

Morphological Analysis of Shortened Forms on Instagram as a Source for Learning Indonesian

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ABSTRACT

Social media platforms like Instagram encourage word shortening and other non-standard vocabulary developments. This phenomenon is typically overlooked in Indonesian language morphology instructional materials, which emphasize normative principles. Therefore, an in-depth morphological analysis of these shortening forms and an exploration of their potential as authentic learning resources are needed. Therefore, this study aims to (1) identify and classify the dominant types of word shortening on Instagram, (2) analyze the morphological process of forming these shortening forms, and (3) formulate didactic implications for utilizing these findings as a source for learning Indonesian language morphology. This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach with a content analysis method. Data in the form of text (captions, comments, and stories) containing shortened forms were collected from Indonesian-language Instagram accounts and analyzed based on morphological rules. The results show that abbreviations and contractions are the most dominant types of shortening on Instagram. The most active morphological processes are syllable fragmentation (apocope) and vowel deletion (syncope). The analysis shows that although many shortened forms are nonstandard, their formation patterns still follow principles of lexical efficiency that can be explained morphologically. This study makes a significant contribution by offering a contextualized morphology teaching model based on contemporary language practices. Utilizing Instagram data can increase student learning interest and bridge the gap between language theory in the classroom and the reality of everyday digital communication.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The development of information and communication technology has created a new sociolinguistic landscape (Kelly-Holmes, 2019). The presence of the internet and social media platforms, such as Instagram, has not only transformed the way individuals interact socially but has also fundamentally influenced the way language is used and evolved (Nani, 2024). In Indonesia, with its high internet penetration rate, Instagram has

become a key digital public space, especially among the younger generation (Gen Z and millennials), who use it as a medium for expression, information, and daily interaction (Supriadi & Sari, 2024).

The nature of communication on social media demands efficiency, speed, and creativity in conveying messages. Text on Instagram, whether in photo captions, comments, or Instagram Stories, is often subject to character limitations and the urge to convey emotions or information instantly (e Rana et al., 2025; Schreiber, 2024). This naturally triggers the use of informal, relaxed language, full of lexical innovation. One of the most striking manifestations of this drive for efficiency is the process of shortening words (abbreviations), which include abbreviations, acronyms, abbreviations, and contractions (Verlin, 2018; Verlin, 2022; Wahyuni et al., 2025). This phenomenon has become a hallmark of what is often referred to as "slang" or "digital slang."

Morphology is a branch of linguistics that studies the internal structure of words and the process of word formation (Sulistyawati et al., 2021; Khanetnok et al., 2023). In the context of standard language, morphological processes such as affixation (adding), reduplication (repetition) and compounding have established rules. However, the language used on Instagram often features word forms resulting from "deviant" or "creative" morphological processes, especially through shortening (Verlin, 2018; Kaharuddin, 2020).

Shortening forms such as mager (lazy to move), bucin (slave of love), baper (bring feelings), or even more extreme forms of abbreviation such as yg (yang) and slmt (congratulations), are not just spelling errors or non-standards, but are the product of productive morphological mechanisms (Verlin, 2022). These forms consistently follow certain patterns that can be analyzed structurally. For example, the process of forming acronyms such as mager is the result of combining the initial syllables or phonemes of the components of compound words, a process that, although not always standard, indicates the existence of linguistic regularities in informal language practices (Verlin, 2018). This analysis is important for uncovering the internal mechanisms of creating new words in the digital ecosystem.

There is a significant gap between the morphological rules taught in the school curriculum (which emphasizes standardization) and the everyday language realities of students on social media (Gabig & Zaretsky, 2013; Green & Wolter, 2025). Often, Indonesian language learning materials in the classroom do not incorporate digital language phenomena (Sutama et al., 2022; Aulia et al., 2025). As a result, students view morphology as a rigid, normative subject, and detached from their real-life communication.

