English as a dominant language and the digital culture of the generation Z: the impact on Romanian culture in the European context

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Abstract: English is not only the language of European policies and relations, but it is also the language of our films, our art and our culture. For many of us, the English language is an unavoidable tool for navigating the world. Consequently, this paper is focused on the use of English in everyday life with an emphasis on spoken language. This study will make an overview of how much the internet and English have impacted everyday discourse and Romanian culture. The core of the study is the analysis of spoken language within its younger, most digitalized generation, generation Z. This study will primarily focus on how English is used in informal contexts rather than formal. The analysis will serve as a demonstration of English's great dominance on Romanian culture and how it has shaped everyday language into a mixture of internet slang, memes and pop culture. The paper will conclude whether this form of multilingualism is either positive or negative for the development of the younger generation.

Keywords: internet, technology, language, digital culture, English language, generation Z, Millennial generation, Romanian culture, literature

Introduction

There is no denying that English should be considered the "Lingua franca" of today's society as it has come to influence people's lives unprecedently. Not only did English intrude in our work, our films, our education, and our policymaking but also in our everyday speech. Researcher Rosemary Salomone emphasizes this truth in *The Rise of English Global Politics and the Power of Language*: "In the intervening years, English has become not just the "language of Europe;" it has become the dominant lingua franca of the world. It is an official language of the United Nations, the World Trade Organization, the International Criminal Court, and NATO. (…) English governs the books young people read, the films and television programs they watch, the cultural values they absorb, and their career options." (Salomone, 2022, p. 4) The knowledge of English has become an indispensable tool for navigating the world. Consequently, this paper aims to analyse how English-

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speaking digital culture has come to shape the Romanian cultural landscape with a primal focus on the use of spoken language. The younger generations such as generation Z frequently instrumentalize English in their speech due to their regular access to social media. This paper aims to discover the impact that English and digital culture have on Romanian everyday discourse and culture. The internet's effects will be analysed through the means of its most digitized generation, generation Z. This generation is comprised of the people born between 1997 and 2012. This paper considers English to be an important expressive tool for this generation mainly because generation Z has been exposed to social media from an early age and it is thus, the most qualified user of digital tools. Often described as a *digitally native* generation, generation Z members both create digital content and/or consume it nearly every single day of their lives. Technology is thus deeply ingrained in their manner of speech and their lives in general. Language is considered to be a constantly growing and shapeshifting organ, in the state of constant development, which is why conducting an analysis on language as it is spoken in this very moment is crucial for understanding language change. This is the reason why the discourse of the young, coming-of-age generation is at the core of the analysis. The speech and the digital culture of generation Z represent the zeitgeist of our developing world.

The research methodology chosen for our paper has been the exploration for a period of four months the content of generation Z Romanian influencers with either large or small audiences. For accuracy and diversity purposes, creators that produce content on an array of topics have been chosen for analysis. This has also aided us to have a comparative perspective and analyse how each content creator melanges a specific terminology with the digital. Selected creators have interests and backgrounds in following areas but not limited to: advertising, fashion, politics, travelling etc. The selected content is video-based (Tik Toks, Reels, Vlogs) and written-based (Instagram posts and captions). The methodological approach is the following: a data observation process (of over four months), data selection, data categorization followed by data analysis. Data selection refers to the process of choosing the most relevant data (in terms of speech analysis) for the given subject. In other words, although we have looked at different types of content, we have selected the relevant videos where content creators speak the most and voice their opinions. Content where no speech is involved or pictures with no written descriptions have not been considered relevant for the analysis and thus have not been selected. Data categorization refers to the process of splitting data in the most prevalent categories. For example, the purpose of this paper has been to look at the possible reasons why young people employ English in their everyday discourse. Three possible reasons have been discovered: conciseness (refers to the instances where content creators resort to speaking English instead of Romanian in order to express oneself in a simpler, more rapid manner), trends and/or technology (refers to the instances where content creators resort to speaking English instead of Romanian in order to reference a certain technological tool or functionality), humour

