Exploring Language Trends on TikTok: Impacts on Indonesian Communication

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Abstract

This study explores the emerging language trends on the TikTok platform and their impacts on communication in Indonesia. As TikTok continues to grow as a dominant social media platform, understanding language adaptation and usage among its users becomes increasingly significant. This research employs a qualitative method through content analysis of high-interaction TikTok videos to examine linguistic patterns. The findings reveal that slang, code-switching, and local cultural elements play a crucial role in shaping communication styles. Slang expressions, often derived from youth culture and internet memes, are widely used to create a sense of identity and belonging among users. Code-switching between Indonesian, English, and regional languages is also prevalent, reflecting the dynamic and multilingual nature of digital communication. Additionally, the incorporation of local cultural elements, such as traditional phrases and dialects, enriches interactions, making them more relatable to specific audiences. These linguistic trends contribute to the evolution of digital communication, influencing how Indonesian youth express themselves and engage with online communities. The study highlights the significance of TikTok as a platform where language is not only a tool for interaction but also a means of cultural expression and identity formation. By analyzing these trends, this research provides valuable insights into the shifting communication patterns in Indonesia's digital landscape.

Keywords: Language Trends, Tiktok Communication, Indonesian Youth.

Introduction

As of 2024, TikTok has amassed over 113 million users in Indonesia, making it one of the most influential social media platforms in the country. This rapid adoption has significantly shaped communication patterns, particularly among younger users, by fostering new linguistic trends and cultural expressions. This study investigates how TikTok influences digital language practices in Indonesia,

with a focus on linguistic creativity, code-mixing, and the integration of multimodal elements. By examining these aspects, the research aims to understand how social media platforms facilitate the evolution of language and contribute to identity formation in digital spaces.

The study identifies several key linguistic features emerging on TikTok, including the frequent use of internet slang, borrowed words, and regional dialects, which are often repurposed within short-form video content. For instance, phrases such as "mantul" (mantap betul) and "gaskeun" (derived from "gas" meaning to go or proceed) have gained widespread popularity through TikTok trends. Additionally, the informal nature of the platform encourages linguistic innovation, where captions, hashtags, and emojis are used to enhance meaning and engagement. These elements align with research emphasizing the role of digital media in informal language learning and creative expression (Hamat & Hassan, 2019; Hasjim et al., 2024).

A significant trend observed is the practice of code-mixing and code-switching, where users fluidly transition between Bahasa Indonesia, English, and regional dialects within a single video. This linguistic flexibility reflects Indonesia's multilingual society and highlights the adaptive nature of digital communication. For example, phrases like "santuy aja bro" (a mix of Bahasa Indonesia and English, meaning "just relax, bro") demonstrate how language is dynamically reshaped in online interactions. Research on digital sociolinguistics suggests that such practices not only reinforce individual identity but also indicate broader shifts in language use influenced by globalization and digital connectivity (Prihatini et al., 2023; Ludwig & Poel, 2015).

Furthermore, TikTok functions as a cultural incubator where digital vernacular extends beyond the platform into everyday conversations. Viral trends, memes, and audio snippets originating on TikTok frequently shape offline speech patterns, reinforcing the reciprocal relationship between online and offline discourse. This phenomenon underscores how social media contributes to the development of new linguistic registers that, while initially confined to digital spaces, increasingly influence mainstream language practices (Natsir et al., 2023; Hasjim et al., 2024).

Despite the growing body of research on social media and language, there remains a gap in understanding how TikTok, as a highly interactive and visually driven platform, uniquely influences linguistic evolution in Indonesia. While previous studies have explored the impact of social media on language use, few have specifically examined the role of multimodal communication elements—such as text overlays, visual cues, and algorithm-driven content discovery—in shaping linguistic trends. This study seeks to address this gap by providing an in-depth analysis of how these factors contribute to the dynamic interplay between language, culture, and digital media.

The findings of this research have broader implications for linguists, educators, and digital media analysts. As digital communication continues to evolve,

understanding how platforms like TikTok shape language use can inform language pedagogy and digital literacy initiatives. Educators may leverage social media trends to make language learning more engaging and contextually relevant, while linguists can gain insights into the mechanisms of language adaptation in digital spaces.

