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THE LANGUAGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA: EXPLORING SPEECH FUNCTIONS IN DIGITAL COMMUNICATION

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ABSTRACT

Social media has completely changed how individuals interact, communicate, and express themselves in the digital age. This study examines the voice functions used in WhatsApp conversations to delve into the complexities of digital communication. The study employs a qualitative research approach and examines user-generated content from WhatsApp through linguistic annotation, discourse analysis, and thematic coding. The investigation reveals several essential speech functions: expressive, social bonding, informative, performative, and pragmatic. While textual expressions are regularly used to celebrate accomplishments and offer encouragement, emojis, and emoticons are frequently utilized to convey feelings and support. Interpersonal ties are strengthened, and social solidarity is promoted by exchanging prayers and congrats. Furthermore, the performative nature of open expressions of thanks and support emphasizes the significance of social norms in digital communication. Practical behaviors, such as encouraging others and praying, represent cultural norms and heighten interpersonal honesty. This study highlights the intricate ways language functions in virtual environments. It offers insightful information about the mechanics of online communication and how it affects social norms and cultural relationships. The results highlight the importance of interpreting voice functions to successfully navigate and make sense of the rapidly changing digital communication world.

Key words: Speech function, Digital Communication, social media

I. Background of the Study

Social media has completely changed how individuals interact, communicate, and express themselves in the digital age. Considering how commonplace social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter are, it's critical to comprehend the terminology utilized there. By examining the speech functions used in social media conversations, this study sheds light on the complexities of digital communication.

In his book "Language and the Internet," expert linguists like Wright (2006) have emphasized the Internet's revolutionary effect on language. He talks about the emergence of new linguistic phenomena brought about by the digital age, such as the development of acronyms, internet slang, and emojis. Wright's observations offer a basic comprehension of the linguistic changes that are taking place in online speech. Comparably, Danesi's (2017) study in "The Semiotics of Emoji: The Rise of Visual Language in the Age of the Internet" clarifies emojis' semiotic role in computer-mediated communication. Emojis are now commonly used in social media conversations as visual clues for expressing various emotions, reactions, and nuanced expressions. Danesi's investigation of the use of emojis deepens our knowledge of the role symbols play in the construction of meaning in digital communications. Furthermore, Dutton (2013) thoroughly examines social media discourse and other facets of online communication in "The Oxford Handbook of Internet Studies." Their multidisciplinary approach explores the semiotic, pragmatic, and sociolinguistic aspects of language use in online contexts, offering insightful information about the intricacies of digital communication dynamics.

Furthermore, influencers on social media have attracted a lot of attention lately (Sagala and Rezeki, 2022). "I Tweet Honestly, I Tweet Passionately: Twitter Users, Context Collapse, and the Imagined Audience" by

Marwick and Boyd (2011) explores the performative elements of Twitter communication as well as the idea of "context collapse." Their study sheds light on how users negotiate audience expectations and their self-presentation in the online public domain. Furthermore, social media has more excellent societal effects on language and communication than individual interactions. Baron's "Words Onscreen: The Fate of Reading in a Digital World" (2015) explores how digital technology affects language understanding and reading habits. Through his analysis of the cognitive implications of screen-based reading, Baron emphasizes the importance of critically assessing how technology advancements affect language use.

Considering these academic contributions, this study expands on previous findings by investigating the speech functions ingrained in social media discourse. By examining linguistic characteristics, communicative tactics, and contextual factors, it seeks to offer a comprehensive comprehension of language use in digital communication environments.

The present investigation is centered on analyzing speech functions employed in digital communication, namely on social media platforms. Speech functions are the many goals or motives that underlie language use, including social bonding, knowledge sharing, emotion expression, and validation seeking. Through an analysis of the linguistic elements and communicative techniques utilized in virtual conversations, this study aims to reveal the fundamental reasons behind language use in virtual environments.

Several groundbreaking studies have established the foundation for comprehending language use in digital communication. In his book "Language and the Internet," Dutton (2013) examined how language has evolved in response to the Internet, highlighting the creation of novel linguistic occurrences in online interactions. Likewise, Danesi (2017) investigated the semiotic importance of emojis in digital communication, emphasizing their function as components of visual language. In "The Oxford Handbook of Internet Studies," Herring et al. (2013) thoroughly analyzed the sociolinguistic, pragmatic, and semiotic aspects of Internet communication dynamics. Marwick and Boyd (2011) examined how the Twitter conversation is performative. They explored the idea of "context collapse," providing insight into how people present themselves in online public spaces. Baron (2015) investigated the language comprehension implications and cognitive effects of screen-based reading in his book "Words Onscreen: The Fate of Reading in a Digital World."

