LANGUAGE, EMOTION, AND ALGORITHMS: THE DYNAMICS OF COMMUNICATION IN THE SOCIAL MEDIA ERA

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Abstract

The social media phenomenon has transformed the way humans communicate. Algorithms, inherent in each platform, play a crucial role in shaping the information users receive, often prioritizing content that triggers emotional responses. This study aims to analyze the dynamics of communication in the social media era through the diverse interactions between language, emotion, and algorithms. Using a descriptive narrative literature review approach, this study examines how language evolves on social media, the role of emotion in content virality, and how algorithms reinforce emotional polarization. The results show that language on social media tends to be more concise, visual, and emotionally expressive, with a predominant use of emojis, abbreviations, and hyperbolic style. Emotions, particularly strong ones such as anger or emotion, have been shown to be key drivers of content virality, which are then amplified by algorithms to increase user engagement. This interaction creates a cycle in which algorithms select emotional language, generate viral content, and in turn, encourage users to imitate that communication style, forming a new digital communication culture. The conclusion of this study is that language, emotion, and algorithms mutually reinforce each other in shaping the way digital communication is perceived, with significant implications for digital literacy and communication ethics. Therefore, the development of more ethical and socially conscious algorithms is necessary to create a healthier digital space.

Keywords: Communication Dynamics, Social Media, Algorithms, Language, Emotions

Abstrak

Fenomena media sosial telah mengubah pandangan komunikasi manusia. Algoritma, sebagai bagian dari tiap platform, memainkan peran penting dalam membentuk informasi yang diterima pengguna, seringkali memprioritaskan konten yang memicu respons emosional. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis dinamika komunikasi di era media sosial melalui beragamnya interaksi antara bahasa, emosi, dan algoritma. Melalui pendekatan kajian pustaka deskriptif naratif, penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana bahasa berevolusi di media sosial, peran emosi dalam viralitas konten, serta bagaimana algoritma memperkuat polarisasi emosi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa bahasa di media sosial cenderung menjadi lebih ringkas, visual, dan ekspresif secara emosional, dengan penggunaan emoji, singkatan, dan gaya hiperbolik yang dominan. Emosi, terutama yang kuat seperti kemarahan atau keterharuan, terbukti menjadi pendorong utama viralitas konten, yang kemudian diperkuat oleh algoritma untuk meningkatkan keterlibatan pengguna. Interaksi ini menciptakan siklus di mana algoritma memilih bahasa yang emosional, menghasilkan konten viral, dan pada gilirannya, mendorong pengguna untuk meniru gaya komunikasi tersebut, membentuk budaya

komunikasi digital yang baru. Kesimpulan dari penelitian ini adalah bahwa bahasa, emosi, dan algoritma saling memperkuat dalam membentuk pandangan komunikasi digital, menimbulkan implikasi signifikan terhadap literasi digital dan etika komunikasi. Oleh karena itu, diperlukan pengembangan algoritma yang lebih etis dan sadar dampak sosial untuk menciptakan ruang digital yang lebih sehat.

Kata Kunci : Dinamika Komunikasi, Media Sosial, Algorithma, Bahasa, Emosi

I. INTRODUCTION

The advent of social media has transformed the way people communicate, interact, and consume information. Platforms like TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, and X (formerly Twitter) not only provide new spaces for self-expression but also reshape existing communication norms. This shift is marked by the emergence of new forms of language, such as abbreviations, slang, memes, and the widespread use of emojis, which allow for more concise and visual expressions. Communication, once dominated by formal text, is now shifting toward more informal, fast-paced, and often emotionally charged content. Beneath the user-friendly content, algorithms play a central role in determining what appears on users' social media platforms. Algorithms are designed to maximize user engagement by personalizing the experience, presenting relevant content based on interaction history, preferences, and even detected emotions. As a result, users are more likely to be exposed to information that confirms their own views, a phenomenon known as the "echo chamber" and the "filter bubble."

