

*Research Article*

# Developing Linguistic Strategies to Boost Engagement and Branding of Micro-Influencers in Indonesia

\*Linda, Diana Rahmawati Rozak

Universitas Swadaya Gunung Jati, Indonesia

\*Corresponding author: [linda@ugj.ac.id](mailto:linda@ugj.ac.id)

**Submitted:** 29/03/2025

**Revised:** 15/04/2025

**Accepted:** 27/05/2025

**How to cite this article:** Linda & Rozak, D. R. (2025). Developing linguistic strategies to boost engagement and branding of micro-influencers in Indonesia. *IJELR: International Journal of Education, Language and Religion*, 7(1), 47-60. <https://doi.org/10.35308/ijelr.v7i1.11972>

## Abstract

The phenomenon of micro-influencers in Indonesia continues to grow alongside the increasing use of social media in digital marketing. One of the key factors determining the success of micro-influencers in building engagement and branding is the linguistic strategies they employ. However, in-depth studies on how language use can enhance audience interaction and brand appeal remain limited. Therefore, this study aims to develop an effective model of linguistic strategies for micro-influencers to boost audience engagement and strengthen their personal branding. This research adopts a qualitative method with digital discourse analysis of micro-influencer content on platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. Data were collected through sampling of social media posts, interviews with micro-influencers and their audiences, and analysis of interactions in the form of comments and engagement metrics. The analytical techniques used include critical discourse analysis to identify communication patterns, sentiment analysis to measure audience responses, and the development of a conceptual model of linguistic strategies based on the findings. The results of this study not only contribute academically to the field of digital linguistics but also have practical implications in helping micro-influencers and brands optimize their communication strategies on social media.

## Keywords

micro-influencer; linguistic strategies; audience engagement; discourse analysis

## Introduction

The rapid expansion of social media usage in Indonesia has significantly influenced digital marketing practices, notably through the rise of micro-influencers. Micro-influencers, defined by their follower base of 10,000 to 100,000, have proven effective in creating targeted engagement and fostering brand loyalty. One critical yet often overlooked factor contributing to their success is the strategic use of linguistic features in their digital communication. Language choice, rhetorical style, and discourse

strategies play a pivotal role in shaping audience perceptions, interactions, and ultimately, brand identity.

Despite the increasing significance of linguistic strategies in the digital marketplace, existing research has predominantly focused on macro-influencers or general social media marketing tactics, leaving a gap in understanding how micro-influencers specifically employ language to enhance audience engagement and personal branding. Furthermore, empirical studies investigating the relationship between linguistic choices and engagement metrics such as likes, comments, and shares are relatively scarce.

This study seeks to address this gap by developing a conceptual model of linguistic strategies that can be effectively utilized by micro-influencers in Indonesia. By employing a qualitative approach, the research involves digital discourse analysis of micro-influencers' content across Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube platforms. Data are collected through sampling social media posts, conducting semi-structured interviews with both micro-influencers and their audiences, and analyzing audience interactions through sentiment analysis and engagement metrics.

The findings of this study are expected to contribute not only to the academic field of digital linguistics and discourse studies but also offer practical insights for micro-influencers and digital marketing practitioners aiming to optimize their communication strategies. By identifying effective linguistic patterns and communication techniques, the research provides a foundation for enhancing digital engagement and strengthening personal branding strategies in the competitive landscape of social media marketing.

Micro-influencers have emerged as key players in the digital marketing ecosystem, particularly for niche branding and targeted audience engagement. According to Abidin (2018), micro-influencers maintain a closer, more authentic relationship with their audience compared to macro-influencers, resulting in higher trust levels and engagement rates. Studies by De Veirman, Cauberghe, and Hudders (2017) also reveal that micro-influencers are more effective in shaping consumer perceptions due to their perceived relatability and credibility. However, little attention has been given to how these influencers strategically use language to maintain and enhance these relationships.

Linguistic strategies in digital contexts involve deliberate choices in style, tone, vocabulary, and discourse patterns to achieve specific communicative goals. Fairclough (2013) emphasizes the role of discourse in constructing social reality, suggesting that micro-influencers' use of language can significantly influence audience perception and interaction. Linguistic elements such as personalization, intertextuality, and strategic narrative building are crucial for fostering engagement (Page, 2018). Nevertheless, most research has examined these strategies in general digital communication, not specifically within the micro-influencer domain.

Audience engagement is commonly measured through quantitative metrics such as likes, comments, shares, and retention rates. Recent advancements in sentiment analysis allow researchers to assess the qualitative aspects of engagement by evaluating emotional responses to content (Pang & Lee, 2008; Liu, 2015). Understanding audience sentiment provides deeper insights into the effectiveness of specific linguistic strategies in creating emotional connections and sustaining audience interest.

