



Digital identity and language complex: An analytical study of the Hna Dzair - Here Algeria Facebook page

Asma Aici *

University of Mouloud Mammeri: tizi ousou

Asmaaici18@gmail.com

Received: 03/02 /2026

Accepted: 16/03 /2026

Published: 31/03 /2026

Abstract:

Our study aims to explore the phenomenon of digital identity and language complexity in the context of the Hna Dzair Facebook page, during the period from 1 June 2025 to 30 August 2025. Our study relies on content analysis to examine the nature of the language and digital techniques used by the page administrators and those who interact with it, and how these uses reflect the way in which digital identity is constructed. A purposive sample of 20 posts from the page's content was selected, including written texts, images, and methods of interaction with followers. The analysis focused on the language used, expressive styles, and the degree of mixing between classical Arabic, colloquial Arabic, and French.

The results showed that the page tends to use a mixture of classical and colloquial Arabic with some French influence, reflecting a linguistic complex among some users that affects their mode of expression and ability to communicate effectively in the digital space. Through this analysis, our study confirms that digital identity is not just a digital image, but rather a continuous construction that is influenced by linguistic, cultural, and social factors.

Keywords: Digital identity; Language complex; Digital discourse; Multilingualism; Linguistic hybridisation; Social representations.

* Corresponding author



Introduction :

The study of digital identity and language complexity on social media pages is an important topic in linguistic and social research, as it provides an in-depth insight into the dynamics of digital communication and the cultural and linguistic transformations that Algerian society is undergoing in the digital age. It also highlights the importance of linguistic and digital awareness and its role in shaping a coherent digital identity that reflects cultural and intellectual belonging and allows individuals to express themselves clearly and effectively in the digital space.

Among the factors that greatly influence the formation of digital identity, language is at the forefront of academic interest, as it plays a dual role: it is a means of communication, a tool for self-presentation, and an indicator of cultural and social belonging. However, the use of language in the digital space often reflects users' language problems or complexes, especially when mixing classical Arabic, local colloquial Arabic, and foreign languages such as French or English. This language complex sometimes manifests itself in the form of difficulty in expression, reduction of meaning, or a tendency to use a second language to overcome limitations in expression, which affects the self-image and digital identity of the individual or group.

In the Algerian context, social media pages represent a vital space for studying the relationship between digital identity and language issues, given the multilingual nature of Algerian society, where classical Arabic, local dialects and French overlap in people's daily lives.

The Hna Dzair Facebook page is a suitable model for examining this phenomenon, as it combines local content that reflects Algerian culture with diverse linguistic practices that represent how young people interact with the digital space and different languages. By studying the content of this page, we can understand how linguistic choices influence the construction of digital identity and the extent to which language issues are reflected in digital interaction and social communication within this page.

❖ Research Problem:

The digital transformation and the spread of social media platforms have created a new communicative space that has reshaped patterns of self-expression, language and identity. Identity is no longer constructed solely within traditional social frameworks, but is also shaped within the digital space through discourse, language used, and patterns of interaction. This has given rise to the issue of language as a manifestation of identity tension, which manifests itself in the mockery of the mother tongue, the preference for foreign languages, or linguistic hybridisation, reflecting a conflict between local references and global influences.

Accordingly, the central research question of this study is:



- How are digital identity and language complex manifested in digital discourse, and what are the implications of linguistic diversity and hybridisation in shaping social representations within the digital space?.

❖ **Sub-questions:**

- What are the most prevalent languages and dialects in the page's digital discourse?
- What is the prevalence of digital identity compared to national and local identity in the published content?
- How widespread are expressions of linguistic pride versus linguistic alienation or mockery?
- What are the most common types of comments (supportive, critical, derisive)?.

❖ **Research Objectives:**

The study aims to:

- Analyse the nature of digital identity as it appears in digital discourse across social media platforms.
- Reveal manifestations of language complexes within various digital interactions.
- Discover patterns of linguistic diversity and hybridisation and their social implications.
- Understand social representations of language as reflected in digital discourse and interaction.

