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Algospeak: The Evolution of Language in the Age of Social Media in Indonesia

Lamsike Pateda[1] (✉) IAIN Sultan Amai Gorontalo, Indonesia[1]
lamsike@iaingorontalo.ac.id[1]
Ibnu Rawandhy N. Hula[2] IAIN Sultan Amai Gorontalo, Indonesia[2]
ibnurawandi@iaingorontalo.ac.id[2]
Ana Mariana[3] Universitas Muhammadiyah Gorontalo, Indonesia[3]
anamariana@umgo.ac.id[3]

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Corresponding Author:✉ Lamsike Pateda

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ABSTRACT

Background: The rapid expansion of digital platforms has given rise to new linguistic practices, including algospeak, a creative strategy used by users to circumvent algorithmic moderation.

Purpose: This study examines the morphological patterns, social functions, and broader implications of algospeak in Indonesian social media.

Method: Employing a qualitative descriptive approach with a digital sociolinguistic case study design, the research analysed 500 posts collected purposively from Twitter (X), TikTok, and Instagram during 2023–2025. Data were gathered through digital documentation and screened based on linguistic relevance. Analytical procedures combined morphological analysis, sociolinguistic interpretation, and critical discourse analysis, while validity was ensured through triangulation of sources and theories, peer debriefing, and limited member checking.

Results and Discussion: The findings reveal four dominant morphological strategies: phonological/orthographic substitution, abbreviation and acronyms, blending and hybridisation, and euphemism/metaphor. These patterns demonstrate that algospeak functions not only as a technical tactic to avoid censorship but also as a form of humour, solidarity, and community identity. Beyond describing linguistic forms, the study contributes to bridging a gap in digital sociolinguistics by highlighting a non-Western perspective and showing how morphology operates as a site of resistance and adaptation to algorithmic control.

Conclusions and Implications: algospeak reflects the dynamic interaction between human creativity and technological governance, underscoring the need to rethink keyword-based moderation and integrate digital language practices into literacy and education. Future research should expand toward multimodal analysis and cross-linguistic comparison to better capture the global evolution of language in algorithm-driven environments.

Keywords: *Algospeak, Indonesia Language, Social Media Language*

ABSTRAK

Latar Belakang: Perkembangan pesat platform digital telah melahirkan praktik kebahasaan baru, salah satunya algospeak, yaitu strategi kreatif yang digunakan pengguna untuk menghindari moderasi algoritmik.
Tujuan: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji pola morfologis, fungsi sosial, dan implikasi lebih luas dari algospeak di media sosial Indonesia.
Metode: Dengan menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif dan rancangan studi kasus sosiolinguistik digital, penelitian ini menganalisis 500 unggahan yang dikumpulkan secara purposif dari Twitter (X), TikTok, dan Instagram pada periode 2023–2025. Data diperoleh melalui dokumentasi digital dan diseleksi berdasarkan relevansi linguistik. Prosedur analisis mengombinasikan kajian morfologi, interpretasi sosiolinguistik, dan analisis wacana kritis, sementara keabsahan data dijamin melalui triangulasi sumber dan teori, peer debriefing, serta member checking terbatas.
Hasil dan Pembahasan: Hasil penelitian menunjukkan empat strategi morfologis dominan, yakni substitusi fonologis/ortografis, singkatan dan akronim, blending dan hibridisasi, serta eufemisme/metafora. Pola-pola ini memperlihatkan bahwa algospeak berfungsi tidak hanya sebagai taktik teknis untuk menghindari sensor, tetapi juga sebagai bentuk humor, solidaritas, dan identitas komunitas. Lebih jauh, penelitian ini menutup celah kajian sosiolinguistik digital dengan menyoroti perspektif non-Barat dan menunjukkan peran morfologi sebagai arena resistensi sekaligus adaptasi terhadap kendali algoritmik.
Kesimpulan dan Implikasi: algospeak mencerminkan interaksi dinamis antara kreativitas manusia dan tata kelola teknologi, sekaligus menegaskan perlunya meninjau kembali sistem moderasi berbasis kata kunci serta mengintegrasikan praktik bahasa digital dalam literasi dan pendidikan. Penelitian mendatang sebaiknya mengembangkan analisis multimodal dan perbandingan lintas bahasa untuk menangkap evolusi global bahasa di bawah pengaruh algoritma.