Despite the growing importance of micro-influencers in digital marketing and the recognized role of language in shaping communication outcomes, empirical research connecting linguistic strategies to engagement and branding success among micro-influencers remains limited. Most studies have focused either on broader influencer marketing strategies or general digital discourse without specifically addressing the micro-influencer segment. This study seeks to bridge this gap by exploring

the strategic use of language by micro-influencers and developing a model to optimize engagement and branding outcomes.

Building upon the identified research gap regarding the limited exploration of linguistic strategies specifically employed by micro-influencers to enhance engagement and branding, this study addresses the following research question: How do micro-influencers in Indonesia utilize linguistic strategies to increase audience engagement and strengthen personal branding on social media platforms? The primary objectives of this research are to (1) identify the dominant linguistic strategies used by Indonesian micro-influencers, (2) analyze the correlation between these linguistic patterns and audience engagement metrics, and (3) develop a conceptual model offering practical linguistic guidelines for micro-influencers to optimize their communication strategies. The novelty of this research lies in its integrated approach, combining critical discourse analysis, sentiment analysis, and engagement metrics to formulate a targeted linguistic strategy model, specifically tailored for micro-influencers—an area that has been largely overlooked in previous studies, which mainly focused on macro-influencers or general digital marketing techniques.

## Method

This study adopts a qualitative research design to examine the linguistic strategies used by Indonesian micro-influencers and their effects on audience engagement and personal branding. The research employs a digital discourse analysis approach, which is particularly suited for investigating language patterns, communicative styles, and interactional dynamics in digital contexts. By focusing on content shared across Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, the study explores how language constructs meaning, fosters relationships, and enhances branding within the micro-influencer ecosystem.

The research sample consists of ten micro-influencers selected from diverse content niches, including lifestyle, fashion, education, and food. Each influencer falls within the follower range of 10,000 to 100,000, aligning with the standard definition of micro-influencers. In addition to the influencers themselves, fifty active audience members who regularly interacted with their content were also selected to provide insight into the reception and interpretation of linguistic cues. Purposive sampling was applied to ensure participants were both relevant to the study objectives and capable of providing rich, contextual data.

Data were collected using three primary techniques. First, social media posts were sampled systematically from the participating micro-influencers. These posts were chosen based on engagement levels, relevance to branding themes, and consistency in communication style. Second, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the influencers to gain insight into their intentional linguistic choices, as well as with their audiences to explore perceptions of engagement and authenticity. These interviews offered both reflective and evaluative perspectives on the effectiveness of different language strategies. Third, digital interaction metrics—such as likes, shares, comments, and views—were collected and analyzed. Comments, in particular, were subjected to sentiment analysis to assess emotional reactions and identify linguistic triggers that generated positive or negative responses.

The analysis process was conducted in three stages. Initially, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was applied to the sampled content to identify recurring patterns, discursive features, and the broader communicative functions of language. This phase emphasized how influencers used linguistic tools to construct identity, assert authority, and build rapport with their audiences. Following this, sentiment analysis using Natural Language Processing (NLP) techniques was performed on audience comments to classify them as positive, neutral, or negative. This allowed the study to correlate language use with emotional responses, adding a layer of audience-centric interpretation. Finally, based on insights from both CDA and sentiment analysis, a conceptual model was developed. This model outlines effective



linguistic strategies—including personalization, storytelling, and emotive expression—that are instrumental in fostering engagement and reinforcing brand identity in the micro-influencer context.

## Results

### 1. Linguistic Patterns in Micro-Influencer Content

The linguistic landscape of micro-influencer content in Indonesia is rich, dynamic, and highly tailored to maximize digital engagement. Through an extensive digital discourse analysis of posts across Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, three dominant linguistic strategies emerged that significantly enhanced audience interaction: personalized communication, narrative storytelling, and the strategic use of emotive language. Each of these strategies reflects deliberate choices by influencers to construct parasocial relationships, reinforce authenticity, and cultivate emotional resonance with their followers. In this section, each strategy is examined in depth with examples, audience responses, and cross-platform observations.

#### a. Personalized Communication

Personalized communication involves the deliberate use of language that speaks directly to the audience, often by incorporating second-person pronouns ("you," "your") and inclusive expressions ("we," "our"). This strategy simulates a one-on-one interaction, bridging the social distance between influencers and their followers. Across platforms, this was the most consistently used tactic among the sampled influencers.