❖ **Importance of the study:**

- The study contributes to enriching sociological research on language and identity in the digital context.
- It helps to understand the transformations that have occurred in the relationship between language and identity in the context of digitalisation.
- It provides data that can be used to construct a conscious digital discourse that limits symbolic linguistic violence.

❖ **Previous Studies:**

- **Study (Rosana 2024)**, entitled "The Role of Digital Identity in the Age of Social Media: Literature Analysis on Self-Identity Construction and Online Social Interaction," aimed to understand the role of digital identity in the age of social media through an analysis of scientific literature, focusing on the impact of individuals' digital self-identity on social interaction via the Internet. The researchers used a qualitative literature review approach by collecting and analysing previous studies and articles (theoretical and applied) related to digital identity and interaction through social media.



The study reached the following conclusions:

- Digital identity is a complex, multidimensional construct that is influenced by individual and social factors.

- Although digital identity provides opportunities for self-expression and community building, it raises concerns about authenticity, privacy, and identity fragmentation¹.

- **Study (Zahaf 2024)**, entitled: "The Role of Social Media in Shaping Young Algerians' Linguistic and Cultural Identity" aimed to explore the impact of social media on the formation of linguistic and cultural identity among young Algerians and to understand how the linguistic and behavioural practices of young people on the internet affect an individual's linguistic and cultural identity. The researcher used a mixed research methodology combining quantitative and qualitative approaches by applying a questionnaire to measure the linguistic and behavioural practices of the participants and an observation tool to verify the qualitative data and interpret certain linguistic and social phenomena. The study sample consisted of first-year Master's students in the English Department at the University of Sidi Bel Abbès, Algeria, who are clearly active on social media, given their tangible linguistic and cultural interaction on digital platforms.

The study reached the following conclusions:

- Social media has a positive impact on the formation of digital identity.

- Some participants believe that digital platforms provide opportunities to interact with and benefit from multiple languages and cultures².

- **Study (Alasal 2025)**, entitled "Investigating the role of social media language in Formation Digital Identity: The mediating effect of social influence," aimed to explore the role that social media language plays in shaping individuals' digital identities.

By analysing the social influence in the relationship between digital language and digital identity formation, the researcher used a combination of quantitative, descriptive and analytical methods, applying an electronic questionnaire. The study sample was a targeted sample of 210 active users of social media in Saudi Arabia.

The study reached the following conclusions:

- Social media language has a direct and statistically significant impact on digital identity formation.

- Digital language has a very strong impact on social influence³.

- **Study (Matrood 2025)**, The study entitled: "Language and Digital Identity: A Sociolinguistic Study of Online Communities" aimed to understand how language use in digital communities affects the formation of individuals' digital identities, and how members use language to express and negotiate their identities within these different digital communities. The researcher relied on qualitative analysis of the linguistic content of what members post in digital communities. The



study sample consisted of a collection of posts and comments by users from open digital communities on Reddit, Discord, and Twitter, where data was selected based on linguistic content that reflects how language is used in the context of digital identity, rather than randomly selecting individuals.

The study reached the following conclusions:

- Digital identity is not static but rather a linguistic performance that is shaped and changed by the linguistic decisions made by users within digital communities.
- Users can navigate between multiple or conflicting identities by using different linguistic styles, such as switching between styles, dialects, and symbols such as emojis⁴.

❖ **Operational Definitions:**

- **Digital identity:**

The sum of linguistic and symbolic representations through which individuals express themselves and their affiliations within the digital space, through writing styles, choice of language or dialect, and patterns of interaction, reflecting their social and cultural position and their view of themselves and others.

- **Language complex:**

A state of tension or disturbance in one's attitude towards language, manifested in the devaluation of one's native language, preference for other languages, or mockery of linguistic usage, reflecting linguistic alienation or aversion.

