
A Sociolinguistic Study of Reels (Short-Form Videos) and Their Influence on Language Use Among Undergraduate Students at Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad

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Abstract

The growing popularity of short-form video applications like Instagram Reels and Tik Tok has introduced a tangible shift in language practices of undergraduates in the age of digital era. This paper holds the thesis that regular use of Reels has a significant impact on the vocabulary and the style of communication, as well as language use overall in general, promoting the use of slang, abbreviations, emojis, and code-switching between English and Urdu in daily communication. Based on a mixed-method study design, a sample size of 50 undergraduate students at Quaid-I-Azam University was used to gather primary data based on a structured questionnaire with closed and open-ended questions. Quantitative data were interpreted through descriptive statistical procedures to determine the pattern of usage, and the responses given through the qualitative theme analysis to explain the personal experience of the students and their perceptions. The results indicate that Reels facilitate informal, expressive, and humor-based communication, which facilitates conversations by making them quicker, more interesting, and social. Simultaneously, the research also raises the issue of informality being excessive and mixing the digital slang with the academic language. The discussion is based on the Social Learning Theory that was proposed by Bandura (1977) that clarifies that students imitate and adopt language fads through repeated exposure to language on Reels. Finally, the research shows that Reels can serve as a strong force of linguistic change, and it is highly important to train awareness of the situation-appropriate language in both academic and social contexts.

Keywords: Instagram Reels, Tik Tok, Short-Form Video, Language Use, Slang, Code-Switching, Social Learning Theory, Undergraduate Student, and Digital Communication

Introduction

Among young users, particularly undergraduate students, short-form videos, also known as Reels, have become one of the most powerful types of digital content. Instagram and TikTok are the examples of such platforms that provide students with the ability to view short, fast-paced, and

visually appealing videos and share them and repeat them in their everyday communication. With the rising popularity of these digital trends, Reels are becoming increasingly influential on how students communicate, socialize and even use English in their academic and social life. The current paper will examine the impact of the daily use of Reels on language practices, especially the use of slang, code-switching, vocabulary, and the general organization of the conversation of students. According to recent research, there is an increased role of short-form video in the language behavioral and communicative habit influences of the youth. According to Barton (2025), the short-form digital content promotes such context-switching that leads to alterations in the attention span and linguistic patterns. In the same vein, Haliti-Sylaj and Sadiku (2024) believe that students who often watch short videos are more likely to be exposed to certain aspects of language such as informal words, shortenings, and combinations of English and local languages. Such results indicate that Reels is not only entertaining, but it is also the way in which students form and update their communicative styles. Other authors also highlight linguistic innovations that take place under Reels. Molem, Makri, and McKay (2024) indicate that applications such as Tik Tok and Instagram are actively involved in changing the language of the audience to suit the trend, audio files, or popular phrases going viral on the Internet. As also emphasized by Purnami (2022), Tik Tok and other platforms are places where entertainment and learning a language can be combined and people absorb new words and informal expressions on a subconscious level. All these studies indicate that Reels do form a dynamic linguistic environment, which keeps on impacting on students' daily communication practices. In general, the popularity of Reels among university students increases, which is why it is essential to comprehend the influence of such digital content on their language use. As communication is an essential factor in academic achievements and socialization, researching the linguistic effects of Reels will assist both educators, researchers, and policymakers to better understand how the current digital habits impact the speech, writing, and identity of the students. The aim of this research is thus to explore the trends of Reels use by undergraduate students, the linguistic nature they pick, and the general impact of such a digital trend on the language practices of the students.

Significance of Study

The study is relevant in that it gives a revised picture of the effect of the short form video platforms on the language use of Pakistani undergraduate students. With Reels growing significantly in the life of a student, the issue of the impact of such videos on vocabulary, grammar, code-switching, and the general linguistic behavior is quite important and should be analyzed. The results will be practical to the teachers who may wish to know about the evolving language trends, researchers pursuing the field of digital Sociolinguistics, and learning institutions that may need to encourage the acquisition of effective communication skills. This study by pointing at the linguistic influence of Reels can be added to the overall discourse of how digital media influences linguistic development in modern society.

Problem Statement

The sudden popularity of Reels on Instagram and Tik Tok has changed the new forms of communication among the university students, but the lingual impact of the phenomenon is not sufficiently studied in the Pakistani context. Slang shortened and mixed language forms are often used by many students based on short video influences, yet not much research has been done on how the alterations affects their vocabulary, grammar and communication within scholarly and social contexts. Unless the educators and researchers are familiar with this effect, they can miss the changes in language acquisition and usage. Hence, the investigation of the role of the Reels in

influencing the linguistic behavior of undergraduate students and what it implies about their academic and social communication is required.