Failure to acknowledge and analyze these creative and non-standard forms in an academic context can lead to two things: first, an overly judgmental view of language innovation by the younger generation; and second, a missed opportunity to use relevant, authentic data to enrich learning materials. Morphology should not only be about correct rules, but also about how words are created, changed, and accepted within speech

communities (Makulilo, 2025; Pantelidou et al., 2025). Data from Instagram, a real-time language 'laboratory' for students, offers an ideal bridge to bridge this gap.

Effective language learning requires authentic, relevant, and contextual materials (Domogen, 2023; Mamba, 2024). For Indonesian language learners today, Instagram is an integral part of their communication context. Every day, they utilize shortened forms that serve as authentic linguistic data, providing a concrete demonstration of morphological concepts (Verlin, 2022). Utilizing Instagram as a data source will make morphology lessons more engaging and meaningful, as students are learning the language they themselves create and use (Verlin, 2018).

While there have been several studies analyzing slang, abbreviations, or contractions on social media (Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, or Instagram in general), this research offers clear and significant novelty. Previous studies have tended to focus on classifying or typologizing shortened forms or recording language errors (Dilla, 2021; Amaro & Reis, 2023; Halfian et al., 2023). However, this study will go further by conducting an in-depth morphological analysis (the processes, patterns, and internal structures) of these shortened forms. We will ascertain which phonemes or morphemes are preserved and which are omitted, and how this process consistently generates new word forms, illustrating lexical productivity. The main novelty of this research lies in explicitly linking morphological analysis with didactic implications for Indonesian language learning. Most purely linguistic studies focus on data description; didactic studies often lack a strong foundation in linguistic analysis. This research aims to bridge this research gap by formulating a specific and detailed model or strategy for morphological learning, using findings on shortening on Instagram as authentic teaching material. We not only argue that social media can be a learning resource but also demonstrate how and why certain shortening forms should be used to explain specific morphological concepts (e.g., using "b aja" to explain the apocope process).

Instagram has unique visual and textual communication characteristics (limited to concise captions and stories, unlike the nature of Twitter/X threads or TikTok videos) (Mirsarraf et al., 2017; Qian, 2025). This research will focus on text data generated within the specific Instagram environment—a context that demands faster and often more creative shortening—thus yielding findings on shortening patterns that may differ from those found on other platforms.

Thus, this research not only adds data but also develops a theoretical-practical model that has a significant contribution to the study of digital linguistics and innovation in Indonesian language pedagogy. The results are expected to serve as a guide for teachers in integrating authentic digital language into the morphology curriculum, making language learning more relevant and engaging for students in the digital age.

2. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive approach. This qualitative approach was chosen to allow for in-depth description and interpretation of a complex linguistic phenomenon, namely the morphological processes of word shortening in the digital environment. This research is descriptive in nature because it aims to

systematically describe the shortening patterns found, analyze their formation processes, and formulate their didactic implications.

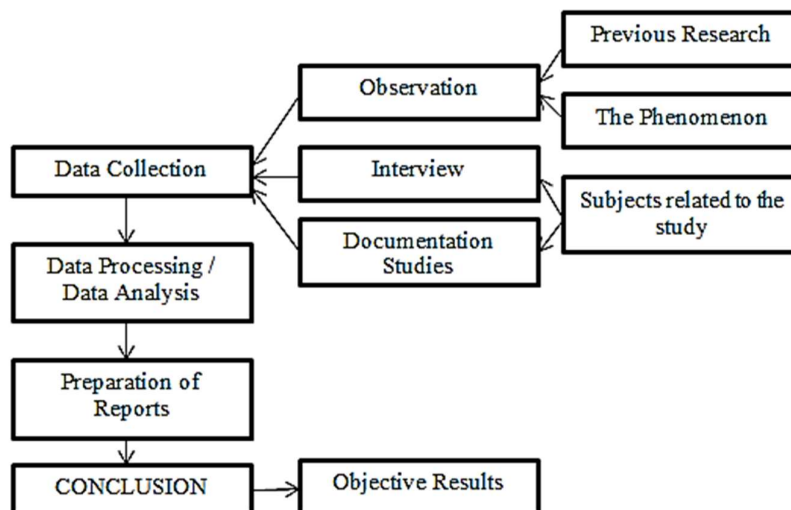


Figure 1. qualitative approach with a descriptive approach

The primary data source for this study is authentic digital communication texts from the Instagram platform. The specific sources selected are Popular Public Accounts: accounts of public figures, influencers, or accounts with general themes (such as entertainment or news) in Indonesia, which were purposively selected because they have high levels of interaction and informal language production and are representative of a broad audience. Text Context: Comment columns, photo captions, and text in Instagram Stories from these accounts.