In conclusion, the study of TikTok's linguistic impact in Indonesia highlights its role as a driving force behind contemporary language shifts. By examining emerging linguistic features, multimodal communication strategies, and the broader sociolinguistic implications, this research contributes to the ongoing discourse on digital language evolution. Future studies could further explore the influence of artificial intelligence and augmented reality on language practices, ensuring that linguistic research remains responsive to the ever-changing landscape of digital communication.

Research Methodology

This study utilizes a qualitative approach with content analysis methodology to examine linguistic trends on TikTok. Data were collected from 150 high-interaction TikTok videos, selected based on metrics such as likes (minimum 10,000), comments (minimum 500), and shares (minimum 1,000). The data collection was conducted over a six-month period, from January to June 2024, ensuring a broad representation of emerging linguistic phenomena.

The criteria for selecting content included videos showcasing unique language usage, humor, or local cultural elements. The collected data were then analyzed to identify language patterns, including the use of new terms, popular phrases, and other forms of communication. A purposive sampling method was employed to ensure the selection of videos that demonstrated clear instances of linguistic innovation while avoiding unnecessary data noise. The demographic backgrounds of TikTok content creators, including age ranges (18-35 years old) and regional distribution (Java, Sumatra, Kalimantan, and Sulawesi), were considered to contextualize linguistic variations.

For content analysis, a coding scheme was developed to classify linguistic features into categories such as neologisms, slang, code-mixing, and humor-based expressions. This coding scheme was refined through an iterative process to ensure consistency in identifying and categorizing linguistic elements. The study employed NVivo software to facilitate the systematic coding and analysis of qualitative data. To enhance reliability, two independent coders analyzed the data, and inter-coder reliability was measured using Cohen's kappa, which yielded a score of 0.85, indicating high agreement.

Additionally, the study incorporated discourse analysis techniques to examine language use in specific contexts. By analyzing TikTok comments, captions, and spoken dialogue within videos, the research identified recurring linguistic patterns and their potential meanings. The study also considered the impact of TikTok's

algorithm in promoting certain linguistic expressions, as virality plays a crucial role in shaping digital language trends.

Recognizing the multimodal nature of TikTok content, this study analyzed not only spoken and written language but also visual and audio elements that contribute to meaning-making. Gestures, music, and visual effects were examined to understand their role in enhancing linguistic expressions. This broader multimodal framework enabled a more comprehensive analysis of digital communication on TikTok.

To ensure methodological robustness, the study cross-referenced linguistic trends identified on TikTok with other social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube. This comparative analysis determined whether specific expressions were exclusive to TikTok or part of a broader digital language trend. Findings from this approach highlighted TikTok's significant role in shaping contemporary linguistic evolution beyond its own platform.

Ethical considerations were strictly adhered to, ensuring that data collection complied with privacy regulations and ethical research guidelines. User-generated content was analyzed while maintaining user anonymity, and personal identifiers were removed when presenting examples. This ethical approach upheld the principles of responsible digital research while capturing valuable insights into linguistic trends on TikTok.

Overall, this methodology provided a structured and transparent framework for analyzing TikTok's language trends. By employing qualitative content analysis, discourse analysis, and multimodal analysis, the study aimed to offer a comprehensive exploration of the dynamic relationship between language and digital culture in Indonesia.

Results

Exploring Linguistic Trends in TikTok Usage Among Indonesian Youth
Introduction

The rise of social media has revolutionized communication, with TikTok emerging as a dominant platform among younger audiences worldwide. In Indonesia, TikTok has become a digital space where youth engage in self-expression, creativity, and social interaction. Language plays a crucial role in shaping content and interactions on this platform. This paper examines the dominant linguistic trends observed in TikTok usage among Indonesian youth, focusing on three key phenomena: the widespread use of slang and colloquial expressions, the practice of code-switching between Indonesian and foreign languages (particularly English), and the integration of local cultural elements. These trends significantly impact communication styles and the interpretation of information, reflecting broader sociolinguistic dynamics in contemporary Indonesia.

2. The Prevalence of Slang and Colloquial Language

Slang and colloquial language are defining characteristics of TikTok content among Indonesian youth. Slang functions as a linguistic tool that fosters a sense of belonging within peer groups, allowing users to establish social identities. TikTok's informal and playful nature encourages the adoption of youth-centric expressions, often characterized by creativity and humor. This linguistic shift represents a departure from conventional formal language norms, mirroring global digital communication trends.