(refers to the instances where content creators resort to speaking English instead of Romanian in order to entertain their audiences). All of these categories serve as a way of analysing why English has become such an important tool for navigating the world of the young and why it has come to be synonymous with their point of view. These categories represent the key findings of our paper. The main aim of this analysis is to have a comprehensive understanding of the cognitive and linguistical reasons why young people use English in their discourse. Moreover, our aim is to discover whether the old generation does or does not have valid criticism towards the generation Z. The criticism of the older generations is usually incessantly revolving around generation Z's presupposed superficiality and disconnection from their mother tongue and native culture. The aim of the research is to form an opinion on this criticism not to instantly counteract it. However, this study does not refrain from highlighting the older generation's hypocrisy. As the Boomers and Generation X members may see superficiality in an English-dominated speech but choose to ignore their own obsession with American culture in the Communist period. Moreover, criticism can only widen the generation gap and is unproductive in creating a dialogue between the two generations.

The most important part of our paper is the data analysis which has been divided into three parts, each dedicated to the categories above mentioned. The first part explores the question of whether English is a more concise language than Romanian given that most content creators use English in order to express themselves more rapidly. The second part explores how technology affects language. This study will make an overview of certain technological functionalities and developments by observing how technical terminology influences everyday discourse. The third part explores the heavily referenced slang of the generation Z and how it is combined with Romanian. The purposes of humoristic effects will also be observed. Additionally, this paper will emphasize the communities of people that have popularized the term and the issues of reappropriation. The melange of English and Romanian in generation Z's discourse reflects an urgent need, the need to explain oneself in a rapid manner and to feel instantly comprehended by others. English serves as a tool for rapid expression and language becomes intertwined with technological development. This is made evident by the additional vocabulary that technical development brings to life. The new terminology that technical development brought to life will be emphasized. Additionally, the adaptation of this new terminology to Romanian will also be observed. The data analysis comprises a conclusion on the usage of English. The study argues that the usage of English reflects today's fast paced world. The internet feels like an infinity as it contains an array of images, videos, and text. To navigate through this infinite amount of content, one must make oneself clear, through precise humour, precise references, and of course, through precise language. The language that the young generation uses is at times niche as it is heavily influenced by pop culture. The gap between the

generations is significantly wide and the blame is rightful to fall on a specific slang that one must master.

Another important aspect of our paper will be reflected in the exemplifications of digitally influenced Romanian literary works. How the literary world has been impacted by the rise of English and digital culture will be explored through the means of two notable examples of contemporary Romanian poetry. The reason being that literary texts have the capacity to show how deeply ingrained digital terminology is in Romanian culture. This paper will focus on contemporary Romanian literature as this is evidently the literature which grows alongside the internet unavoidably impacted by its rise. This paper will not perform an in-depth literary analysis but more of a thematical one. Poetic structures associated with the digital space or social media will be exemplified. Our paper will conclude with a combination of the findings on language and literature. This paper will demonstrate the significant impact of English and digital culture on everyday language and our literary works to come. It is only evident that a new language creates a new literature. Our world is witnessing a wave of literature which heavily relies on the digital in terms of artistic expression. This literature is written more often than not for and by the young generation. Especially when it comes to poetry, many generation Z members have come to enter the Romanian literary scene, these poets choose to rely on social media, internet slang and English in order to artistically express themselves. This new wave of poetry which is shyly shaping its course in the Romanian literary landscape cannot however, escape criticism from the older generation. The aim for this final part is to explore what role does the digital play within the literary works of generation Z. This paper aims to discover whether the digital is seen as means of connection or disconnection and will emphasize this generation's perspective on technology, social media and political issues. The study is more of a thematic literary exploration based on the belief that art does imitate life. Moreover, through generation Z's art, a new exploration of the digital space is being brought to light. This exploration exposes a reality that we sometimes choose to ignore, a reality which places the young generation in positions of lonely, disconnected, depressed and helpless individuals struggling to face the world.

