



Language Transformation In The Digital Era On Whatsapp: Issues And Solutions Of Using Emojis And Stickers As Replacements For Words Among Students

Transformasi Bahasa di Era Digital pada WhatsApp: Masalah dan Solusi Penggunaan Emoji dan Stiker Sebagai Pengganti Kata di Kalangan Pelajar

Siska Mustikawati Hasibuan¹, Ayudiah Cisita², Salabila Eka Ananda³, Velissa Grace Aulia Situmorang⁴, M. Natsir⁵

Universitas Negeri Medan

Email : siskamustikaw.17@icloud.com¹ ayudiahcisita@gmail.com² sayaecha123@gmail.com³
velissa3689@gmail.com⁴ natsirfbs@unimed.ac.id⁵

Article history :

Received : 11-12-2024

Revised : 13-12-2024

Accepted: 15-12-2024

Published: 17-12-2024

Abstract

This article discusses the transformation of language in the digital era, particularly through the use of emojis and stickers as substitutes for words among university students using WhatsApp. The study identifies challenges arising from the use of these visual symbols, such as meaning ambiguity, misunderstandings, and a decline in verbal communication quality. Employing a qualitative research method and survey approach, data were collected through online questionnaires and conversation analysis in WhatsApp groups. The findings reveal that while emojis and stickers can enrich communication, excessive reliance on these symbols can hinder students' ability to communicate verbally and formally. This article also offers solutions to improve communication quality in academic settings and emphasizes the importance of developing verbal communication skills in the digital age.

Keywords: *Language Transformation, Digital Era, Emoji, Stickers, Visual Communication.*

Abstrak

Artikel ini membahas transformasi bahasa di era digital, khususnya melalui penggunaan emoji dan stiker sebagai pengganti kata-kata di kalangan mahasiswa yang menggunakan WhatsApp. Studi ini mengidentifikasi tantangan yang timbul dari penggunaan simbol-simbol visual ini, seperti ambiguitas makna, kesalahpahaman, dan penurunan kualitas komunikasi verbal. Dengan menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif dan pendekatan survei, data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner daring dan analisis percakapan di grup WhatsApp. Temuan penelitian ini mengungkapkan bahwa meskipun emoji dan stiker dapat memperkaya komunikasi, ketergantungan yang berlebihan pada simbol-simbol ini dapat menghambat kemampuan mahasiswa untuk berkomunikasi secara verbal dan formal. Artikel ini juga menawarkan solusi untuk meningkatkan kualitas komunikasi dalam lingkungan akademis dan menekankan pentingnya mengembangkan keterampilan komunikasi verbal di era digital.

Kata kunci: Transformasi Bahasa, Era Digital, Emoji, Stiker, Komunikasi Visual.

INTRODUCTION

In the modern digital era, communication has expanded beyond traditional written or spoken language. Platforms like WhatsApp have introduced emoji and stickers as alternatives to words, significantly influencing how individuals interact. While these symbols can enhance emotional



expression and add creativity to conversations, their use in academic contexts raises concerns about their effectiveness in ensuring clear and precise communication. This study examines the challenges posed by the use of emoji and stickers as substitutes for words, particularly among university students. Issues such as ambiguous meanings, misunderstandings, and reduced communication quality are explored, alongside potential solutions to help students navigate these challenges and improve their ability to communicate effectively in both informal and formal academic settings.

The transformation of language in the digital era, particularly through platforms such as WhatsApp, has significantly altered how university students communicate. The use of emoji and stickers as substitutes for words has become increasingly common, adding an emotional dimension that is often difficult to convey through text alone. Emojis, which are small icons, and stickers, which are larger and more expressive, enable users to communicate emotions and intentions more effectively. This is particularly important in virtual communication, where non-verbal cues are often absent. As a result, these visual tools play a crucial role in reducing ambiguity and enhancing social engagement in digital interactions.

However, the use of emojis and stickers also presents unique challenges. A primary concern is the potential for misunderstandings arising from differing interpretations of these symbols. Social and cultural factors heavily influence how users perceive and utilize emojis and stickers, leading to frequent miscommunication among individuals from diverse backgrounds. Additionally, there are concerns that reliance on these visual elements may diminish students' ability to express themselves effectively through written or verbal language.

