The Role of *Alay* Language in Online Relationship Dissolution: A Netnographic Study of TikTok Trend "*Kenapa Gak Coba Sama Yang Baru?*"

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ABSTRACT

The "Kenapa gak coba sama yang baru?" TikTok trend in Indonesia highlights the use of "typing jelek" in online relationship dissolution, in this case Alay language. This study aims to explore the motivations behind sharing private conversational failures on social media platforms and its impact on personal relationships, particularly within the context of the trend on TikTok. A netnographic content analysis of 28 TikTok posts following this trend reveals how Alay language can create negative first impressions in early stages of online relationships. The use of Alay language is now often perceived as outdated and can create a horn effect, negatively influencing overall perceptions of the sender, reflecting broader societal attitudes and cultural shifts in digital communication norms, where a more structured and contemporary language is preferred. This trend also provides insights into how cultural nuances intersect with evolving digital norms across societies. The high engagement rates of posts featuring Alay language miscommunications suggest that this content resonates strongly with TikTok users, likely due to its relatability or entertainment value. Creators following this trend suggested were seeking validation and emotional support from others who have had similar experiences and engaging in a form of digital self-presentation. This study contributes to our understanding of how social media platforms can serve as spaces for shared experiences, even when those experiences are negative, potentially offering users a sense of community and validation through the sharing of communication mishaps.

Keywords: alay language, online self-presentation, social media trends, cultural shifts

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of new interpersonal connections via online platforms, including both romantic and non-romantic associations, is enabled by the widespread availability and variety of online dating services. Individuals have the opportunity to engage with a diverse pool of potential partners and friends, with the option to filter and select based on specific criteria including interests, geographical location, and personal attributes. Online platforms offer a virtual space for individuals to create a favorable representation of themselves, thereby facilitating the initiation of interactions that have the potential to foster deeper connections. These relationships have the potential to transition from virtual interactions to in-person encounters, providing a contemporary approach to cultivating diverse connections (Oktawirawan & Pamungkas, 2023). The growth of online relationships has led to the development of successful and unsuccessful meetings with new potential partners. This happens because of deception where users often present an idealized version of their profile which can lead to misleading information (Zhang, 2023). Computer-mediated communication (CMC) is now a vital everyday tool in contemporary society, with messaging platforms and social media serving as widely used means of communication. The unequal information exchange and dissemination through CMC can create mistrust and disappointment when people meet in person. CMC has been accused of reducing communication quality and negatively affecting both offline and online relationships as CMC relies on verbal cues rather than face-to-face interaction, thus leaving room for misinterpretation (Thurlow et al., 2004).

Social media platforms have transformed into dynamic spaces where people not only communicate but also engage in a form of digital dramaturgy, carefully curating and presenting their online personas. As emerging platforms continue to evolve, they offer new ways for users to express themselves and connect with others. This has led to a culture of widespread sharing, where individuals freely post about their lives, thoughts, and experiences. People now share everything from personal accomplishments to failures, with the latter often gaining popularity as relatable and

entertaining content. This openness has created a virtual stage where users can project their identities, engage with others through shared content, and gain insights into different perspectives and lifestyles. The impact of social media on society and culture is far-reaching, influencing how people form relationships, consume information, and shape their worldviews (Munasaroh, 2021). As long as the Internet exists, social media will likely continue to play a crucial role in shaping our digital interactions and cultural landscape.

There are many kinds of contents on social media platforms. Those that can generate the most engagements are contents that showed authenticity of the creator, by showing real life experiences. With the rise of AI and staged content on social media, current audiences are in the search of more authentic content as a way to see how people live their lives outside their own. One of the examples is the popularity of Praz Teguh, an influencer from Padang, who rose to fame by creating authentic content that resonates with the youth audience (Diego et al., 2023). Studies done by Ayub et al. (2017) and Rachmawati & Nurhajati (2019) also showed that creating a good personal branding is important for future content creators by focusing on their specialization and visibility.

TikTok has emerged as a popular social media platform, used by millions globally (Guinaudeau et al., 2022). While initially known for dance videos and challenges, TikTok has expanded to become a space for sharing knowledge and experiences across various domains. In April 2024, there was a trend in Indonesian TikTok called "*Kenapa gak coba sama yang baru?*", which translated to "Why not try with someone new?". This trend revolved around the experiences of meeting someone new during the early stages of a relationship. This stage of communication happened through text messaging via social media and dating apps. The early stage of online relationship development is critical because it sets the foundation for how individuals perceive each other, primarily through computer-mediated communication. In computer-mediated communication, almost all interactions heavily relied on verbal cues, and it is up to the receiver on how to interpret the message. The messenger can also create different kinds of images they want to portray themselves to the receiver.

