

Conference Paper

Memos As the Representation of Criticism in Social Media

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Abstract

The development of the internet world is now increasingly widespread and diverse. Information can be immediately obtained. For example, meme content is distributed via social media accounts. Memes are a form of creative ideas that are packed with graphic design and often contain insinuations about something. The purpose of this study is to uncover the signified and signifier, and speeches that appear in memes that are circulating on Fakartun Instagram account regarding the disappointment with the House of Representatives (DPR). Following a student rally in the courtyard of the DPR, concerning to the rejection of the revision of the Organization Statue of the Indonesian Corruption Eradication Commission (Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi - KPK) and the Indonesian Criminal Code (UU KUHP), various responses emerged on social media platforms. In particular, electronic graphic designs spread from one person to another through social media platforms such as Instagram. These memes represent some people's anxiety about the revised bills. This study relies on Roland Barthes's semiotic approach which is the development of Ferdinand De Saussure's semiotic theory and the illocutionary act of Searl. The results of this study suggest that the memes merged as a form of reaction to the disappointment of citizens over the revision of the bills.

Keywords: semiotic-pragmatics, illocutionary acts, representations, memes

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1. Introduction

The use of the internet is now very widespread and covers almost all levels of society. Internet connection is a computer system that is able to connect someone remotely [1]. The development of the internet has become more rapid and the internet has become an easy to use software program for uploading various contents to the internet, this has been proven in 2000 as many emerging blogs, video sharing sites, social networking site and in 2010 emerged the type of social media that is equipped with features for editing photos and videos, can exchange comments and use likes as interactions between account owners and there are comments and DM columns to send messages to each other, this social media which is now known as Instagram [2]. Various information

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can be obtained through information ranging from social, political, cultural to simple things that can become viral only through the fingertips. In the previous research [3] conclude that in virtual space is a kind of space or place to show a forum of a democratization, public participant, freedom expression and the development of the internet as a media has resulted for more debate and complaint.

In virtual space especially Instagram Account, the netizen feel free to upload and comments anything. Now days, memes become popular pictures which can communicate and represents something such as critics, insult a person or a group. The various memes uploaded on social media are a form of reaction to what is currently in turmoil in the country. These memes raise the other side of the rally that is far from being anarchist since it contains graphic design and writing that is full of innuendos that appeal to its readers. The appearance of graphic design and writing, better known as memes, has become its own concern as a tool to convey messages through social media. At the beginning of its appearance, memes were introduced by [4] in his book *The Selfish Gene*, which according to him is a cultural evolution. Memes are units of cultural propagation, such as songs, ideas, fashion styles, hair styles. In its dissemination, memes cannot be separated from the role of the internet, especially social media, such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter and Youtube. Through cyberspace all forms of thoughts, ideas, concepts and ideals can be conveyed through a technology introduced by [5] called Computer Mediated Communication.

As in the opinion [6] that a satire always has a critical function. Like what just happened in Indonesia, there was a student rally that was carried out in front of Indonesian House of Representatives (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat - DPR) building. The beginning of the rally was due to the ratification of the organization statue of the Indonesian Corruption Eradication Commission (Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi - KPK) by the House of Representatives, which was impressed with the content of the controversial articles, including the addition of a supervisory board, which originally did not exist and the need for the supervisory board permission for KPK to conduct wiretapping. This bill gives the impression of weakening the KPK.

Furthermore, the plan to ratify the bill of the Criminal Code by the Parliament, with the content of controversial articles, makes the student rally even more widespread in the regions. Social media seems to be heating up and filled with reports of student protests that seem to be the turning point of a democracy in the reform era.

Based on the 1945 Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia, Article 20A paragraph (1), paragraph (2) and paragraph (3) it is stated that the DPR has a legislative function that is to prepare and discuss the draft law (RUU), the budget function namely to pay

attention to the DPD's consideration of the draft bill on the state budget and draft bill on taxes, education and religion as well as the supervisory function, namely to supervise the implementation of the law, the state budget of the government policies.

In addition, based on law number 17 of 2014 concerning the MPR, DPR, DPD, and DPRD (MD3) in article 81 it is stated that several obligations must be carried out by the DPR as people's representatives namely prioritizing a state interest above personal, group and group interest as well as fighting for improving people's welfare and accommodating and following up people aspirations and complaint [7].