To address these challenges, educators should consider incorporating an understanding of emoji and sticker usage into language-learning curricula. By providing training on the effective use of these symbols, students can learn to express themselves clearly while maintaining strong verbal communication skills. For example, instructional sessions could include analyses of the contextual use of emojis and stickers and their impact on the intended meaning of messages.

With the right approach, the use of emojis and stickers can not only enhance communication among students but also enrich their learning experiences. Understanding pragmatic strategies in virtual communication equips students to adapt to the dynamics of modern communication and prepares them to interact effectively in an increasingly digital world.

The use of emojis and stickers in digital communication has given rise to several challenges, particularly among university students. Misinterpretation of meaning is a significant issue, as the ambiguous nature of emojis and stickers can lead to discomfort or even conflict between individuals. Additionally, reliance on visual symbols may negatively impact students' ability to communicate effectively in both verbal and written forms, hindering the development of their language skills. This poses a critical challenge, especially in academic contexts where clarity and precision are essential for effective communication.

Another area of concern is the ethical use of stickers. Many students use stickers featuring images of others without permission, which can tarnish reputations and create social issues. Furthermore, the use of degrading or mocking stickers can result in negative psychological effects for the individuals targeted, such as feelings of shame or diminished self-confidence.



Beyond individual concerns, the trend of using emojis and stickers also presents challenges in terms of normativity and communication effectiveness. Students often follow popular trends without understanding the original meaning of these symbols, leading to less effective communication. Over time, this phenomenon may undermine the quality of interactions in both informal and formal contexts.

This study employs a qualitative research method with a survey approach to analyze the phenomenon of using emojis and stickers as substitutes for words among university students. Primary data will be collected through the distribution of online questionnaires targeting students as the main respondents. These questionnaires are designed to explore students' understanding and experiences regarding the use of emojis and stickers in daily conversations, both in informal and academic contexts. Additionally, secondary data will be gathered from conversations within WhatsApp groups comprising university students to analyze how emojis and stickers are utilized in their digital communication. By combining data collection through questionnaires and conversation analysis, this study aims to provide deeper insights into the role of emojis and stickers in the transformation of digital language among university students.

The goal of addressing this issue is to identify and analyze the negative impacts of using emojis and stickers in communication among university students. Specifically, this research aims to: reduce misunderstandings by minimizing the ambiguity of meanings that could lead to conflicts, enhance communication skills by avoiding over-reliance on visual symbols that may hinder verbal abilities, promote ethical practices by raising awareness about the proper use of stickers, including respecting copyright, minimize negative psychological effects by discouraging the use of derogatory stickers, and preserve original meanings to ensure that communication remains effective despite the use of visual symbols. These objectives aim to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and offer actionable solutions for improving communication in the digital age.

This study is crucial for understanding how the use of emojis and stickers influences language transformation in the digital era, particularly in the context of student communication, which increasingly relies on digital platforms. It aims to identify the impact of visual symbols on students' verbal and written communication skills and explore solutions to enhance their interpersonal communication competence. Additionally, the research highlights ethical issues surrounding the use of emojis and stickers and examines the psychological effects that may arise from ineffective communication, which can lead to conflicts or misunderstandings. Furthermore, the findings of this study can be utilized to develop more relevant educational curricula that address the demands of digital communication, helping students adapt to changes in modern communication practices.

The urgency of this research is significant, given the increasing prevalence of digital platforms in daily life, especially among students. WhatsApp, as one of the most widely used instant messaging applications, has become a primary means of communication for students, both personally and in academic contexts. Within this digital communication, the use of emojis and stickers has rapidly evolved as a faster and easier form of expression, but their use also presents potential issues in terms of ambiguity of meaning, misunderstandings, and a decline in the quality of verbal communication.



