

YOUTH FILM CONSUMPTION CULTURE: REPRESENTATIONS OF COMMUNICATION STYLES ON THE @KEPINHELMY TIKTOK ACCOUNT

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ABSTRACT

Film reviews have shifted from long-form textual criticism toward dense, dynamic audiovisual narratives with the rise of TikTok; amid dominant fast-paced, emotional review styles, the account @kepinhelmy stands out for its contemplative, poetic tone and soft, deep-toned voice. While prior semiotic studies have examined self-image construction or humor on social media, few apply Ferdinand de Saussure's structural semiotics to a film-review creator's personal communication style, and existing literature tends to treat verbal and nonverbal elements separately rather than as one integrated sign system shaping digital persona and authority. This study analyzes the signifiers, signifieds, and their relations in representing @kepinhelmy's verbal and nonverbal communication style in reviews of Para Perasuk, Dusun Mayit, and Hoppers. Using a constructivist paradigm and descriptive qualitative method grounded in Saussure's framework, data were gathered through video documentation, verbatim transcription, and field notes on ten top-performing contents from October 2025 to March 2026. Findings show verbal signifiers appear through contemplative-poetic diction, analytical-philosophical narrative structure, and simplified technical terms, while nonverbal signifiers emerge through a soft intimate tone, measured tempo, direct eye contact, and medium close-up talking-head format—jointly constructing signifieds of philosophical reflection, emotional intimacy, and academic credibility. Theoretically, the study extends Saussurean semiotics into new media by revealing how digital parole works multimodally; practically, it offers content creators strategic guidance for building authentic persona through deliberate alignment of verbal and nonverbal signs.

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INTRODUCTION

The transformation of the digital media landscape over the past decade has changed the way society—particularly younger generations (Gen Z and Gen Alpha)—consumes pop culture products such as films (Bhandari & Bimo, 2022). The emergence of algorithm-based short-form video platforms like TikTok serves not only as a means of entertainment but has evolved into a highly influential space for film literacy, recommendations, and critical discourse (Cheng & Li, 2024).

Whereas in the era of conventional media, film criticism was dominated by formal press institutions or academic critics using print media and specialized websites, there is now a democratization of film criticism in which *content creators* can produce film reviews that instantly reach millions of viewers in a matter of seconds (Saputra, 2021; Suvattanadilok, 2021).

The TikTok platform has a unique set of rules and communication culture—or what is referred to in structural linguistics as “*langue*” (De Saussure, 1959). TikTok’s “*langue*” system is characterized by the constraints of a 9:16 vertical aspect ratio, a fast-paced editing rhythm, the requirement to include an attention-grabbing “hook” within the first three seconds, and a tendency toward populist audio trends (Grzenkiewicz & Wildfeuer, 2025; Zhao & Wagner, 2022). These characteristics of the sociotechnical environment encourage most movie reviewers on TikTok to express their individuality (*parole*) through an explosive communication style, hyperbolic plot summaries, the use of slang, and dramatic emotional reactions in order to drive viewer retention and the *For You Page* (FYP).

Amid this trend of TikTok’s noisy and instant-gratification communication style, an intriguing phenomenon has emerged on the TikTok account @kepinhelmy. This film review account presents a communicative anomaly. @kepinhelmy adopts a contemplative, calm, and analytical approach to film reviews, yet still manages to achieve high engagement and popularity among young people. Verbally, he explores poetic and philosophical diction while demonstrating sensitivity to technical aspects of cinematography. Nonverbally, he consistently maintains a *deep tone* of voice, clear articulation, a focused facial expression, and the use of an intimate *medium close-up* camera shot.

The phenomenon of @kepinhelmy’s communication style is crucial to study because it represents a new chapter in young people’s film-consuming culture on social media. A reviewer’s communication style on social media platforms is not merely a tool for conveying information but acts as a structured system of signs that constructs the creator’s digital identity and credible authority. As explained by Norton (1978), communication style is a key instrument in shaping the communicator’s image of expertise and appeal in the eyes of the audience. Previous studies on film review content on social media have examined: (1) Movie recommendation and algorithm-driven shifts in film consumption on TikTok (Kulaga, 2024), (2) Audience engagement and viewer perception of short-video film criticism (Cheng & Li, 2023; Suvattanadilok, 2021), (3) The influence of TikTok movie-review exposure on viewing interest, and content analysis of promotional messages (Nadeem & Suardhita, 2024; Setiawan, 2022). (4) The general communication style of TikTok content creators across non-film niches (Wijaya & Muktaruddin, 2024).

However, they rarely investigate the semiotic construction of credibility through multimodal communication. There remains a limited body of research that thoroughly examines how aspects of audiovisual *multimodality* (a combination of verbal and nonverbal elements) are semiotically constructed to build the reviewer’s credibility within the context of short-form video platforms.

