WHY BACKRONYMS? INVESTIGATING STRATEGIC LANGUAGE PLAY IN @BIASALAHANAKMUDA

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Abstract
This study investigates the motives of using backronyms in the Indonesian Instagram discourse, focusing on the account @biasalahanakmuda, related to the backronyms' communicative functions in social media interaction. The data consists of 137 backronymic items with 189 occurrences, collected from Instagram posts, captions, and stories posted between July 10, 2020 and April 27, 2026. The data were selected using purposive sampling based on three criteria: (1) the item is an existing lexical form or acronym-like expression, (2) a new invented expansion was assigned to it, and (3) the expansion resulted in a different meaning than the original form. This research employed a qualitative descriptive method supported by quantitative calculation. The analytical approach combined morphological analysis, especially Kridalaksana's rules of acronym formation, with pragmatic and digital discourse analysis to examine how the backronyms are structurally formed and communicatively used in Instagram discourse. Each backronymic item was interpreted in relation to its original form, its invented expansion, its Instagram context, and its pragmatic function. Data validity was enhanced by contextual verification with the aid of screenshots, and systematic coding ensured the reliability of analysis. The results show that backronyms are used for four general reasons: entertainment, audience engagement and group intimacy, evaluation and criticism, and identity and stance marking. Findings suggest that backronyms are not merely playful wordplay, but flexible resources for interaction, evaluation, and self-positioning in digital discourse.

Keywords: *backronym, acronym reinterpretation, Indonesian Instagram discourse, digital humor, computer-mediated communication*

Introduction

In digital communication, language is shaped by creativity, playfulness, and fast social interaction. In the current social media context, language is not only used to communicate information, but also to accomplish a variety of communicative goals. One phenomenon that is becoming increasingly apparent in Indonesian online discourse is the emergence of reverse linguistic shortenings, or backronym-like expressions, in which an existing word, acronym, abbreviation, or familiar lexical form is intentionally reinterpreted as a newly invented expansion.

The phenomenon can be observed in the content on Indonesian social media, especially on Instagram accounts that often use internet humor and wordplay, like @biasalahanakmuda. For example, the abbreviation 'PPKM', usually referring to ***P**emberlakuan **P**embatasan **K**egiatan **M**asyarakat* during the COVID-19 pandemic, could be creatively redefined as ***P**agi-**P**agi **K**ok **M**ager* ('being too lazy to do anything in the morning'). Similarly, the word '*janda*' (widow) may be creatively expanded as **Ja**wa Su**nda** or Jog**ja** Su**nda**, while 'cheddar', a type of cheese, may be reinterpreted as ***che**plok **d**adar* (sunny-side-up egg and omelet). In these examples, the lexical forms are already in place before the new expansions are created. Thus, the process is different from conventional acronym formation, because the expanded form is invented retrospectively. The goal is not etymological accuracy, but phonological similarity, orthographic familiarity, cultural association, and humorous redefinition.

However, this study is delimited to backronym-like expressions whose surface forms can be pronounced as ordinary words. In other words, the analysis focuses only on forms that operate through reverse acronymic logic, rather than on all types of reverse linguistic shortenings. This delimitation is important because Indonesian morphology distinguishes acronyms from other shortened forms. An acronym is a shortening formed by combining letters, syllables, or parts of words into a new lexical unit that is pronounced as a word (Kridalaksana, 2008; Kridalaksana et al., 1985), not spelled letter by letter. Therefore, forms that are primarily read letter by letter, or that belong to other shortening types such as ordinary abbreviations, clippings, contractions, or letter symbols, are not the main focus of this article.

Unlike conventional acronyms, which are formed by shortening a longer expression into a pronounceable lexical form, the forms discussed in this study work in the reverse direction. A pre-existing lexical item is treated as if it were an acronym and is then assigned a newly invented expansion. This process corresponds to what has been discussed in linguistic literature as backronym formation, in which an existing word is retrospectively expanded into a phrase (Stock & Strapparava, 2005). Accordingly, the term backronym-like expression in this study refers specifically to the creative reinterpretation of familiar lexical forms or pronounceable abbreviation-like items through acronymic logic in Indonesian Instagram discourse.

The emergence of such backronym-like expressions in Indonesian online discourse is closely related to the rapid growth of social media use in Indonesia. According to the Digital 2025 Global Overview Report (DataReportal, 2025; The Global Statistics, 2025), Indonesia has more than 103 million Instagram users, making Instagram one of the country's most influential platforms for online interaction. Social media platforms encourage the use of short, memorable, visually engaging, and shareable linguistic forms. In this regard, the social significance of acronym-like expressions is in their recognizability, compactness, and ease of transformation into humorous or expressive content.

