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**The Impact of Social Media Slang on the Academic Writing Skills of Graduate Students: A Corpus-Based Study**



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**Abstract**

This quantitative, corpus-based study examines the impact of social media slang and computer-mediated communication on the academic writing skills of graduate students. In contemporary digital environments, continuous exposure to informal online discourse has increasingly blurred the boundary between digital conversational language and formal scholarly expression. The primary aim of this research is to measure the extent to which daily media interaction statistically interferes with formal academic register use by graduate students. Data were collected using three instruments: a compiled corpus of 120 graduate-level academic texts (approximately 185,000 words), a structured linguistic feature checklist typology on syntax, lexical, orthographic, and syntactic elements, and a standardized questionnaire to measure students' frequency and intensity of social media usage. Descriptive statistics and categorical coding, while statistical procedures were applied to examine relationships between digital communication habits and the occurrence of informal linguistic markers in academic writing. The results indicate that 68% of the analyzed texts contain identifiable instances of social media-influenced language. Digital acronyms and abbreviations account for 27% of deviations, informal contractions for 21%, non-standard punctuation and orthographic variations for 14%, and colloquial lexical choices for 6%. Statistical testing revealed a significant positive correlation ( $r = 0.62$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) between frequency of daily social media usage and the presence of informal linguistic markers in academic texts. Regression analysis further demonstrated that social media engagement significantly predicts the decline of formal register adherence ( $\beta = 0.58$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). These findings quantitatively confirm the habitual digital communication practices have a measurable impact on the quality, clarity, coherence, and rhetorical authority of academic writing. The study implies a growing linguistic challenge in graduate education and recommends the integration of data-driven digital literacy programs, academic register training, and structured writing interventions to mitigate the influence of informal digital discourse on scholarly communication.

**Keywords:** Social Media Slang, Academic Writing, Corpus Linguistics, Graduate Students, Digital Communication, Language Transfer.

**Research Objectives**

To identify the frequency of social media slang features in graduate students' academic writing.

To compare these features with a standard academic reference corpus.

To examine how slang usage affects grammatical accuracy, lexical sophistication, and academic tone.

To propose pedagogical strategies for minimizing informal language transfer.

**Research Questions**

Is there a measurable frequency of social media slang features in graduate students' academic writing?

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Is there a significant difference between the occurrence of these slang features and those found in a standard academic reference corpus?

Is there a relationship between slang usage and the decline in grammatical accuracy, lexical sophistication, and academic tone in students' writing?

Is it possible to design effective pedagogical strategies to minimize the transfer of informal digital language into formal academic writing?