This study offers novelty by: (1) Integrating Saussurean structuralist semiotics with the analysis of a content creator’s personal communication style, redirecting a framework previously applied mainly to film texts or cultural representation toward the communicator behind the content (2) Examining verbal and nonverbal elements as a single, integrated system of multimodal signs, rather than treating them as separate descriptive categories as most previous studies have done; and Introducing digital authority as a semiotic construction, showing that a communicator’s credibility on social media is systematically produced through the relationship between signifier and signified, rather than resulting merely from a communication effect.

Based on this background, this study aims to analyze the representation of verbal and nonverbal communication signs on the TikTok account @kepinhelmy using Ferdinand de Saussure’s semiotic framework. This study focuses its analysis on three sample units of movie review content representing a variety of genres, namely an experimental drama (*Para Perasuk*), a horror film (*Dusun Mayit*), and an animated film (*Disney Hoppers*). Through a Saussurean structuralist approach, this study examines: (1) What is the dyadic relationship between the signifier and the signified in the verbal and nonverbal elements of @kepinhelmy’s film review content? (2) How are syntagmatic and paradigmatic structures organized in constructing the narrative of his reviews? (3) How does the dialectic between platform rules (*langue*) and the articulation of individual style (*parole*) represent a new culture of film consumption and construct @kepinhelmy’s credible authority on TikTok?

METHOD

Research Design and Approach

This study employs a qualitative approach with an interpretive paradigm focused on Ferdinand de Saussure's structuralist semiotics. The qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for an in-depth examination of implied meanings, the structure of audiovisual messages, and the construction of symbolic reality underlying the communication styles of content creators on social media (Neuman, 2014; Creswell & Poth, 2016). Through the Saussurean framework, communication phenomena are viewed as a structured sign system (sign system) where meaning does not exist in isolation but is formed through the relationships between signs within the reality of digital media (De Saussure, 1959).

Research Object and Unit of Analysis

Table 1. Verbal Semiotic Analysis of the “Para Perasuk” Movie Review Content

Dimensions of Analysis	Operational Indicators	Audiovisual Observation Parameters
Dyadic Relations	Signifier	Transcript of spoken audio, vocal frequency, kinesic expressions, lighting, frame rate, and visual overlays
	Signified	Mental concepts, cognitive perceptions, of authority, and emotional intimacy (pathos).
Syntagmatic Axis	Linear Sequence (Temporal Order)	The flow of delivery from the hook (0–5 days), context (5–20d), deep analysis (20–70d), to verdict/closing (70–90d+).
Paradigmatic Axis	Style Selection (System of Choice)	creator by eliminating alternative styles on TikTok (e.g., avoiding hyperbolic slang, rapid jump cuts, and AI voices).
System Dialectics	Langue vs. Parole	The interaction between TikTok's technical conventions (language) and the creator's individual expression

Source: Researcher Data, 2026

Data Collection Technique

Data collection was conducted systematically through three main stages:

1. Digital Documentation: Downloading and archiving master video files from the three movie review videos on the TikTok account @kepinhelmy in high-resolution format (1080x1920 pixels) to prevent data loss due to deletion or changes in the platform's algorithm.
2. Verbatim Transcription: Converting all of the creator's spoken utterances (audio recordings) into literal text transcripts to analyze verbal data, including notes on intonation pauses and word stress.
3. Micro-Observation Field Notes: Conducting micro-observations of nonverbal elements using frame-by-frame analysis tools. Researchers record every change in kinesic expression, vocal fluctuations, and the appearance of visual overlays per second.

Data Analysis Procedure

Data analysis was conducted based on Ferdinand de Saussure's structuralist semiotic framework. Saussure defined a sign as an indivisible dyadic unit consisting of two inseparable elements (the signifier and the signified). The Saussurean qualitative data analysis process in this study was carried out through four systematic stages:

Stage 1 – Identification of Dyadic Signs: Isolating verbal signifiers (diction, syntax, cinematic terms) and nonverbal signifiers (deep-tone vocalizations, gestures, expressions, lighting), then mapping the signifieds—which are the resulting mental concepts or cognitive perceptions.

Stage 2 – Saussurean Coding: Grouping signs into a qualitative matrix to distinguish between verbal communication (transcripts and language functions) and nonverbal communication (kinesics, vocalisations, and spatial cues).

Stage 3 – Syntagmatic and Paradigmatic Axis Analysis: Analyzing the linear sequence of signs from the hook, body, to the closing (syntagmatic), as well as analyzing the process by which creators select speech styles and visual markers while eliminating other stylistic options available on TikTok (paradigmatic) (Dewanti, 2023; Shovy & Azmy, 2024).

Stage 4 – The Dialectic of Langue and Parole & Synthesis of Meaning: Contrasting the rules and conventions of the TikTok platform (langue) with the articulation of creators’ individual expressions (parole) to extract meanings of digital culture, identity formation, and the legitimization of credible authority (Martianto & Toni, 2021; Paskaleva, 2024).