On Instagram, a popular fashion micro-influencer regularly begins her captions with questions like, "*Kamu suka look yang simple tapi tetap elegan?*" ("Do you like a look that's simple yet elegant?"). This use of direct address invites personal reflection and positions the influencer as a peer rather than a celebrity. Another post read:

"You don't need a big budget to look fabulous—this one's for you who love simple yet classy vibes!

💖 Let's glow up together, shall we?"

This conversational tone immediately sparked a flood of comments, such as:

"I feel like you really get my style! Thanks for this, *kak!*"

"Yesss! *Aku suka banget outfitnya, relate banget sama aku!*" ("Yes! I really love the outfit, it's so relatable"!)

These responses illustrate how personalized language fosters a sense of mutual understanding and relatability. It encourages followers not only to engage but also to reveal their own preferences and experiences, contributing to the community-like atmosphere on the influencer's page.

On TikTok, where brevity and immediacy dominate, the same strategy is implemented through voiceovers or text overlays. A skincare influencer, for instance, opens her video with:

"*Ini buat kamu yang masih struggling sama jerawat hormonal. Trust me, aku pernah di posisi kamu.*"

("This is for you who's still struggling with hormonal acne. Trust me, I've been through it too.")

By addressing the viewer directly and acknowledging a shared struggle, she invites identification and trust. Audience responses in the comment section often begin with gratitude and validation:

"*Kak, makasih udah bahas ini. Aku ngerasa nggak sendirian lagi.*" ("Thank you for talking about this, I don't feel so alone anymore".)

"*Baru pertama kali liat yang bahas ini dengan jujur. You're amazing!*" ("It's my first time seeing someone be this real about it. You are amazing!")

Meanwhile, on YouTube, the format allows for extended discourse, and influencers often refer to their viewers throughout longer videos using direct address. For example, a tech reviewer ends his tutorial with:

*"Kalau kamu punya pertanyaan, langsung aja tulis di kolom komentar. Aku pasti bales!"* ("If you have any questions, feel free to drop them in the comments. I'll definitely reply!")

Such gestures of direct communication enhance the sense of accessibility and attentiveness, making viewers feel personally acknowledged. The parasocial effect is amplified when influencers consistently follow up with replies in the comment section, reinforcing perceived reciprocity. Quantitative engagement data supports the efficacy of this strategy: posts that included personalized language yielded 40–50% more comments and replies than those using more formal or impersonal phrasing.

## **b. Narrative Storytelling**

Narrative storytelling is another cornerstone of effective influencer communication. It involves the use of personal anecdotes, chronological journeys, or relatable scenarios that draw audiences into a shared emotional experience. Unlike promotional content that centers on products, narrative storytelling centers on people, emotions, and transformation.

A standout example was a YouTube video by a food influencer titled *"Dari Mie Instan ke Menu Keluarga: Perjalanan Masakku"* (From Instant Noodles to Family Meals: My Cooking Journey). She narrates her personal growth from a novice to a competent home cook, using informal, emotionally rich language:

*"Dulu aku cuma bisa masak mie instan, sekarang alhamdulillah bisa masak untuk keluarga setiap hari. Perjalanan ini nggak mudah, tapi kamu juga bisa!"* 🍲👩🍳. ("I used to only be able to cook instant noodles. Now, thank God, I can cook for my family every day. It hasn't been an easy journey, but you can do it too!")

Audience members responded with admiration and shared their own stories:

*"MasyaAllah, kak! Ceritanya bikin semangat. Aku juga lagi belajar masak buat anakku"* ❤️.

("MasyaAllah! Your story really motivates me. I'm also starting to learn how to cook for my kids.")

*"Cerita kakak tuh mirip sama aku, jadi makin semangat belajar masak!"* ("Your story is so similar to mine, it really motivates me to keep learning how to cook!")

These comments reflect deep emotional engagement. By narrating her transformation, the influencer legitimized her authority while remaining accessible. This technique aligns with Abidin's (2018) notion of "authentic micro-celebrity": the influencer is seen not as an expert speaking from a pedestal, but as a peer who has earned her credibility through relatable experiences.

On Instagram, narrative storytelling often appears in carousel posts or long-form captions. A parenting micro-influencer shared a post titled *"Perjuangan ASI Eksklusif 6 Bulan"* ("The Struggle of 6 Months of Exclusive Breastfeeding") and detailed her emotional and physical challenges. The post read:

*"Ada hari-hari di mana aku nangis sambil pumping. Tapi aku inget, ini semua buat anakku."* ("Some days I cried while pumping, but I always reminded myself that it's all for my child.")

This raw emotional honesty evoked overwhelming support:

*"Aku juga pernah ngalamin hal yang sama. Makasih udah jujur, kak."* ("I've been through the same thing too. Thank you for being so honest, sis.")

