

Digital Poetics and Identity Expression: A Stylistic Analysis of Contemporary Indonesian Micro-Poetry on Social Media

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the stylistic features and identity expressions embedded in contemporary Indonesian micro-poetry posted on social media platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok. Utilizing a qualitative descriptive method grounded in stylistic analysis and digital discourse theory, the research examines 40 curated micro-poems written by Indonesian youth over the past year. The findings reveal that these short poetic texts demonstrate a unique blend of traditional literary devices—such as metaphor, imagery, repetition, and free verse with digital-specific elements like emojis, code-mixing, white space, and audiovisual performance. These stylistic choices are not arbitrary; they function as tools for expressing emotional depth, negotiating hybrid cultural identities, and engaging audiences in affective, performative ways. Moreover, the influence of platform-specific affordances shapes not only the form of the poems but also how identity is presented and perceived. Twitter favors brevity and irony, Instagram highlights visual design, while TikTok enables embodied, multimodal performances. This study concludes that Indonesian digital micro-poetry is a dynamic literary and cultural phenomenon, enabling self-expression, community building, and emotional resonance in ways that transcend traditional poetic boundaries.

Keywords: Digital poetry, Indonesian micro-poetry, stylistic analysis, identity expression, social media

INTRODUCTION

In the age of digital connectivity, the boundaries between art, self-expression, and communication are increasingly blurred. Literature, once confined to the pages of books and the realm of academic or literary elites, has now found new life on social media platforms. Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok have emerged as unexpected yet powerful stages for the reimagination of poetic expression, particularly through the form of **micro-poetry**. These short-form poetic texts often composed in under 280 characters have gained massive popularity among Indonesian youth, serving not only as artistic output but also as deeply personal reflections of emotion, identity, and socio-cultural narratives. Unlike traditional poetry, which often adheres to established norms of form, rhythm, and language, digital micro-poetry is dynamic, fluid, and responsive. It is shaped by the constraints and possibilities of the platforms that host it. For instance, the character limit of Twitter challenges poets to express profound ideas in minimal words, while Instagram's visual layout encourages aesthetic experimentation with line breaks, typography, and image-text integration. TikTok, on the other hand, facilitates audiovisual poetry where voice, music, and caption work in tandem to evoke emotional resonance. These multimodal forms of digital poetics reflect the increasing interplay between language, media, and performative identity in the 21st century.



More significantly, micro-poetry has become a potent **medium for identity construction and negotiation**. Through stylistic and linguistic choices, young Indonesians are able to navigate personal struggles, gender politics, spirituality, existential questions, and the urban experience. The use of **metaphor, allusion, elliptical syntax, slang, code-mixing, and emojis** allows authors to encode layered meanings while remaining within the concise form. For many, poetry on social media is both an emotional outlet and a digital signature—an intimate expression of self made public. These poems often go viral not because of formal literary merit, but because they resonate with collective sentiment and digital culture.

This shift is not without cultural and academic significance. The popularity of poetry on digital platforms challenges hierarchical conceptions of literary authorship and invites a more inclusive understanding of who creates literature and how. Social media empowers marginalized voices, particularly women, LGBTQ+ individuals, and people outside the literary mainstream, to articulate their realities through poetic form. The “like,” “share,” and “comment” features create a feedback loop that not only validates but also shapes poetic content. The audience becomes both critic and co-creator, highlighting the **collaborative and performative nature** of digital literary production.

From a linguistic perspective, this new wave of digital poetry offers a rich field for **stylistic analysis**. How do language features—diction, syntax, rhetorical devices—interact with visual and digital elements? What does the stylistic innovation in micro-poetry tell us about evolving norms of written expression? How do digital constraints influence literary creativity? These are key questions that position stylistics as an essential method for decoding the formal and functional characteristics of micro-poetry in digital spaces.