Data Trustworthiness and Rigor

Data validity testing was conducted to ensure qualitative validity and reliability through two main strategies:

1. Source Triangulation: Comparing and evaluating the consistency of sign patterns across three contrasting film content samples of different genres (experimental drama, horror, and animation) (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).
2. Prolonged Engagement and Micro-Analysis: Reexamining every second (frame-by-frame) of the video recording repeatedly to ensure the accuracy of semiotic interpretations and avoid the researcher’s subjective bias (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

An analysis of the TikTok account @kepinhelmy reveals how a film review channel can establish distinct communicative characteristics within the social media ecosystem. While the majority of film reviewers on the TikTok platform rely on sensationalism, the massive cutting of film clips (re-uploads), and gossip-style voice-overs or exaggerated expressions, the @kepinhelmy account consistently presents a style of high-value film criticism. This study analyzes three video samples representing variations in genre and narrative approach: a review of the experimental/surrealist drama *Para Perasuk* (1 minute 48 seconds), a review of the local horror film and *Dusun Mayit* (1 minute 25 seconds), and a review of the Disney family animated film *Hoppers* (1 minute 56 seconds).

Semiotic Analysis of the Content of the “Para Perasuk” Film Review



Image 1. Screenshot of Nonverbal Signs and Visual Composition of the *Para Perasuk* Movie Review Content
Source: TikTok account @kepinhelmy, 2026; accessed on June 2, 2026

The modeling of verbal signs in the *Para Perasuk* film review is dominated by poetic diction, cinematic metaphors, and analytical articulation that dissects the film’s surrealist narrative. These verbal signs are identified and mapped into the dyadic relationship between signifier and signified.

The visualization of nonverbal signs and the vertical screen layout in the *Para Perasuk* movie review content demonstrate how the visual space is constructed in an intimate and exclusive manner. The medium close-up talking-head composition is combined with low-key lighting to emphasize the contemplative atmosphere of the review (see Figure 1)

Table 2. Verbal Semiotic Analysis of the “Para Perasuk” Movie Review Content

No.	Sign Code	Signifier	Signified
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1	V-PP-01	"This film is like poison being slowly injected into your bloodstream..."	A metaphor for the allure of surrealist films that don't deliver an instant jolt, but gradually builds an atmosphere of alienation and psychological tension.
2	V-PP-02	"Characterization that hovers between the unconscious and a decaying social visual reality."	A cognitive analysis of the film's character depth indicates that the film is not merely entertainment but a high-art art-house film.
3	V-PP-03	"The scenes don't rely on cheap jump scares, but instead creep up on you through the sound design and camera movements that highly intimidating."	Appreciation for the technical quality of cinematography and sound design, while simultaneously positioning the reviewer as a toward the clichés of the horror/thriller genre.

Source: Researcher Data, 2026

In line with these verbal markers, nonverbal cues are present to support and reinforce meaning through calm facial expressions, a deep tone of voice, and dramatic lighting.

Table 3. Verbal Semiotic Analysis of the Film Review for “Para Perasuk”

No.	Sign Code	Signifier	Signified
1	NV-PP-01	Vocal: Deep tone (heavy/low voice), slow and steady tempo (110–120 words per minute), flat and intimate intonation.	Conveys an impression of calmness, intellectual maturity, authority, and a contemplative atmosphere that encourages the audience to think.
2	2NV-PP-02	Kinesics: Sharp, direct eye contact with the camera lens, serious facial expression, without excessive smiling, minimal hand gestures.	Demonstrates sincerity, honesty in the review, firmness of argument, and stable emotional control in front of the camera.
3	3NV-PP-03	Spatial & Visual: 9:16 medium close-up framing, low-key lighting with a predominance of warm shadows, dimly lit workspace.	Creating an atmosphere of intimacy (a personal touch), an exclusive space for discourse, and visual aesthetics that complement the atmosphere of the film “Para Perasuk.”

Source: Researcher Data, 2026

Table 2 and Table 3 do not merely catalogue isolated signs; read together, they clarify why this particular combination of verbal and nonverbal markers is capable of producing ethos rather than simply “sounding calm.” Following established paralinguistic accounts, a low, evenly paced vocal register is conventionally decoded by listeners as a marker of composure, maturity, and deliberative thinking, precisely because rapid, high-pitched delivery is culturally associated with panic, spontaneity, or performative excitement. When this deep tone is paired with poetic-analytical diction (Table 2) rather than hyperbolic slang, the two signifiers reinforce one another: the voice sounds like it is thinking, and the words show that it is. In Saussurean terms, the sign gains stability not because “deep voice” naturally means “credible” — the relationship remains arbitrary — but because the vocal signifier is anchored by a verbal signifier pointing to the same signified (Laksani & Pandanwangi, 2023), closing off alternative readings such as disinterest or fatigue. Low-key lighting operates through a parallel, but visually coded, logic. In visual grammar, high-key, evenly lit setups are conventionally associated with cheerfulness and commercial polish, whereas low-key, shadow-modulated lighting is a stylistic convention borrowed from documentary and art-house cinema to index seriousness, intimacy, and authorial intent (Grzenkiewicz & Wildfeuer, 2025). By lighting himself the way a film he might review would be lit, @kepinhelmy semiotically borrows the visual authority of cinema itself and applies it to his own persona, so that credibility is produced through visual quotation rather than mere claim-making. What each table demonstrates, then, is that ethos in this content is never delivered through a single channel; it is the