The research data consists of all forms of word shortening (abbreviations), such as abbreviations, acronyms, fragments, and contractions, found in the data sources, for example: gws, mager, bocil, yg, slmt, gpp, kuy, otw, and others. The main instrument in this study was the researcher herself (human instrument), assisted by a Data Documentation Sheet and a Morphological Analysis Guide. The sheet serves to record: (a) the shortened form, (b) the original/extended form, (c) the sentence context, (d) the type of shortened form, and (e) the morphological process of its formation.

The data collection techniques used were non-participant observation and documentation. Observation: The researcher conducted passive observation of posts and text interactions on selected Instagram accounts over a specific period (e.g., one month) to identify shortened form data. Documentation: Each shortened form found was recorded in full, including its sentence context, and documented in the Data Documentation Sheet.

Data analysis was conducted through three main steps: Morphological Categorization: Identifying and grouping all shortened form data based on its type (abbreviation, acronym, contraction, or fragment) in accordance with abbreviation theory in linguistics. Morphological Process Analysis: Analyzing how each shortened form is formed from its original word/phrase. The processes analyzed include apocope (final beheading), syncope (middle phoneme omission), initial merging, and other

relevant processes. This stage focuses on discovering regular and productive patterns. Formulation of Didactic Implications: Formulating practical recommendations on how to integrate the findings of these regular shortening patterns into Indonesian morphology learning materials and models in the classroom, so that morphological concepts can be taught more contextually and authentically.

To ensure the validity of the findings, data source triangulation (collecting data from various Instagram accounts) and theoretical triangulation (using various morphological and abbreviation theories to compare and verify the analysis results) were used.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This research results section presents key findings obtained from the morphological analysis of word shortening data sourced from text interactions on Instagram. The findings are presented in three main subsections: classification of shortening types, analysis of morphological processes, and the dominant patterns found.

1. Classification of Shortening Types (Abbreviations)

Based on the analysis of a total of 450 unique shortening data points collected from comments, captions, and stories during the observation period, the data were classified into four main types of abbreviations, as presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Shortening Type

No.	Types of Shortening	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)	Sample Data
1.	Contractions	185	41.1%	yang (who), gpp (it's okay), slmt (congratulations), dr (from)
2.	Acronyms	120	26.7%	mager (lazy to move), bucin (love slave), bocil (little boy), sotoy (know-it-all)
3.	Abbreviations	95	21.1%	otw (on the way), wkwk (laugh), gws (get well soon), bf (best friend)
4.	Elisions	50	11.1%	kuy (let's go), deh (enough), b aja (just so-so), pro (professional)
	Total	450	100%	

Key Findings:

- Contractions are the most prolific type of shortening (41.1%). This type is characterized by internal shortening of words that often violate standard spelling rules, while maintaining easily recognized pronunciation (e.g., the omission of non-critical vowels or consonants).
- Acronyms are in second place (26.7%). This form results from the shortening of phrases into new words, demonstrating high lexical creativity in forming slang terms.

2. Analysis of Morphological Formation Processes

In-depth analysis at the morphological level shows that shortening on Instagram does not occur randomly, but rather through regular, repetitive processes, driven by the principle of communication efficiency. These processes can be classified into three main mechanisms:

2.1. Dominant Morphological Processes: Apocope and Syncope (In Contractions and Fragmentation)

Apocope (the omission of phonemes or syllables at the end of a word) and Syncope (the omission of phonemes or syllables in the middle of a word) are the most fundamental processes in the formation of contractions.