1. Literature review: generation Z key characteristics

Having background information about generation Z is relevant for the study because it is important to first understand a group of people before analysing their speech. This information will serve our language and cultural analysis. Anna Dolot in her study *The Characteristics of Generation Z* suggests that there is no other generation with as many names as the ones given to generation Z. For example, generation Z is also known as "Gen Tech, Online Generation, Post Millennials, Facebook Generation, Switchers" etc. (Dolot, 2018, p. 45) This alternative names for the gen Z members evidently emphasize their tight connection to technology and

social media. "Switchers" as a name for the generation z is the phenomenon that Dolot describes as the "switch between two worlds" (Dolot, 2018, p.45) Generation Z have the newly found ability to interact with both with the digital and the physical world as the author suggests. The conclusion we can draw from this is that generation Z is comprised of people that are not present, to switch between two worlds means to not be present in either of them. Additionally, another important aspect of the generation Z is their speed of talking, creating, watching or thinking. Digital tools are rapid, they provide the possibility of consuming millions of videos and pictures per minute. It is only evident that the most eager users of these are also quite rapid in terms of movement and cognition. A term often used to describe Generation Z is that of *digital natives* precisely because the internet plays such an immense role in their lives. A study from McKinsey and Company suggests that "(…) Gen Zers— speaking generally—are extremely online. Gen Zers are known for working, shopping, dating, and making friends online; in Asia, Gen Zers spend six or more hours per day on their phones." (McKinsey, 2023, p.2) Other important aspects that have been observed by researchers are the following: Generation Z values individual expression, they avoid labels and they are always mobilized for social causes. (Tracy and Hoefel, p. 2) On the other hand, the most common negative characteristic of Generation Z is focused on their mental health issues.

The recurring cliches suggest that gen Zers have a short attention span, that they are overly sensitive or experience anxious feelings. The most popular insult of 2016 was "snowflake" according to the Guardian (Nicholson, 2016). *Snowflake* is a derogatory term for a person that is easily offended. The official definition would be "a way of referring to the type of young people who are considered by some people to be too easily upset and offended" (Cambridge Dictionary)[1] Consequently, there is no doubt that one of the most negative qualities of the Generation Z is perceived to be their sensitivity, their propensity towards negative emotions such as anxiety and depression. New studies have started to refer to Generation Z as the "loneliest generation" (Bowler, 2020) suggesting that "Young adults (…) are still much more likely to be lonely than older adults." (The Cigna Group, 2021) The main culprit for these negative feelings is thought to be social media suggesting that people that use social media more are more likely to experience feelings of loneliness. (Coombs, 2020) The cause for such feelings could be explained by another study conducted at the University of Montclair which suggests that Generation Z perceives the world as being more dangerous than previous generations (Rubin, 2024). Although the issue of mental health is complex as it is difficult to establish precisely how previous generations used to evaluate their state of wellbeing. For example, if this research

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[1] The term used to by conservative politicians especially by Trump supporters. In 2019, the former president of the United States launched a website entitled snowflakevictory.com in order to give advice to republicans on how to win arguments against their liberal relatives. (Gallagher, 2020)

would consider Romanian's situation, it is unlikely to believe that Generation X or Boomers experienced fewer negative feelings taking into consideration that they had to live under a totalitarian regime. The paper is not concerned however with making these comparisons between generations, but rather with looking how this propensity that Gen Z has for caring or having issues mental health intertwines with the way that they speak.

1.2 The evolution of language

Language is a vital component of human life and it has always adapted to reflect changes in social relationships, lifestyles, and technology. Language is frequently compared by linguists to a living organism that is continuously changing, adapting, and thriving in reaction to its surroundings: "The English language, like a healthy, growing tree, each year puts out more new leaves than it loses old ones, and thus its lexical foliage becomes ever lusher and more luxuriant." (Algeo, 1980, p. 267) English particularly has proven incredible development and adaptation over the last years. More people than ever before speak English as their first or second language as Rosemary Salomone suggests "By 2012, (…) a majority of EU citizens (56 percent) spoke English as a first or second language. Setting aside the loss of first language speakers since the United Kingdom's departure from the European Union, and not considering levels of fluency, the figure on second language speakers especially among young people is presumably higher today but certainly nowhere near universal." (Salomone, 2022, p. 4) This extensive usage of English in so many different countries and contexts requires a constantly growing vocabulary. Vocabulary expansion is usually motivated by a variety of factors such as political changes, sociological or cultural developments, and moral factors. This paper is most interested by the technological factors that motivate language change meaning the "rapid advances in information technology, industries, products and economy" that "simply require new words that drive language change." (Mantiri, 2010, p. 2). Our research brings to light the significant amount of new terminology that was born along with the internet. Few most common words that were brought to life by the internet are "like", "meme", "selfie", "dm" (meaning the instant message you can send on Instagram) etc. This only demonstrates that language continuously evolves alongside technology. However, some words can easily disappear along with obsolete technologies as Oktavian Mantiri suggests with the example of the floppy disk: "the term 'floppy disk' was considered a brand new lexical development, but now it is rarely used or featured in today's conversations as it has been replaced with 'memory stick' " (Mantiri, 2010, p. 3).