Although these practices are becoming more visible in online discourse, academic discussion remains limited. Previous studies on Indonesian abbreviations have focused mainly on the conventional shortening process, where the expansion is followed by the shortened form. These studies have examined acronym formation (Dardjowidjojo, 1979), the structure and morphology of abbreviations (Deliani, 2014; Kulsum, 2023), and the use of abbreviations in various domains, such as the Indonesian military (Dhika Jr & Ermanto, 2023), politics (Dhika Jr & Rizal, 2023), newspapers (Ayu & Winata, 2024; Azmi

et al., 2018; Deliani et al., 2020; Lingga et al., 2019; Noviatri, 2015), internet slang (Winarto, 2019), literary works (Nurulanningsih et al., 2024), and social media platforms, including Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook, and X (Azizah et al., 2023; Dilla & Agustina, 2021; Ekalestari et al., 2022; Malikha, 2022; Meinawati et al., 2021; Muniyf et al., 2021; Pebriyanti & Rosyidah, 2026; Pratiwi et al., 2025; Setiawaty, 2024; Viono et al., 2023; Wulandari & Iryana, 2024). However, these studies generally discuss abbreviations as products of linguistic reduction, not as forms that are retrospectively re-expanded for new meanings.

Compared with research on conventional shortenings, studies on backronyms or reverse reinterpretations remain relatively few. Jupriono et al. (2023) study punned acronyms and abbreviations among college students in East Java, as strategies of social criticism and verbal resistance in unequal political relations especially in offline discourse in and after the New Order era. Stock and Strapparava (2005), in a different context, study acronym reinterpretation as computationally generated verbal humor through HAHAcronym, an "acronym ironic re-analyzer and generator" designed to produce humorous acronymic reinterpretations. In Javanese linguistic tradition, Suwardi (1996) discusses *othak-athik mathuk* as a reinterpretative practice that emphasizes contextual semantic fit, accepted logic, and interpretive harmony, particularly in relation to Javanese alphabet philosophy. Miyake (2019) examines *kerata basa* as a Javanese word game resembling backronymic reinterpretation, in which speakers understand that the explanation is not based on real historical etymology but on clever associations between sound and meaning. Similarly, Ubaidillah (2022) describes *kerata basa* as an interpretative form within Javanese cultural grammar that operates at the level of parole and produces connotative meanings. Wijana (2022) further discusses *jarwa dhosok* as reinterpretative wordplay in which meanings are reconstructed through arbitrary but culturally meaningful associations, although his study remains primarily rooted in traditional Javanese cultural contexts.

Taken together, these studies reveal that retrospective reinterpretation has been a deeply rooted feature of the cultural and linguistic traditions of Indonesia and Java. However, how such re-interpretative mechanisms work in contemporary social media environments has been little researched in the past. This leaves a gap in understanding the social and communicative functions of backronym-like expressions in Indonesian digital discourse, especially in Instagram. The present study thus contributes to the investigation of backronym-like expressions in Indonesian Instagram discourse, connecting traditional reinterpretative practices such as *jarwa dhosok* and *kerata basa* with contemporary computer-mediated communication. It also reveals that acronym-like forms on social media are not always used as a means of linguistic economy, but may serve as creative resources for humor, interaction, and social meaning.

The rapid development of digital discourse makes it important to document and analyze backronym-like practices in order to understand the contemporary Indonesian language creativity. Such analysis contributes to not just morphology and pragmatics, but also wider discussions on digital culture, participatory communication, and language practices in social media. Thus, the study focuses on acronym-like expressions in Instagram @biasalahanakmuda content. Within this context, @biasalahanakmuda was selected not only because it frequently employs humor and wordplay, but because it exemplifies a specific form of Indonesian Instagram discourse where linguistic play is embedded in conversations about architecture, housing, urban space, lifestyle, and

everyday social experience. Unlike general humor accounts that primarily utilize jokes as a source of entertainment, @biasalahanakmuda targets at an audience interested in spatial aesthetics, urban living, middle-class domestic culture, and relatable everyday observations. Because of this audience specificity, the account is a relevant site for examining how backronym-like expressions work not only as playful linguistic forms, but also as tools for other communicative functions. Therefore, this paper addresses the motivation underlying the use of these expressions in computer-mediated communication and in Instagram interaction in particular.

Method

This research uses a qualitative descriptive method supported by descriptive quantitative calculations. The qualitative approach was used due to the necessity to interpret each backronymic item in context, considering its original lexical form, invented expansion, and pragmatic function in Instagram communication. Meanwhile, descriptive quantitative calculation was used to show the frequency and distribution of the motives found.

The data source of this study is the Instagram account @biasalahanakmuda (BAM) which discusses house architecture, design, and urban-related issues, and also contains humorous and playful linguistic content to about 610K followers during the observation period. The data consisted of backronymic items found in Instagram posts, captions, and stories posted between 10 July 2020 and 27 April 2026. The data were collected by purposive sampling based on three criteria, including (1) the item should be an existing lexical form or acronym-like expression; (2) it should be given a newly invented expansion; and (3) the expansion should generate a different meaning from the original form. Using these criteria, 137 backronymic items were collected for analysis. As these 137 data emerged by applying the criteria to the data source during the determined period of study, not by fixing a sample size in advance, in this qualitative descriptive study, data adequacy was assessed in terms of the relevance and richness of the items in addressing the research questions. Therefore, 137 items (with 189 occurrences) offered enough variation to discern dominant patterns of backronymic formation and to interpret the main motives behind their use in the Instagram discourse.