Because of the lack of face-to-face interactions, users can determine compatibility, personality, and potential for further connections based on verbal communications alone (Thurlow et al., 2011). The posted contents are mostly in the form of slideshows with the cover using a photo with the text "*Kenapa gak sama yang baru?*" and screenshots of the messages in the next slide. All of the contents use a snippet of the song *Ingkar* by Tulus originally posted by the TikTok account @storytulus on March 9, 2024. The snippet included the lyrics mentioned:

> "*Aku coba dengan yang baru* (I was trying with someone new)
>
> *Kukira hilang bayangmu* (I thought your shadow would disappear)
>
> *Namun, tiap dengan yang baru* (However, everytime I'm with them)
>
> *Rasanya seperti ku berbohong dan curangimu* (It felt like I was lying and cheating on you)"

The "*Kenapa gak coba sama yang baru?*" trend highlighted the reasons on the dissolution of relationships on the early stage. Content creators shared screenshots of conversations where miscommunications occurred due to various factors, including the use of internet slang, regional dialects, and differing language proficiencies. This trend garnered significant engagement, with tens of thousands of posts and thousands of comments reacting to the behaviors displayed. The trend includes the use of "*typing jelek*" or ugly typing which led to the dismissal of interaction based on initial impressions. "*Typing jelek*" can be defined as typing words or phrases that is not grammatically and phonetically proper, hence making it harder to read the messages sent. Most of the conversations captured showed that the messenger did not meet the receiver's expectation by using "*typing jelek*" which transcribe to using Alay language. Alay came from the abbreviation of '*anak layangan*' and '*anak lebay*' can be distinguished from the use of random capitalization, abbreviation, jargon, and punctuation mark placements (Trimastuti et al., 2017). The rise of Alay speaking came from the heightened use of SMS and internet lingo with the addition of customization of words and widely popular in social media in the early 2000s. It is not necessarily bad to use Alay language in conversations via text. With the correlation of sociolinguistics theory, those who use the same language and speech structures can flourish in their

relationship. This can suggest that the messenger and the receiver came from similar social backgrounds and, despite the difference in geographical locations, have familiarity with the terms used in their communication (Tang et al., 2020). However, in this day and age, using Alay texting patterns is considered to be outdated, especially with the change from keypad to QWERTY keyboards used for texting in smartphones. Granted that is now easier to type legible words using a QWERTY-style keyboard, the need to use Alay language as significantly decrease in the recent decade. With the addition of having unreadable forms of the same word structure, the receiver in this current era will have trouble understanding what the messenger sent. Instead of feeling excited about the text received, the receiver left feeling annoyed by having to actually decrypt the text first to understand what the messenger sent (Nurhayati, 2015).

Because this happened in a private conversation manner, most faced with this instance would not contact the person and move on with their life as if nothing happened. However, in this era of social media, users are more likely to share this experience using available trends, in this case using trends from TikTok (Yang et al., 2019). There have been risks of getting their personal information leaked via the internet, but most content posted has redacted the other users' display names. But this does not change the fact that the user still chose to share failure and bad luck that happened to them.

The purpose of this research is to explore the motivations behind sharing private conversational failures on social media platforms, particularly within the context of the "*Kenapa gak coba sama yang baru?*" trend on TikTok. By employing a qualitative approach to analyze the content affiliated with this trend, this study aims to contribute to the academic discourse on computer-mediated communication, online self-presentation, and the impact of social media trends on personal relationships. Simultaneously, it seeks to provide practical insights into the real-world implications of such sharing behaviors, informing social media users, content creators, and platform developers about potential risks and benefits. The findings of this research will not only enhance our understanding of the psychological and sociological factors driving these online behaviors but also offer valuable information for developing better

communication strategies, improving digital literacy, and promoting healthier online interactions in the contemporary digital landscape.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research employs a qualitative approach using the netnography method, which is designed to understand online cultures and communities through an ethnographic lens (Kozinets et al., 2018). Data was gathered by observing TikTok public accounts participating in the "*Kenapa gak sama yang baru?*" trend, specifically those using the sound from *Ingkar* by Tulus, posted by @storytulus during April 2024, when the trend peaked. Researchers, acting as passive observers, collected data through a snapshot approach (Carter et al., 2021), selecting 100 eligible contents based on predefined criteria. These contents were then reviewed to identify communication patterns leading to the termination of interpersonal relationships in their early stages. From the initial selection, 80 contents were chosen for their context of miscommunication, which were subsequently analyzed to uncover the reasons behind the miscommunication mentioned in the content. Each piece of content was categorized and coded to determine the specific reasons for relationship dissolution due to miscommunication. For the coding of each content, the codes were based on the characterization of Alay language, as stated by Trimastuti et al. (2017) as below.