Research Questions (RQs)

1. How do undergraduate students at Quaid-i-Azam University use Reels (short-form videos) in their everyday communication?
2. What linguistic features (such as slang, code-switching, and abbreviations) do students most commonly adopt from Reels?
3. How does exposure to Reels influence students' vocabulary, sentence structure, and overall language use in both academic and social contexts?

Research Objectives (ROs)

1. To examine the patterns of Reels usage among undergraduate students at Quaid-i-Azam University
2. To identify the linguistic features that students adopt from Reels in their spoken and written communication
3. To evaluate the influence of Reels on students' vocabulary, grammar, and overall language use in social and academic settings

Literature Review

The digital media and in particular the short-form videos Instagram and the Tik Tok Reels have become a strong authority on language use among the youth. These sites are integrated with casual learning and provide students with the ability to learn new terms, slang, abbreviation and sentence structure through interaction with peers over the Internet. Researchers have come to the realization that Reels do not only offer entertainment, but they are also a contributor to communication patterns, linguistic identity, and learning habits (Purnami, 2022, Rintangingrum, 2024). The contacts of students with Reels tend to lead to inventive language use, such as code-switching, combining formal and informal speech, and the use of hybrid forms. These effects are especially significant to undergraduate students, whose language practices are changing as they may have an impact on their academic performance as well as social life. This review of literature generalizes the studies on the influence of short-form digital content and categorized them in three directions on a thematic basis, which are linguistic features, language learning and vocabulary acquisition, and social communication and identity.

Linguistic Characteristics of Short-Form Videos Consumption

Molem, Makri, and McKay (2024) suggest that short-form videos will stimulate the students to incorporate the trending phrases in everyday communication. Slang, abbreviations, and other stylistic elements become a part of spoken and written language as students imitate popular Reels, which proves that digital media affects language practice. Purnami (2022) notes that the Tik Tok platform can be viewed as an entertainment and informal learning opportunity, where exposure of phrases, sounds, and expressions can enable students to acquire new aspects of the language without being fully aware of it. According to Rintangingrum (2024), Instagram and Tik Tok contribute to the spreading of teen language and slang at high rates, and the creation of new hybrid forms of language depends on peer culture and media trends. As Arshad, Shabir, Aslam, and Farid (2025) observe, repeated use of Reels results in changes in linguistic identity as the students are trying English slang and informal language and mix local languages. This observation is supported by Azimov (2024), who notes that the use of viral phrases in social media on top of standard English by teenagers has become a common phenomenon in the changing language environment.

An analysis of the comments on social media by Di Marco, Loru, Bonetti, et al. (2024) has resulted in the conclusion that the repetition of certain words and sentence structure in Reels leads to language development among young people. As Hajra and Akram (2025) point out, code-switching has already become a usual practice to render short video content where students imitate it, which demonstrates how flexible language is in the virtual environment. According to Herawati, Hermansyah, Syahrir, and Sadapotto (n.d.), students of Generation Z integrate English slang on TikTok into oral and written language, which supports the effects of Reels on the language use. Kusyairi and Qomariyah (n.d.) prove that there are several language variations existing on Tik Tok that promote flexibility in communication and the creation of various linguistic approaches among learners.

Language Learning and Vocabulary Acquisition

Language learning and learning vocabulary are two different entities that are related to one another. Lashari, Rizvi, Abbasi, Kurd, et al. (2023) discover that a high frequency of Reels use improves vocabulary learning, which offers informal learning. Nevertheless, excessive use of slang can affect grammatical correctness. Similarly, Putra, Bahar, and Fauzi (n.d.) note that the Tik Tok language also promotes creativity and linguistic games, as well as violates the traditional grammar. A quasi-experimental study by Rohmah and Irmayani (n.d.) found out that the confidence of the students to speak English increased following the regular contact with Reels. This indicates that short-form content can serve as a motivational factor, as the learners can use new vocabulary and sentence structure in actual communication. Sameen et al. (2021) emphasize that social media promotes experimentation of language among the youths, where they learn to use the expressions, they see on the internet and combine them into informal language. Shahid et al. (2025) point that Reels mostly influences vocabulary formation, whereas Siddique (2025) highlights how they contribute to the practice of informal communication. There is a tendency among students to copy what they find online, mixing the words of the trends with individuality and resulting in both the inventiveness of the language and the possible mistakes in its more formal use.

