Digital Communication and Language Hybridization: Exploring the Impact of Technology on Language Change in the Republic of Moldova

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Comunicarea digitală și hibridizarea limbajului: explorarea impactului tehnologiei asupra schimbării limbii în Republica Moldova

Rezumat

Studiul analizează diverse aspecte ale impactului comunicării digitale asupra limbajului și a schimbării în comunicarea contemporană. În textul dat ne concentrăm pe tranziția pe care a parcurs-o limba română din Republica Moldova în ultimele decenii. Accentul îl vom pune pe interacțiunea dintre tehnologie și lingvistică, prezentând rezultatele cercetării noastre cu privire la modul în care platformele digitale, cum ar fi platformele sociale, mesageria instantanee și comunitățile online (majoritatea având caracter profesional), acționează ca factori catalizatori pentru inovațiile lingvistice și pentru formarea aspectelor hibride ale limbajului. De asemenea, studiul abordează dinamici ale limbii în tranziția sa de la o influență la alta în contextul schimbărilor politice și sociale. Schimburile rapide și convergențele culturale favorizează proliferarea formelor hibride de limbaj. Înțelegerea acestor procese este esențială pentru monitorizarea formelor în continuă evoluție a limbilor și pentru elaborarea unui cadru adecvat de politici lingvistice și de identitate. Actualmente elaborarea unor politici lingvistice este de o deosebită importanță pentru societatea din Republica Moldova, care a captat și a transmis prin limbaj schimbările sociale, istorice și politice.

Cuvinte-cheie: comunicare digitală, schimbarea limbajului, tehnologii noi, schematizare lingvistică.

Abstract

The study examines some aspects of the impact of digital communication on language and the change in contemporary communication. Our study is focused on the transition that the Romanian language from Moldova made in the last decades. Focusing on the intersection of technology and linguistics we will bring some results of our investigation

of how digital platforms such as media, instant messaging, and online communities (most of them professional ones), serve as catalysts for linguistic innovations and the formation of hybrid aspects of language. The study also addresses some dynamics of language in its transition from one influence to another in the context of political and social changes. Rapid exchanges and cultural convergences foster the proliferation of hybrid forms. Understanding these processes is vital for monitoring the evolving nature of languages and for building a framework for language policies and identity, especially important for the society of the Republic of Moldova, which captured and transferred the imprint of the political and historical changes from generation to generation.

Keywords: digital communication, language change, new technologies, schematization of language.

Introduction

The impact of digital communication on language evolution has captivated the attention of scholars, prompting an exploration into the profound effects of technology on our communicative practices. The advent of digital platforms, encompassing social media, instant messaging, and online communities, has fundamentally transformed language dynamics, giving rise to novel modes of expression and communication styles. This shift has prompted linguists to investigate the intricate relationship between technology and language evolution, moving forward to the impact of the communication style on the way we view the world and think.

Among the eminent linguists contributing to this discourse, David Crystal stands out as a pioneer in the intersection of linguistics and technology. His research is focused on how the internet, texting, and social media platforms act as catalysts for linguistic innovation, reshaping the way we communicate. Crystal's work has been instrumental in unveiling the evolving language landscape in the digital era from mobile and GSM speech to the Net speech (Crystal, 2020).

The "Linguistics Digital Communication and Media" (Gnach, Weber, Engebretsen, Perrin, 2023) textbook offers an interdisciplinary overview of media linguistics approaches to explain and understand digital communication and multimodality. It links communication studies, applied linguistics, and journalism, grounding communication practices in a deep understanding of the social and societal implications of language use in digital media.

The author of "The Discourse of Text Messaging" (2012), Caroline Tagg, demystifies the perceived divide between online and offline communication, emphasizing that issues raised about digital communication shed light on language use and practices in general. Linguistic interventions in this area have implications not only for users of digital communication but also for linguists' general understanding of language and social changes. Accessibility to communication and a simplified language changed relationships and attitudes.

