DIGITAL ONOMASTICS: USERNAME AND ONLINE NAMING TRENDS AMONG YOUTH

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Abstract. *This article explores the emerging field of digital onomastics with a focus on username creation and online naming practices among young users. The study examines linguistic, sociocultural, and pragmatic aspects of digital names across social media platforms. The findings indicate that usernames reflect identity construction, creativity, and cultural influences in digital communication.*

Keywords: *digital onomastics, usernames, online identity, youth language, social media, naming practices, linguistic identity.*

Introduction. Onomastics, traditionally defined as the study of proper names, has undergone significant transformation with the rapid development of digital communication technologies. While traditional onomastic studies have primarily focused on anthroponyms, toponyms, ethnonyms, and literary names, the rise of digital environments has introduced new naming systems that require modern linguistic analysis. The widespread use of social media platforms, online forums, gaming communities, and messaging applications has created new forms of naming, commonly referred to as usernames, digital nicknames, and online identities (Crystal, 2011).

Digital onomastics has emerged as a relatively new research field that examines naming practices in virtual environments. Unlike traditional names, digital names are self-selected and often reflect personal creativity, identity

construction, and social positioning. Users have the freedom to construct names that may differ from their real-world identities, which contributes to linguistic innovation and experimentation. This flexibility allows individuals to create multiple identities across platforms, reflecting the dynamic nature of modern communication (Seargeant & Tagg, 2014).

Youth represent one of the most active groups engaged in digital naming practices. Young users often experiment with linguistic forms, combining words, numbers, symbols, and multilingual elements. These naming strategies reflect cultural identity, humor, social belonging, and technological awareness. Additionally, usernames serve pragmatic purposes such as anonymity, personal branding, and attracting attention in competitive digital environments (Danet & Herring, 2007).

Furthermore, digital naming practices often involve creative linguistic processes such as abbreviation, blending, phonetic stylization, and symbolic representation. For example, users may replace letters with numbers or combine multiple languages in a single username. These features demonstrate how digital communication encourages linguistic creativity and innovation.

Despite the growing importance of digital communication, research on digital onomastics remains limited, particularly in the context of youth naming practices. Therefore, this study aims to analyze username formation patterns among young users and identify linguistic, pragmatic, and sociocultural characteristics of digital naming practices.

Methods. This study employs qualitative and descriptive methods to analyze digital usernames. A dataset of 120 usernames was collected from popular social media platforms including Instagram, Telegram, and TikTok. The selected usernames belonged to users aged between 18 and 25.

The analysis focused on:

- structural features of usernames
- linguistic creativity

- cultural references
- use of symbols and numbers
- multilingual elements

The collected data were categorized and analyzed using descriptive linguistic and sociolinguistic approaches.

Results. The analysis revealed several major patterns in digital naming practices:

1. Identity-Based Usernames

Many users incorporate personal names or modified versions of their real names:

- @ali_jr
- @dilnoza_official
- @samir_uz

These usernames emphasize personal identity and authenticity.

2. Creative and Symbolic Usernames

Some users prefer creative names reflecting personality or interests:

- @dreamer_soul
- @silent_moon
- @wild_spirit

These names function as symbolic identity markers.

3. Use of Numbers and Symbols

Numbers and symbols are widely used to create unique usernames:

- @lola_777
- @king_01
- @starx_99

These elements often help users avoid duplication.

4. Multilingual Usernames

Users frequently mix languages:

- @uzb_girl

- @cool_yigit
- @smart_ustoz

This demonstrates globalization and linguistic hybridity.

5. Humorous and Playful Names

Some usernames reflect humor and creativity:

- @lazy_genius
- @coffee_addict
- @no_sleep_club

These names create informal digital identities.

Discussion. The results of this study indicate that digital naming practices among youth are highly dynamic and influenced by various linguistic and sociocultural factors. Unlike traditional naming systems, digital names are flexible and allow users to construct identities that reflect personal interests, creativity, and social positioning. This flexibility promotes linguistic experimentation and innovative naming strategies.

Identity-based usernames demonstrate that many users maintain a connection to their real identities. However, these names are often modified through abbreviations, stylization, or symbolic additions. This phenomenon reflects the hybrid nature of digital identity, where authenticity and creativity coexist. These findings support previous research suggesting that usernames function as tools for identity construction and social interaction (Boyd, 2014).

Creative and symbolic usernames highlight the role of self-expression in digital communication. Many users select names that reflect emotions, personality traits, or aspirations. Symbolic elements such as “dream,” “moon,” or “spirit” often serve as identity markers that communicate personal characteristics.

The use of numbers and symbols represents another important feature of digital naming practices. While initially motivated by technical requirements such as username availability, these elements have evolved into stylistic

devices that enhance individuality and creativity. Similarly, multilingual usernames reflect globalization and cross-cultural communication trends. Youth frequently combine English with native languages, resulting in hybrid linguistic forms.

Humorous and playful usernames also play an important role in digital communication. These names create informal communication environments and contribute to social interaction. Humor in usernames often reflects creativity, group identity, and digital culture trends.

Moreover, modern technologies such as artificial intelligence tools, social media algorithms, and online communities influence naming practices. Users increasingly adapt their names for visibility, branding, and engagement. As digital communication continues to evolve, naming practices are expected to become even more diverse and complex.

Overall, digital onomastics provides valuable insights into linguistic creativity, identity formation, and sociocultural trends among youth. Future research may explore cross-cultural comparisons, gender differences, and longitudinal changes in digital naming patterns.

Conclusion. Digital onomastics represents a growing area of linguistic research. Username formation among youth reflects identity construction, creativity, and sociocultural influences. The study demonstrates that online naming practices are dynamic and continue to evolve alongside digital communication technologies.

Future research may focus on cross-cultural comparisons and longitudinal studies of digital naming trends.

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