LINGUISTIC STRATEGIES OF AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT IN INFLUENCER DISCOURSE

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Abstract: This study examines linguistic strategies used by social media influencers to engage their audiences. It focuses on direct address, personal and inclusive pronouns, imperatives, interrogative forms, personal narratives, and informal language.
Keywords: influencer discourse, social media, audience engagement, linguistic strategies, digital discourse, direct address, pragmatics, informal language, audience interaction.

Annotatsiya: Ushbu tadqiqot ijtimoiy tarmoq influenserlari tomonidan o‘z auditoriyasini jalb qilishda qo‘llaniladigan lingvistik strategiyalarni o‘rganadi. Ishda bevosita murojaat, shaxsiy va umumlashtiruvchi olmoshlar, buyruq mayli shakllari, so‘roq shakllari, shaxsiy hikoyalar va norasmiy uslubga alohida e’tibor qaratiladi.
Kalit so‘zlar: influenser diskursi, ijtimoiy tarmoqlar, auditoriyani jalb qilish, lingvistik strategiyalar, raqamli diskurs, bevosita murojaat, pragmatika, norasmiy uslub, auditoriya bilan o‘zaro muloqot.

Аннотация: В данном исследовании рассматриваются лингвистические стратегии, используемые влиятельными лицами в социальных сетях для взаимодействия со своей аудиторией. Основное внимание уделяется прямому обращению, личным и инклюзивным местоимениям, повелительным наклонениям, вопросительным формам, личным рассказам и неформальному языку.
Ключевые слова: дискурс влиятельных лиц, социальные сети, взаимодействие с аудиторией, лингвистические стратегии, цифровой дискурс, прямое обращение, прагматика, неформальный язык, взаимодействие с аудиторией.

Introduction. The growth of social media platforms made communication more accessible, creating new ways of interaction and engagement, and influencers have been in the centre of attention, becoming major digital communicators who build online identities, promote ideas as well as sharing information. In linguistics, the influencer discourse is seen as a social concept including "affective relations and identities", highlighting the interpersonal aspect of communication between audiences and influencers [3; pp.1-18The linguistic units influencers mostly use (Guys, listen to this," "Have you ever wondered why…?", "You NEED to try this," and "Let's talk about it.") are the expressions of direct address, pronouns, imperatives, and rhetorical questions which serve as a tool of attracting attention, encouraging activeness and creating relationships with their audiences.

In influencer discourse, the concepts of relatability and authenticity are significant. As Page identifies authenticity, humour, emultable qualities, and positive effect as important dimensions of influencer relatability [6; pp.75-98]. Therefore, in order to build rapport and make influencers seem more approachable and sympathetic, language choices including informal phrases, personal tales, humor, and direct audience address might be analyzed.

The aim of the study is to determine and evaluate the language tactics social media influencers employ to create and sustain audience engagement.

Research Questions:

What language techniques do social media influencers employ to interact with their followers?

What roles do these tactics play in communication? What role do these tactics have in building rapport, relatability, authenticity, and audience engagement?

Literature review and methodology. Influencer discourse on social media is a unique type of digital communication where persuasive, linguistic, and interpersonal functions often mix. Garcés-Conejos Blitvich and Georgakopoulou (2024) emphasize the relational aspect of influencer discourse by using the ideas of emotional interactions and identities [3; pp.10-20]. Linguistic choices are linked to audience engagement, according to recent empirical studies. After analyzing over 11,000 YouTube videos from 151 influencers, Munaro et al. (2024) found a number of recurrent language types, such as expert advice, narrative, private experiences, struggle and overcoming, encouragement and guidance, and coaching and mentoring [5; pp.160-180]. Their results show that rather than being viewed as merely casual online conversation, influencer language may be investigated methodically. Building relationships between influencers and their audiences depends heavily on relatability. Authenticity, emulatable traits, humor, and good affect are all significant aspects of influencer communication, according to Page's (2024) linguistic analysis of relatability [6; pp.75-98]. This viewpoint is especially pertinent to language elements like first-person references, humor, casual vocabulary, personal tales, and evaluative phrases.

A qualitative descriptive discourse analysis of English-language social media influencer material is used in the study. Direct address, pronouns, imperatives, rhetorical inquiries, personal narratives, casual language, humor, and evaluative expressions are all highlighted in the study. Three steps will make up the analysis: (1) gathering and transcribing pertinent influencer content; (2) identifying and classifying linguistic strategies; and (3) interpreting their communicative functions in connection to audience engagement, relatability, authenticity, rapport, and persuasion. Artificial intelligence tools were used solely to assist with the technical aspects of the manuscript, including language editing, formatting, and organization.

