



**A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS:
THE DIMENSION OF MACROSTRUCTURE
ON EDUCATION MEME**

**Muhammad Guntar
Rahmad Husein
Anni Holila Pulungan**

**English Applied Linguistics Study Program
Postgraduate Program-Universitas Negeri Medan**

Submitted May; Accepted June; Published Augustus

ABSTRACT

In the current digital era, memes are rapidly gaining popularity and transforming into a form of communication through numerous social media platforms. Education field has also been impacted by the rise of memes. This study investigated the macrostructure dimension of education memes in the lens of Van Dijk critical discourse analysis framework. The purpose of this study is to examine the dimension of macrostructure on education memes. In this study, descriptive qualitative research was used. The data sources included four Instagram groups, namely *Itb.receh*, *school_life memories*, *9gag.com*, and *memeindonesia.real*. There were a total of 40 chosen education memes. Documentation was utilized to collect the data. Additionally, Van Dijk Critical Discourse Analysis Framework was used to analyze the data. The findings showed that five topics emerged in the selected education memes, namely portrait of students' problem, teacher professionalism, school infrastructure, language learning and reality of school education. The topic of portrait of students' problems is the most dominant one. 25 education memes or 62.5% express students' problems while the least dominant topic is school infrastructure which specifically discussed about bad condition of school toilet.

Keywords: *Critical Discourse Analysis, Education Meme, Macrostructure, Van Dijk*

How to Cite: Guntar, M. (2023). A Critical Discourse Analysis: the Dimension of Macrostructure on Education Meme. *Jurnal Linguistik Terapan, Pascasarjana Unimed*. 20 (2): 132-144 .

INTRODUCTION

In an era in which social life is increasingly played out on the Internet, memes are becoming a common way to share information online. It is impossible to distinguish the rapid spread of memes from the advancement of communication technology. The presence of meme as a new thing created using technological advantages describes various kinds of social problems in daily life. One of the topics in meme includes education. New forms of information exchange between people have emerged as a result of the integration of the educational system, the Internet, and the media. Memes are quickly gaining popularity among students in the network domain as the primary component of images and visual culture in this era, relying on the popular media platforms at this moment such as Instagram, Facebook, Tiktok, Twitter and so forth, and influencing people's daily lives, including students and learning processes.

Furthermore, the emerge of meme is also considered as a way of reflection on the educational process. Students frequently use Facebook, Twitter, Reddit, Tumblr, and Instagram, among other social media platforms. They perform identities on social media and express reflection and criticism there. It is time to start recognizing memes because they have become a significant component of our students' everyday reading habits. Further, a possibility to get peer feedback was also given by sharing the activity on social media platforms. The feedback reveals individual opinions or personal feelings on the concept or topics addressed by each meme. Because memes can reflect social attitudes, they can help in exposing public perceptions and expectations. The more education memes are produced and shared, the more the issues they address reflect society perspectives. Indeed, public perception and critics are crucial for a better educational process. The meme culture expresses freedom to express people's thoughts on issues surrounding, including education.

Several researches have been conducted in meme. One of the researches was conducted by Destira, Hidayat, Alek, and Sufyan (2021). It aimed to investigate memes on Instagram through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis and to find out the similarities and differences between Indonesian students and foreign students. The research found that there is no significant difference in education culture between Indonesia and other foreign countries. The findings also showed that the readers can learn about people's activities through the memes. Additionally, memes may improve communication and act as a medium for the growth of digital literacy. Other research conducted by Milhaidis (2020).

The research was to investigate young people's attitudes towards popular social communication modalities – memes and hashtags – for civic purposes. It also explored how young people perceive memes and hashtags as relevant avenues for civic expression, and the impact that a digital literacy intervention can have on youth attitudes. As a result, the present study identified three emerging themes – civic negativity, playful resistance and reluctant engagement – around their attitudes towards popular online communication forms for civic expression, and their own creation of memes and hashtags around relevant political issues.

In regarding to the explanation above, the researcher was interested in conducting research related to critical discourse analysis on education meme. It aimed to find out the macrostructure of education memes. The researcher analysed education meme by using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in order to understand education meme as a whole. Fairclough (1989) stated Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a new paradigm of discourse analysis in which texts are to be described, explained, and interpreted or investigated deeply by positioning the neutral analyst. Specifically, the researcher used CDA model proposed by Van Dijk.

