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ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL MEMES IN SOCIAL MEDIA

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A B S T R A K

Internet use in Indonesia is very active with the existence of social media. This gave birth to a new phenomenon among internet users with creativity in making memes. The memes that are currently developing are in the form of images and videos. This meme is defined as an idea, behavior, style, entertainment that spreads from one person to another. Memes on social media have become a vehicle for entertainment because they are funny and contain parodies. However, memes also often cause problems where someone thinks that everything can be used as a joke in the form of a meme and the aim is to corner certain parties. Moreover, if a meme contains elements of a political meme, many people like to edit the meme as a daily joke. The aim of this research is to get an overview of the semiotic elements in political memes circulating on social media. This research method is semiotic analysis using Charles Peirce's semiotic approach (signs, objects and interpreters). The research results concluded that there is a close relationship between signs, objects and interpreters. Meme signs (images) created by netizens responding to feuds between political memes. The object (meaning) generally contains scorn, sarcasm and netizens' dislike for Lulung and is packaged in the form of satire (humor). Meanwhile, the interpretation or attitudes (thoughts) of meme creators and netizens tend to be the same. Where netizens generally accept and agree with the contents of this meme and support each other.

INTRODUCTION

The existence of the internet as a new media has a very strategic role in the era of interactive communication. According to APJII, internet users in Indonesia currently number 132.7 million or 52% of the total population. As many as 129.2 million have active social media accounts and the average netizen spends around 3 hours per day consuming the internet (APJII, 2016). The use of social media in new media is very popular and has become a new trend in society. This phenomenon is clear evidence of the development of global villages in the world, especially in Indonesia. The advantage of social media is its multi-platform design, that is, it can

be accessed and connected on various digital devices. This can be seen from a survey conducted by APJII in collaboration with PusaKaKom University of Indonesia which surveyed 7,000 internet users from various provinces in Indonesia. The results of this survey stated that as many as 87.4% of the total respondents admitted that they liked accessing social media (Prihadi, 2015).

The spread of visual games that are being consumed by virtual society today is happening on a massive scale. Various image visualizations appear every day in various new media, such as images about women's lives. Nowadays, themes about women are increasingly appearing in the mass media. Talking about women in the media certainly cannot be separated from gender issues (Littlejohn, 2009). Gender is an interesting issue in media content. From year to year, there are different trends regarding how gender is represented in the media. Along with the increasing use of the internet and social media by Indonesian people, this has given rise to a new phenomenon among users, namely the creativity of creating memes which are then quickly spread and commented on on social media. Memes are defined as ideas, behavior or styles that spread from one person to another. Memes on the internet take the form of an image, hyperlink, video, website, or hashtag. Memes circulate on social networks from one friend to another. Memes become popular because they can be used as material for jokes, satire, and expressions of users' feelings in cyberspace and this quickly becomes popular and widespread (Luthfi, 2015).

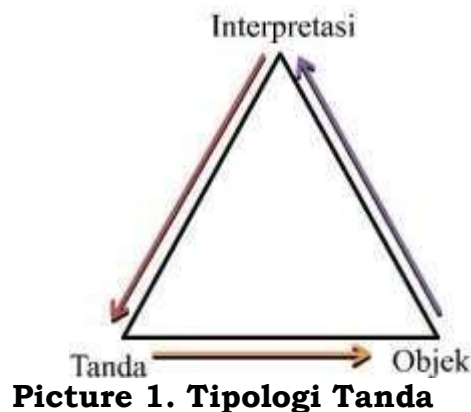
Apart from that, there are also many creators who deliberately create memes with the aim of cornering certain parties, especially if those parties make mistakes. It is certain that meme makers collectively make bad jokes about them through memes that circulate widely and quickly through social media, various expressions of feelings have also become easy targets for meme makers, such as memes about the Haji Lulung case (Juditha, 2015). Not only expressions of happiness, but also sadness. As a form of communication, the informational content of memes is often used as a forum for discourse wars by many interested people. Maybe the creators' goal was to make it a humorous parody and just for entertainment purposes. However, they do not consider other effects after they spread it massively on social media which can be accessed globally.

This phenomenon also inspired meme makers to create special editions of mothers as street queens and the most feared figures on the roads who went viral on social media, starting from not wearing helmets, then when driving motorbikes forgetting to turn on or off the signal lights so that often just turn around. Apart from that, there are memes about mothers who like to walk in the middle at a slow driving speed, making it difficult for motorbike drivers or cars behind them. This is the reason why internet users (netizens) create or spread satire through memes created by their creators.