Social Communication and Identity Formation

Sikorska (2025) argues that the digital media help with structural changes in English because of exposure to new patterns and expressions as well as syntactic patterns. The interaction of students with Reels contributes to the development of vocabulary as well as transforms the vision of sentence structure, expression of style, and communication rules. Tumasang (n.d.) examines the neologisms that are created through social media and finds out that exposure to new words may help to increase the linguistic repertoire and offer a challenge to teachers who wish to teach in a standard language and avoid new trends. Alfitri (n.d.) emphasizes that Reels will assist Generation Z students who are eager to actively learn English and entertain to enhance the practicality of the language skills. Taken together, these studies show that Reels affect linguistic behavior in three mutually reinforcing directions: they lead to the adoption of slang and hybridization, the development of vocabulary and confidence, and the determination of social identity by language. They disclose that the process of interaction between students and digital media does not suppose a purely passive nature, but a type of negotiation between linguistic norms, through which new patterns of communication emerge, in which the digital culture of the present is reflected.

Research Gap

Even though some studies have already examined how social media affects language use, most of the research is based on the trends at the international level or the overall social media, but little information is given on the Pakistani undergraduate population. Very little research is done to

analyze the compounding functions of Reels on vocabulary, grammar, sentence structure, adoption of slang and code switching on one large scale. Furthermore, the little work exists that examines the overlap of social, academic, and linguistic results of Reels consumption. The research will address these gaps by examining the influence of Reels exposure on language practices of undergraduate learners in the social and academic sphere to understand the local linguistic change of the effects of short-term digital media.

Methodology

The section of the methodology describes the general methodology with the help of the impact of Reels (short-form videos) on the language of undergraduate students at Quaid-I-Azam University Islamabad is studied. It describes the research design, theoretical framework, population and sample size, sampling method, data collection tools and data analysis procedures that will be used to have systematic and reliable findings.

Research Design

The research design used in the study is mixed-method research design, which combines quantitative and qualitative research. The quantitative method assists in the measurement of the tendencies of using the Reels and the proportion of the frequency of the usage of the linguistic features by the students, whereas the qualitative method can offer insights into the experience and perception of the students. This mixture enables the overall perceptions of the linguistic influences of Reels in academic and social settings.

Theoretical Framework

The research is grounded on the Social Learning Theory put forward by Bandura in 1977, according to which people learn behaviors, including language, by observing and imitating them. In this study, the undergraduate students will be exposed to linguistic expressions and slang and communication styles employed in Reels and then they will replicate them in their speech and writing. The theory is quite effective in explaining the effect of exposure to short-form videos on students in terms of vocabulary, sentence structures, and the overall language use.

Population and Sample Size

The population of the research was undergraduate students of Quaid-I-Azam University, Islamabad. A population of 50 undergraduate students was chosen to participate in the study. This sample size suited the small-scale mixed-method research because it would enable the gathering of quantitative data that would be of significance and qualitative data regarding language practices practiced by the students.

Sampling Method

The participants were selected to participate in the study using a convenience sampling technique. The sample was made up of students who were readily available and ready to participate in the study. The reason is that this method had to be selected based on time and resource limitations, and at the same time, the participants had to be active users of Instagram and Tik Tok Reels.

Data Collection Tools

A structured questionnaire created with the help of Google Forms was used in gathering the data. The questionnaire used close-ended items to capture quantitative data and open-ended ones to capture qualitative answers on the language use and communication patterns by students which Reels affected. This was an appropriate tool to gather extensive data on a huge number of participants.

Data Analysis And Results

Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages were used to analyze quantitative data collected through close-ended questions to determine patterns and trends. Open-ended questions were used to reach the qualitative data which was analyzed thematically to detect the common theme connected with the matters of language change, the style of communication, and the impact of language. The mixed-method design is substantiated by the collective analysis and corresponds to the theoretical framework. This paper provides a critical discussion of the results gathered by means of a structured questionnaire to 50 undergraduate students of Quaid-I-Azam university, Islamabad. This analysis aims at exploring how far Instagram Reels can affect the use of language by the students, and specifically in English vocabulary and expressions, and the ways students use or communicate in academic and social settings. The quantitative results are combined with the theoretical interpretation including the Social Learning Theory of Bandura (1977) which focuses on learning by watching, imitating and reinforcing.

Quantitative Findings

A structured questionnaire was delivered to 50 students of Quaid-I-Azam University Islamabad to determine how Reels (short-form videos) influence students' language use, particularly English vocabulary, expressions, and communication practices in academic and social contexts. This questionnaire consists of multiple-choice questions, and the responses of respondents are given below:

No	Questions	Options	Respondents	Percentage
1	Age	18-20 Years	19	38%
		21-23 Years	27	54%
		24-26 Years	04	08%
2	Gender	Male	25	50%
		Female	24	48%
		Other	01	02%
3	Department	Social Sciences	19	38%
		Management Sciences	13	26%
		Natural Sciences	09	18%
		Other	09	18%
4	How often do you watch Reels?	Daily	28	56%
		3-4 times a week	10	20%
		1-2 times a week	06	12%
		Rarely	06	12%
5	How much time do you spend on Reels per days?	Less than 30 minutes	10	20%
		30-60 minutes	16	32%

