Language Identity and Multilingual Learning on Social Media: A Linguistic Analysis of TikTok Content

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Abstract:
The development of social media, particularly TikTok, has created a new space for creative and interactive informal language learning. This video-based platform facilitates language learning through a combination of visuals, audio, and social interaction. This study aims to analyze the linguistic identity and language learning of Arabic and Turkish in TikTok learning content that features vocabulary with similar forms and meanings between the two languages, with English as the medium for translation. Using a descriptive qualitative method, data was collected from nine language learning TikTok videos published between 2023 and 2024, and then analyzed and classified into five areas of usage based on the Arabic-Turkish Dictionary by Helalşah (2024), the Arabic Medical Dictionary by al-Labadi (2005), and the Arabic Legal Dictionary by Wahab (1972). These areas include daily conversations, family, medicine, law and government, and traits and character. The results of the study indicate that there are 45 vocabulary items presented in parallel, with a dominance of vocabulary related to daily conversations, followed by the fields of medicine, law and government, traits and character, and family. The study by Syarofi & Syuhadak (2023)

emphasizes that TikTok not only functions as entertainment media but also as a learning space that strengthens the linguistic identity of learners. Language learning content on TikTok serves as a platform that enhances users' language skills through the presentation of creative and efficient material. This platform helps improve the understanding of meanings and the application of words in diverse communication situations. Moreover, the short video format creates a dynamic, collaborative learning experience that is relevant to the characteristics of today's learners.
Keywords: TikTok, language learning, linguistic identity.

A. INTRODUCTION

Social media has revolutionized the way humans live across various aspects of life, including language learning in the digital era. Platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube are prominent in this shift. Focusing on TikTok, which is no longer merely an entertainment space, but also serves as an open, dynamic, and easily accessible learning tool for all audiences (Syarofi & Syuhadak, 2023). TikTok, with its effective and efficient short-video format, presents great opportunities for informal language learning. Through brief video durations, users can quickly absorb material without academic pressure and without the limitations of space and time, making it an effective and efficient media for language learning.

In the context of language learning, the concept of informal learning as proposed by (Schugurensky, 2000) becomes relevant. He explains that informal learning is the learning process that takes place outside formal educational institutions, without teachers, curriculum, or rigid evaluation structures. This type of learning is self-directed, spontaneous, and interest-based, where individuals learn due to personal motivation rather than institutional obligation. TikTok represents a concrete form of this informal learning. Through the platform, language learners can absorb content from creators, mimic pronunciation, understand meanings, and interact with other users without spatial and temporal boundaries.

On the other hand, linguistic identity, as explained by Norton (2013), is a social dimension that continually develops through learning experiences and linguistic interactions. Norton emphasizes that when someone learns a language, they not only understand the grammatical system but also negotiate social positions, community memberships, and their self-image as a user of that language. In the context of TikTok, linguistic identity is shaped through active participation in cross-cultural learner communities. Arabic learners studying Turkish, or vice versa, find new meanings in the linguistic interactions they consume and produce, thus enriching their language experience and simultaneously expanding their social identity in the digital realm.

In the context of Arabic and Turkish language learning, the linguistic characteristics of both languages demonstrate a strong historical connection. Linguistic data shows that more than 6,000 Arabic vocabulary words have been absorbed into Turkish, covering areas such as religion, law, science, and government. Conversely, only a few hundred Turkish words have entered the Arabic language, mostly related to culture and daily life during the Ottoman Empire period. Borrowed words from Turkish to Arabic are generally related to food (baklava, börek, dolma, yoğurt, cacık), clothing, household items, and military or administrative terms.

On the other hand, Arabic vocabulary in Turkish has a broader scope and has had a significant impact on the development of the modern Turkish lexicon.