Table 2. Apokop Process

Process	Mechanism	Sample Data	Original Form	Morphological Analysis
Apokop	The removal of one or more final phonemes from a word/phrase.	<i>slmt</i>	congratulations	The removal of the vowel phoneme /e/ in the first syllable and the entire final syllable /mat/.
		<i>b aja</i>	normal	The complete removal of the lexical morpheme <i>ia-sa</i> in regular words, leaving only the initial phoneme /b/.
Sinkop	Omission of phonemes in the middle of a word.	<i>yg</i>	that	The removal of the vowel phoneme /a/ in the middle of words.
		<i>kuy</i>	Come on	The reversal of phoneme order, followed by the removal of the phoneme /k/ and the addition of the phoneme /y/ (phenomena of lexical metathesis and syncope).
Phonemic Fragments	Systematic removal of vowel phonemes.	<i>gpp</i>	it's okay	The contraction of <i>ga pa pa</i> to <i>gpp</i> occurs through the systematic removal of all vowels in each morpheme.

2.2. Productive Morphological Process: Acronymization of Syllable Compounds

This process is highly productive in creating new lexicon. Acronymization occurs by combining syllables or parts of syllables from each component of a phrase, which are then read as a single new word. This process mimics the morphological mechanism of compounding followed by shortening.

Table 3. Productive Morphological Process

Examples of Acronyms	Original Phrase	Formation Process	Morphological Implications
mager	Lazily to move	Taking the initial syllable: (Ma)las + (Ger)ak	Creating new lexemes with verb/adjective categories, functioning as root words that can potentially accept non-standard affixations (ngemager).
bocil	little boy	Retrieval of initial/middle syllables: (Bo)cah + ke(cil)	Forming new nouns from phrases demonstrates lexical economy.
baper	carry feelings	Taking the initial syllable: (Ba)wa + (Feeling).	Creating new lexemes rich in sociocultural meaning (sensitive).

3. Didactic Implications as a Source for Learning Morphology

The findings of this study indicate that shortened forms on Instagram have significant potential as a source for contextual learning of Indonesian morphology. The didactic implications formulated are as follows:

3.1. Contextualization of Morphological Concepts

- Affixation and Acronyms (Contrast Process): Acronyms can be used to teach about compounding and the formation of new words, by comparing them with the standard compounding process. For example, teachers can compare rumah sakit (standard) with mager (non-standard) to explain that both are the result of morpheme combination, but differ in phonological/ortographic rules.
- Free and Bound Morphemes: Data on the shortened forms gpp (ga pa pa) or yg (yang) can be used to stimulate discussions about the function of morphemes (conjunctions, particles, verbs) and why certain phonemes are dropped while others are retained, linking this to the concept of morphemic efficiency in communication.

3.2. Developing Skills in Distinguishing Language Varieties

This shortened form is an effective tool for teaching the concept of register. Students can be trained to:

- Analyze Context: Identify that shortening is a product of informal, spoken-written, and rapid variety.
- Morphological Conversion: Conduct conversion exercises, namely changing a non-standard shortened form (slmt) back to the standard form (selamat) and explaining the morphological changes that occur. This exercise strengthens students' understanding of standard rules while recognizing the existence of slang variations.

Thus, the results of this study go beyond linguistic descriptions but also provide an empirical basis for demonstrating that digital language is a rich source of data that can revolutionize morphology teaching, making it more relevant and engaging for students in the social media era.

Discussion

This discussion section examines the findings of a morphological analysis of abbreviations on Instagram. The discussion focuses on three main aspects: (1) verification of the findings using abbreviation theory and the digital language context, (2) an in-depth analysis of the productivity of non-standard morphological processes, and (3) empirical justification for using this data as an authentic source in learning Indonesian morphology.

1. Verification of Findings Using Abbreviation Theory and the Digital Context

The results show that contractions and acronyms are the most dominant types of abbreviations on Instagram (41.1% and 26.7%, respectively). This finding aligns with the abbreviation theory classified by linguists such as Kridalaksana, which divides abbreviations into abbreviations, acronyms, contractions, fragments, and letter symbols (Zerkina et al., 2015; Grace & Heryono, 2022).