		1-2 hours	10	20%
		More than 2 hours	14	28%
6	Do you imitate the language (slang, abbreviations, expressions) you see in Reels in your daily communication?	Always	14	28%
		Often	13	26%
		Sometimes	22	44%
		Never	01	02%
7	Which type of language do you mostly adapt from Reels? <i>(multiple answers allowed)</i>	Slang	28	56%
		Emojis	19	38%
		Abbreviations	14	28%
		Code-switching	27	54%
8	How much do Reels Influence your English vocabulary r expressions?	Very much	14	28%
		Somewhat	19	38%
		Little	16	32%
		Not at all	01	02%
9	Do Reels affect your spoken or written language in academic or social contexts?	Yes, in both	19	38%
		Only in social contexts	17	34%
		Only in academic contexts	07	14%
		No influence	07	14%

Interpretation of Quantitative Findings

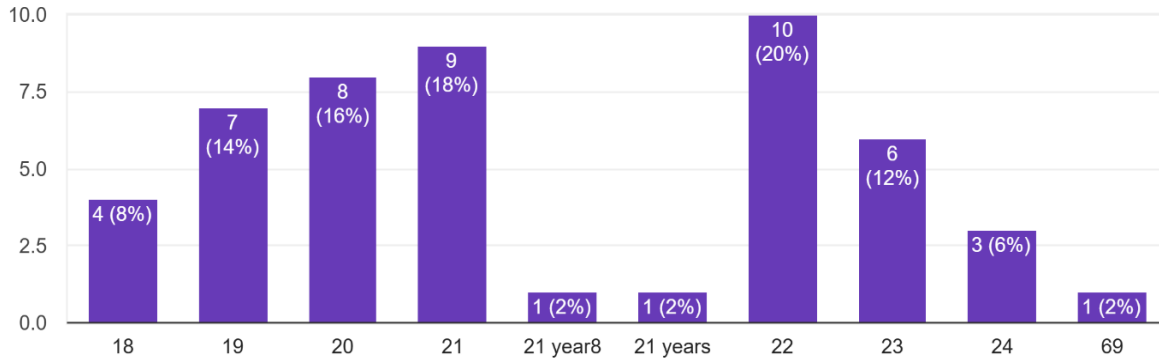
The Interpretation of Quantitative Findings are given below:

Age Distribution of the Respondents

It is important to understand the demographic background of respondents to provide the context of findings of the study. The age distribution indicates that most of the participants were within the 21-23 years age bracket (54%), and then 18-20 years (38%), whereas the lower category (8) was 24-26 years. This implies that majority of the respondents were at a developmental age and stage of active social interaction, use of digital media, and formation of identities so they are more inclined to linguistic influence of social media networks.

Q1: Your Age?

50 responses

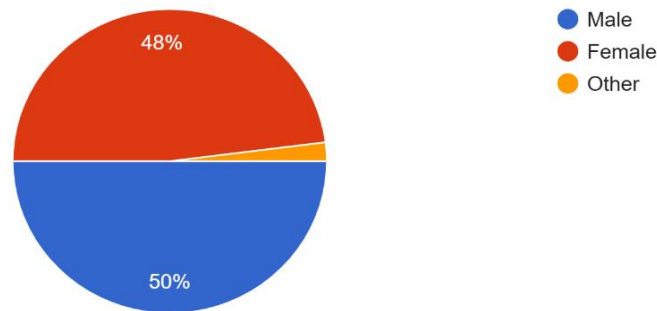


Gender Distribution of the Respondents

The gender of the respondents was almost equal with 50 percent being males, 48 per cent being females and 2 percent other. The representativeness of the sample is enhanced by this balance, and the findings can be used to represent the language influence among the genders and not just among one group.

Q2: Gender?

50 responses

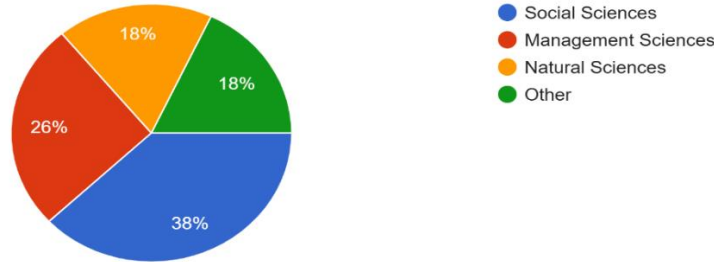


Academic Discipline of the Respondents

On the academic discipline, 38% of the respondents were pursuing Social Sciences, 26% pursued Management Sciences, 18% pursued Natural Sciences and 18% pursued other departments. This diversity implies that the impact of Reels on language cannot be limited to a certain scholarly domain, but it is felt across disciplines. The existence of students of language-related and non-language-related backgrounds also contribute to emphasizing how digital media can affect the use of English outside the scope of the formal language training.