- **Digital discourse:**

Texts comments, and written or symbolic interactions circulating on digital platforms, which express individuals' attitudes towards language and identity and carry analysable semantic and sociological dimensions.

- **Multilingualism:**

The use of more than one language or linguistic style within the realm of digital interaction, whether in posts or comments, reflecting the diversity of individuals' cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

- **Linguistic hybridisation:**

The combination of two or more languages within digital discourse, such as mixing Arabic and French or English in the same comment, is an indicator of the interaction between the local and the global in the construction of digital identity.

- **Social representations:**

The mental images and collective perceptions that individuals hold about language and identity, as reflected in digital discourse and patterns of interaction, guide their attitudes and communicative behaviour within the virtual space.



THE FIRST TOPIC : Theoretical Framework:

FIRST REQUIREMENT: Identity and linguistic identity: what is the connection?:

Identity is an old term that became popular in the postmodern era through a number of studies in the fields of psychology, sociology and politics. It has also been widely used by nationalist movements, politicians, intellectuals and media figures, occupying a significant place in contemporary human thought. All of these groups have elaborated on its meaning and significance. In general, they have concluded that identity is a set of characteristics that distinguish an individual or group and foster the individual's sense of belonging to the group, creating an awareness of the group's uniqueness and difference from other groups and societies. From this perspective, identity "is a person's awareness of their affiliation with a society, homeland or group within the framework of general human affiliation."

Awareness of identity and belonging to a group influences the behaviour of individuals and the group as a whole, and determines their distinctive cultural and human role. Therefore, the distinctive characteristics of a group or society are meaningless without its members' awareness of those characteristics and their sense of belonging to the group. Such awareness is also meaningless if it does not translate into a force that drives individuals to work and perform distinctive roles.

On this basis, identity may pertain to a specific person and be called personal (individual) identity, which differs from one person to another. We may also refer to a group of individuals who share these characteristics, which is called social identity, and these individuals form an ethnic group, a nation or a people. Hence, ethnic, national or nationalist identities are all forms of social identities, as they denote a set of characteristics or features shared by individuals. In this research, we will focus on this type of identity, excluding personal or individual identity⁵.

Since its emergence, the concept of identity has been linked to the term language, as language has been and continues to be the most prominent sign of existence and the most important means of expression for a group. Most scholars in various disciplines agree that language is one of the most important elements that shape social identity (national and ethnic duality). Since language is specific to each group, and since each group has its own characteristics, this system cannot be merely a neutral means of communication. Rather, it is true to Christine Frachette's comment that language carries identity, values, history and meaning; it achieves social cohesion and supports the growth of a sense of belonging to the group.

Looking at language in relation to identity goes beyond seeing it as a tool for communication between members of a community to viewing it as a symbol of that community, helping to define and identify it. Language can also be a cause of



division within a community or country if there are multiple languages within the community and those communities refuse to abandon their languages in favour of another language that unifies the community. Each community then separates with its own language, which is what has happened in many countries that have experienced civil wars caused by language issues.

The significant role that language plays in shaping social identity has led some scholars to conclude that language, like religion, transcends being a normal component of social identity to become identity itself.

If language is a component of social identity, then linguistic identity is the awareness of the members of the community of this component and its importance in shaping the community's past, present and future. This awareness fosters their pride in the language and its use, strengthens their desire to learn it and teach it to their children, and motivates them to develop and promote it. The stronger the linguistic identity and the greater the group's awareness of the importance of the language, their pride in it, their use of it, and their efforts to develop it, the weaker the linguistic identity of the group members, the less pride they take in it, the less they use it in various aspects of life, and the more they replace it with foreign languages. Linguistic identity is also positively and negatively affected by other identities, such as religious identity, and in turn positively and negatively affects the entire social identity⁶.

