# From Tweets to Text: Exploring the Influence of Social Media on Generation Z's Lexical Innovation and Academic Writing

**Euan John S. Opialda[1], Jackielyn B. Asong[2], Jhon Lloyd B. Bonda[3], Ronalyn A. Dela Torre[4], Jamelyn Joy O. Ochida[5], Rhea B. Rojo[6], and Sharon O. Calimpong[7]**

Northern Iloilo State University – Ajuy Campus, Ajuy, Iloilo, Philippines[1234567]
Email: euanjohnopialda102802@gmail.com [1]
ORCID: 0009-0000-3119-1442[1]

**Abstract**

This study explored the influence of social media–driven lexical innovations on the academic writing performance of Generation Z students at Northern Iloilo State University–Ajuy Campus. Grounded in the Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) Theory, the research employed a quantitative descriptive–correlational design to examine how exposure to online platforms and slang affects students' formal writing. Fifty undergraduate students from five academic programs participated through a validated survey questionnaire, and data were analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean, and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). Results revealed that *BTW*, *LOWKEY*, *ASAP*, and *SLAY* were among the most frequently used slang expressions, primarily acquired through social media platforms such as Facebook, X, and Instagram. Students perceived that the use of slang and lexical innovation had a high influence on their academic writing performance, though no significant difference was found when grouped according to age, sex, or course. The findings confirm that social media serves as both a source of linguistic creativity and a challenge to formal writing conventions. The study concludes that Generation Z's language use reflects the convergence of digital and academic literacies. It recommends that educators integrate digital literacy and language awareness into instruction to help students distinguish between informal and academic registers, fostering linguistic flexibility and academic competence in the digital era.

**Keywords:** Social Media, Lexical Innovation, Generation Z, Academic Writing, Digital Communication, Computer-Mediated Communication Theory

## 1. Introduction

Language constantly evolves as society and technology transform communication practices. The widespread use of digital media has accelerated this evolution, particularly among Generation Z—young people who grew up immersed in online interaction and mobile technology. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), and TikTok have become linguistic laboratories where users coin new words, abbreviations, and expressions that rapidly spread across virtual communities (Tagg & Seargeant, 2019). This environment has fostered a participatory linguistic culture in which creativity, humor, and brevity dominate exchanges, leading to the emergence of a distinctive digital lexicon. The phenomenon of lexical innovation—the creation of new words or new uses of existing words—has long been a central concern in sociolinguistics. It reflects both cognitive and social processes that allow speakers to adapt language to new contexts (Grieve, Nini, & Guo, 2018). In online communication, these innovations often appear in the form of abbreviations (*BTW*, *LOL*), blends (*hangry*), or semantic shifts (*lit*, *slay*), demonstrating how digital discourse reshapes meaning (McCulloch, 2019). Such linguistic creativity contributes to the dynamism of English but also raises questions about its implications for formal literacy and academic writing.

Studies have shown that digital communication practices can both enrich and erode language competence. Empirical evidence suggests that while exposure to online platforms expands vocabulary and fosters pragmatic awareness, excessive use of informal digital expressions can hinder mastery of grammar and syntax in formal contexts (Alorwu & Sarpong, 2021; Mahajan, 2023). Social media's brevity norms and multimodal affordances also encourage linguistic economy, prompting users to prioritize efficiency over correctness (Androutsopoulos, 2020). Consequently, students may unconsciously transfer informal conventions from online discourse into academic writing, leading to structural inconsistencies and reduced textual cohesion. In the Philippine context, where English serves as a key language of instruction and global mobility, understanding the linguistic influence of social media on students' writing is crucial. Generation Z Filipino learners engage intensively with digital platforms, shaping their communicative styles and lexical preferences (Aguillo & Pascual, 2022). Exploring how these digital habits intersect with formal writing competence offers valuable insights for teachers, curriculum developers, and language policymakers. Therefore, this study investigates the influence of social media on lexical innovation and academic writing among Generation Z students at Northern Iloilo State University–Ajuy Campus. It aims to identify the most frequently used slang expressions, determine the social media platforms most associated with linguistic change, and examine how these innovations affect students' writing performance. Through this inquiry, the study contributes to understanding how digital culture mediates language development and literacy among young Filipino learners in the 21st-century educational landscape.