Research on digital communication is expanding, but more needs to be done to understand the speech functions used in social media conversations. Even while earlier research has touched on several topics related to language use online, more needs to be known regarding the complex goals and motives underlying digital communication practices. By investigating the speech functions incorporated into social media interactions, this study aims to close this gap and offer insights into the fundamental dynamics of online communication.

II. RESEARCH METOE

This study used a qualitative research approach to investigate voice functions in digital communication, with a particular focus on WhatsApp interactions. The selection of the qualitative approach facilitated a comprehensive analysis of the subtle applications of language in social media exchanges, offering valuable perspectives on the socio-cultural elements and communication tactics involved (Patton, 2002; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Silverman, 2021; Huberman, 2014).

The primary data source used in this research was user-generated material on WhatsApp. Because WhatsApp talks are widely used and cover many different communication styles, they offer a rich background for analyzing real-time digital communication.

Data from WhatsApp chats was purposefully sampled to obtain the data. This approach focuses on certain dialogues likely to involve various speech functions. The sampling comprises conversations from multiple

demographic groups and subject categories to guarantee a thorough grasp of language use across different social circumstances.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result of the Study

Example of Data Analysis

Data 1

[19:22, 6/1/2024] Congratulation indah
[19:27, 6/1/2024] Selamat jg kakak
[19:29, 6/1/2024] Iya ndo alhamdulillah rezeki thn ini setelah sekian purnama. Trakhir 2016 kk dpt baru ini dpt lg.
[19:30, 6/1/2024] Oiya?? Hehe Alhamdulillah ya kak Tetap semangaaaat
[19:34, 6/1/2024 Iya ndo □

Based on the provided social media chat data, here's an analysis focusing on speech functions in digital communication:

Expressive Function:

- Emoticons and emojis such as □ are used to express emotions of warmth, congratulations, and support.
- Textual expressions like "Congratulation indah" and "Selamat jg kakak" convey positive sentiments and celebratory wishes.

Social Bonding Function:

- Users engage in mutual congratulatory messages and expressions of happiness, fostering a sense of camaraderie and social cohesion.
- The exchange of greetings and well-wishes strengthens interpersonal relationships and affirms social connections between users.

Informational Function:

- Users share personal news and updates, providing information about significant life events (e.g., "Thn ini setelah sekian purnama," "Trakhir 2016 kk dpt baru ini dpt lg").
- Details about past and present achievements are shared, giving insight into individual experiences and milestones.

Performative Function:

- The act of congratulating and expressing gratitude publicly serves a performative function, allowing users to showcase their social interactions and positive relationships within their social network.
- Users perform roles as supportive friends or family members, reinforcing social norms of celebration and acknowledgment.

Pragmatic Function:

- Users engage in pragmatic communication by offering words of encouragement and support ("Tetap semangaaaat").
- The use of religious expressions such as "Alhamdulillah" reflects cultural norms and values, conveying gratitude and blessings within the conversation.

Overall, the chat data exemplifies how speech functions manifest in digital communication, encompassing expressions of emotion, social bonding, information sharing, performative acts, and pragmatic communication strategies.

Data 2

[21:52, 5/30/2024] Semangat terus ibu... Tetap sehat selalu mamasiswa □
[21:59, 5/30/2024] Aamiin ya Allah, semangaaat dan sehat2 jg ibuu □□
[22:00, 5/30/2024] Aamiin Allahuma aamiin
[22:00, 5/30/2024] Terima kasih ibu

Analyzing the provided social media chat data based on speech functions in digital communication:

Expressive Function:

- Emoticons and emojis such as □ are used to express affection, care, and support towards the recipient

("Semangat terus ibu... Tetap sehat selalu mamasiswa □").

- The repeated use of emojis like □□ amplifies the emotional tone and reinforces the message of well-wishes and encouragement.

Social Bonding Function:

- Users exchange blessings and wishes for good health, fostering a sense of empathy and solidarity ("Semangat terus ibu... Tetap sehat selalu mamasiswa," "Aamiin ya Allah, semangaaat dan sehat2 jg ibuu").
- The reciprocal exchange of blessings and prayers strengthens interpersonal connections and builds rapport between users.