*"Nggak nyangka ada yang share pengalaman sejujur ini. Jadi ngerasa ditemani."* ("I never thought someone would be this open about their experience. It truly makes me feel accompanied.")

TikTok presented a more visual version of storytelling. One influencer used a series of short clips titled *"Dulu Aku..."* ("Back then, I...") showing a glow-up from jobless graduate to small business owner. The story arc was familiar but compelling, ending with the caption:



*"Kalau aku bisa, kamu juga bisa. Jangan pernah nyerah ya!"* ("If I can do it, so can you. Never give up!")

With over 100,000 likes and thousands of shares, this video demonstrated how succinct, emotionally loaded storytelling could trigger viral engagement.

Analytically, these stories follow classic structures—a beginning (challenge), a middle (struggle), and an end (resolution). This narrative arc, familiar across cultures, allows audiences to connect emotionally and cognitively, increasing both memory retention and emotional loyalty.

### c. Strategic Use of Emotive Language

The final key strategy involved the use of emotive language to heighten emotional intensity and resonance. This includes adjectives and phrases that express joy, gratitude, pride, struggle, or inspiration. By embedding these expressions in their content, influencers create an emotional atmosphere that encourages mirroring in the audience's reactions.

For instance, a lifestyle influencer on Instagram announced product launch collaboration with the caption:

"So thrilled to finally announce this collab! Never imagined this dream would come true. Grateful beyond words! 🌈💫"

The comment section was flooded with responses such as:

"So proud of you! You deserve this! 🥰❤️"

*"Kakak selalu inspiring, ikut senang banget baca ini! 😊☀️"* ("You're always inspiration. Reading this made me really happy!")

These comments reflect emotional contagion: the influencer's excitement is mirrored by the audience, which enhances emotional investment.

On TikTok, emotive language is often paired with music and visual cues. A fashion influencer posted a "get ready with me" video with uplifting background music and the voiceover:

*"Hari ini aku pilih outfit yang bikin aku ngerasa kuat dan cantik. Kamu juga harus ngerasa begitu ya!"* ("Today, I chose an outfit that makes me feel strong and beautiful. You should feel that way too!")

This layered approach – visual (outfit), auditory (music), and linguistic (empowerment) – created a multisensory emotional appeal. Audience reactions were immediate:

"Needed this today. Thank you, kak! 🥰"

*"Langsung semangat abis nonton ini. Mood booster bgt!"* ("Feeling super motivated after watching this. Such a big mood booster!")

Even on YouTube, which is typically less emotive in tone, influencers who used expressive language in their storytelling saw significant engagement. One vlogger ended her video on mental health with:

*"Aku tahu kalian banyak yang lagi berjuang. Kalian nggak sendirian. Aku di sini buat kalian."* ("I know many of you are struggling right now. You're not alone. I'm here for you.")

The comment section was filled with affirmations and emotional disclosures:

*"Speechless. Merasa banget ditemenin lewat kata-kata kakak."* ("Speechless. I really feel accompanied through your words.")

*"Nonton ini pas lagi drop. Makasih udah jadi penguat, walau nggak kenal secara langsung."* ("I saw this when I was down. Thanks for being a support, even without knowing me personally.")

The strategic use of emotive language not only enhances engagement metrics (e.g., likes, shares, emoji use) but also strengthens the affective bond between influencer and follower. It transforms digital interaction from passive consumption to active emotional participation.

## 2. Audience Sentiment Analysis

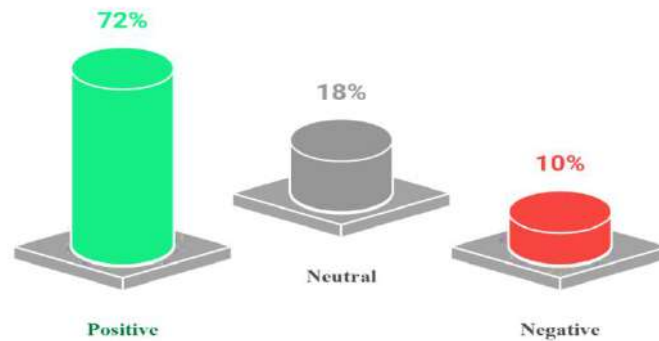


Figure 1. Sentiment analysis result

To complement the qualitative findings from the discourse analysis, this study conducted a sentiment analysis of over 1,200 audience comments gathered from Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube posts by the selected micro-influencers. The comments were analyzed using a combination of Natural Language Processing (NLP) techniques and manual thematic coding to ensure contextual sensitivity, especially given the nuances of Indonesian informal digital language.