Kata Kunci *Algospeak, Bahasa Indonesia, Bahasa Media Sosial*

INTRODUCTION

Language is an entity that continues to evolve alongside social, technological, and cultural dynamics. The emergence of social media over the past two decades has revolutionised human communication practices, accelerating the exchange of information and creating new arenas for linguistic innovation.[1] Platforms such as Twitter (X), TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube are not merely spaces for social interaction, but also linguistic laboratories where language strategies are born that adapt to the digital ecosystem. In this context, language is not only understood as a medium of communication but also as a means of adaptation to algorithms, platform regulations, and digitally formed cultural norms.[2],[3]

The phenomenon of algospeak arises from interactions between users and algorithmic systems. Algospeak refers to the practice of using alternative language variations, ranging from grapheme modifications and symbol usage to the creation of new vocabulary to avoid censorship, automatic moderation, or content distribution restrictions.[4] Unlike everyday language variations, algospeak has a strategic function: it serves as a survival mechanism within a communication ecosystem controlled by algorithms. In the Indonesian context, this practice can be seen in the form of replacing letters with numbers (4nak for anak [child]), adopting hybrid lexicon (cansel for cancel), and creative euphemisms (resepsi alam for resesi [recession]). This phenomenon not only represents linguistic creativity but also shows how the digital community negotiates with the technology and power that governs it.[5],[6]

Previous digital linguistic studies have highlighted slang, youth language, meme language, and hybridised language forms in online conversations.[7], [8], [9] Other studies emphasise how social media encourages the emergence of new forms of literacy, shapes the linguistic identity of digital communities, and influences morphological and pragmatic practices in language.[10], [11], [12] At the global level, there is also a particular focus on algorithms as a determining factor in language dynamics, with findings that automatic moderation encourages the emergence of coded speech.[13] Recent studies even highlight algospeak as a phenomenon that connects linguistic creativity, symbolic resistance strategies, and digital power relations.[14]

However, most of these studies are still limited to the context of English or a northern global perspective. Specific studies on algospeak in Indonesia have hardly been touched upon, even though this phenomenon is becoming increasingly widespread and influencing the communication practices of the younger generation on social media.[15] Furthermore, previous studies tend to be descriptive in nature, documenting variations in digital language without linking them to the underlying algorithmic system. This gap raises critical questions: how is algospeak in Indonesian formed, what are its social and pragmatic functions, and to what extent does it imply the development of Indonesian linguistics and digital culture?[16].

This research gap is significant because it presents two dimensions at once. First, academically, it opens up new avenues of analysis in digital sociolinguistics by emphasising the relationship between language, technology, and power outside the Western context. Second, practically, this study provides a deeper understanding of the digital literacy of Indonesian society, which is relevant to language policy, education, and the development of a more inclusive communication ecosystem.[17] Thus, this research not only contributes to language documentation but also to critical analysis of how algorithms shape the way humans communicate.

The novelty of this research lies in its focus on analysing algospeak in Indonesian, combining morphological and sociolinguistic approaches. Rather than simply identifying forms of language variation, this research positions algospeak as a linguistic strategy born out of negotiations between users and algorithmic systems. This position distinguishes the study from research on slang or colloquial language, which generally originates from popular culture without a direct connection to platform algorithms.[18], [19] Thus, this study offers a new conceptual framework for understanding digital language as an arena where creativity, control, and resistance converge.

Furthermore, this study presents methodological contributions by utilising empirical data from linguistic practices on Indonesian social media, which have been underrepresented in global literature. Analysis of the morphological patterns, pragmatic functions, and social contexts of algospeak usage is expected to broaden cross-cultural understanding of digital sociolinguistics. By placing Indonesian as the primary focus, this study also enriches academic discourse that tends to centre on dominant global languages.

In general, the purpose of this study is to explore the phenomenon of algospeak as a representation of the dynamic relationship between language, technology, and society in Indonesia. This research is expected to explain how linguistic strategies are formed in the context of algorithmic communication, while highlighting its implications for the development of digital sociolinguistic theory globally. With this approach, the research not only adds to the body of knowledge on digital language studies but also contributes to the broader discourse on digital culture and community literacy.

Specifically, this study is designed to: (1) describe the morphological patterns of algospeak that have developed in Indonesian social media, (2) analyze its social and pragmatic functions, both as a strategy to avoid censorship, a means of humor, and a symbol of digital community identity, and (3) assess the contribution of the Indonesian algospeak phenomenon to the development of theory and practice in global digital sociolinguistics studies. With this framework, the study is

expected to serve as both an empirical and theoretical reference in understanding the evolution of language in the algorithmic era.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital media has long been seen as fertile ground for the birth of new language variations. Platforms such as Twitter, TikTok, and Instagram not only function as communication channels but also as arenas where linguistic norms, social discourse, and collective identities are formed.[20] Language development in the online realm confirms that linguistic forms are constantly adapting to technological contexts. The phenomena of slang, meme language, and algospeak show that linguistic creativity often arises not from complete freedom, but from technical limitations and platform regulations. Thus, the study of digital language can no longer be understood merely as a variation in communication style, but as a social practice closely related to algorithmic power structures.[21],[22]