redundancy across verbal, vocal, and visual signifiers — each independently interpretable, yet tightly aligned — that manufactures the impression of a stable, trustworthy communicator (Norton, 1978; Rahmawati & Pratama, 2022).

Semiotic Analysis of the Content of the “Dusun Mayit” Film Review

In the second sample, which reviews the horror film “Dusun Mayit,” the verbal analysis reveals sharp criticism of clichés in the local horror film industry. This criticism is conveyed through elegant satire that remains grounded in technical parameters.

Table 4. Verbal Semiotic Analysis of the “Dusun Mayit” Film Review

No.	Sign Code	Signifier	Signified
1.	V-DM-01	"Dusun Mayit is trapped in a formula that exploits past trauma without providing an organic resolution to the story."	A critical assessment of the weaknesses in the film’s screenplay structure, which relies too heavily on the formula of the local horror market.
2.	V-DM-02	"The score tries hard to scare us every five seconds, while the visuals themselves have forgotten how to build suspense."	A communicative critique of the film’s failure to coordinate its audio-visual elements in creating authentic fear.
3.	V-DM-03	"Cinematographically, there are some beautiful shots, but unfortunately the script is as rotten as wood eaten by termites."	A balanced verbal analogy; appreciating the visual aesthetics of the cinematography while evaluating the weaknesses of the narrative substance bluntly.

Source: Researcher Data, 2026

The nonverbal elements in this review content reveal a combination of firmness of opinion and micro-expressions of skepticism regarding the quality of the film being reviewed. In the review of the film *Dusun Mayit*, the use of a visual overlay of the film’s trailer—precisely positioned over the reviewer’s shoulder (shoulder overlay)—serves as empirical evidence supporting the criticism of the screenplay, without displacing the reviewer’s position as the primary narrator (see **Figure 2**).



Image 2. Visual Overlay of a Trailer Clip and Skeptical Kinesic Gestures in the “Dusun Mayit” Movie Review
Source: TikTok account @kepinhelmy, 2025, accessed on June 2, 2026

Table 5. Nonverbal Semiotic Analysis of the “Dusun Mayit” Movie Review Content

No.	Sign Code	Signifier	Signified
1.	NV-DM-01	Kinesics: A slow nod of the head interspersed with a slight shake of the head, eyebrows slightly raised while critiquing the manuscript.	A representation of measured skepticism, objective, and not emotionally accusatory but rather rational.

2.	NV-DM-02	Vocal: Emphasis on key words (“flawed,” “exploitation”), a microscopic pause (0.5 seconds) before a critical point.	Paralinguistic techniques to hold the audience’s attention on the main points of evaluation, signaling the precision of the analysis.
3.	NV-DM-03	Visual Overlay: A 2–3-second trailer clip, precisely edited, played as a shoulder overlay of the creator.	Reinforcement of empirical evidence supporting the spoken argument, ensuring the creator remains the primary visual subject

Source: Researcher Data, 2026

The signs mapped in Table 4 and Table 5 point to a different rhetorical register than Para Perasuk: rather than contemplative ethos alone, @kepinhelmy here constructs what classical rhetoric would call logos-inflected credibility — the appearance of judgment that is evidence-based rather than merely felt. The verbal signifiers in Table 4 (e.g., “the score tries hard to scare us... the visuals have forgotten how to build suspense”) are structured as claim-plus-diagnosis rather than pure complaint, which is significant because horror-review langue on TikTok typically favors exclamatory jump-scare reaction rather than structural critique. The nonverbal signifiers in Table 5 — a measured head nod interrupted by a slight shake, a micro-pause of roughly half a second before the critical word lands — function as paralinguistic punctuation: the pause signals that a judgment, not a reflex, is about to be delivered, borrowing the same pragmatic function a rhetorical pause performs in spoken argumentation. Combined with the shoulder-overlay trailer clip (NV-DM-03), which supplies visual “exhibit” evidence for the verbal claim, the nonverbal system does not simply decorate the critique; it performs the epistemic labor of showing rather than only telling, which is precisely what separates analytical criticism from gossip-style reaction content (Cheng & Li, 2023). The audience is therefore not asked to trust @kepinhelmy's opinion because he sounds serious; they are shown the evidence while he sounds serious, so the two signifiers jointly manufacture the mental impression of an objective, evidence-literate critic rather than a merely skeptical one.