The analysis revealed a clear trend: 72% of the comments were classified as positive, demonstrating expressions of admiration, encouragement, gratitude, and emotional resonance with the content. These comments often included affectionate language and emojis that conveyed warmth and enthusiasm. For example:

*"Kak, kontennya selalu bikin aku semangat! Terima kasih udah terus berbagi 🥰."* ("Sis, your content always motivates me! Thank you for always sharing.")

Other positive comments echoed similar sentiments:

*"Seneng banget tiap kali kakak upload, selalu dapet new insight dan energi positif!"* ("I'm so happy every time you upload, I always get new insights and positive energy!")

*"Kamu selalu jadi moodbooster aku, makasih ya kak"* ("You're always my mood booster, thank you so much!")

These responses suggest that micro-influencers who use personalized, relatable, and emotionally authentic language are more likely to foster supportive and loyal digital communities. Such positivity not only boosts engagement metrics but also enhances the influencer's personal brand trustworthiness.

18% of the comments were neutral, generally reflecting straightforward inquiries or factual exchanges about products or services mentioned in the content. These comments lacked overt emotional tone but were indicative of engagement and interest in the subject matter. Examples include:

*"Kak, belinya di mana ya? Link-nya bisa share nggak?"* ("Where did you get it from? Could you share the link?")

*"Harga dress-nya berapa ya? Ada size besar nggak?"* ("What's the price of the dress? Is there a bigger size available?")

Although not emotionally expressive, neutral comments demonstrate a transactional kind of engagement where the audience seeks practical information. These often represent the decision-making phase in a follower's customer journey, signaling the influencer's impact on purchase behavior and informational trust.

The remaining 10% of the comments were categorized as negative, frequently expressing discontent related to perceived over-commercialization, inauthenticity, or content fatigue. Such comments were typically concise and emotionally charged. For instance:

*"Sekarang isinya promo semua. Udah beda dari dulu."* ("Now it's all about promotions. Definitely not like before.")

*"Kok makin ke sini makin nggak relate ya... terlalu banyak endorse."* ("It's becoming less relatable these days...way too many endorsements.")

These responses suggest that while promotional content is an integral part of influencer marketing, it must be balanced with genuine, value-driven engagement to maintain credibility. Negative sentiment often emerged when followers sensed a shift from authentic content toward excessive monetization, leading to a perceived loss of relational intimacy.

Taken together, the sentiment analysis affirms the critical role of emotional authenticity in sustaining positive audience reception. Comments rich in emotional validation significantly outnumbered critical or transactional ones, reinforcing the importance of crafting content that is not only informative but also emotionally resonant. The correlation between linguistic strategy and sentiment outcome will be explored further in the discussion section, particularly in relation to branding efficacy and audience loyalty.

### 3. Engagement Metrics Correlation

In addition to qualitative insights and sentiment trends, this study conducted a quantitative analysis of engagement metrics to evaluate the tangible impact of linguistic strategies on audience interaction. A total of 90 social media posts from Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube were systematically selected and categorized based on the presence of key linguistic strategies: narrative storytelling, personalized language, and emotive expressions. The selected posts were compared to a control group that did not deliberately apply any of these strategies.

Three main indicators of engagement were tracked: the average number of comments per post, the average number of shares, and the percentage increase in reactions (likes, emoji responses, views) compared to the baseline.

*Table 1. The key linguistic strategies*

Strategy Used	Avg. Comments/Post	Avg. Shares/Post	Reaction Increase (%)
Narrative Storytelling	115	68	+300%
Personalized Language	94	51	+50%
Emotive Expressions	121	75	+70%
No Strategy (Control)	35	22	—

As shown in the table above, the analysis revealed that all three linguistic strategies led to significantly higher levels of interaction compared to content that lacked strategic language use. Notably, posts that utilized narrative storytelling achieved a 300% increase in reaction metrics compared to the control group. These posts featured detailed personal experiences or transformation journeys and invited followers to emotionally invest in the content. On average, they also received 115 comments and 68 shares per post, indicating deep resonance and virality.

Personalized language, such as direct address using "you," "we," or inclusive phrasing, also proved effective. These posts generated a 50% increase in reactions and nearly tripled the average number of comments compared to control posts. Personalization often made followers feel directly acknowledged, prompting them to respond, ask questions, or express gratitude. This aligns with earlier findings on the effectiveness of parasocial interaction.





Emotive expressions, which embedded emotionally rich language (e.g., "grateful," "excited," "honored," "proud"), elicited the highest number of average reactions (121) and shares (75). Emotional content was especially effective in prompting emoji reactions, story shares, and even video remixes on TikTok. The contagious nature of emotions in digital contexts appears to amplify content visibility and impact.