Within this framework, algospeak occupies an increasingly important position. This phenomenon refers to linguistic strategies such as word modification, the use of symbols, or the creation of alternative vocabulary to avoid algorithmic censorship. Common global examples include the use of the term unalive as a substitute for dead, s3x for sex, or certain metaphors such as lemon party as code.[23], [24] Unlike conventional slang, which arises from popular culture, algospeak has developed as a form of negotiation with algorithmic systems that directly influence the visibility and dissemination of online content. This perspective is consistent with the field of digital sociolinguistics, which emphasises that language interaction in the virtual world cannot be separated from the technology and online communities that use it.[25]

The relationship between algospeak and morphology is a particular concern. Linguistic processes such as phoneme substitution, blending, acronyms, and reduplication are often used to create new forms that are more difficult for algorithms to detect. This phenomenon shows that morphological creativity is not just a play on language, but an adaptive strategy against algorithmic control.[26] Structural studies such as Aronoff & Fudeman (2011) provide a framework for understanding the mechanisms of word formation, while Labov's (1972) theory of language variation asserts that linguistic change is always linked to social factors. By combining these two perspectives, algospeak can be understood both as a morphological product and as a social strategy.[27], [28]

The dimensions of power surrounding this phenomenon become increasingly apparent when viewed through critical discourse analysis (CDA). Fairclough (1995) argues that language is always linked to ideology and structures of domination. In the context of social media, algorithmic control is a new form of power that regulates what is seen, disseminated, or silenced. Studies on computer-mediated communication and discussions about "governing by algorithms" reinforce the view that language practices in digital media are not merely neutral interactions, but rather a form of symbolic resistance to platform control mechanisms.[29], [30]

Globally, research on algospeak began to develop in the 2020s. Alexander (2023) documented this practice on TikTok, showing that linguistic creativity actually emerged as a response to automatic moderation.[31] Samuel Joshua (2020) found similar patterns in meme language on Instagram, where the technical limitations of the platform triggered linguistic innovation.[32] However, older literature in Indonesia still focuses on youth slang [33], bahasa campuran dalam percakapan daring [34], mixed language in online conversations.[35] These studies highlight linguistic creativity, but do not directly address the role of algorithms as a determining

factor in the emergence of linguistic variation. Thus, algospeak in Indonesia tends to be treated the same as slang, even though the context of its emergence is fundamentally different.

This literature synthesis clearly shows a gap in research. Previous studies have documented the dynamics of digital language, but none have specifically examined how algorithms act as linguistic variables that shape the way people speak. In fact, algospeak is a phenomenon that arose not solely from popular cultural trends but from direct interaction between users and algorithmic systems.[36] This study attempts to fill this gap by analysing algospeak in Indonesian, both morphologically and sociolinguistically.[37] Thus, this study not only enriches the literature on digital language in Indonesia but also places it within the global conversation on the relationship between language, technology, and power.

METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a digital sociolinguistic case study design. The phenomenon of algospeak is understood as a language practice that is related not only to linguistic structure but also to social function and user interaction with platform algorithms.[38], [39] The case study design was chosen to enable in-depth analysis of specific linguistic forms while interpreting their underlying social and ideological meanings. The research focused on Indonesian-language social media content that was potentially subject to algorithmic moderation, particularly on Twitter (X), TikTok, and Instagram, which have a large user base in Indonesia and active algorithmic systems that regulate content visibility.[40] Data selection was conducted using purposive sampling techniques, considering linguistic relevance criteria. These criteria included posts that displayed language modifications (letters, numbers, symbols, euphemisms), had high interaction (likes, shares, comments), and were published between 2023 and 2025. The amount of data is flexible according to the principle of data saturation, with approximately 500 posts meeting the criteria.[41]

In qualitative research, researchers act as the main instrument that reflectively interprets data. To support the analysis process, auxiliary instruments are used in the form of linguistic coding sheets, sociolinguistic analysis guides, software for organising text data, and Microsoft Excel for initial tabulation of morphological categories. Data was collected through digital documentation, including screenshots, text notes, and searches for popular hashtags containing language variations, such as resepsi alam (resesi), mi**n (drink), or cansel (cancel).[42] The data collection process was iterative, starting with searching and collecting content, filtering data according to criteria, and recording digital field notes. This stage was followed by initial coding and classification, in which each piece of data was analysed based on morphological categories (substitution, blending, acronyms, reduplication) and social functions (avoiding censorship, algorithmic resistance, community identity, humour).[43]