This phenomenon shows that the Arabic-Turkish relationship is historical and bidirectional, although not balanced in terms of quantity or fields. Through TikTok content, this linguistic connection is revived in the form of parallel learning, where users can recognize similarities in word forms, pronunciation, and meanings between the two languages. Turkish content creators often present words that resemble Arabic, along with explanations of their meanings in English, allowing Arabic speakers who do not know Turkish to understand the content, and vice versa. Such practices make TikTok an effective, efficient, and participatory learning space, where users not only acquire new vocabulary but also build linguistic awareness and language identity in the digital world.

However, previous studies (Mufliha et al., 2024; Priantiwi & Abdurrahman, 2023; Syarofi & Syuhadak, 2023) have generally focused on a single language and the motivation behind language learning, without exploring how the interaction between Arabic and Turkish, mediated by English, affects language learning and the formation of linguistic identity among users in the digital space. This phenomenon is crucial to examine because TikTok presents a model of informal, creative language learning.

Based on this discussion, this study seeks to understand how informal language learning and the formation of linguistic identity occur through TikTok content that features similarities between Arabic and Turkish vocabulary, with explanations in English. Theoretically, this research is expected to enrich applied linguistics studies, especially in the field of language learning through digital media and the development of linguistic identity in the global era. Practically, the findings can serve as a reference for educators, content creators, and language learners to utilize TikTok as an innovative, efficient, and contextual learning space to broaden linguistic and cultural competence.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

Various studies have affirmed the potential of social media in language learning. (Priantiwi & Abdurrahman, 2023) showed that TikTok is effective and efficient in enhancing motivation and vocabulary mastery in Arabic through creative and interactive content. (Syarofi & Syuhadak, 2023) found that TikTok excels in microlearning formats and user engagement compared to other platforms. (Mufliha et al., 2024) also proved that the integration of TikTok in formal learning improves vocabulary mastery and student motivation. However, most of these studies are still limited to one language and have not examined the multilingual interaction between Arabic, Turkish, and English, nor the dimension of digital linguistic identity.

(Schugurensky, 2000) emphasized that the more appropriate term for the informal context is "learning" rather than "education," because in informal learning processes, there is no educational institution, instructor, or teacher with institutional authority, and no set curriculum. In various academic studies, informal learning is characterized by self-directed

learning and the absence of specific individuals intentionally fostering interactions or interventions.

Social media platforms like TikTok serve as primary spaces for informal language learning because they present engaging and easily accessible materials. (Farhan et al., 2024) emphasized that microlearning enhances students' motivation and thinking skills, while (Bozanta & Mardikyan, 2017) showed that collaborative learning through social media is more effective and efficient than traditional methods.

The concept of linguistic identity developed by (Norton, 2013) emphasizes its dynamic nature and how it is shaped through social interactions. (Coulmas, 2024) defines linguistic identity as a fundamental aspect of social identity that emerges through language use in specific social contexts. (Wenger, 1998) referred to this phenomenon as communities of practice, where identity is formed through sustained participation in communities with similar interests and goals.

Multilingual learning strengthens cross-linguistic awareness, which is the ability to recognize relationships between languages (Mayr, 2021). In the context of Arabic and Turkish, this awareness is important due to historical contact and shared vocabulary. (Nation, 2001) emphasized that vocabulary mastery is a core foundation of language learning, and the presentation of interlanguage helps learners build systematic connections of meaning and improve long-term knowledge retention.

C. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to examine the representation of Arabic–Turkish–English language learning on TikTok. Data was collected through purposive sampling (Subhaktiyasa, 2024) from nine educational videos published between 2023 and 2024 with high interaction rates. The data collection process included identifying videos with the keywords "Arabic Turkish words" and "learn Turkish Arabic," transcribing vocabulary, and documenting the context of usage in the comments section. This research is based on (Norton, 2013) Language Identity Theory, which emphasizes identity formation through sociolinguistic practices, and Schugurensky's (2000) Informal Learning Theory, which explains autonomous learning outside formal education. In this context, TikTok functions as an informal learning space where users learn languages freely while negotiating linguistic and cultural identities through digital interactions.

