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Let me hear the emoji ❤️👉👉👉:

## Prosodic patterns in attitudinally loaded Instagram comments

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Commenting on Instagram is a social practice for which a variety of digital writing routines have evolved, some of which are community-specific [1]. Linguistic research on social media has so far mainly focused on written comments, including the use of “emojis”, but little is known about *spoken* language. The present study sets out to explore whether, within the social media community, users (“literates”) produce not only written [2], but also *spoken* conventionalized patterns. To this end, we designed a production experiment in which 25 native speakers of German, who differed in their social media usage, read aloud short written Instagram comments. Materials were taken from a corpus compiled by [3] (29,373 comments on body acceptance). We focus on the “emoji”-phenomenon (4 items: super, richtig, danke, toll). The three experimental conditions contained different types of emojis: intensifying (super 🤩), affective, (super ❤️😊), or both (super ❤️👉👉👉), while the control condition contained no emoji (super). Participants were instructed to read out the comments in the four conditions (within-subject), and express the attitude communicated in the post. To increase naturalness, they were asked to imagine that their spoken renditions would be made available to people with visual impairments. Participants’ social media usage was assessed in a questionnaire.

Results revealed longer syllable durations and a higher intensity for the ‘emoji’-conditions as compared to the neutral condition. Interestingly, participants who more infrequently use social media tended to show a stronger acoustic difference between the neutral and the emoji conditions than those who spend more time on social media (both for duration and intensity). For  $f_0$ , we observed a high degree of individual variation, which was not necessarily associated with participants’ social media usage. Some participants used a larger  $f_0$  range to encode emojis; others used a high plateau (H-%). Vowels in unstressed syllables also tended to be lowered. Speakers hence use prosodic and segmental cues to encode attitude in Instagram comments – a finding that could eventually inform automatic read-out functions. To further explore the role of familiarity with social media, we plan to include more senior participants and adolescents in future studies.

**References:** • [1] Reyes, A. (2019). Virtual communities: Interaction, identity and authority in digital communication" *Text & Talk*, 99-120. • [2] Penfield, J. (1989). Social and linguistic parameters of prosody in Chicano English. In O. Garcia & R. Otheguy (eds.), *English across cultures. Cultures across English*. Berlin: De Gruyter. • [3] Merten, M.-L., (2022). “This!!! 100!!! DANKE!!!“ – Multimodales Stancetaking auf Instagram," Talk at the Center for

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