

From Tweets to Text: How Social Media Shapes Gen Z's Language

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ABSTRACT

The English language evolves continuously, shaped by each generation. Currently, Generation Z, known as digital natives, significantly impacts this evolution through their unique online lexicon. This study investigates the impact of technological advancements, particularly social media, on the lexical innovation and academic writing of Generation Z students at NISU Ajuy. As digital platforms increasingly influence communication, slang and lexical innovation have become widespread among young users. This study utilized a survey research design to identify the top ten slang terms, top three social media platforms shaping language use, and their effect on academic writing among these students. The sample comprised 50 students. The most popular slang terms identified were BASIC, CLOUT, BTW, SLAY, ASAP, BET, LOWKEY, OTW, LIT, and SQUAD. Facebook, Twitter (X), and Instagram were the leading social media platforms. The study also examined the impact of these digital language trends on academic writing. It found that increased use of slang, particularly among BSHM, BSE, and BSC students, led to more grammatical errors and weaker sentence construction. However, BSEd, and BEEd students were less affected. It also showed the statistical analysis of the impact of slang and social media platform usage on the academic writing of NISU Ajuy Gen Z students, focusing on demographic factors such as sex, course, and age which revealed that there was no significant differences in academic writing performance across these groups, with all significance values exceeding the threshold of 0.05. These findings highlight the importance of being a wise technology user and recognizing the distinction between formal and informal language. While social media platforms are valuable for communication and self-expression, students must learn to differentiate between casual online slang and the formal language required in academic contexts.

Key words: Lexical Innovation, Slangs, Social Media, Generation Z, Language Utilization

1. Introduction

The English language has continuously evolved throughout history, with each generation contributing to its development. Today, the Gen Z, being referred to as the digital natives and also are at the forefront of this evolution, infusing their online conversations with a distinctive lexicon such as abbreviation, and omission of some letters. GenZ's internet slang aimed to qualitatively dissect the word formation processes and explore the semantic shift of popular slang terms found on social media such as TikTok, YouTube, X (formerly known as Twitter), Facebook, and Instagram (Shalevska, 2023). This has led to a phenomenon that gradually created a significant change in the course of language and introduced a new set of words.

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There were many possible causes for a language to change. It can happen due to the adaptation of development and changes in the social life system, such as education level, culture, social, and technology mastery (Harya, 2016). As language has a close relationship with human society, it can change over time. Language can evolve and develop because the meaning of certain phrases changes in the context of language use (Strongman, 2017).

For years, linguists have documented how new words evolved and monitored the evolution of word meanings over time. In recent times, scholars have turned their attention to the process by which words become entrenched in specific forms and meanings, as well as how they become integrated into the standardized lexicon of a language (Grieve et al., 2019).

Platforms like Facebook and X changed the words we used and how we use them. Social media has made new ways of talking, like using short forms and hashtags, the most popular. Also, social media helped make up new words and phrases, like memes. In social media, it was acceptable to use different kinds of language and slang from different places; it also changed the way we talk to each other, like being able to talk right away or later, making friends from all over the world, and letting people speak up about what matters to them. On the other hand, social media can make it easy to misunderstand things or spread false information; it also gives us chances to get better at understanding digital stuff and talking responsibly. Social media has a big effect on how we talk and we need to be smart about how we use it (Jassim, 2023).

Language was one of the evolving aspects of our lives. It was shaped by various factors such as social interaction, technology, and lifestyle. With the new advancements, language had been enriched with new and innovative words. Our lifestyle choices also influenced the way we speak and the words we use especially when we were more exposed to social media which was one of the sources of new word formation. The recent pandemic had been a challenging time for all of us, and it had also impacted our language. We had seen plenty of new words added to the Oxford Dictionary, including COVID-19, WFH, lockdown, and many more (Jeresano, & Carretero, 2022).

The study of *A Lexical Innovation Through Social Media: A Closer Look into GenZs' Language Utilization* was important because it provided insights into how language evolved, what the most commonly used lexical innovation was used by Generation Z, and how new words and phrases were created and disseminated because of social media.