Semiotic Analysis of the Content of the Disney Film “Hoppers” Review

When reviewing the Disney animated film *Hoppers*, the verbal diction used by @kepinhelmy becomes warmer and more appreciative, while still maintaining a perspective of socio-cultural subtext analysis.

Table 6. Verbal Semiotic Analysis of the “Hoppers” Movie Review

No.	Sign Code	Signifier	Signified
1.	V-DH-01	"Disney Hoppers isn't just a funny cartoon for kids, but a brilliant allegory about and interspecies empathy."	A deconstruction of the film's layers of meaning; elevating the status of animated films from mere children's entertainment to works that possesses philosophical depth.
2.	V-DH-02	"The character development is so fluid, the comedy arises purely from the situations and the dynamics between the characters, not dry slapstick."	Appreciation for the script's quality of structural comedy and character development.
3.	V-DH-03	"The animation's visuals are colorful and a feast for the eyes, but its true essence lies in the warmth between characters."	A balanced assessment of both the technical beauty of the 3D animation and the emotional power (heart/pathos) of the story.

Source: Researcher Data, 2026

The nonverbal cues in this animated film review display warm expressions that align with the film's emotional and narrative messages. A significant change in nonverbal cues is evident when @kepinhelmy reviews the Disney animated film *Hoppers*. Warmer kinesic expressions, a subtle smile, and high-key lighting are employed to align the emotional atmosphere (pathos) with the film's theme of inclusivity (see Figure 3).



Image 3. Kinesic Cues: A Subtle Smile and High-Key Lighting in the Review of the Disney Film *Hoppers*
Source: TikTok account @kepinhelmy, 2026; accessed on June 2, 2026

Table 7. Nonverbal Semiotic Analysis of the “Disney Hoppers” Movie Review Content

No.	Sign Code	Signifier	Signified
1.	NV-DH-01	Kinesics: A warm, subtle smile, a more relaxed gaze, and an open hand gesture toward the camera.	Conveys emotional warmth (approachability), genuine joy (artistic appreciation), as well as accessibility to all segments of society.
2	NV-DH-02	Vocal: A more dynamic yet controlled vocal intonation, with a slight rise in pitch during the humorous appreciation.	Conveys enthusiasm and admiration without coming across as over-the-top (over-acting).
3.	NV-DH-03	Visuals & Lighting: Lighting is slightly Harmony between the creator’s visual aesthetics of the animated content.	brighter (high-key balance), emphasizing the positive and cheerful impression.

Source: Researcher Data, 2026

The *Hoppers* sample (Table 6 and Table 7) is analytically important because it shows that @kepinhelmy's system of signs is not a single fixed persona but a differential system that can be recalibrated while preserving its underlying grammar. High-key lighting is chosen here instead of low-key (NV-DH-03), and this shift is not incidental: brighter, more evenly distributed light is conventionally coded as approachable, safe, and emotionally open, which matches the pathos this review is built to elicit — appreciation and warmth rather than contemplative gravity. Crucially, the verbal register does not become simplistic to match the brighter visual tone; Table 6 still contains analytical language (“a deconstruction of the film's layers of meaning,” “elevating animated film... to works that possess philosophical depth”), so the intellectual register (verbal ethos) is held constant even as the emotional register (nonverbal pathos) is deliberately raised. This selective variation is theoretically significant: it demonstrates that @kepinhelmy's credibility is not produced by a single static formula of “always speak softly, always use low light,” but by a stable underlying value system — verbal depth, controlled nonverbal delivery, minimal sensationalism — that is applied differently, yet consistently, across genres. In Saussurean terms, this is the langue of @kepinhelmy's own personal style operating across different paroles (per-video executions), which is what allows audiences to recognize “a @kepinhelmy review” as a coherent communicative brand regardless of which film or genre is being discussed

Discussion and Synthesis of Saussurean Meaning

Through the Saussurean framework, all audiovisual elements presented by the @kepinhelmy account function as a structured network of signs. This dyadic relationship between signifier and signified is not random but is intentionally constructed (motivated sign) to create a perception of expertise and emotional intimacy.

Table 8. Synthesis of the Dyadic Relationship Between Signifier and Signified in the @kepinhelmy Account Sign

Categories	Signifier	Signified	Implications for Digital Culture
Verbal	Poetic diction, cinematic terminology, script analysis.	Intellectual quality, depth of interpretation.	Transforming film reviews from mere “good/bad” judgments into a space for cinematic education.
Vocal	Deep tone, slow tempo, steady intonation.	Calmness, steadfastness, authority.	Serving as an antidote amid the chaotic, explosive audio trends on TikTok
Kinesics	Constant eye contact, measured gestures.	Honesty, reliability (trustworthiness).	Building strong parasocial bonds and intimate parasocial bond with Gen Z audiences.
Spatial/Visual	Low-key lighting, with a dominant talking head.	Focus, professionalism, exclusivity.	Maintaining the creator’s subjective authority over the film clips being reviewed.