METHODOLOGY

The present study applied qualitative research since the data is ordinarily expressed in qualitative terms. Patton (2002) stated qualitative research as an attempt to understand the unique interactions in a particular situation. The data of the present study were texts and images in the selected education memes. Instagram groups such as *Itb.receh*, *school_life memories*, *9gag.com*, and *Meme Indonesia* were used as the sources of data. *Itb.receh* and *Meme Indonesia*, which are published in Indonesia, are considered to represent education meme in national level whereas *9gag.com* and *school_life memories* are regarded to represent education meme in global level as the followers of Instagram account of *@9gag* and *school_life memories* are global audiences. Documentation was used to obtain the document of data in the form of education meme. The data were analysed by using Van Dijk Critical Discourse Analysis Framework. It focused on macrostructure dimension. Macrostructures was analysed by looking at topics or theme of the texts. The research was conducted from January 2023 to March 2023.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Van Dijk (1998) defined macrostructure represents the general meanings of a text or speech, which are also known as topics or themes. These hierarchical structures specify how coherent a discourse is on a global level. In the present study, to understand theme/topic within the meme, all resources including text and pictures are analysed. A caption of meme and image are viewed as one unity. Image which is not supported by caption can be interpreted in different ways. Since the concern of the internet meme is to share the general mindset (Shifman, 2014), the creator of a meme purposefully connects the words and the image. Separating the caption from the image will lead to different interpretations, destroying the goal of the meme's development. The meme's message will not be effectively communicated. Furthermore, Eriyanto (2001) added that theme describes general point of a text while one or more sub-theme is meant to support a theme.

After analysing the data, the result of macrostructures analysis is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Macrostructure of Education Memes

No	Theme/Topics	Quantities	Percentages (%)
1	Portrait of Students' Problem	25	62.5
2	Teacher's Professionalism	6	15
3	Reality of School Education	6	15
4	Language Learning	2	5
5	School Infrastructure	1	2.5
	Total	40	100

From Table 1 above, it showed that there are five themes expressed in the selected education memes, namely portrait of students' problem, teacher professionalism, school infrastructure, language learning and reality of school education. The theme of portrait of students' problem is the highest of all. 25 education memes or 62.5% express students' behaviour. It is followed by the theme of teacher's professionalism which was found in 6 memes (15%). After that, the theme of reality of school education is 15% which were expressed in 6 memes. Meanwhile, there are 2 memes (5%) which talk about language learning and 1 meme (2.5%) discusses about school infrastructure which is specifically about bad condition of school toilet.

A. Portrait of Students' Problem

School or college presents challenges for students. There are several problems that

mostly all students deal with at least once during their time at school or college. Kristine and Crystal (2018) stated students may experience problems that go beyond academic pursuit, and what an adult or non-student might seem unimportant or simple is actually problematic in the context of student life.

In the present study, it was found that 25 education memes, 62.5% of all memes, portrayed students' problems such as low confidence, procrastinating task, no preparation for test, laziness, cheating, and lack of motivation in reading book and studying.

Datum 1:



Figure 1. Portrait of Students' Problem

(Source: Instagram *itb.receh*)

This meme consists of sentences and images. Eriyanto (2001) stated that theme/topic can be concluded after all parts are completely read and analysed. At the top part of this meme, the sentence '*already informed from the beginning* (udah info dari awal)' and it is supported by image of a man who is riding a bike without any distraction. It reflects things are running well at the beginning. The middle part which consists of a phrase '*procrastinating task* (menunda-nunda pekerjaan)' and supported by a picture showing the man has an issue with his bicycle tire and stick express a problem arises. The bottom part of this meme which consist a dependent clause '*when asked to hand in* (ketika disuruh ngumpulin)' and supported by a picture of a man falling down from his bicycle show that the effect of procrastination of his task eventually put him in a trouble.

It can be analysed that the sentence '*procrastinating task*' and the image of a man falling from his bike in this meme inferred this man procrastinated his task and then it creates a problem to himself. Procrastination here is considered as problem. Baldwin, Tietje and

Stoltz (2016) mentioned procrastination as one of the biggest threats to the success of students. To add, Gardner and Barefoot (2017) stated that procrastination has become a serious issue or problem for college students.

Harrington (2016) defined this problem can increase the stress level of students and is very potential to weaken students' academic performance. Meanwhile, the man here is referred to a student. It can be seen from the description of words '*task to write resume*', '*when asked to hand in*', and '*the task is too many*'. Thus, it can be concluded that the theme of this meme indicates students' problem who likes to procrastinate tasks.

