Slang Types and Meanings in Comments on @supremenewyork Instagram Posts: A Case Study

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Abstract. *This study explores the types and meanings of slang in the comment section of the most-engaged Instagram post on the @supremenewyork account, a prominent global streetwear community. Slang in online interactions accelerates linguistic change, signaling solidarity, humor, and group identity. Using a qualitative descriptive method, 4,577 comments containing 79 slang items, including words and emojis, were analyzed. The slang items were classified into morphological, phonological, and semantic types based on Mattiello's (2017) framework, while meanings were examined through Dynel's (2014) semantic approach, encompassing literal, figurative, and symbolic meanings. The results revealed that semantic slang was the most prevalent (2,273 occurrences), followed by phonological (284) and morphological slang (267). Common examples of semantic slang included words like "fire," "dope," and "sick," as well as emojis like 🔥, 🤯, 💯, and 😎, used to express evaluation, emotion, enthusiasm, and group affiliation. Morphological and phonological slang primarily appeared as acronyms, abbreviations, and informal spelling modifications. These findings indicate that meaning-based innovation is a key strategy in digital communication within the streetwear community, strengthening cultural identity, creativity, and a sense of belonging. This study contributes to digital sociolinguistics and enhances understanding of slang and emojis as markers of identity and interaction on social media.*

Keywords: Emoji; Instagram; Language; Semantics; Slang.

1. INTRODUCTION

Language is a fundamental tool for communication and social interaction, reflecting identity, creativity, culture, and social relationships. Speakers often develop innovative and informal expressions, such as slang, to signal solidarity, humor, and in-group membership. In the digital era, technological development and online interaction have accelerated linguistic change, making social media platforms dynamic spaces where slang circulates rapidly, adapts to trends, and acquires new meanings across diverse communities.

Among various digital platforms, Instagram has become a major platform for interaction and cultural exchange, where users communicate through visual content, captions, and comment sections that frequently feature informal language. Within streetwear culture, accounts such as @supremenewyork shape taste, identity, and community belonging, with comment sections containing slang expressions, abbreviations, and emojis signaling admiration, enthusiasm, and affiliation. Based on a preliminary review of approximately 13,500 comments across several posts, this study focuses on the most commented post, from which 1,420 slang expressions including words and emojis functioning as slang were collected. Slang types are classified using Mattiello's (2017) morphological, phonological, and semantic

framework, while meanings are interpreted via Dynel's (2014) semantic categories of literal, figurative, and symbolic meaning. In line with Danesi's (2016) digital semiotics approach, emojis are analyzed only when they function as slang or convey non-literal meanings.

Numerous previous studies have examined slang in digital communication. Indra & Marhamah (2024) identified the types and functions of slang used in Instagram captions and comments, emphasizing its role in expressing familiarity and emotional closeness. Kesek et al. (2024) analyzed slang in comments on @Agnezmo's Instagram posts, demonstrating how slang expresses admiration and fan identity in celebrity-centered communities. Madani et al. (2025) explored the semantic aspects of teenage slang on Instagram, highlighting shifts from literal to figurative and symbolic meanings. Nainggolan et al. (2024) described the forms and functions of slang on Instagram, while Pitrianti & Maryani (2024) examined morphological, phonological, and semantic slang forms, identifying semantic slang as dominant. Salsabila et al. (2022) emphasized linguistic creativity and group identity in Instagram slang variation. Selia & Nurain (2024) investigated slang use in a pageant-based online community, confirming its role as an in-group identity marker. Sitorismi (2024) analyzed slang in brand-related Instagram captions, showing its strategic use in audience engagement. Syaputra et al. (2024) examined Gen-Z slang usage on Instagram, highlighting identity expression, and Xursanovna (2025) demonstrated that slang and abbreviations function globally as tools of efficiency and emotional expression in youth discourse.

Although previous studies demonstrate that slang on social media conveys emotion, identity, evaluation, and solidarity, most focus on general Instagram interactions, celebrity accounts, youth language, or official brand captions. Few examine the dominant type of slang and its semantic interpretation within the comment section of a global streetwear brand community using an integrated morphological and semantic framework. In particular, limited research combines Mattiello's (2017) classification of slang types with Dynel's (2014) semantic model in a focused dataset derived from highly engaged, user-generated brand comments.