Examples of Slang Terms
Several slang terms have gained popularity on TikTok, including:
1. "Gaskeun" (derived from "gas" meaning "go ahead" or "let's do it")
2. "Santuy" (a relaxed pronunciation of "santai" meaning "chill")
3. "Mantul" (short for "mantap betul" meaning "really great")
4. "Bestie" (borrowed from English, meaning "close friend")
5. "Coy" (derived from "kuy" which is a reversed form of "yuk," meaning "let's go")

Direct Quotes from TikTok Videos
1. "Gaskeun, bro! Jangan sampe zonk!" (Let's go, bro! Don't mess it up!)
2. "Santuy aja, nggak usah panik." (Just chill, no need to panic.)
3. "Mantul banget outfit lo hari ini!" (Your outfit is really awesome today!)

The rapid evolution of slang on TikTok highlights the platform's role in shaping linguistic innovation among Indonesian youth, with new terms emerging and gaining widespread popularity at an unprecedented pace.

3. Code-Switching Between Indonesian and Foreign Languages
Code-switching, or the practice of alternating between languages within discourse, is another prevalent linguistic phenomenon on TikTok. Indonesian youth frequently switch between Indonesian and English, a practice driven by various social and cognitive motivations. English is often perceived as a marker of modernity, global connectivity, and educational prestige. This bilingual practice enables users to express ideas more effectively, particularly when certain English phrases lack direct Indonesian equivalents.

Examples of Code-Switching
1. "Guys, ini beneran insane! Gue nggak expect bakal sebagus ini." (Guys, this is seriously insane! I didn't expect it to be this good.)
2. "Sorry, aku nggak bisa join live hari ini. Lagi super busy!" (Sorry, I can't join the live session today. I'm super busy!)
3. "Mood banget sih ini, literally relate!" (This is such a mood, literally relatable!)

A study of 100 TikTok videos revealed that 68% contained instances of code-switching, with the majority mixing English phrases into Indonesian sentences. The most frequently used English words included "sorry," "guys," "literally," "mood," and "relate."

4. The Integration of Local Cultural Elements

TikTok serves as a digital space where local cultural elements are actively incorporated into content, reinforcing a sense of national and regional identity. Indonesian youth frequently integrate traditional music, dance, folklore, and dialects into their TikTok videos.

Examples of Cultural Integration
1. The use of "Pantun Melayu" in comedic skits
2. Traditional Javanese dance challenges adapted to modern beats
3. "Gamelan" music as background sound in storytelling videos
4. Local dialect expressions, such as Betawi slang "begimana, dah?" (How's it going?)

Regional variations in language trends are also observed. For instance, Javanese TikTok users often integrate Javanese words such as "ndak" (no) and "opo" (what), while users from Sumatra might use Minangkabau expressions like "ndak tau bana" (I don't really know).

5. Implications for Communication and Interpretation

The linguistic trends observed on TikTok have broader implications for communication and meaning-making among Indonesian youth. The use of slang and code-switching fosters in-group dynamics, creating linguistic subcultures that strengthen social bonds while potentially excluding those unfamiliar with these linguistic forms. Additionally, the integration of local cultural elements enhances content relatability, allowing users to engage with and interpret information through culturally relevant frameworks.

Differences from Traditional Communication Norms
1. Increased informality compared to formal Indonesian (Bahasa Baku)
2. Higher prevalence of borrowed words and hybrid linguistic structures
3. Faster evolution of language due to digital influence

This aligns with the argument of Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) that meaning is shaped by social and cultural contexts. As digital communication continues to evolve, these linguistic phenomena will likely play a crucial role in influencing youth identity construction and cultural expression.

Conclusion

The examination of linguistic trends in TikTok usage among Indonesian youth reveals a complex interplay between language, identity, and culture. The prevalence of slang, code-switching, and cultural integration underscores the dynamic nature of communication in digital spaces. These linguistic practices not only shape online interactions but also reflect broader sociolinguistic transformations within Indonesian society. As TikTok remains a dominant platform for youth expression, understanding these linguistic trends will be essential for comprehending the shifting linguistic and cultural landscape in Indonesia.

Discussion

Differentiation from Results

The analysis of linguistic trends on TikTok highlights how the platform influences youth communication patterns in Indonesia. To avoid repetition, this discussion section will focus on interpreting these trends in a broader sociolinguistic and educational context while considering theoretical perspectives and previous research.

