TRACKING LINGUISTIC CHANGE IN INSTAGRAM YOUTH LANGUAGE VIA AN AUTOMATED CORPUS DASHBOARD FOR FREQUENCY SHIFTS AND NEOLOGISM DETECTION

Dr. Jahanzeb Jahan[1*], Shahbaz Hassan Wasti[2], Ghulam Jillani Ansari[2]

[1]Department of English, University of Education, Lahore,
Email: jahanzeb@ue.edu.pk ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6954-2308
[2]Department of Information Sciences, Division of Science and Technology, University of Education, Lahore, Email: shahbazwasti@ue.edu.pk,
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5788-2604
Email: ghulamjillani@ue.edu.pk, ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8985-1383

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Keywords: Instagram, Language Change, Neologism, Social media **Corresponding Author:** **Dr. Jahanzeb Jahan,** Department of English, University of Education, Lahore, Email: jahanzeb@ue.edu.pk ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6954-2308	English has confronted a steady variation since its initiation. Apart from other variations, semantic change is fairly noticeable. This study examines the semantic variations in English language and likewise highlights the position of social media such as Instagram in semantic change which is an outcome of language contact. Concentrating on neologisms employed in social media, the current study focuses on a sequence of words and their connotations as used on Instagram. Instagram is a prevalent social media/ messenger which has overall provided innovative terminologies and changed meanings of various traditional English words. To analyses neologisms in Instagram, a corpus was formed comprising posts of Instagram. Python and its natural language processing libraries were used to automatically extract and pre-process the Instagram captions for annotation The most prevalent expressions used on Instagram were examined to identify whether and to what degree Instagram users are developing novel meanings of traditional English words. The study unveils that social media language has given rise to innovative expressions and change of the meanings of traditional English words.

Introduction:

English language has been evolving ever since its inception. It has also played a crucial role in connecting the globe and making the world, a global village. Presently, the global village is formed using various other means such as media, social media, internet and news etc. English is not the language of a nation right now rather it has become the language of anyone who speaks it. The concept of World Englishes is already popular and people are using English in

various patterns. Social media has also impacted English language to a massive extent. Salih, Prabowo, and Kalfin (2024) discuss the role of society in language change especially in online spheres. Since the users are connected online, they copy the innovative patterns used by the others online Vasylevska and Holinko (2025). The article examines the sociolinguistic dynamics of digital communication within English-speaking social media environments. The study discovers linguistic globalization, which is revealed because of the changeability in generating new lexemes and the development of social media-induced neologisms on platforms like Instagram. In the contemporary world, According to Wijewantha (2025), social media has substituted face-to-face interface as an efficient and effective mode of discourse. English on these podiums is a noteworthy variant of its commonplace verbal and written presentations. Arrizabalaga (2021) believes that English language now has become different from traditional linguistic standards which is recurrently manifested in their communication. Fozilova, Mushtariybonu Raufjon qizi (2025) examined the thoughtful influence of o online discourse on modern language usage. The escalation of social media has resulted in quick transformation of language in its vocabulary, structure, pragmatics, spellings and discourse norms. Natsir et al. (2020) also worked on social media language and discovered a lot of examples that came with the inception of Instagram that provoked language change online. Pirdaus and Vera (2025) discovered that online discourse forms an innovative language genre that is performative, hybrid and visual. Since Instagram is indeed a very popular social media because as of 2025, 1.74 billion users globally use Instagram. It is not only used of discourse or chat but also it is immensely used for business development and proliferation. It is also used for making and editing videos and reels. It helps a great deal in projecting one's professional and personal achievements. The 1.74 billion figure not only focuses on a massive no of app downloads in cell phone, tabs and computer but also highlights that this much large number of users comes up with innovative use of language. Novel linguistic patterns are exhibited by the Instagram users focusing on various levels of language change.

Instagram has grown to be foremost spot for language novelty, working as a catalyst for the formation and propagation of neologisms. Having its pictorial emphasis and collaborative features i.e. hashtags, comments and captions, Instagram inspires users to create innovative lexical forms to show identity, social meaning and trends competently and spiritedly (Javed, Gill, Shahzada, & Naveed, 2025). This kind of innovative, trendy and novel activities are frequently seen through numerous distinguishing patterns i.e., abbreviations, clipping, blending and compounding etc. Such distinctive patterns suggest morphological creativity that aligns with discourse requirements in online settings (Begum, Bhatti, & Javed, 2024). Since the Instagram users recurrently come across and accept these novelties, few terms go viral beyond their traditional contexts, helping in wider linguistic variation (Shahlee & Ahmad, 2022). If noticed, socio-cultural undercurrents of Instagram form unique neologisms. The young Instagram audience is being very creative and quick in its communication in online setting where communicative competence and social signaling are appreciated, moving language in the direction of conciseness and innovation (Javed et al., 2025). A lot of studies attest that some specific features of Instagram like incorporating emojis and threads impact the probability of newly coined words becoming viral, mostly linking innovative word formation with identity construction and communal belonging. This also proves the point of Rukh (2025) that netizens do not inertly devour language but vigorously redesign it, creating Instagram a microcosm of modern language expansion. Tumasang (2025) is of the view that there has been considerable research on Instagram coupled with its impact on language development and some scholars have expressed anxieties over the influence of social media on language expertise in official contexts. Aziza (2025) believes that at the same time others claim that reviewing this spectacle suggests insights into continuing semantic shifts and lexical development in living languages. These drifts underline the status of

investigating Instagram not just as a social network but as an active driver of linguistic innovation. The current study finds a gap in previous literature as there's no research that has focused on neologism created by Instagram. These neologisms have become so famous and frequent that they have replace the traditional meanings of many English words online.