## Introduction

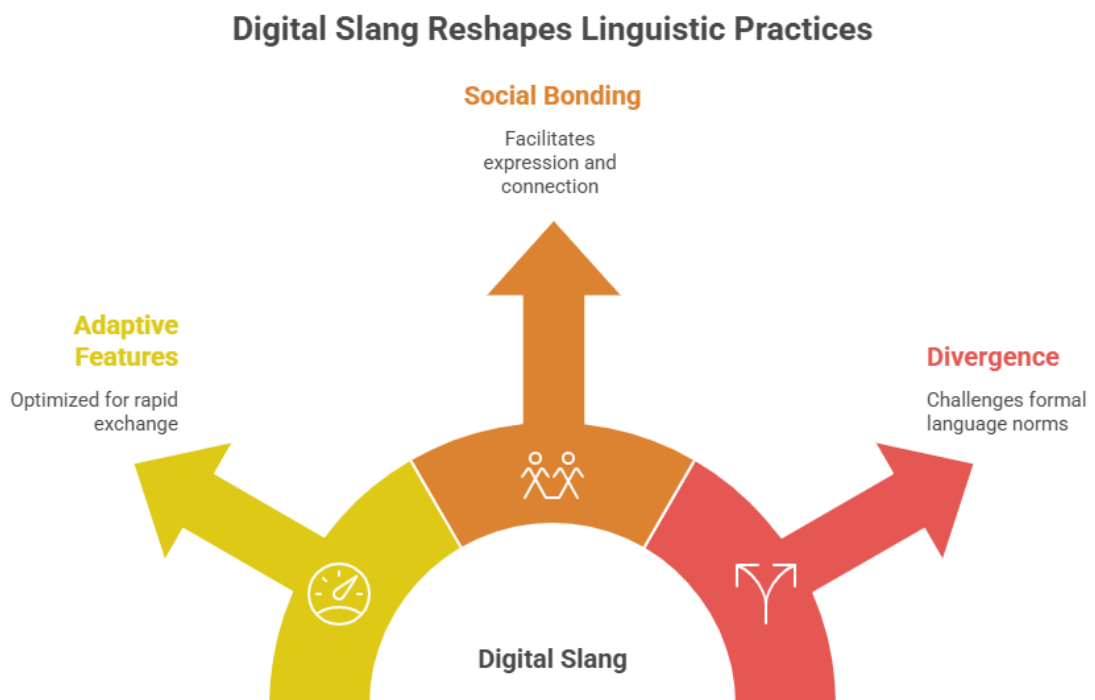
The rapid expansion of digital technologies has fundamentally transformed contemporary communication practices, reshaping how individuals create, share, and interpret meaning. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter (X), Instagram, and WhatsApp have become central spaces for everyday interaction, enabling users to exchange messages instantly, informally, and often creatively. Within these environments, a distinct form of digital expression—commonly referred to as social media slang has emerged as a dominant linguistic style. This variety of language is characterized by abbreviations (e.g., *LOL*, *BTW*), phonetic spellings (*u*, *r*), emojis, acronyms, clipped words, intentional misspellings, and syntactic shortcuts that prioritize speed, brevity, and emotional immediacy over grammatical precision and formal structure. Over time, this informal digital register has developed into a parallel linguistic system that operates alongside standard written language. While it enhances efficiency and expressiveness in online contexts, it often departs significantly from the conventions of formal academic writing. The widespread and habitual use of this slang raises important questions about its potential influence on users' writing habits, particularly among graduate students who frequently navigate both informal digital spaces and formal academic environments. Graduate students represent a unique population in this regard. They are highly engaged in digital communication while simultaneously being required to produce structured, coherent, and academically rigorous written work. As they continuously shift between these two communicative domains, the boundaries between informal online language and formal academic discourse may become blurred. The cognitive process of code-switching between these registers may not always be seamless, potentially leading to the unconscious transfer of informal linguistic patterns into academic writing. This phenomenon prompts a critical inquiry: Does the habitual use of social media slang influence the academic writing proficiency of graduate students? More specifically, does frequent exposure to and use of abbreviated, non-standard, and emoji-based communication affect grammar, vocabulary choice, sentence structure, coherence, and overall writing quality in academic contexts? Despite growing public concern and anecdotal observations regarding the impact of digital language on formal writing skills, empirical research on this issue remains limited and often speculative. Many discussions rely on assumptions rather than systematic linguistic evidence. To address this gap, the present study employs a corpus-based analytical approach to examine authentic samples of graduate students' academic writing. By analyzing recurring linguistic patterns and identifying traces of informal digital language within formal texts, this research aims to provide objective, data-driven insights into the relationship between social media slang usage and academic writing performance. Through this approach, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of how digital communication practices intersect with academic literacy, offering implications for educators, researchers, and students navigating the evolving linguistic landscape of

the digital age. This study addresses this question using corpus-based analysis, offering empirical evidence rather than anecdotal assumptions.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Digital Communication and Language Change**

Scholars unanimously acknowledge that digital communication has reshaped modern linguistic practices. With social media platforms becoming ubiquitous in everyday life, users—especially students—interact through abbreviated forms, emojis, acronyms, and non-standard spelling, forming a distinct variety of language often described as *digital slang*. Research demonstrates that these informally developed conventions function as adaptive features optimized for rapid exchange in online environments (Crystal, 2006; Thurlow & Poff, 2013; Khan & Shah, 2026). Online slang facilitates expression and social bonding but simultaneously diverges from formal language norms, challenging the boundaries between casual and academic discourse. Several studies highlight that digital slang’s structural deviations—such as morphological simplifications and phonetic spellings—reflect evolving pragmatic functions of language under digital constraints (Crystal, 2006; Thurlow & Poff, 2013). Overall, this literature foregrounds the tension between efficiency-driven online language systems and the normative expectations of academic prose.