Limitations of the Study

Although this study provides valuable insights, several limitations should be noted. First, the research relies on qualitative observations without a comprehensive quantitative analysis of language trends across a larger dataset. Second, while TikTok is a dominant social media platform, linguistic behavior may differ on other platforms with distinct communication norms. Third, this study does not deeply explore how demographic factors such as age, education level, or regional background influence language use on TikTok. Future studies should incorporate a mixed-methods approach with corpus-based analysis to provide more empirical evidence.

Comparison with Other Social Media Platforms

Comparing TikTok with platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube reveal differences in linguistic behavior. Twitter, known for its character limitations, encourages concise and sometimes cryptic expressions, leading to unique abbreviations and hashtag trends. Instagram, with its emphasis on visuals, often features language in captions that complement images, sometimes incorporating multilingual elements for broader reach. YouTube, being a long-form content platform, fosters more structured speech patterns, though comment sections still reflect informal and dynamic language use. TikTok's rapid and highly interactive format facilitates real-time linguistic innovation, setting it apart from other platforms in terms of speed and spread of new slang and expressions.

Long-Term Implications for Indonesian Language Evolution

The widespread adoption of slang, code-switching, and localized expressions on TikTok suggests that Indonesian language use is becoming more fluid and adaptable. While this flexibility enriches the language, it also raises concerns about the gradual erosion of formal Indonesian, particularly among younger generations. If informal and hybrid language use continues to dominate digital spaces, future language policies may need to address the balance between linguistic innovation and preservation of standard Indonesian.

Implications for Language Policy

Given the influence of digital media on language development, policymakers should consider strategies to support both linguistic creativity and the integrity of formal Indonesian. Possible initiatives include:

1. Integrating digital literacy programs in schools that emphasize appropriate language use in different contexts.
2. Encouraging the documentation of emerging slang and linguistic trends for linguistic research and dictionary updates.
3. Promoting awareness campaigns on the importance of maintaining a balance between informal and formal language proficiency.

Recommendations for Educators

Educators can leverage TikTok's linguistic trends to make language learning more engaging. Specific recommendations include:

1. **Contextualized Language Learning**: Use TikTok videos as examples to analyze language use in informal contexts and compare them with formal writing standards.
2. **Code-Switching Awareness**: Encourage discussions on when and why code-switching occurs, helping students develop metalinguistic awareness.
3. **Creative Assignments**: Assign students to create short videos that incorporate different language registers, fostering an understanding of audience-appropriate communication.

Influence on Formal Communication Contexts

The informal linguistic styles popularized on TikTok may gradually seep into formal communication, affecting workplace and academic discourse. While digital-era communication favors brevity and expressiveness, excessive reliance on slang and code-switching may challenge students' ability to adapt to professional writing standards. Educational institutions should reinforce the importance of formal Indonesian while recognizing that digital fluency is a valuable skill in modern communication.

Conclusion and Future Research Directions

This study underscores TikTok's significant role in shaping Indonesian youth's linguistic identity. Future research could explore:

1. The impact of TikTok language trends on academic writing skills.
2. Longitudinal studies tracking how digital communication influences language change over time.
3. Comparative analyses between TikTok users from urban and rural areas to assess regional linguistic variations.

By addressing these aspects, scholars and educators can better navigate the evolving landscape of digital communication while ensuring the continued development of Indonesian language skills across different contexts.

Conclusion

Language trends on TikTok have had a significant impact on communication in Indonesia, particularly among the youth, by introducing new forms of expression that blend traditional language with digital culture. The widespread use of slang has created a more informal and relatable way of speaking, where phrases like "gabut" or "kepo" are commonly used both online and offline. Additionally, code-switching—alternating between Bahasa Indonesia, local languages, and English—has become prevalent, reflecting Indonesia's multicultural and multilingual society.

This practice not only allows for more dynamic communication but also helps creators reach a wider audience by mixing languages to maintain relevance. Furthermore, TikTok encourages the integration of local cultural elements, such as traditional customs, memes, and humor, fostering a sense of community and pride in Indonesian heritage. These trends highlight a shift toward casual, creative, and interactive communication that reflects the evolving social and cultural landscape in Indonesia, especially among younger generations who engage with these digital platforms regularly.

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