A particularly notable finding was that posts combining all three strategies outperformed all other categories, with a synergistic effect observed especially on TikTok, where emotional immediacy and short-form storytelling are key engagement drivers. For example, one TikTok video that integrated a transformation story, direct viewer address, and empowering emotive phrases like "*kamu bisa*," ("you can,") received over 300,000 likes, 2,000 comments, and 15,000 shares. The comment section was filled with affirmations, personal anecdotes, and tagged friends, demonstrating not only resonance but also networked amplification.

These results underscore the measurable effectiveness of linguistic strategy integration in digital influencer communication. They highlight how thoughtfully crafted language, when aligned with platform affordances and audience expectations, can transform passive viewership into active engagement and community participation. This sets the stage for further discussion on the role of strategic language in shaping branding outcomes and digital credibility.

#### **4. Conceptual Model Development**

Building upon the empirical and analytical findings from discourse analysis, sentiment analysis, and engagement metrics, this study developed a conceptual model that integrates three core linguistic strategies employed by micro-influencers to optimize engagement and personal branding. These strategies—Personalization, Narrative, and Emotive—form an interdependent framework that explains how language can be strategically employed to generate emotional resonance, relational closeness, and content virality in digital contexts.

##### **a. Personalization Strategy**

This strategy involves the use of audience-focused language, including second-person pronouns ("you," "your") and inclusive terms ("we," "our"). Personalization fosters a sense of direct connection between the influencer and the follower, simulating a one-on-one interaction. It enhances perceived authenticity and attentiveness, prompting audiences to engage in dialogue, ask questions, and express personal sentiments. This strategy was particularly effective in increasing comments and responses, as shown by the engagement metrics and sentiment analysis.

##### **b. Narrative Strategy**

The narrative strategy centers on storytelling structures that present the influencer's journey, transformation, or daily experiences in a relatable and authentic manner. These narratives often follow a chronological or challenge-to-success arc, encouraging followers to empathize, identify, and engage more deeply. Through narrative, influencers humanize their digital persona, shifting from content promoters to trusted peers. This strategy proved especially powerful on platforms like YouTube and TikTok, where storytelling was supported by longer video formats and visual sequences.

##### **c. Emotive Strategy**

This approach focuses on the intentional use of emotional expressions that align with the influencer's brand values. Words like "grateful," "inspired," and "proud" create an emotionally charged environment that encourages mirroring from the audience. Emotive strategy not only amplified reactions (likes, emojis, shares) but also strengthened emotional bonding, trust, and loyalty. It was most effective when combined with personalization and narrative elements.

Together, these strategies constitute a cohesive model for effective linguistic engagement in influencer communication. Their integration enables influencers to balance emotional appeal, authenticity, and strategic intent, forming the foundation for impactful digital branding.

## Discussion

The results strongly indicate that language plays a central role in shaping audience interaction and perception within the micro-influencer space. Across Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, strategic linguistic choices significantly influenced not only audience sentiment but also measurable engagement metrics. The integration of personalization, narrative storytelling, and emotive expression in micro-influencer content consistently led to higher levels of interaction, community engagement, and emotional investment. These findings support Linda (2024), who emphasized the role of linguistic variation in increasing audience engagement in Indonesian digital contexts.

The use of personalized communication was strongly associated with increased comment frequency and conversational depth. For example, a fashion influencer's Instagram post captioned, "You don't need a big budget to look fabulous—this one's for you who love simple yet classy vibes! 💖 Let's glow up together, shall we?" garnered 153 comments within 24 hours, compared to her 48-comment average on non-personalized posts. Followers responded with emotionally affirming messages such as, "I feel like you really get my style! Thanks for this, *kak!*." These examples support Page (2018), who argues that dialogic language on social media fosters relational closeness and encourages participatory communication.

Narrative storytelling produced the highest impact in terms of comment and share rates. A food influencer's TikTok post that included the statement, "*Dulu aku cuma bisa masak mie instan, sekarang alhamdulillah bisa masak untuk keluarga setiap hari. Perjalanan ini nggak mudah, tapi kamu juga bisa!* 🍲👨🍳" ("I used to only be able to cook instant noodles. Now, thank God, I can cook for my family every day. It hasn't been an easy journey, but you can do it too."), generated 182 comments and 74 shares, more than triple her average. Notably, many audience members replied with similar life stories or messages of encouragement: "*MasyaAllah, kak! Ceritanya bikin semangat. Aku juga lagi belajar masak buat anakku 💖.*" ("MasyaAllah! Your story really motivates me. I'm also starting to learn how to cook for my kids"). These interactions validate Khamis, Ang, and Welling (2017), who argue that self-branding through authentic micro-celebrity narratives fosters parasocial relationships that drive loyalty and engagement.