Datum 2:

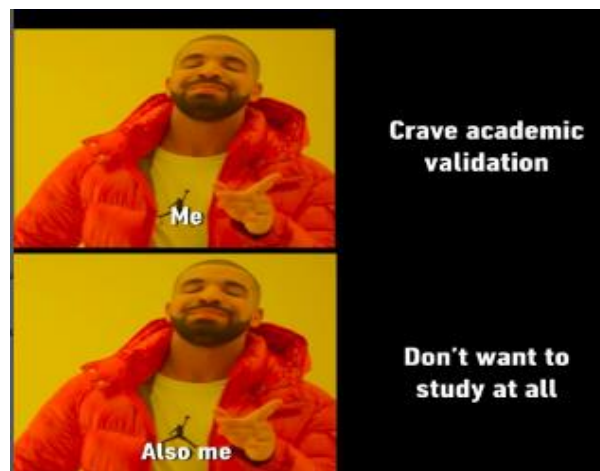


Figure 2. Portrait of Students' Problem

(Source: Instagram 9gag.com)

The meme above consists of sentences and images. There are two images and two sentences in this meme. Image (1) and image (2) are the same which shows these two images represent the same person '*me*'. '*me*' in this meme is referred to student. It is shown by the word '*study*' and '*academic validation*'. Meanwhile, the sentences consist of sentence (1) '*me crave academic validation*' which expresses the idea of dreaming for other peoples' approval based on academic performances. Sentence (2) '*also me don't want to study at all*' shows the idea of having no desire to study. Sentence (1) and sentence (2) are contradictive since sentence (1) is hoping for good things to happen, while sentence (2) shows laziness which does not support the idea of sentence (1).

It can be seen that this meme delivers the problem which students may experience in their academic pursuit, that is laziness issue. It is referred by the sentence '*also me don't want to study at all*'. Duru & Bakis (2014) mentioned that passive attitudes such as laziness gives an impact in self-regulation that is related to academic performance. So, it can be concluded

that the theme of this meme is about student's problem who dreams good academic performance but being lazy to study.

A. Teacher's Professionalism

Teacher Professionalism is drawn by four competences, namely pedagogical competence, professional competence, personal competence, and social competence. It is defined as what teacher must possess in order to become an effective educator. After analysing the data, it was found there were six memes, 15% of all memes, which delivers the idea about teacher professionalism, for instance: complicated explanation from teacher, teacher who is not supportive, discrimination in classroom interaction, and different materials when teaching and examination.

Datum 3:



Figure 3. Teacher professionalism

(Source: Instagram *MemeIndonesia.real*)

The meme above consists of a conversation and two similar images of classroom activity. At the top part, teachers' statement '*for those who are still confused, feel free to ask (yang masih bingung boleh bertanya)*' and added by a response from a student '*me, Mam (saya, bu)*'. This expresses classroom interaction among teacher and students. However, at the bottom part, the statement '*while your teacher is explaining, do listen and pay attention (makanya kalau guru jelasin itu dengerin)*' gives significant meaning to this meme. It shows the teacher assumes the student do not listen to the explanation delivered by her.

It can be implied from the combination of these images and sentences that the teacher does not express good support in which students should have more rooms to ask or discuss

things in classroom instead of assuming for not listening the lecture or even blaming the students. Bonwell and Eison (1991) stated it is crucial for teachers to provide an atmosphere where kids feel comfortable making attempts. For example: appreciating how they feel about an assignment or other important concerns and encouraging them to ask questions. As a result, the theme which the author is trying to convey is about teacher professionalism – a figure of teacher who is not supportive to students’ learning process.

