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# Language Phenomena in Pro-Palestinian Posts on Social Media

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## ABSTRACT

This research aims to describe a number of language phenomena that appear in posts on social media related to the pro-Palestinian movement. This research is a qualitative descriptive study. The data sources for this research are the social media platforms Instagram, X, and Telegram. The data in this research consists of linguistic elements in pro-Palestinian posts on the social media platforms Instagram, X, and Telegram. The data obtained are analysed using the matching method. The results of the data analysis are presented informally. Data was collected using listening and note-taking techniques with data sources in the form of social media, especially Instagram, X, and Telegram. The result obtained include that pro-Palestinian movements or action produce a number of language phenomena, including the emergence of registers, slang, and dysphemism in posts on social media. The results illustrate the emergence of a linguistic phenomenon arising from a social phenomenon currently occurring in society. As part of the social element, language once again demonstrates the distinctiveness of certain groups based on the linguistic codes that have developed. Furthermore, the emerging language phenomenon does not merely appear as a form of vocabulary or language codes. Indirectly, these language codes manifest as a form of support and even resistance echoed by the public against the injustice currently happening to the Palestinian people.

Keywords: Instagram; language; pro-Palestine; social media; telegram; X

# INTRODUCTION

As part of human life, language, whether directly or indirectly, is very dependent on everything that happens to the speaker. It is not only regarding the external context of language use, but also the internal aspect of the speaker. In the science of Psycholinguistics, the influence of a speaker's psychological condition on the form of language, even the choice of words/diction produced is studied. This is due to during the process, language naturally goes through the stages of conceptualization and formulation, which Griffin and Ferreira (2006, p. 22) mention as two stages in a person's psychology when producing a language. Slip of the tongue, for example, often occurs when conceptualization and formulation do not occur smoothly due to feelings of nervousness or even being in a tense situation.

Such phenomenon was found in posts with a pro-Palestinian theme as a result of Israeli's genocidal actions in the Gaza region, especially since the event of 7 October 2023. Parties who condemn Israeli's actions in pro-Palestinian groups are trying to join in the struggle by utilizing social media in digital war movements. The groups that were later formed even named

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themselves the "Julid Fiisabillaah Brigade" because they had not been able to fight directly on the battlefield in Gaza.

A unique pattern of language in the existing posts described the sender's emotions. In Psycholinguistics, as previously described, the language produced is influenced by the psychological condition of the speaker. These pro-Palestinian posts tended to describe psychological conditions in the form of angry emotions. This is in line with Holmes' (1992, p. 2) statement that in fact language does not only carry out its 'duty' as a conveyor of information, but furthermore acts as a conveyor of the emotions of its users. The linguistic phenomena that appear indicated the unwillingness towards oppression performed by Israel as a country that always promotes self-defence against the Hamas movement which is labelled a terrorist. This pro-Palestinian netizen does not even hesitate to say harsh words on pro-Israel accounts. Even Islamic religious leaders support such action and state that cursing criminals is a legitimate thing to do, as seen in the following example which equates IDF soldiers with monkeys.



FIGURE 1. Pro-Palestinian post

As is known, Israel does not move alone. The United States is a country that fully supports the genocide it has committed against the people of Gaza, as performed since 75 years ago when the territory had the status of "Palestine". Such support is not only in the form of supplies of soldiers and weapons, but also in digital manner. A company called Meta keeps a close eye on social media algorithms. It is no longer a secret that an account cannot send comments, cannot find its posts, or is even blocked and ultimately collapsed, deleted by the system if it is detected sending something related to Gaza.

Meta, as the ruler of social media, especially Facebook, X or Twitter, and Instagram, is trying to cover up the truth of what is happening in Gaza and replace it with various propaganda. Based on <u>https://graniteshares.com/</u> meta has a significant influence on content on social media platforms like Instagram, X, and Facebook, including personal communication, online shopping, and social connections worldwide. This is the challenge of the Julid Fisabilillah Brigade troops who have made social media their weapon of resistance. So, there are many efforts, not only to reveal the truth about the current situation and what Israel did, but also to try to find opportunity so that the revealed truth can continue to survive and not be blocked by the system. Therefore, certain unique linguistic phenomena that were born are

interesting to explore. For example, there was the word Isriwil to replace the word, Israel. The use of such a word aims to not only mock Israel, but also to hide it from the Meta algorithm so that the posting remains safe.