SECOND REQUIREMENT: Digital Identity and Online Communities:

The advent of social networking sites and online forums has added new dimensions to how identities are formed and performed. Scholars of digital culture, such as Sherry Turkle (1995), observed early on that online environments allow people to present aspects of self that may be constrained in face-to-face life. In multi-user domains or social media profiles, users craft written selves—effectively narrating who they are (or who they wish to be). This is particularly salient for adolescents and young adults, who often experiment with identity in online spaces as part of their development. Subsequent research has emphasized continuity between offline and online identity: even when the medium changes, individuals bring their embodied experiences into how they act online. Weber and Mitchell (2008) describe online identity as "work-in-progress, an evolving active construction" that unfolds through interactions with both digital and non-digital worlds. They stress that physical embodiment still underpins identity—for example, profiles often include photos, and personal experiences influence online behavior—but the internet provides new tools for performing identity (e.g., editing one's posts, selecting which personal information to display). A key notion in understanding online identity is performativity. In line with Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical analogy of social life, identity performance refers to the idea that identity is something one does rather than simply something one is, As



Buckingham (2008) succinctly put it, "Identity is something we do, rather than simply something we are"⁷.

This performative view means that on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, or language learning apps, users actively construct a persona through status updates, language choices, images, and interactions. For language learners, this might involve choosing an English nickname, using certain greetings or humor to appear more "native-like," or consciously avoiding mistakes in writing to project a competent identity. Performance is constrained by audience and context: on a public forum, an ELL might carefully proofread a post (performing a diligent student identity), whereas in a casual group chat they might freely mix languages and use slang (performing a bilingual youth identity).

It is important to recognize that online identity performance can both empower and unsettle. On one hand, digital platforms can flatten some aspects of identity an ELL user might feel relieved that online nobody can immediately judge them by appearance or accent,

In conclusion, digital identity is a performative and negotiated construct in online communities. These settings provide ELLs with a special setting in which to practice being an "English user" as part of their identity repertoire. Online identity is socially situated, dynamic, and complex, according to the literature (Dooly, 2017). These revelations lay the groundwork for investigating how language use, which is the primary means of communication, becomes a vital tool for constructing identities in virtual communities⁸.

THE SECOND TOPIC : Methodology:

Firstly:

1- Study Scope:

a- Temporal Scope: The study was conducted between 1 June 2025 and 30 August 2025, which was an appropriate period of time that allowed us to track digital discourse in a contemporary social and cultural context.

b- Spatial Scope: Our study is limited to the digital space due to the high demand for following the Hna Dzair - Here Algeria page on Facebook only, excluding accounts on other social media platforms.

Secondly:

1- Research Design: Our study relied on qualitative content analysis, as this approach allows us, as researchers, to understand symbolic meanings and analyse implicit discourses that reflect the relationship between the digital actor and their self, language and identity.

**Third:****1- Population and Sample:**

The study relied on a purposive sample consisting of 20 posts selected from the content of the Hna Dzair - Here Algeria page, according to the following criteria:

- The intensity and nature of interaction.
- The diversity of linguistic styles and communication methods.

Fourth:**1- Instrument:**

The study utilized the following tools:

- Content analysis form containing linguistic indicators.
- Digital discourse observation

Fifth:**1- Analysis Categories:**

The analysis categories for our study were determined based on the theoretical framework and study objectives, and are as follows:

- Language categories: Standard Arabic, Algerian dialect (Darija), French, English.
- Identity categories: national identity, local identity, digital identity.
- Semantic categories: linguistic pride, linguistic alienation, linguistic bullying and mockery.
- Interactive categories: supportive comments, critical comments, mocking comments

THE THIRD TOPIC : Data Analysis

Table 01 represents the linguistic category.

Language categories	Freq uency	Perce ntage
Standard Arabic	21	19.4 4%
Algerian dialect (Darija)	74	68.5 2%
Language French	09	08.3



		3%
Language English	04	03.7 1
Total Results	108	100 %

Source: Designed by the researcher based on the sample data

Table 1 shows the dominance of the Algerian dialect (colloquial) with 68.52% of the total posts on the page, followed by classical Arabic with 19.44%, then French with 8.33%, while English recorded the lowest percentage at 3.71%.