This study is important because it provides a deeper understanding of how digital language transformation affects the way students interact and communicate, both socially and academically. Excessive use of emojis and stickers can impact students' ability to express thoughts and emotions verbally, a crucial skill for learning and professional interaction. By exploring the issues and challenges that arise from the use of emojis and stickers, this research can offer solutions to enhance the quality of student communication, maintain effectiveness in academic discussions, and help students understand when and how to use these digital symbols wisely.

Moreover, the findings of this research are expected to contribute to the development of communication policies in academic and educational environments. Understanding the limitations of using emojis and stickers in formal communication can help foster more professional, clear, and effective communication. Overall, the urgency of this study lies in the importance of improving communication quality in the digital age, particularly among students, which will directly impact the development of their communication skills in both academic and professional settings.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research method with a survey approach to understand the phenomenon of digital language transformation on WhatsApp, particularly through the use of emojis and stickers as substitutes for words among students. Data is collected through an online questionnaire designed to explore students' perceptions, experiences, and potential issues encountered when using these digital symbols. The target population for the study consists of students from various academic programs, with purposive sampling techniques used to ensure the selection of relevant respondents for the research topic.

Data collection occurs in two stages. The first stage involves the distribution of the online questionnaire to students in order to gather information regarding the frequency of emoji and sticker usage, the contexts in which they are used, and their impact on communication quality. The second stage consists of analyzing conversations within WhatsApp groups containing students to observe the use of emojis and stickers in real-life communication, both in casual and academic discussions.

The research instrument consists of a structured questionnaire that includes questions about the frequency, context, and perceptions of emoji and sticker usage, as well as their potential impacts on formal and academic communication. Additionally, conversation records from WhatsApp groups are qualitatively analyzed to identify usage patterns and the meanings conveyed.

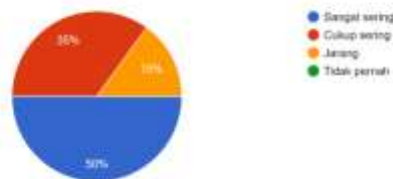
Data analysis techniques involve thematic analysis to identify key issues emerging from the questionnaire responses and group conversations. The data is organized into themes such as meaning ambiguity, misunderstandings, and the influence on academic communication, which are then interpreted to formulate relevant solutions. The research is conducted over a specified period, including the distribution of the questionnaire and the analysis of WhatsApp group conversations.

RESULT AND DISCUSS

The data were collected through online questionnaires distributed to participants:

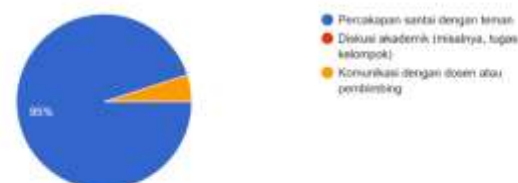


Seberapa sering Anda menggunakan emoji atau stiker dalam percakapan WhatsApp?
20 jawaban



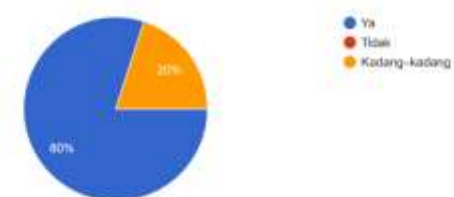
Many individuals reported using emojis and stickers quite frequently, indicating that these symbols have become essential communication tools in digital interactions. The discussion may explore how emojis help to alleviate the rigidity in text-based conversations, making communication more dynamic and expressive. Furthermore, this phenomenon could be influenced by the evolving digital culture among younger generations.

Dalam percakapan seperti apa Anda lebih sering menggunakan emoji atau stiker?
20 jawaban



Emojis are more commonly used in casual conversations with friends compared to formal or academic contexts. This can be attributed to the informal nature of communication between peers, where emotional expression takes precedence. The discussion could delve into how the context influences users' perceptions of emojis. For example, in academic settings, the use of emojis may be seen as unprofessional, leading individuals to exercise more caution.