To enhance data validity, each item was examined in its Instagram context (caption, story sequence, visual situation, discourse topic, communicative setting). Screenshots were taken to record the linguistic form, visual context, caption, and date of publication when available. The documentation was helpful to verify the relation between the original lexical item, the invented expansion, and the discourse context before determining its motive. The reliability of the analysis was verified through systematic coding. All selected data were recorded in a coding table including original form, original meaning, invented expansion, Instagram context, and possible motive so that each item could be examined in a consistent manner using the same categories.

The motives were interpreted by considering the relation between lexical form, invented expansion, context, and pragmatic function. The classification was based on the use of backronym-like expressions as linguistic resources for several communicative purposes, namely entertainment (Attardo, 1994; Raskin, 1979), audience engagement (Malikha, 2022; Syafruddin et al., 2023; Wulandari & Iryana, 2024), stance marking (Du Bois, 2007), identity performance and group solidarity (Agha, 2003; Androutsopoulos, 2011; Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Tagliamonte & Denis, 2008), and social commentary or

criticism (Gibbs Jr. & Colston, 2012). The analysis also took into account theories of humour, in particular by Raskin (1979) and Attardo (1994), and views of computer-mediated communication and internet linguistics by Herring (2005) and Crystal (2011).

Result and Discussion

Backronymic Expression Formations

The findings show that there are 137 backronymic items with 189 total occurrences in @biasalahanakmuda. Most of the items were formed by retaining various letters and syllables which is difficult to formulate, a category described by Kridalaksana (2010) in Indonesian acronym formation, covering 87.59% of the whole items. The high percentage suggests that BAM's backronymic creativity is not based on fixed or rigid rules of formation. Instead, it is more flexible, by which BAM chooses letters, syllables, sounds, and parts of words that can be modified to fit the humorous expansion that is intended.

The difference between the number of identified items and their occurrences also shows that some backronymic expressions are used repeatedly in BAM's discourse. This suggests that some forms are not merely one-time jokes, but can evolve into recurrent expressions that become identifiable with the account's communicative style. However, whether they appear once or repeatedly, these forms are produced through the same basic mechanism: an already familiar lexical item is reinterpreted as if it were an acronym and then assigned a new expansion that fits the sound or written shape of the original form.

(128) Tomingse (Referring to Dao Ming Si, an iconic character from the legendary Taiwanese drama series, Meteor Garden (2001))
→ ***To****long* ***ming****gir* ***se****dikit* (Please move aside a little)
Formation rule: Retaining the first syllable of each component

(109) Samrat (the name of a popular meatball franchise called Bakso Samrat)
→ *A****sam*** *u****rat*** (gout/uric acid)
Formulation rule: Retaining the last syllable of each component

(51) Jojo (the name of one of the duet members, Sinta and Jojo, popular for their lip-sync of the Keong Racun song on YouTube in 2010)
→ ***Jo****lang dan* ***jo****jodog* (Sundanese terms for basin and stool)
Formulation rule: Retaining the first syllable of each component with conjunction deletion

(114) *SOP JANDA* (an Indonesian beef soup made of beef cuts cooked in a rich, spicy broth flavored with aromatic spices)
→ **S**ense **O**f **P**lace: **J**ourney **A**nd **N**arrative **D**esign **A**wareness (a made-up term to refer to the sense of considering small details in designing a place)
Formation rule: Retaining the first letter of each component

(49) Jember (a regency in East Java)
→ ***Jem****aah* ***ber****komentar* (the congregation commenting)
Formulation rule: Retaining three initial letters of each component

(110) Sashimi (a traditional Japanese dish of thinly sliced raw fish or meat served raw)

→ ***Sa****ngat* ***shi****ap* ***mi****n* (very ready, min (admin))
Formulation rule: Retaining two initial letters of the first and third component and conserving the three initial letters of the second component

(19) *Bucin* (love slave, referring to being enslaved by love)
→ ***Bu****bur* ***cin****a* (Chinese porridge)
Formulation rule: Retaining two initial letters of the first component and three initial letters of the second component

Examples of data representing the formulation rule of retaining various letters and syllables which is difficult to formulate:

(10) Barcelona (the capital of the autonomous community of Catalonia in Spain)
→ ***Bar****u* ***Sel****asa* ***o****tak udah ke ma****na*** (It's just Tuesday, my mind is already losing focus)

(35) EXO (a South Korean-Chinese boy band based in Seoul, consisting of nine members: Xiumin, Suho, Lay, Baekhyun, Chen, Chanyeol, D.O., Kai, and Sehun)
→ ***Ex****tra* ***O****eang* (extra money)

(123) *Tawadhu* (Arabic, meaning humble, not arrogant, or not haughty)
→ ***Ta****ra ma****wa dhu****it* (not carrying/having money)

Several examples illustrate the flexibility of acronymic expressions. Some items follow more recognizable acronymic patterns, such as (128) *Tomingse* → *Tolong minggir sedikit*, which retains the first syllable of each component; (109) *Samrat* → *Asam urat*, which retains the last syllables; (51) Jojo → *Jolang dan jojodog*, which retains the first syllables while deleting the conjunction; and (114) *SOP JANDA* → Sense of Place: Journey and Narrative Design Awareness, which retains the first letters of the components. These examples show that BAM's reinterpretations still draw on recognizable acronymic logic, even though the process works in reverse: the lexical form exists first, and the expansion is created afterward.