Moreover, in the Indonesian context, this phenomenon intersects with broader cultural dynamics. As a linguistically and culturally diverse nation, Indonesia provides a unique backdrop where language mixing, regional expression, and hybrid identities flourish. In digital poetry, this hybridity becomes visible through the fusion of **Bahasa Indonesia, English**, regional languages, and visual/symbolic elements. Studying how Indonesian youth use digital poetics to express and perform identity thus contributes not only to literary studies but also to digital ethnography, sociolinguistics, and cultural studies.

Therefore, this research aims to analyze how micro-poetry in Indonesian digital spaces constructs and communicates identity through stylistic features. By examining a curated selection of micro-poems from Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok, the study will investigate the interplay between language form, digital aesthetics, and the sociocultural contexts that give meaning to them. Ultimately, this research highlights the transformative impact of digital culture on literary form and expression, and affirms the role of young Indonesians as active literary agents in shaping new narratives of self and society in the 21st century.

METHODS

This research adopts a qualitative descriptive methodology rooted in stylistic analysis and supported by digital discourse analysis to investigate the linguistic and aesthetic features of Indonesian micro-poetry on social media and their function in identity expression. Qualitative methods are best suited for this study because the data are inherently interpretive and context-dependent, and the aim is to understand the relationship between poetic form, digital medium, and personal or collective identity. This approach allows for in-depth exploration of how digital poetic texts use language, structure, and visual form to convey layers of meaning that go beyond the surface text.

Data Collection and Sampling

Data were collected from three primary social media platforms: **Instagram**, **Twitter (X)**, and **TikTok**, chosen for their distinct affordances and high user engagement among Indonesian youth. A **purposive sampling technique** was used to select 30 to 50 micro-poems that meet the following criteria: (1) written by Indonesian authors, (2) published within the past 12 months, (3) categorized as poetic in form and intention, and (4) displaying features relevant to identity expression—such as emotional vulnerability, cultural reference, spiritual reflection, or socio-political stance. Metadata such as post date, hashtags, number of likes/comments, and username type (anonymous vs. verified) were also documented to situate each poem within its digital context.

Posts that contain multimedia enhancements (e.g., images, captions, emoji, or voice overlay on TikTok) were not excluded but instead were analyzed with attention to how such features contribute to the **multimodal poetic performance**. The decision to include diverse digital forms reflects the evolving nature of contemporary poetics, where meaning is not limited to text but expanded through design and interaction.

Analytical Tools and Stylistic Framework

The core analytical tool employed in this study is **literary stylistics**, as theorized by [Geoffrey Leech](#), [Mick Short](#), and other stylisticians. The stylistic analysis focuses on multiple levels of language:

- **Lexical level:** examining word choice (e.g., use of slang, anglicisms, and emotionally charged language)
- **Syntactic level:** sentence structure, fragmentation, punctuation, and non-linearity
- **Semantic and figurative level:** use of metaphor, simile, irony, personification, and symbolism
- **Graphological level:** visual layout of text, including use of spacing, line breaks, emojis, and formatting (e.g., bold/italic)

To address the multimodal aspect of digital poetry, the study incorporates principles from **social semiotics** and **multimodal discourse analysis** (Kress & van Leeuwen), examining how non-linguistic elements like visual structure, imagery, color tones, or soundtracks on TikTok function as carriers of poetic meaning.

Interpretive Strategy and Theoretical Orientation

The interpretation stage links stylistic choices to broader identity themes, drawing on theoretical perspectives such as:

- **Bakhtin's theory of heteroglossia** – highlighting how multiple voices and discourses interact in poetic expression
- **Goffman's dramaturgical model of self-presentation** – viewing the poet as a performer navigating an audience
- **boyd's concept of networked publics** – analyzing how identity is shaped by visibility and interactivity on digital platforms

The study views each poem not only as an artistic product but as a **performative act of identity** that is deeply situated in social, cultural, and technological contexts.

Ethical Considerations and Validity

To ensure ethical research practice, the study anonymizes usernames unless the author is a verified public figure or explicitly identifies themselves as a professional poet. Comments and user interactions are used only for interpretive purposes when they enhance understanding of the poem's impact. Additionally, **researcher reflexivity** is emphasized through journaling and peer debriefing, recognizing that the interpretation of poetic texts is influenced by the researcher's positionality, cultural background, and aesthetic sensibilities.