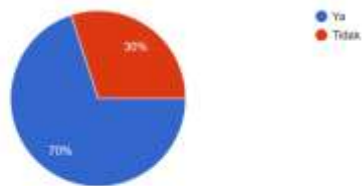
Apakah Anda merasa penggunaan emoji atau stiker dapat membantu menyampaikan perasaan Anda dengan lebih baik?
20 jawaban



Many people believe that emojis help convey emotions more effectively. Emojis serve as substitutes for facial expressions and tone of voice, which can be difficult to interpret in text. The discussion could explore how emojis enhance emotional communication, adding nuances that might be lost with text alone. This also raises questions about how effective emojis are in conveying complex emotional nuances.

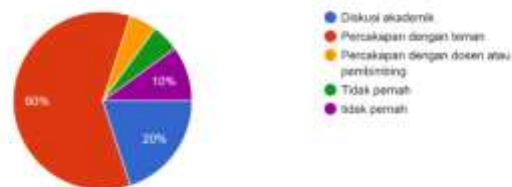


Apakah Anda pernah mengalami kesalahpahaman akibat penggunaan emoji atau stiker dalam percakapan?
20 jawaban



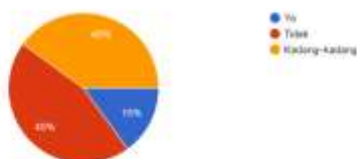
While many feel that emojis improve communication, some have experienced misunderstandings. This often occurs in conversations with friends or in academic contexts, where the meaning of emojis can vary depending on context and individual interpretation. The discussion could focus on concrete examples of these misunderstandings and ways to avoid them, such as clarifying the intent behind the use of emojis.

Jika pernah, dalam situasi apa kesalahpahaman tersebut terjadi? (Pilih yang sesuai)
20 jawaban



There is a perspective that using emojis in academic communication can reduce the quality of communication. This may be due to concerns that emojis distract from the core message. The discussion could consider how emojis should be strategically used in academic settings, such as as a prelude to more serious topics, to maintain a relaxed atmosphere.

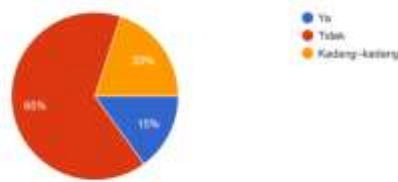
Apakah Anda merasa penggunaan emoji dan stiker dapat mengurangi kualitas komunikasi dalam diskusi akademik?
20 jawaban



Some individuals feel that over-reliance on emojis makes communication less clear. Excessive use can lead to confusion, especially when the message depends too much on symbols rather than words. The discussion could address how to avoid this confusion, emphasizing the importance of balancing emoji usage with clear verbal communication.

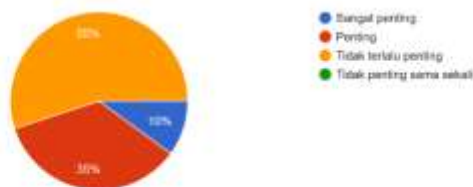


Apakah Anda merasa ketergantungan pada emoji atau stiker membuat komunikasi Anda menjadi kurang jelas?
20 jawaban



Many emphasize the importance of combining emojis with words to make messages clearer. This suggests that emojis should not replace verbal communication but rather complement it. The discussion could identify effective communication techniques, such as using emojis to emphasize or clarify specific points in a message.

Menurut Anda, apakah penting untuk menggabungkan penggunaan emoji dan stiker dengan kata-kata dalam percakapan agar lebih jelas?
20 jawaban



There is a consensus that the use of emojis should be limited in formal communication contexts. This is crucial to maintain communication ethics and professionalism, especially in interactions with professors or within academic settings. The discussion could explore clear boundaries for emoji usage in formal situations and how these can be applied in practice.

Apakah Anda setuju bahwa penggunaan emoji dan stiker harus dibatasi dalam konteks komunikasi formal (misalnya, dengan dosen atau dalam tugas akademik)?
20 jawaban

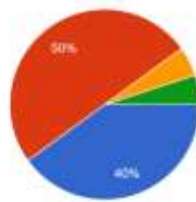


There is an awareness of the importance of educating individuals on the responsible use of emojis. This indicates a need for educational programs that teach students how to effectively use emojis in digital communication. The discussion could highlight methods for educating students, such as workshops and seminars on effective digital communication.