Performative Function:

- Users perform the role of well-wishers and supporters by offering prayers and expressing good intentions ("Aamiin Allahuma aamiin," "Terima kasih ibu").
- The act of expressing gratitude ("Terima kasih ibu") serves a performative function, acknowledging the supportive gesture and affirming social norms of reciprocity and appreciation.

Pragmatic Function:

- Users engage in pragmatic communication by offering prayers for the well-being and health of the recipient ("Aamiin ya Allah, semangaaat dan sehat2 jg ibuu").
- Religious expressions such as "Aamiin ya Allah" reflect cultural values and beliefs, conveying blessings and invoking divine protection within the conversation.

In summary, the chat data exemplifies how speech functions operate in digital communication, encompassing expressions of affection, social bonding, performative acts, and pragmatic communication strategies aimed at offering support, encouragement, and blessings.

Discussion

Expressive Function:

The use of emojis, such as □ and □, plays a critical role in conveying emotions and sentiments in social media interactions. Emojis serve as visual aids that enhance the emotional tone of the conversation. For example, in the first data set, the use of "□" and expressions like "Congratulation indah" and "Selamat jg kakak" effectively convey feelings of joy and congratulations. Similarly, in the second data set, emojis like "□" are used to express affection and support. These expressive elements help users to communicate emotions more vividly, making the interaction more engaging and empathetic.

Social Bonding Function:

Social media interactions often aim to foster social connections and a sense of community. In the provided data, users engage in mutual congratulatory messages and expressions of encouragement, which strengthen social bonds. The exchange of well-wishes and blessings, such as "Semangat terus ibu" and "Tetap sehat selalu mamasiswa □," demonstrates how digital communication can reinforce social ties and build rapport. This bonding function is essential for maintaining and nurturing relationships in a virtual environment, where physical presence is absent.

Informational Function:

Digital communication often involves sharing personal updates and information about significant life events. In the first data set, users share personal achievements and updates, such as "Thn ini setelah sekian purnama," and "Trakhir 2016 kk dpt baru ini dpt lg." This informational exchange provides context and background to the conversation, allowing users to stay informed about each other's lives. The sharing of such information helps in maintaining a sense of continuity and relevance in social media interactions.

Performative Function:
The performative aspect of social media communication is evident in the public display of support and gratitude. Users perform roles as supportive friends or family members by publicly expressing congratulations and encouragement. For instance, phrases like "Tetap semangaaaat" and "Terima kasih ibu" are not only expressions of support but also performative acts that showcase the user's role in the social network. These performative acts help in reinforcing social norms and expectations related to acknowledgment and celebration.

Pragmatic Function:
Pragmatic communication involves practical aspects of language use, such as offering support, encouragement, and invoking blessings. In both data sets, users engage in pragmatic communication by offering words of encouragement ("Semangat terus ibu") and religious blessings ("Aamiin ya Allah"). These pragmatic elements reflect cultural norms and values, highlighting the role of religion and tradition in digital communication. The use of religious expressions like "Alhamdulillah" and "Aamiin Allahuma aamiin" underscores the cultural context within which the conversation occurs, adding depth and authenticity to the interaction.

Overall, the analysis of speech functions in social media interactions reveals the multifaceted nature of digital communication. Emoticons and emojis enhance expressiveness, while informational exchanges keep users connected and informed. Social bonding and performative functions strengthen interpersonal relationships and reinforce social norms. Pragmatic communication, including religious expressions, reflects the cultural underpinnings of digital interactions. Understanding these speech functions provides valuable insights into the dynamics of language use in digital spaces, offering a nuanced perspective on how users navigate and negotiate meaning in their online interactions.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study has delved into the intricacies of digital communication by examining the speech functions utilized within social media interactions. The analysis of chat data reveals that digital communication on platforms such as WhatsApp encompasses a diverse range of speech functions, each serving distinct purposes in facilitating interaction and meaning-making. In conclusion, the study underscores the multifaceted nature of language use in digital communication. The varied speech functions identified illustrate how social media platforms serve as rich sites for emotional expression, social bonding, information sharing, performative acts, and pragmatic communication. Understanding these functions provides a nuanced perspective on the dynamics of online interactions, offering valuable insights into how users navigate and negotiate meaning in the digital age. This understanding is essential for both linguists and social media practitioners aiming to comprehend and enhance communication in digital environments.

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