The dominance of the colloquial dialect reflects the digital space's orientation towards everyday language as a more effective tool for building digital identity and interacting with the public. In contrast, the presence of classical Arabic remains linked to symbolic legitimacy and knowledge, while the limited use of foreign languages indicates linguistic tension or selectivity, sometimes reflecting a language complex or a desire for distinction within the digital space.

Table 02 represents the identity category.

Identity categories	Freq uency	Perce ntage
National identity	31	31.6 3%
Local identity	24	24.4 9%
Digital identity	43	43.8 8%
Total Results	98	100 %

Source: Designed by the researcher based on the sample data

Table 2 shows that digital identity represents the highest percentage at 43.88% (43 repetitions), followed by national identity at 31.63%, and then local identity at 24.49%.



This distribution indicates the emergence of digital identity as a fundamental frame of reference for self-expression in virtual space, ahead of traditional affiliations. as it indicates a shift in patterns of belonging, where identity is reshaped through digital platforms, with national and local identity continuing to be present as a symbolic asset that is reused within digital discourse rather than disappearing.

Table 03 represents the semantic category.

Semantic categories	Freq uency	Perce ntage
Linguistic pride	71	51.4 5%
Linguistic alienation	49	35.5 1
Linguistic bullying and mockery	18	13.0 4
Total Results	138	100 %

Source: Designed by the researcher based on the sample data

Table 3 shows that linguistic pride ranks first with 51.45% (71 occurrences), followed by linguistic alienation with 35.51% (49 occurrences), while linguistic sarcasm and mockery come last with 13.04% (18 occurrences).

This distribution reflects the strong presence of discourse expressing pride in linguistic belonging within the digital space, indicating the use of language as a central element in the construction of digital identity. However, the significant percentage of linguistic alienation reveals, on the other hand, an identity tension resulting from the dominance of foreign languages or globalised digital expression models, which embodies what can be called a language complex. Linguistic irony, on the other hand, represents a symbolic mechanism for expressing rejection or resistance and reflects a critical awareness or paradox between language and identity in the digital context.



Table 04 represents the interactive category.

Interactive categories	Freq uency	Perce ntage
Supportive comments	30	30.6 1%
Critical comments	24	24.4 9%
Mocking comments	44	44.9 0%
Total Results	98	100 %

Source: Designed by the researcher based on the sample data

We note from Table 4 that there is a disparity in the distribution of interaction patterns within the digital space, with sarcasm dominating over positive or rational criticism, with sarcastic comments ranking first at 99. % (44 occurrences), followed by supportive comments with 30.61% (30 occurrences), and then critical comments with 24.49% (24 occurrences).

The dominance of mocking comments reveals the nature of interaction on digital platforms, where sarcasm is used as a symbolic mechanism to express rejection or scepticism and sometimes as a means of establishing status within the virtual community. On the other hand, the presence of supportive comments reflects the existence of a group of followers who embrace the discourse presented and contribute to reinforcing its legitimacy. As for critical comments, despite their relative scarcity, they express a critical awareness that seeks to question the content rather than reject or mock it. This pattern of interaction indicates that the digital space is not limited to passive reception, but is rather an arena for symbolic conflict over the meaning and stance of the discourse at hand.

Conclusion:

This study shows that digital space has become a pivotal element in the construction of individuals' linguistic and social identity, where digital identity intersects with linguistic diversity and hybridisation, and manifestations of linguistic pride and alienation reflect what is known as the "language complex". The results also show that digital interactions (supportive, critical, and mocking comments) reveal symbolic conflicts and the impact of digital discourse on the



social representations of followers. Therefore, it can be said that digital platforms are not merely a space for communication, but rather an arena for the reproduction of social and linguistic identities and representations, which necessitates awareness of the dimensions of language and identity when designing and managing digital content.