Therefore, this study addresses this gap by systematically analyzing the types and meanings of slang in the comment section of the most commented Instagram post by @supremenewyork. The novelty of this study lies in its integrated analysis of slang form and meaning within a global streetwear brand community. The research aims to (1) identify the most frequently used type of slang and (2) analyze the meanings conveyed by the most common slang expressions. Theoretically, it contributes to sociolinguistic discussions of digital slang

through the combined application of Mattiello's and Dynel's frameworks; practically, it provides insight into how linguistic creativity functions as a marker of digital identity, community belonging, and cultural expression in a high-engagement online environment.

2. THEORETICAL STUDY

Slang in Sociolinguistic Perspective

Sociolinguistics examines how language reflects identity, social norms, and group membership, with language viewed as a social practice shaped by cultural and interpersonal contexts (Holmes, 2013) and speech communities defined by shared linguistic norms (Gumperz, 1971). In digital environments, Instagram acts as a virtual speech community where users interact through conventions like slang and emojis, constructing social identity through group membership and interaction (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Bucholtz and Hall, 2005))while specialized vocabulary signals subcultural belonging (Bennett, 2011). Slang as informal and nonstandard language, strengthens social bonds and distinguishes insiders from outsiders (Eble, 1996), and it is formed through morphological, phonological, or semantic processes (Mattiello's, 2017), with meanings interpreted contextually (Dynel (2014). Emojis also function as slang in digital semiotics (Danesi's, 2016) and within the streetwear community, expressions such as fire, lit, or drip serve as performative tools to construct digital identity and reinforce in-group belonging in online interactions.

Language in Digital Communication

Language in digital communication is shaped by technological affordances and user creativity. Crystal, (2006) conceptualizes online discourse as "*Netspeak*," a hybrid form combining spoken and written features, characterized by abbreviations, stylized spelling, and visual symbols. Tagg (2015) argues that social media fosters linguistic innovation, enabling users to construct identity, humor, and evaluation through creative language use. From a new media perspective, digital platforms promote participatory interaction and blur the boundary between producers and consumers (Lister et al. 2009), leading to emerging linguistic practices (Barton & Lee, 2013). As a multimodal platform, Instagram integrates textual and visual elements, allowing slang and emojis to function as efficient markers of stance and shared evaluation; in the @supremenewyork comment sections, expressions such as *fire*, *flex*, and emojis like 🔥 and 💯 illustrate this dynamic. Emphasizing the multimodal and identity-

constructing nature of digital discourse, (Androutsopoulos, 2014) and Bucholtz & Hall (2005) position slang as a semiotic resource through which cultural alignment and community belonging are negotiated online.

Slang Morphology in Social Media (Mattiello, 2017)

Mattiello's (2017) framework analyzes slang formation through morphological, phonological, and semantic processes. Morphological processes include clipping (bro from brother), blending (hangry), acronyms (LOL), and compounding (sneakerhead), phonological processes involve creative spelling or pronunciation changes reflecting speech-like features, and semantic processes occur when words shift meaning, such as fire acquiring an evaluative sense of "excellent." Beyond structure, slang also signals informality and group alignment in online interactions. In this study, Mattiello's framework is applied to classify slang in the most commented @supremenewyork post, categorizing each item by formation type to identify te dominant structural pattern and address the first research objective..