Q3: Department?

50 responses

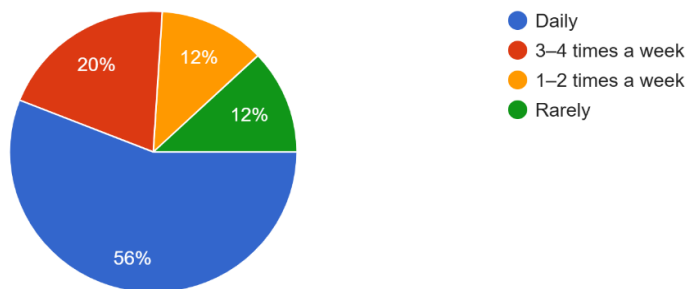


Frequency of Reels Consumption

The frequency of use of Reels is one of the main features of the current study because exposure is a crucial element of learning as per the Social Learning Theory. The results show that Reels are an integral part of the lives of students. Over fifty-six percent (56) of the respondents regularly watched Reels every day, whereas 20 percent watched it three to four times a week. In the meantime, 12% had viewed Reels once or twice a week and another 12% had viewed it rarely.

Q4: How often do you watch Reels (Instagram/TikTok)?

50 responses



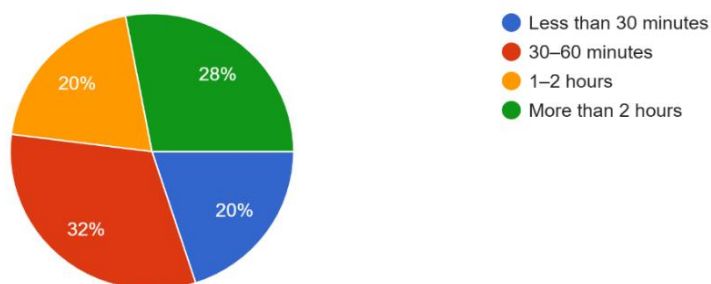
This is due to the large number of exposures per time, which means that Reels is an unending source of linguistic input. Bandura (1977) states that behavior repetition, including language, increases retention and reproduction. The usage of Reels daily thereby produces a situation where the students are constantly bombarded with new vocabulary, slang, expressions, and speech patterns, which may lead to an increased probability of imitation.

Duration of Time Spent on Reels

Besides frequency, the time spent on Reels is also important in influencing the level of influence. The statistics indicate that 32 percent of the people spent 30-60 minutes a day on Reels, and 28 percent of people spent over two hours a day there. The other 20% had less than 30 minutes and the remaining 20% had one to two hours every day.

Q5: How much time do you spend on Reels per day?

50 responses



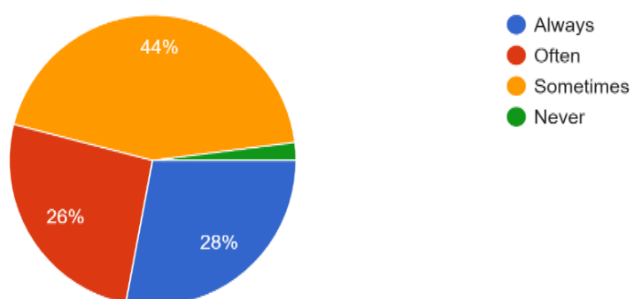
These results show that a high percentage of students spend much time watching Reels. Theoretically, habitual exposure reinforces observational learning by enhancing attention and retention as two of the fundamental processes distinguished by Bandura. The longer the time students watch Reels, the more the linguistic models they will manage to see, which can gradually influence their language practices.

Language Reel imitation

Among the major results of the research is associated with language imitation. Respondents asked about imitating the language they use in Reels gave 28 percent yes and 26 percent no as their answers when questioned whether they always imitate the language they use or not. A high percentage (44) showed that they occasionally imitate the language and only 2 percent said that they never did it.

Q6: Do you imitate the language (slang, abbreviations, expressions) you see in Reels in your daily communication?

50 responses



This great propensity to imitate is a strong argument of the applicability of the Social Learning Theory (1977). According to Bandura, people acquire new behavior by modeling it, imitating it, particularly in situations where the model's behavior did not seem unattractive, unpopular or socially unapproved. The creators of the content and influencers on Reels are most highly engaged, which serves as social reinforcement, prompting the viewers to follow the same lingo style.

