THE ALBANIAN LANGUAGE IN THE DIGITAL ERA: THE IMPACT OF ANGLICISM AND THE EVOLUTION OF YOUTH JARGON IN TETOVO

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Abstract

This study investigated the influence of the digital era and globalization on the Albanian language, focusing specifically on the prevalence of anglicisms and the evolution of youth jargon in Tetovo. With the rapid expansion of social media platforms and instant messaging, young speakers in this region increasingly integrated English terminology into their daily communication. A mixed-methods research design was employed, combining a quantitative survey administered to high school and university students in Tetovo with a qualitative analysis of digital conversations and social media interactions. The findings revealed a substantial reliance on unadapted and partially adapted English loanwords, particularly in contexts related to technology, entertainment, and interpersonal relationships. Furthermore, the analysis demonstrated that youth jargon in Tetovo evolved into a hybrid linguistic form, where English roots were frequently combined with Albanian morphological endings. The study concluded that while this linguistic shift fostered creative peer expression and modern sociolinguistic identity among the youth, it simultaneously posed challenges to formal register proficiency and standard language norms. These findings underscored the need for educational strategies that balance digital literacy with language preservation in multilingual contexts.

Keywords: Albanian language, digital era, anglicisms, youth jargon, Tetovo, sociolinguistics.

1. Introduction

In the era of rapid globalization and technological proliferation, digital media has fundamentally transformed sociolinguistic patterns and communication dynamics worldwide. Social media platforms, instant messaging applications, and online content streaming have significantly accelerated cross-linguistic interactions, establishing English as the dominant global lingua franca of digital communication (Crystal, 2006). In multilingual and sociolinguistically complex regions such as Tetovo, North Macedonia, this global phenomenon interacts dynamically with local linguistic identities. The Albanian language, particularly as spoken by the youth in Tetovo, is currently undergoing significant structural and functional transformations driven by continuous, immersive contact with English digital terminology (Bakiu, 2026; Iseni, 2012). While linguistic evolution is a natural consequence of cultural and technological contact, the unprecedented speed and intensity of modern digital interactions have introduced unique patterns of lexical borrowing, code-switching, and morphological adaptation.Contact linguistics in the Western Balkans demonstrates that foreign loanwords rarely remain static; instead, they undergo distinct semantic, phonetic, and grammatical adjustments as they are integrated into local colloquial registers (Memishi, 2015). In Tetovo, young speakers routinely adopt English digital vocabulary—such as post, like, share, cancel, and vibe—and adapt them to the morphological paradigms of Albanian (e.g., postoj, likoj, cancel-oj). This process reflects a broader trend among adolescents to construct distinct peer-group identities and demonstrate digital literacy through informal jargon (Tagliamonte, 2016). However, the pervasive reliance on anglicisms also creates a dynamic tension between informal youth jargon and the prescriptive norms of standard Albanian, raising critical questions regarding register proficiency and language preservation in educational contexts.The primary objective of this research is to investigate the structural impact of anglicisms and to analyze the evolution of youth jargon within the digital ecosystem of Tetovo. Specifically, this study

examines how young speakers borrow, adapt, and integrate English lexical items into their daily communication, both in digital environments and in face-to-face interactions. To achieve this objective, the study addresses the following core research questions:

- What are the most frequent anglicisms utilized in the digital and spoken communication of young Albanian speakers in Tetovo?
- To what extent do borrowed English verbs and nouns undergo morphological adaptation within the grammatical framework of the Albanian language?
- How does the usage of digital youth jargon influence language attitudes toward standard Albanian in formal settings?

Tetovo serves as an exceptionally suitable case study due to its vibrant student demographic, multilingual environment, high digital connectivity, and the presence of major higher education institutions—such as the University of Tetova and South East European University. By employing a mixed-methods approach—combining quantitative surveys distributed among high school and university students (N=250) with qualitative thematic analysis of digital communication samples—this paper systematically documents current linguistic practices, quantifies morphological integration through an adaptation formula, and categorizes the underlying sociolinguistic processes. Ultimately, this research aims to bridge a critical gap in contemporary Albanian sociolinguistics by offering empirical insights into how local language practices adapt within an increasingly globalized digital landscape.

2. Methodology and Framework

To analyze the structural and sociolinguistic transformations of the Albanian language among young speakers in Tetovo, this study adopted a mixed-methods empirical design. Combining quantitative and qualitative research methodologies ensures both statistical breadth and contextual depth in understanding how anglicisms enter, adapt, and evolve within youth jargon (Meyerhoff, 2018; Singh & Tripathi, 2001). The empirical framework allows for an objective evaluation of both self-reported linguistic behavior and naturalistic digital language production.