**Aim and Objectives**

This study aimed to examine the influence of social media–driven lexical innovations on the academic writing of Generation Z students at Northern Iloilo State University–Ajuy Campus.

The study specifically sought to:
   a. Identify the most frequently used lexical innovations or slang expressions among Generation Z students.
   b. Determine the leading social media platforms that contribute to the emergence and spread of these lexical innovations.
   c. Assess the extent to which the use of slang and lexical innovations affects students' academic writing performance.
   d. Compare the perceived influence of lexical innovation on academic writing when students are grouped according to age, sex, and course.
   e. Recommend pedagogical strategies that promote awareness of appropriate language use across informal and academic contexts.

**Significance of the Study**

This study is significant as it offers a deeper understanding of how social media influences the linguistic behavior and academic writing of Generation Z students in higher education. With digital communication shaping language use and literacy practices, the research highlights the need to balance informal online language with formal academic standards. The findings will benefit students by increasing their awareness of the impact of slang and lexical innovations on writing performance, helping them distinguish between casual and formal contexts. For educators, the study serves as a guide for developing classroom strategies that integrate technology while strengthening grammatical accuracy and academic expression (Mahajan, 2023). Curriculum developers and policymakers may also use the results to design programs that promote digital literacy and linguistic awareness, ensuring that educational frameworks remain responsive to the

realities of online communication (Aguillo & Pascual, 2022). Moreover, the study provides a basis for future research on the evolving relationship between language and digital culture, contributing to broader discussions on linguistic innovation in the Philippine context and beyond (Alorwu & Sarpong, 2021).

**Theoretical Framework**

This study is anchored on the **Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) Theory**, which explains how digital platforms transform linguistic behavior and communication norms. Herring (2016) emphasized that online environments encourage new modes of interaction characterized by informality, brevity, and creativity, leading to the emergence of unique lexical and syntactic patterns. Social media, as a dominant form of CMC, allows users—particularly Generation Z—to negotiate meaning, identity, and social belonging through language innovations such as slang, abbreviations, and emojis (Androutsopoulos, 2020). These features of digital discourse often blur the boundaries between spoken and written language, influencing how individuals express ideas both online and in academic settings. In this study, CMC Theory provides the lens for analyzing how social media exposure shapes lexical innovation and affects students' academic writing. It supports the assumption that frequent participation in digital communication fosters linguistic experimentation that may enhance creativity but also compromise grammatical precision and formality in written outputs. By applying this theoretical lens, the study situates language change within the broader dynamics of technology-mediated communication and its implications for academic literacy among Generation Z learners.

**Conceptual Framework**



Conceptual Frameworck
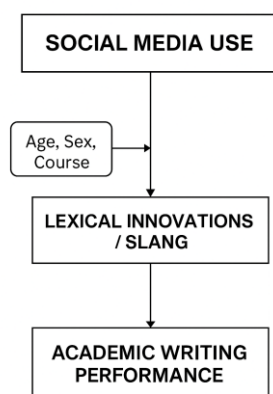
**Figure 1. Diagram of Conceptual Framework**

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework of the study, which is grounded on the Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) Theory. It shows the hypothesized relationship between social media use, lexical innovations or slang, and academic writing performance among Generation Z students. The framework begins with Social Media Use, representing students' exposure to various digital platforms such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and TikTok. This exposure leads to Lexical Innovations or Slang, where students develop or adopt new linguistic expressions influenced by online interactions. The model further identifies Age, Sex, and Course as moderating variables that may affect the extent of this relationship. These demographic factors can influence how frequently students encounter or apply online lexical trends in communication and writing. Finally, the framework points toward Academic Writing

Performance as the dependent variable, emphasizing how social media–induced lexical behavior impacts the students' ability to produce grammatically correct, coherent, and formal written outputs. The diagram thus visualizes the flow of influence from social media exposure to writing outcomes, mediated by demographic characteristics, reflecting the study's central premise that digital communication practices shape linguistic competence in academic contexts.