Data analysis was conducted using a thematic analysis approach based on morphological frameworks (Aronoff & Fudeman, 2011), sociolinguistics (Labov, 1972), and critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995). The analysis stages included data reduction, theme grouping, interpretation of linguistic patterns, and concluding the relationship between language form, social function, and the underlying algorithmic context. Data validity was maintained through triangulation of sources and theories, peer debriefing with two digital linguistics experts, and limited member checking in online community discussions to test the validity of interpretations. With this strategy, the research not only documents variations in language form but also reveals how algospeak functions as a linguistic strategy closely related to algorithmic power and digital communication practices in Indonesia.[44], [45]

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Morphological Patterns in Indonesian Algospeak

An analysis of 500 social media posts reveals four main patterns in the formation of algospeak. The details can be seen in the following table:

Table 1. Morphological Patterns of Algospeak in Indonesian Social Media

No	Morphological Pattern	Examples	Linguistic Mechanism	Description	Frequency (n)	Percentage
1	Phonological substitution	*4nak* (anak), *1stri*	Letters replaced with numbers/symbols; blurring of vowels/consonants	Phonetically similar; difficult to detect automatically	182	36,4%
2	Abbreviations/Acronyms	*rec* (receh), *vc* (video call)	Phonemic reduction; acronymization	Efficient; strengthening group exclusivity	126	25,2%
3	Blending/Hybridisation	*cansel* (cancel), *fyp-in*	Indonesian–English hybrids + local affixation	Cross-language adaptation	108	21,6%
4	Euphemisms/Metaphors	*resepsi alam* (resesi), *open BO*	Semantic/metaphorical shifts	Avoiding taboo/sensitive words	84	16,8%
	Total				**500**	**100%**

Notes

- Unit of analysis = **post**; if a post contains more than one pattern, the **dominant pattern** is coded.
- The numbers above reflect the distribution of **selected** patterns per post, so the total = 500.

The results in Table 1 show that algospeak is not limited to grapheme manipulation but also works at the morphological and semantic levels. Phonological substitution emerges as the most dominant strategy (36.4%) because this form is easy to create and remains readable to humans but is difficult for algorithms to detect. In contrast, blending and hybridisation reflect more complex linguistic creativity, namely by combining English and local affixation. Euphemisms/metaphors are more often used in sensitive topics such as sexuality, politics, and economics.[46], [47] For more details regarding the phonological substitution category, see the following table.

Table 2. Details of Subtypes in the "Phonological Substitution" Category

Sub-type: Substitution	Examples	n	% of Substitutes
Number replacing letters (leet/numsub)	*4nak* (anak), *1stri* (istri) *1m99r15* (Inggris) *J3p4n9* (Jepang) *1nd0ne3s14* (Indonesia)	118	61,5%
Symbols/character separators (asterisk/space)	*mi***n* (minum), *se_ggs* (seks) *p@_ud@r@* (payudaya) *#omo* (homo) *le$bian* (Lesbian) *Komanc>* (Komandan) *@b0r51* (Aborsi) *c>ding* (Ending)	41	21,4%
Variations in letters (vowels/consonants changed/deleted)	*Vidio* (Video), *Cansel* (Cancel) *Izriwil* (Israel) *Mamarika* (Amerika) *Kolej* (Kollege) *Apotik* (Apotek)	23	12,%

Trimakasih (Terima Kasih)			
Emotion Symbols	🍆 Male Genitalia 🌶️ Sex 🥜 Clitoris 💦 Ejaculation 🌻 Ukraine 🍉 Palestine 🍒 Breast 🏳️‍🌈 LGBT 💈 Barbershop 🔗 Link in Bio	10	5,2%
Total		**192**	**100%**

Notes

- Sub-types are derived from the most common practices to circumvent keyword scanning.
- "Letter variations" include c/k, i/y substitutions, vowel omissions, and other near-misspellings that remain human-readable.

Table 2 above shows that the dominance of number substitution (64.8%) demonstrates users' ingenuity in exploiting graphic similarities (a → 4, i → 1) to avoid algorithmic detection. From a critical discourse analysis perspective, this strategy illustrates a negotiation between the need for legible communication and resistance to algorithmic power. Furthermore, this is inseparable from low cognitive effort, as word forms such as 4nak or 1stri are elementary to create and read because they maintain visual and phonetic proximity to the original words.[48]

Meanwhile, abbreviations and acronyms (25.2%) serve a dual purpose: they are practically efficient in quick conversations, while also serving as markers of membership in digital communities. Acronyms such as vc (video call) or dm (direct message) function as social codes. This can be understood from a discourse perspective, whereby abbreviation is not a technical simplification, but rather a strategy of inclusion and exclusion: those who understand are considered "insiders," while those who do not understand are excluded as "outsiders." Thus, abbreviations not only serve a pragmatic function but also play a role in building solidarity and collective identity.[49]