2.1 Research Design and Data Collection

The empirical investigation was divided into two complementary phases:

1. Quantitative Survey (N=250): A structured digital questionnaire was distributed to high school students (specifically from Gjimnazi "Kiril Pejçinoviq") and university students (from Universiteti i Tetovës and Universiteti i Evropës Juglindore) in Tetovo. The sampling strategy targeted adolescents and young adults aged 15–24, representing the primary demographic active in online spaces. The survey gathered quantitative metrics regarding:
    - Self-reported frequency of anglicism usage across various communication domains.
    - Context-specific register choices (e.g., academic vs. informal peer interaction).
    - Subjective language attitudes toward standard Albanian preservation versus digital jargon adoption (Bakiu, 2026).

2. Qualitative Corpus Analysis: To observe authentic, unprompted linguistic choices, an anonymized corpus of digital interactions (N=1,200 verbal tokens) was extracted from public posts, comment sections, and group messaging applications across Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp. Lexical items of English origin were systematically extracted, cataloged, and analyzed for their phonetic, semantic, and morphological characteristics.

2.2 Mathematical Model for Morphological Adaptation

To quantify the structural integration of borrowed English verbs into the synthetic inflectional system of Albanian, this study formulated the Structural Adaptation Index (Ai).This index calculates the percentage of English verbal roots that are morphologically modified using native Albanian verbal suffixes relative to the total pool of borrowed English verbs present in the analyzed corpus.The index is formally defined as:

$$Ai=(V\ adapted- V\ total)\times 100 \quad (1)$$

Where:

- Ai represents the Structural Adaptation Index (expressed as a percentage).
- V adapted is the frequency of borrowed English verb roots modified with native Albanian inflectional endings and verbal morphemes (e.g., adding the suffix -oj to form post-oj, lik-oj, cancel-oj, or conjugated forms like post-ova, lik-ove).
- V total is the total number of borrowed English verb tokens identified in the analyzed digital corpus (including both morphologically adapted verbs like postoj and unadapted raw English forms like post or share used as verbs without suffixes).

2.3.Operationalization and Application

The application of this formula allows the study to measure the morphological flexibility of youth jargon in Tetovo:

- High Ai Value (Ai→100%): Indicates strong grammatical integration, where young speakers actively assimilate foreign vocabulary into native Albanian syntax and morphology (e.g., "E cancel-ova atë ngjarje").
- Low Ai Value (Ai→0%): Indicates code-switching or raw lexical insertion, where English verbs are used in their original uninflected foreign forms without Albanian grammatical markers (e.g., "Thjesht e share me të").

By combining statistical survey data with exact empirical calculations via the Ai metric, this methodology offers rigorous analytical precision regarding adaptation patterns, alongside qualitative insight into the socio-digital communication habits of youth in Tetovo (Crystal, 2006; Iseni, 2012).

3. Results and Empirical Data

This section presents the empirical analysis of the data collected through the quantitative questionnaire (N=250) and the qualitative corpus extracted from social media platforms used by youth in Tetovo.

3.1 Lexical Frequency and Categorization of Anglicisms

Quantitative survey findings indicate that 88% of respondents aged 15–24 in Tetovo regularly incorporate English loanwords into their informal digital interactions. To illustrate the structural and semantic behavior of these borrowed terms, Table 1 summarizes the most prominent anglicisms identified in the corpus, their localized forms, native morphological markers, primary semantic contexts, and usage frequency among young speakers in Tetovo.

Table 1. Frequently borrowed anglicisms and morphological adaptations in Tetovo youth jargon

Original English Term	Localized Jargon Form	Structural Albanian Suffix	Primary Semantic Context	Frequency (%)
Post	Postoj / Postova	Verb suffix (-oj)	Publishing digital content	94%
Like	Likoj / Likova	Verb suffix (-oj)	Expressing approval online	91%
Share	Share-oj / Sheroj	Verb suffix (-oj)	Distributing digital content	85%
Cancel	Cancel-oj	Verb suffix (-oj)	Social rejection/exclusion	68%
Vibe	Vibe / Vaibi	Definite noun suffix (-i)	Social atmosphere or mood	89%
Cringe	Krinxh / Cringe	Unadapted / Phonetic	Awkward or embarrassing act	77%