2. Methodology

The methodology chosen for this research paper is the data observation process taking place for 120 days starting on the 10th of January 2024. This was followed by data selection which refers to the process of choosing the relevant data in terms of speech analysis. Relevant data in terms of speech analysis refers to the data where Romanian creators are talking, expressing their thoughts and opinion. Data containing pictures with no caption or videos with no written phrases is not considered to be relevant data and thus has not been selected. The selected data for this research study is supposed to clearly represent how young people speak in general which is why the chosen influencers come from a variety of backgrounds and create a diverse range of videos. For example, the first creator named Denisa Elena has a background in law and is interested in creating lifestyle and sometimes opinion content. Her most commonly used platform is TikTok and her current audience is of 354 000 followers. Another example would be the influencer Nadia Hu or Nadd Hu, a half Chinese, half Romanian content creator with a background in musical and artistic studies. Her YouTube channel has 73 500 subscribers, she is active on Instagram and TikTok as well. Mara "Calli" and Sabina Teodora both are interested in fashion, the latter has studies academic studies in fashion. Anca "Thunder" and Ruxandra or "Really Rux" as her online account is called, are both interested in producing comedic content. The first one usually creates on TikTok, the latter usually uses YouTube. Ruxandra or "Really Rux" has a background in advertising and has worked in the field prior to starting her online activity. She is not part of the generation Z, but of the millennial generation. However, her videos have been included in the study because of her large generation Z audience. Silviu Istrate or "Silviu Faiăr" is one of the most well-known Romanian Twitch streamers. Currently, his Twitch account has 134 000 subscribers and his YouTube channel has 211 000 subscribers. Similarly to "Really Rux", he has a background in advertising and he is part of the Millennial generation. However, he is known for his generation Z audience and he represents generation Z in terms of political beliefs and opinions. He is well-known for his progressive views especially regarding minority and women's rights and he vehemently opposes far-right political extremism. Anca Petcu is a very popular Romanian TikToker, she usually creates travel and lifestyle content. Similarly, Valentina Hristov and Ioana Taisia Turcescu or "Yoyo" are also interested in fashion and lifestyle content. Ioana Taisia Turcescu has a background in communication studies from the University of Villanova, United States. In the videos selected, the creators express themselves in English whether through slang or a melange of English and Romanian. For this research paper, the content has been selected in order to analyse why and how these people use English, their expressive reasons, the digital references and the overall impact English has on Romanian.

Table 1. Representing the first category: data selected from the app "TikTok"

Creator Name	Date	English[2]	Slang[3]
Denisa Elena or "Deni Elena"	16/05/2024	side by side, lavish, I'm not doing enough, it's still not working, scroll, blessing, insane.	N/A
Anca "Thunder"	18/05/2024	Story-uri, like-uri	delulu
Nadd Hu	15/04/2024	Contouring, make up, smokey eye, stuff like that	cute
Mara "Calli"	07/05/2024	Princessy, outfit-uri, insane, amazing	Chef's kiss, basic
Mara "Calli"	27/03/2024	Safe, fast fashion, regular	N/A
Ioana Taisia Turcescu or "Yoyo"	16/04/2024	Damn, that's really personal, it's really weird, horror, single, crippling fear, you know what I'm saying, stream of consciousness, love life, it's fine, for whatever reason	N/A

Source: author's representation

Table 2. representing the second category: data selected from the app "YouTube"

Creator Name	Video Name	English	Slang
Silviu Istrate or "Silviu Faiăr"	*How to be a main character in Romania[4]*	For some reason, rage bait, entitlement, obnoxious, scam, oh my God.	main character vibes, hot, cringe, true.
Ruxandra or "Really Rux"	*The secrets of the corporate workers: what do they do at the office?[5]*	deal with them, sure that's mean, aware, carbon footprint, first of all, insecure.	Juicy, what's the tea.
Ruxandra or "Really Rux"	*What does gen Z do at work[6]*	Beauty, overweight, small business, it's not good, how, I don't know, I guess, let me guess, gruesome, a lot of money, horror	sneaky, slay, you go girl, work bestie, girl, based

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[2]For this category, the English words or phrases used by Romanian creators in their videos have been selected.