Menurut Anda, apakah penting untuk mengedukasi mahasiswa tentang cara menggunakan emoji dan stiker dengan bijak dalam komunikasi digital?

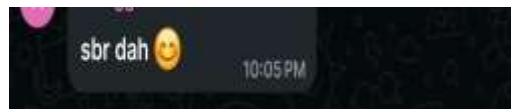
20 jawaban



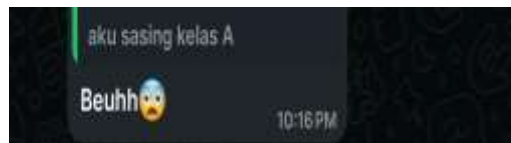
● Sangat penting
● Penting
● Tidak penting
● Tidak penting sama sekali

Many believe that educating students on the responsible use of emojis and stickers is crucial. Education on the mindful use of emojis can reduce misunderstandings and improve communication. The discussion could emphasize the importance of workshops or seminars that teach effective digital communication skills.

The data were collected from interactions and conversations in a student group chat:



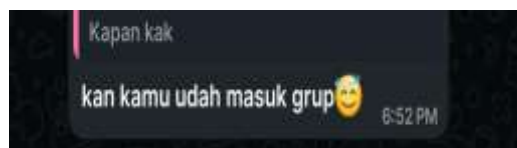
The smiling emoji is ambiguous as it can represent happiness but also anger.



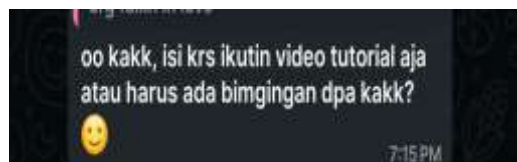
The emoji can represent amazement or fear, depending on the context.



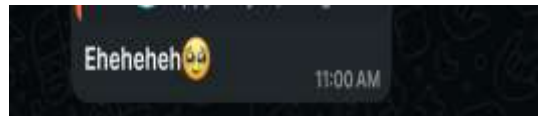
Emojis can convey sadness or can also represent a form of self-deprecation or 'laughing at oneself.



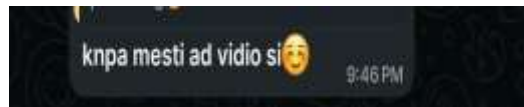
The emoji can convey friendliness or may also represent someone attempting to be patient.



The smiley emoji with flat eyes can be interpreted as either a friendly smile or an expression of fatigue due to circumstances.



The emoji can represent a mix of emotions, such as being deeply moved by happiness or sadness regarding something.



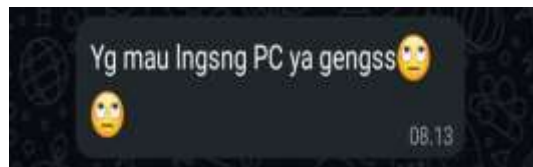
This message can convey two meanings: first, a polite inquiry due to a lack of understanding, and second, sarcasm regarding the necessity of a video, delivered with a humorous tone.



This message conveys two meanings: a joyful mood and a subtle criticism, suggesting that one must continue smiling even when undesirable events occur.



This message conveys two meanings: responding with humor to something frustrating, while also expressing disappointment in a more serious tone.



Based on the emoji '😅', it may suggest frustration, yet it is also being used to offer to purchase something.



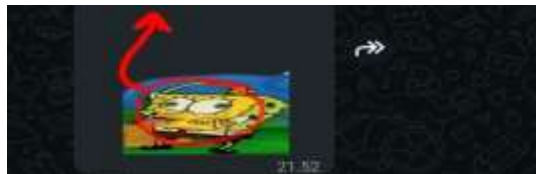
Without the word 'KACAU', many people might not understand the intended meaning of this sticker, as the text and image are incongruent.



Many people may perceive this sticker as lacking meaning due to its image being overly random or careless.



The image of the cat climbing bamboo lacks a clear meaning, which may cause the recipient to feel confused about the sender's intent.



This sticker does not provide a clear meaning, which may cause the viewer to feel somewhat confused about its purpose.



It is quite confusing, as both the image and the words used are unfamiliar and not easily recognizable.