Research Design:

This study employed a qualitative content analysis approach to discover how neologisms appear and work on Instagram. Qualitative study is suitable as it permits comprehensive inspection of structures, functions and patterns of language use in Instagram posts.

Data Source and Sampling:

Data comprised Instagram posts and associated comments collected over an extended period of 24 weeks. Purposive sampling was applied to select posts based on hashtags probable to produce neologisms (e.g. meme hashtags, trending tags,). Nearly 1000–1500 posts were sampled to guarantee variety, range and representativeness.
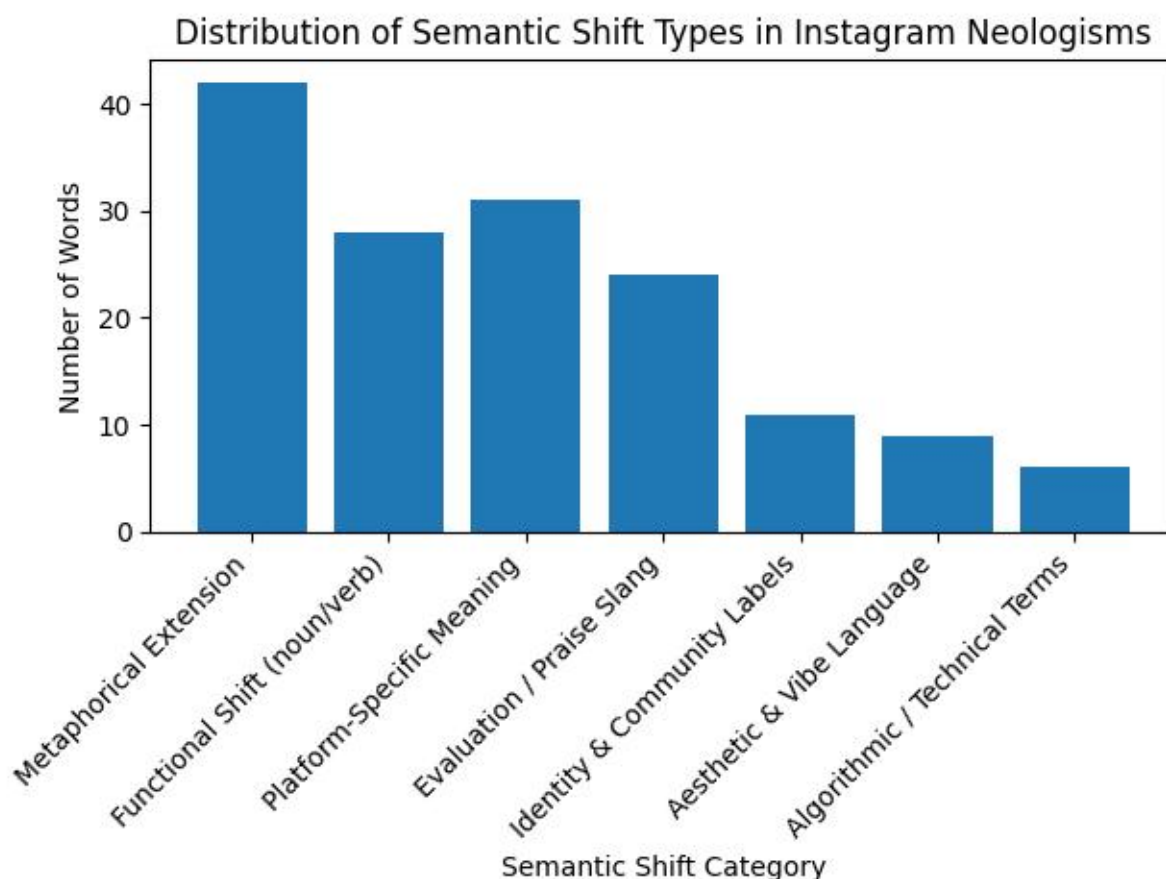
Data Collection and Analysis:

The pre-processing of the obtained text is a very crucial step in any linguistic research. Therefore, the researchers used Python and its natural language processing libraries to automatically extract and pre-process the Instagram captions for annotation. In particular, the researchers first removed the stop words and special characters from the captions. Next the researchers used BERT (Bidirectional Encoder Representations from Transformers) model to perform semantic annotation. The entire data was anonymized, having no individual identifiers recorded. Overtly reachable posts were used only in aggregate, and extreme care was taken not to disclose distinguishable material in reporting.

