



Humorous Discourse on Indonesian Students' Protest Slogans

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ABSTRACT

The objectives of this study were to find out what, how, and why humor were realized on Indonesian students' protest slogans. The method of this research is descriptive qualitative. The data was taken from all the words, phrases, clauses, sentences written in Indonesian students' protest slogans. The result shows that there are two types of humor found in Indonesian students' protest slogans, namely collective identities with total number 7 slogans (35%), the effect of participation with total number 6 slogans (30%), frames with total number 5 slogans (25%) and tactics with total number 2 slogans (10%). Collective identities showed that K-Poppers, gamers, introverts are not only as community but also as a new power to strengthen a sense of 'we' in social movement. Humor also has the effect of participation on enhancing engagement and preventing burnout by including their personal life experience

intentionally and explicitly. Indonesian students' protest slogans showed frames by using some symbols and some analogies to the popularity (music, drama, song title) to attract public interest and the protesters brought or wear some attribute in the movement to establish a repertoire and interpreted as an action to get their message across. There were two dualistic reason of using humor in the societal level. Collective identities as the emphasis on differentiation reflects a strong identification to make it possible to exclude the others, while the effect of participation, frames and tactics act as control or resistance which mean a form of attack and challenge the power and become a new way for communicating among the protesters and to establish a new relationship with the power.

Keywords:

Humor, Indonesian Students, Slogan

INTRODUCTION

Language is a tool of communication to express ideas, feelings, and emotions. People use both spoken and written language to engage in communication. Like spoken language,

written language is also used to deliver a message to other people. It occurs in various contexts such as academic, politic, and social. In political context, written language is usually used in demonstrations as a powerful tool to express opinions. In Indonesia, demonstration has already occurred in many years. The first student demonstration was *Tri Tuntutan Rakyat* (Three People's Claims) occurred in 1966 who demanded to dissolve the *PKI* (Indonesian Communist Party) and its mass organizations, overhaul the *Dwikora* cabinet and lower the prices. But the biggest demonstration occurred in 1998 which was called Reformation Era, the demand for president Soeharto's resignation was a national agenda of the student movement at that time. In both these demonstrations, students used more spoke language in expressing their opinions, such as using loudspeakers and microphones but it cannot be denied that they also used written language in slogans or boards with messages that are directly addressed.

Unlike the demonstrations that took place in 2019, the Indonesian student movement that happened on September 23, 2019, was one of other demonstrations and political events. This student movement was the form of protest upon the revision of several number of *RKUHP* (Draft of Criminal Law) and *RUU KPK* (Draft of Eradication Commission) 2019 that has been legalized by the parliamentary. As millennials, they use technological advancements to express the opinions and protest against the ruling government. They use social media platforms, like Twitter with Hashtags and Instagram with their photos of demo activities. Then, like the protesters, they use textual communication as the form of social and political action to protest the government policy, but they make the implicit explicit towards humor.

The use of humor is also a product of Millennials' creativity. They are very creative in drawing the attention of political institutions and power. It makes the Indonesian students' protest unique. The media highlighted the protest slogans of the Indonesian students' movement. *Kompas.com* reported about this by using the headline „*Seni Perlawanan Anak Muda di Balik Poster Lucu Pendemo*“ (The Art of Youngers' Protest behind the Humorous Poster of the Demonstrants). A sociologist from Airlangga University, Bagong Suyanto noted that those humorous messages are not far from the effect of social media. He said that demonstrations are in various versions, the students enjoyed this as a part of identity expression. Thus, the use of humor in protest has been a new practice to protest in social and political movements.

Humorous Discourse

Humor as a type of discourse, is an important tool to achieve certain purpose. Humor appears to be a universal human phenomenon, it is more obviously embedded in situational sociocultural context than most other communication. Kutz-Flamenbaum (2014) defines humor related to the social movement, is a core communicative and emotional strategy for social movements activists. It is concluded that humor in the social context is an important emotional strategy that violates the communication principles.

Hiller (1983) posits one such model by identifying four primary types of humor in social movements: Expressive-Acceptance (e.g. self-deprecating humor), Instrumental-Acceptance (e.g. diversionist humor), Expressive-Resistance (e.g. retaliation humor), and Instrumental-Resistance (e.g. aggressive humor). This model offers a useful framework for beginning to categorize and organize the many disparate manifestations of humor in movements.

Referring to the model, Kutz-Flamenbaum (2014) thinks about the instrumental-expressive framework and also categorizes humor by its intended target; external humor and internal humor. External humor is used to mean humor directed at an audience beyond the immediate individual. This potentially includes activists within the movement community, opponents and targets, bystanders and observers, and the media. It is primarily manifest as frames and tactics. Frames (phrases or symbols that link ideas in an interpretive way) are the message that an organization uses to identify and critique an issue and persuade others to join the cause. It represents an organization's attempts to diagnose a problem, propose a solution, or motivates other to take action. Tactics are the direct action relying upon performances. Internal humor can help to maintain, strengthen, or grow a social movement organization or community by looking at the role of humor in establishing collective identity and the effect of participation. From those two categories, humor can be seen as an expressive strategy as well as an instrumental one. It is a vehicle to express a range of emotions as well as intellectual critiques. Humorous actions can be part of an explicit strategy to attract media attention.