Emotional engagement has also become a dominant element in content that goes viral on social media. Content that triggers a strong emotional response, whether anger, joy, sadness, or surprise, has a greater potential to be shared and shared. Social media algorithms inherently amplify similar content, creating a cycle where emotion becomes the primary currency in the digital attention economy. This phenomenon raises profound questions about how the interplay between language, emotion, and algorithms shapes communication patterns and their impact on society.

II. THEORETICAL STUDIES

2.1 Language in Social Media

Language on social media has undergone significant transformation, adapting to the fast-paced and visual characteristics of digital platforms. The use of abbreviations, slang, and acronyms has become commonplace, such as 'FYI' (For Your Information), 'LOL' (Laughing Out Loud), or 'YGY' (Ya Gaes Ya). (Agustina, 2020). The meme phenomenon, which

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combines images or videos with short text, has become a new form of expression rich in meaning and often humorous or satirical. Emojis also play a significant role in digital communication, serving as markers of emotion, intonation, or even as substitutes for words and sentences, allowing users to convey nuances that are difficult to express through text alone (Bakhtiar, Sukamto, & Pramono, 2022). The use of caps lock for emphasis or to indicate strong emotions (such as anger or surprise) has also become part of communication conventions on social media. Furthermore, hyperbolic language is often used to attract attention and trigger strong emotional responses from audiences.

In analyzing language on social media, the theories of semiotics and media pragmatics are relevant. Semiotics, as the study of signs, helps us understand how emojis, memes, or even abbreviations function as signs that carry specific meanings in digital contexts. For example, the emoji '😂' doesn't just mean laughter; it can also convey amusement, irony, or even frustration, depending on the context. Roland Barthes' semiotic theory, with its concepts of denotation and connotation, can be used to unpack the layers of meaning in social media content. Meanwhile, media pragmatics focuses on how language is used in digital communication and how meaning is understood based on context, speaker intent, and audience interpretation. In digital communication, aspects such as implicature, presupposition, and politeness are important to understand, given that misinterpretations often occur due to the absence of non-verbal cues (Lestari, 2024).

2.2 Emotions in Digital Communication

Emotions are an integral component of human interaction, and their role is increasingly prominent in digital communication. In the context of social media, emotions are not only expressed but also become a key driver of engagement and content virality. Emotion theories, such as those proposed by Paul Ekman and Robert Plutchik, provide a framework for understanding the spectrum of human emotions. Ekman identified six basic, universal emotions: happiness, sadness, anger, fear, disgust, and surprise. Meanwhile, Plutchik developed a "wheel of emotions" that classifies eight basic emotions (joy, sadness, trust, disgust, fear, anger, anticipation, and surprise) and shows how these emotions can combine to form more complex emotions (Second, 2025). On social media, content that evokes strong emotions, whether positive (e.g., joy, inspiration) or negative (e.g., anger, sadness), tends to be shared more frequently and receive high engagement. Content that provokes anger or emotion, for example, has greater viral potential because it encourages users to react and

share it with their networks (Berger & Milkman, 2023). This suggests that emotions are not merely passive responses to content but also active catalysts in the spread of information and the formation of opinions in the digital realm.

2.3 Algorithms and Communication Architecture

Social media algorithms are sets of computational rules designed to process user data and determine the most relevant or interesting content to show them. These algorithms act as new "gatekeepers" in the media ecosystem, replacing the role of traditional editors or journalists in filtering and distributing information. They analyze a variety of signals, including user interactions (likes, comments, shares, viewing duration), content preferences, and even geographic location, to create highly personalized experiences. The theory of algorithmic gatekeeping explains how algorithms automatically select, prioritize, and present content to users, often without the users' awareness. Platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and X use sophisticated algorithms to prioritize content with high engagement potential. For example, TikTok's algorithm is highly effective at identifying videos that will keep users scrolling, often prioritizing content that sparks emotion or curiosity. Instagram and TikTok also use engagement metrics to determine post visibility, with content with a high number of initial interactions being shown more frequently to a wider audience (Syam, 2025).