Data analysis was carried out in three stages: descriptive analysis to observe the vocabulary used, pedagogical analysis to examine the content presentation strategies in visual and audio formats, and language identity analysis to explore how users build linguistic awareness and language identity. Vocabulary classification refers to the dictionaries, namely *al-Muʿjam al-Mawḍūʿī al-Siyāqī* (Helalşah, 2024) for categories of daily conversations, family, and character; *al-Qāmūs al-Ṭibbī al-ʿArabī* (Al-Lubadi, 2005) for the category of medicine; and *al-Qāmūs al-Qānūnī* (Wahb, 1972) for the categories of law and government. The validity of the research is reinforced through source triangulation, combining digital data, literature

reviews, and consultations with Turkish language experts to ensure the accuracy of vocabulary interpretation and users' language identity.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the analysis of nine TikTok videos collected through purposive sampling, this study successfully identified 45 Arabic-Turkish vocabulary items classified into five thematic categories. The vocabulary classification refers to three main reference dictionaries. First, *al-Muʿjam al-Mawḍūʿī al-Siyāqī* by Helalşah (2024) was used to classify vocabulary in the categories of daily conversation, family, and character/traits. This dictionary was chosen because it provides contextual vocabulary relevant to language use in practical communication. Second, *al-Qāmūs al-Ṭibbī al-ʿArabī* by al-Lubbadi (2005) served as a reference for the category of medicine, covering medical terminology absorbed from Arabic into Turkish. Third, *al-Qāmūs al-Qānūnī* by Wahb (1972) was used to classify vocabulary in the categories of law and government, reflecting the influence of Arabic in the Turkish administrative and legal systems.

Of the 45 identified vocabulary items, the daily conversation category dominated with 23 items, followed by the character/traits category with 6 items, and medicine and law & government, each with 6 items. The family category contained 4 items. The dominance of the daily conversation category indicates that TikTok content tends to focus on practical vocabulary that can be directly applied in social interactions, in line with the principles of microlearning that emphasize quick and applicable learning (Farhan et al., 2024). The medicine and law & government categories reflect the historical influence of Arabic in the fields of science and administration during the Ottoman Empire period, while the family and character categories highlight the socio-cultural dimensions inherent in language learning.

Table 1. Multilingual Vocabulary Corpus (Arabic–Turkish–English)

No	*Arabic (عربي)*	*Turkish*	*English*	*Category*
1	حُبّ *(ḥubb)*	*aşk*	*love*	*Daily Conversation*
2	كِتَاب *(kitāb)*	*kitap*	*book*	*Daily Conversation*
3	زَيْتُون *(zaytūn)*	*zeytin*	*olive*	*Daily Conversation*
4	قَطَائِف *(qaṭāʾif)*	*kadayıf*	*kadaif (dessert)*	*Daily Conversation*
5	قَهْوَة *(qahwa)*	*kahve*	*coffee*	*Daily Conversation*

6	ما شاءَ الله	*maşallah*	*Masha Allah*	*Daily Conversation*
7	عَقْل (ʿaql)	*akıl*	*mind / intellect*	*Daily Conversation*
8	قَلَم (qalam)	*kalem*	*pen*	*Daily Conversation*
9	سَيّارَة (sayyārah)	*araba*	*car*	*Daily Conversation*
10	سِيجَارَة (sijāra)	*sigara*	*cigarette*	*Daily Conversation*
11	كَلِمَة (kalima)	*kelime*	*word*	*Daily Conversation*
12	مَرْحَباً mer	*merhaba*	*hello*	*Daily Conversation*
13	سَلام (salām)	*selam*	*peace / greeting*	*Daily Conversation*
14	سَاعَة (sāʿah)	*saat*	*hour / clock*	*Daily Conversation*
15	سَبَب (sabab)	*sebep*	*reason*	*Daily Conversation*
16	مَسَافَة (masāfah)	*mesafe*	*distance*	*Daily Conversation*
17	حَامِل (ḥāmil)	*hamile*	*pregnant*	*Daily Conversation / Family*
18	مُعْجِزَة (muʿjizah)	*mucize*	*miracle*	*Daily Conversation*
19	نَعَم (naʿam)	*evet*	*yes*	*Daily Conversation*
20	يَجِبُ أَنْ نَتَكَلَّمَ	*Konuşmamız lazım*	*we have to talk*	*Daily Conversation*
21	جِسْر (jusr)	*köprü*	*bridge*	*Daily Conversation*