Source: Researcher Data, 2026

The narrative and visual structure of the @kepinhelmy account is constructed through Saussure’s two main axes of language: the syntagmatic axis, which governs the linear sequence of signs, and the paradigmatic axis, which governs the selection of stylistic and visual elements.

Table 9. Mapping of the Syntagmatic and Paradigmatic Axes in @kepinhelmy’s Review Content

Axis of Analysis	Element / Aspect	Selected Style Options / Content Structure	Eliminated (Rejected) Style Options
Syntagmatic (Linearity)	1. Hook (0–5 s)	Open with a philosophical or poetic line (not a sensational claim like “Must-See!”).	—
	2. Context (5–20 s)	A brief explanation of the premise without major spoilers.	—
	3. Deep Analysis (20–70 s)	A breakdown of the script, acting, and cinematography.	—
	4. Verdict/Closing (70–90+ s)	A reflective conclusion that invites discussion in the comments section.	—
Paradigmatic (Selection)	Diction	Poetic & Analytical	Slang / hyperbolic shouting
	Voice	Deep tone & Contemplative	High-pitched voices / synthetic AI voice-overs
	Visual	Intimate talking head & Warm lighting	Busy filters / excessive colorful text
	Editing	Calm & Substantial Cuts	Fast-paced jump cuts every 0.5 seconds

Source: Researcher Data, 2026

The intersection of TikTok’s technical conventions and @kepinhelmy’s unique communication style creates an intriguing structural dialectic between general rules (langue) and the articulation of individual expression (parole).

Table 10. Matrix of the Dialectic Between Langue and Parole on the @kepinhelmy Account

Dimension	Langue (TikTok Conventions)	Parole (Articulation of @kepinhelmy's Style)	Communicative Synthesis / Anomaly
Format & Duration	9:16 vertical aspect ratio, short duration (30–60 seconds).	Uses a 9:16 aspect ratio, but with a longer duration (90–110 seconds).	Adjusting the duration to provide a comprehensive analysis.
Audio & Sound	Uses loud, trending/viral music with a fast-paced voice-over.	Use only the original vocal track (deep tone) with that is very soft.	Creating a prominent “quiet space” in the middle of the FYP feed.
Delivery Style	Over-the-top reactions, fast-paced editing, clickbait claims.	Calm talking head, poetic diction, measured micro- expressions.	Establishing a new norm that substantive content can still be popular without sensationalism.

Source: Researcher Data, 2026

The final synthesis of this study confirms that the popularity and appeal of the @kepinhelmy account are not merely the result of a random algorithm, but rather a manifestation of a deliberate sign construction that combines the three pillars of classical rhetoric within the digital cultural ecosystem.

First, Ethos (intellectual credibility) is built through verbal markers such as the precise use of technical cinematographic terms like *mise-en-scène*, character arc, and pacing, combined with poetic and mature word choices. This approach positions @kepinhelmy as a film critic with proven cinematic literacy.

Second, Pathos Authority (emotional intimacy) is constructed through nonverbal cues such as a deep vocal tone, direct eye contact with the camera, and warm, low-key lighting. This combination creates a sense of personal closeness (parasocial closeness), as if the creator were having a private conversation with their audience.

Third, Logos Authority (critical logic) is demonstrated through the coherent and rational syntactic structure of the reviews. Every evaluative argument—whether praise or criticism—is consistently supported by visual evidence and objective explanations of the script's structure. Through the integration of these three pillars, the @kepinhelmy account has pioneered a new space within youth film consumption culture—a space where Gen Z and Gen Alpha audiences are no longer merely passive consumers of superficial movie recommendations, but are instead invited to become reflective, critical viewers who appreciate cinema as a complete work of art.

Overall, the dialectic between platform rules (langue) and the articulation of individual style (parole) executed by @kepinhelmy forms a cohesive structure of credibility. The mapping of the relationships between these elements can be understood through the Saussurean semiotic synthesis diagram in Figure 4