[3]For this category, the slang used by Romanian content creators has been selected.

[4]From original in Romanian "Cum să fii un personaj principal în România." (Author's translation).

[5]From original in Romanian "Secretele corporatiștilor: ce fac la birou?" (Author's translation).

[6] From original in Romanian "Ce fac gen z la job-uri" (Author's translation).

Ruxandra or "Really Rux"	*How to hack your exes*[7]	ask Gen Z, match, right, well, obviously, shattered, don't come running back to me, dating app, I kept on going, in the sherlock Holmes style, I did it, her best friend, over my budget, overpriced, swipe, here This paper go again, black hatter, jail, my lowest point, redemption arc, enjoyable.	The bookworm, the cool girl, slay.

Source: author's representation

Table 3. representing the third category: data selected from the app "Instagram"

Creator Name	Date	English	Slang
Anca Petcu	18/05/2024	Also, fun, love and support, stick to it, quality memories.	N/A
Sabina Teodora	20/03/2024	What I live for, swipe for more, I love them.	Serving, girl time
Valentina Hristov or "Valentina is love"	11/05/2024	Quick fit change with my dearest.	N/A

Source: author's representation

2.1. Data categorization

This paper will explain more precisely the reasons behind our categorizing process. The data selected was split in order to have a better grasp on why young people choose to speak English instead of Romanian. The research has unveiled three possible reasons for English being used predominantly in this Generation's discourse. The first reason is conciseness which refers to the instances where young people use English in order to explain themselves more easily and rapidly. Speaking English online reflects an urgent need, a need that is demanded by the internet and social media, a need to make oneself understood immediately. The internet is as fast paced as our world, this is one of the main reasons young people prefer speaking English instead of Romanian because they opt for a simpler way to convey a message. The second reason why people choose to speak English instead of Romanian is in order to reference a digital tool or a certain digital trend. New digital terminology has come to only make our language grow and develop. Like any new technology, social media and the internet have brought to life an array of new vocabulary and expressions. Understanding this vocabulary and expressing it is the

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[7] From original in Romanian "Cum să îți hackuiești foștii" (Author's translation)

key to navigating the digital world. The third reason why young people use English is for humoristic reasons, they use it as a way of entertaining their peers. Generation Z humour is particularly creative, it relies on memes, TikToks, dances and creating new words. Understanding Generation Z humour requires speaking English and mastering certain internet trends.

Table 4. representing examples for each linguistic category

1. Conciseness	2. Trends and technology	3. Humour
Side by side, lavish, I'm not doing enough, it's still not working, blessing, contouring, stuff like that, fast fashion, regular, crippling fear, smokey eye, love life, it's fine, entitlement, obnoxious, scam, oh my God, first of all, sure that's mean, deal with them, aware, carbon footprint, overweight, let me guess, also, fun, love and support, stick to it, quality memories, right, how do you guys do it, match, overpriced, I did it, shattered, over my budget, dating app, well, obviously.	Story-uri, like-uri, outfit-uri, rage bait, swipe for more, fit change, swipe.	Delulu, chef's kiss, basic, main character vibes, hot, cringe, juicy, what's the tea, sneaky, slay, you go girl, work bestie, girl, based, serving, girl time, the bookworm, the cool girl, princessy.

Source: author's representation

Words that are difficult to categorize are the following: insane, makeup, amazing, safe, that's really personal, it's really weird, single, you know what I'm saying, stream of consciousness, for whatever reason, insecure, beauty, small business, it's not good, how, gruesome, horror, a lot of money, what I live for, I love them; This paper has found representative examples for each category. These are just one of the many reasons Romanian content creators use English in their online discourse.