22	مُسْتَحِيل (mustahīl)	olmaz	impossible	Daily Conversation
23	شاي (shay)	çay	tea	Daily Conversation
24	أُسْرَة (usrah)	aile	family	Family
25	عَمّ (ʿamm)	amca	paternal uncle	Family
26	طِفْل / وَلَد (ṭifl / walad)	çocuk	child	Family
27	تَرْبِيَة (tarbiya)	terbiye	upbringing	Family
28	طِبّ (ṭibb)	tıp	medicine	Medicine
29	عَمَلِيّة (ʿamaliyya)	ameliyat	operation	Medicine
30	فَحص (faḥṣ)	muayene	examination	Medicine
31	شِفاء (shifāʾ)	şifa	healing	Medicine
32	جَرّاح (jarrāḥ)	cerrah	surgeon	Medicine
33	دَواء (dawāʾ)	ilaç	medicine / drug	Medicine
34	قانون (qānūn)	kanun	law	Law & Government
35	مَحْكَمَة (maḥkama)	mahkeme	court	Law & Government
36	حُقوق (ḥuqūq)	hukuk	rights	Law & Government
37	دَوْلَة (dawla)	devlet	state	Law & Government
38	حُكُومَة (ḥukūma)	hükûmet	government	Law & Government
39	حَقّ (ḥaqq)	hak	right	Law & Government
40	عَادِل (ʿādil)	adil	just / fair	Character/Traits

41	جَسُور *(jasūr)*	*cesur*	*brave*	*Character/Traits*
42	مَمْنُون *(mamnūn)*	*memnun*	*grateful*	*Character/Traits*
43	رَاحَة *(rāḥa)*	*rahat*	*comfortable*	*Character/Traits*
44	ظَرِيف *(ẓarīf)*	*zarif*	*elegant*	*Character/Traits*
45	ذَكِيّ *(dhakī)*	*zeki*	*intelligent*	*Character/Traits*

Digital Data Sources and Content Characteristics

The data for this study is sourced from nine TikTok videos published by five different creators between 2023 and 2024. The creator @speakinturkish presents language learning content focused on everyday conversation vocabulary with a simple yet effective and efficient visual approach. Videos from the @polyglot.in.paris account highlight lexical similarities between Arabic and Turkish, focusing on word pairs like *qahwa-kahve* (coffee), showing both phonological and semantic similarities. Creator @vallahkulturschockk discusses common words often used in everyday conversations, presenting content that combines humor with education. Meanwhile, @hebahsrollercoaster dominates the corpus with five videos covering a variety of categories, from daily conversation (*ihtimal*, *şay/çay*, *köprü/jisr*), medicine, family, law and government, to character traits.

The diversity of creators and content presentation approaches reflects the characteristics of informal learning through social media, where there is no formal curriculum or instructor regulating the learning process (Schugurensky, 2000). Each creator develops their own presentation style based on their personal approach and audience understanding, creating a dynamic and participatory learning ecosystem. The short video format on TikTok, with a maximum duration of three minutes, allows for concise material delivery without overwhelming the user's attention, in line with microlearning principles that have been shown to improve motivation and information retention (Farhan et al., 2024).