1. Abbreviations: For example, "*otw*" for "on the way" or "*thx*" for "thanks".

2. Alphabet changing: Such as "*laper bingits*" instead of "*laper banget*" (very hungry).

3. Irregular capitalization: Like "*mo kEm4n4?*" for "*mau kemana?*" (where are you going?).

4. Use of numbers to replace letters: For instance, "*13RuaN*" for "*Buruan*" (hurry up).

5. Mixing of letters and numbers: As in "*Gi n4pn*" for "*lagi ngapain*" (what are you doing?).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Out of 80 contents were selected based on their context of miscommunication, 28 TikTok posts related to the "*Kenapa gak coba sama yang baru?*" trend found to have the use of Alay language that led to the miscommunication. Analysis of the screenshots reveals several key aspects of this phenomenon. These include the use of irregular abbreviations, capitalizations, and the mix of numbers and letters in text, in accordance to the Alay language characterization mentioned by Trimastuti et al. (2017), shown in sampled contents on Table 1. The perception of Alay language as cringe to people with higher socio-economic status underscores the complex interplay between language use, social class, and online identity.

Table 1 Examples of sampled contents that followed the trend and engagement results

Content link	Published date	Sample of Alay text in content	Engagement		
			Likes	Comments	Shares
https://www.tiktok.com/@i5uckers.era/video/7353568686571097349?lang=en	April 3, 2024	Messenger texted "*water pov*" instead of waterproof	385,300	41,800	79,400
https://www.tiktok.com/@aerimeong/photo/7353922907828931845?is_from_webapp=1&sender_device=pc&web_id=7363563069278209552	April 4, 2024	Messenger texted "*Psti suara [receiver] Cntix*" instead of "*Pasti suara [receiver] cantik*", meaning the receiver's voice must be beautiful.	376,100	36,900	29,200
https://www.tiktok.com/@i5uckers.era/photo/735329395762905	April 2, 2024	Messenger supposed to be sleep call but turn into "*slip school*"	390,500	26,600	54,100

4214?lang=en					
https://www.tiktok.com/@punyamarkleeee3/photo/7353149595200818438?is_from_webapp=1&sender_device=pc&web_id=7363563069278209552	April 2, 2024	Messenger texted "*Qmu dah vulank?*" instead of "*Kamu sudah pulang*?" meaning "Are you home yet?"	345,000	17,900	41,100
https://www.tiktok.com/@oishipopc0rn/photo/7356500085942881541?lang=en	April 11, 2024	Messenger texted "*vervek*" instead of perfect	249,300	10,300	31,800
https://www.tiktok.com/@studiotas/photo/7354330349855411462?lang=en	5 April 2024	Messenger texted "*koperet*" instead of corporate	45,000	1,858	7,966

Figure 1 "*waterfup*" and "*water pov*" instead of waterproof

The first conversation shown on Figure 1, the creator wrote "*alisku ga luntur dari pagi weh*" (*My eyebrows haven't faded since this morning*), and which the

messenger replied "water pup yah alisnyah? [heart emoji] cwk mh alishnyah natural [laughing emoji] cwk ribet harus beli alis waterfup. Jast kidding [laughing emoji]" [*Waterproof yah alisnya? Cewek mah alisnya natural, cewek ribet harus beli alis waterproof. Just kidding*] (Is your eyebrows waterproof? Girls have natural eyebrows. Difficult girls need to buy waterproof eyebrow [pencil]. Just kidding). At first, the creator didn't understand what the messenger meant by "*waterpup*", thinking it might be something else. The messenger replied with "*water pov*" and claiming to have mistyped the word, yet still misspelled the word waterproof.