However, at present the people feel that their representatives, namely the DPR, are no longer taking sides with the interests of the people. Various discussion efforts carried out by students are still unable to change the DPR's intention to ratify some revisions of the bill of law. Therefore, the people felt disappointed and as a next step, together with the student elements who were members of the student alliance, staged a rally in front of the DPR building. In addition to actions carried out by students in front of the DPR, other reactions were also raised by citizens on the internet through various memes appearing on various social media as a form of disappointment with the ratification of the bill of laws.

The memes that emerge, such as those found in social media after student rally, are a form of reaction from the people. The memes, which are packaged simply and lightly, have signified and signifier that are able to convey the message, so that when the meme appears, it will be quickly and easily accepted by citizens to become viral [8].

The meme becomes a fairly new and unique thing to study especially when it is reinforced by the student rally that just happened. Some research on memes has been done, including by [9], who stated that memes are used for a specific purpose. In addition, She also mentioned that memes can also be a communication medium on social media. Another opinion was also expressed by [10] who stated that memes contains not only explicit messages but could also implications for critical and even cynical attitudes. In addition, he also concluded that meme is a political movement in a virtual space that can involve the whole community in expressing opinions, both in pros and cons.

Memes are often presented through graphic design and writing in which both will convey a meaning that the meme maker wishes to convey. In its study, [11] concluded that memes consist of visual and verbal signs packaged through satirical graphics. The meaning of a meme can be obtained by using the Peirce semiotic approach which was developed in word-of-mouth semiotic [12]. Through his study [13] made a semiotic approach in observing an advertisement concluding that through the sign present in

an ad, the audience not only captures the message explicitly about related products, but through semantic, the audience can dig deeper about gender equality in terms of education, independence, and tradition.

In the rally, students try to convey that the revision of several bill of laws must be immediately canceled since it will cause new problems and an imbalance between content and reality if the law is passed. In addition, students said that if the law was passed then many articles would be more detrimental to the community. The student expressed the anxiety of the community that the members of the council were no longer in favor of the people. According to [14] memes are very dependent on internet networks and the development of memes is very closely related to the development of modernization in society.

To examine the memes used as a source of data in this study, the data are taken from Instagram account @fakartun. The writer chooses this Instagram account because there are a lot of political memes. The writer uses Barthes's semiotic approach. Barthes said that semiotics is a part of linguistics, each sign that appears, seen from the point of view of language, has a meaning that is formed by a combination of signified and signifier, then develops into denotative, connotative, and mythic meanings [15]. In his theory, Barthes emphasizes myths and relates to the culture of a particular society, it is concluded that the connotation process comes from the reasonable assumption of all things that arise, such as forms and expressions for significant, content for signifier.

Besides the writer there are also some other writers which analyze this kind of discussion. First, related study has been done by Zubaedah and Ardelia from State University of Jakarta with title A discourse Analysis of Meme, they conclude that meme in the internet not only be used for humor purposes but also for specific purposes, such as to persuade someone else to being nice, also that being sarcastic, and sometimes it can be used for black campaign [16]. Second related study has also done by Handayani, Chasanah, and Mahmudah, from Universitas Muhamadiyah Surakarta [17]. In their research, they conclude that meme can communicate everything with simple, clear, and easy to understand. By using simple dictions, meme also can be used for critics government, social life style and politics. Third previous study has been done by Sudarsono and already present in KOLITA 15 Atmajaya. In his research, He found that meme s can be interpreted as a form of netizen release of hoaxes but also can be a criticism, so that people become more honest [18].

Through this study, the writer wants to find out how the signified and signifier represent a form of disappointment towards DPR. This study is also expected to be

able to open an understanding of courtesy in communication and expressing opinion especially on social media