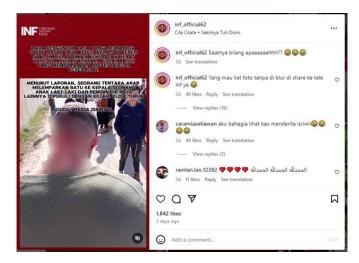


FIGURE 2. Pro-Palestine post comment column

A number of data found show distinctive patterns that are interesting to study. As part of the linguistic phenomena on social media, these findings showed other characteristics that increasingly illustrate that social media is no longer just a site for social interaction, for marketing needs, or to archive certain moments in the form of photos or videos. Lutkevich (2023) states that social media can even become a medium for guiding public opinion through its analytical power, by making a topic to be discussed continually. So, directly or indirectly, social media can even become a weapon of resistance against bad regimes in certain social phenomena that is worth considering.

The Palestine-Israel conflict has somewhat attracted public attention, leading some to become the basis for scientific research to examine societal tendencies towards the conflict from various perspectives. From a social perspective, for example, viewing the conflict through the lens of the close brotherhood that has developed between Indonesia and Palestine (Intan, 2021). The focus of this research lies on the bilateral relationship based on the long history of Palestine's support for Indonesia's independence. Another study viewed from a social perspective is found in Irsyad's (2021) writing, which examines public reactions on social media X regarding the percentage of emotional tendencies of the community towards Palestine. The result shows that the dominant emotion is positive compared to negative and neutral emotions. From the perspective of the role of social media, Sholehkatin et al. (2024), Kaslam (2024), and Pratama et al. (2024) analyze the orientalism patterns in social media towards Palestine and Israel based on the content shared. The findings indicate that social media plays an important role in shaping public sentiment regarding the ongoing conflict. Lastly, from the perspective of news framing, Mahayasa and Putri (2024) as well as Akmal (2024) observe that both on social media and mass media, the reporting on the conflict between the two countries often does not align with the actual facts, depending on the media outlet reporting it. one of which is provided by the mass media BBC. Information searches must be based on caution, because as stated by Kholid et al. (2023), social media has become a medium for delivering information or news that can be easily obtained by anyone quickly in the current digital era. From the various studies, none have focused their research on the phenomenon of language codes that arise from the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

# METHODOLOGY

This was a qualitative study which involved data in the form of language phenomena in pro-Palestinian posts on social media. Data were collected not only from information or better known as photo captions sent, but also from comments from pro-Palestinian accounts. In this case, the social media as the data sources were Instagram, X, and Telegram. The data collection was conducted over two weeks. Listening, participation and conversation techniques and notetaking as an advanced technique were applied to collect data from these two sources. The results of data acquisition were analysed using the matching method. The analysis process involved context outside language. The results of the analysis were further presented informally using ordinary words without the involvement of quantitative number calculations.

# **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Based on the collected data, three language phenomena were found in pro-Palestinian posts, namely register, slang, and dysphemism. The following section will explain such phenomena.

## REGISTER

Register is a variety of languages used in certain fields. In principle, there are a number of dictions found in several different fields. However, if you look at the field of use, the meaning and context of the use of these dictions can be different from each other. In pro-Palestinian posts, it was found a linguistic phenomenon in the form of register. There were a number of words commonly used in the society, but when they were related to the context of the war in Gaza, the meaning of such words shifted or even changed, as shown in the following data.

- (1) war
- (2) batalyon
- (3) brigade
- (4) makan
- (5) tumbang
- (6) rujak
- (7) rujakin
- (8) boycott
- (9) kera
- (10) penjajah
- (11) pendudukan

Data (1)—(3) are generally used in the military field. All three apparently found their use in pro-Palestinian posts with shifting meanings. The word 'war', for example, in data (1) was understood as a word used in the context of digital war. As is known, most of the pro-Palestinian netizens were located far from Gaza and could not fight directly in the battlefield like Hamas did. This inability did not make their enthusiasm for learning ebbed so that the war they were fighting was finally realized digitally through the use of social media, such as Instagram and X, as well as Telegram. That is also the reason for using the terms battalion and brigade, resulting in the creation of a fighter group with the name "*Brigade Hassan Bin Tsabit.*".