It cannot be explained.

CONCLUSION

The results of the study indicate that the majority of students use emojis or stickers quite frequently, especially in casual conversations with friends. However, their use tends to decrease in formal communication contexts, such as academic discussions or communication with professors. Emojis and stickers are generally considered effective in conveying emotions, although some individuals express doubts regarding their effectiveness in formal situations. Additionally, the use of emojis and stickers has been shown to cause misunderstandings in some cases, particularly in casual conversations or academic discussions, reflecting the ambiguity in interpreting these symbols.

Most respondents did not feel that emojis or stickers reduced the quality of communication in academic discussions. However, excessive reliance on these visual symbols can make communication unclear for a small percentage of respondents. It is important to note that the majority of students recognize the need for education on the wise use of emojis and stickers to



minimize misunderstandings, improve communication ethics, and optimize their use in formal contexts. Respondents also generally agree that the use of emojis and stickers should be limited in formal communication to maintain clarity and professionalism.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that students be educated on how to use emojis and stickers wisely through training and socialization. The use of these visual symbols should also be balanced with words to avoid ambiguity. Furthermore, it is crucial to limit the use of emojis and stickers in formal communication to maintain ethics and clarity in messaging. This conclusion aims to support efforts to create more effective, ethical, and clear digital communication in the modern era.

SUGGESTION

Based on the findings, several recommendations can be made to improve the quality of digital communication, particularly regarding the use of emojis and stickers. First, it is essential to educate students on how to use emojis and stickers wisely in digital communication. This education should include an understanding of communication contexts, both formal and informal, and how to avoid using symbols that may be ambiguous without additional clarification. Furthermore, students should be taught to use emojis and stickers as complements rather than substitutes for verbal messages, ensuring that the message remains clear.

Next, in the context of formal communication, it is important to limit the use of emojis and stickers to maintain professionalism. Students can be encouraged to prioritize clearer and more formal communication styles, especially when interacting with professors or in academic assignments. Awareness of the potential ambiguities in emoji use should also be raised. Students need to be taught to anticipate misunderstandings by combining visual symbols with explanatory words.

Additionally, to reduce dependence on visual symbols, it is crucial to encourage the development of students' verbal communication skills. By enhancing their verbal communication abilities, students are expected to convey messages effectively without over-relying on emojis or stickers. Finally, further research should be encouraged to explore the impact of emoji and sticker use in various contexts, such as in psychology, communication, and digital ethics. With these measures, it is hoped that more effective, ethical, and contextual digital communication will emerge, helping students better adapt their communication styles.

REFERENCES

- Amelia, A., Justice, B. M. R., Kurnia, N. F. E., Anisah, U. R., & Asror, A. G. (2024, June). Strategi Pragmatik dalam Komunikasi Virtual: Penggunaan Emoji dan Stiker dalam Pesan Singkat. In *Seminar Nasional dan Gelar Karya Produk Hasil Pembelajaran* (Vol. 2, No. 1, pp. 286-304). <https://prosiding.ikipgribojonegoro.ac.id/index.php/SNGK>
- Azikin, M. A. (2023). *Analisis Etika Komunikasi Penggunaan stiker Pesan Whatsapp pada mahasiswa IAIN Parepare* (Doctoral dissertation, IAIN Parepare). <https://repository.iainpare.ac.id/id/eprint/7079>
- Bagaskara, R. S., & Putri, F. N. F. Efek Penggunaan Emoji Terhadap Kesan Hangat dan Kompetensi di Konteks Proyek Virtual Mahasiswa. *WACANA*, 15(2), 134-143. <https://doi.org/10.20961/wacana.v15i2.72892>