Similarly, Deborah Tannen, a renowned expert in sociolinguistics, has made substantial contributions by examining the nuanced impact of digital communication on interpersonal relationships and language usage. Her research sheds light on how digital interactions influence language patterns and shape communication dynamics (Tannen, 2020). The more informal communication the more it tends to consist of logograms, abbreviations, and graphical representations.

Furthermore, Viorica Marian's work adds an intriguing dimension to the discussion by exploring the link between language and cognition (Marian, 2023). Marian's research emphasizes how the way we speak can influence the way we think, suggesting a bidirectional relationship between language and cognitive processes. As technology continues to reshape our linguistic landscape, these scholars, including Viorica Marian, play a crucial role in unravelling the intricate connections between digital communication, language evolution, and cognitive shifts.

About language change and evolution under the impact of social changes and a dominant language, research has been made by scholars in applied linguistics and socio-linguistics as Lidia Para, Klaus Bauchman Sebastian Andrei Labeș, and others. The social, economic, and technological changes all left a mark on the language and the way we choose to communicate.

The Impact of Digital Communication on Language Change

The purpose of this study, which represents a paragraph from our thesis about language hybridization and schematization, is to investigate how digital platforms influence the linguistic behavior and attitudes of Romanian speakers in Moldova, a country that has a complex linguistic and political situation. Moldova is a former Soviet republic that declared its independence in 1991 but still faces pressure from Russia to join its sphere of influence. The official language of Moldova is Romanian, but it is often referred to as Moldovan by the pro-Russian segments of the population. Moreover, Moldova has a large Russian-speaking minority that uses Russian as a lingua franca and a marker of identity. In the linguistic landscape of Moldova, the influence of the Russian language is also noticed in other minority languages as well, on Ukrainian, Gagauz, and Bulgarian, most of them speak Russian as a second or even the first language.

The Romanian language in Moldova has undergone significant changes over the years. During the Soviet period, native speakers became bilingual in Romanian and Russian (Molea, 2016, pp. 169-170). Romanian vocabulary was augmented, in some cases replaced, by Russian words and lexical constructions,

a part of the sound system was affected by Russian phonology, and some parts of syntax were altered by Slavic phrasal patterns (Dyer, 1999, pp. 85-86).

Last year, in March 2023, Romanian was declared as the official language in Moldova (Călugăreanu, 2023). This change is important as it diminishes the rhetoric of politicians who claim that there are no grounds for the two countries to be considered to have the same language and shared cultural identity since Moldova has always been an independent, separate state (Chirileasa, 2023).

The latest discoveries in technologies as platforms with AI incorporated, might significantly influence the way we learn and use the language. This is particularly evident in the case of the Romanian language in Moldova, a region with a rich linguistic history and a dynamic digital landscape, despite the economic and political instability throughout the last three decades.

The language of internet communities and social platforms is not an exception. The influence of the Russian language is still perpetuated through the messages to the general public and in advertising messages. A younger generation that doesn't speak Russian, will use colloquial expressions in the same message with the English words, some of them borrowed through the Russian channel.

Example: „dacă guvernul Sandu nu dă bani pentru bursă, apu tăț o să ne ducem în ITișniși?" (If Sandu Government doesn't give money, so shall we all go to IT?). Here the expression „ne ducem în ITișniși" is a calque from the Russian expression – пойдем в айтишники, the Romanian expression should be „o să devenim" – we will become, and the expression ITșniși is borrowed from English through the Russian adaptation. The Romanian borrowed word is „IT-iști".

The study of linguistic changes in the context of digital platforms can contribute to a better understanding of the language dynamics in Moldova, as well as in other multilingual and multicultural societies. Digital platforms can be seen as spaces of linguistic innovation, creativity, and diversity, where speakers can experiment with new forms and functions of language, as well as express their identities, attitudes, and opinions. Digital platforms can also be seen as spaces of linguistic contact, and negotiation, where speakers can interact with different linguistic communities and ideologies, as well as face linguistic norms and pressures. By analyzing the linguistic features and practices of Romanian speakers on digital platforms, we can gain insights into the linguistic vitality, variation, and change of Romanian language in Moldova, as well as the linguistic attitudes, identities, and ideologies of its speakers. Moreover, we can notice the transition from Russian as a lingua franca to the English language.