The phenomenon of blending/hybridisation (21.6%) shows the dynamics of language glocalisation. Forms such as fyp-in or like-an combine global vocabulary with local morphological patterns, creating new variations that are communicative for local communities but unclear to algorithms. Thus, blending is not only creative but also a strategy of linguistic resistance. In discourse analysis, blending can be interpreted as a form of creative resistance to algorithmic power by inserting traces of local identity into global language practices.[50], [51]

Euphemisms and metaphors (16.8%) show that algospeak also works on the level of meaning. Expressions such as natural reception (recession) or open BO (prostitution) function as linguistic shields to avoid censorship, while also demonstrating the exclusivity of communication within specific groups. This practice most often appears in sensitive topics such as sexuality, politics, and economics. Critical discourse analysis highlights that euphemisms function as linguistic shields: they protect users from algorithmic censorship while allowing discussions to continue in the digital public sphere. However, at the same time, this practice also shows how algorithms force society to adopt ambiguous and layered communication strategies, so that meaning becomes "in-group"—only understood by communities that share the code. This confirms that algospeak is not only a form of resistance but also a form of discourse exclusivity.[52], [53]

Emoticons (5.2%): Visual Language as a Global Secret Language. This is the most interesting and subversive category: the use of emojis and visual symbols as substitutes for sensitive words. Examples: 🍆 for male genitalia, 🌶️ for sex, 🍉 for Palestine, 🌻 for Ukraine, 💦 for ejaculation, and 🔗 for "link in bio".

Semiotically speaking, this is a translation of meaning from a linguistic system to an iconic system (Peirce, 1931). Emojis function as universal yet ambiguous signifiers—and it is this

ambiguity that gives them their power. Algorithms have difficulty detecting them because there are no text keywords, while humans understand them through cultural context and collective knowledge.

From a critical discourse analysis perspective, emotional symbols are the most sophisticated form of resistance: they not only evade censorship, but also globalise local codes. For example, 🍉 (watermelon) became a symbol of Palestinian resistance because its colour resembles the Palestinian flag — this code spread globally without the need for verbal explanation. This is a form of semiotic guerrilla warfare (Eco, 1979) — a war of signs against algorithmic hegemony.

Politically, the use of this symbol also reflects the creativity of digital activism. It allows discussions of sensitive issues (politics, sexuality, religion) to remain alive in the public sphere without being detected. However, on the other hand, it also creates a digital illiteracy gap — only those who are "code literate" can understand, while others — including authorities or AI — remain blind.

2. The Social and Pragmatic Functions of Algospeak

In addition to morphological patterns, algospeak also has clear social and pragmatic functions. The social-pragmatic functions of algospeak can be summarised into three main categories, as shown in the following table:

Table 3. Social and Pragmatic Functions of Algospeak

No	Social/Pragmatic Functions	Examples	Description
1	Avoiding algorithmic censorship	*mi**n* (drink), *seggs*	Used to avoid labelling adult/prohibited content
2	Expressions of humour and creativity	*resepsi alam* (resesi)	Modifications produce comedic effects, often appearing in memes.
3	Symbol of group identity	*OTW JP*, *open BO*	Becoming a code of communication among members of a particular community
4	Security codes in sensitive communication	💦 *(ejakulasi),* 🍆 *(alat kelamin)*	Being code in a sensitive environment
5	Linguistic resistance against hegemony	🍉 *(Palestina),* 🌻 *(Ukraina)*	Becoming a symbol of resistance and gaining global public support

Based on Table 3, Algospeak is not merely a technical tool, but also a social medium that serves several functions. The first function is that the use of seggs is not only to "evade AI," but also an implicit form of resistance against the authority of platforms that arbitrarily determine what can and cannot be discussed. In Foucault's theory (1977), this is a form of counter-conduct—small acts that oppose bureaucratic-algorithmic power. Such modifications also reflect technological disobedience (Sandoval, 2018): users do not passively accept the rules, but actively look for loopholes.[54] The second function is humour as a political and social strategy. Terms such as resesi (natural reception) are not only funny—they also criticise economic reality in a non-frontal way. Humour becomes a shield: if criticised, it can be considered a "joke"; if accepted, it spreads collective awareness. In the context of social media, humour is an adequate soft power for spreading messages without triggering open conflict.[55] More detailed letter substitution (seggs) clearly aims to avoid censorship, but the use of metaphors such as natural reception is often more