Data Analysis:

No	Word	Traditional Meanings	New Meanings
	Lit	Illuminated	Exciting or excellent
	Story	A Tale	Temporary Post
	Vibe	Emotional Signal	Mood or Aesthetic
	Viral	Linked with a Virus	Widely Shared
	Flex	Muscle Movement	Showing Off
	Slide	Smooth Physical Movement	DM Me
	Mood	Temporary Emotions	Relatable Feelings
	Shade	Shadow	Insult
	Aesthetic	Artistic Taste	Visual Identity Style
.	Iconic	Linked with Icons	Legendary
.	Ghost	Spirit	Ignoring Someone Online
.	Feed	Food for Animals	Instagram Timeline
.	Handle	To Manage Something	Username
.	Bio	Life Science	Profile Description
.	Reel	Film Roll	Short Video
.	Tag	Label	Mention Someone
.	Filter	Purifying Device	Photo Effects
.	Post	Mail Job	Upload Something
.	Caption	Subtitle	Description Text
.	Profile	Face Outline	Digital Identity
.	Explore	Physical Search	Digital Search
.	DM	Doctor of Medicine	Private Message

.	*Live*	Being Alive	Streaming Video
.	*Close Friends*	Literal Trusted Circle	Selective Story Audience
.	*Grid*	Physical Graph Structure	Profile Layout
.	*Swipe Up*	Physical Motion	Link Interactions
.	*Highlight*	Light Effect	Saved Story Category
.	*Archive*	Historical Record Storage	Hide Posts
.	*Follow*	Physically Walk Behind	Subscribe to the Account
.	*Block*	Physical Obstruction	Restrict Someone Digitally
.	*Report*	Narrate	Flag Content
.	*Save*	Data Storage	Bookmark Content
.	*Share*	Distrubuting Objects	Send to Others
.	*Sticker*	Adhesive Label	Story Element
.	*Meme*	Gene Concept Misused	Humour Trend Format
.	*Trend*	Fashion Direction	Popular Online Wave
.	*Unfollow*	Physically Stop Going Behind	Remove Subscription
.	*Influencer*	Anyone who Influences	Social Media Personality
.	*Algorithm*	Math Concept	Content Selector
.	*Binge*	Eating	Excessive Watching
.	*Crash*	Accident	DM Suddenly
.	*Cook*	Literal Cooking	Praise Someone
.	*Slay*	Killed Violently	Did Amazing
.	*King/Queen*	A Royal Rank	Praise Title
.	*Goat*	An Animal	Greatest of All Times
.	*Pin*	Needle	Save a Comment
.	*Duo*	A Pair	Two Creators
.	*Retro*	Past Era	Classic Trend
.	*Red Flag*	Danger Sign	Warning Sign Trait
.	*Spell*	Magic	Vibe Influence

Distribution of Semantic Shift Types in Instagram Neologisms

The bar chart validates and supports the comprehensive presence of metaphorical extension in the data. Lexical items like slay, goat and fire exemplify how tangible or literal meanings are used to prompt valuation, admiration, or intensity. The terms such as highlight, bio, feed, reel and story are part of platform-specific meanings. These words obtain meanings that are comprehensible within Instagram's technical and communal ecosystem, representing vigorous platform-driven lexical novelty. Words like drop, serve, shift and crash etc. show functional shifts and disclose Instagram's preference for verbification and action-oriented expression. Words like iconic and ate etc. show evaluation and praise slang and highlights the role of Instagram as an affective space, favoring quick judgment and stance-taking. Lesser occurrences in identity/community labels, aesthetic & vibe language, and algorithmic/technical terms suggest that while these categories are noteworthy, they are more specialized and context-dependent. The results clearly show that Instagram has indeed become quite influential space for innovative word formation and circulation in modern digital communication. It enables users to play with language, exhibit novel expressions, and change trends through hashtags, reels and comments. Instagram neologisms are not random innovations. They show how the youth adapt language to fit fast-paced, visually driven, and socially interactive communication. The high frequency of wordplay, abbreviation, blending, and borrowed forms shows that Instagram serves both as a linguistic playground and a distribution channel for emerging vocabulary. The research also attests that the daily use of the Internet and as of recently the massive use of social media platforms and easy to access technologies such as smart phones, have truly shaped the way we communicate, which contributes to the development of a whole new variety that defines culture as it is today coinage of new words becomes a rapid phenomenon because Instagram algorithms support repetition along with the social approval. Whenever a unique word becomes viral and trendy, its spread is escalated and people use it purposely showing their knowledge of newly coined words.

Last but not the least, Instagram's vocabulary is not only limited to online atmospheres. It has also become part of the daily communication of people. It inspires their everyday speech, marketing techniques, branding and language learning behaviours. Probing into these novelties helps researchers, content creators, linguists and teachers comprehend how vocabulary develops, how societies impact adoption, and how online media form long-term language trends. In present world, Instagram is no more just a platform to share photos. It has become a monumental linguistic engine, forming the way novel words are formed, shared, accepted, and used in daily communication.

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