However, most items are less systematic and therefore fall under the category of retaining various letters and syllables which is difficult to formulate. For example, (35) *EXO* → *Extra Oeang* relies mainly on orthographic resemblance. To keep the visual connection with the letter O in *EXO*, the old Indonesian spelling *oeang* is used instead of *uang*. Datum (10) *Barcelona* → *Baru Selasa otak udah ke mana*, on the other hand, has more to do with phonological similarity, especially in the connection between the sound *-cel-* and *Selasa*. A few elements are also absent from the expansion, suggesting that the reinterpretation is more a matter of recognizability and comedic effect than a full structural correspondence.

The data further indicate that BAM's backronymic formations utilize multilingual resources. In datum (110) *Sashimi* → *Sangat shiap min*, *Sashimi* is a loanword from the Japanese, but here the word *shiap* is adapted in a way that resembles both the phonology and orthography of the Japanese-derived word *sashimi*. (123) *Tawadhu* → *Tara mawa dhuit* employs a Sundanese extension to reinterpret an Arabic term, with the spelling *dhuit* adapted to resemble the syllable *-dhu* in t*awadhu*. Likewise, these examples suggest that BAM's backronymic creativity is driven not only by the logic of

acronyms, but also by phonological play, orthographic manipulation, multilingual awareness, and contextual relevance.

In general, the rise of backronymic expressions in BAM's discourse is best understood as a flexible lexical reinterpretation, rather than a fixed morphological process. In this account, familiar words are treated as potential acronym-like forms and assigned new expansions on the basis of phonetic similarity, orthographic similarity, cultural association, and communicative context. This flexibility explains the high productivity of backronymic expressions in the data and their adaptability to different topics in the Instagram discourse.

The Motives Underlying the Use of Backronyms

While the analysis of backronym formation is based on the structural patterns, the analysis of motives is based on the context and the frequency of occurrence. This is necessary because a single backronymic item may occur in different contexts, be given different invented expansions, and serve different communicative functions. The motives of the use of backronyms in @biasalahanakmuda are classified into four categories based on the use in context: (1) entertainment, (2) audience engagement and group intimacy, (3) identity and stance marking, and (4) evaluation and criticism.

Although every backronymic expression in the data is humor-based, their communicative functions are not restricted to amusement. The humorous effect usually comes from the incongruity between the lexical item's ordinary meaning and its newly invented extension. This incongruity produces surprise and unexpected semantic associations, which are widely recognized as key mechanisms of verbal humor (Attardo, 1994). However, research on humor in social interaction has revealed that humorous expressions are often used for wider social and interactional purposes, rather than only as jokes (Dynel & Chovanec, 2021; Dynel & Sinkeviciute, 2021).

This view is in line with the backronyms in @biasalahanakmuda. Each reinterpretation is funny in its semantic deviation and linguistic creativity. However, the recurrence and contextual use of some forms reveals further pragmatic motivations. Therefore, humor is not treated as a separate motive category in this analysis. Instead, humor is seen as a general characteristic of backronymic expressions, and the categories discussed in this section refer to the dominant communicative goals achieved through those humorous forms.

Table 1 The Motives of Using the Backronyms in @biasalahanakmuda

No.	Motives	Amount of Occurrence	Percentage (%)
1.	Entertainment	79	41.80
2.	Audience engagement and group intimacy	74	39.15
3.	Identity and stance marking	8	4.23
4.	Evaluation and criticism	28	14.82
	Total	**189**	**100**

As can be seen in Table 1, the most common motive is entertainment with 79 occurrences or 41.80% of the data. The next motive which frequently emerges is audience engagement and group intimacy at 74 occurrences or 39.15%. The motive of evaluation and criticism appears in 28 occurrences or 14.82%, while identity and stance marking is the least frequent motive with only eight occurrences or 4.23%. This distribution shows that @biasalahanakmuda's backronyms are dominantly used to make

the content fun and to keep the interaction with the followers. However, they also serve as resources for expressing evaluation, critique, as well as identity and stance.

The Motive of Entertainment

Although all backronyms in this study are humorous, not all are used primarily for entertainment. In this study, the entertainment motive is used in the sense that the reinterpretations are mainly used to amuse the audience, and turn ordinary observations into pleasurable Instagram content.

Entertainment appears as the most dominant motive in the data, indicating that BAM frequently uses backronyms to present familiar objects, places, people, and situations through unexpected linguistic associations. In these cases, the main purpose is not to deliver criticism, construct identity, or invite audience participation, but to make the content more amusing and pleasurable to consume. Two examples are presented as follows.

(7) Balita (*bawah lima tahun* or the age range for children under five years old)
→ ***Ba****yi* ***li****ma puluh* ***ta****hun* (fifty years old baby)
Context: BAM examines two places: a prestigious school in Surabaya and a recreation forest in Purwokerto. Both places have nice playgrounds and recreational facilities for kids. However, BAM, as adults, want to try the recreational facilities too. Thus, they humorously reinterpret *balita*, conventionally referring to *bawah lima tahun* ('children under five years old'), as *bayi lima puluh tahun* ('fifty-year-old baby').