1.1. The Dominance of Contractions: A Manifestation of the Need for Morphological Efficiency

The dominance of contractions (yg, gpp, slmt) confirms the hypothesis that the digital communication environment, particularly Instagram, is heavily driven by the principle of linguistic economy. Contractions are the most efficient form of shortening because they minimize the number of keyboard strokes (phonemes/written letters) without compromising the semantic and pragmatic substance of the message.

Theoretically, contractions on Instagram often involve syncope (vowel omission in the middle of a word, e.g., yg dari yang) or apocope (final beheading, e.g., dr dari dari). These processes, although considered non-standard, demonstrate an internal regularity within the deviations. Users intuitively retain consonants deemed crucial for identifying meaning, while vowels—which can be reconstructed through context—are omitted. This phenomenon validates the view that language continues to evolve in order to adapt to media and technology, as emphasized in studies on the evolution of digital language (Azka & Karo-Karo, 2023; Bangun et al., 2024). Instagram users not only use abbreviations but also create language tailored to the short story or caption features.

1.2. Acronym Productivity: An Indicator of Lexical Creativity

The high proportion of acronyms (mager, bucin, baper) indicates that Instagram is not only a place for abbreviations, but also a laboratory for the formation of new lexemes. Acronymization here functions as a highly productive neologism (new word creation) mechanism in slang.

Acronyms such as mager (lazy movement) are the result of a compounding process followed by syllable shortening. This process has strong morphological implications: the newly formed words often have the potential for affixation (such as ngemagerin or kemageran), demonstrating that these non-standard forms have been accepted as new roots in the informal lexicon. This process is a concrete manifestation of language evolution driven by the speech community. Unlike standard acronyms, which tend to be formed from word initials (e.g., ABRI), acronyms on Instagram are formed from

combinations of syllables that are phonotactically easy to pronounce and remember, reflecting the informal and oral nature of this communication.

2. In-depth Analysis of Non-Standard Morphological Processes and Their Regularities

This research shifts the focus from simply criticizing non-standardization to analyzing regularities within the deviations. The analysis shows that the dominant Apocope and Syncope processes (as in *gpp* and *yg*) have a predictable pattern:

2.1. Systematic Vowel Syncope

In contractions, vowel deletion occurs systematically, especially in unstressed vowels or those between two consonants, as long as the initial consonant of the word is retained to identify meaning. For example, in *slmt* from *selamat*, the vowels /e/ and /a/ are lost, while the consonant sequence /s/, /l/, /m/, /t/ is maintained. This pattern compares favorably with standard morphological processes such as clipping or beheading (e.g., *Prof* from *Professor*), but is applied with looser rules and driven by typing speed.

2.2. Initial-Phoneme Merging Patterns in Acronyms

The acronyms formed often do not follow the standard PUEBI rules, but instead follow non-standard phonological readability rules. Acronyms like "bocil" are not formed from B-K (initials), but rather from syllables (*Bo* + *Cil*), ensuring that the acronym can be read like a word. The regularity in selecting syllables to combine into an acronym is evidence of a new lexical system, operating in parallel with standard rules. This reinforces the view that language is never static and that the process of creating new words is a continuous mechanism occurring at the informal level.

3. Didactic Justification: Transforming "Problems" into Authentic Learning Resources

The finding that shortened forms on Instagram have regular morphological patterns provides strong justification for the research's didactic implications. This justification is supported by pedagogical literature that emphasizes the importance of authentic data in language learning.

3.1. Contextualizing Morphology through Authentic Data

Traditional morphology instruction often feels abstract because it focuses only on isolated standard examples (*me-*, *per-*, *ke-an*). By using *mager* or *bucin* data in the classroom, teachers can:

- Increase Relevance: Students learn about word formation from words they themselves use, bridging the gap between theory and practice.
- Demonstrate Language Variation: Teachers can use shortened forms to teach concepts of language variety (formal vs. informal) and sociolinguistic context.

This involves teaching students when to use *"yang"* and when to use *"yg."* This trains students to become linguistically intelligent communicators.