2. Objectives

This study aimed to examine the influence of lexical innovations from social media on the academic writing of Gen Z students at NISU Ajuy Campus for the Academic Year 2023–2024. Specifically, it sought to identify the top 10 most commonly used lexical innovations among these students. Additionally, the study investigated the primary social media platforms through which students acquire these lexical innovations. Furthermore, it assessed the extent to which slang and lexical innovations impact students' academic writing. Lastly, it aimed to determine whether there is a significant difference in the influence of slang and social media platforms on academic writing when students are classified according to age, sex, and course.

3. Significance of the Study

This study aims to explore lexical innovation from social media, focusing on Gen Z students' language utilization. Its findings will serve as a valuable reference for understanding the influence of digital media on freshmen's lexical choices. The results may benefit learners, educators, and researchers by highlighting the impact of emerging language trends. Curriculum planners can use this study to develop effective teaching strategies that enhance student engagement. Learners may gain awareness of evolving language patterns, while professors and instructors can better understand digital media's role in lexical innovation. Lastly, future researchers may use this study as a foundation for further exploration.

4. Related Literature

4.1 Effects of Internet Slang on Academic Writing

Olasubomi Funmilayo (2020) conducted a study on the effects of internet slang on secondary school students' academic achievements in English essay writing. The research found a strong association between the use of slang and academic performance, highlighting that internet slang increased grammatical mistakes and weakened students' English language proficiency. Similarly, Matias (2023) explored the impact of internet slang on Computer Science students' academic writing, revealing frequent grammatical errors and a decline in writing formality due to the informal nature of digital communication.

The study by Dounia (2016) examined how chat language affects students' academic writing at Mohammed Kheider University of Biskra. It found that frequent use of chat language led to poor sentence structures, incorrect punctuation, and coherence issues, as students often mixed multiple languages. The findings underscored the necessity of balancing informal digital communication with formal academic writing.

4.2 Social Media and Vocabulary Development

Social media platforms serve distinct functions that influence how users communicate. Research by Mansor (2016) and Sebah Al-Ali (2014) found that Twitter encourages concise language use due to character limits, while Facebook allows for longer text-based communication. Instagram, primarily a visual platform, has minimal constraints on text length. Jimma (2017) highlighted the development of internet slang, such as acronyms (e.g., ROFL, BTW, LOL) and numerical substitutions (e.g., "555" in Thailand for LOL).

Khan et al. (2016) studied the role of social media in enhancing English vocabulary among university students. The research found that a majority of students reported positive effects, with correct usage of social media sources contributing to better language proficiency. Similarly, the study by Jeresano and Carretero (2022) on Gen Z social media slang demonstrated that while slang aids fluency and communication skills, it can create a language barrier with older generations and negatively impact formal writing skills.

Gretchen McCulloch's (2019) book, *Because Internet: Understanding the New Rules of Language*, provides a comprehensive analysis of how digital communication drives linguistic evolution. The book explores how internet language is shaped by memes, viral trends, and subcultural identities, illustrating how online communities generate and disseminate new lexical items.

4.3 Lexical Innovation and Word Formation

Morphological awareness plays a critical role in lexical development. Studies by Rabadi (2019) and Kremmel and Schmitt (2018) found that students who utilized morphological analysis strategies performed better in vocabulary comprehension. Akbulut (2019) demonstrated that morphological instruction improved vocabulary retention among ESL students. Similarly, Nation and Anthony (2016) emphasized the positive correlation between vocabulary size and morphological awareness, suggesting that structured vocabulary instruction enhances language acquisition.

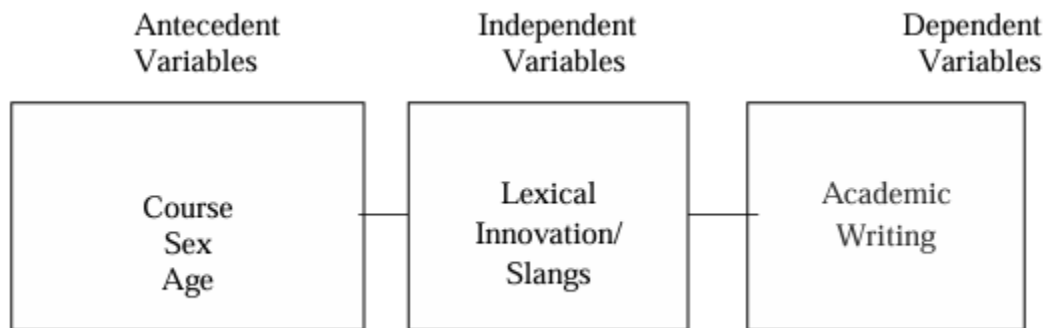
4.4 Influence of Social Media on Academic Performance