## 2. Review of Related Literature

### Lexical Innovation in Digital Communication

Lexical innovation—the process of creating new words or redefining existing ones—has accelerated in the digital age due to the rise of computer-mediated communication. Scholars have shown that online interaction promotes linguistic creativity, resulting in neologisms, abbreviations, and semantic shifts (Grieve, Nini, & Guo, 2018). These innovations reflect the participatory culture of online spaces, where users collectively construct and disseminate language forms through social media (Androutsopoulos, 2020). Tagg and Seargeant (2019) emphasized that this collaborative nature of online discourse facilitates the rapid evolution of digital lexicons across global communities. For Generation Z, social media platforms not only function as communication tools but also as environments for identity expression through language, leading to the creation of a hybrid linguistic code that merges formal English with digital vernacular.

### Social Media and Linguistic Behavior

Social media platforms have transformed how individuals communicate by promoting brevity, immediacy, and informality. Herring (2016) explained that online discourse encourages multimodal expression—through text, images, and symbols—which affects linguistic structure and style. On platforms such as Facebook and X, users frequently employ abbreviations, hashtags, and emojis to convey emotion and tone (Page, 2022). These practices have normalized the blending of written and spoken forms, making language more dynamic yet less formal. Studies in different linguistic contexts confirm that heavy exposure to social media reshapes linguistic norms, leading to increased lexical borrowing, code-switching, and the use of shortened expressions (Aguillo & Pascual, 2022; Alorwu & Sarpong, 2021). Such phenomena demonstrate how digital communication modifies both the production and perception of language among young users.

### Impact on Academic Writing

While social media fosters creativity and linguistic flexibility, research consistently indicates that it can negatively affect academic writing. Mahajan (2023) found that constant engagement with informal online discourse reduces students' sensitivity to grammar and coherence in formal writing. Similarly, Alorwu and Sarpong (2021) revealed that students exposed to digital slang tend to incorporate colloquial terms in essays, lowering their overall writing accuracy. Conversely, some scholars argue that social media can also support literacy development when used constructively, as it encourages peer interaction and self-expression (Vásquez, 2019). However, the challenge lies in distinguishing between informal digital creativity and academic appropriateness—a distinction that many students struggle to maintain, especially in multilingual contexts like the Philippines where English functions as both an academic and social language.

### Philippine Context and Research Gap

In the Philippine setting, social media has become deeply integrated into daily life and education, shaping language preferences and communicative practices. Studies by Aguillo and Pascual (2022) and De Vera and Custodio (2023) observed that Filipino students' frequent online interaction affects their choice of words, sentence structure, and tone in academic writing. The influence of English digital slang among Filipino learners reflects global linguistic trends while simultaneously blending with local expressions. Despite growing attention to digital literacy, limited empirical research has examined how these linguistic behaviors translate into measurable effects on writing performance within specific student populations. This gap underscores the need to explore the interplay between social media use, lexical innovation, and writing competence among Generation Z students in Philippine higher education, particularly at Northern Iloilo State University–Ajuy Campus.

3. **Methodology**

**Research Design**

This study utilized a **quantitative descriptive–correlational research design** to examine the influence of social media–driven lexical innovations on the academic writing of Generation Z students at Northern Iloilo State University–Ajuy Campus. The descriptive component was used to identify the most frequently used slang or lexical innovations and the most common social media platforms contributing to language change. The correlational aspect determined whether significant relationships existed between the use of lexical innovations and students' academic writing performance, as well as differences across age, sex, and course. This design was appropriate as it allowed the researchers to describe existing linguistic behaviors while statistically analyzing their possible effects (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

**Research Respondents**

The respondents consisted of 50 randomly selected undergraduate students enrolled during the first semester of Academic Year 2023–2024. Stratified random sampling was employed to ensure representation from the five academic programs: 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). Each program contributed ten respondents, resulting in a balanced sample distribution. Participants were predominantly 18 to 22 years old, representing both male and female students. Inclusion criteria required active social media users with at least one year of engagement in online communication platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, X (Twitter), or TikTok.