Triangulation is used by comparing stylistic patterns across platforms and poets, ensuring that the interpretation is grounded in recurring themes and not isolated instances. This comparative approach also allows the research to account for platform-specific poetic practices and digital constraints that shape stylistic outcomes.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Distribution of Analyzed Micro-Poems by Platform

Platform	Number of Poems	Percentage (%)	Notable Features
Twitter	15	37.5%	Conciseness, irony, use of ellipsis
Instagram	13	32.5%	Visual aesthetics, layout design
TikTok	12	30.0%	Voice-over, background music, visual edits
Total	40	100%	

Source: Research Data (2025)

Table 2. Dominant Stylistic Features Identified

Stylistic Feature	Frequency	Platform Presence	Function
Code-Mixing (ID-EN)	High	All	Signaling bilingual identity
Emoji Usage	High	Instagram, Twitter	Emotional reinforcement
Visual Line Breaks	Medium	Instagram, TikTok	Rhythm and spatial emotion
Metaphor and Symbolism	High	All	Deepening emotional meaning
Ellipsis/Fragmentation	High	Twitter	Suggesting hesitation, unspoken thoughts
Hashtag Integration	Medium	Instagram, TikTok	Contextual labeling and discoverability
Voice-over Narration	Medium	TikTok	Auditory personalization of the poem

Source: Textual and multimodal analysis of selected poems

Table 3. Thematic Categories in Identity Expression

Theme	Subthemes	Emotional Tone	Examples (English translation)
Loneliness	Disconnection, silence	Melancholic	"I sleep with the Wi-Fi on, still alone."
Healing & Self-Recovery	Moving on, growth, reflection	Uplifting/Somber	"Still healing... but walking again."
Romantic Longing	Heartbreak, ghosting, nostalgia	Painful, sentimental	"You were my poetry. Now, just a draft."
Gendered Experience	Emotional labor, self-worth, identity	Assertive/Reflective	"I am soft, not weak."

Theme	Subthemes	Emotional Tone	Examples (English translation)
Spiritual & Moral Struggle	Faith, guilt, surrender	Calm, sacred	"In sajdah, I leave what the world won't take."

Source: Thematic coding of 40 micro-poems

Table 4. Multimodal Features by Platform

Platform	Visual Element	Audio Element	Interaction Style
Twitter	Minimal (text-based)	None	Retweets, replies
Instagram	Image background, fonts	Ambient music (IG Reels)	Likes, comments, saves
TikTok	Video filters, captions	Voice-over, lo-fi music	Duets, shares, stitched responses

Source: Observational analysis of post formats

The stylistic and thematic analysis of 40 selected Indonesian micro-poems across Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok reveals a **rich interplay between language, digital aesthetics, and identity construction**. The findings indicate that micro-poetry, as practiced by young Indonesian writers on social media, is not merely a condensed form of traditional poetry, but a **transformative genre** that merges poetic function with digital culture and emotional self-representation.

One of the most prominent features observed was the **consistent use of affective and emotive diction**, which includes emotionally charged words such as *sunyi* (silence), *tenggelam* (drowning), *kosong* (empty), *patah* (broken), and *tenang* (calm). These words are often arranged into fragmented syntactic structures that reflect psychological or emotional fragmentation, as seen in poems like "aku hilang / di antara sinyal dan suara-suara yang tak kupahami." The **intentional disjointedness** of these lines imitates the inner disarray of the poet, showing how form mirrors content.

Furthermore, many poems demonstrate a **visual-poetic sensibility** shaped by the affordances of the digital platforms themselves. For example, poets deliberately use **line breaks, single-word lines, centering, and emoji placement** to create visual rhythm or spatial emphasis. On Instagram, poems often appear on aesthetically curated backgrounds—neutral tones, blurred cityscapes, soft lighting—which contribute to the affective mood. TikTok poems often combine slow-motion video clips with melancholic audio and overlaid text, thus forming a **multimodal, audiovisual poetic performance**.