The relationship between social media use and academic performance is complex. While some studies highlight its detrimental effects, others emphasize its benefits for collaborative learning. Oguguo et al. (2016) found that students frequently use social media for academic research and information gathering, though excessive use can lead to distractions. Similarly, Akinwalere and Adeosun (2022) reported that 80% of students primarily use social media for information-seeking, but misinformation and excessive screen time negatively impact academic performance.

Sivakumar et al. (2023) explored the role of social media in knowledge sharing and student engagement. The study concluded that social networking platforms facilitate information dissemination and motivation for learning. Mahajan (2023) examined the impact of digital communication on written English, finding that online interactions encourage informal writing styles, leading to a decline in formal grammar and syntax usage.

5. Conceptual Framework

The diagram below showed the variables that were used to determine the Lexical Innovation from Social Media: A Closer Look into Gen Z.



6. Methodology

6.1. Research Design

This study employed a survey research design to evaluate the impact of lexical innovation and slang among Gen Z students of NISU Ajuy Campus during the academic year 2023-2024. The research aimed to measure the top 10 most commonly used lexical innovations/slang, identify the top three social media platforms where these terms were learned, and assess the effects of lexical innovation or slang on students' academic writing. According to Nworgu (2006), survey research involves using a subset of individuals or items that reflect a broader group to analyze a specific category effectively. This method allows researchers to draw conclusions about the entire population based on the characteristics of the selected sample.

Surveys, typically using structured questionnaires, serve as valuable tools for gathering insights into respondents' viewpoints, interests, beliefs, and expectations regarding topics directly impacting them. By administering structured questionnaires, researchers systematically collect data on various aspects of students' language usage, attitudes, and behaviors related to lexical innovation and academic writing.

Given the study's objectives, the survey methodology was deemed appropriate as it enabled researchers to collect comprehensive data directly from the target respondents. This approach ensured that a diverse range of perspectives and experiences were captured, contributing to a well-rounded understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

6.2. Research Respondents

The respondents of this study, "A Lexical Innovation from Social Media: A Closer Look into Gen Zs' Language Utilization," comprised 50 students from NISU Ajuy Campus enrolled during the first semester of the academic year 2023-2024. The researchers randomly selected 10 students from each of the following courses: Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSEd), Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEEd), Bachelor of Science in Hospitality Management (BSHM), Bachelor of Science in Criminology (BSC), and Bachelor of Science in Entrepreneurship (BSE).

Table 1. Distribution of Research Respondents According to Profile.

Categories	Frequency	Percent
A. Course		
BSEd	10	20%
BEEd	10	20%
BSHM	10	20%
BSC	10	20%
BSE	10	20%
Total	50	100%
B. Age		
19 Years Old and Below	29	58%
20 Years Old and Above	21	42%
Total		
	50	100%
C. Sex		
Male	20	40%
Female	30	60%
Total	50	100%
Overall Total	50	100%

6.3. Research Instrument

The study employed a revised and adapted questionnaire based on Olasubomi Funmilayo's (2020) research, Effect of Internet Slangs on the Academic Achievements of Secondary School Students in Essay Writing in English Language. The questionnaire was structured into three sections to ensure comprehensive data collection. The first section, Personal Information, gathered optional details about the respondents, including their name, program and section, age, and sex. The second section, Lexical Innovation and Social Media Use, focused on identifying the most frequently used slang terms and the social media platforms where students encountered these terms. Respondents were asked to list the top 10 slang words they commonly used in daily conversations, such as "OTW," "BTW," "Stan," and "Periodt," as well as the top three social media platforms where they had learned these terms. The final section, Effects on Academic Writing, contained targeted questions designed to assess how the use of lexical innovations and slang influenced students' writing proficiency, particularly in academic settings. By structuring the questionnaire in this manner, the study aimed to capture relevant insights into the relationship between slang usage and academic writing among Gen Z students at NISU Ajuy Campus.