**Research Instrument**

Data were gathered using a structured survey questionnaire adapted and modified from Olasubomi (2020), who investigated the effects of internet slang on students' writing performance. The instrument was divided into three parts. The first section collected demographic information (age, sex, and course). The second section focused on the identification of commonly used lexical innovations or slang and the top three social media platforms influencing language use. The third section assessed the perceived effects of these lexical innovations on academic writing through a 10-item Likert scale ranging from 1 (Very Low) to 10 (Very High). The questionnaire underwent expert validation by three English language specialists to ensure content relevance and clarity. A pilot test with 10 students yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.87, indicating high internal consistency and reliability.

**Data Gathering Procedure**

After obtaining permission from the college administration, the researchers distributed the validated questionnaires during scheduled class periods. The purpose of the study was clearly explained to respondents, and informed consent was obtained. Respondents were given sufficient time to answer the survey anonymously. The completed questionnaires were collected, tallied, and encoded for statistical analysis. Data were organized by variable—course, age, and sex—to facilitate comparison and interpretation. Confidentiality of responses was maintained throughout the research process.

**Data Analysis**

Data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Frequency and percentage were used to summarize demographic data, while ranking identified the most commonly used slang terms and the most prevalent social media platforms. The mean and standard deviation were computed to determine the level of influence of slang and lexical innovation on students' academic writing performance. To test for differences across groups, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and independent-sample t-tests were employed, using a significance level of 0.05. The statistical results revealed that while slang use varied across programs, there was no significant difference in academic writing performance when grouped according to sex, age, or course—supporting the conclusion that lexical innovation affects students uniformly regardless of demographic classification.

**Ethical Considerations**

The study adhered to ethical research standards. Participation was voluntary, and no personal identifiers were collected. Respondents were informed that their data would be used solely for academic purposes. The researchers ensured confidentiality, transparency, and the right to withdraw participation at any point. Ethical clearance was secured from the research committee of Northern Iloilo State University–Ajuy Campus.

4. **Results and Discussion**

**Table 1**
**Top Ten Most Common Lexical Innovations or Slang Used by Generation Z Students**

| Lexical Innovation / Slang | Frequency | Percentage (%) | Rank |
|---|---|---|---|
| BASIC | 6 | 12.0 | 1 |
| CLOUT | 6 | 12.0 | 1 |
| BTW (By the Way) | 10 | 20.0 | 2 |
| SLAY | 5 | 10.0 | 3 |
| ASAP | 8 | 16.0 | 4 |
| BET | 5 | 10.0 | 5 |
| LOWKEY | 9 | 18.0 | 6 |
| OTW (On the Way) | 5 | 10.0 | 7 |
| LIT | 3 | 6.0 | 8 |
| SQUAD | 5 | 10.0 | 9 |

Table 1 shows the ten most frequently used slang expressions among Generation Z students. The dominance of terms such as *BTW*, *LOWKEY*, and *ASAP* reflects how social media promotes abbreviations and concise communication. This pattern aligns with Grieve, Nini, and Guo (2018), who noted that lexical innovations in online environments thrive on efficiency and shared understanding within digital communities. The prevalence of *CLOUT* and *SLAY* also demonstrates the role of online identity formation, as these terms express self-image, popularity, and empowerment (Tagg & Seargeant, 2019). Such lexical adoption highlights students' immersion in global internet culture while indicating a shift toward informality in daily discourse.