Figure 2 "*selip school*" instead of sleep call

In the second content example on Figure 2, the messenger asked the creator "*Selip school ndak*" [*Sleep call tidak?*] meaning the messenger asked the creator for a sleep call and tried calling the creator. The creator declined because they were already tired, which made the messenger responded "*Ndk suka yah selip school sama ak. Ak mah aph g se whort eat itu selip school sama cwek kayak kmu. Dhlh guth nigh, izin blok. Jgn cri gua lgh*" [*Tidak suka ya sleep call sama aku? Aku mah apa ga se-worth it itu sleep call sama cewek kayak kamu. Sudah lah good night, izin blok. Jangan cari gua lagi.*] (You don't like sleep calling with me, right? I'm not worth it to have a sleep call with you. Alright then, good night, permission to block you. Don't go look for me again.) which led to the messenger blocking the creator leaving the creator confused with the messenger.

Figure 3 Comments about the "*waterpov*" post on Figure 1

The trend's popularity is evident from the high engagement on these posts, with the comments from the post shown on Figure 1 evidenced in Figure 3 receiving more than 385,000 likes, 41,800 comments and 79,400 shares. Netizens were actively participating in decoding and discussing Alay terms. For instance, user @Shizuka_eca humorously suggests "*water pup itu mencret ga si artinya*" (Does water poop mean diarrhea?), receiving 59,300 likes and user @urshawtyyy asked if "*water pup*" could meant water park, receiving 43,800 likes. Other users were commenting on the creator wondering why the creator would respond to the confusing messages that the messenger sent based on the context of the conversation.

Figure 4 Comments about the "*selip school*" post on Figure 2

Same goes for the comments on post on Figure 2 evidenced in Figure 4, netizens were eager to decrypt the text that the messenger sent. A user with the screen name @aencelea?, provides translations for various Alay terms mentioned, including "*selip school*" and "*whort eat*" garnering 1,727 likes. Other users, such as @[star] and @acaaa, jokingly and ironically used "*selip school*" and "*guth nigh*" in response to the content. This evidence of engagement demonstrates that users find entertainment and relatability in these linguistic misunderstandings.

Discussion

Based on the findings, language choices and typing patterns can impact first impressions and early relationship development. Because the communication occurred using CMC, verbal cues were the only components used to judge the messenger's first impressions. While time is needed to objectively review the whole interaction, having a bad first impression during the texting stage, in this case, Alay texting, can create a horn effect on the messenger. In interpersonal relationships, having a horn effect is the exact opposite of a halo effect. The horn effect, which is the opposite of the halo effect, occurs when a single negative trait unduly influences one's perception of another, causing the whole impression to be viewed negatively. This cognitive bias can lead to a

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distorted view of the person, affecting how future interactions are perceived and conducted. Recognizing and mitigating the horn effect is crucial to ensure fair and balanced evaluations of others, as it can lead to prejudice and hinder the development of meaningful relationships. With having a subjectively bad texting structure or using Alay language in general, the whole impression of the messenger can be viewed negatively (Noor et al., 2023). Just by the messages sent, the receiver can directly judge the messengers' profile by the way they text. Although you can't judge a book by its cover, having a good first impression will leave a better impression on the receiver of what is more to come. The prevalence of Alay language as a cause for relationship dissolution underscores the importance of language proficiency and communication style in forming positive first impressions online (Weisbuch et al., 2009).

Although most receivers will just dismiss the interaction after receiving a bad first impression from the messenger, some decided to post their interaction on social media with the messengers' identities redacted. The form of sharing these private messages to the public is related to the need of self-disclosure behavior on social media users. People tend to share experiences that happened in their life through social media, including their interactions with other people. By sharing these stories through this trend, they want to find if other people went through a similar situation and thus can relate to them. Showing that the other users can relate to the original user's post can be shown by interacting to said post (Krämer & Schäwel, 2020). The context that was chosen to be shown for their content showed the deliberate display of refusal to meet new people and blaming it on having used Alay language. As previously stated, using Alay language is considered cringe in this decade. Showcasing behavior that is considered cringe through content can easily generate reactions for other users. A research done by Sihombing et al. (2021), Kekeyi, a popular Indonesian YouTuber, strategically uses controversial content and maintains a unique image to attract and retain viewers, despite receiving both positive and negative reactions. Kekeyi deliberately maintains her unconventional appearance and creates controversial content as part of her strategy to maintain and increase her popularity on YouTube. Furthermore, sharing stories of meeting new people and feeling disappointed is now a

popular way to connect with others who have had similar experiences, a trend that Kekeyi has also capitalized on through her content creation and online persona management.