6.4. Data Gathering Procedure

To ensure the validity of the research instrument, experienced English teachers with expertise in language studies and research methodology reviewed the questionnaire. These professionals evaluated its clarity, relevance, and comprehensiveness, providing valuable feedback that refined the instrument. Their insights helped ensure that the questionnaire effectively captured the necessary data while maintaining academic rigor and credibility.

Upon approval of the permission letter, the researchers proceeded with data collection. To ensure a smooth process, students were approached in advance to confirm their availability before administering the questionnaire. Once the data were gathered, both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were conducted. The descriptive analysis summarized and described the collected data, offering insights into trends and patterns, while the inferential analysis employed quantitative techniques to examine relationships and variations within the data.

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data. By incorporating both types of analyses, the researchers ensured a thorough evaluation of the research questions.

Following the retrieval of the questionnaires, responses were computed, tabulated, analyzed, and interpreted. The researchers categorized respondents based on year level, course, age, and sex. To identify trends, the top 10 most commonly used lexical innovations or slang terms and the top three most commonly used social media platforms were ranked accordingly. To determine the effects of lexical innovation and slang on academic writing, a scale was utilized, ranging from 1.00–2.99 (Very Low), 3.00 - 4.99 (Low), 5.00 - 6.99 (Moderate), 7.00 - 8.99 (High) and 9.00–10.00 (Very High). This structured approach ensured the systematic processing of data, allowing for accurate and meaningful conclusions.

6.5. Statistical Treatment

For data interpretation, various statistical tools were employed to ensure accurate analysis. Frequency count and percentage were used to determine the distribution of respondents based on demographic variables, providing a clear representation of their characteristics. The mean was calculated to identify the average value of the data, offering insights into general trends. Standard deviation (SD) was applied to measure the variability in responses, allowing the researchers to assess the consistency of the data. Additionally, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was utilized to evaluate differences in means across multiple groups, ensuring a comprehensive comparison of results. Lastly, ranking was conducted to determine the top 10 most commonly used lexical innovations or slang and the top three most frequently used social media platforms among Gen Z students. These statistical treatments provided a structured approach to data analysis, enhancing the reliability and validity of the study's findings.

7. Results and Discussion

7.1. Results

Table 1: Top 10 most common lexical innovations/ Slangs used by NISU Ajuy GenZ students.

Lexical Innovation/ Slangs	Count in Rank	Percent of Total in Rank
Top 1: BASIC	6	12.0%
Top 2: CLOUT	6	12.0%
Top 3: BTW	10	20.0%
Top 4: SLAY	5	10.0%
Top 5: ASAP	8	16.0%
Top 6: BET	5	10.0%
Top 7: LOWKEY	9	18.0%
Top 8: OTW	5	10.0%
Top 9: LIT	3	6.0%
Top 10: SQUAD	5	10.0%

The study identified the top 10 lexical innovations or slang terms used by Gen Z students at NISU Ajuy Campus. The most frequently used terms were BASIC and CLOUT, both ranking first with 12.0%. BTW ranked third with 20.0%, followed by SLAY (10.0%), ASAP (16.0%), BET (10.0%), LOWKEY (18.0%), OTW (10.0%), LIT (6.0%), and SQUAD (10.0%). These findings align with broader linguistic trends observed in McCulloch's study, emphasizing the evolving nature of language among young people. The study highlights the impact of digital communication on slang development, incorporating acronyms (e.g., BTW, OTW), new words (e.g., slay, clout), and modified spellings (e.g., periodt) commonly used in online interactions.

Table 2: Top 3 most common used social media used by NISU Ajuy GenZ students.

Social Media	Count in Rank	With a Total in Rank
Top 1: FACEBOOK	50	100.0%
Top 2: TWITTER (X)	25	50.0%
Top 3: INSTAGRAM	17	34.0%

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The study revealed that the top three social media platforms used by Gen Z students at NISU Ajuy Campus were Facebook (100%), Twitter (X) (50%), and Instagram (34%). Facebook ranked highest as it was the most accessible and widely used platform for daily activities. Twitter (X) was favored by half of the respondents for quick information sharing, while Instagram was used for visual content without message length restrictions. These findings align with studies by Mansor (2016) and Sebah Al-Ali (2014), which highlighted how these platforms contribute to the development and use of internet slang, enabling fast and concise communication.