(13) Berlin (the capital and largest city of Germany)
→ ***Ber****harap* ***li****bur sampe Seni****n*** (hoping the holiday lasts until Monday)
Context: BAM mentions Berlin, the capital of Germany, and jokingly translates it as *berharap libur sampai Senin* (hoping the holiday lasts until Monday). The phrase captures a common feeling among workers and students who wish weekends or holidays could last longer.

In datum (7), *Balita* is reinterpreted by extending the age category from five years old to fifty years old. The entertainment effect comes from exaggeration and relatability, as adult audiences are invited to laugh at their own desire to enjoy children's recreational spaces. A similar pattern appears in datum (13), Berlin, where the reinterpretation is based on a shared everyday wish for a longer holiday. The humor is not about Berlin the actual city, but about the phonological possibility of turning the place name into a common feeling about work, school, and leisure.

This finding is in line with research on digital humor. Social media humor is often used as a form of recreational communication to allow users to enjoy and share common experiences and relatable situations (Dynel, 2021). Yus (2017) also argues that linguistic play works well when it transforms ordinary experiences into funny reinterpretations that the audience can easily recognize and enjoy.

The data are relevant with these observations. Many of the entertainment-motivated backronyms found in BAM are grounded in everyday experience: money, work, travel, education, housework, and local cultural references. The audience is not meant to respond, to pick sides, or to identify with a group. Rather, they are invited to enjoy the playful re-interpretation itself, so entertainment is a strong pragmatic motivation for

BAM to use backronyms. BAM uses exaggeration, juxtaposition, localization, and playful reinterpretation to make everyday observations into amusing linguistic performances, adding to the unique communicative style of the account.

The Motive of Audience Engagement and Group Intimacy

The second most frequent motive for the use of backronyms in @biasalahanakmuda is the audience engagement and group intimacy with 74 occurrences or 39.15% from the total 189 occurrences. This means that backronyms are not just humorous linguistic inventions, but also interactional resources used by BAM to create and maintain relations with its followers. In this context, backronyms function as participatory markers, repetitive catchphrases, and community-specific expressions that invite followers to recognize references, respond to content, and experience belonging to a shared online community.

Audience engagement in computer-mediated communication refers to practices that encourage participation, interaction, and involvement in online discourse. Group intimacy, meanwhile, refers to the sense of closeness, solidarity, and shared identity among members of a community. In BAM's content, backronyms help create these effects by turning ordinary expressions into recognizable discourse markers. Several examples are presented as follows.

(119) Sushi (A traditional Japanese dish centered around vinegared rice)
→ ***Su****dah* ***shi****ap* (already ready)
Context: This expression is found at the beginning of some activities such as house reviews, mini lectures (*kajian*), discussions, giveaways, and other interactive content. It functions as a cue that signals to the audience to get ready for the upcoming activity.

(110) Sashimi (a traditional Japanese dish of thinly sliced raw fish or meat served raw)
→ ***Sa****ngat* ***shi****ap* ***mi****n* (very ready, min (admin))
Context: This phrase is used before reviews, announcements, or new content segments. It functions as a cue that signals the audience to get ready for the upcoming activity and is expected as a response to BAM's question about the viewers' readiness.

(91) Party
→ **P**hilips Sm**art**izen Get Luck**y** (the name of a major promotional campaign by Philips Lighting Indonesia that ran until late 2023)
Context: BAM promotes Philips Smart LED lights through the Wiz application, and links the program to the idea of a party or celebration, because through the program, people can enjoy shopping for the Philips product to get the chance to win prizes.

One of the clearest examples is datum (119), *Sushi*, which appears 17 times and becomes the most frequent item in this category. Rather than referring to the Japanese dish, *Sushi* is used as a ritualized opening formula before house reviews, discussion sessions, giveaways, or mini lectures. It is commonly paired with datum (110), *Sashimi*, which functions as an expected response from followers. Together, *Sushi* and *Sashimi* form a predictable call-and-response sequence between BAM and its audience.

Repeated use makes these expressions more than isolated jokes. More importantly, they become markers of a community in the language, with a meaning known to BAM and its followers. This process is related to the enregisterment process proposed by Agha (2003), where certain linguistic forms become socially recognizable through repeated use within a community. In BAM's discourse, *Sushi* and *Sashimi* denote not only readiness but also familiarity with the style of the account. When followers understand and use these expressions, they exist as members of the same interpretive community.

Backronyms are also used to promote more direct forms of audience participation, such as giveaways, quizzes, and promotional campaigns. In datum (91), *Party* is reinterpreted as Philips Smartizen Get Lucky, a promotional program of Philips Smart LED products promoted by BAM. The expansion is not a literal party but more a giveaway type campaign where consumers can win prizes such as a Hyundai Ioniq 5 and a trip to Japan. Here, the backronym serves to frame the promotional content as fun and celebratory, contributing to making the campaign more engaging for the audience.

These findings are in line with studies of social media discourse, where linguistic creativity, humor, and repeated in-group expressions can promote participation, foster affiliation, and strengthen communal bonds among users (Dynel, 2021; Gal, 2018; Zappavigna, 2011, 2019). In BAM, *sushi* and *sashimi* are both invitations to participate and linguistic badges signifying membership. They enable followers to identify themselves as part of the same online community, where a shared understanding of playful language serves as a signifier of intimacy and belonging.