This trend's focus on sharing negative experiences aligns with the concept of mocking of cringe behavior as a form of entertainment. Based on the responses generated from contents following this trend, other than laughing at the behavior, most users find using Alay language in typing is cringe and outdated, and somewhat infuriating to them. Because the original poster is the receiver in this situation, the audience is laughing with the creator, not at the creator themselves. Both the creator and its audience considered this behavior to be cringe. As previously stated, the use of Alay language in this decade is considered to be outdated and not hip according to current Indonesian youth culture standards when used unironically. This trend even categorizes the use of Alay language as "*typing jelek*", thus making it cringe. Cringe behavior can be described as a behavior that is opposed to what the dominant culture currently adapts. In a review done by Verma (2021), some social media contents in India made from people from the lower castes are considered to be cringe when watched by people from the upper castes. While for the creators is normal and doing the best that they know of, because of being different from the upper castes audience's norm, it made to be something to be made fun of. Similar case to a study done by Syafa'ati & Khusyairi (2023) about the Citayam Fashion Week phenomenon, where adolescents came from lower-class suburban areas of Jakarta visiting Sudirman Central Business District, a Jakarta metropolitan district area that is considered to be elite, as a way of expressing themselves in the city. While the government and a lot of people praised and supported this phenomenon, some viewed this negatively as the people visiting are 'dirtying' the area with their choice of clothing, so it doesn't have the same elite feeling when visiting the area. The "*Kenapa gak coba sama yang baru?*" trend facilitated content creators to tapping into a shared cultural understanding that such communication styles are considered outdated or undesirable. Viewers who perceive themselves as having a higher socio-economic status, as they may view Alay language use as indicative of lower social standing or education levels. The perception of Alay language as cringe to

people with higher socio-economic status highlights the complex interplay between language use, social class, and online identity (Tang et al. 2020).

The enjoyment of cringe content in the form of observing people with cringe behaviors is not a new concept. Cringe contents can be found on many forms of media, from television to social media. While it can create a sense of furious for the audience, most chose to just laugh on the behaviors itself, as if they were in on the joke. A research done by Marso (2019) explains that people enjoy cringe content because they can laugh at the absurdity of the situation and it gave them a unique and thought-provoking experience. Engagement generated from the contents posted in the form of comments showed that viewers poking fun at the "*typing jelek*" behavior by trying to decrypt the message and ironically using the said terms. Furthermore, Pradhan & Drake (2023) also suggests that watching cringe content can create liberatory exercise for viewers by finding that embracing cringe representations of undesired selves can lead to self-compassion, empathy for others, and understanding one's own limitations and place in the world. Because Alay language used unironically is considered to be outdated in this decade, viewers find themselves relieved to have not used that kind of language that is deemed unreadable. Watching the contents through "*Kenapa gak coba sama yang baru?*" trend somewhat gave the audience a sense of relief of not having to meet the people who still use "*typing jelek*", yet still gave sympathy to the creator for having to deal with said people.

CONCLUSION

The "*Kenapa gak coba sama yang baru?*" TikTok trend in Indonesia provides valuable insights into online communication and social media behavior. Language proficiency and communication style play a crucial role in forming positive first impressions in CMC, especially without non-verbal cues. Alay language when used unironically can negatively influence overall perceptions of the sender, leading to the dissolution of early relationship. This trend highlights the cultural shifts in internet

trends and how it can determine first impressions through verbal communication mediated by technology. The perception of Alay language as cringe to people with higher socio-economic status underscores the relationship between language use, social class, and online identity. Creators sharing their experiences with this trend are looking for validation and finding people who can relate to them. This demonstrates how social media platforms can serve as spaces for shared experiences, even when those experiences are negative, potentially offering users a sense of community and validation through the sharing of communication mishaps. The audience enjoys this trend by finding entertainment in the sender's cringe-worthy behaviors. This phenomenon suggests that engaging with such content may help the audience understand their own social positioning and how they differ from similar behaviors in real life.

This research contributes to our understanding of evolving digital communication norms in Indonesia, particularly among younger users. It also sheds light on how social media trends can reflect and reinforce cultural attitudes towards language use and social status. For future research, it would be valuable to explore how these online communication patterns translate to offline interactions and relationships. Additionally, investigating the long-term effects of sharing private conversations on social media platforms could provide insights into changing notions of privacy and self-presentation in the digital age.

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