Semantic Analysis of Slang Meaning (Dynel, 2014)

Dynel's (2014) provides a semantic framework for interpreting slang as context-dependent and pragmatically driven, emphasizing that meaning extends beyond dictionary definitions. She distinguishes three categories: literal (conventional meaning), figurative (metaphorical or expressive reinterpretation), and symbolic (meanings tied to shared cultural values and group identity). In digital subcultures, figurative and symbolic meanings often signal evaluation and insider status; for example, *fire* expresses admiration and may function symbolically within the community. This framework is complemented by Danesi's (2016) theory of digital semiotics, which explains how emojis operate as visual signs conveying non-literal meanings such as enthusiasm or approval. In this study, emojis are treated as slang when they perform figurative or symbolic functions in the @supremenewyork comment section, allowing for a systematic interpretation of how verbal and visual expressions construct evaluation, identity, and belonging in a digital streetwear community.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive design to examine slang expressions in the comment section of the most commented Instagram post on @supremenewyork. A preliminary review of approximately 13,500 comments was conducted to identify general linguistic tendencies, after which the post with the highest engagement was selected as the primary data source. Comments containing slang words or emojis functioning as slang were manually observed, transcribed, and organized while preserving their original forms. The data were then

classified using Mattiello's (2017) framework of slang formation to determine the dominant type, and the meanings of the most frequent category were analyzed using Dynel's (2014) semantic classification of literal, figurative, and symbolic meaning. Emojis functioning as slang were interpreted through Danesi's (2016) concept of digital semiotics. The findings are presented descriptively and supported by tables to ensure systematic and coherent analysis.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the analysis of slang in the most commented post on @supremenewyork. A total of 79 slang items were identified and classified using Mattiello's (2017) framework into semantic, phonological, and morphological types. Semantic slang was dominant (2,273 occurrences), followed by phonological (284) and morphological (267), indicating that meaning-based innovation plays a key role in expressing evaluation, emotion, and identity within this digital streetwear community. Detailed analyses of each type are provided in the following subsections.

Filtering and Identification of Slang

After the initial data collection, approximately 13,500 comments were manually screened to remove irrelevant content and retain only those containing slang expressions. Each comment was examined for nonstandard, creative, or informal linguistic forms, including abbreviations (e.g., lol), evaluative expressions (e.g., lit, fire, dope), phonologically modified forms (e.g., gonna, wanna), and other context-specific vocabulary typical of the streetwear community. Emojis were also analyzed to determine whether they functioned as slang. Following Danesi's (2016) digital semiotics framework, only emojis with figurative or symbolic meanings, such as 🔥 (awesome), 💯 (approval), or 😎 (cool), were included. Emojis used solely for decoration or to convey emotional tone without slang meaning were excluded. Each relevant item was then categorized using Mattiello's (2017) framework of slang morphology, which classifies slang into morphological, phonological, and semantic types.

After filtering and categorization, 82 distinct slang items both words and emojis were identified and organized by type, with their frequencies calculated to address Research Problem 1. Three analytical tables were created to illustrate the distribution of morphological, phonological, and semantic slang. Because semantic slang was the most frequent, the analysis then focused on interpreting the meanings of these items using Dynel's (2014) framework, examining literal, figurative, and symbolic meanings to address Research Problem 2.

Classification and Frequency of Slang Types (Based on Mattiello, 2017)

After completing the filtering process, a total of 79 distinct slang items were identified in the comment section of the high-engagement Instagram post and classified according to Mattiello's (2017) framework into morphological, phonological, and semantic types to address Research Problem 1. Morphological slang, formed through clipping, blending, acronyms, and abbreviations, accounted for 11 items, while phonological slang, characterized by spelling or pronunciation changes reflecting informal speech, included 6 items. Semantic slang, involving shifts in meaning where words or emojis acquire figurative, evaluative, or context-specific senses, was the most dominant category with 62 items. The frequency of each item was calculated and systematically organized, with the results presented in the following tables.

Table 1. Morphological Slang Classification.