The Motive of Evaluation and Criticism

In this study, evaluation is defined as the use of backronymic expressions to evaluate a person, place, object, design, facility, social condition, or public issue. The evaluation can be positive, negative, or mixed. Positive evaluation expresses admiration, appreciation, or approval, while negative evaluation expresses dissatisfaction, disapproval, irony, or criticism. This understanding is in line with Appraisal Theory that considers evaluation as the linguistic expression of attitude, including affect, judgment, and appreciation toward people, behavior, objects, states of affairs, and phenomena (Martin & White, 2005; White, 2015). However, in the data of this study, evaluative backronyms mainly appear as negative and mixed evaluations.

(11) *Batuk* (cough)
→ ***Ba****gus* ***t****api asa te****u*** ***k****udu* (an Indonesian-Sundanese mix of: It is good, but it does not really feel necessary)
Context: BAM reviews the house of an EXO member, Kai, and discusses its architectural design. One of the eye-catching features is the use of flush doors that blend seamlessly into the walls, giving a clean, minimalist look. BAM acknowledges the design which looks good, but then interprets it as *Bagus tapi asa teu kudu* (good, but it does not really seem necessary). The phrase used in admiring of the design, but at the same time questioning its practicality or necessity.

(117) Sumbar (West Sumatera, a province in Indonesia)
→ ***Sum****atera* ***Bar****bar* (Barbaric Sumatera)
Context: BAM visits a tourist attraction in West Sumatra, where the natural scenery is already beautiful. BAM points out that the site is filled with many replicas

of famous global landmarks, including Stonehenge, the Eiffel Tower, the Leaning Tower of Pisa, the "I Amsterdam" sign, colorful European-style buildings, and other icons. BAM believes these additions are excessive and aesthetically inappropriate, as they detract from the authenticity and beauty of the natural environment. Expressing this evaluation, BAM reinterprets Sumbar as *Sumatera Barbar*. Here, *barbar* does not literally mean uncivilized or savage, but is a colloquial expression of aesthetic disapproval.

(127) Timbel (a traditional dish typical of the Sundanese, West Java)
→ ***TNI m****enjabat do****bel*** (Indonesian military holds dual positions)
Context: BAM reviews Mak Nonon's house through a house-tour video broadcast on Sobat Missqueen on Trans7. During the visit, Mak Nonon serves nasi timbel, a traditional Sundanese rice dish. BAM then playfully reinterprets *timbel* as *TNI menjabat dobel*, connecting the food item to a current public debate in Indonesia about the revised TNI (Indonesian military) Law and the possibility of active military personnel occupying civilian positions while still holding military status.

Datum (11), *Batuk*, represents mixed evaluation. BAM appreciates the visual quality of the design, but at the same time questions its necessity. The backronym therefore works as a soft critique of excessive refinement in interior design. Datum (117), *Sumbar*, presents a stronger negative evaluation. Through the phrase *Sumatera Barbar*, BAM criticizes a tourist site that is considered visually excessive because of its artificial replicas of world-famous landmarks. In both cases, the criticism is delivered indirectly, expressed through humor, which lessens the confrontational nature of the evaluation.

The evaluative function also appears in relation to wider social and political issues. Datum (127) *Timbel* connects a Sundanese food item to the topic of double positions by military personnel. This example proves that BAM's backronyms can go beyond aesthetic judgment and offer a playful way of commenting on public issues. The use is in line with Jupriono et al. (2023), who demonstrate that the use of punned acronyms in Indonesian discourse can be utilized for social criticism and verbal resistance. Another related study on Indonesian X discourse shows how irony, satire, wordplay, and jokes can be used to express dissatisfaction with political leadership, economic inequality, and exploitative conditions (Risty & Mustikawati, 2025).

These findings suggest that evaluation and criticism in BAM's discourse are often mediated by humor. Instead of directly pronouncing judgment, BAM translates evaluation into humorous linguistic reinterpretation. This is in accordance with research on digital humor that indicates that humorous content on social media can include critical, ideological, and evaluative content without losing its humor and shareability (Dynel, 2021; Schmid, 2025). Backronyms allow BAM to express disapproval, aesthetic judgement, and social criticism without abandoning the lighthearted and playful style that characterizes the account.

The Motive of Identity and Stance Marking

Even though this category only appears in 4.23% of the data, it is important because it shows that backronyms are not only used for humor, entertainment, audience engagement, or evaluation. In some cases, they become linguistic resources through which BAM positions itself socially and expresses attitudes towards persons, places,

objects, or experiences. Du Bois (2007) characterizes stance as a public act of evaluating objects, positioning oneself, and aligning or disaligning with others. From this point of view, linguistic choices are not only information carriers but also markers of social identity, group affiliation, values, and personal orientation. Digital communication provides opportunities for the construction of identity through creative language practices that allow users to present themselves, signal belonging, and mark distinction (Androutsopoulos, 2013). Some examples are provided below.