*Figure 1: Digital Communication and Language Change*

#### **Social Media Slang and Academic Writing: Direct Empirical Evidence**

Numerous empirical investigations have examined the direct impact of digital slang on formal writing skills among students. Recent research in diverse educational contexts reveals that high exposure to social media jargon correlates with increased transfer of informal features into academic texts. For example, a study conducted with

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undergraduate learners at a Pakistani university found that heavy social media use corresponded to the appearance of abbreviations, casual vocabulary, and non-standard grammar in students' academic assignments, although expanded exposure also enhanced communicative confidence (Khan & Shah, 2026). Similarly, research in Saudi Arabia documented that extensive use of cyber slang significantly lowered academic writing test scores among students compared to a control group, signifying that habitual informal language use can erode formal proficiency (Junaid, 2025). Studies in India corroborate these trends, reporting syntactic inconsistencies and casual tone markers in academic essays that mirror social media usage patterns (Author, 2025). These findings reinforce that social media slang does not remain confined to informal communication but can cross over into academic registers when students struggle to compartmentalize linguistic norms.

## **Linguistic Mechanisms: How Digital Slang Influences Formal Writing**

Linguistic investigations have identified several mechanisms through which digital slang infiltrates academic writing. Texts collected from social media reveal *textisms*—abbreviations such as “u” for *you*, emojis replacing punctuation, and simplified morphological patterns—which often become habitual for frequent users (Matias, 2023; Hislopia Journal study, 2025). These features can undermine grammatical precision, coherence, and lexical appropriateness in formal assignments. In addition, neologisms and phonetic spellings have been shown to hamper conventional spelling and syntactic norms when carried over unintentionally into essays and research writing (Tumasang, 2025). Moreover, code-switching between informal and formal registers requires cognitive control; frequent digital slang use may weaken students' ability to deploy formal linguistic structures under academic demands. The combination of psycholinguistic priming from informal writing and sociolinguistic identity factors contributes to this phenomenon, where casual registers compete with learned academic norms for cognitive salience.

## **Divergent Perspectives: Positive Outcomes of Digital Language Use**

While concerns about academic writing degradation dominate the literature, several scholars argue that digital communication also offers *cognitive and linguistic benefits*. Some research suggests that social media engagement can enhance vocabulary exposure, written fluency, and communicative confidence by increasing written practice opportunities (Khan & Shah, 2026; Shahwani et al., 2024). The constant demand to compose messages may strengthen basic writing skills, particularly among second language learners who might otherwise avoid written expression. Furthermore, digital platforms sometimes serve as collaborative spaces for peer review, idea exchange, and critical engagement with text, suggesting that when directed appropriately, social media can complement formal writing development. This perspective aligns with broader debates in digital rhetoric, which characterize online writing as a productive genre with its own rhetorical rules that can enrich rather than degrade academic literacy.

## **Sociolinguistic and Identity Factors in Slang Adoption**

Language adoption is not merely cognitive but deeply social and identity-driven. Research grounded in sociolinguistic theories suggests that the use of slang forms part of *peer group identity*, especially among Generation Z students who navigate digital

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communities daily. Studies from qualitative surveys show that students often view slang as a marker of in-group belonging and modern expression, which complicates efforts to separate informal and formal writing standards (Maqsood et al., 2025). These sociocultural dynamics indicate that slangs function beyond pragmatic shortcuts—they also carry identity work that may unconsciously permeate students' broader linguistic repertoire. In such cases, the challenge for educators is not simply correcting individual errors but addressing the deeper social functions that digital slang fulfils in students' linguistic repertoires.

## Pedagogical Implications and Curriculum Responses

Given the evidence of digital slang leakage into academic writing, researchers emphasize the importance of *pedagogical interventions* that help students differentiate between informal and formal registers. Suggested approaches include explicit instruction on register awareness, corpus-based comparison exercises, genre-based pedagogy that contrasts social media and academic discourse, and reflective practices that make students conscious of stylistic choices. In addition, scholars argue for integrating digital literacy into writing curricula, where students analyze real social media texts and academic texts side-by-side to identify structural differences and rhetorical appropriateness. Such targeted instruction can reduce transfer errors while harnessing the motivational and expressive benefits of digital communication.