To examine the role of digital platforms in language evolution, we will focus on three types of digital platforms that are widely used by Romanian speakers in

Moldova: 1. Media; 2. instant messaging; 3. online communities. Each of these types of digital platforms has different characteristics and affordances that can affect the linguistic behaviour and attitudes of its users. On elenarobu.md blog the journalist uses the Russian word in the title not only to inform, but also to refer to a well-known case of corruption, and suggest an attitude to the reader: „Între adevăr și minciună: „Kuliokul" lui Dodon, ajutorul românesc, tehnologia 5G și COVID-19" (Between Truth and Lie: Dodon's ‚Kuliokul', Romanian aid, 5G technology, and COVID-19) (Robu, 2020).

Media platforms, such as online newspapers, blogs, podcasts, and videos, are mainly used for information, entertainment, and persuasion. Media platforms can expose Romanian speakers to different varieties and styles of Romanian language, as well as to other languages and dialects. Media platforms can also shape the linguistic preferences and opinions of Romanian speakers, as they often reflect and promote certain linguistic ideologies and agendas. For example, some media platforms may use the Romanian language as a symbol of national identity and cultural heritage, while others may use it as a tool of integration and communication with other countries. Russian is frequently used by Romanian speakers on digital platforms by bilinguals to appeal to different audiences and markets or to express different viewpoints and perspectives.

In specialized fields, managers often use specialized jargon or technical language related to their industry or profession, we witness how Russian technical terms are used mostly in the automotive industry, while in the IT area, English terms prevail in professional communication. The professional vocabulary becomes part of the organizational discourse and indicates a high level of professional experience and, thus higher social level within the professional community. Subordinates, seeking to communicate effectively and assimilate within the organizational environment, may incorporate and adapt this specialized language into their communication, facilitating clearer and more efficient communication within the organization. Even if the communication involves speakers of two languages or more.

Instant messaging platforms, such as WhatsApp, Telegram, and Viber, are mainly used for communication, coordination, and socialization, so users expect to have a more dynamic communication, than on social media platforms, where a reaction is not always expected. Instant messaging platforms can enable Romanian speakers to communicate and maintain social networks and relationships. Using instant messaging can also influence the linguistic choices and strategies of Romanian speakers, as they often require and facilitate fast, informal, and interactive communication. The above-mentioned platforms can also foster linguistic creativity and diversity, as speakers can use various

linguistic resources, such as emojis, stickers, gifs, images, audio, and video, to enhance and enrich their messages. Some abbreviations are used in English even by non-speakers. For example, some Romanian speakers may use logograms and abbreviations in English rather than in Romanian to express their attitudes or to replace words and phrases (LOL, pls). Some Romanian speakers may also use stickers and gifs to convey humor and irony or to reference popular culture and memes with English markers.

The younger generation, not all of them Russian speakers, inherited only some vulgar expressions and make use of the Russian and English expressions in the same text: idk, brat (an abbreviation for the English expression "I don't know" and the Russian word «брат»), what in Romanian means „Nu știu, frate". The use of expressions, with a Russian and English influence, in digital communication can vary among individuals and regions, and it may change over time, transitioning from one language to another, from a more literary style to a familiar one. Additionally, not all expressions are adopted universally. Some of them are used in the messaging just for fun. Blin (блин) – Similar to "shoot" or "darn", used to express frustration or surprise. Spasibo (спасибо) – "Thank you". Often used interchangeably with the Romanian „mulțumesc". Privet (привет) – "Hello" or "Hi". Davai (давай) – "Let's go" or "Come on". There are expressions that came into the communication from Russian under the influence of English language – Mazafaka (мазафака).