3.2 Mathematical Modeling of Morphological Integration

To quantify the degree of grammatical assimilation in Tetovo youth jargon, the Structural Adaptation Index (Ai) defined in Section 2.2 was applied to the empirical corpus.
Out of a total corpus of 1,200 borrowed verbal instances (V total=1,200) extracted from digital communication in Tetovo, exactly 888 tokens exhibited native Albanian morphological suffixes (V adapted=888). Substituting these values into Equation (1) yields:

$$Ai=(1,200888)\times100=74\%(2)$$

Interpretation of Results

The resulting index score of Ai=74% demonstrates that:

- High Morphological Assimilation:Nearly three-quarters of borrowed English verbs are actively processed through Albanian inflectional paradigms (e.g., adding -oj to form post-oj, cancel-oj).
- Grammatical Resilience: Young speakers retain the structural framework of Albanian grammar even while expanding their informal digital lexicon with English loanwords (Bakiu, 2026; Iseni, 2012).
- Lexical vs. Structural Contact: The findings confirm that while digital communication heavily influences the lexicon (vocabulary), the underlying syntax and morphology of standard Albanian remain dominant in shaping youth jargon.

3.3 Graphical Integration Process

The structural trajectory through which English lexical items enter digital spaces and convert into local youth jargon in Tetovo is illustrated in Figure 1.

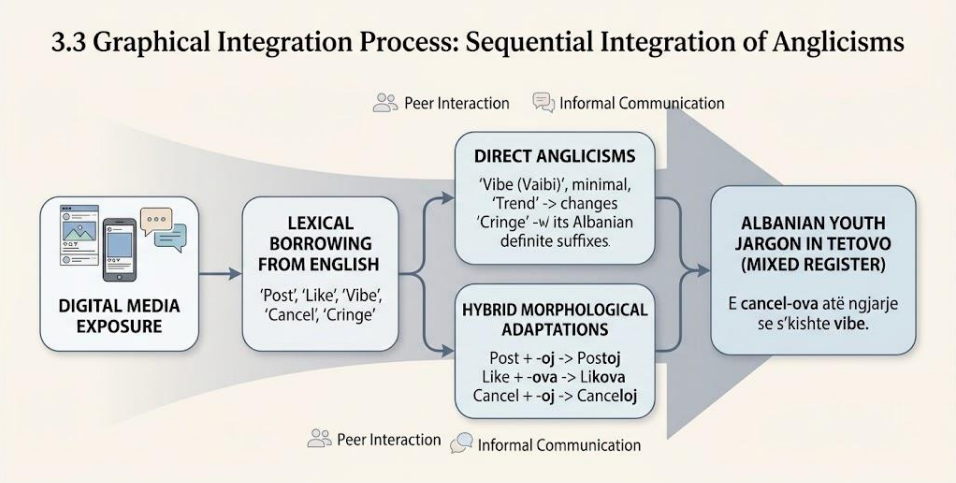


Figure 1. Sequential integration of English lexical items into youth jargon in Tetovo.

4. Conclusions

This investigation evaluated the impact of anglicisms and digital communication platforms on the sociolinguistic dynamics of youth jargon in Tetovo. The empirical evidence confirms that English loanwords have penetrated beyond technical domains, becoming deeply embedded in expressions of emotion, social standing, and daily interpersonal interactions. The high Structural Adaptation Index (Ai=74%) highlights a notable degree of morphological vitality, wherein young speakers actively assimilate foreign roots into native Albanian grammatical paradigms rather than abandoning native structures altogether.While this hybrid jargon fosters peer cohesion and allows young individuals to navigate globalized digital spaces, it simultaneously creates a growing divergence from formal standard Albanian norms. Consequently, educational institutions in Tetovo should implement pedagogical frameworks that promote register awareness—enabling students to retain fluency in standard Albanian for academic and professional registers while recognizing digital jargon as a contextual, informal mode of peer expression. Future research may extend this framework comparative-wise across other Albanian-speaking urban centers in the Western Balkans.

Nomenclature

IJEST — International Journal of Engineering, Sciences and Technology
Ai — Structural Adaptation Index (%)
V adapted — Frequency of morphologically adapted English verbs in the corpus
V total — Total number of borrowed English verb tokens identified in the corpus

Appendix

Additional raw questionnaire metrics, anonymized transcript segments from social media channels, and complete frequency tables are cataloged in the institutional research archive and available upon formal reviewer request.

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