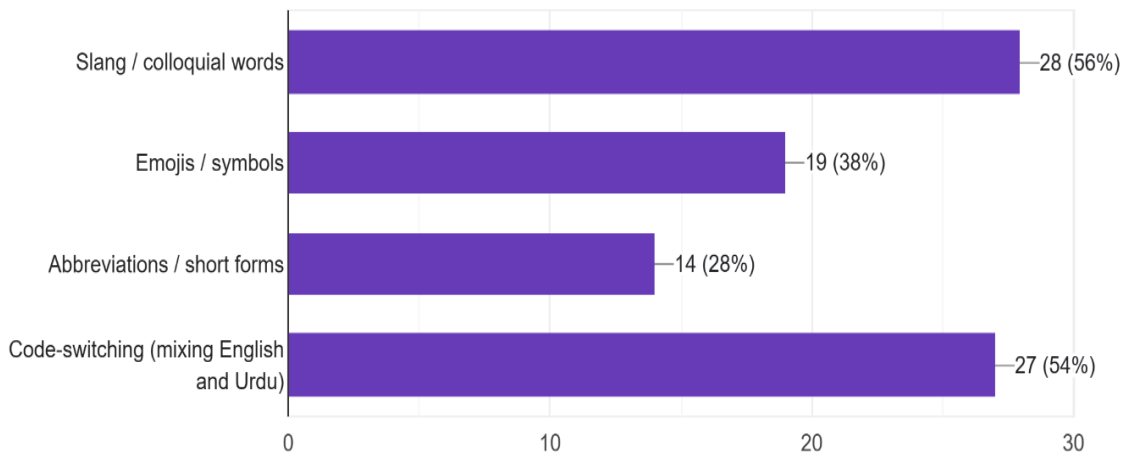
Linguistic Features Borrowed on the Reels

The survey also examined the languages that the students use, as acquired at Reels. Given that there were several responses that could be made, the results provide an overlapping linguistic

behavior. The most widespread feature, which was reported among 56% of the respondents, was slang. Immediately after was code-switching which was reported by 54 meaning they often mixed English with Urdu or other local languages. Moreover, 38 percent of the respondents said that they were using emojis and 28 percent were using abbreviations and short forms.

Q7: Which type of language do you mostly adopt from Reels? (multiple answers allowed)

50 responses



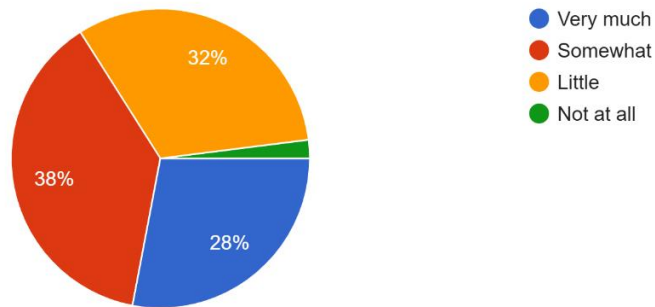
These results contribute to the transition to informal, hybrid, and digitally mediated language. In this regard, code-switching demonstrates the multilingual situation of Pakistani students and indicates how Reels foster the use of multiple languages. Based on the Social Learning Theory, these are all features that are internalized through repeated exposure and made normal using peers and finally, become a part of the daily communication process.

Impact of Reels on the English Vocabulary and Expressions

Another aspect of the study was the effects of Reels on vocabulary development. The findings are that 28 percent of the respondents believed that Reels have a very strong effect on their vocabulary in English with 38 percent of the respondents claiming that they are rather affected by Reels. A third of them, 32%, had minimal influence and a mere 2% indicated no influence whatsoever.

Q8: How much do Reels influence your English vocabulary or expressions?

50 responses



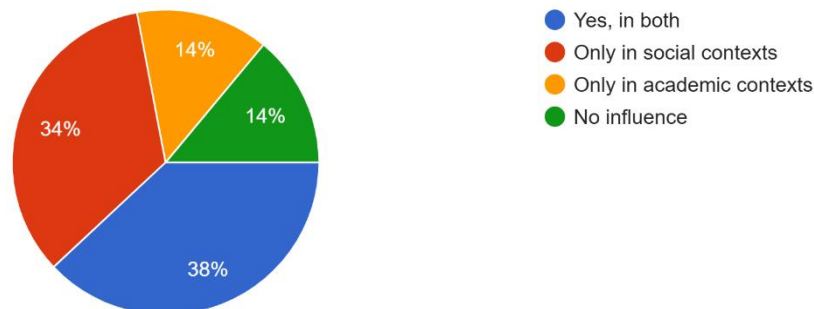
The findings indicate that Reels serve as an informal setting of language learning where students are exposed to new words, idiomatic expressions and pronunciation. In terms of Social Learning, the more a person is exposed to vocabulary in meaningful and entertaining situations, the more he/she retains and recalls the words. That is why a great number of students see in Reels the vocabulary-developing tool without any intentional learning plans.