In addition to stylistic choices, the **strategic use of code-mixing** is a recurrent pattern in the data. English phrases like "I'm tired," "still healing," or "don't let me go" are integrated within Bahasa Indonesia to reflect **globalized identity performance**. This linguistic hybridity does not simply function for stylistic variety; it also signals the poet's alignment with cosmopolitan youth culture, bilingualism, and emotional fluency across languages. The interplay between local and global language forms suggests that digital poetry is both **a site of hybrid cultural negotiation and a mirror of generational belonging**.

The use of **emojis** in micro-poetry was particularly significant. Emojis such as 💔, ☁️, 🏠, and 🌧️ do not merely accompany the text, but serve as **paralinguistic cues** that complete, reinforce, or even replace words. For example, a poem that reads "aku selesai ..." followed by 💔 says more than the words themselves—the emoji becomes part of the syntax and poetic rhythm. Emojis also serve as **emotional punctuation**, softening or sharpening tone, conveying irony, or adding subtle layers of interpretation. In many

cases, poems without emojis were perceived by audiences (via comments) as “less expressive” or “emotionally flat,” indicating their importance in the digital poetic register. Another key finding involves **platform-specific trends**. On **Twitter**, brevity and wordplay dominate, with many poets employing **enjambment**, **ellipsis**, and **conversational tone**. The constraints of the character limit encourage linguistic minimalism and compressed emotion. On **Instagram**, the emphasis is often on **visual layout** and **caption-poetry**, where the aesthetics of the post play a critical role. Poets frequently use white space, decorative fonts, and curated backgrounds. **TikTok**, however, emphasizes **performance**—voiceovers of self-written poems, combined with music, filters, and gestures, transform micro-poetry into performance art. This signals a broader trend toward **multimodal and embodied poetics** in the digital sphere.

Thematically, the micro-poems reflect **deep engagement with identity-related issues**, especially those tied to **emotional states, gendered experiences, faith, mental health, urban alienation, and digital loneliness**. Female-identifying poets often write about healing, heartbreak, bodily autonomy, and resistance to emotional labor, while male-identifying poets depict silent pain, social pressure, or emotional detachment. These thematic patterns suggest that micro-poetry serves as both **a therapeutic outlet and a counter-narrative** to dominant cultural discourses around emotion and self-expression. Finally, the interaction between the poet and the audience also emerged as a critical aspect of identity formation. Through likes, shares, and comments, readers often affirm, reinterpret, or extend the poem’s meaning. This dynamic interactivity turns poetry into **a dialogic space**, where meaning is co-produced by writer and audience. The poet’s identity becomes **relational**, shaped not only by their self-expression but also by the digital community’s reception and feedback.

Digital Poetics as a New Form of Literary Performance

This study confirms that micro-poetry on digital platforms transcends its function as mere literary artifact; it emerges as a **performative expression of selfhood and emotion in the public digital sphere**. The poets—mostly youth navigating complex emotional, social, and cultural landscapes—use poetic language not only to narrate inner experiences but to **position themselves in a broader socio-digital network**. Posting a poem is not only about writing; it is an act of identity assertion, a performance of presence, and an invitation for interaction. In this way, digital micro-poetry becomes part of a larger **attention economy**, where identity is performed through stylized vulnerability and shared textual emotion. The aestheticization of pain, longing, or introspection in these poems reflects a desire for recognition and connection, as well as a **strategy for social engagement in digital publics**.

2. Stylistic Innovation and Emotional Intimacy

The research reveals that Indonesian micro-poets have developed a unique stylistic repertoire that combines traditional poetic techniques with the expressive tools of digital culture. Through **strategic fragmentation, metaphoric condensation, emoji augmentation**, and **visual spacing**, the poems achieve **emotional intimacy** that is immediate and potent. Rather than relying on elaborate structure or rhyme, poets often use brevity and silence as tools of depth. White space becomes a metaphor for absence or confusion, while repetition and abrupt breaks echo emotional loops or trauma. This minimalism is not a constraint—it is an artistic response to digital limitations that heightens poetic impact. The fusion of linguistic elements with visual layout demonstrates how the **affective dimension of poetry is reimaged in the digital age**, where form and feeling coalesce into a concise yet powerful expression.

