



## LANGUAGE STYLES OF TEENAGE INSTAGRAM USERS IN PAKISTAN: ANALYZING CASUAL COMMUNICATION PATTERNS

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### **Abstract:**

*This paper examines the language styles of teenage Instagram users in Pakistan, focusing on communication patterns that reflect cultural, social, and linguistic dynamics. Style refers to the variation in language use based on the degree of formality or informality of a situation. To collect data, the researcher analyzed posts and stories of teenage and pre-adult Instagram users using a qualitative research approach (Creswell, 2014). The study explores how language is used in captions, comments, and direct messages, highlighting the influence of globalization, regional dialects, and social identity. The analysis revealed that the most common language style used by Instagram users in Pakistan is casual, reflecting the interaction between local linguistic norms and global digital culture.*

**Key words:** Language style, Instagram users, Teenagers.

### **Introduction:**

Language is any system of formalized gestures, sounds, signs and symbols used to communicate. We use language as a tool to communicate our ideas and thoughts with others. Language is culture — the way people talk reveals their cultural identity. The role of languages have different roles, as seen in educational institutions, scientific research, business and commercial activity and politics. Language is important, since it is the form of communication and interacting among people set with us by nature.

Because you can get a job at faster way through improving your English in the nowadays world, unless using language is so vital that's to be assertive for communication other people as if well socializing within others aspects of life. Because language mirrors the cultural heritage of its users, they select which form of expression that best serves their purpose reflecting upon roles and surroundings in a locally global sense. Remember to select the right language depending on where they are speaking. This gives a language variety and is called 'Style'. According to Sociolinguistics, 'Style' refers to a bundle of linguistic expressions which bear social meanings and functions that relates with group membership, personal attributes/characteristic & believes on speakers.

The concept of style in sociolinguistics was first really broached by William Labov (1960s). Though he did not give a clear definition, his studies revolved about the way people speak which is determined by their social interactions and refers to pace or style & language that they use to express meaning.

It is important to think of that speakers often alter their styles depending on what is going on, so style is not a continuous characteristic. Furthermore, presenter's strength blend aspects of numerous styles in order to produce a special one that works best for the circumstance. The study of style and stylistics has a long past in sociolinguistics and beyond. The beginnings of style in sociolinguistics dates back to the discipline's early days.

Through the practice of social media, an internet-based technology, users can increase their social networks and shape close relationships by sharing their ideas, feelings, and particular lives with the world. It is important for many aspects of life, such raising awareness, establishing brand recognition, advertising, and facilitating connections between people in the



business and marketing spheres. Social media has become awfully common these days, especially with early people, who use it to rapid themselves and meet somebody new. This study is restricted to teenage Instagram users who live in Pakistan.

**Objectives:**

- 1 .To identify the predominant language styles used by teenagers on Instagram.
- 2 .To investigate the use of emoji and their role in enhancing or altering meaning in communication.

**Research Questions:**

1. How do teenagers use language to connect with others of Instagram?
2. How do current trends impact the language teen’s use of Instagram?

**Literature Review:**

The study of style is one of the important elements in sociolinguistics. The way style is observed in sociolinguistics depends upon the numerous theories and ideas offered by the researchers. As Labov started the study on the grace, he examined the stylistic restrictions based on the courtesy paid to the speech (Labov, 1966). According to Labov’s model, the style of the speakers depends on the amount of consideration paid to their speech and the level of convention of the condition. If more courtesy is paid to the speaker’s speech, it will limit the speaker’s use of his language style. Additionally, based on the conventionalism of the situation, speakers’attention to their speech is improved, and they effort to make their style more formal. Moreover, the style also be contingent on the other speakers involved in the discussion. This relates to Lee's theory of spectators, according to which the speakers change their style based on the audience they converse with (Lee, 2017).

Such mindful attention to the style helps in positive identity construction, especially in teenagers already in the shaping process.

The style the speakers adopt not only projects their identity but also reflects their educational background, social background, economic background, and biological- intellectual age. People are always worried about how to present themselves better; they incorporate the elements of multiple styles in their speech and form a unique style. Stylistic variation not only exists in speech but also in writing. The variation of language style in writing can be extensively found in social media. The language found in social media can be very similar to the spoken language used in casual, informal situations (Paris, 2012). According to some researchers, the increased number of stylistic variations in the English language under social media threatens the Standard English varieties (Abbasova, 2019). Because of the style variation in social networking, the meanings of

The style variation in social networking, the meanings of many words have changed. Nowadays, social media has become a platform for self-presentation and identity construction. According to (Goffman, 1959), identity is like a mask people can wear and take off while interacting in different social contexts. Wearing the wrong mask on public forums may lead to dire social consequences. People publicly share their personal lives on social media (Lange, 2007). In the case of teenagers, if they are not made aware and educated about the style selection, it can lead to identity crises. It is because by exploring the language style they use in social media, one can learn about their backgrounds and the social groups to which they belong. According to Thurlow (2003) emphasis that social media fosters informal language marked by the use of emojis, slang abbreviations, and creative spellings .This phenomenon is particularly pronounced among teenagers, who prioritize quick and engaging interactions.



## **Methodology**

This study employed a qualitative research design to investigate the language styles of teenage Instagram users in Pakistan. The primary objective was to explore how young users express themselves linguistically on Instagram and how their styles reflect cultural, social, and linguistic dynamics.