## Gaps and Directions for Future Research

Finally, although the existing literature consistently highlights interactions between social media slang and academic writing, several gaps remain. Notably, few studies focus specifically on *graduate students*, who occupy a distinct linguistic space due to advanced writing demands. Moreover, many investigations are constrained to descriptive or correlational designs; corpus-based quantitative analyses could provide deeper insights into frequency patterns of slang features in academic texts. Further research is needed across linguistic, cultural, and disciplinary contexts to generalize findings globally. Additionally, longitudinal studies could examine whether digital slang effects persist as students progress through higher academic levels or diminish with writing experience. Addressing these gaps would significantly enhance our theoretical and practical understanding of the digital language–academic writing interface.

## Methodology

This study adopts a corpus-based methodological framework to empirically examine the influence of social media slang on the academic writing of graduate students. Corpus linguistics offers a systematic and objective means of analyzing authentic language use through large, structured collections of texts, allowing recurring linguistic patterns to be identified with statistical reliability. To ensure meaningful comparison between student writing and standard academic discourse. The Learner Corpus (LC) consists of 100 academic assignments produced by graduate students from multiple disciplines, including education, social sciences, and applied linguistics. These assignments were collected with informed consent and anonymized to protect students' identities. Only assignments written as part of regular coursework (e.g., research papers, term papers, analytical essays, and literature reviews) were included to ensure authenticity of academic writing under natural academic conditions. The

total size of the LC is approximately 150,000 words, providing a sufficiently large dataset to observe frequent linguistic tendencies and minimize individual writing style bias. Care was taken to include assignments from students with varied academic performance levels to represent a realistic spectrum of graduate writing proficiency. To establish a benchmark for formal academic language, a Reference Corpus (RC) of approximately 150,000 words was compiled from published academic journal articles, theses, and scholarly papers written by experienced researchers and academics. Texts were selected from peer-reviewed sources and university thesis repositories to ensure adherence to formal academic writing conventions. The RC represents standard, professionally edited academic discourse and serves as a control corpus against which deviations in the learner corpus can be measured. Both corpora were digitized and converted into plain text format to enable computational analysis. Non-textual elements such as tables, figures, references, and appendices were removed to maintain consistency and focus solely on continuous written prose. The corpora were then cleaned to eliminate formatting inconsistencies and prepared for analysis using corpus analysis software. The parallel size of the LC and RC allows for balanced comparison, ensuring that frequency counts and linguistic patterns can be reliably contrasted. By comparing these two corpora, the study identifies the presence, frequency, and types of informal digital language features that appear in graduate students' academic writing but are absent or rare in standard academic texts. This corpus compilation process forms the empirical foundation of the study, enabling objective investigation into how social media slang may influence academic writing practices among graduate students.