The next data was *makan*. This verb was associated with the act of mentally destroying Israel through digital attacks, either through comments or private messages (direct messages).

*Makan siang* was a commonly found term, accompanied with information about the accounts of Israel or its supporters to be mentally attacked.

The further data, namely *tumbang* (collapsed) and *rujak/rujakin*, were also related to the digital attacks performed. The term *tumbang* was applied for accounts that could no longer be accessed since they were blocked by the Meta system. The term *rujak/rujakin* that was generally associated with a type of food containing fruit and chili sauce was currently associated with the act of destroying something. In this case, the mentality of pro-Israel, both Israel and its supporters was the object to destroy.

The word *boycott* recently went viral. This was due to the emergence of facts regarding a number of product brands or even a number of well-known companies that apparently supported Israel. The pro-Palestinians finally issued a fatwa to boycott these products. So, the word *boycott* tends to be related to the action of stopping using a number of products that are specific to a number of products affiliated with Israel.

The further data was *kera*. This word was included in the register in pro-Palestinian posts. The term *kera* was taken from the term in Islam for Jews who always break their promises (Kumalasari, 2021). In addition, it is stated that *kera* or *monyet* have a greedy animal nature that does not want to share with others, as is the nature of the Jews. This word was often applied to refer to IDF soldiers who often appeared in posts on Instagram and Telegram

The last two data, namely *penjajah* and *pendudukan*, had a narrowed meaning, especially for pro-Palestinian netizens. These two terms were actually used to refer to Israel with other words that tended to have negative connotations. So far, western media propaganda had made Israel the victim of terrorist acts attached to Hamas fighters. So, in accordance with the actions of Israel towards Palestinian land, the terms *penjajah* and *pendudukan* were applied to emphasize the appropriate labels for them as invaders of other people's homeland and occupying and seizing other people's land by force.

Actually, all the existing data were not presented in the new vocabulary or diction. However, because the field or context of its use shifted to a certain field or context, the meaning it contains also shifted, either expanding or narrowing. Bakhtin (2006, p. 88) states that registers are needed in the social interaction of a community. So, these registers were formed as a means of communication between community members, in this case pro-Palestinians.

#### SLANG

Register is a variety of languages in a certain field. On the other hand, slang is a variety of language used by a certain group. Like its status, slang is understood as a form of variety whose form is non-standard and does not last long. In the data collected, several forms of diction or language use were found which were included in the slang category. After classification, three types of slang forms were found, namely the formation of new diction, non-standard writing, and the use of punctuation.

In the formation of new diction, there were phrases consisting of old vocabulary commonly used in society, both standard and non-standard. However, when the two words were used together, a new meaning as part of slang emerged, as shown in the following sections.

(12) Julid fiisabilillaah

The word *julid* has actually been around for a long time since the 2020s. The word is usually used to refer to the act of meddling in other people's affairs. The word *fiisabilillaah*, which is taken from Arabic and means 'in the way of Allah', is a word that often appears in Islamic religious conversations or phrases. Both words were coined into the same new phrase which was ultimately understood as an online social media attack movement by Israelis and their

supporters. This term was formed from a shift in the phrase *jihad fiisabilillaah* as a form of *jihad* in another form that can be carried out amidst the inability to go directly to the battlefield in Gaza.

The second form of slang is non-standard writing. Previously, it was explained that Meta, as the owner of the social media system, one of which is Instagram, often deleted posts or simply comments that contained pro-Palestinian words. It was under this pretext that netizens disguised pro-Palestinian words in their posts and comments with other writing so that they were not read by the Meta system as sensitive pro-Palestinian words. The most commonly used form was a combination of letters and numbers, as described below.