(99) *Philo Birkin* (*Philodendron Birkin*, a tropical ornamental houseplant known for its thick, glossy leaves featuring striking white-cream variegated stripes against a dark green background, with a relatively high price)
→ ***Phi****ngin* ***lo****h,* ***bi****arpun mis****kin*** (I really want it, even though I am poor)
Contexts: BAM reviews a YouTube video of Indonesian actress Titi Kamal sharing her plant collection. One of the plants is a *Philodendron Birkin (Philo Birkin)*, an ornamental plant with attractive variegated leaves and a relatively high market price. When BAM hears the name of the plant and its price range, BAM jokingly reinterprets *Philo Birkin* as *Phingin loh, biarpun miskin* (I really want it, even though I am poor), driven directly by the perceived desirability and cost of the plant. BAM shows a lighthearted way of expressing a frequent desire for something beautiful but expensive, self-deprecatingly implying they cannot afford it.

(58) *Kembar* (twins)
→ ***Kem****bung dan le****bar*** (bloated and wide)
Contexts: BAM, as a father, posts an Instagram story of a journal written by the BAM father for his twin daughters, Bim and Bum. In discussing the journal entry, BAM notes that the daughters are twins (*kembar*) and that he (the father) is also *kembar*, but he humorously translates *kembar* as *kembung dan lebar* (bloated and wide) rather than its literal meaning. The expression, rather than describing the children, humorously depicts the father's physical appearance through self-mockery.

(129) Ubud (a village and cultural center in the Ubud District, Gianyar Regency, Bali, known as the heart of Bali's spirituality and art.)
→ ***U****jung* ***B****er****u****ng In****d****ah* (beautiful Ujung Berung. Ujung Berung is the name of a sub-district in the East Bandung area, Bandung City, West Java, which is also the hometown of the BAM account users)
Contexts: BAM is having a short stay in Ubud, Bali, an area known for its peaceful scenery and village atmosphere. While enjoying Ubud, BAM jokingly reinterprets the place name as Ujung Berung Indah. Ujung Berung is a district in East Bandung where BAM was raised. Through this reinterpretation, BAM playfully elevates its hometown by comparing it to one of Indonesia’s iconic tourist destinations.

These examples show how BAM uses backronyms to construct a particular social persona. In datum (99), BAM expresses desire for an expensive object while positioning itself as financially modest. The self-deprecating phrase *Phingin loh, biarpun miskin* allows BAM to acknowledge envy or aspiration without sounding resentful. In datum

(58), BAM avoids presenting itself as physically ideal or socially distant. Instead, the reinterpretation *kembung dan lebar* creates a humorous self-portrait that supports an approachable and ordinary persona. Meanwhile, datum (129), *Ubud → Ujung Berung Indah*, indexes local attachment by transforming a well-known tourist destination into a reference to BAM's hometown. This illustrates what Bucholtz and Hall (2005) describe as identity indexing, in which linguistic forms signal social belonging and local affiliation.

Though BAM often discusses architecture and urban spaces, it rarely adopts the stance of a technical expert. Its backronymic expressions are more likely to situate architecture through everyday concerns, such as affordability, comfort, family life, locality, and practical use. Consequently, BAM seems to be an enthusiastic observer of architecture rather than a detached professional authority, despite its architectural background. All these data suggest that BAM creates a persona of an average, modest income person, a companion with whom people can relate, a Sundanese/Bandung person who is rooted locally, and an architecture enthusiast who is grounded in everyday life. In terms of Du Bois's (2007) stance triangle, BAM tends to align with ordinary people, local communities, fans, middle-class audiences, and everyday consumers, while disaligning from social elites, luxury privilege, excessive authority, and expert exclusivity.

This explains why the motive of identity and stance marking remains important, even if it is infrequent. The backronyms under this motive reveal the social persona BAM continually embodies throughout the account: funny, self-effacing, rooted in locality, and relatable. The category thus aids us in understanding how backronymic expressions function not only as playful linguistic forms, but also as tools for self-positioning in digital discourse.

The findings of this study indicate that the backronyms in @biasalahanakmuda are not just playful linguistic accidents, but strategic language play shaped by morphology, humor, platformed interaction, and shared cultural knowledge. From a structural point of view, the emergence of acronym-like forms allows more scope for reinterpretation by pronounceable and familiar lexical items. It is in accordance with the explanation of Kridalaksana (2010) that Indonesian acronyms can be formed through a combination of letters, syllables, and word segments in a flexible manner. The present study, however, shows that such flexibility is not only operative in conventional acronym formation. In BAM's discourse, the process is reversed: the lexical form already exists, and the expansion is created afterward. The results thus extend studies of Indonesian acronyms, which have largely treated acronymizations as products of reduction, efficiency, and structural formation, to demonstrate that acronym-like forms can also be resources for expansion, humor, and social meaning.

The findings are also in line with research on retrospective reinterpretation and backronym-like practices. Stock and Strapparava (2005) demonstrate that humorous effect of acronym reinterpretation can be obtained by means of ironic reanalysis, semantic incongruity, and playful replacement of meanings. The current study supports this view but places the phenomenon in a natural Instagram discourse rather than a computationally generated context. Moreover, Indonesian and Javanese traditions such as *othak-athik mathuk*, *kerata basa*, and *jarwa dhosok* demonstrate that reinterpretation is not limited to historical or etymological accuracy but to associative fit, sound resemblance, cultural familiarity, and interpretive resonance (Suwardi, 1996; Miyake, 2019; Ubaidillah, 2022; Wijana, 2022). BAM's backronyms are part of this

broader tradition of reinterpretation, but they take place in a different communicative environment: Instagram, where the meaning of an expression is shaped by captions, visual and situational context, story sequences, and the recurring style of the account.