Online community platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Reddit, are mainly used for participation, collaboration, and activism. So, users create communities on the mentioned platforms that can allow them to join and create groups, based on their interests, and hobbies, and act on different causes. Online community platforms are widely used lately by a large group of people of different age groups and educational backgrounds, adapting linguistic behavior to the purpose. The choice is marked not only by the purpose of the community but also by the attitudes of Romanian speakers, especially during some social movements. There are also, linguistic choices made based on the type of community (professional, sports, hobbies, cultural, and others). Online community platforms can also foster linguistic variation and change, as speakers can adopt and adapt new linguistic forms and functions, as well as challenge and contest existing linguistic norms and rules. For example, some Romanian speakers may use hashtags in other languages or even use vulgar expressions to categorize and highlight their topics and messages, or to show their support and solidarity with certain movements and campaigns. Some Romanian speakers may also use neologisms and borrowings to express new concepts and ideas or to show their affiliation and alignment with certain groups and communities.

Hashtags:

Hashtags categorize and highlight topics, making them easily discoverable. For instance, a Moldovan activist supporting environmental causes might use #ClimateAction, #SaveOurPlanet or #Metoo, #Redmylips in a Romanian written text. Hashtags serve as linguistic markers of solidarity and shared interests.

Neologisms and Borrowings:

Online communities foster linguistic creativity. Romanian speakers invent new words (neologisms) or borrow terms from other languages. For instance, Moldovan gamers might use "gameri" (a blend of "gamer" and Romanian plural suffix) to refer to fellow gamers. The same are formed "bloggeri", "developeri", "provideri", HRerişti/haşerişti, and others.

Challenging Norms:

Online spaces allow speakers to challenge linguistic norms. Moldovan youth may intentionally break grammar rules or playfully twist expressions. This rebellion against conventions reflects linguistic agency and identity negotiation.

Linguistic Innovations in the Romanian Language from Moldova

Digital communication has become a dynamic catalyst for linguistic transformations, reshaping the landscape of languages worldwide, especially with synchronous (instant messaging platforms) written communication. In the context of Moldova, the Romanian language undergoes distinctive linguistic changes propelled by the pervasive influence of digital communication channels. This section of the article focuses on specific linguistic innovations observed in the digital realm, with an emphasis on the influence of professional online communities, the impact of instant messaging, and the role of media in shaping linguistic trends.

Professional online communities serve as breeding grounds for specialized terminology, contributing significantly to the evolution of the Romanian language in Moldova. In these digital spaces, individuals engage in domain-specific discussions, necessitating the development of precise and contextually relevant language. The study identifies instances where professionals from diverse fields contribute

to the creation and adoption of specialized terms, expanding the lexicon of Romanian in response to the demands of a rapidly evolving digital society. By delving into these linguistic nuances, we gain insights into how the language adapts to the intricacies of various industries, reflecting the intersection between digital communication and professional discourse.

The digital age has brought about significant changes in the standard language and in the day-to-day communication in the way we communicate, and the Romanian language on the language policy level (Șimon, Dejica, Fărcașiu, Kilyeni, 2022, pp. 459-474). The internet has become a platform for the major influence on the Romanian language, especially for the wide diversity of speakers from the Republic of Moldova. The older generation, who experienced the influence of the Soviet Union regime and witnessed the efforts of the politicians to artificially create a so-called Moldovan language, and the younger generation, who had access to the global wide web since their childhood and had their choices open, now share the same space of communication and have the same access to the mass communication platforms. These two generations still communicate and understand each other, as they share the same cultural identity.

One of the key aspects of the language change is the blending of tradition and innovation, which is specifically noticed on the lexical level in social media postings. The adaptation to the technical progress is manifested in the language, reflecting a permanent interplay between the necessity of keeping the fundamental coordinates of the linguistic system and the need to adapt communication to the new challenges of reality (Trandabăț, Irimia, Barbu et al., 2012).

The digital communication landscape has also led to the emergence of linguistic calques in the Romanian language of the Republic of Moldova. These calques, often borrowed from the Russian language, are used in both oral and written communication (Molea, 2018, p. 11). To a certain extent personal correspondence and social media shifted to a more casual style of communication for professional purposes.