Linking humor and social movements, there are two dualistic functions of humor at the societal level: identification or differentiation and control or resistance. According to Lynch (2002), sociological research focuses on the broad functions of humor, identification humor occurs when humor creates an internal perception that increases group cohesiveness and validates commonly held perceptions. Differentiation humor can extend and express preexisting boundaries of divergence in social groups such as gender, nationality, race,

religion, or occupational position. Humor is often understood to be both control and resistance. The control consequence of identification humor emerges when the group's humor is influenced by identification with organizational work structures and culture. The resistance consequence of differentiation humor occurs when the group's identity clashes with organizational structure and work culture. It is assumed humor cannot function as true resistance. Resistance humor is thus control humor disguised as resistance.

Slogan

A slogan is one of the most obvious humorous and amusing elements in the protests. It is individually created, printed, or handwritten. It symbolizes the way people think and act, it has served the primary tool for social change and political control in democratic and totalitarian societies of the modern era. Massaeed (2013) defines slogans as dialogues and sites for interaction, social goods and social languages, as well as interpersonal relations and discourse. In such a case, Hoey (2001) argues that the text should fulfill the writer/author's goals and, at the same time, remember the power of the reader(s)/audience, which as a result, led them to make sure they focus on their needs, on the other hand, and the action that should be taken by their government on the other.

Slogans, as a special form of language, are a reflection of society and politics. Slogans in a political role as a tool of struggle and weapon can pressure authorities to achieve the demands of the people. Using slogans may give the protesters a sense of belonging to a certain group, slogans use to create identification. Slogans become extremely popular among the protesters and are transformed into a few other versions, a piece of poetry, using wordplay, metaphor, and slang. To understand the language used in slogans, discourse analysis is implied to examine how people use language to construct versions of their experiences.

To support a research, the previous studies are really needed to conduct a reliable and valid research. There are five previous studies that relevant with this research.

Tekinalp (2016) conducted a research about humor protest. This study investigated a unique protest in the context of the protester's value priority and the humor they used. This research found that the protesters was creative in finding unexpected connections in irreconcilable ideas (incongruity) to compose an ironic defense (relief) rhetoric, aiming to establish a playful and gentle control (superiority) over the police and Erdogan.

Masaeed (2013) studied about the power of Egyptian slogans and found that the language use of Egyptians through slogan was a site of struggle that expressed dissatisfaction. They used language through different modes as a weapon in the form of slogans to empower themselves, engage the world, and challenge their government.

Romanos (2013) analyzed the strategic use of humor in the Spanish *Indignados* Movement. The findings showed that the use of humor in social movements undoubtedly has an expressive component. Activists employed it in their protests to achieve a series of objectives that went beyond their having fun. Activists wrote messages on individual and collective placards organized ironic performances, tried to change the style of communication inside the movement's committees, and used techniques of identity correction on the Internet. Other objectives were: i) identify problems within and outside the movement and draw the attention of its participants –actual and potential-; ii) cool tempers at moments of great stress; iii) cause onlookers to identify with the demands of the movements; iv) lower the costs of activism related of fatigues; v) communicate possible internal anger and criticism in less dramatic and conflictual way; vi) reinforce internal cohesion; and vii) ridicule opponents.

Then, Halim (2011) analyzed the pragmatic of the protest slogans. One of the findings showed that humor is often used in such texts for the purpose of enhancing camaraderie and as a form of political satire, to reduce tension, to enhance bonds in the group; it at least brought rapport between the producers and the receivers of these slogans.

On the other hand, Muhroji (2019) conducted a research about the eroticism banner in protesting RKUHP in Indonesia. This was a descriptive qualitative study which intended to identify the banner texts of the demonstrators in the rejection toward the revision of RKUHP which took place in various cities in Indonesia on September 23, 2019 based on pragmatic analysis. This study illustrated the new style of students in carrying out demonstrations that feature millennial language styles from the nuances of humor to eroticism. This study found that erotic and vulgar words chosen by the demonstrators implicitly expressed anger and disappointment towards the government.

METHOD

This study was conducted by using a qualitative research by Creswell (2014). The writer focused on analyzing humor on Indonesian students' protest slogans to find the types of humor and describe the reasons of using humor. The data were words, phrases, clauses,

and sentences in which collected from the protest slogans used by Indonesian students. The source of data was Indonesian students' protest slogans which was taken from social media platform, Instagram.