- Baktiar, A., Sukanto, B. R. K., & Pramono, S. H. S. (2022). Efektivitas penggunaan emoji dalam komunikasi digital. In *Prosiding Seminar Nasional Ilmu Ilmu Sosial (SNIIS)* (Vol. 1, pp. 620-632). <https://proceeding.unesa.ac.id/index.php/sniis>
- Evanurmala, E., & Rahayu, P. B. (2023). Analisis Semiotika terhadap Penggunaan Emoji dalam Media Sosial Antar Mahasiswa Fakultas Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik Universitas Islam Makassar. *Komedia*, 2(1), 24-31. <https://doi.org/10.24256/jcm.v2i1.4969>
- Hanum, J. N. A. (2023). *Penyalahgunaan potret orang lain sebagai Stiker Whatsapp di kalangan mahasiswa Fakultas Syariah dan Fakultas Saintek UIN Malang perspektif kesadaran hukum* (Doctoral dissertation, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim). <http://etheses.uin-malang.ac.id/id/eprint/52476>
- Hariani, S. (2023). Stiker WhatsApp Sebagai Pesan Nonverbal Dalam Komunikasi Interpersonal Mahasiswa. *Hikmah*, 17(2), 255-270. <https://doi.org/10.24952/hik.v17i2.6346>
- Lidya, G. (2024). FENOMENA PENYALAHGUNAAN POTRET SESEORANG SEBAGAI STIKER WHATSAPP DI KALANGAN GENERASI Z DALAM KOMUNIKASI DIGITAL. *Busyro: Jurnal Dakwah dan Komunikasi Islam*, 5(1), 6-14. <https://doi.org/10.55352/kpi.v5i1.969>
- Manurung, A. M., Wulandari, A. N., Limbong, M. Z. R. B., & Sinurat, S. (2024). Pentingnya Pemertahanan Bahasa Indonesia Di Era Digital The Importance of Maintaining the Indonesian Language in the Digital Era. *Jurnal Intelek Insan Cendikia*, 1(4), 456-461. <https://jicnusantara.com/index.php/jiic>
- Maulidina, D. H. (2021). *penggunaan emoji dalam komunikasi pembelajaran daring melalui media whatsapp (Studi Deskriptif Pada Mahasiswa Jurusan Bimbingan Penyuluhan Islam Institut Agama Islam Negeri Ponorogo Angkatan Tahun 2018)* (Doctoral dissertation, Iain Ponorogo). <http://etheses.iainponorogo.ac.id/id/eprint/12831>
- Ningsih, L., Amran, A., & Dianto, I. (2024). Persepsi Mahasiswa Terhadap Penggunaan Emoticon Pesan WhatsApp Pada Program Studi Komunikasi dan Penyiaran Islam. *INTERAKSI PERADABAN: Jurnal Komunikasi dan Penyiaran Islam*, 4(1). <https://journal.uinjkt.ac.id/index.php/interaksi/article/viewFile/41227/14756>
- Shalahuddin, M. A., & Fajrianti, L. (2024). The Impact of Emoticons in Social Media Communication. <https://doi.org/10.37010/prop.v4i2.1632>
- Siregar, R. P. (2021). PENGARUH PENGGUNAAN EMOJI TERHADAP PERSEPSI KOMUNIKAN ATAS UMPAN BALIK NEGATIF PADA WHATSAPP:(Survei Pada Mahasiswa Universitas Telkom Angkatan 2017). *MEDIALOG: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi*, 4(2), 244-251. <https://doi.org/10.35326/medialog.v4i2.1417>
- Sundry, L., & Fauzah, F. (2024). Studi Analisis Perkembangan Bahasa Indonesia di Era Digital. *Innovative: Journal Of Social Science Research*, 4(3), 11295-11303. <https://doi.org/10.31004/innovative.v4i3.11633>
- Wahyutiar, R., Noviadji, B. R., Bentri, S. A., & Gusnov, J. N. (2023). Penciptaan Komik webtoon sebagai sarana edukasi bagi remaja tentang perilaku berkomentar yang baik di media sosial. *Artika*, 7(1), 39-62. <https://doi.org/10.34148/artika.v7i1.660>
- Wibisono, A. T. A., Suryawati, I. G. A. A., Joni, I. D. A. S., & Damasemil, C. PENGARUH PENGGUNAAN EMOJI WHATSAPP TERHADAP KEPUASAN REMAJA KOTA DENPASAR DALAM MENYAMPAIKAN PESAN. <https://ojs.unud.ac.id/index.php/komunikasi>