2.4 Interaction between the Three

The interaction between language, emotion, and algorithms creates complex communication dynamics on social media. Algorithms, in their efforts to maximize engagement, tend to prioritize content that uses emotional language and triggers strong emotional responses. This indirectly encourages users to adopt a more expressive and emotional language style to gain greater visibility for their content. This cycle can be observed in the phenomena of "echo chambers" and "filter bubbles," where users are only exposed to information and opinions that align with their own views, which are reinforced by algorithms presenting similar content (Srikandi, 2023). This phenomenon can lead to opinion polarization, the spread of misinformation, and the formation of "digital tribes" where groups with similar views reinforce each other and reject divergent views. Thus, language, emotion, and algorithms are intertwined and mutually reinforcing in shaping the digital communication landscape. Algorithms select emotional language, which then goes viral and establishes new communication norms, which in turn feed back into the algorithms, creating a self-perpetuating cycle.

III. RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a narrative descriptive method. As a literature review, this research does not involve primary data collection through experiments or surveys, but rather focuses on the synthesis and interpretation of relevant literature. The narrative descriptive approach was chosen to provide a comprehensive overview of the dynamics of communication in the social media era from the perspectives of language, emotion, and algorithms, and to identify patterns of interaction between the three.

3.1 Data Collection Techniques

Data for this research was collected through an extensive literature review. The sources used include:

1. Scientific journals with articles from reputable journals discussing digital communication, social media, linguistics, communication psychology, computer science (related to algorithms), and media sociology.

2. Books containing fundamental and recent works on communication theory, semiotics, pragmatics, emotion theory, and the impact of technology on society.

3. Scientific articles and research reports published by research institutions, universities, or organizations relevant to the research topic.

4. Observing social media platforms through participant observation. Understanding social media phenomena is gained through passive observation of language trends, emotional expressions, and viral content types on various platforms (TikTok, Instagram, X). This helps provide concrete examples for analysis.

5. Hashtag/comment analysis using secondary data from hashtag or comment analysis conducted by other researchers also serves as a reference for understanding communication patterns and emotional expression on social media.

3.2 Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data was analyzed using an interpretive and thematic approach. Interpretive analysis involves a deep understanding of the meaning behind digital communication phenomena, including the interpretation of linguistic and non-linguistic signs (such as emojis and memes) and the emotional implications of social media content. Thematic analysis was conducted to identify recurring themes and key patterns emerging from the literature, such as the role of emotion in virality, the impact of algorithms on polarization, and the evolution of language in the digital space. This analytical process aims

to build coherent arguments and provide an in-depth synthesis of the interactions between language, emotion, and algorithms in shaping communication dynamics in the social media era.

IV. RESEARCH RESULTS

Language as a medium for emotion: In the social media ecosystem, language has evolved into a highly effective medium for expressing and triggering emotions. Character limitations on some platforms (although many have now relaxed these limitations) and the need for rapid communication have encouraged the use of concise yet meaningful forms of language. Emoji, for example, have become a universal language that transcends linguistic boundaries, capable of conveying a wide spectrum of emotions from happiness to anger, often more effectively than words (Shalahuddin & Fajrianti, 2024). The use of caps lock to indicate emphasis or intensity of emotion, such as screaming or extreme surprise, has also become a widely accepted convention in the digital space. Furthermore, hyperbolic language is often used to attract attention and create a strong emotional impact. Phrases like "too excited to cry" or "laughing until my stomach hurts" are examples of how language is exaggerated to convey the intensity of feelings. Slang and abbreviations also contribute to the formation of group identities and more relaxed and informal expressions of emotion. These changes in language structure reflect adaptation to the digital environment, which demands speed, visuality, and the ability to evoke an instant emotional response. Language on social media serves not only as a communication tool but also as an emotional performance designed to trigger reactions from audiences.