Slang Item	Frequency	Morphological Category
omg / omfg / oml	91	Acronym
cop / copped / coppin	88	Shortening
Af (as fuck)	35	Abbreviation
Tho (though / informal)	20	Shortening
wtf	7	Acronym
asap	7	Acronym
u / ur / r u	7	Shortening
fml	4	Acronym
ffs	4	Acronym
yolo	3	Acronym
XXL (over the top)	1	Abbreviation
	Total Frequency: 267	

The morphological slang in the dataset primarily consists of acronyms, shortenings, and abbreviations, reflecting common word-formation processes described by Mattiello's (2017). Acronyms such as "omg," "omfg," and "oml" are formed from the initial letters of longer expressions (e.g., Oh My God, Oh My F**ing God, Oh My Lord) and are widely used in digital communication to convey emotional reactions quickly. Shortenings like "cop," "copped," and "coppin" derive from reduced lexical forms while preserving core meaning, enabling fast-paced interaction in streetwear discourse. Abbreviations such as "af" (from *as fuck*) condense multi-word phrases into compact forms, maintaining intensifying functions while relying on contextual understanding. These morphological forms illustrate how Instagram users manipulate linguistic structure to express reactions, evaluations, and actions concisely; however, their overall frequency is lower than semantic slang, highlighting that meaning-based innovation predominates in this online streetwear community.

Table 2. Phonological Slang Classification.

Slang Item	Frequency	Phonological Category
fuck / fckn / fkin	158	Phonological Variation
bruh/bro/dude	85	Reduction
yo / yoo / aye	18	Reduction
prolly (probably)	12	Reduction
geez	8	Reduction
ayeee	3	Reduction
Total Frequency: 284		

Following Mattiello's (2017) framework, the phonological slang identified in this study is categorized based on how spelling changes reflect pronunciation rather than word-formation processes. For instance, forms such as *fuck*, *fckn*, and *fkin* represent phonological variation, as they involve intentional spelling changes like vowel omission and consonant modification that mimic informal spoken pronunciation without altering the core lexical meaning, thereby intensifying emotional expression in digital interactions.

Similarly, *bruh*, *bro*, and *dude* are classified as phonological reductions, representing simplified pronunciations that shorten the phonological structure of informal address terms commonly used in speech. These sound reductions create shorter, more casual forms that are faster to type while maintaining their interpersonal function as markers of familiarity and solidarity. Overall, these items are considered phonological slang rather than morphological because the changes occur at the level of sound representation rather than through processes such as clipping, blending, or abbreviation.

Table 3. Semantic Slang Classification.

Slang Word	Frequency	Semantic Category
fire 🔥	234	Semantic (Meaning Shift)
😂 / lol / lmao / lmfao	211	Semantic (Symbolic/Figurative Meaning)
sick	136	Semantic (Meaning Shift)
dope	124	Semantic (Meaning Shift)
shit	120	Semantic (Meaning Shift)
lit / litty	113	Semantic (Meaning Shift)
cool	105	Semantic (Meaning Shift)
love / ❤️ / 💖 / 😍 / 😻	103	Semantic (Symbolic)
damn	77	Semantic (Emotive)
hype/heat	73	Semantic (Shift)
crazy/insane/wild	69	Semantic (Shift)
flex / 🤑 / 💰	64	Semantic (Symbolic)
💀 (dead from laughter)	62	Semantic (Symbolic)
😭 (cry-laugh)	57	Semantic (Symbolic)
🤤 (drooling/want it)	55	Semantic (Symbolic)
🤩 (amazed/impressed)	53	Semantic (Symbolic)
💯 (real/perfect)	50	Semantic (Symbolic)
😎 (cool/chill)	42	Semantic (Symbolic)
💪 (strength/power)	38	Semantic (Symbolic)
👀 (attention/look	37	Semantic (Symbolic)
🙌 (praise/awesome)	32	Semantic (Symbolic)
💸 / 🎰 = money/luck	30	Semantic (Symbolic)
boss/legend/king	28	Semantic (Shift)