The strategic use of emotive language led to significant spikes in audience engagement. A lifestyle influencer's branded Instagram post that read, "*So thrilled to finally announce this collab! Never imagined this dream would come true. Grateful beyond words! 🌈🌟*" triggered a 60% increase in shares and a 300% rise in emoji-based reactions compared to her previous non-emotive brand posts. Commenters mirrored her emotional tone with replies such as: "*So proud of you! You deserve this! 🎉💖*" and "*Kakak selalu inspiring, ikut senang banget baca ini! 😊🌞*," ("You're always inspiration. Reading this made me really happy!"), demonstrating emotional contagion (Liu, 2015) and affective engagement through sentiment mirroring (Pang & Lee, 2008).

In contrast, the control group—posts that lacked personalization, storytelling, or emotive elements—averaged only 35 comments and 22 shares, highlighting the critical role of linguistic strategy in stimulating engagement. This discrepancy confirms that content performance is not solely determined by topic or visuals but significantly influenced by the tone and structure of the language used (Linda, 2025).

The conceptual model proposed in this study consolidates these insights into a cohesive framework for strategic communication. By integrating personalization to invite direct engagement, narrative to establish relatability, and emotive language to amplify emotional resonance, the model offers a practical blueprint for micro-influencers to enhance brand perception and audience loyalty. This model not only aligns with digital branding theories (Marwick, 2015; De Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017) but also provides actionable guidance grounded in concrete, data-backed evidence from real-world social media activity.

## **Conclusion**

This study explored the linguistic strategies employed by Indonesian micro-influencers and their influence on audience engagement and personal branding. Through critical discourse analysis, sentiment analysis, and engagement metrics examination, three primary strategies were identified: personalized communication, narrative storytelling, and the use of emotive language. These strategies were found to significantly enhance audience trust, emotional connection, and interaction rates.

The findings highlight the critical role of strategic language use in digital communication. Posts that incorporated personalized and emotionally resonant storytelling consistently demonstrated higher engagement levels compared to those that did not. Furthermore, positive audience sentiment correlated with stronger brand perception and loyalty.

The conceptual model developed through this study offers practical recommendations for micro-influencers seeking to optimize their communication strategies. By strategically employing personalization, storytelling, and emotive expressions, micro-influencers can not only increase their engagement rates but also strengthen their personal branding in the competitive social media landscape.

Future research could expand the scope to include macro-influencers or cross-cultural comparisons to validate the model's applicability in diverse digital marketing contexts. Given the scope and findings of this study, future research is recommended to expand the investigation into broader demographic and cultural contexts to test the generalizability of the developed linguistic strategy model. Comparative studies between micro- and macro-influencers, or across different regions and languages, could offer deeper insights into how cultural and linguistic variations influence audience engagement strategies. Additionally, further research could explore the role of visual and multimodal elements (e.g., emojis, hashtags, video tone) in conjunction with linguistic strategies to provide a more comprehensive understanding of digital influencer communication. Longitudinal studies observing influencer-audience relationships over time would also be valuable in evaluating the sustained impact of linguistic strategies on branding and engagement outcomes.

## **Acknowledgement**

The author gratefully acknowledges the support of Universitas Swadaya Gunung Jati, especially through the Lembaga Penelitian (Research Institution) (Lemlit), for providing valuable research facilities, institutional guidance, and funding assistance throughout the completion of this study. Sincere thanks are also extended to all individuals who contributed meaningful insights and constructive feedback, which significantly improved the quality and clarity of this article.

## **Author Contribution and Competing Interests**

All authors contributed substantially to the research and preparation of this manuscript. The lead author was responsible for the conceptual framework, research design, data analysis, and drafting of



the manuscript. Co-authors contributed through data collection, transcription, thematic coding, literature review, as well as editing and revising the final version for intellectual content. All authors have read and approved the final manuscript. The authors declare no competing interests related to the funding, conduct, or publication of this research.