Table 3: The effect level of slang/lexical innovation on the NISU Ajuy GenZ student's academic writing.

State ment	BEED		BSED		BSC		BSE		BSHM	
	Mean	Interpretation	Mean	Interpretation	Mean	Interpretation	Mean	Interpretation	Mean	Interpretation
1	6.60	Moderate	4.80	Low	8.70	High	7.50	High	9.20	Very High
2	8.11	High	9.80	Very High	9.20	Very High	6.90	Moderate	7.11	High
3	8.56	High	7.20	High	9.60	Very High	7.20	High	9.33	Very High
4	7.56	High	6.22	Moderate	7.44	High	8.30	High	6.17	Moderate
5	5.00	Moderate	7.00	High	6.10	Moderate	8.89	High	6.60	Moderate
6	5.89	Moderate	7.88	High	5.00	Moderate	7.00	High	6.80	Moderate
7	4.57	Low	7.88	High	7.90	High	7.33	High	5.80	Moderate
8	8.29	High	5.57	Moderate	10.00	Very High	10.00	Very High	8.00	High
9	8.14	High	7.50	High	5.13	Moderate	9.00	Very High	7.80	High
10	7.40	High	7.60	High	8.17	High	5.17	Moderate	4.75	Low

The study examined the impact of slang and lexical innovation on the academic writing of Gen Z students at NISU Ajuy Campus across different courses. Findings revealed varying levels of influence, with BSHM students exhibiting the highest grammatical errors due to slang (Mean = 9.20), while BSED students experienced the lowest impact (Mean = 4.80), likely due to their strong foundation in formal language skills. In terms of perceived relationship with academic writing, BSED and BSC students reported a very high awareness of slang's effects, while BSE students had a moderate perception. When assessing the impact on language construction, BSC and BSHM

students experienced the highest negative effects, suggesting that their frequent use of slang influenced their ability to construct formal English sentences.

Regarding SMS communication, BSE students saw the highest improvement (Mean = 8.30), indicating that using proper English enhances clarity in digital conversations. In terms of ease of communication, BSE students found slang highly effective (Mean = 8.89), while BEED students ranked it as moderately easy to use. Slang also played a role in essay writing, with BSED and BSE students reporting high benefits, whereas BEED students perceived a lower influence. Additionally, the study highlighted that BSC and BSE students observed very high usage of slang among their peers. When considering slang's role in learning and writing, BSE students reported the highest benefits (Mean = 9.00), while BSC students had a moderate perception.

The study also explored the potential of slang to improve essay writing, with BSC and BSED students acknowledging high potential, whereas BSHM students perceived fewer benefits. Overall, the research concluded that slang has a moderate impact on academic writing (Mean = 6.69), indicating that while it contributes to communication and engagement, it negatively affects formal writing quality. These findings align with Matias (2023), which reported that internet slang leads to increased grammatical errors, poor sentence construction, and weakened formal writing skills. Similar to Matias' study, this research found that while slang is beneficial for informal communication, its integration into academic writing is problematic, affecting coherence and grammatical accuracy across different student populations.

Table 4: Significant difference between in slangs and social media platform to the Academic writing of NISU Ajuy Gen Zs' Studentswhen classified as to their course.

Variable	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	f	Sig.
Between Groups	66.80	4	16.70	0.912	0.504
Within Groups	667.87	35.4	19.05		

The study also examined whether there is a significant difference in the influence of slang and social media on the academic writing of NISU Ajuy Gen Z students based on their course. The results showed a between-groups sum of squares of 66.80 and a within-groups sum of squares of 667.87, with an F-value of 0.912 and a significance level (Sig.) of 0.504, which is greater than the 0.05 threshold. Since the p-value is above 0.05, the hypothesis was accepted, indicating no significant difference in the impact of slang and social media on academic writing across different courses. This suggests that a student's course does not significantly influence how these factors affect their writing.

These findings align with the study by Habes et al. (2018) on the relationship between social media usage and academic performance among Jordanian university students. Their research highlighted that social media platforms, such as YouTube, can have both positive and negative effects on academic performance depending on how they are used. Similarly, the current study suggests that while social media and slang influence academic writing, their effects are not significantly different across courses.