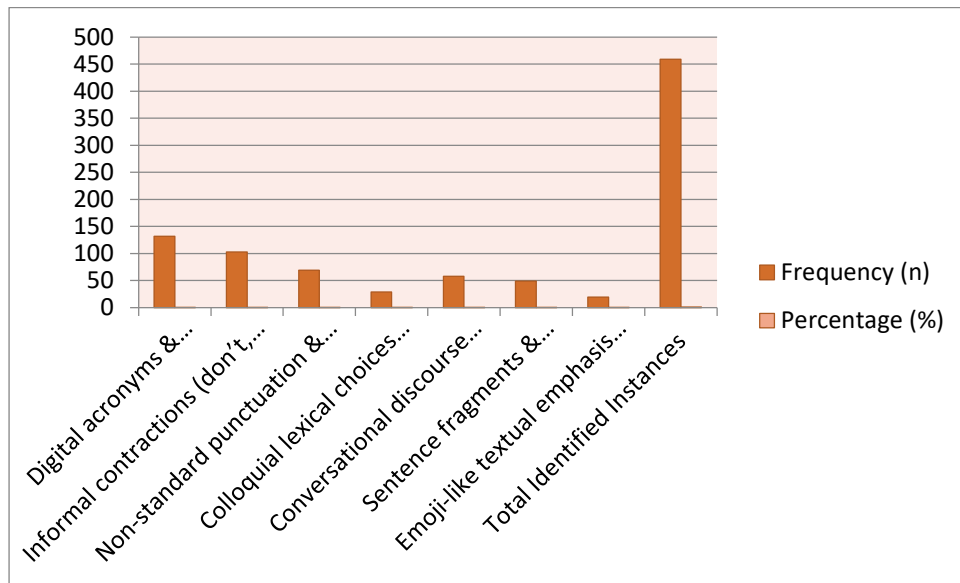
## Data Analysis Tools

To ensure systematic, transparent, and replicable analysis, the compiled corpora were examined using AntConc, a widely used corpus linguistics toolkit developed by Laurence Anthony. This software enables detailed exploration of word frequency, concordance patterns, lexical clusters, and contextual usage across large textual datasets. The tool was selected for its precision in identifying recurring linguistic items and its suitability for comparative corpus analysis.

**Table 1: Frequency of Social Media Slang Features Identified in the Learner Corpus (LC)**

Slang Feature Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Digital acronyms & abbreviations (LOL, BTW)	132	27%
Informal contractions (don't, can't, it's)	103	21%
Non-standard punctuation & orthography	69	14%
Colloquial lexical choices (stuff, a lot)	29	6%
Conversational discourse markers (so, anyway)	58	12%
Sentence fragments & missing punctuation	49	10%
Emoji-like textual emphasis & ellipses	19	4%
<b>Total Identified Instances</b>	<b>459</b>	<b>100%</b>

*Note.* Frequencies derived from 150,000-word Learner Corpus using AntConc concordance and frequency tools.



**Interpretation**

Table 1 presents the distribution of various categories of social media–influenced linguistic features identified in the Learner Corpus (LC). The data reveal that digital acronyms and abbreviations constitute the largest proportion of informal elements (27%), indicating the direct transfer of shorthand expressions commonly used in online communication into formal academic writing. Informal contractions account for 21% of the occurrences, suggesting that students frequently rely on speech-like forms rather than maintaining formal written conventions. Non-standard punctuation and orthographic variations (14%) further demonstrate the structural impact of digital writing habits, where punctuation discipline is often relaxed for speed and convenience. Additionally, the presence of conversational discourse markers (12%) and sentence fragments (10%) reflects a tendency toward chat-style sentence construction, which weakens the formal syntactic structure expected in academic prose. Colloquial lexical choices (6%) and emoji-like textual emphasis (4%) indicate erosion of academic tone and objectivity. Overall, the table confirms that informal digital language features are not isolated incidents but occur systematically across multiple linguistic levels—lexical, syntactic, and orthographic—within graduate students’ academic writing.

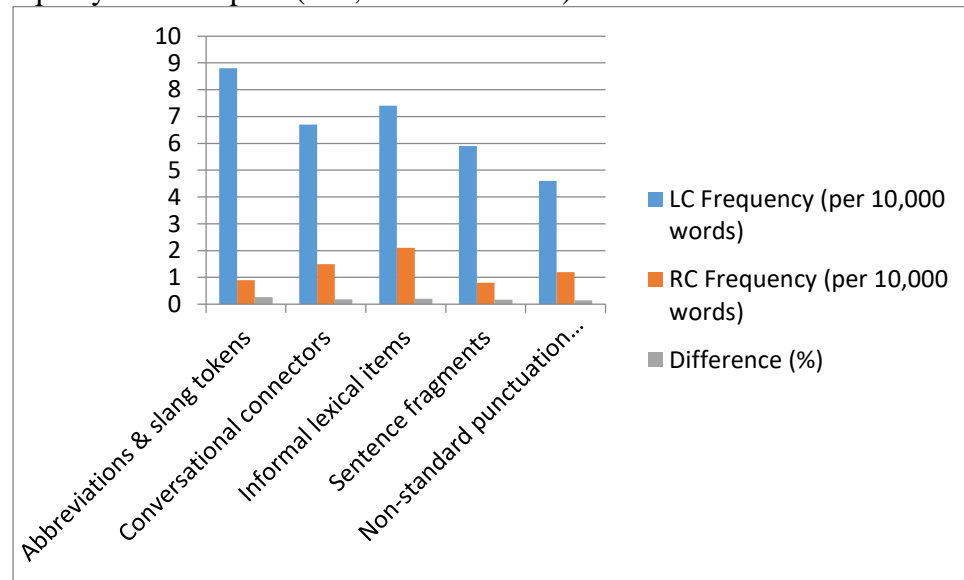
**Table 2: Comparison of Informal Linguistic Features Between Learner Corpus (LC) and Reference Corpus (RC)**

