Sound Repetition in Indonesian TikTok Speech: A Phonological–Pragmatic Analysis

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ABSTRACT
This study investigates the role of sound repetition in Indonesian TikTok speech through a phonological–pragmatic framework. In contrast to morphological reduplication and syntactic repetition, the repetition observed in TikTok oral discourse operates primarily at the level of sound and prosody, serving as a strategy to emphasize meaning and intensify emotional expression. Employing a qualitative descriptive method, this research analyzes spoken data drawn from Indonesian TikTok videos featuring spontaneous verbal interaction. Selected utterances were transcribed and examined by identifying recurring sound sequences and interpreting their pragmatic functions within specific discourse contexts. The findings indicate that sound repetition predominantly occurs in vowel-based and consonant-based patterns, accompanied by rhythmic timing, accelerated tempo, and consistent pitch contours. Pragmatically, these repetitions function to amplify emotional stance, foreground salient discourse moments, and enhance humorous effects. This study contributes to phonological and pragmatic scholarship by highlighting the significance of sound-based emphasis strategies in digital spoken communication.

Keywords: phonology, sound repetition, pragmatics, TikTok speech, digital discourse

INTRODUCTION

The expansion of social media platforms has brought significant changes to contemporary communication practices, particularly in environments that privilege spoken interaction. Among these platforms, TikTok has gained prominence as a medium that relies heavily on short-form oral performances to express emotions, reactions, and personal narratives. Speech in TikTok videos is often spontaneous, expressive, and directed toward audience engagement, making it a valuable source of linguistic data.

Previous linguistic research on TikTok and similar platforms has primarily examined lexical innovation, slang formation, abbreviation usage, syntactic variation, and multimodal features such as gestures and visual cues. While these studies contribute to the understanding of digital communication, they often marginalize phonological aspects of speech. As a result, sound-based phenomena tend to be overlooked or treated as secondary to lexical and grammatical analysis.

In Indonesian TikTok speech, speakers frequently produce expressions such as "no no no no," "hei hei hei," and "bye bye bye" during moments of heightened emotion or interaction. These expressions do not create new words nor fulfill grammatical functions. Instead, their communicative impact arises from the repetition of identical sound units, which increases auditory prominence and emotional intensity. This suggests that repetition in such contexts operates as a phonological strategy rather than as a morphological or syntactic process.

From a phonological–pragmatic perspective, sound repetition functions as an emphasis mechanism grounded in prosodic features such as rhythm, duration, and pitch. By reiterating the same sound sequence, speakers signal emotional involvement and draw listener attention efficiently. Given TikTok's time-limited and performance-oriented format, sound repetition emerges as an effective communicative resource. Despite its frequent occurrence, this phenomenon remains underrepresented in linguistic research, motivating the present study.

THEORETICAL

Phonology is concerned with the systematic organization of sounds and their functional roles within a language, while prosody addresses suprasegmental features such as rhythm, stress, tempo, and intonation (Crystal, 2011). These elements play a crucial role in spoken discourse, as they shape meaning beyond lexical content and grammatical structure.

Pragmatics, on the other hand, focuses on how meaning is constructed through context, speaker intention, and listener interpretation (Yule, 2020). In spoken interaction, speakers often rely on non-lexical strategies—such as intonation shifts, pauses, and repetition—to convey stance and emotion. Repetition, in particular, has been shown to function as a pragmatic device for emphasis and affective expression.

When repetition does not involve morphological reduplication or syntactic duplication, it may function exclusively at the phonological level. In digital spoken discourse, phonological features are frequently exaggerated to enhance expressiveness and audience engagement (Tagg & Seargeant, 2014). Sound repetition can therefore be conceptualized as a phonological–pragmatic strategy that enables speakers to construct meaning efficiently in online communication contexts.

METHODS OF RESEARCH

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to examine sound repetition in Indonesian TikTok speech. A qualitative framework is appropriate because the research aims to describe phonological patterns and interpret their pragmatic functions within naturally occurring spoken discourse.

The data were collected from publicly available TikTok videos produced by Indonesian content creators. The selected videos feature spontaneous spoken utterances containing repeated sound sequences used for expressive purposes. To maintain ethical standards, the identities of the content creators are anonymized and referred to as Creator A, Creator B, and Creator C.

The selection of data was guided by the following criteria:
1. The use of Indonesian language
2. The presence of spontaneous spoken interaction
3. Repetition of identical sound sequences
4. Exclusion of morphological reduplication as a grammatical process
5. Emphatic or expressive communicative intent

Data collection involved repeated observation and attentive listening. Relevant utterances were transcribed and classified according to their sound repetition patterns. The analysis focused on identifying phonological characteristics and interpreting pragmatic functions based on the surrounding discourse context.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Forms of Sound Repetition

The analysis reveals that sound repetition in Indonesian TikTok speech functions independently of grammatical structure. Repeated sound sequences operate as unified prosodic units rather than as separate lexical items.

Three primary forms of sound repetition were identified:

No	Sound Pattern	Example Expression	Category
1	/no/	no no no	Vowel-based
2	/hei/	hei hei hei	Consonant-based
3	/bai/	bye bye bye	Consonant-based

These repetitions are characterized by rhythmic regularity, accelerated articulation, and relatively stable pitch contours. Such features indicate that the communicative force of repetition lies in phonological emphasis rather than in lexical meaning or grammatical structure.

Pragmatic Functions of Sound Repetition

From a pragmatic perspective, sound repetition fulfills multiple communicative functions in TikTok speech. One prominent function is emotional amplification, where repeated sounds intensify feelings such as refusal, excitement, or emphasis during farewells. Repetition also serves to foreground specific moments within discourse, guiding audience attention toward key reactions or narrative highlights.

In addition, exaggerated sound repetition often contributes to humorous effects, particularly in reaction-based or performance-oriented content. This aligns with TikTok's entertainment-driven discourse, where expressive delivery plays a central role. Given the platform's temporal constraints, sound repetition

enables speakers to convey affective meaning efficiently without relying on complex syntactic constructions. This demonstrates the pragmatic effectiveness of phonological strategies in digital spoken interaction.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that sound repetition in Indonesian TikTok speech functions as a phonological–pragmatic emphasis strategy rather than as a morphological or syntactic process. Appearing primarily in vowel-based and consonant-based forms, sound repetition plays a significant role in intensifying emotional expression, highlighting discourse moments, and generating humorous effects.

The findings contribute to phonological research by identifying sound repetition as an independent analytical category and extend studies of digital discourse by emphasizing the role of sound-based meaning construction in social media communication. Future research may explore similar phenomena across different languages, platforms, or communicative contexts, as well as incorporate acoustic analysis to examine prosodic variation more precisely.

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