**Table 2**
**Top Three Most Common Social Media Platforms Influencing Lexical Innovation**

| Social Media Platform | Frequency | Percentage (%) | Rank |
|---|---|---|---|
| Facebook | 50 | 100.0 | 1 |
| X (formerly Twitter) | 25 | 50.0 | 2 |
| Instagram | 17 | 34.0 | 3 |

As indicated in Table 2, all respondents identified Facebook as the most frequently used platform influencing their linguistic habits (100%), followed by X (50%) and Instagram (34%). Facebook's dominance is expected, as it remains the most accessible and widely used platform among Filipino youth (Aguillo & Pascual, 2022). The use of X and Instagram supports Page's (2022) observation that visual and short-text-based media environments facilitate lexical innovation through creativity, humor, and rapid dissemination. This finding underscores how online engagement serves as a social space where students experiment with new linguistic forms, reinforcing the link between media exposure and evolving vocabulary.

**Table 3**
**Perceived Effects of Slang and Lexical Innovation on Academic Writing Performance**

| Program | Mean | Verbal Interpretation |
|---|---|---|
| BEEd | 6.84 | Moderate |
| BSEd | 7.23 | High |
| BSC | 7.88 | High |
| BSE | 7.60 | High |
| BSHM | 8.05 | Very High |
| **Overall Mean** | **7.52** | **High** |

Table 3 presents students' perceptions of the effect of slang on academic writing. The overall mean of **7.52 (High)** suggests that students acknowledge a noticeable impact of lexical innovation on their written work. BSHM students reported the highest effect (M = 8.05), indicating greater exposure to social media and informal linguistic environments. In contrast, BEEd students reported a moderate effect, possibly due to their stronger emphasis on formal writing conventions in education courses. These findings correspond with Mahajan (2023), who found that increased informal communication online contributes to reduced grammatical precision in writing. Similarly, Alorwu and Sarpong (2021) emphasized that digital informality can infiltrate academic writing when learners are not consciously aware of context. The data here reflect the need for language educators to emphasize the differentiation between informal creativity and academic correctness.

**Table 4**
**Significant Difference in the Effect of Slang and Social Media on Academic Writing When Grouped by Course**

| Source of Variation | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. (p-value) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Between Groups | 66.80 | 4 | 16.70 | 0.912 | 0.504 |
| Within Groups | 667.87 | 45 | 19.05 | — | — |
| **Total** | **734.67** | **49** | — | — | — |

As shown in Table 4, the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) yielded an F-value of 0.912 with a p-value of 0.504, which is greater than the 0.05 significance threshold. This result indicates no significant difference in the effect of slang and social media use on academic writing performance when students are grouped according to course. This suggests that the influence of lexical innovation is relatively uniform across academic programs, regardless of discipline. Similar findings were reported by Habes et al. (2018), who noted that digital communication behaviors tend to transcend academic specialization. This outcome implies that exposure to social media and informal linguistic norms has become a shared cultural experience among Generation Z students, reinforcing the necessity of embedding digital literacy in all disciplines.

**Summary of Results**

The results indicate that social media platforms, particularly Facebook, are the primary sources of lexical innovation among students. Slang expressions like *BTW*, *LOWKEY*, and *ASAP* dominate online communication, revealing an evolving digital lexicon that mirrors global linguistic trends. Students perceive that these innovations affect their academic writing to a high degree, though statistical analysis shows no significant differences across courses. The findings suggest that social media use fosters a uniform linguistic influence across educational disciplines, highlighting the importance of balancing creative language use with formal academic writing standards.

**5. Implications of the Results**

The findings of this study carry several important implications for language education, curriculum development, and future research. The evidence that social media exposure significantly shapes lexical behavior and influences students' academic writing underscores the need for language instruction to adapt to digital realities. Since Facebook, X, and Instagram emerged as major sources of linguistic innovation, educators must recognize that digital spaces function as informal learning environments where students acquire new vocabulary, syntactic patterns, and discourse styles. This reinforces the premise of the Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) Theory that technological platforms do not merely transmit language but actively reshape it through user interaction (Herring, 2016). Hence, teachers should integrate discussions of online language trends into classroom instruction to develop students' metalinguistic awareness and enable them to differentiate between informal digital expressions and academic registers.