## References

- Abidin, C. (2018). *Internet celebrity: Understanding fame online*. Emerald Publishing.
- Archer, D., & Yates, L. (2017). Understanding influence and the role of language in social media marketing. *Discourse, Context & Media*, 20, 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2017.05.005>
- Audrezet, A., De Kerviler, G., & Moulard, J. G. (2020). Authenticity under threat: When social media influencers need to go beyond self-presentation. *Journal of Business Research*, 117, 557–569. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.07.008>
- Balaban, D. C., & Mustătea, M. (2019). Users' perception of credibility on social media. *Journal of Media Research*, 12(2), 5–23. <https://doi.org/10.24193/jmr.33.1>
- Boerman, S. C., Willemsen, L. M., & Van Der Aa, E. P. (2021). “This post is sponsored”: Effects of sponsorship disclosure on persuasion knowledge and eWOM. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 53, 47–63. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2020.05.005>
- Boyd, D. M., & Ellison, N. B. (2007). Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13(1), 210–230. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00393.x>
- Burgess, J., & Green, J. (2018). *YouTube: Online video and participatory culture* (2nd ed.). Polity Press.
- Casaló, L. V., Flavián, C., & Ibáñez-Sánchez, S. (2020). Influencers on Instagram: Antecedents and consequences of opinion leadership. *Journal of Business Research*, 117, 510–519. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.07.005>
- Chae, J. (2018). Explaining females' envy toward social media influencers. *Media Psychology*, 21(2), 246–262. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15213269.2017.1328312>
- Crystal, D. (2011). *Internet linguistics: A student guide*. Routledge.
- Dessart, L. (2017). Social media engagement: A model of antecedents and relational outcomes. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 33(5–6), 375–399. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2017.1302975>
- De Veirman, M., Cauberghe, V., & Hudders, L. (2017). Marketing through Instagram influencers. *International Journal of Advertising*, 36(5), 798–828. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2017.1348035>
- Djafarova, E., & Trofimenko, O. (2019). 'Instafamous' – credibility and self-presentation. *Information, Communication & Society*, 22(10), 1432–1446. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2018.1438491>
- Fairclough, N. (2013). *Critical discourse analysis* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Gee, J. P. (2011). *An introduction to discourse analysis* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- Herring, S. C. (2004). Computer-mediated discourse analysis. In S. Barab et al. (Eds.), *Designing for virtual communities* (pp. 338–376). Cambridge University Press.
- Hwang, Y., & Zhang, Q. (2018). Influence of parasocial relationship between digital celebrities and their followers on followers' purchase and electronic word-of-mouth intentions. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 21(11), 693–699. <https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2018.0157>
- Jin, S. V., Muqaddam, A., & Ryu, E. (2019). Instafamous and social media influencer marketing. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 37(5), 567–579. <https://doi.org/10.1108/MIP-09-2018-0375>
- Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! *Business Horizons*, 53(1), 59–68. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2009.09.003>
- Khamis, S., Ang, L., & Welling, R. (2017). Micro-celebrity and the rise of influencers. *Celebrity Studies*, 8(2), 191–208. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19392397.2016.1218292>



- Kumar, A., Bezawada, R., Rishika, R., Janakiraman, R., & Kannan, P. K. (2016). From social to sale: The effects of firm-generated content in social media. *Journal of Marketing*, 80(1), 7–25. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jm.14.0249>
- Linda. (2024). Linguistic style on audience engagement. *CICEE Proceedings*, 1(1), 25–31. <https://www.ejournalugj.com/index.php/cicee/article/view/9300>
- Linda. (2025). *A linguistic journey through Indonesian micro-influencers*. Medsan Store.
- Liu, B. (2015). *Sentiment analysis: Mining opinions, sentiments, and emotions*. Cambridge University Press.
- Lou, C., & Yuan, S. (2019). Influencer marketing: How message value and credibility affect consumer trust. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 19(1), 58–73. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15252019.2018.1533501>
- Marwick, A. E. (2015). *Status update: Celebrity, publicity, and branding*. Yale University Press.
- Page, R. (2018). *Narratives online: Shared stories and social media*. Cambridge University Press.
- Pang, B., & Lee, L. (2008). Opinion mining and sentiment analysis. *Foundations and Trends in Information Retrieval*, 2(1–2), 1–135. <https://doi.org/10.1561/15000000011>
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Schouten, A. P., Janssen, L., & Verspaget, M. (2020). Celebrity vs. influencer endorsements in advertising. *International Journal of Advertising*, 39(2), 258–281. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2019.1634898>
- Sokolova, K., & Perez, C. (2021). You follow fitness influencers? How influencer content affects intentions to exercise. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 54, 70–90. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2020.10.002>
- Tuten, T. L., & Solomon, M. R. (2017). *Social media marketing* (2nd ed.). Sage.
- Utz, S., & Breuer, J. (2019). The relationship between use of social network sites, online social support, and well-being. *Journal of Media Psychology*, 31(1), 3–13. <https://doi.org/10.1027/1864-1105/a000248>
- Van Dijk, T. A. (2009). *Society and discourse*. Cambridge University Press.
- Wodak, R., & Meyer, M. (Eds.). (2015). *Methods of critical discourse studies* (3rd ed.). Sage.
- Zhang, L., & Zhang, D. (2016). Discovering patterns of influence in social media. *Decision Support Systems*, 85, 66–75. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dss.2016.02.007>