❖ **Results and Discussion**

- Language is a pivotal element in the construction of digital identity, with linguistic pride emerging as the most prominent category in digital interactions.
- The persistence of the language complex within the digital space through manifestations of linguistic alienation and marginalisation, despite the modernity of the media.
- The dominance of derisive comments reflects a sarcastic tone that prevails in digital discussions related to language and identity.
- The existence of duality in linguistic attitudes between pride in language on the one hand and mockery or aversion to it on the other.
- Digital platforms contribute to the reproduction of symbolic linguistic violence through mockery, exclusion and the belittling of certain linguistic patterns.
- Digital interaction plays a role in shaping linguistic and identity awareness, whether in a positive, supportive manner or in a negative, exclusionary manner.
- The digital space is a symbolic space of conflict where language intersects with identity and social power.

❖ **Recommendations:**

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

- The need to promote digital linguistic awareness through educational content that limits mockery and linguistic alienation within social media platforms.
- Encouraging the use of Arabic and local languages with positive awareness in the digital space without excluding multilingualism.
- Integrating digital identity and language studies into university research and academic programmes to keep pace with digital transformations.
- Calling for the establishment of a critical and rational digital discourse that respects linguistic diversity and reduces symbolic violence.

¹ Rosana Anita & Irfan Fauzi, The Role of Digital Identity in the Age of Social Media: Literature Analysis on Self-Identity Construction and Online Social Interaction, Join Journal of Social Science, v1, n4, 2024, 477-489.



² Zahaf Esam, The Role Of Social Media In Shaping Young Algerians' Linguistic And Cultural Identity, *Taalimiya Review*, v14, n1, 2024, 889-904.

³ Alasal Mahmoud Sabri, Investigating the role of social media language in Formation Digital Identity: The mediating effect of social influence, *E Learning and Digital Media*, v22, n6, 2025, 1123-1145.

⁴ Matrood Doaa Taher, Language and Digital Identity: A Sociolinguistic Study of Online Communities, *Frontiers in Global Research*, v1, n2, 1-3.

⁵ Bediaf souad & Boudjamline Laboukhe, The impact of linguistic identity on the development of the Arabic language, *Journal Al-Athar*, v15, n25, 2016, p196.

⁶ Bediaf souad & Boudjamline Laboukhe, The impact of linguistic identity on the development of the Arabic language, p197.

⁷ Demir Ayşe Nesil & Ekizoglu Mehmet, Exploring Identity Construction and Language Use Among English Language Learners in Online Communities: An Integrative Review (2004-2024), *Kuramsal Eğitim*, v18, n4, 2025, p 758.

⁸ Demir Ayşe Nesil & Ekizoglu Mehmet, Exploring Identity Construction and Language Use Among English Language Learners in Online Communities , p 759.

Writing conditions:

- Alasal Mahmoud Sabri, Investigating the role of social media language in Formation Digital Identity: The mediating effect of social influence, *E Learning and Digital Media*, v22, n6, 2025, 1123-1145.
- Bediaf souad & Boudjamline Laboukhe, The impact of linguistic identity on the development of the Arabic language, *Journal Al-Athar*, v15, n25, 2016, 195-210
- Demir Ayşe Nesil & Ekizoglu Mehmet, Exploring Identity Construction and Language Use Among English Language Learners in Online Communities: An Integrative Review (2004-2024), *Kuramsal Eğitim*, v18, n4, 2025, 755-776.
- Matrood Doaa Taher, Language and Digital Identity: A Sociolinguistic Study of Online Communities, *Frontiers in Global Research*, v1, n2, 1-3.
- Rosana Anita & Irfan Fauzi, The Role of Digital Identity in the Age of Social Media: Literature Analysis on Self-Identity Construction and Online Social Interaction, *Join Journal of Social Science*, v1, n4, 2024, 477-489.
- Zahaf Esam, The Role Of Social Media In Shaping Young Algerians' Linguistic And Cultural Identity, *Taalimiya Review*, v14, n1, 2024, 889-904.