2.2. Data analysis[8]

The results of our research are the following: Generation Z uses English in informal contexts for the following reasons but not limited to the referencing of different trends or certain technologies, to express oneself more concisely, to express oneself in a humoristic way. According to our research, creators use English the most often in order to express themselves more concisely (see Table 4, column 1). Our research demonstrates that the usage of English by Romanian creators reflects the need to be immediately understood. Creators rely on simpler and shorter English words or expressions instead of the longer Romanian equivalents. For example, there are the following instances: when "side by side" used instead of the "unul lângă

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[8] This analysis provides examples for each category exemplified in Table 4, the translation for each English phrase or word has been provided by the author of this paper.

altul" or "stuff like that" is used instead of "lucruri de genul acesta/ăsta" or "crippling fear" is used instead of "frică paralizantă" and "first of all" is used instead of "în primul rând." Sometimes, certain English words are not used because they are necessarily a lot shorter but instead, they are used in order to express oneself less formally. More often than not, the words are used because the Romanian equivalent is either too formal or less common. For example, there is the word "overweight" that is used instead of "supraponderal." The Romanian translation sounds formal bordering on medical terminology thus it is not appropriate for the informal context of the digital space. Of course, the creator could have used "gras" which translates to "fat" but just like the English term, the Romanian one could also be problematic and offensive. Consequently, the creator chooses the easiest more informal sounding "overweight." Another example of this situation would be "it's fine" used instead of "(e) în regulă". The Romanian equivalent is more formal sounding. In a conversation between young people, it would probably not be used. Instead, generation Z members would probably opt for "it's okay" or "e ok" in Romanian. However, in the context of our research, "it is fine" would more accurately be translated to "e în regulă." On the same note, "love life" used instead of the Romanian "viață amoroasă" or "fun" used instead of "distracție" is not a choice dictated by formality issues. "Love life" is most likely used because it is a very common English expression, often circulated online whereas "viață amoroasă" is not so common bordering on archaic at least for the younger generation. "Fun" used instead of "distracție" is most certainly used to express oneself more rapidly, but also because "fun" is a very common English word.

In the second category dedicated to trends and technology, there are examples that do not have exact equivalents in Romanian. Or even if there are Romanian equivalents, creators have chosen to use the English version as it sounds more natural in the context of the actual digital technologies. For example, the word "scroll" which refers to the process of navigating social media tools, webpages, browsers etc. It is more natural for a generation Z internet user to use this word in a conversation instead of the Romanian word "a derula." In the case of other functionalities that available on social media, for example the option to post a "story" nearly all generation Z members will use the word "story" instead of the Romanian "poveste." One of the reasons may be because some users might have the language of their phone set to English. Other reason may be because the word "story" was the original name of the described social media function and as it got popular among teenagers and young adults the English terminology remained in their vocabulary. Precisely the same situation applies to the word "like" which designates the number of people that enjoyed a post or story. Most people from Generation Z or even older generation will use the word "like" instead of "aprecieri." Moreover, the word has been intuitively adapted to Romanian by adding the plural suffix "-uri." Similarly to the functionalities explored before, there is the word "swipe" often used in the context of "swipe for more." The word "swipe" could be translated to a more uncommon

Romanian word "a glisa". Usually, it designates an internet function available on many apps. For example, on certain dating apps you can swipe either right or left in order to like or dislike a user's profile. Moreover, creators use "swipe for more" when they link a new video, a website or a certain product on their story. Users can watch their story and swipe downwards in order to gain more information about the product or just buy it directly. Additionally, the word "outfit" used instead of "ținută" which has started to be used in online discourse because of numerous fashion trends popularized online. Romanian creators are more likely to use "outfit" instead of the Romanian word because of trends such as presenting one's "outfit of the day (abbreviated to OOTD)" or doing "outfit checks" etc. Sometimes it can also be shortened to the word "fit." Another internet trends in the selected data for our paper that does not have a direct translation to Romanian is "rage bait" which refers to content created in order to "elicit outrage with the goal of increasing internet traffic, online engagement, revenue and support" (Wikipedia, 2024)