3. Identity Construction Through Hybrid Language Use

A salient observation in this study is the prevalence of **linguistic hybridity**, particularly the interweaving of Bahasa Indonesia and English. This phenomenon reflects the **hybrid cultural identity** of Indonesian youth who are simultaneously rooted in local traditions and exposed to global media influences. The alternation between languages is not arbitrary; English is often used for abstract or generalized emotional statements, while Indonesian carries a more intimate and culturally textured resonance. This duality allows poets to **negotiate between personal and public selves**, maintaining emotional proximity to their cultural background while reaching a broader, possibly international audience. Moreover, this code-mixing signifies a refusal to be confined by linguistic purity, embracing instead a **fluid, adaptive, and cosmopolitan voice** that reflects contemporary realities.

4. The Role of Platform Affordances in Shaping Poetic Form

Each social media platform contributes distinctively to the construction and dissemination of digital poetry. **Twitter** fosters a culture of conciseness and cleverness, where poets must distill emotional and philosophical reflections into 280 characters. This brevity often results in poems that are sharp, minimal, and charged with subtext. **Instagram**, with its emphasis on visual curation, encourages a form of **graphic poetics**, where typography, layout, background images, and filters become integral to the meaning of the poem. The text is not just read but seen, designed, and emotionally felt through its aesthetic. Meanwhile, **TikTok** expands the poetic experience into a multimodal realm—voice, gesture, music, and cinematic framing turn written poems into **performance-based micro-narratives**, often consumed in 15–60 seconds. The different affordances of these platforms underscore that **poetic form is deeply shaped by technological infrastructure**, which in turn affects how poets compose, present, and circulate their identity.

5. Emotional Resonance and Collective Identity

Another critical insight is the function of micro-poetry as a **site of emotional convergence**. The themes of heartbreak, grief, disorientation, self-discovery, and healing were not only common but often echoed in user responses, revealing how deeply these poems resonate with the **emotional experiences of digital audiences**. Comment sections frequently serve as communal spaces for empathy, validation, and shared vulnerability. The poet's individual suffering is echoed in collective recognition—"aku banget," "ini gue," "terlalu relate"—turning personal pain into **shared affective capital**. In this sense, micro-poetry becomes a tool not just for self-expression, but for **community building and emotional solidarity**. It transforms poetry into a **relational act**, where identity is both self-constructed and socially reinforced through layers of digital interaction.

6. Digital Micro-Poetry and Cultural Reflection

Finally, the poems studied also function as mirrors of **broader socio-cultural realities**. References to Islamic phrases, Javanese metaphors, K-pop lyrics, or internet memes show how poets draw from diverse cultural reservoirs to articulate their identities. These intertextual traces reveal how digital poetry is not isolated from real-world structures—it is a reflection of cultural hybridity, generational anxiety, spiritual longing, and globalized aspiration. As such, micro-poetry emerges not only as personal narrative but as a **cultural document**, capturing the ethos of a generation in flux—one navigating between rootedness and mobility, tradition and reinvention, presence and performance.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this research indicate that contemporary Indonesian micro-poetry on social media serves as a dynamic space for both **linguistic creativity** and **identity performance**. Through a fusion of traditional poetic devices and digital aesthetics—such as metaphor, fragmentation, code-mixing, emoji usage, and visual formatting—young poets construct multilayered expressions of emotion and selfhood. Each platform (Twitter, Instagram, TikTok) contributes uniquely to the form and function of these poems, demonstrating that **technological affordances directly influence poetic expression**. Moreover, the prevalence of personal themes such as vulnerability, loneliness, healing, and cultural hybridity reveals that digital micro-poetry functions not only as an artistic outlet, but also as a tool for emotional resilience and communal belonging. This study concludes that digital micro-poetry is a **powerful, evolving genre** that reflects the voices of a generation navigating the intersections of tradition, modernity, and virtual life—where poetry becomes both a mirror and a medium for identity in motion.

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