The memes referred to here are memes that develop on the internet. In the form of images of scenes from films, anime, illustrations, etc., distributed via

websites, blogs, social media, as well as in several other mass media. The purpose of using this meme is very diverse, including being used to tell a personal experience, parody an event, make fun, advise, criticize, etc. which really depends on the cultural codes in which the meme is spread. In 2013, Richard Dawkins explained that internet memes are purely a creation of human creativity, which can also be interpreted as "hijacking an idea" that develops in a new direction. Internet memes leave a historical imprint on mass media unlike other memes which makes them amenable to analysis.

To reveal the hidden meaning or message carried by memes, connotative meaning is of course the key to this. Therefore, researchers use semiotic analysis as an analytical tool to explain the message/meaning contained in a meme using Charles Sanders Peirce's triangular model of meaning, namely: sign, object and interpretant. According to Peirce in Budiman (2004:25), a sign is something that for someone represents something or another in some way/capacity. Something else is called the interpretant of the first sign - which in turn refers to the object. On this basis, Peirce carried out a classification of signs through triangular relationships which is known as the triangle meaning theory.



Source: John Fiske, Cultural and Communication Studies.

A sign refers to something outside its own object, and this is understood by someone and this has an effect on the mind of the user/Interpretant. We must realize that the interpretant is not the user of the sign, but Peirce calls it everywhere "the proper sign effect": namely the mental concept produced by both the sign and the user's experience of the object. The word interpretant (the sign in each context will produce the user's experience of that word and he will not apply it to a technical collage), and his experience with the institution called "school" as the object. So the meaning is not fixed, as formulated by the dictionary, but can vary within limits according to the user's experience. These boundaries are set by social convention; variations in it allow for social and psychological differences among users. (Fiske, 1990). Peirce divides signs into icons, indexes and symbols. An icon is a sign in which the relationship between the signifier and the signified is a natural form. Or in other words, an icon is a relationship between a sign and an object or reference

that is similar. An index is a sign that shows the existence of a natural relationship between the signifier and the signified which is causal or a cause and effect relationship, or a sign that directly refers to reality. Signs can also refer to the denotatum through convention. Such a sign is a conventional sign which is also usually called a symbol, so the symbol is you which shows the natural relationship between the signifier and the signified. This relationship is based on community conventions (agreements) (Sobur, 2004: 41).

Semiotic studies distinguish two types of semiotics, namely communication semiotics and significance semiotics (Eco and Hoed in Sobur, 2003). Communication semiotics emphasizes the theory of sign production, one of which assumes the existence of six factors in communication, namely the sender, receiver of the code (sign system), message, communication channel, and reference (the thing being discussed) and puts emphasis on sign theory and its understanding in a certain context. Signification semiotics does not question the existence of the purpose of communication. What is prioritized is the aspect of understanding a sign so that the cognition process for the recipient of the sign is given more attention than the communication process. The basic concept that unites traditions is defined as a stimulus designating something other than itself (a stimulus that refers to something that is not itself). Messages have a very important position in communication. According to John Powers (1995), messages have three elements, namely: (1) signs and symbols; (2) language; and (3) discourse. According to him, signs are the basis for all communication. A sign designates or refers to something that is not itself, while meaning is the relationship between an object or idea and a sign. These two concepts are integrated in various communication theories, especially communication theories which pay attention to symbols, language and nonverbal behavior. This group of theories explains how signs are connected to meaning and how signs are organized. Studies that discuss signs are called semiotics. Signs are absolutely necessary in compiling the message to be conveyed. Without understanding sign theory, the message conveyed can confuse the recipient. Semiotics is the science of signs. Semiotics is a science or analytical method for studying signs. Signs are tools used in trying to find a way in this world, among humans and with humans. Semiotics basically wants to study how humanity interprets things. Interpreting in this case cannot be confused with communicating.

Semiotics breaks down text content into parts and connects them to broader discourses. A semiotic analysis provides a way of relating a particular text to the message system in which it operates. This provides an intellectual context to the content: it examines the ways in which various elements of the text work together and interact with cultural knowledge to produce meaning (Astuti, 2006).

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a literature review method (literature study) where the technique used is to collect specific reading material and literature and then analyze the content of the study based on the focus of the problems discussed. This study was carried out between November and December 2023. Semiotic analysis attempts to find the meaning of signs, including things hidden behind a sign (text, advertisements, news). Because the sign system is very contextual and depends on the user of the sign.