Slang Word	Frequency	Semantic Category
🤯 (mind-blown)	27	Semantic (Symbolic)
😱 (shock/amazed)	26	Semantic (Symbolic)
Mad (very/really)	25	Semantic (Shift)
🤪 (playful/crazy)	23	Semantic (Symbolic)
💋 (kiss)	22	Semantic (Symbolic)
👌 okay/perfect)	19	Semantic (Symbolic)
Broke (no money)	16	Semantic (Shift)
💣 (awesome/bomb)	15	Semantic (Symbolic)
👊 (respect/fist bump)	14	Semantic (Symbolic)
🚀 (amazing/power/fast)	13	Semantic (Symbolic)
Bet (agreement/ok)	12	Semantic (Shift)
🧠 (smart/clever)	11	Semantic (Symbolic)
Pad (home/crib)	11	Semantic (Shift)
🌀 (vibe/aesthetic)	10	Semantic (Symbolic)
👏 (applause/approval)	10	Semantic (Symbolic)
😜 (playful/teasing)	10	Semantic (Symbolic)
hell yeah/hell/yaas	9	Semantic (Shift)
savage	9	Semantic (Shift)
clout	8	Semantic (Shift)
😤 (confidence/brag)	8	Semantic (Symbolic)
😫 (want so bad/ desperation)	6	Semantic (Symbolic)
💥 (impact/explosion)	6	Semantic (Symbolic)
😯 (mild surprise)	6	Semantic (Symbolic)
🙈 (embarrassed/can't look)	5	Semantic (Symbolic)
😳 (shocked/surprised)	5	Semantic (Symbolic)
😋 (pleasure/satisfaction)	5	Semantic (Symbolic)
🦉 (OVO/wisdom/Drake ref)	4	Semantic (Symbolic)
💔 (broken heart)	3	Semantic (Symbolic)
👽 (out of this world)	3	Semantic (Symbolic)
"L" (loss/fail)	3	Semantic (Shift)
🙏 (thanks/hope)	3	Semantic (Symbolic)
🎱 (8-ball/luck)	2	Semantic (Symbolic)
🏆 (winner/success)	2	Semantic (Symbolic)
🔝 (top/best)	2	Semantic (Symbolic)
💪 (strength variant)	2	Semantic (Symbolic)
👉 (emphasis)	2	Semantic (Symbolic)
🤟 rock on)	1	Semantic (Symbolic)
👅 (flirty)	1	Semantic (Symbolic)
💧 (drip/fashion slang)	1	Semantic (Symbolic)
Total Frequency: 2.273		

Semantic slang is the most prevalent type in the dataset, indicating that meaning-based innovation plays a central role in the linguistic practices of Instagram users in the @supremenewyork streetwear community. This category includes expressions whose meanings diverge from their literal sense and are shaped by context, emotion, and shared cultural understanding. Using Dynel's (2014) framework, semantic slang is interpreted through meaning shift, symbolic/figurative meaning, and emotive meaning. For example, fire and its emoji 🔥 literally refer to combustion but are used to express approval, admiration, or high

quality, illustrating how repeated social use transforms literal words into evaluative tools.

Other expressions highlight symbolic or figurative meanings. Items like 😄 lol, lmao, and lmfao no longer indicate literal laughter but function as markers of amusement, friendliness, or casual engagement, while the laughing emoji 😆 conveys humor or lightheartedness visually. Emotive meaning appears in terms such as damn, which expresses surprise, admiration, or intensity as an emotional intensifier. Overall, the dominance of semantic slang demonstrates that @supremenewyork Instagram users prioritize expressive meaning over structural innovation, using meaning shifts, symbolic representations, and emotive expressions to efficiently communicate evaluation, attitude, and identity in a fast-paced digital environment.

Interpretation of Semantic Slang Meanings (Based on Dynel, 2014)

Because semantic slang was the most dominant type in the dataset, this section applies Dynel's (2014) framework to interpret the meanings of the most frequently used slang expressions. Dynel categorizes slang meanings into literal, figurative, and symbolic types, and this study applies her framework directly to analyze how meaning is constructed and communicated in the @supremenewyork Instagram comment section. Unlike morphological or phonological slang, semantic slang relies heavily on context, with words and emojis often undergoing meaning shifts or serving symbolic functions to convey evaluations, emotions, attitudes, and identity.

In the streetwear comment environment, these expressions are closely linked to shared cultural values such as hype, exclusivity, creativity, and in-group belonging. The analysis focuses on the most frequently occurring semantic slang items, as their repeated use across many comments reflects a common understanding among community members. Each selected slang item is interpreted in context and categorized according to Dynel's three semantic types such literal, figurative, or symbolic highlighting how these expressions operate as communicative resources within the digital community.