To collect the data, the writer mapped the slogans from Instagram by using some hashtags, #TolakRUUKPK, #TolakRKUHP, #SaveKPK, #HidupMahasiswa and so on, then captured all of the slogans from Instagram and selected the humorous slogans as the object of this study. To analyze the data, the writer identified the types of humor that found in the protest slogans, classified them into external and internal humor, described how and why humor was used in the slogans, and summarized the findings into results.

RESULTS

After collecting the data, all of the words, phrases and sentences from protest slogans were classified into two based on the types of humor. From the internal humor are divided into collective identity and the effect of participation, and external humor consists of frames and tactics. There were 20 data found in the protest slogans. From the 20 data of slogans, there were 7 collective identity and 6 the effect of participation, 5 frames and 2 tactics respectively.

Table 1. Types of Humor on Indonesian Students' Protest Slogans

No.	Types of Humor	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Collective Identity	7	35%
2.	The Effect of Participation	6	30%
3.	Frames	5	25%
4.	Tactics	2	10%
	Total	20	100%

DISCUSSIONS

The result shows that there are two types of humor found in Indonesian students' protest slogans, namely collective identities with total number 7 slogans (35%), the effect of participation with total number 6 slogans (30%), frames with total number 5 slogans (25%) and tactics with total number 2 slogans (10%). Collective identities showed that K-Popers, gamers, introverts are not only as community but also as a new power to strengthen a sense of „we“ in social movement. Humor also has the effect of participation on enhancing engagement and preventing burnout by including their personal life experience intentionally and explicitly. Indonesian students' protest slogans showed frames by using some symbols and some analogies to the popularity (music, drama, song title) to attract public

interest and the protesters brought or wear some attribute in the movement to establish a repertoire and interpreted as an action to get their message across.

Collective identity was indicated as differentiation or identification. There was an explicit emphasis on differentiation „we“ and „us“, which reflects a strong identification for the members of the community. As mentioned above, choosing a humorous language derived from new generation (K-Popers, gamer, and introverts) makes it possible to exclude the other, namely the power. In this case, this differentiation and identification process aims to disband all kinds of hierarchical order within and outside the group community. It can be seen as a struggle to change the shrinking movement. In addition, humor can act as control and resistance. Humor as a weapon, a form of attack, a means of defence. In this case, the slogan entails messages that can be read as a form of attack and challenge power (as can be seen “Mr. President, legalize me and Taqy Malik, not the RUU”, “Stop all the drama!!!”, “DPR, do not put salt on my wound, will get married next month”, “I thought the weak is my heart, but KPK too” and “Even I rejected my ex! Let alone RUUKUHP”).

Indonesian students' protest slogans produced its own unique language to facilitate a culture of resistance within the movement. The protesters' language derives from the young generations' cultural background which includes references to the social media (as can be seen in the slogan, “HESoyAM BAGUVIX AEKZAKMI to all Indonesian people” and popular culture icons that related to the music and drama (“Is that DPR or Afgan's song? How „SADIS' (cruel)” and “Enough Roma!! Enough!! Stop all the drama”). Funny and humorous language acted as a unifying factor for social movement based on anti-violence as well. By humorous slogans, the protesters criticise in a unique way which demands a new form of relationship with the authority. Furthermore, Indonesian students' protest slogans can be seen as a reaction to the government's intervention and restriction on democratic freedom and rights. The protesters reject the revision of KUHP and RUU KPK by mocking it directly. They mostly targeted DPR (the parliament) and the President. Thus, by “DPR, do not put salt on my wound, my ex is getting married next month” and “. President, legalize me and Taqy Malik, not the RUU”.

In other words, the humorous language of the protesters identified and differentiated in the movement. This dualistic function of humor is most evident in the movement as the emphasis on differentiation reflects a strong identification. Moreover, humor on Indonesian students' protest slogans was directly related to resistance to enable sovereignty to come in

the movement and the protesters support each other overcome political and become intermediators, and hence the movement attracts more members.

CONCLUSIONS

Humor on Indonesian students' protest slogans have different types for the realization. In this research, the types of humor were collective identities and the effect of participation as internal humor, frames and tactics as external humor. There were 7 data of collective identity that consist of K-Poppers, gamers, and introverts. Six data for the effect of participation that have the merits of being intentionally and explicitly fun. Five data for frames that consist of symbols and analogy to attract public interest to political issue, and 2 data of tactics by bringing or using attribute to establish repertoire to get the message across. The reasons of using humor are identification or differentiation to make it possible exclude the other and control or resistance to become a unique way for communicating among the protesters and to establish a new form of relationship with the power.

By understanding the theory, it is suggested to people that involve in the movement to express their ideas, opinions and critics in interpretive ways in case using humor as a tool or instrument can be used to help people deal with difficult political moments. It is essential for the readers and students should increase scientific knowledge about the relationship between humorous language and social movement particularly the realization humor on Indonesian students' protest slogans. For another researcher, this study can be used as reference.

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