The thoughts of sign users are the result of the influence of various social constructions in which the sign user is located (Kriyantono, 2006). Peirce differentiates types of signs into icons, indexes and symbols which are based on the relationship between the representamen and the object. It can be described as follows: (1) Icon: something that carries out a function as a marker that is similar to the shape of the object (seen in a picture or painting); (2) Index: something that performs the function of a signifier that signals its signified; and (3) Symbol: something that carries out a function as a marker which is conventionally used in society (Sobur, 2002). Types of signs such as icons, indices and symbols have distinguishable nuances. The difference between icons, indexes and symbols can be seen in the following example with a collection of political memes found on social media.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Sign

According to Saussure, this sign is divided into three components, namely:

- Signs include material aspects in the form of sounds, letters, images, movements and shapes.
- Signifiers include the material aspects of language, namely what is said or heard; and what is written or read.
- Signified, includes the mental aspects of language, namely mental images, thoughts and concepts.
- Icon = a sign that is similar to the object it represents. The existence of an icon is usually similar to the thing it is intended for. For example: a picture of a toilet in a building or gas station means that there is a toilet.
- Index = a sign that has a cause and effect with what it represents. For example, on the sticker of a cardboard package there is a picture of broken glass, which means that if the package is slammed it will break just like the glass. Another example is at a tourist spot, there are signs in the form of footprints which means that is where the photo point is.

- Symbol = a sign that is based on conventions, regulations, or agreements based on mutual agreement. The existence of this symbol can only be understood if someone really understands the existing mutual agreement. For example, the pink heart sign is interpreted as love, where everyone subconsciously agrees on the symbol and meaning of this.

2. Code

Codes are also included in things studied in semiotics, you know... Codes are a way of combining signs that have been socially agreed upon, to enable the message to be conveyed to certain people.

3. Meaning

Does Grameds realize that all meaning in life is indirectly created based on symbols that refer to an event or object?



Picture 1

Ikons	Indeks	Simbol
An image shows a photo of a presidential candidate and vice president and below it is a cartoon photo of Nobita.	The picture above shows that the picture of Prabowo and Gibran is combined with a cartoon of Nobita whose facial expression is the same as the picture of Prabowo and Gibran who clearly looks serious about taking part in an event.	The symbol in the picture above is Pak Prabowo wearing a blue shirt and Gibran wearing a blue shirt too and in the Nobita cartoon there is a conversation between Jaiyen and Suneo, Jaiyen says "Tukang nyerang Nobita" and Suneo says "This is the profocator"



Picture 2

Icons	Indeks	Symbol
Photo of Prabowo and Cipung as presidential candidate and map of Indonesia.	The picture above shows a photo of Prabowo and Cipung as candidates for the 2024 presidential election and ready to serve Indonesia.	The symbols in the picture above are the colors of the Indonesian flag, red and white and Prabowo wearing a white and black jacket and cipung wearing a white shirt and black jacket, and the words in the picture are "Prabowo-cipung for a cuter Indonesia"



Picture 3

Icons	Indeks	Symbol
Picture of Mr. Ganjar giving a thumbs up and smiling.	The picture above shows Mr. Ganjar raising his thumb while smiling and in the picture is written in Javanese, namely "pile le saiki reti to kenopo tak kon neng omah? Neng njobo udan"	The symbol in the picture above is Mr. Ganjar wearing black clothes and wearing a black cap, and the background is gray.

CONCLUSION

Meme theory was proposed by Richard Dawkins and describes how ideas, behaviors, or styles spread and develop within a culture. Memes are considered the smallest units of cultural evolution and operate through a process of natural selection similar to the principles of biological evolution. Dawkins uses an analogy between memes and genes to explain the concept of cultural evolution. The argument is that memes are reproduced and evolved through processes of variation, mutation, competition, and cultural inheritance, and that the most successful memes spread and influence individuals effectively. Dawkins stated that memes can undergo changes and mutations so that new memes can emerge whose spread and replication can be better or worse. Meme theory enriches our understanding of cultural evolution and how culture develops and changes over time.

Overall, internet memes have become an integral part of modern digital culture, ranging from humorous images and videos to serious political documents. Internet memes include digital items that have certain characteristics, including the ability to be copied, modified, and distributed by Internet users. Internet memes are often very viral and can influence public opinion and culture. These can be simple images, videos or comics that demonstrate humor, simplicity and repetition, thereby attracting the attention and participation of Internet users. Internet memes have evolved since their creation, from simple images of dancing children to complex political content, and have become a powerful communication tool in today's online culture. Although many Internet memes may seem simple or crude, they have a unique appeal that encourages user participation and interaction. Despite the decline in quality and loss of authenticity due to their popularity, internet memes remain an integral part of contemporary digital culture.

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