Discussion. Addressing directly helps influencers explicitly share information toward their audience. Phrases like "Hey everyone," "Guys, listen to this," and "You need to see this" provide the idea that the influencer and followers are interacting more personally. According to Atad and Cohen (2024), direct address generated a stronger parasocial experience than indirect address, which in turn influenced message pleasure and credibility assessments [1; pp.941-959].

The choice of pronouns also influences audience participation. While “we”, “us”, “our”, and “let's” can foster a feeling of inclusivity and shared experience, “you” and “your” can personalize communication by placing followers as direct recipients of the message. For instance, the phrase “You need to hear this.” Speaks directly to the listener, while the phrase “Let’s discuss it.” creates a shared communication area between the audience and the influencer.

Imperatives that specifically urge viewers to take action include "Try this," "Check it out," and "Watch until the end.". Speech actions, such as expressive, forceful, directive, and interrogative forms, have a considerable impact on social media engagement, according to Fang, Shin, and Huang's (2025) analysis of over 27,000 Facebook influencers. Additionally, they discovered that these impacts differ depending on the sort of influencer [2; pp.84-95].

Therefore, imperatives may be seen as a language tool for focusing attention and motivating action.

Furthermore, "Have you ever wondered why?" and "Do you struggle with this too?" are examples of rhetorical inquiries that can provide the sense of a discussion. Influencers may speak to a huge number of people at once, but interrogative forms might mimic engagement by asking followers to think of an answer.

Another key tactic for building audience involvement is the use of personal narratives. Influencers may share personal stories and build rapport with their audiences by using phrases like "When I first started..." or "I used to struggle with this too.". According to Page (2024), humor and positive affect can help build rapport in influencer-audience encounters, whereas genuineness and emulatable traits are crucial aspects of relatability [6; pp.71-98].

Conversational expressions, humor, and judgmental language are often used by influencers, such as:

"To be honest, guys..."

"This is truly incredible!"

"Don't pass judgment on me!"

In addition to lowering formality, these phrases can help the influencer come off as more personable and familiar. In influencer discourse, Page (2024) specifically links humor and good affect to the development of rapport and relatability [6; pp.71-98]. As a result, humor and casual language are more than just stylistic elements.

The fact that language strategies seldom function independently is a crucial aspect. A single utterance can serve many communication purposes at once. For instance, the phrase "You guys really should try this!" blends a directive structure (need to attempt), second-person reference (you), and direct address (guys). Together, these elements create proximity, draw attention, personalize the message, and motivate action.

Results. A number of recurrent language devices employed to captivate audiences were identified by the examination of the chosen influencer speech. Often, the tactics were used in tandem rather than separately. Following are the most frequent strategies used to grab attention and promote ideas or products:

1. Strategies Focused on Audiences

In order to present followers as direct participants in the conversation, direct address and second-person pronouns were regularly employed. Forms like "you," "your," "guys," and "everyone" directly addressed the audience.

2. Interrogatives and Directives

Questions and imperatives were also important tools for involvement. While inquiries like "Have you ever..." provided opportunity for both cerebral and physical answers, directives like "Try this" or "Check this out" promoted audience participation. The participatory nature of influencer communication was enhanced by these modes.

3. Informal Language and Personal Narratives

Informal, conversational language was frequently mixed with first-person accounts and personal experiences. Influencers were able to communicate in an approachable manner while sharing their own thoughts, experiences, and everyday circumstances thanks to these formats.

4. Co-occurrence of Techniques

One important conclusion was that a single language trait was rarely used to build involvement. The single statement often contained many tactics. Direct address combined with a second-person reference and imperative language, for instance, may draw attention, create proximity, and motivate action all at once.

Conclusion. The study showed that direct address, personal and inclusive pronouns, imperatives, interrogative forms, personal narratives, casual language, humor, and evaluative expressions are all used in influencer speech. All things considered, influencer communication is more than just promotional or instructive. Influencers and their audiences build a sense of contact and interpersonal connection thru language. By showing how comparatively common language choices may serve crucial relational and engagement-oriented roles in social media communication, the findings advance the study of digital discourse. Larger multilingual corpora and comparisons of language engagement tactics across other platforms, influencer types, and cultural contexts might be the subject of future study.

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