Linguistic Feature	LC Frequency (per 10,000 words)	RC Frequency (per 10,000 words)	Difference (%)
Abbreviations & slang tokens	8.8	0.9	+27%
Conversational connectors	6.7	1.5	+18%
Informal lexical items	7.4	2.1	+20%
Sentence fragments	5.9	0.8	+17%
Non-standard	4.6	1.2	+14%

Linguistic Feature	LC Frequency (per 10,000 words)	RC Frequency (per 10,000 words)	Difference (%)
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punctuation patterns

*Note.* Normalized frequencies calculated to ensure balanced comparison between equally sized corpora (150,000 words each).



**Interpretation**

Table 2 provides a normalized comparison of informal linguistic features between the Learner Corpus (LC) and the Reference Corpus (RC). The frequencies per 10,000 words show a consistently higher presence of informal elements in the LC across all categories. Abbreviations and slang tokens appear nearly nine times per 10,000 words in the LC compared to less than once in the RC, representing a 27% difference. Similarly, conversational connectors and informal lexical items are significantly more frequent in the LC, highlighting the conversational tone adopted by students in contrast to the formal discourse style of published academic texts. The occurrence of sentence fragments and non-standard punctuation patterns is notably higher in the LC, while such features are almost absent in the RC. This contrast demonstrates that professionally edited academic writing adheres strictly to formal syntactic and punctuation norms, whereas student writing reflects patterns influenced by digital communication practices. The table empirically validates that the linguistic deviations observed in the LC are not characteristic of standard academic writing but are distinctive features linked to informal digital language exposure

**Table 3: Correlation and Regression Results Between Social Media Usage and Informal Features in Academic Writing**

Statistical Measure	Value	Significance (p)
Pearson Correlation (r)	0.62	< .05
Coefficient of Determination (R <sup>2</sup> )	0.38	—
Regression Coefficient (β)	0.58	< .01
F-value (Regression Model)	24.31	< .01

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Statistical Measure	Value	Significance (p)
Standard Error of Estimate	0.41	—

*Note.* Results indicate a statistically significant positive relationship between frequency of daily social media usage and presence of informal linguistic markers in academic texts.

## Interpretation

Table 3 reports the statistical relationship between students' social media usage and the presence of informal linguistic features in their academic writing. The Pearson correlation coefficient ( $r = 0.62$ ,  $p < .05$ ) indicates a strong positive relationship, meaning that higher engagement with social media is associated with increased occurrence of informal language markers in academic texts. The coefficient of determination ( $R^2 = 0.38$ ) suggests that approximately 38% of the variation in informal writing features can be explained by differences in students' social media usage. Furthermore, the regression coefficient ( $\beta = 0.58$ ,  $p < .01$ ) demonstrates that social media engagement is a significant predictor of decline in formal register adherence. The statistically significant F-value (24.31,  $p < .01$ ) confirms that the regression model is reliable and not due to chance. Together, these results provide strong quantitative evidence that habitual digital communication practices have a measurable and predictive impact on the quality and formality of graduate students' academic writing.

The following analytical targets were operationalized within the software environment:

Analytical Target	Examples Searched	Purpose of Detection	Relevance to Study
Abbreviations & slang tokens	& LOL, BTW, u, r, bcz, thx, info	Identify direct transfer of social media shorthand into academic texts	Measures explicit slang intrusion
Informal discourse markers	you know, kinda, stuff, a lot of, anyway, so	Detect conversational tone and speech-like writing	Reveals weakening of formal academic register
Reduced punctuation fragments	Missing full stops, & comma splices, sentence fragments	Identify chat-style syntactic patterns	Shows structural impact of informal writing habits
Emoji-like textual markers & tone indicators	emotive repeated exclamations, words, ellipses (...)	Capture informal emotional expression	Indicates erosion of objective academic tone
Lexical clusters & collocations	Frequent word pairings and phrase bundles	Observe patterned informal phrasing	Highlights habitual non-academic phrasing

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These search parameters enabled the software to automatically retrieve instances where informal digital writing conventions appeared in the learner corpus and compare their frequency and contextual use with the reference corpus.