For the third category which refers to humour, the data selected comprises common English slang used by the younger generation in order to entertain their audiences. For example, when generation Z refers to delusion or being disillusioned in a certain situation, they often use a more humoristic way of expressing it through the slang word "delulu." There even was a humoristic way of expressing "May your delusions come true" through "May your delulu come trululu." This could be explained by "may your dreams come true" but such dreams could be so wild that they border on delusion. Similarly, the word "Slay" is a term that originally meant "that joke was killer" but now it suggests that something is impressive or even beautiful. It is often used in regards to outfits and fashion, it is not a coincidence that it used to derive from 1970s LGBT ball culture. Additionally, "tea" or "what is the tea" or "spilling the tea" is synonymous with what is the truth or what is the gossip and it has its origins in African-American drag culture. "Main character vibes" is a term that is usually used to describe a person that wishes to be the centre of attention. It can have a more negative connotation when it is used in the phrase of "main character syndrome" which refers to an entitled and selfish person. Moreover, the word "based" is used to describe someone that is themselves and does not care for other's opinions, but now the word is "used to indicate an opinion or something that someone agrees with. It is especially common in political slang and discussions and may be used for controversial topics." (Wikipedia, 2024). It is a direct antonym to "cringe" which is used to describe someone that is uncool, embarrassing or awkward. Similar to "cringe", the word "basic" is "used to denote those who prefer mainstream products, trends, and music" (Wikipedia, 2024) "Basic" can also refer to fashion trends and style in general. These are just some of the most commonly used slang words used by the generation Z.

3. Cultural exemplifications

Furthermore, this paper will explore how the internet has shaped Romanian literary culture by exploring a few notable examples of contemporary Romanian literature. Not only did English shape our spoken discourse but it also shaped our culture in general. A perfect example for this cultural shift within the Romanian cultural space can be seen in today's literature. The contemporary Romanian literature scene is dominated by English and digital culture. Two notable examples have been selected in order to illustrate how deeply ingrained English and technology is in our culture. Our first most notable example would be a poem by Andrei Dósa which perfectly encapsulates how the internet has permeated into our closest relationships:

> "google is my father
> from him I've learned how
> to do a tie-knot
>
> I turned to him
> several times in one day
> than I've turned to my father in my entire life
>
> me and my dad
> drifting through cyberspace
> we sometimes send each other emails (...)
>
> to: dad
> subject: [No subject]
>
> I read somewhere on the internet that this year
> four exabytes of unique information
> will be generated
> we will be more connected than ever."
> (extract from poem entitled *Online,* Dósa, Andrei, vol. "Când va veni ceea ce este desăvârșit", Tracus Arte, 2011.)

One important takeaway of this poem is the impact of the internet on relationships, here the focus being the relationship between a son and a father. The search engine *google* stands as a metaphor for this estranged relationship. The first verse "google is my father" is a shocking and radical demonstration of loneliness in the digital age, where important relationships are replaced by the internet. Not having the possibility to learn how to do a tie-knot from a parent and instead relying on the internet further emphasizes this idea. On the one hand, it can also suggest the

conveniency of the internet and on the other hand, the estrangement caused by technology. The verse "I turned to him several times in one day than I've turned to my father in my entire life" also emphasizes the convenience that the internet provides. Moreover, the idea of only exchanging emails instead of a phone call or a real-life visit further suggests that the relationship between the two cold. Only exchanging email also implies that the relationship requires little effort to maintain. Although it is a lot easier to contact someone nowadays, these rapid connections are actually superficial and cannot replace a deep human relationship. On the same note, sending an email with "[No subject]" can also convey this idea of a void or an absence of meaningful communication. The verse "four exabytes of unique information" that are being generated suggests the meaningless and infinite data generated by the internet. Similarly, "We will be more connected than ever," has two possible interpretations. It suggests that people may feel more connected thanks to social media. On the other hand, it can also suggest that information overload could estrange us from each other and hinder us from forming a connection. The underlying irony of modern life is that genuine emotional connection might still be out of reach in spite of enhanced contact.

Another notable example is Elena Boldor's volume *Traxx* which is dominated by internet references. Elena Boldor is a young poet, part of generation Z. She is artistically influenced by the internet and her poetry volume is the proof of this truth. The poetry of *Traxx* heavily relies on the visual component, the volume has pictures of messenger chats, tweets, gifs and search bars. In her title poem, Boldor boldly declares "I feel closer to the people on the internet than the ones in real life."