Datum 4

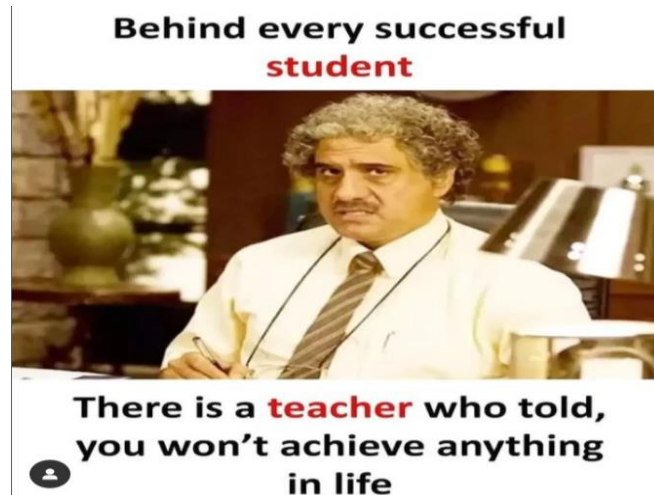


Figure 4. Teacher professionalism

(Source: Instagram *School_life memoriess*)

This meme consists of an image of a man wearing tie, holding a pen and expressing cynical face. It also has a sentence '*behind every successful student, there is a teacher who told, you won't achieve anything in life*'. This man is assumed as a teacher, while the sentence in this meme shows the idea of a figure of teacher who demotivate student.

It can be implied from this meme that in some cases, a teacher might act as students' judge which is potentially leading to student's demotivation. However, this is worth considering that, as a teacher, it is not proper to put students in the box of teacher's judgement, which may be based on certain things. Ferlazzo (2015) stated teacher who create positive relationship with students is more likely to affect their willingness to learn. Theobald (2006) defined building relationship with students may not be easy. However, encouraging and being positive are able to encourage students' intrinsic motivation. Hence, it can be concluded from the combination of the image and sentence that the theme conveyed in this meme is about teacher professionalism – a figure of teacher who is not supportive to students.

B. School Infrastructure

The term "school infrastructure" refers to things like educational facilities, school building, public spaces, playgrounds, laboratories, libraries, restrooms, and other facilities. Tambo (2012) stated that school infrastructure is referred to facilities that support and enhance teaching and learning activities. In the present study, there was only one meme (2.5%) which talked about school infrastructure, especially about bad condition of school toilet. Datum 5:



Figure 5. School infrastructure

(Source: Instagram *MemeIndonesia.real*)

This meme consists of 2 sentences at the top part and bottom part and one image of cartoon figure with his thumbs up. The first sentence "*it is better a little bit late coming to school (Lebih baik sedikit terlambat ke sekolah)*", and the second sentence '*than going to toilet at school (daripada harus boker di wc sekolah)*'. These two sentences show comparative degree in which one sentence is better than the other sentence. It is shown by the words "*better*" and "*than*". Meanwhile, the image of cartoon figure shows his thumbs up. According to Britannica, thumbs up is a gesture with thumb pointed up in order to say yes or to show approval.

It is implied from this meme that there is an issue with school toilet so students prefer come a little bit late to school. The idea of the sentences is supported with a picture with cartoon figure showing his thumbs up which means an approval. So, it can be concluded from the sentences and image in this meme that the theme of this meme is about school infrastructure which talks about bad condition of toilet at school.

C. Language Learning

Language learning is challenging for many people. They learn language as they use it to express their ideas, feelings, and experiences, build connections with their family and friends, get occupations, and explore to make sense of the world around them. In the present study, there were two memes (5%) which delivered the idea of language learning. They are about the sources of learning English and language boundary.

Datum 6:



Figure 6. Language learning

(Source: Instagram 9gag.com)

This meme consists of a dialogue and one image of six people. The first line is a question of "Wow, you're from ..., how is your English so good?" and then the question is replied by providing one image showing six people with their own descriptions, they are school education, Netflix, movies, memes, Youtubers, and online arguments. In this image, it shows that five of them are holding their hands together above the cake, while one person with the description of school education is not doing the same thing.

This meme implies that the answer for a question, "how is your English so good" are Netflix, movies, memes, Youtubers, and online arguments. Nowadays, there are many ways to improve one's English ability. School education is not the only way to do it. In this digital era, online based methods or entertainment may help people learn English as well. They may get it from watching Netflix, an internet-connected and streaming which offers various TV shows, anime, movies, etc. Besides, they also get it from Youtube in which you can find all you want to know, or they can acquire it from memes which are flooding social media. Therefore, theme which the author is trying to convey is language learning, which is about sources of how people learn English.

C. Reality of School Education

Reality of school education in this context refers to concern for fact of being actual and real in the life of school education. School education is aimed to present one to numerous realities of life, such as academic curriculum, children development, and educational system.

In the present study, there were 6 memes which expressed the idea of reality of school education. It was 15% of all memes. These memes were about missing school days, boredom at school, and course reading complexity.