2. Methods

This study uses pragmatic qualitative and semiotic perspectives, to describe the emergence of memes. The data are taken from contents of Fakartun's Instagram account. @fakartun on Instagram have full name is Eko faizin, altogether fakartun has 65966 followers and follows 214 on Instagram and since joining Instagram fakartun has posted around 1,310 photos and videos there altogether. There are five memes that the writer got from @fakartun Instagram account. But the writer just chooses two memes as the data because the writer considered that it is quite representative. These memes that the writer chooses are related to a student rally that was carried out in front of Indonesian House of Representatives (Dewan Perwakilan Rakyat - DPR) building. The beginning of the rally was due to the ratification of the organization statue of the Indonesian Corruption Eradication Commission (Komisi Pemberantasan Korupsi - KPK) by the House of Representatives, which was impressed with the content of the controversial articles, including the addition of a supervisory board, which originally did not exist and the need for the supervisory board permission for KPK to conduct wiretapping. This bill gives the impression of weakening the KPK This data is analyzed by looking at the signified and signifier in the form of graphic design and writing using the theory of [15], which every signified and signifier that appears has denotative, connotative, and mythical meaning. To understand the purpose of the meme, the researcher uses the theory of speech acts from Searl which includes locution, illocution, and perlocution [19]. The main data of this study are the memes on Fakartun's Instagram account which was a reaction from netizens to the student rally. The memes are displayed in a certain amount as a data representation.

3. Results

There are two memes as the representation of netizen criticism. These are taken from Fakartun's account in Instagram [20]. To understand the signs, signified and signifier that appear on the memes, researchers use the semiotic theory of [15] which is a development of Saussure's theory, namely sign, signified, and signifier. The relation between the signifier and the signifier, and the referent, Initially, the relation between signified, signifier and referent is at the level of denotative meaning, then it develops

into the level of connotation, which is when the sign meets feelings, emotions and cultural values. Furthermore, it develops into a general assumption as an agreement attached to a sign called a myth.

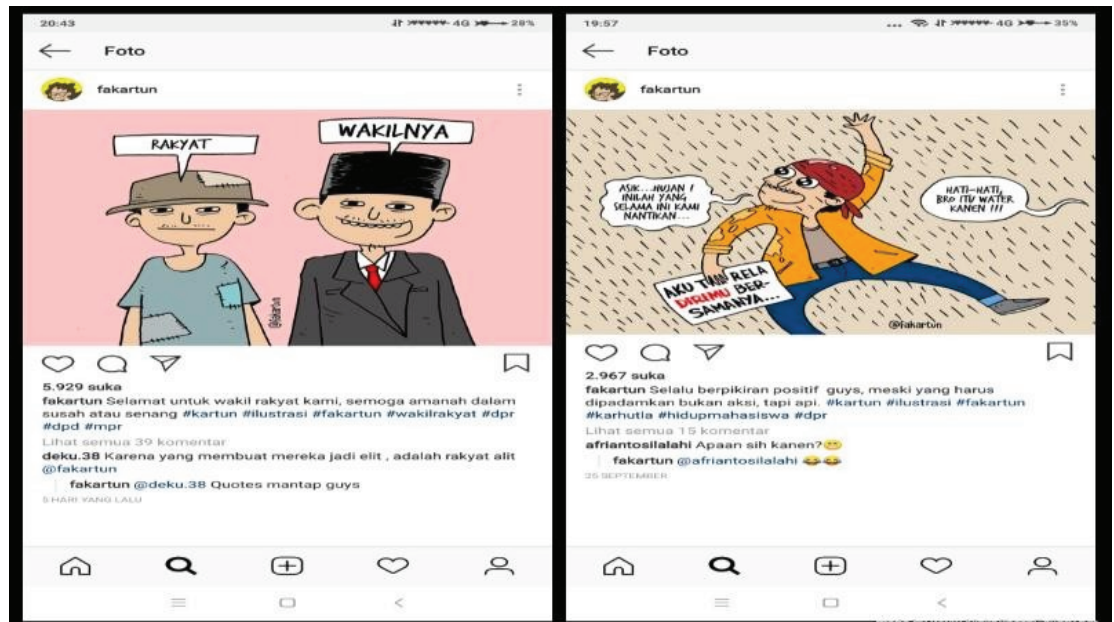


Figure 1: Data Source

Caption: “selamat untuk wakil rakyat kami semoga amanah dalam susah atau senang” congratulation to the house of people’s representatives.

Caption: “selalu berpikiran positif guys, meski yang harus dipadamkan bukan aksi tapi api” just be positive thinking, even extinguished not the action but fire

4. Discussion

4.1. Representation of Netizen Criticism

In Figure 1, there are two men standing side by side. The man on the left is wearing faded, shabby clothing with two patches on the right and left, and a hat with patches too. This man smiles flatly with the words *Rakyat* (People) above the man’s head. The man on the right is wearing a neat black suit, a red tie and a black cap. This man smiles broadly with the words *Wakilnya* (His representative) above the man’s head.