This approach demonstrates that semantic slang plays a central role in shaping interaction and meaning-making in the @supremenewyork comment section. Commenters use semantic slang to express admiration for products, convey emotional reactions, align with trends, and signal membership in the streetwear community. Less frequent slang items are not analyzed individually to maintain focus, but they remain part of the dataset and are provided in the Appendix to ensure transparency and completeness.

Table 4. Semantic Interpretation of Slang (Based on Dynel, 2014).

Slang Word	Literal Meaning	Figurative Meaning	Symbolic Meaning
Fire 🔥	Flame or burning object	Cool, excellent	Expression of admiration or hype in a streetwear/fashion context
😂 / lol / lmao / lmfao	Laughing	Amusement, joking	Symbol of humor, shared enjoyment in digital culture
Sick	Ill, unwell	Impressive, stylish	Symbol of positive evaluation in street style
Dope	Drug (narcotic)	Cool, fashionable	Symbol of admiration in urban fashion culture
Shit	Feces	Strong emphasis or surprise	Symbol of emotional expression, frustration, or excitement
Lit / litty	Lighted	Exciting, energetic	Symbol of hype or party atmosphere
Cool	Moderately cold	Impressive, stylish	Symbol of calm confidence or popularity
Love / ❤️ / 💖 / 😍 / 😻	Affection, feeling	Admiration, deep liking	Symbol of attachment or approval
Damn	Condemnation	Admiration, surprise	Symbol of strong feeling or reaction
Hype/heat	Excessive promotion	Excitement, popularity	Symbol of fashion trend or desirability

Semantic analysis of slang expressions in the @supremenewyork comment section applies Dynel's (2014) framework, which distinguishes literal, figurative, and symbolic meanings. Each slang term is examined by identifying its literal reference and interpreting how its meaning shifts in the context of digital interactions within the streetwear community. While many expressions retain an identifiable literal meaning as their semantic base, they frequently extend to figurative or symbolic interpretations in Instagram comments. For instance, fire (🔥) literally refers to flame or burning but is used to convey admiration or approval, while expressions such as 😂, lol, lmao, and lmfao signal amusement, joking, or light-hearted interaction and symbolically indicate shared humor and social alignment among community members.

Meaning is constructed through repeated social use and mutual understanding within the community. Slang items like damn convey primarily emotive meaning, expressing surprise, admiration, or strong reaction rather than literal condemnation. This illustrates how literal, figurative, and symbolic meanings coexist, shaped by contextual cues, shared cultural knowledge, and the interactive nature of social media. Applying Dynel's framework demonstrates that semantic slang in the @supremenewyork comment section functions as a flexible linguistic resource, allowing users to convey evaluations, emotions, and social connections efficiently in a digital streetwear environment.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined 79 distinct slang items from 4,577 comments on the most-commented post of @supremenewyork. Using Mattiello's (2017) framework, slang was classified into semantic, phonological, and morphological types, with semantic slang being the most frequent (2,273). Semantic slang, including words like fire, sick, and dope and emojis such as 🔥 , 🥶 , 💯 , and 😎, conveys meaning shifts, figurative interpretation, and symbolic representation, expressing evaluation, emotion, enthusiasm, and social alignment. Morphological slang appeared as acronyms, abbreviations, and shortenings, while phonological slang reflected informal spelling patterns. Overall, slang in this digital streetwear community functions as a strategic linguistic resource for expressing creativity, cultural identity, and in-group belonging, highlighting the centrality of meaning-based innovation over structural or phonological modification.

The findings suggest that online language is shaped by social evaluation, emotion, and shared cultural knowledge, with the @supremenewyork comment section functioning as a digital speech community where slang and emojis signal group membership and collective identity. Emojis serve as meaningful semiotic resources, and combining Mattiello's (2017) framework with Dynel's (2014) semantic classification provides a systematic method for analyzing online slang. Future research could expand across posts or platforms, compare online and offline communities, track slang evolution over time, and examine emojis as meaning-bearing elements to better understand digital subcultural communication.

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