intended for humour and solidarity. The function of group identity is evident in specific online communities (e.g., gamers or the "open BO" community), where vocabulary becomes an exclusive code. The third function, Group Identity: Language as a Gateway to Exclusivity. The use of OTW JP or open BO is not just a matter of efficiency—it is a linguistic initiation ritual. To understand its meaning, one must "enter" the community, understand the context, and often go through a socialisation process. This creates digital capital (Bourdieu, 1991)—social capital that only those who are fluent in the code possess. In the long run, this reinforces the digital social hierarchy: those who understand vs. those who don't. The fourth function is Safe Code: Digital Body Language/Emojis such as 💦 or 🍆 function like body language in the digital world — they convey meaning without words, relying on context and shared knowledge. In psycholinguistics, this is called a paralinguistic cue — a signal beyond words that helps to understand meaning. Emojis are also cross-linguistic: understood across languages, making them an effective global communication tool in private and public spaces. Finally, Resistance to Hegemony: Symbolic Politics at Your Fingertips. The 🍉 symbol for Palestine or 🌻 for Ukraine are examples of viral and decentralised symbolic politics. They require no permission, no organisational structure—just one emoji, and millions of people can express solidarity. This is a form of networked dissent (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012)—a resistance that is scattered, leaderless, but very powerful symbolically. Platforms may be able to delete text, but it is difficult to erase the meaning that is attached to visual symbols.

Based on Table 3, it can be concluded that algospeak is not merely a technical strategy to avoid algorithmic censorship, but rather a complex and multidimensional social medium that fulfils various social, cultural, and political functions in the contemporary digital ecosystem. The first function, as reflected in phonological substitutions such as seggs (sex), is a form of micro-resistance against the hegemony of digital platforms. Such modifications are not only intended to circumvent content detection systems but also represent an implicit rejection of the normative authority of platforms that unilaterally determine the boundaries of acceptable discourse. [54]. Within Foucault's theoretical framework, this practice can be understood as a form of counter-conduct—small tactics employed by individuals or groups to resist the bureaucratic-algorithmic power structures that govern the digital public sphere.[55]. Furthermore, this phenomenon reflects what Sandoval calls technological disobedience: a form of user agency that actively seeks loopholes in the system, rather than passively submitting to technological rules.[56].

The second function, namely humour as a political and social strategy, is clearly seen in the use of metaphors such as natural recession. This expression is not only comical but also serves as veiled social criticism, allowing users to convey political messages without engaging in explicit confrontation [57]. Humour acts as soft power in the digital space—it protects users from potential social or algorithmic sanctions, while spreading collective awareness through mechanisms that appear non-threatening. In this context, humour is not merely entertainment, but a strategic rhetorical tool for building solidarity and conveying criticism of socio-economic realities.

The third function, namely the formation of group identity through linguistic exclusivity, is evident in the use of phrases such as OTW JP or open BO. These expressions are not only a form of communicative efficiency, but also function as linguistic initiation rituals that mark membership in a particular community. To understand their meaning, one must have access to the social and cultural context of that community—a process that creates digital capital, as conceptualised by Bourdieu [58]This linguistic capital becomes a marker of social status in the digital hierarchy: Those who understand the code are considered "insiders," while those who do not are considered "outsiders." Thus, language becomes both a tool and a social boundary.

The fourth function, namely the use of emojis as secure codes or "digital body language," shows how visual symbols such as 💦 (ejaculation) or 🍆 (male genitalia) function as paralinguistic

cues—nonverbal signals that convey meaning through context and shared knowledge, rather than through formal linguistic structures. [58] Emojis are cross-linguistic and cross-cultural, enabling them to transcend language and cultural barriers, making them an effective global communication tool in private spaces that are public in nature. [59] In this context, emojis are not mere decorations, but rather an independent semiotic system capable of conveying emotional, sexual, or political nuances without exposing users to the risk of censorship.

The fifth and final function is symbolic resistance to global hegemony, reflected in the use of emojis such as 🍉 (Palestine) or 🌻 (Ukraine). These symbols are a form of networked dissent—decentralised resistance, without hierarchical structures, but with massive symbolic impact. [60]. They operate outside the control of formal institutions and do not require permission or authorisation; with just one symbol, millions of individuals can express political solidarity anonymously and collectively. In a world where text can be easily deleted or blocked by platforms, the meaning attached to visual symbols is much more difficult to erase, making them a resilient and adaptive form of resistance.

Thus, algospeak—whether in the form of phonological substitution, metaphors, community codes, emojis, or political symbols—is a complex manifestation of contemporary digital agency. It not only demonstrates linguistic creativity but also reflects the dynamics of power, identity, and resistance in a digital society governed by algorithms.