For educators and curriculum designers, the results highlight the importance of embedding digital literacy and register awareness into English and communication courses. Students should be guided to analyze the linguistic structures of online discourse and reflect on how these influence their formal writing.

Activities such as comparing online posts with academic essays or translating digital slang into standard English could cultivate precision without disregarding creativity. Such strategies align with Mahajan's (2023) findings that constructive engagement with digital language enhances writing proficiency when properly contextualized in instruction.

For institutions and policymakers, the results indicate that the impact of social media and slang on writing is not confined to specific academic programs. The absence of significant differences among courses suggests that this linguistic phenomenon is widespread among Generation Z learners, necessitating institution-wide initiatives. Universities may introduce workshops or seminars on digital communication ethics, responsible language use, and online literacy to mitigate the transfer of informal language habits to academic contexts. Moreover, teacher training programs should emphasize how technology influences student writing, equipping instructors with strategies to address emerging linguistic trends.

Finally, for future research, the findings suggest multiple directions for continued inquiry. Expanding the sample size across campuses or including qualitative components such as discourse analysis could provide a deeper understanding of how students internalize and reproduce online language patterns. Further investigations might also explore whether frequent exposure to specific platforms correlates with measurable changes in syntax, coherence, or vocabulary in academic writing. By continuing this line of research, scholars can help refine pedagogical approaches that balance linguistic innovation with academic accuracy—ensuring that creativity in digital communication coexists with competence in formal writing.

## 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

### Conclusion

This study examined the influence of social media–driven lexical innovations on the academic writing of Generation Z students at Northern Iloilo State University–Ajuy Campus. The results revealed that social media exposure, particularly through platforms such as Facebook, X, and Instagram, plays a significant role in shaping students' lexical preferences and communication styles. The most common slang terms identified—such as *BTW*, *LOWKEY*, *ASAP*, and *SLAY*—reflect the global diffusion of digital expressions among youth. While students acknowledged that these lexical innovations affect their writing to a high degree, statistical analysis confirmed no significant difference in the extent of impact across courses, sexes, or age groups. This indicates that the linguistic influence of social media is pervasive, transcending disciplinary boundaries and individual demographics.

Grounded in the Computer-Mediated Communication Theory, the findings affirm that technology-mediated interaction promotes linguistic experimentation, creativity, and informality, which may both enhance and undermine academic writing. Social media encourages expressive and accessible communication but simultaneously blurs the distinction between conversational and academic registers. The study concludes that Generation Z's linguistic behavior reflects the dynamic intersection of digital literacy and academic competence, emphasizing the need for guided awareness in managing the influence of informal online language on formal writing tasks.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings, this study recommends a holistic approach to addressing the linguistic impact of social media on academic writing among Generation Z students. For educators, there is a pressing need to

incorporate explicit instruction on language register and style differentiation into classroom practices. Teachers should design writing tasks and discussions that encourage students to analyze online discourse and transform informal digital expressions into appropriate academic forms. This strategy would strengthen grammatical precision while maintaining linguistic creativity. Curriculum developers and language program designers are encouraged to integrate digital literacy and linguistic awareness modules within English and communication courses to help students critically examine how social media influences their lexical choices and written communication. For higher education institutions, the findings suggest the value of institutional policies and professional development initiatives—such as seminars and writing enhancement workshops—that promote responsible technology use and awareness of digital language norms. Students, on their part, must become self-aware and reflective users of language by monitoring their own writing habits, reading academic texts regularly, and practicing editing to avoid the unintentional transfer of online slang into formal work. Finally, future researchers are encouraged to expand this investigation through mixed-method and longitudinal designs, exploring how the integration of social media language evolves over time and across disciplines. Such inquiries will further enrich understanding of the relationship between digital communication, linguistic innovation, and academic literacy in the contemporary educational landscape.

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