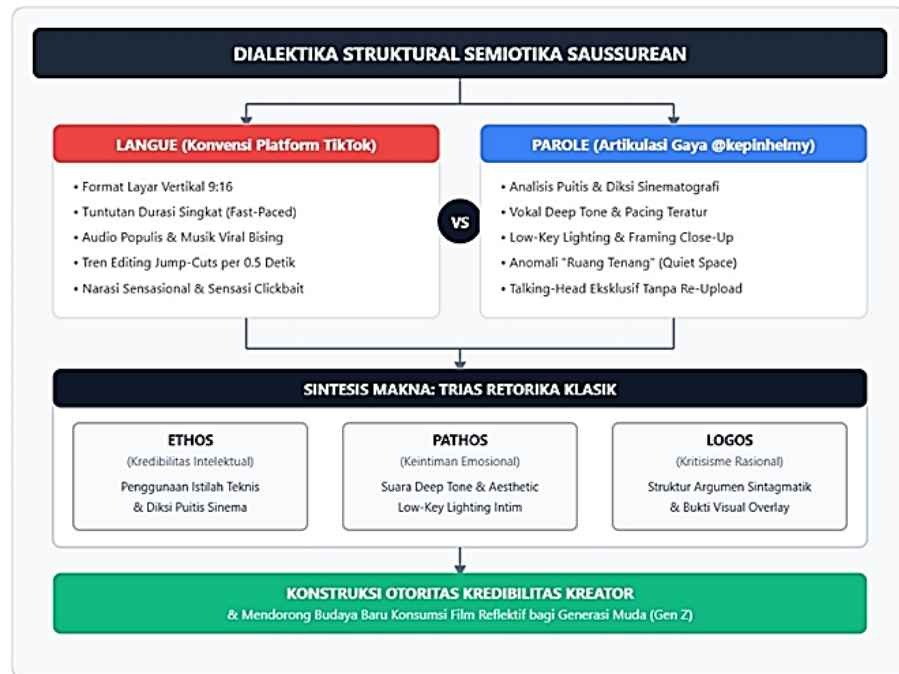


Figure 4. Framework of the Languge-Parole Dialectic and the Rhetorical Triad on the TikTok Account @kepinhelmy

Source: Compiled by the Researcher, 2026

Theoretical Dialogue: Positioning the Findings within Prior Research

Read against the broader literature on personal communication style on social media, the findings of this study occupy a complicated position: they simultaneously support, contradict, and extend existing theoretical claims. Our findings support Norton's (1978) foundational claim that communicator style functions as a structured instrument for constructing a communicator's image of expertise, rather than as a neutral delivery mechanism for content; @kepinhelmy's audience does not simply receive information about films, they receive a persona whose credibility is manufactured through the consistent co-occurrence of specific verbal and nonverbal signs. The findings likewise support Rahmawati and Pratama's (2022) argument that influencer authority on social media is constructed rather than given, and they align with prior studies on personal-style accounts such as @buiramira and the da'wah content of Habib Jafar, which similarly found that aligning verbal register with supportive nonverbal expression is what produces perceived credibility (ethos) among followers.

Our findings contradict, however, a recurring assumption in the TikTok communication-style literature that engagement on the platform is primarily driven by dramatic, equalitarian, high-arousal delivery. Studies on @dokterdetektif (Marwah et al., 2025) and on TikTok movie-review stylistics more broadly (Nugroho & Putri, 2024) treat storytelling drama, humor, and exaggerated reaction as near-prerequisites for audience engagement on short-form video. The 1.6 million followers and multi-million view counts recorded on precisely the videos analyzed here directly contradict the assumption that low-arousal, slow-paced, analytically dense delivery is incompatible with viral success on TikTok. This is not a minor discrepancy; it suggests that "engagement-optimized style" in the existing literature has been theorized too narrowly, largely by generalizing from the platform's dominant style rather than from the full range of styles capable of producing engagement.

Our findings extend Saussurean semiotics itself in a direction anticipated but not yet executed by Paskaleva (2024), who applied structuralist semiotics to visual/textual social media artifacts and to platform langue respectively, but not to an individual communicator's embodied style as an integrated multimodal sign system. By treating a communicator's voice, gaze,

lighting choice, and diction as jointly constituting a single differential system of signs — rather than as separate variables to be coded and counted, as in most communication-style content-analysis studies — this study extends the langue-parole framework from platform-level convention to person-level style, showing that an individual creator can function as a micro-langue of their own, generating internally consistent sub-rules (Table 8, Table 9) that his own parole then follows from video to video.

Why Does Calm Communication Win on a Loud Platform? A Critical Reading

The most theoretically interesting puzzle raised by this study's findings is not that @kepinhelmy is calm, but that TikTok — a platform structurally optimized for speed, noise, and immediate stimulation (Bhandari & Bimo, 2022; Zhao & Wagner, 2022) — rewards him for it. This apparent paradox becomes explicable, rather than merely descriptive, once it is read through Saussure's own concept of value (*valeur*): a sign's meaning and salience are not intrinsic but relational, produced by its difference from everything it is not (De Saussure, 1959). On a For You Page saturated with jump-cuts, high-pitched voice-overs, and clickbait hooks (Table 10), the overwhelming majority of film-review content occupies the same paradigmatic region of the platform's sign system. Within that saturated field, an unusually slow, low-pitched, visually still video does not need to compete on the platform's own terms — it gains attention by refusing to compete on those terms at all, producing what this study terms a quiet space (*ruang senyap*) of maximum differential value, precisely because almost nothing else on the feed occupies that position. This is best understood as a pattern-interruption effect operating at the level of platform-wide sign convention: scrolling behavior is trained on a rhythm of rapid, similar-looking stimuli, so a sign that departs sharply from that rhythm captures attention not despite its calmness but because of it.