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

8.1. Conclusion

The study on lexical innovations from social media and their impact on the academic writing of NISU Ajuy Gen Z students highlighted several key findings. It revealed that slang preferences vary based on age, gender, and course, influenced by social and cultural factors. Younger students (19 and below) frequently used trendy slang

terms like BASIC and BTW, while older students (20 and above) preferred more nuanced expressions like LOWKEY and CLOUT. Gender differences were also evident, with male students favoring slang associated with social status and assertiveness (CLOUT, SAVAGE), while female students leaned towards expressions of confidence and empowerment (PERIODT, SLAY). Course-specific trends showed that BEED students commonly used LOL and SQUAD, reflecting their collaborative learning environment, while BSED students preferred BASIC and SLAY, possibly due to their exposure to formal language education.

Social media platforms also played a crucial role in shaping students' linguistic habits. Facebook emerged as the most commonly used platform, favored by all demographic groups due to its multifunctionality. However, preferences varied, with younger students gravitating towards Instagram for its visual appeal and older students favoring Threads for more in-depth discussions. Gender-based trends showed male students balancing Instagram and Twitter (X), while female students engaged more actively with Twitter (X) for its conversational and real-time interactions. These findings suggest that the way students interact with digital platforms directly influences their language patterns and communication styles.

The study further established that internet slang significantly affects academic writing, particularly in grammar and sentence structure. BSE, BSHM, and BSC students exhibited higher levels of grammatical errors due to frequent exposure to informal language on social media, whereas BSED students were less affected, likely due to their stronger focus on formal writing. BEED students experienced a moderate impact, reflecting a balance between informal digital communication and structured writing practices. Gender and age also influenced perceptions of slang in academic contexts. Female students viewed slang as beneficial for communication, while male students believed it enhanced their adaptability in essay writing. Younger students saw slang as a creative tool for writing, whereas older students were more concerned about its impact on grammatical accuracy and professionalism.

Despite these variations, statistical analysis revealed no significant difference in the influence of slang and social media on academic writing when students were classified by course, gender, or age. This finding suggests that demographic factors do not play a crucial role in determining the extent to which slang affects academic writing. Instead, individual behaviors, attitudes, and usage patterns may have a greater influence. The study underscores the need for further research to explore other potential factors shaping students' academic writing skills in the digital age.

8.2. Recommendations

To address the influence of slang and social media on academic writing, a collaborative effort among educators, administrators, parents, and students is essential. Campus administrators should create an academic environment that values both formal and informal communication by providing professional development opportunities for educators, fostering collaboration among stakeholders, and investing in language-focused programs that strengthen students' writing skills. Curriculum planners should integrate lessons that emphasize both formal and informal language use, ensuring students understand their appropriate contexts. Incorporating digital literacy into language courses can help students navigate the impact of social media on their writing, while continuous assessments should be implemented to monitor and address slang's influence on academic writing.

Educators play a crucial role in reinforcing formal writing skills by incorporating frequent academic writing exercises, providing constructive feedback, and conducting workshops on the effects of internet slang. Lessons should emphasize the significance of context in language use, enabling students to distinguish between casual digital communication and academic writing. Parents also play a key role in reinforcing proper language use at home by encouraging students to read books, newspapers, and formal texts, helping them develop a strong foundation in academic writing. Additionally, monitoring children's digital communication and promoting the use of formal language in casual settings can help students strike a balance between informal and academic writing.

Students must take an active role in improving their writing skills by recognizing the appropriate contexts for different types of language. Understanding the significance of formal writing in academic and professional settings is crucial. Regular self-assessment and collaboration with peers can help refine their writing and minimize the influence of slang on academic work. Meanwhile, future researchers should explore the long-term effects of slang and social media on academic writing, considering factors such as students' writing habits, exposure to formal education, and digital media engagement. Further studies on these variables can provide educators and policymakers with more effective strategies to enhance students' writing proficiency in an evolving linguistic landscape. By implementing these recommendations, educational institutions and individuals can foster a balanced approach that acknowledges the role of digital language while reinforcing the importance of formal writing for academic success.

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