Emotion and content performance: Emotion has been shown to be one of the most dominant factors in determining the performance and virality of content on social media. Content that successfully triggers strong emotions in audiences, whether positive emotions such as joy, inspiration, or empathy, or negative emotions such as anger, sadness, or fear, is more likely to be shared and disseminated (Agustina, 2020). Studies show that content that evokes intense emotions, especially high-arousal emotions such as anger and anxiety, tends to go viral more often than content that is neutral or evokes low emotions. This phenomenon can be explained by several factors. First, sharing emotional content often serves as a catharsis or a way to express one's identity and values. Second, emotional content tends to attract more attention amidst a flood of information, as humans are psychologically predisposed to respond to stimuli that trigger feelings. Third, social media algorithms actively

amplify these emotional responses. Platforms are designed to identify content that generates high engagement (likes, comments, shares), and because emotional content often triggers such engagement, the algorithms prioritize its distribution. This creates a positive feedback loop where emotional content gains more visibility, which then drives more interactions, and so on, accelerating the virality process.

The role of algorithms in emotional polarization: Social media algorithms, with their ability to personalize user feeds, play a significant role in reinforcing emotional and opinion polarization. Through filter bubble and echo chamber mechanisms, algorithms tend to present content that aligns with users' pre-existing preferences and views. If a user frequently interacts with content that incites anger about a particular issue, the algorithm will continue to present similar, even extreme, content to maintain engagement. This can lead to users becoming increasingly locked into their own views, less exposed to different perspectives, and more motivated to express similar emotions. The social consequences of algorithm-enhanced emotional polarization are profound. The spread of misinformation and disinformation becomes easier because content that triggers strong emotions, even if inaccurate, tends to spread quickly (Syam, 2025). Furthermore, the formation of "digital tribes," or groups that are highly homogeneous in their views and emotions, can deepen social divisions. Constructive discussion becomes difficult because each party tends to interact only with those who share their views, viewing others as "enemies" to be fought, not engaged in dialogue. Algorithms, in this case, act as accelerators, not simply filters, in shaping public opinion and sentiment.

The interaction of these three elements—language, emotion, and algorithms—on social media forms a dynamic, mutually reinforcing cycle. Algorithms, designed to maximize engagement, implicitly "select" and promote content that uses emotionally rich language and triggers strong emotional responses from users. This content, which often uses emojis, caps lock, hyperbolic style, or provocative narratives, then goes viral and reaches a wide audience. This virality, in turn, feeds back to users. When they see a particular type of content successfully garnering attention and engagement, they tend to imitate that communication style. This creates a kind of "new communication culture" on social media, where intense emotional expression and unconventional language become the norm. Users learn that to be "heard" or "seen" amidst the digital noise, they need to use language that captures the algorithm's attention and triggers emotions in their audience. The cycle continues: algorithms

prioritize emotional language, that content goes viral, users imitate that style, and ultimately, this forms the dominant communication pattern on the platform. The impact is a shift from informative to more affective communication, where emotional validation and resonance become more important than factual accuracy or nuance. This is a dynamic that needs to be deeply understood to manage the social impact of social media in the future.

V. CONCLUSION

This research underscores that language, emotion, and algorithms on social media do not operate independently, but rather are intertwined and reinforce each other, shaping the contemporary digital communication landscape. Language on social media has evolved to become more concise, visual, and emotionally expressive, with the use of emojis, abbreviations, and hyperbolic style becoming the norm. Emotions, both positive and negative, have proven to be a key driver of content virality, which is then efficiently amplified by platform algorithms to maximize user engagement. This cycle creates a dynamic where algorithms prioritize emotionally charged content, which then goes viral, and in turn, encourages users to adopt similar communication styles, shaping a new digital communication culture.

The implications of this dynamic are significant. While social media offers a space for connectivity and expression, the interaction between language, emotion, and algorithms can also reinforce phenomena such as "echo chambers" and "filter bubbles," potentially leading to opinion polarization, the spread of misinformation, and the formation of "digital tribes." Therefore, digital literacy is crucial for users to critically filter information, understand algorithmic bias, and participate in online communication more responsibly. Furthermore, digital communication ethics need to be emphasized to encourage more constructive and empathetic interactions.

As a recommendation, the development of more ethical and socially impact-conscious algorithms is imperative. This includes designing algorithms that focus not only on engagement metrics but also consider users' psychological well-being and promote information diversity and healthy dialogue. Collaboration between platform developers, researchers, policymakers, and civil society is necessary to create a digital space that is not only innovative but also socially responsible, for a more inclusive and informative future of communication.

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