Language Identity in Digital Learning Practices

Language identity in the context of Arabic-Turkish learning through TikTok manifests through a complex linguistic negotiation process. (Norton, 2013) asserts that language identity is dynamic and formed through social practices and continuous linguistic interactions. In this study, TikTok users not only learn new vocabulary but also build awareness of their position as multilingual learners connected to the shared historical and cultural heritage between the Arab and Turkish worlds. When an Arabic speaker encounters the word *kitap* (book), derived from *kitāb* in their own language, a linguistic recognition process occurs, strengthening their language identity as part of a broader linguistic community.

(Coulmas, 2024) explains that language identity is a fundamental aspect of social identity that emerges through the use of language in specific social contexts. In TikTok, this identity is constructed through active participation in comment sections, where users share learning

experiences, validate lexical similarities, and support each other in the learning process. This phenomenon creates what (Wenger, 1998) calls communities of practice, where identity is formed through sustained engagement in practices that share common meanings. Arabic speakers learning Turkish, or vice versa, not only gain linguistic competence but also develop an identity as members of a cross-cultural learner community that transcends geographic and institutional boundaries.

Furthermore, language identity in Arabic-Turkish learning on TikTok also reflects historical and political dimensions. Awareness that thousands of Arabic words have been absorbed into Turkish creates a sense of cultural ownership and linguistic pride among Arabic speakers, while Turkish speakers gain an appreciation for the historical roots of their language. This process reinforces what (Norton, 2013) describes as "investment" in language learning, where individuals learn not only for practical communication but also to assert their social and cultural identities in the global context.

Language Learning Through a Multilingual Approach

Language learning in Arabic and Turkish through TikTok offers a unique multilingual learning model, where English serves as a lingua franca facilitating cross-cultural understanding. This strategy allows users from diverse linguistic backgrounds to access content without mastering either of the target languages. For example, when a creator shows the words *ḥubb* (Arabic) and *aşk* (Turkish), both translated as "love" (English), users can understand the concept without requiring complex grammatical explanations. This approach aligns with the principle of cross-linguistic awareness proposed by Mayr (2021), which is the ability to recognize structural and semantic relationships between languages, enriching holistic linguistic understanding.

(Nation, 2001) emphasizes that vocabulary mastery is the core foundation of language learning, and presenting vocabulary based on fields or categories of meaning helps learners build a systematic network of meanings. In this study's corpus, the grouping of vocabulary by fields such as daily conversation, medicine, and law & government facilitates contextual learning, making long-term retention easier. When users learn medical terminology like *ṭibb*(Arabic) and *tıp* (Turkish), both meaning "medicine," they do not merely memorize individual words but also understand their contextual use in the healthcare field, thus expanding their communicative competence in specific domains.

Multilingual learning through TikTok also promotes the development of metalinguistic awareness, which is an understanding of the structure and function of language as a system. Users begin to recognize phonological, morphological, and semantic patterns connecting Arabic and Turkish, such as similarities in words like *qānūn-kanun*(law) or *maḥkama-mahkeme* (court). This awareness not only accelerates the learning process but also enhances appreciation for the complexity and beauty of language as a cultural phenomenon.(Piro et al., 2025), in their study on technology-based Turkish language learning, assert that digital approaches enable the integration of various learning modalities, enriching the learning experience compared to traditional methods.

Informal Learning Through TikTok as an Autonomous Space

TikTok, as a social media platform, represents an autonomous informal learning space, free from structured curricula, formal assessments, and institutional authority. Schugurensky (2000) distinguishes informal learning from formal education through three key characteristics: the absence of educational institutions, the lack of instructors with institutional authority, and the absence of a fixed curriculum. On TikTok, users have complete freedom to choose the content they want to learn, set their own learning pace, and decide their level of engagement within the learning community. Learning occurs spontaneously, driven by intrinsic interest and personal needs, rather than academic or institutional obligations.

This characteristic of informal learning creates a low-pressure, high-motivation learning environment. Bozanta and Mardikyan (2017), in their study on collaborative learning through social media, found that students show higher levels of engagement and better learning outcomes compared to traditional learning methods. In the context of TikTok, users can replay videos as many times as they like, pause to take notes, or directly practice vocabulary in the comment section without fear of negative judgment. This flexibility creates a sense of ownership in the learning process, where individuals feel they have full control over their learning journey.

