Alpha*: Dominant, leader-type male. *Sigma*: Lone wolf type, successful but outside social hierarchies.	37
66	Cringe	Embarrassing, awkward, or trying too hard	35
67	Glow up	A transformation (usually in looks or confidence) for the better.	34
68	Sheesh	Exclamation of amazement, admiration, or disbelief.	34
69	Clout	Fame or influence, especially online or on social media.	33
70	Duh	Used sarcastically to point out something obvious	33
71	Dope	Cool or impressive.	32
72	Main character energy	Someone who acts like they’re the star of the story; confident, charismatic, self-aware	31
73	Bop	A really catchy or enjoyable song	30
74	Fumble	Messing up a good opportunity, often romantically or professionally.	27
75	Slaps	Really good, often referring to music, but also food or content.	26
76	Gatekeep	Controlling access to something	24
77	Gaslighting	Manipulating someone into doubting their own reality, memory, or feelings.	21
78	Icy	Looking super stylish, flashy, or expensive.	16