The pragmatic results also indicate that humor is the main mechanism, although not always the ultimate communicative aim. The four motives found in the data, including entertainment, audience engagement and group intimacy, evaluation and criticism, as well as identity and stance marking, point to the fact that backronyms do different kinds of social work. Backronyms for entertainment purposes turn mundane experiences into entertaining material, consistent with theories of humor that suggest incongruity as a source of comic effect (Raskin, 1979; Attardo, 1994). Audience-oriented backronyms, such as repeated opening formulas and response cues, enable participation and common knowledge. This is in line with research on digital discourse which finds that online language is often used to build affiliation, interaction and a sense of community (Herring, 2005; Crystal, 2011; Zappavigna, 2011). In BAM, repeated expressions such as *Sushi* and *Sashimi* gradually emerge as recognizable markers of the account's interactional style. This process can be understood in terms of Agha's notion of enregisterment, whereby repeated linguistic forms become socially recognizable in a community (Agha, 2003). The findings of evaluation and criticism also associate this study with the previous studies of punned acronyms in Indonesian discourse. Jupriono et al. (2023) demonstrate that playful acronyms and abbreviations may be employed as social criticism and verbal resistance in particular political contexts. The present study corroborates this point but also shows that backronym criticism in Instagram discourse is not limited to political resistance. Evaluation in BAM may be on interior design, public facilities, urban spaces, social conditions or current public issues. Thus, the criticism is indirect and more acceptable, since it is re-expressed humorously, but it still permits the narrative to express judgment. This is in line with the view that humor can soften evaluative or critical meanings without lessening their social force.

Finally, the motive of identity and stance-marking shows how the backronyms also contribute to building the persona of the account. BAM is positioned as humorous, locally rooted, self-deprecating, and close to ordinary followers through backronyms in accordance with Du Bois's (2007) notion of stance as evaluation, positioning, and alignment. This also relates to Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) conception of identity as produced through linguistic and semiotic practices, including labels, styles, and stances. In this sense, the backronyms of BAM are not just jokes added to familiar words. They are small but meaningful resources for demonstrating who is the speaker, what the speaker values, and how the speaker wishes to relate to the audience.

More generally, the results of the study contribute by showing that the motive of a backronym is not solely based on the shortened form. A single form may carry different motives when it is linked to a different original meaning, assigned a different made-up expansion, and used in a different discourse context. This shows that backronyms are context-sensitive rather than form-fixed. Pragmatic approaches to discourse, therefore, understand meaning to be constructed not only through linguistic structure, but through the interaction between language users, context, shared knowledge, and communicative aims (Yule, 1996). Overall, the relationship between the backronymic lexical items and motives indicates that backronyms in @biasalahanakmuda are not random wordplay. The source term offers familiar linguistic material, the invented expansion represents a humorous reinterpretation, and the discourse context

establishes the dominant motive. Therefore, the same linguistic mechanism can produce entertainment, audience engagement, identity marking, or criticism, depending on what BAM invites the audience to notice, feel, evaluate, or identify with.

Conclusion

This study shows that backronyms in @biasalahanakmuda are used because they allow familiar lexical forms to be reinterpreted into humorous, recognizable and contextually meaningful expressions. These backronyms are not merely a matter of wordplay, but rather a flexible communicative resource in Instagram discourse. Four major motives for their use are revealed, which are entertainment, audience engagement and group intimacy, evaluation and criticism, and identity and stance marking. The most common motive is entertainment, implying that backronyms are frequently used to make routine observations humorous. The second most prominent motive is the audience engagement and group intimacy motive, particularly in repeated invitations to followers to participate and identify themselves as part of BAM's interpretive community. The evaluation and criticism motive reveals how backronyms can soften judgment or social commentary through humor. The motive of Identity and stance marking reveals how BAM positions itself as humorous, ordinary, locally rooted, and relatable persona. In general, the use of backronyms in BAM shows that acronym-like expressions in social media are not always used for efficiency but can also be tools for humor, interaction, evaluation, and self-positioning.

This study on backronyms may have wider implications in morphology, pragmatics, and digital communication, by showing how linguistic forms acquire social meaning through context. Backronyms in Indonesian social media discourse are not a random linguistic game, but the outcome of interaction between existing lexical forms, invented expansions, shared cultural knowledge, and communicative purposes. This study also provides opportunities to reconsider the tradition of interpretative practices such as *kerata basa* and *jarwa dhosok* in the context of contemporary digital language practices. Further research may explore backronym-like expressions on different social media platforms, observe their applications in other online communities, or study audience reactions to understand how followers interpret and engage in these linguistic practices. Future research may also investigate the role of multilingual resources, regional languages, and popular culture references in the production and dissemination of backronyms in Indonesian digital discourse.

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