This reading also requires revisiting what “engagement” means in this context. Kurniawan et al., (2021) and Cheng & Li (2023) note that TikTok's algorithm privileges watch-time and completion rate at least as heavily as reactive metrics such as instant likes or shares. A slow, contemplative review structured as a linear argument (Table 9's hook-context-analysis-verdict sequence) is arguably better designed to hold a viewer to completion than a fast, disconnected barrage of jump-scars and hype, because its coherence gives the viewer a reason to keep watching until the analytical payoff at the end, rather than a reason to swipe away once the initial adrenaline of a loud hook has passed. @kepinhelmy's style may therefore be less “anti-algorithmic” than it first appears: it optimizes for a different, arguably more durable signal — sustained attention and trust — than the reactive, short-burst signal that most TikTok film-review content chases. This also helps explain why the account accumulates parasocial intimacy rather than merely views (Table 8): a viewer who stays for ninety seconds of unbroken, low-arousal argument is plausibly investing more cognitive effort in the message, and effortful processing of this kind tends to produce more durable trust and attachment than reflexive reaction does. Read this way, the “communicative anomaly” identified in this study is less an exception to platform logic than a demonstration that TikTok's logic rewards distinctiveness and completion, not merely volume — a nuance the existing engagement literature, with its focus on dramatic and high-arousal style, has not yet fully theorized.

Theoretical Implications

Theoretically, this study contributes to communication and media studies in three specific ways. First, it demonstrates that Saussurean structuralist semiotics — originally formulated for linguistic systems and later extended to film and cultural texts — remains a productive analytic lens for a communicator's embodied personal style in short-form video, provided verbal and nonverbal signifiers are analyzed as a single interdependent system rather than as separate descriptive categories, addressing the gap this study identified in the existing literature. Second, it reframes digital credibility (*ethos*) as a structural, differential property of a sign system rather than as a fixed personal trait or a simple function of isolated “authoritative-sounding” cues: credibility emerges from the internal consistency and mutual reinforcement between verbal, vocal, kinesic, and visual signifiers, and can therefore be theorized — and potentially measured — as a coherence variable rather than a checklist of individual cues. Third, and most significantly, this study nuances platform-engagement theory by showing that a communicator can achieve high engagement precisely through differentiation from, rather than conformity to, a platform's

dominant langue, suggesting that engagement models built solely around arousal, speed, and sensationalism should be revised to account for distinctiveness and narrative completion as alternative, competing pathways to virality.

Practical Implications

Practically, the findings offer concrete guidance for content creators, film critics, and digital communication practitioners. For creators working in saturated content niches, the study suggests that differentiation through restraint (a deliberately calmer register, more analytical diction, and more static visual composition than the platform's dominant convention) can function as a viable, evidence-based content strategy rather than a risky departure from “what works,” provided the verbal and nonverbal signifiers used remain mutually consistent so that the overall persona reads as coherent rather than simply low-energy. For film-review content specifically, the study suggests that pairing analytical or philosophical diction with slower vocal pacing and visual evidence (e.g., overlays of scores, behind-the-scenes material, or comparative references) can substitute for spoilers and hyperbole as an engagement driver, offering an education-oriented model of film criticism for creators concerned about the ethical costs of clickbait and spoiler-heavy content. For platform strategists and digital-literacy educators, the findings offer empirical evidence that Gen Z and Gen Alpha audiences are receptive to substantive, reflective content when it is well-constructed, with implications for how educational or public-interest content might be designed to compete for attention on short-form video platforms without resorting to sensationalism.

CONCLUSION

Based on the Saussurean semiotic analysis of @kepinhelmy's film-review content on TikTok, this study concludes that the account constructs credibility through the dyadic integration of verbal signifiers (poetic diction, precise cinematographic terminology, script analysis) and nonverbal signifiers (a deep vocal tone, steady tempo, calm expressions, and low-key lighting), which together convey expertise, sincerity, and emotional intimacy. Syntagmatically, the review narrative follows a linear hook-context-analysis-verdict structure, while paradigmatically it deliberately rejects TikTok's hyperbolic, fast-paced conventions. This langue-parole dialectic produces a contemplative quiet space that unites ethos, pathos, and logos, reshaping young audiences' film-consumption culture toward critical, reflective appreciation. Theoretically, this study contributes a construction-based model of digital credibility, extending Saussurean semiotics to the short-form video ecosystem; practically, it shows that a restrained, consistent communication style can itself function as a distinctive, marketable signal of expertise for content creators.

This study is limited by its qualitative, researcher-interpretive design and its focus on three review videos from a single TikTok account, without direct audience-reception data; the meanings identified reflect textual construction rather than confirmed audience decoding. Future research is encouraged to incorporate audience reception or digital ethnography approaches, while content creators are encouraged to cultivate authentic communication styles rather than following algorithm-driven trends.

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