3. Algospeak Indonesia's Contribution to Global Digital Sociolinguistics Studies

The phenomenon of Indonesian algospeak contributes significantly to global digital sociolinguistic studies. The main findings are summarised in the following table:

Table 4. Theoretical Contribution of Indonesian Algospeak

No	Theoretical Contributions	Description	Academic Impact
1	Non-Western Perspectives	Data from Indonesia expands algospeak studies, which English previously dominated	Enriching global literature
2	Digital Morphology	Hybrid forms such as fyp-in and like-an demonstrate creative affixation in the digital space.	Expansion of morphological theory
3	Language-Algorithm-Power Relations	Algorithms act as social actors that influence language practices.	Strengthening the concept of algorithmic governance

Table 4 above shows that Algospeak makes several significant contributions. First, the Indonesian case presents a non-Western perspective that broadens the study of algospeak, which has so far focused on the English-speaking world. Second, the phenomenon of digital morphology in Indonesia shows a hybrid form that enriches our understanding of morphological productivity in the digital age. Third, the results of this study confirm that algorithms act as social actors that regulate language practices, which is in line with the theory of algorithmic governance.[61], [62], [63]

Overall, this study shows that Indonesian algospeak is shaped by four main morphological strategies—phonological substitution, shortening, blending, and euphemism—each of which has different social and pragmatic functions. Furthermore, this practice reflects how language negotiates with algorithmic power: maintaining readability among users while resisting the limitations imposed by the platform system. Thus, this study not only fills a gap in the study of digital slang in Indonesia but also makes a significant theoretical contribution to the global understanding of the relationship between language, technology, and power.[64]

Discussion

This study fills two critical gaps that have previously been rarely explored in the literature on algospeak. First, most previous studies have been dominated by English-language contexts, focusing on TikTok in the United States or Europe. This study presents evidence from Indonesia, a non-Western linguistic ecosystem with agglutinative morphological features, showing how avoidance strategies adapt to different morphological resources. Second, this study shifts attention from the level of policy and macro discourse to micro-linguistic processes, specifically how word forms are modified through phonological substitution, local affixation, and cross-language hybridisation in order to escape algorithmic classification. Thus, these results bridge the gap between algorithmic moderation theory and empirical evidence on morphological mechanisms as resistance tactics.[65], [66]

In addition, this study shows that local affixation, such as -in and -an, attached to loanwords (e.g., fyp-in or like-an) supports the concept of "digital morphology." Here, algorithms act as ecological pressures that drive the selection of linguistic forms: variations that are sufficiently ambiguous for machines but still readable by humans will survive and spread. This perspective broadens our understanding of how algorithms are not merely technical instruments, but also socio-technical actors that mediate language practices, visibility, and discourse value in digital spaces.[67]

Findings regarding patterns of phonological substitution, blending, and euphemism are consistent with international literature that affirms the dominance of "intentional non-standardness" in digital communication, ranging from leet speak and vowel dropping to spelling games as strategies to avoid automatic censorship. However, this research's contribution lies in its more detailed micro-linguistic explanation, particularly the integration of Indonesian morphology into algospeak practices. Thus, this research enriches the global digital sociolinguistic study, which previously paid little attention to agglutinative language-based variations.[68]

Furthermore, the socio-pragmatic functions of algospeak that were discovered—avoiding algorithmic censorship, channelling humour and creativity, and serving as a marker of group identity—support previous research findings on the role of language as an arena of resistance against algorithmic power. This practice shows that algorithms not only moderate content but also shape linguistic behaviour through implicit incentives and punishments. A comparison with studies on TikTok in Western contexts reveals similar patterns of resistance. Still, strategies in Indonesia appear to be more morphologically varied, in line with the productive affixation potential in local languages.[69]

In the Indonesian socio-cultural context, the use of algospeak also reflects the dynamics of a creative and adaptive digital community. The pattern of hybridisation between Indonesian and English, for example, is not only a technical strategy, but also a form of digital language glocalisation that strengthens the solidarity of online communities. This shows that resistance to algorithms is not always serious or political, but can also take the form of linguistic games that bring humour and social cohesion. Thus, the function of algospeak in Indonesia cannot be separated from the fluid and improvisational culture of online communication.[70]

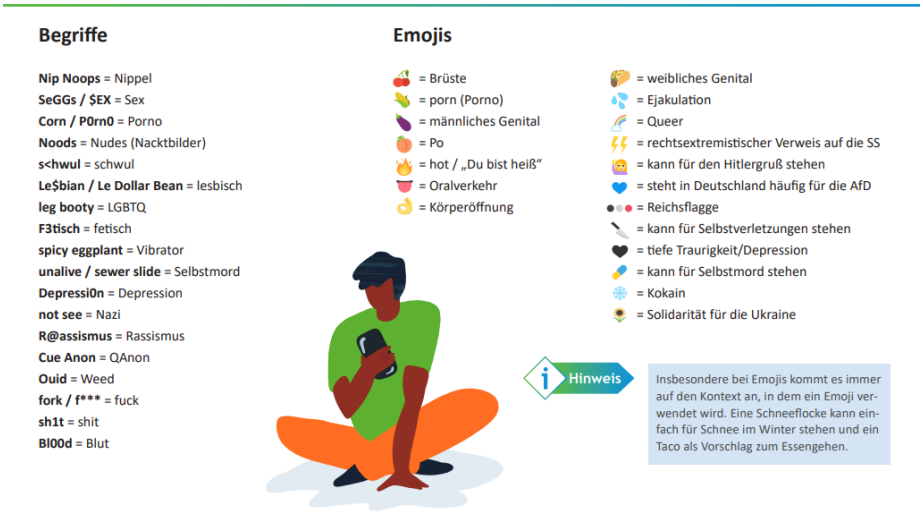
Furthermore, platform environmental factors also influence the dynamics of algospeak. Twitter (X), TikTok, and Instagram have different moderation systems and algorithms, so users develop different strategies that are tailored to the affordances of each platform. For example, spelling games on TikTok are more related to creators' concerns about shadow banning, while on Twitter, modifications are more directed at political issues and expressions of opinion that are vulnerable to visibility moderation. This context shows that algospeak is situational: the linguistic strategies chosen depend on the digital arena where discourse is produced and circulated.[71]