### **Data Collection**

Data were collected from publicly available posts, stories, captions, and comments of Instagram users aged between 13 and 19 years. A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants who actively engaged in online communication through captions, hashtags, and direct messages (Creswell, 2014).

Instagram, a free social networking platform, has become one of the most popular online spaces for self-expression, with approximately 855 million global users in 2020, a number projected to exceed 988 million by 2023 (Instagram, 2023). It allows users to share images, videos, and personal narratives through posts and stories, often accompanied by captions and hashtags. This makes it a rich linguistic environment for studying contemporary communication trends among youth.

The study focused specifically on the Pakistani teenage and pre-adult population, as this group represents the most active segment of Instagram users in the region. Data were gathered from 85 selected user accounts, ensuring representation of various linguistic and social backgrounds. The collected samples included textual elements (captions, comments, and replies) that revealed distinct communication patterns and language variations.

### **Analytical Framework**

The linguistic data were analyzed according to the speech style model proposed by Martin Joos (1967), which classifies language into five styles: Frozen, Formal, Consultative, Casual, and Intimate. Each linguistic sample was carefully examined to identify features such as vocabulary choice, sentence structure, level of formality, and interactional tone.

This framework was particularly useful for distinguishing between varying degrees of formality and intimacy in online discourse. The analysis sought to determine which style(s) were most dominant among Instagram users and how social factors, such as context and purpose, influenced stylistic choices (Crystal, 2011; Barton & Lee, 2013).

### **Data Analysis**

The data analysis followed Joos's (1967) classification of language styles to determine the frequency and distribution of each style among Instagram users.

#### **Formal Style (4%)**

Only 4% of the users employed the Formal Style, which is typically characterized by structured vocabulary and grammatical precision. This style appeared in contexts requiring professionalism or official communication. Examples included posts from a CSS officer and a public account sharing verified information about celebrities and national events. The rarity of this style supports the idea that social media prioritizes informal and personal communication over institutional discourse.

#### **Consultative Style (20%)**

Approximately 20% of users adopted the Consultative Style, which is often used in semi-formal contexts. This category included Instagram business owners, brand promoters, and online sellers who used polite, courteous, and partially formal language to interact with customers or followers. This finding suggests that semi-formal interaction is maintained where professionalism and social engagement intersect.

#### **Casual Style (50%)**

The Casual Style was the most dominant, observed in 50% of the data. It was primarily used by students, artists, writers, and young professionals who shared similar educational or cultural



backgrounds. This style featured colloquial expressions, emojis, informal abbreviations, and conversational tones. The widespread use of casual communication demonstrates how Instagram fosters a relaxed and expressive linguistic environment, emphasizing peer connection and shared identity (Androutsopoulos, 2008; Tagg, 2015).

#### **Intimate Style (26%)**

The Intimate Style appeared in 26% of user interactions. It was characterized by personalized language, private code words, incomplete sentences, **and** non-standard spellings, such as “*u*” for *you*, “*ty*” for *thank you*, “*n*” or “*nd*” for *and*, and “*r*” for *are*. These linguistic patterns signaled emotional closeness and private relationships, often used in direct messages or close-friend captions.

#### **Frozen Style (0%)**

No instances of the Frozen Style—the most rigid and formal style typically reserved for official or ceremonial contexts—were found in the data. This absence aligns with Joos’s (1967) framework and further confirms that Instagram communication emphasizes informality, creativity, and social bonding rather than fixed linguistic conventions.

#### **Summary of Findings**

The analysis revealed that Instagram users in Pakistan predominantly employ informal linguistic styles, with the Casual and Intimate styles together accounting for 76% of total interactions. These results indicate that users prefer language that enhances social intimacy and community engagement, supporting the idea that digital communication spaces promote relaxed and adaptive linguistic practices.

#### **Conclusion:**

The present study explored the language styles of teenage Instagram users in Pakistan, focusing on how communication patterns reflect the influence of culture, social relationships, and linguistic variation in digital spaces. Using Joos’s (1967) framework of speech styles, the study identified that the Casual and Intimate styles dominate online interactions, while Formal and Consultative styles appear less frequently, and the Frozen style is entirely absent.

The findings suggest that Instagram serves as a platform for personal expression and social connection, where users prioritize informality, creativity, and emotional intimacy over grammatical accuracy or linguistic rigidity. Teenagers use informal abbreviations, emojis, and hybrid linguistic forms to establish closeness, identity, and belonging within their peer groups. Such patterns demonstrate how globalization and digital communication have reshaped language behavior, leading to the development of context-sensitive and identity-driven discourse among Pakistani youth.

Moreover, the prevalence of casual and intimate language indicates that social media has blurred traditional linguistic boundaries, merging English with regional expressions, slang, and code-switching practices. This linguistic hybridity not only reflects Pakistan’s multilingual and multicultural context but also reinforces the adaptability of English as a global language that accommodates local identities.

Overall, this research contributes to the understanding of digital sociolinguistics and World Englishes by showing how Pakistani teenagers employ language online to negotiate identity, intimacy, and belonging. Future research could expand this investigation by examining gender-based language differences, regional linguistic influences, or comparative analyses between different age groups and platforms.



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