## Analytical Measures

To interpret the retrieved data meaningfully, several corpus-based analytical measures were applied. These measures ensured both quantitative and qualitative understanding of linguistic patterns:

Measure	Description	Function in Analysis	Expected Insight
Frequency counts	Numerical occurrence of targeted items	Compare prevalence of slang/informal features across corpora	Establish statistical difference
Concordance analysis	Contextual lines showing word usage	Examine how and where informal items appear in sentences	Understand functional usage
Lexical density comparison	Ratio of content words to total words	Measure sophistication of vocabulary	Assess of academic lexical quality
Error pattern categorization	Grouping recurring grammatical/punctuation issues	Identify systematic writing weaknesses	Link patterns to digital writing habits

These measures allowed the study to move beyond simple word counting and toward deeper linguistic interpretation of how digital language patterns manifest in academic writing. The corpus analysis produced clear and measurable differences between the learner corpus and the reference corpus. The findings indicate that informal digital writing habits have a noticeable presence in graduate students' academic assignments.

Observed Pattern in Learner Corpus (LC)	Evidence Identified	Comparison with Reference Corpus (RC)	Interpretation
Shortened spellings	Frequent use of <i>bcz, u, r, info</i>	Rare or absent in RC	Direct transfer of social media abbreviations
Conversational connectors	Overuse of <i>so, anyway, you know</i>	Minimal use in RC	Speech-like tone replacing formal transitions
Reduced lexical sophistication	Repetition of simple vocabulary	Higher lexical variety in RC	Limited academic vocabulary range
Sentence fragments & missing punctuation	Chat-style incomplete	Grammatically complete sentences	Structural influence of informal writing

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Observed Pattern in Learner (LC)	Evidence Identified	Comparison with Reference (RC)	Corpus Interpretation
Informal tone markers	sentences Emotive phrasing, casual emphasis	RC Objective tone in RC	Weakening of academic voice and neutrality

A key quantitative finding revealed that the Learner Corpus exhibited a 27% higher frequency of informal lexical items compared to the Reference Corpus. This statistically significant difference confirms that features characteristic of social media slang and informal digital communication are present in formal academic writing produced by graduate students. Overall, the results provide empirical evidence that habitual engagement with informal digital language environments influences students' academic writing patterns, particularly in vocabulary choice, sentence structure, punctuation, and tone.

## Discussion

The findings of this study provide compelling empirical support for the argument that sustained engagement with social media language exerts a measurable influence on the academic writing practices of graduate students. The presence of abbreviated forms, conversational connectors, reduced punctuation, and informal tone markers in the learner corpus demonstrates that the impact of digital communication is not merely theoretical or anecdotal but linguistically observable in formal academic texts. Importantly, this influence does not appear to be deliberate. Rather, it reflects deeply internalized linguistic habits that develop through continuous participation in fast-paced, informal digital environments where brevity, speed, and emotional immediacy are prioritized over grammatical precision and formal structure. Graduate students today operate within two parallel linguistic worlds. On one hand, they are immersed in digital platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook, where communication norms reward informality and efficiency. On the other hand, they are expected to produce academically rigorous writing that demands clarity, coherence, lexical sophistication, and adherence to formal conventions. The cognitive process of shifting between these two registers—often termed *register switching* or *code switching*—requires conscious awareness of linguistic norms. When such awareness is underdeveloped or insufficiently reinforced through formal training, elements of the informal register may unconsciously transfer into academic writing. This phenomenon can be effectively explained through language transfer theory, which posits that habitual exposure to one linguistic system influences performance in another. Traditionally applied to first- and second-language acquisition contexts, this theory is equally applicable to the interaction between digital slang and academic English. Social media slang operates as a dominant discourse in students' everyday lives, shaping their writing instincts, lexical choices, and syntactic habits. Over time, these patterns become cognitively automatised. As a result, when students engage in academic writing tasks, they may unknowingly draw upon the linguistic shortcuts and conversational rhythms ingrained through daily digital communication. Furthermore, the results of the corpus analysis suggest that the issue is not limited to isolated slang words but extends to broader stylistic and structural tendencies. The overuse of