Moreover, informal learning through TikTok also facilitates incidental learning, which is learning that occurs without full awareness or an explicit intention to learn. Users who initially access TikTok for entertainment may unintentionally encounter educational content about Arabic-Turkish lexical similarities and become interested in learning more. This process reflects what (Sockett & Toffoli, 2012) describe as informal global language learning, where digital technology creates learning opportunities that transcend the limitations of traditional classrooms and provide access to limitless linguistic resources.

History and Lexical Similarities Between Arabic and Turkish

The lexical similarities between Arabic and Turkish presented in TikTok content are not coincidental but are the result of centuries of intense language contact, particularly during the Ottoman Empire period. Over six thousand Arabic words have been absorbed into Turkish, covering various fields such as religion, law, science, government, and everyday life. This absorption occurred because Arabic was a prestige language in academic and religious fields, while the Ottoman Empire adopted an administrative and legal system based on Islamic traditions using Arabic terminology.

In the study corpus, the law and government category clearly shows historical traces with vocabulary such as *qānūn-kanun* (law), *maḥkama-mahkeme* (court), *ḥuqūq-hukuk* (rights), and *dawla-devlet* (state). These words reflect the influence of the Arabic language's Islamic legal system on the Ottoman administrative structure. Similarly, the *medicine*category, with terms like *ṭibb-tıp* (medicine), *ʿamaliyya-ameliyat* (surgery), and *jarrāḥ-cerrah* (surgeon), shows the contribution of Islamic civilization in medicine, which was adopted by the Turkish world through Arabic mediation.

In contrast, the influence of Turkish on Arabic is far more limited, with only a few hundred words absorbed, mostly related to material culture and everyday life, such as food (baklava, börek, dolma, yoğurt), clothing, and household items. This imbalance reflects the dynamics of linguistic power during the historical period, where Arabic held a higher status in the cultural and intellectual hierarchy. However, in the context of modern learning through TikTok, awareness of this linguistic history does not create a hierarchy but rather mutual appreciation, where both language communities respect their shared heritage. Leodafira and Oktarina (2023), in their study on cross-cultural communication between Indonesia and Turkey, assert that digital media facilitates equal intercultural dialogue, where linguistic exchange occurs in a context of mutual respect and appreciation for linguistic diversity.

E. CONCLUSION

This study reveals that TikTok functions as an effective and efficient space for informal language learning in the context of Arabic–Turkish acquisition mediated by English. Based on the analysis of nine videos from five creators, forty-five vocabulary items were identified and distributed across five categories, with *daily conversation* emerging as the dominant one reflecting the practical orientation of digital learning content. The microlearning format promoted by TikTok enables spontaneous, low-intensity, and interest-driven learning, aligning with Schugurensky's concept of informal education, which emphasizes learner autonomy without curricular or formal evaluation intervention.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that language learning practices on TikTok contribute to the formation of a dynamic linguistic identity. Users not only acquire lexical competence but also develop an awareness of the historical and cultural interconnections between Arabic and Turkish. This process of identity negotiation occurs through participation in digital *communities of practice*, where learners share experiences, co-construct meaning, and cultivate a sense of linguistic connectedness.

The limitation of this study lies in its restricted scope, focusing only on TikTok and the Arabic–Turkish language pair. Other platforms such as Instagram Reels or YouTube Shorts, as well as other related language pairs like Arabic–Persian or Turkish–Persian, may offer broader comparative perspectives. Therefore, future research is encouraged to conduct cross-platform studies and include analyses of user interaction to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of digital learning communities.

Conceptually, this study reinforces the role of social media as a new learning ecosystem that blurs the boundaries between entertainment and education. It also demonstrates that language learning in the digital era is not merely about linguistic acquisition but also about cultivating cultural awareness and reflective language identity formation.\

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