> "every day comes with a new revolution, I want to embrace each
> person like an open flower.
> we're all eating from the same orange I feel
> closer to people on the internet than in real life, I can't wait for the
> next birth of the universe!! please tell my mom to
> to let me use the computer. My friends send me funny messages and
> I reply with emoji's.
> (…) I feel
> my most beautiful when the screen lights up my face.
> (…)
> <HTML>
> (…)
> </HEAD>
> <BODY>
> I WAS BORN ON THE INTERNET I WILL DIE THE SAME
> WAY" (*Traxx,* Boldor, Elena, vol. "Traxx", Oh My God Publishing,
> 2021)

Traxx explores the complexities and contradictions of contemporary existence. Thematically, the poem touches upon connection, alienation, and the search for authenticity in the digital age. The first verse, "every day comes with a new revolution, I want to embrace each person like an open flower," expresses the feeling of yearning for genuine human connection. Moreover, it could also allude to the need for open communication. "We're all eating from the same orange" evokes the sense of shared experience and commonality provided by social media platforms. Feeling "closer to people on the internet than in real life," further suggests that digital relationships can occasionally seem easier to form and maintain than real life ones. Additionally, the cries to "please tell my mom to let me use the computer" signify a generational shift in the ways that relationships are established and sustained. Nowadays, relationships are reliant on technology and more often than not maintained through technology as opposed to the past. The verse "My friends send me funny messages and I reply with emoji's" conveys the expressive communication styles that use the visual instead of the written form. By using gifs, pictures or emojis instead of text, communication is more superficial. The verse "I feel most beautiful when the screen lights up my face" is ironic as it challenges old beauty standards. In the past women were not engulfed by the phone's blue light and felt beautiful in a natural way, away from technology. The verse challenges the idea of natural beauty suggesting that in the digital age, one must feel beautiful only through the means of technological advancement and social media. Overall, the poem captures the spirit of living in the digital age, where relationships, experiences, and self-perception are significantly impacted by the social media. It is a nuanced analysis of how technology affects modern life illustrating the tension between connection and disconnection, between intimacy and loneliness. Moreover, Boldor challenges readers to reflect on their own digital lives and urges us to remain authentic.

Conclusion

The internet and digital culture have profoundly changed communication, giving life to a new language that reflects the technical developments of today's world. Since generation Z is exposed to technology from such an early age, they represent the key to unveiling the language evolution. As we have demonstrated, slang is greatly influenced by social media and technology, which speeds up the assimilation of new terms into common speech. Beyond ordinary speech, Romanian literature and culture have been greatly influenced by English and internet culture. A new wave of literature that addresses contemporary challenges and creatively narrates stories that are closely intertwined with the digital has begun to shape in the current cultural landscape. This change in culture highlights the intricate relationship between global digital trends. The younger generations, like the Millennials or Generation Z, heavily utilize online slang and English in written communication on

social media platforms as well as in spoken language and this paper exposes this truth. The Romanian Generation Z uses English for one of the following reasons but is not restricted to technology, internet culture, entertainment, and to express themselves more concisely. Generation Z creators have a unique and creative way of expressing themselves by heavily relying on internet trends in order to generate entertainment and engagement with their audiences. Their discourse is unfiltered and honest and relies on the internet and English in order to rapidly get a message delivered. Although their superficiality is often criticized by their older generations, generation Z members and creators are more involved in social issues as the themes explored in the videos, we have witnessed are often political and sociological. Internet and digital culture have created numerous new terminologies because language is a living organism that constantly develops and grows. Through the means of its most digitalized generation, Romanian language has evolved drastically. The speech of the younger generation is a testimony of this significant shift in our lives. Unquestionably, English is the "Lingua franca" of our days, influencing our lives in ways never seen before. It interfered not just with our professional lives, movies, and educational systems, but also with language and policymaking. Speaking and understanding English has become essential for getting around in today's world. Thus, the purpose of this paper is to demonstrate this truth about Romanian culture. As demonstrated, gen Zers speak English and use the internet every day of their lives, their speech is full of English expressions and phrases. The purpose of this research paper was to unveil the radical language and cultural change we are witnessing thanks to the internet and to recent technological advancements.

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