Datum 7:



Figure 7. Reality of School Education

(Source: Instagram *MemeIndonesia.real*)

This meme consists of two images and a conversation between two astronauts. The images showed two astronauts in outer space. It can be seen from what they are wearing and the background of its nature. The conversation consists of two sentences. The first sentence is *'1 hour here is equal with 7 years on earth (1 jam di sini setara dengan 7 tahun di bumi)'* and the second sentence is *'how come it is like school? (kok mirip ya sama sekolah)'*. Sentence (1) indicates that they are currently in outer space and spend different length of time compared with spending time on earth. Sentence (2) mentions similar analogy between that length of time with spending time at school.

From this meme, it implied that spending time at school are longer than what it really is. Boredom may happen because of several possible reasons, such as a very challenging course work, lack of students' motivation and interest, deficiency of learning skill, different learning style, or lack of meaningful learning. Ozerk (2020) states academic boredom is an underestimated and complex issue in many schools in many countries. To add, Daschmann, Goetz & Stupnisky (2014) mentioned boredom in education can be considered as the 'plague'

of contemporary society. Thus, it can be concluded that this meme conveys the idea of reality in school education, especially about boredom at school.

CONCLUSIONS

From the data analyzed, it could be concluded that there were five topics emerged in the selected education memes, namely: portrait of students' problem, teacher professionalism, image of school infrastructure, language learning and reality of school education. The topic of portrait of students' problem is the most dominant one in this study. 25 education memes or 62.5% express students' problems, while the topic of school infrastructure was the least dominant. There is one meme (2.5%) which discusses about school infrastructure which is specifically about bad condition of school toilet.

REFERENCES

- Ariyoga, M., and Rahyono, F.X. (2020). Ideational Meaning and Morality in the Internet Memes of 9gag about the Interaction between Teacher and Students. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature*, 9, 91-100.
- Baldwin, A., Tietje, B., and Stoltz, P. G. (2016). *The College Experience (2nd ed.)*. Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Destira, Y., Hidayat, D.N., Alek, A., and Sufyan, A. (2021). A Discourse Analysis of Education Memes on Instagram. *Loquen: English Studies Journal*.
- Dongqiang, X., de Serio, L., Malakhov, A.I., and Matys, O. (2020). Memes and Education: Opportunities, Approaches and Perspectives. *Geopolitical, Social Security and Freedom Journal*, 3, 14 - 25.
- Eriyanto. (2001). *Analisis Wacana: Pengantar Analisis Teks Media*. Yogyakarta: LKiS Yogyakarta.
- Fairclough, Norman. (1995). *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*. London; New York: Longman.
- Fairclough, N., and Wodak, R. (1997). *Critical Discourse Analysis*. In T. Van Dijk (Ed.), *Discourse Studies: A Multidisciplinary Introduction* (Vol. 2, pp. 258-284). London: Sage.
- Gardner, J. N., and Barefoot, B. (2017). *Step by Step to College and Career Success (7th ed.)*. Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's.
- Harrington, C. (2016). *Student Success in College: Doing What Works (2nd ed.)*. Boston, MA: Cengage learning.

- Illisha Kala, Sanjay Pawar. (2022). What is in a Meme: Analysing the Perception of Gen Z to Memes and Virality in Modern Marketing. *Cardiometry*; Issue 24; p. 737-742;
- Kristine Ask and Crystal Abidin. (2018). My Life is a Mess: Self-Deprecating Relatability and Collective Identities in the Memification of Student Issues, *Information, Communication and Society*, 21:6, 834-850
- Nepul Raj and Jayaprakash. (2021). Meme Usage Culture on Social Issues Among Youth. *Turkish Journal of Computer and Mathematics Education*. Vol.12 (11), 2099-2107.
- Paul Mihailidis. (2020). The Civic Potential of Memes and Hashtags in the Lives of Young People, Discourse. *Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*.
- Shifman, L. (2014). *Memes in Digital Culture*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press.
- Syartanti, Nadya Inda. (2021). Humour in The Midst of Pandemic: Critical Discourse Analysis on Covid-19 Related Memes. *TALENTA Conference Series: Local Wisdom, Social, and Arts*.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (1998). *Ideology: A Multidisciplinary Approach*. London: Sage.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (2009). *Society and Discourse: How Social Contexts Influence Text and Talk*. Cambridge University Press.