The main challenge of this research is the highly dynamic nature of the phenomenon. Algospeak continues to evolve in line with changes in platform policies and detection system updates, meaning that forms that are popular today may disappear or shift tomorrow. Therefore, a longitudinal corpus is needed to capture the cycle of innovation and die-off of certain forms. In addition, external factors such as user reports and regional regulations also shape moderation patterns, making cross-country comparative studies important for distinguishing universal strategies from those specific to Indonesia.[72]

Theoretically, this research confirms that language cannot be separated from the algorithmic ecology that governs it. Findings on "digital morphology" expand morphological theory by showing how technology can be a determining variable in word productivity. At the same time, this study reinforces the algorithmic governance framework with micro-linguistic evidence that algorithms directly influence the form and function of language. Thus, language and algorithms are understood as actors that interact with each other in the production of digital discourse.[73], [74]

In practical terms, the results of this study provide a warning for platform policy design. Keyword-based detection systems have proven vulnerable to circumvention through orthographic substitution, euphemisms, and morphological games. This poses the risk of over-moderation (legitimate content being deleted) and under-moderation (harmful content slipping through). Therefore, the moderation approach needs to shift from mere literal matching to models that are more sensitive to pragmatic context and cross-cultural variations. On the other hand, this study shows that algospeak can obscure important public communication—for example, on health issues—so policy design must be cautious about the unintended effects of encouraging evasive practices.[75]

The main contribution of this study is to expand the study of algospeak to non-Western contexts with a micro focus on morphological mechanisms. Theoretically, this study introduces the concept of "digital morphology", which shows how algorithms can affect word form productivity. Practically, these findings emphasise the need for a more contextual approach to moderation that is sensitive to local languages and does not rely solely on keyword-based detection.[76] Thus, this study contributes to the global literature on digital sociolinguistics while providing concrete input for platform policy practices in the algorithmic era, as seen in the following sample images.



Picture 1

Picture 2 **Picture 3** **Picture 4**

When analysed from a critical discourse perspective, the four images above show that algospeak is not only a form of code-switching but also resistance against digital hegemony. Users are not only avoiding censorship but also forming an alternative culture that is independent of platform control.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study affirms that algospeak within Indonesian social media platforms is not merely a form of slang, but rather a linguistic and social practice originating from the interaction among communication needs, community creativity, and algorithmic pressures. Four principal patterns—phonological substitution, abbreviation, hybridisation, and euphemism—illustrate how language is systematically adapted to preserve human readability while simultaneously obscuring meaning for automated moderation systems. Consequently, algospeak functions not only as a technical measure to evade censorship but also as a means of humour, solidarity, and digital identity, thereby exemplifying the adaptability of language within the digital platform ecosystem.

The contribution of this research lies in two principal aspects. Theoretically, the findings broaden the scope of digital sociolinguistics by introducing a non-Western perspective and emphasizing the significance of morphology as a fundamental mechanism in the evolution of digital language. This reinforces the concept of "digital morphology," wherein algorithms function as ecological pressures that foster the emergence of new linguistic forms. Practically, the research underscores the limitations inherent in keyword-based moderation systems, which can be easily bypassed through orthographic and metaphorical variations, thereby offering valuable insights for the development of platform policies. In the fields of education and digital literacy, these findings underscore the importance of acknowledging online language practices to ensure that learning remains connected to the communication realities experienced by the social media generation.

Moving forward, the comprehension of algospeak must be broadened through multimodal research—including textual, emoji-based, visual, and video analyses—as well as through comparative studies across Southeast Asian languages to identify universal and region-specific patterns. Collaboration among scholars, user communities, and platform operators will be essential in developing moderation policies that are attuned to linguistic and cultural sensitivities. Consequently, this investigation not only demonstrates how language adapts under algorithmic influence but also facilitates broader discourse concerning the future of digital communication, democracy, and linguistic identity in the era of algorithms.

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