- (13) p4l3st1n4 untuk Palestina
- (14) 1sr43l untuk Israel
- (15) zi0ni5t untuk zionis

Another form of slang was the insertion of punctuation. Among the punctuation marks used were the asterisk (\*), hashtag (#), underscore mark (\_), and exclamation mark (!). An asterisk (\*) was generally used to write words that were considered rude or taboo (Mualafina, 2017). In the data collected, the phenomenon of using the asterisk (\*) were related to two factors, including to avoid taboo, as mentioned previously, and to avoid detection of certain algorithms.

- (16) bant\*i (17) b\*n\*h
- (18) membak\*r diri
- (19) anj\*ing
- (20) f\*kin
- (21) Isra\*l
- (22) unil\*v\*r

Data (16)—(18) revealed the use of the asterisk (\*) in the interest of avoiding the use of taboo words. Recently, the words massacre, murder, self-immolation have become sensitive because of a number of actions behind them. These words were considered inappropriate to use vulgarly since they related to the large number of victims of Gaza residents due to massacres and killings by Israel. Furthermore, the case of self-immolation by American soldiers due to their protest actions some time ago was also seen as part of an event that was as tragic as that experienced by Gaza residents. For this reason, an asterisk was inserted to reduce the value of the word which tended to be sensitive.

The further data, namely (19) and (20), involved the use of an asterisk (\*) with the aim of reducing the harshness of the word. In general, the word *anjing* in Indonesian and *fukin* from fucking in English are two words that are generally used to curse. Muafana (2017) in her writing states that this kind of use indirectly functions to save the writer from accusations of being impolite in language. However, the reason for using this form of slang was still intended according to the status of the word, namely to insult Israel, as stated by Rezeki and Sagala (2019, p. 80) that one of the reasons for using slang in social interactions was as a means to insult.

The insertion of an asterisk (\*) also aimed to hide the use of certain words. Previously, we discussed changing words to hide them from the Meta algorithm. It turned out that this was also performed through the use of an asterisk (\*), as seen in the word Isra\*l data (21) which was hidden so that it could not be read by the system. Slightly different from data (22) in that the use of the asterisk (\*) in the word Unilever was not merely to avoid system reading of the word, but rather to conceal the brand, as mentioned by Mualafina (2017). As is known, the

Unilever Company is one of the pro-Israel companies that experienced a boycott from pro-Palestinian parties. The mention of it was sensitive, not least for those who still loyally rejected the boycott of the brand. Thus, the use of asterisk in data (22) aimed to reduce the impression of sensitivity.

Another punctuation often used was the hashtag (#). In general, the hashtag (#) was used for keywords in a particular post or topic. In pro-Palestinian posts, this punctuation was applied to increase the algorithm for using substitute words for the word *boikot*, as seen in the following data.

(23) #BuyCut

Other punctuation marks that were also found in use were the underscore (\_) and the exclamation mark (!). Similar with the previous data, these two punctuation marks were used to accompany the formation of new words that were changed for the security purposes of the Meta system, as seen in the following data.

(24) z!onis (25) ga\_za

### DISFEMISME

Most of the slang that appeared was a form of dysphemism. Dysphemism is an antonym of euphemism which is understood as the use of language that shows positive connotations. So, on the contrary, dysphemism actually shows the use of language that contains negative values or connotations. It is also stated that dysphemism refers to the tendency to choose harsh or offensive words or phrases rather than smooth, polite and socially acceptable forms (https://www.bachelorprint.com/academic-writing/dysphemism/).

These forms of words containing dysphemism are used with the aim of insulting, triggered by dislike or even hatred. This is in line with pro-Palestinians who strongly oppose Israel's actions against Gaza residents. Directly or indirectly, the data collected revealed that insults that could be represented by the vocabulary available in Indonesian or other languages seemed to be insufficient so that some of the dysphemism data became another means of insults to express emotions.

In an article, Khatimah et al. (2021, p. 66) stated that the existing vocabulary is often not sufficient to express and represent the feelings of the speaker, so new forms are created to accommodate these feelings. Regarding dysphemism, Ristanto (2019, p. 162) further states that the use of harsh language aims to direct public opinion, as performed by pro-Palestinian netizens.

Based on the obtained data, there were many dysphemisms used by netizens, both in posts on their personal accounts, as well as comments embedded in other people's posts regarding Israel atrocities. Dysphemism was found in people's names, group names, and country names. All three are discussed in detail as follows.