Influence on Academic and Social Communication

It is also found that Reels have an impact on academic and social communication. The respondents were asked whether they use Reels in their language use in academic and social contexts and 38 percent said that they do, and 34 percent said that they do in social contexts. 14 percent said they are influenced in academic contexts and the remaining 14 percent said they are not influenced at all.

Q9: Do Reels affect your spoken or written language in academic or social contexts?

50 responses



These findings suggest that in as informal as the social environment, the power of Reels has the most impact, but at the same time it is also transferred to academic communication of a substantial number of students. The contextual generalization of language is in line with the concept of generalization of behavior proposed by Bandura, where the behaviors acquired in one context are generalized to other contexts, although they may be acquired in an informal setting.

Thematic Analysis of Qualitative Findings

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the responses to the two open-ended questions to get a better understanding of the linguistic influence of Reels. This approach enabled the presence of recurring patterns, meanings, and trends in language practices of students to be spotted beyond numerical data. The review indicated that there were several prevailing themes that indicated vocabulary adoption, expressive style, communication patterns, and sociolinguistic change in the undergraduate students.

Adoption of Trending Slang and Internet Vocabulary

One of the themes that were highlighted in the responses was the common usage of trending slang and internet-related words acquired through Reels. Most students claimed they used English slang language which may be *“POV, Slay, Sus, flex, Rizz, Lit, Vibes, No cap and Bussin”*. These phrases were commonly referred to as cool, trendy or fun, which hints at Reels acting as a significant provider of modern youth lingo.

- As an example, respondents said: I got to know such words as POV and aesthetic on Reels.
- I picked up such words as Slay, Bussin, and Cap/No cap.
- I began to be saying Lit and Vibes following viewing Reels.

This theme is in favor of the Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) because students see the same linguistic behavior repeated in Reels and learn it in the field of real-life communication.

Increased Use of Abbreviations, Emojis, and Visual Language

The use of abbreviations, emojis and symbolic expressions in day-to-day communication was another powerful theme. Most of the respondents stated that they use abbreviations like *“OMG, LOL, IDK (I do not know), FR (first response)”*, and reaction emojis, including “😊🔥🔥”. This is an indication of change to cost-effective and expressive online communication.

Examples include:

- I have become more frequent in the use of short words such as OMG, LOL and IDK.
- I use more emojis, memes, reactions, and more in my chats.
- I use emojis and abbreviations such as “I am dead 🧟”.

This tendency suggests that Reels promote visual shortening, eliminating the need to have long descriptions and encouraging rapid emotional response.

Code-Switching and Hybrid English–Urdu Expressions

According to many students, the code switching especially between English and Urdu in the informal language increased. Reels have frequent appearances of bilingual creators, and this makes the use of hybrid language normal. The expressions used by the respondents comprised of *“scene on Hai”*, *“Yaar scene Dekho”*, *“Kya mast edit Hai”* and *“Main vibe kar Rahi Hoon”*.

Examples of illustrative responses are:

- After watching Reels I speak English and Urdu mixed language more.
- I use more English- Urdu mixture, such as “Bro yeh scene Dekho”.
- I have picked up “chill karo bro”.

The theme is based on how the Reels support digital bilingualism, particularly among the Pakistani youth, and define informal styles of communication.

Use of Meme Culture, Humor, and Sarcasm

One of the biggest communicative shifts reported by students was the adoption of humor, sarcasm and meme-based expressions in a daily interaction. There were several respondents who reported that Reels turned their communication funnier, more playful, as well as meme-style.

Examples include:

- Due to Reel culture, my conversations have become more casual and funnier.
- I began to use sarcastic expressions such as Sure Jan.
- One line of a Reel describes an entire situation.

This shows that Reels can be used as a common cultural reference point, and humor and irony can be expressed effectively.

Shift Toward Shorter, Faster, and Casual Communication

Students often stated that Reels have resulted in shorter, quicker and less formal communication. Students use short phrases, reaction clips, or shared reels as a form of meaning instead of using long messages.

The representative responses are:

- I speak more quickly and informally.
- I use reaction Reels instead of leaving long explanations.
- Communication has been abridged, fast and informal.

This development speaks of the effect of short-form video format not only on content but also on the effectiveness and style of communication.

Social Bonding Through Shared Reels and Inside Jokes

The other theme that was vital was the establishment of peer relationships by Reels. Most students agreed that when they were in talks, they usually start by showing or tagging friends in reels and created a common laugh and jokes.

Examples include:

- This is through conversations that are mostly triggered by tagging one another with relevant clips.
- To have inside jokes and to play jokes, we share on Reels.
- It is more convenient to reach out to friends with the help of common Reel content.