The meme contrastly illustrates two men in clothes, smiles, and writing that explain who they are. Barthes said that semiotics is a part of linguistics, each sign that appears, seen from the point of view of language, has a meaning that is formed by a combination of signified and signifier, then develops into denotative, connotative, and mythic meanings [15]. This is very relevant when related to the context before the emergence of the meme, namely the existence of a student rally that demanded several things at the



Figure 2: Meme about DPR and People. Source: Fakartun Instagram Account

DPR. The meme is connoted as a picture of the current political reality. This is based on that the DPR as a people's representative, has the obligation to improve the people's welfare, accommodate and follow up on people's aspirations and complaints. In this case, it means that the DPR is ready to serve the people. However, in the meme above, the opposite is actually described, the man with the shabby clothes become helpless and he has to serve the man with the tie. The man with the tie does not seem to care about the man with the shabby clothes. These signified and signifier rise new signs of disappointments. It is reflected on the face of the man with the shabby clothes towards the man with tie as their representatives. These signified and signifier then become a myth that emerges from an agreement on cultural values which can then develop into general assumptions.

Ideally, as a people's representative, the man with the tie must be able to fulfill the obligations of serving and protecting the people, prospering the lives of their people, and accommodate and follow up on people's aspirations and complaints. However, what has

happened so far, it is the man with the shabby clothes who serve the man with the tie. It has become a collective agreement that the people must respect and follow all the

wishes of their superiors, in this case their representatives. The meme represents the people’s disappointment with the performance of the DPR who are obliged to protect and accept the aspirations of the people.



Figure 3: Meme about the Water Cannon. Source: Fakartun Instagram Account

Figure 2 depicts someone who jumps happily in the pouring water with three writings. The first writing, *asik...hujan! Inilah yang selama ini kami nantikan...* (Cool... it’s raining! This is what we have been waiting for), the second writing, *hati-hati bro, itu water kanen!!!* (be careful bro, that’s water cannon!!!), and the third writing, *Aku tak rela dirimu bersamanya...* (I’m not willing if you are with him).

This third meme describes someone who feels happy after all this time he has never seen rain. This is shown through the speech *asik...hujan! Inilah yang selama ini kami nantikan...* (cool... rain! This is what we have been waiting for). It is relevance to the last few months the rain has not yet fallen, even in some areas have been drought.

The meme is connoted as a picture of a student rally in front of the DPR building which turned out to be a chaotic event between students and officials. There was an attempt to disperse the student mass by spraying tear gas. This meme is very relevant to the context during the rally, which is many students are affected by bursts of tear gas, and some have even been hurt and had sore in their eyes. In addition to stopping the action

through tear gas bursts, this can also be connoted by stopping the rally, the number of student masses does not increase. based on data analysis above in accordance with the Barthes's theory.

The DPR is elected and assigned by the people as representatives to convey aspirations to the government, which has several tasks including: fighting for the improvement of people's welfare, accommodating and following up on people's aspirations and complaints. However, in reality, the DPR is no longer in favor of the people, this is proven to soon pass a draft on several laws that do not favor the people. The DPR tends to side with the government, this can be seen by the presence of members of the council listening more to what is proposed by the government than what is voiced by the people through the student alliance action.

5. Conclusion

At this time virtual space especially social media is an important part in the process of disseminating information. Through a meme in an instagram account it is able to communicate something. Initially meme is just a funny picture that is only intended to entertain, just for fun, but now memes can be used to insinuate, criticize, ridicule something that is considered harmful, deviate from habit. Based on the analysis above the writer concludes that for two memes are the representative of netizen criticism. The first meme shows that people who are unhappy and poor face with a happy and rich man. The students who carry out the action are people, IG caption from the people who congratulate. All sign, signified, and signifier feature as well as the meaning of connotation, denotation, and myth are forms of criticism to DPR. The second meme shows that a happy man because of the rain, but the fact it is not rain, it is tear gas. It is used to dissolve students rally in front DPR building. It is representing that they are not allowed to demonstrate to show their disappointment. All the sarcasm arises because the students demonstrate in front of the DPR building to express their disappointment to DPR. Some memes and caption which appear in social media Instagram show us that in virtual space everyone has the opportunity to give their comments, critics, opinion.

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