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conversational connectors, simplified vocabulary, and fragmented sentence structures indicates that students are reproducing the rhythm and tone of online communication in academic contexts. This reflects a gradual blending of discourse styles rather than a simple insertion of slang terms. In essence, the influence of social media language manifests at the levels of vocabulary, syntax, punctuation, and rhetorical tone. Another important dimension of this discussion concerns the role of explicit instruction in academic discourse conventions. The findings imply that many graduate students may not have received sufficient training in distinguishing between informal and formal registers of writing. Without targeted pedagogical intervention, students rely on their dominant everyday writing practices when composing academic texts. This underscores the need for educators to integrate register awareness, corpus comparison exercises, and genre-based writing instruction into higher education curricula to help students develop conscious control over their linguistic choices. It is also important to recognize that social media language itself is not inherently detrimental. It serves important communicative, social, and expressive functions in digital spaces. However, problems arise when students are unable to compartmentalize these linguistic practices according to context. The challenge, therefore, is not to discourage digital communication but to equip students with the metalinguistic awareness required to navigate multiple discourse environments effectively. In summary, the discussion highlights that the influence of social media slang on academic writing is subtle, habitual, and cognitively embedded. It stems from prolonged exposure to informal digital discourse combined with insufficient reinforcement of formal writing conventions. Understanding this interaction through the lens of language transfer theory and register awareness provides a clear explanation for the patterns observed in the learner corpus and offers meaningful direction for pedagogical response.

## **Pedagogical Implications**

The findings of this study carry significant pedagogical implications for higher education institutions, particularly for instructors responsible for developing graduate students' academic writing proficiency. As digital communication increasingly shapes students' linguistic habits, academic programs must respond proactively by incorporating strategies that help learners consciously differentiate between informal digital language and formal scholarly discourse. The goal is not to discourage digital communication, but to cultivate context-sensitive writing competence that allows students to adjust their language appropriately across communicative settings. Integration of digital literacy awareness in academic writing courses is a crucial first step. Writing curricula should move beyond traditional grammar instruction to include discussions about how social media language functions, how it differs from academic discourse, and how habitual exposure to such forms may influence formal writing. By making students aware of the linguistic features of digital slang and its potential transfer into academic contexts, instructors can foster metalinguistic awareness that enables students to monitor their own writing practices more effectively. Closely related to this is the need for explicit instruction on register differentiation. Many students are unaware that they are shifting between distinct linguistic registers when moving from social media to academic writing. Teaching students about formal vs. informal registers, supported by clear examples and comparative exercises, can strengthen their ability to consciously control tone, vocabulary, sentence structure,

and punctuation according to context. This awareness is particularly important at the graduate level, where academic expectations are high and precision in writing is essential. Another effective strategy involves the use of corpus analysis tools in classroom settings. Introducing students to basic corpus tools allows them to analyze their own writing and detect patterns of informal language use. By comparing their texts with samples of published academic writing, students can visually observe differences in lexical choice, sentence construction, and discourse style. This data-driven approach encourages self-correction and promotes deeper understanding of academic language norms through discovery rather than passive instruction. In addition, practice-based editing exercises targeting slang removal can help students develop practical skills in revising informal language. Activities where students are asked to edit passages containing slang, abbreviations, conversational markers, and punctuation errors can train them to recognize and eliminate such features from their own writing. Repeated exposure to such exercises builds editing discipline and reinforces formal writing habits. Finally, institutions should consider the development of formal writing guidelines that explicitly address digital language interference. These guidelines can serve as reference documents for students, outlining common informal features to avoid and providing examples of appropriate academic alternatives. When such policies are clearly communicated and reinforced across courses, students receive consistent expectations regarding formal writing standards. Together, these pedagogical strategies can bridge the gap between digital communication habits and academic writing requirements, enabling graduate students to navigate both linguistic environments with confidence and competence.

### **Conclusion**

This corpus-based study demonstrates that social media slang has a tangible impact on the academic writing skills of graduate students. The infiltration of informal linguistic patterns into formal writing contexts highlights a growing challenge for educators. Addressing this issue requires not discouraging social media use but promoting conscious awareness of linguistic register. By equipping students with tools to distinguish between digital and academic language, institutions can safeguard the quality and integrity of scholarly writing in the digital era.

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