This implies that Reels assist in making up of collective identity and social bonding between students.

Mixed Perceptions of Linguistic Impact

Although most students found Reels helpful, some of them were worried about the adverse linguistic influences, i.e., the usage of informal or derogatory language.

For instance:

- It has also enhanced my English a bit though in some cases; it has rendered my language derogatory.
- “Change too much.”

This ambivalent impression makes clear that the role of Reels is not entirely positive, particularly when the informal language finds its way to the academic or formal world.

Overall Thematic Results

Overall, the thematic analysis has shown that Reels have a substantial impact on the language of students by means of dictating the vocabulary, style of communication, humor, code-switching, and patterns of interaction. The results are very close to the Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) showing that continued exposure to the linguistic models on Reels results in imitation and normalization of new language practices in everyday communication.

Findings

This study has shown that Reels has a substantial influence on the daily language use of undergraduate students in Quaid-I-Azam University. The quantitative findings suggest a high exposure to the short-form videos, and more than half of the interviewees (56) report having watched Reels every day and a significant percentage of them spent more than an hour per day on the same. Such high exposure makes students more exposed to such forms of trending language; thus, Reels is a powerful provider of vocabulary, informal expressions, and communicative styles. The research also concludes that learners are eager to embrace linguistic characteristics that are witnessed in Reels. Most of the respondents said that they imitated language sometimes (44%), often (26%), and always (28%) with a very small percentage (2%) saying that they did not. The most widely used lingo (56) and code-switching English-Urdu (54) turned out to be the most popular with emojis and abbreviations coming in second. These results prove that Reels are stimulating observational learning, according to which students without knowledge are ready to include the same language patterns in their speech and writing, proving the Social Learning Theory of Bandura (1977). Through qualitative analysis of the results of open-ended questions, it has been found that Reels have changed the way communication between students has become more informal, lighthearted and expressive. Students also claimed that they have used more trending slang, meme-based phrases, emojis and short forms that enable them to communicate quickly and directly to the point with emotive expression. Communication has become shorter, light exchanges, involving usually shared references, inside jokes, and response-based replies instead of longer elaborations. Reels are also contributing towards the use of bilingual and hybrid languages and many of them often mix English and Urdu languages in informal contexts. Nevertheless, the results also show ambivalent views of the influence of Reels on the quality of language. Although many students admitted that their vocabulary and communication confidence improved, some of them also mentioned that it became too informal and they started to use inappropriate or rather off-putting expressions. This implies that informal and social communication is being enriched by Reels, but their effects on the academic language should be well addressed. All in all, the results prove that Reels do have a profound effect on the linguistic behavior of students, the way they communicate, the patterns of socialization, and short-video platforms can be regarded as the powerful driver of the modern language change.

Conclusion

This paper has explored how Reels (short-form videos) have affected the language use of undergraduate students in Quaid-I-Azam University with a specific focus on vocabulary, communication style, and linguistic behavior in both academic and social life. It is found that Reels have become a part of everyday digital consumption of students and can influence the communication process to a considerable extent. Regular exposure to Reels promotes the practice of trending slang, abbreviations, emojis, and code-switching, which dominate informal communication. The research also illustrates that language acquisition using Reels is more acquired using observation and imitation thus as described by the social learning theory of Bandura (1977). Children absorb language patterns provided on the Reels and repeat them in their daily

communication. Although such process makes expressiveness, creativity, and social bonding, it also causes more informality and the use of non-standard forms of language. Overall, the paper finds that Reels have a two-sided effect in language development. On the one hand, they increase vocabulary of students, enhance confidence, and increase the interest of communication. Conversely, over exposure can confuse informal and academic languages. Consequently, the impact of Reels on language can be interpreted as facilitating and problematic depending on circumstances and application.

Recommendations

Depending on the conclusions of this research, some recommendations are suggested. To start with, the students ought to be motivated to be aware of the language, especially in the comparison of informal digital language with formal academic writing. Awareness of the appropriate use of language in each context can also assist the students to take advantage of Reels without impacting academic communication adversely. Second, digital media literacy can be included in language classes taught by educators and language instructors. Talking about trending online language in classrooms, teachers can provide the students with an idea of how informal language changes and how it contrasts with standard academic language. This strategy can convert social media exposure into a positive learning tool. Third, the workshops or seminars about responsible use of social media and its promotion in universities should be focused on language creativity and ethical communication. These programs can make students think about the effects that online resources have on their language behavior. Lastly, the researchers in the future are recommended to do large-scale or longitudinal research to investigate the long-term impacts of short-form video content on academic writing proficiency and professional communication. Comparative research in universities or between ages can also be more illuminating to the changing relationship between social media and language use.

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