*The first dysphemism was applied in people's names.* Since the attack on 7 October, 2023, the names of Netanyahu, Prime Minister of Israel, and Joe Biden, President of the US, had become very viral. Their actions and policies that were detrimental to the people of Gaza were widely criticized by the world community. So, many netizens changed their names to other words with negative connotations, as detailed below.

(26) Setanyahu

(27) Syaitonyahu

- (28) Netanyahoak/Netanyahoax
- (29) Mbah Bindeng

The three initial data were several forms of puns on the name Netanyahu which were often used on social media. The reason is clear that the word elements contained negative connotations. The words *setan* and *syaiton* in data (26) and (27) referred to words with bad meanings. If we look at the Indonesian Dictionary, the word *Setan* is interpreted with the main meaning of 'evil spirit (which always tempts humans to do evil)'.

Data (28) contained the hoax words -or standardly hoax--. In the Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language, the word hoax means 'false information'. In contrast to the previous formation, the attachment of the word hoax was associated with the habit of Netanyahu, or in general, Israeli citizens, who liked to spread false information and propaganda about the actual condition in Gaza.

Data (29), namely *mbah bindeng* is slightly different from the previous data which was presented in word form. This data was a shift in the writing of the name Joe Biden, President of the United States. So far, Biden is known as a full supporter of Israel's attack on Gaza, including labelling Hamas as a terrorist movement group. Apart from being cruel, Biden also often shows poor health, such as not being fluent in speaking, so this phrase was chosen to mock him. The word *bindeng* refers to a condition when a person has difficulty speaking due to a blocked nose so that the resulting words or utterances sound less clear. This condition is the basis for the emergence of a derisive name called *Mbak Bindeng* by netizens. They seemed unwilling to mention Biden's real name, including Netanyahu, and replaced it with another form that described the true nature and behavior of both of them.

*The second dysphemism was applied in the group names.* Israel, as a system, attacked Gaza on behalf of a particular group. The groups often mentioned in pro-Palestinian posts were Zionists and IDF (Israel Defense Force) soldiers.

- (30) Zionista
- (31) jijikonis
- (32) Israel Diapers Force
- (33) Pasukan popok
- (34) Israel Offensive Force
- (35) Israel Occupation Force

The word *Zionis* was often censored by Meta so that posts containing the use of this word would generally be deleted automatically by the system. So, to avoid this, netizens replaced them with the words *zionista* and *jijikonis*, as shown in data (30) and (31). In addition to avoiding meta-censorship, netizens deliberately used the word *nista* to be combined with this word as an illustration of their bad behavior.

The IDF group, as the army at the forefront of the attack and occupation of Gaza, also did not escape bullying attacks from netizens. The attack was not only based on the badness of their actions, but also on the behavior they showed on social media, making them easy targets for netizens. One of them was by changing the abbreviated element of IDF, as seen in data (32), namely from the word 'defense' (*perlawanan*) to 'diapres' (*popok*). This further triggered the emergence of the phrase *pasukan popok* in the data (33). The appearance was due to traces of footage that was uploaded some time ago to social media which showed several IDF troops wetting their pants when hit by resistance attacks from Gaza fighters.

Another dysphemism appeared in data (34) and (35) which was similar to the previous formation process. In data (32), it can be seen that the change was made in the extended element of the word defense to diapers, there was a change in the element of the letter D to O in data

(34) and (35) so that IDF was changed into IOF. Such change, again, was based on the cruel actions and occupation carried out on the people of Gaza. The abbreviations for offensive and occupation attached to IOF had become a form of anger among netizens so that this abbreviation was chosen more often than the actual abbreviation.

*The third dysphemism was applied in the country name*. The country names had also not escaped dysphemistic attacks from pro-Palestinian netizens. Of course, the country referred to the country as the 'main figure' in the Gaza genocide attack, namely Israel. The following data indicated dysphemism performed by netizens towards such countries.