Ce vei învăța:
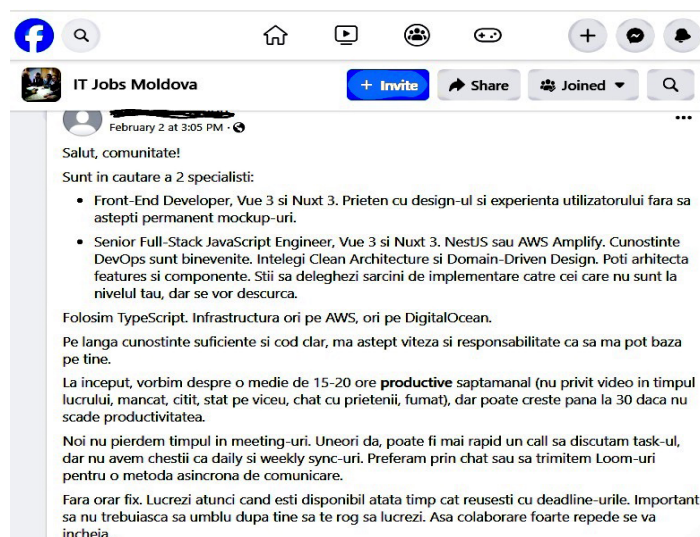Tehnici de *sourcing* avansate
Interviuri eficiente și personalizate
Dezvoltarea unui *brand* de angajator atrăgător

Influence of Professional Online Communities on Specialized Terminology

Professional online communities have a significant influence on the development of specialized terminology. In the Information Technology (IT) area, for instance, sentence loan translations from English have become very frequent in the Romanian language. These loan translations often consist of integral or partial translations of sentence units from English, and they are particularly common in scientific terms or specialized languages.

The below example is taken from social media and professional correspondence, where verbal communication is transferred in written form, even in official emails. The given example of a job posting on a professional community channel will be less formal and use not only specific terms but also a specific style for the target audience:

Noi nu pierdem timpul în *meeting-uri*. Uneori da, poate fi mai rapid *un call* să discutăm *task-ul*, dar nu avem chestii ca *daily* și *weekly sync-uri*. Preferăm prin *chat* sau să trimitem *Loom-uri* pentru o metodă asincrona de comunicare.

Fără orar fix. Lucrezi atunci când ești disponibil atâta timp cât reușești cu *deadline-urile*. Important să nu trebuiască (informal expression – a fi nevoie) să umblu după tine să te rog să lucrezi. Așa colaborare foarte repede se va încheia.

Moreover, translation technologies have played a crucial role in managing specialized terminology. These technologies allow translators to manage specialized terminology in a format similar to bilingual glossaries, such as medical terms or company-specific branding (Rău, 1998).

Media plays a pivotal role in shaping linguistic trends within the Romanian language in Moldova. Through television, online news portals, and social media platforms, the media disseminates linguistic patterns that influence the broader population. By scrutinizing the language disseminated through various media channels, we gain a comprehensive understanding of the intricate interplay between media, digital communication, and the evolution of the Romanian language in the Moldovan context. The media has been instrumental in fostering social inclusion at various levels, including making accessible to all people language innovations

from specific communities or professional languages (Borisova, 2020). However, a lot still needs to be done in the field of linguistic accessibility. As we use the language not only as a means of communication, persuasion, and influence on digital platforms, we choose to adapt the language and innovate due to economic interest, to express an opinion, or to target a specific audience. For the announcements about the national products, advertising will be only in Romanian, sometimes with calques added deliberately to highlight the authenticity. An anglicized language would be generally used to promote a job in the IT sector or to emphasize the opportunity of working in a multinational environment.

Conclusion

In the multinational context of the Republic of Moldova, the use of the undergoes a transition from the prevalent use of the Russian language to the adoption of English as a lingua franca. This linguistic shift underscores the adaptive response of speakers to prevailing political and societal dynamics. The shift in communication is a choice and is dictated by economic, social, and political interests. Language is a living organism and is in constant change, so it will accept or reject the artificially imposed changes. Having a positive attitude to linguistic innovations and at the same time encouraging via digital platforms the usage of literate communication we can contribute to the national heritage and keep the national identity.

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