For example, to teach the concept of compounding, teachers can compare:

- Standard: Hospital (Full compounding)
- Non-standard: Bucin (Compounding followed by syllabic acronym) This discussion allows students to see that compounding has many ways of forming and that linguistic creativity is a natural part of language evolution, provided the context of its use is understood.

3.2. Developing Metalinguistic Skills

Analysis of non-standard forms requires students to engage in higher-level metalinguistic analysis (thinking about the language itself). When students are asked to analyze why *"gpp"* is used more frequently than *"tapp"* (a contraction of *"tidak apa apa"*), they indirectly analyze the phonological structure and readability principles that apply in Indonesian.

Integrating this data into the curriculum requires a contextual pedagogical approach that utilizes multimodality (text and visuals from Instagram screenshots) to strengthen understanding. This aligns with research supporting the use of authentic and multimodal materials to make morphology learning more meaningful (Rohi & Nurhayati, 2024; Yatri et al., 2024).

4. Comparison with Previous Research and Contributions

These findings reinforce previous research on abbreviations on social media (e.g., Twitter or Facebook), but provide specific contributions to the visual and short-text environment of Instagram. This research demonstrates that:

- Instagram Encourages Extreme Vowel Contractions: Unlike more news-focused media (which are dominated by standard abbreviations or formal acronyms), Instagram, as a casual communication platform, shows a strong preference for contractions that maximize typing speed.
- Clear Pedagogical Contribution: This research goes beyond linguistic description by providing a framework for how these non-standard forms can be transformed into didactic tools. This is a step beyond simply recording the phenomenon to leveraging it to achieve learning objectives.

Overall, the discussion demonstrates that the phenomenon of shortening on Instagram is structured and meaningful linguistic data. By using it, teachers can transform morphology—often considered a rigid subject—into a dynamic, contextual, and relevant subject for students' digital lives. This positions Indonesian as a living and adaptive language.

4. CONCLUSION

This study aims to morphologically analyze the shortening of words on the Instagram platform and explore their didactic implications as a resource for Indonesian language learning. Based on the qualitative data analysis, the following conclusions were reached: Dominant Types of Shortening: The most dominant forms of shortening found in text interactions on Instagram are contractions (including internal omissions of vowels and consonants) and acronyms (the formation of new words from the combination of phrasal syllables). This dominance reflects the principle of linguistic economy and the need for speed of communication in a digital context. Regular Morphological Processes: Although most shortening forms are non-standard, their formation processes exhibit morphological regularities that can be analyzed. The most productive processes are syncope (vowel omission in the middle of a word) and apocope (final beheading), as well as acronymization of syllable combinations that produce new lexemes (mager, bucin). These regularities demonstrate that digital slang possesses a linguistically mappable word formation system.

Additionally, significant didactic implications: Instagram shortening data has high potential as a source for authentic and contextual morphology learning. Its use can bridge the gap between normative rules in the classroom and students' everyday language practices. This data can be used to teach the concepts of language variation, new word formation, and morphemic economy in a more relevant and engaging way. Overall, this study confirms that Instagram is not only a platform for language deviation but also a living and dynamic language laboratory, where non-standard morphological processes operate in a structured manner and can be effectively integrated into the Indonesian language curriculum.

As a suggestion, teachers are advised to integrate authentic shortening data from social media (especially contractions and acronyms) as discussion and analysis material in morphology lessons. Teachers can use this data to encourage discussions about the context in which language varieties are used (formal vs. informal). Train students to analyze the morphological processes behind shortening, then convert them to standard forms (e.g., analyzing mager because of compounding and shortening). Develop a worksheet that compares standard morphological processes (affixation) with non-standard processes (digital abbreviation). Further research is recommended to conduct a contrastive analysis by comparing shortening forms on Instagram with other platforms (e.g., TikTok or Twitter/X) to see if there are significant differences in morphological patterns based on the nature of the media. Develop a learning tool (RPP) model or learning media based on Instagram data and test its effectiveness in improving students' understanding of morphological concepts. Examine the pragmatic implications of this shortening form, namely how shortening affects the meaning and reception of messages in the context of digital communication.

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