- (36) Israhell
- (37) Sirewel
- (38) Isntreal

Not different from the processes and factors behind the word changes in the previous data, data (36)—(38) also showed the same symptoms. The censorship and deletion of posts by the Meta system caused netizens to look for other ways to send information by disguising their names with other words. Of course, as can be seen from the data, the names that emerged were not good names. The word hell, for example, was deliberately attached to the substitute word Israel as a prayer for retribution for the genocide committed.

Data (37), said Sirewel, was also used by netizens as an illustration of the nature of the Israeli side. Their habit of always claiming to be victims who have been hurt by Hamas made netizens embarrassed and likened them to small children who have tantrums and blame everything on other people. In fact, what they experienced was nothing other than an attack from their own side.

Data (38) is somewhat different, namely *isntreal*. The word is considered taken from is not real. This naming can be based on two things. The first basis was that the news presented was mostly fake news that did not correspond to reality. This fact was a joke generally known by the world community. Some time ago, a video appeared showing a nurse who looked frightened and claimed to be surviving a Hamas attack. After further investigation, the nurse turned out to be an Israeli artist in disguise and deliberately used Arabic to deceive the world community.

Furthermore, the second basis for the form of dysphemism in data (38) was that historically, Israel was formed from a colonial state and the forced extraction of Palestinian citizens. Historical data further stated that the country's sovereignty has been tarnished by its own citizens, so pro-Palestinian netizens pointed out the falsity of the name of Israel. With this name, pro-Palestinian netizens intended to show that a country called Israel was a fake country that never actually existed.

The last dysphemism was applied in the changes of the word forms. Still with the same factor, change in word form in pro-Palestinian posts was also one of the phenomena found. A number of posts that were considered to be in danger of being deleted from an account because of the use of certain words was the reason for changing those words, including Hamas, Gaza, and Palestine. In the previous section, it was explained that a number of slangs were also performed by changing words, using a combination of numbers and letters, as well as using a number of punctuation inserts. In contrast, this word form changing did not involve such two tricks. In addition, the meaning of ridiculing and mocking contained in the previous data was no longer present in this word form changing.

- (39) OSP (Occupied State of Palestine)
- (40) Khamas

(41) Gazza

(42) Fistin

(43) Falistin

These five data are some examples of the many changes in word form. Through the use of words such as data (39)—(43), a post on social media, such as Instagram, will be safer from system detection. Moreover, netizens also felt safer using this word form when voicing facts about Gaza without worrying about deletion of the information sent or account blocking by the Meta system.

Based on all the data that has been obtained, it can be seen that social phenomena greatly allow for the emergence of new linguistic phenomena. These new linguistic phenomena do not always consist of the addition of entirely new vocabulary with new meanings. However, this phenomenon is also manifested in the development of new meanings for vocabulary that already existed and was commonly used by the community. Furthermore, it was found that the form of the language codes is not merely a new vocabulary or language form, but more broadly serves as a means of support and even resistance against the injustice currently occurring in Palestine.

The language codes discovered represent a novelty not found in previous research, which tends to focus on the world's response to social issues in the Palestine-Israel conflict from a social perspective. Even when data on the use of language codes on social media is found, the research focus is not on the variation of the language codes but on the social impact of their use.

# CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Language phenomena often appear together with social phenomena in society. It is not always a completely new formation that emerges, but it can be an existing form which then acquired or experienced expansion and shift, both in terms of form, meaning and use. Based on the entire data found, the dominant phenomenon that emerged was dysphemism. This domination was motivated by none other than the anger and hatred of Palestinian supporters over the genocide committed by Israel which was then expressed in the form of the language they used. Furthermore, based on the presentation of the entire data, it can be concluded that language did not just exist as a means of communication, as a means of expressing feelings, but became a 'weapon' to convey aspirations and even fight against injustices occurred, as social media acted as a site for the use of such weapon.

Based on the results of study on language phenomenon in pro-Palestine posts on social media, educational practitioners are expected to integrate social media analysis in learning with a focal point on the use of language in the context of social and political issues. In this way, students may have a wise attitude in using social media, especially in the context of posting and responding to posts on social media regarding social and political issues. Future research is recommended to conduct an in-depth analysis on the shifts in social and political contexts that influence the messages conveyed in relation to changes in language over time.

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