

An Ethnography of Shipping as a Communication Practice Within the *Fujoshi* Community in Indonesia

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Abstract. This essay is an ethnographic study of communication practices within the *fujoshi* community in Indonesia that analyses three main issues: how a women becomes a *fujoshi*, the practice of shipping as a communication phenomenon, and social stratification within the *fujoshi* community. Our analysis applies a qualitative ethnography approach. The results of our research yielded three conclusions. Firstly, a women becomes a *fujoshi* when she finds boys' love content interesting and is attracted to the visual representations in boys' love manga. Secondly, shipping is the practice of pairing two fictional male characters in a romantic relationship. Shipping fantasies are expressed in the form of fan art, fanfiction, and *doujinshi* (explicit manga made by fans). The third is the social stratification within the *fujoshi* community in which there are *fujoshi* whose are considered either upper or lower class. This research concludes that shipping as a communication phenomenon is not performed by an individual *fujoshi* but rather involves the *fujoshi* community as a whole. Through the practice of shipping, *fujoshi* develop their own distinctive, unique culture.

Keywords: *ethnography of communication, community, fujoshi, shipping, boys' love*

1 Introduction

In Indonesia, there is generally low acceptance of the LGBT community. However, despite these negative attitudes toward sexual minorities, there are a significant numbers of women who enjoy homosexual themes in films, television, manga, and anime. This community of individuals is referred to as *fujoshi*. *Fujoshi* is a Japanese term for women who actively read, create, buy, and sell boys' love comics. Boys' love, often abbreviated as BL, is a sub-genre of Japanese manga which features romantic relationships between men. *Fujoshi* individuals are neither gay nor lesbian, and the homosexual content in boys' love doesn't represent actual homosexuality in the real world. The genre of boys' love is also not limited to professionally produced films, TV series, manga, or anime, but also includes texts created by fans, commonly known as *doujinshi* and fanfiction (Strickland, 2006). In texts written by fans, male characters who are c known to not be gay are commonly placed in a homosexual fantasy by the fan-author. The practice of placing two characters in a fictional romantic relationship is called "shipping." The study of *fujoshi* in Indonesia has previously been discussed in the fields of Psychology and Japanese literature. However, there are no ethnographic studies examining the communication practices within the *fujoshi* community; and therefore, this study provides a necessary contribution to the scholarship concerning of boys' love manga and the women who read them.

Research Problem

This paper attempts an ethnographic study of the communication practice of shipping within the *fujoshi* community in Indonesia—a subject which has so far been neglected in the ethnography of communication.

Purpose

The aims of this study are the following:

1. To study the causes behind someone becoming a member of the *fujoshi* community
2. To study the practice of shipping within the *fujoshi* community
3. To study the components of communication comprising the practice of shipping
4. To study the terminology used during shipping practices
5. To study the competence of communication used by *fujoshi* when performing shipping activity

6. To study social stratification within the *fujoshi* community.

2. Literature Review

Ethnography of Communication

Ethnography of communication is the analysis of communication patterns within a group or community. In this study, we aim hasten the acceptance of the communication style of this particular community by society. The work of ethnography consists of (a) identifying patterns of communication used by a group or community, (b) translating the types of communication used by the group or community, (c) determining when and where the members of the community perform said communication, (d) ascertain how communication patterns contribute to the formation of the community, (e) document the variety of codes used by the group or community (Littlejohn & Foss, 2012, p. 460). In ethnographic research, communication is defined as the event or process of communication. Communication is the set of components used by individuals sharing the same language varieties, tone, setting and roles of interaction to discuss a certain topic. (Kuswarno, 2011, p. 41). According to Kuswarno (2011, pp. 42-43), identifying the components of communication is crucial to understanding how communication patterns are formed within the event of communication. The components of communication in ethnography are as follows:

- Genre or communicative events such as jokes, greetings, introductions, gossip, etc.
- Topic
- General and individual aims and functions
- Setting, including place, time, season, and other physical aspects (such as the size of the room, layout of the decorations, etc.)
- Participants, including age, gender, ethnicity, social status, relation to each other, and other relevant attributes
- The form of the messages as either non-vocal or verbal, as well as the nature of the codes (such as language and varieties)
- The content of the messages, including what has been communicated (with attention to connotative level and denotative references)
- The order of the behaviour or communication, including turnover and conversation phenomena
- Rules of interaction
- The norms of interpretation, including general knowledge, habit, culture, value, ethics and taboos that have to be followed, etc.

The other object of ethnographic study is competency within the communication process. Competency is the ability or inability to master a skill. This ability or inability will affect the shown communication. An individual may possess both knowledge of and skill at communication. Indeed, both can exist in a social community and will vary depending on each individual (Kuswarno, 2011, p. 43-44). The last subject of our research is language varieties. Kuswarno (2011, p. 45) was quoting Hymes, saying there will be variety of language codes and speech methods used in each society, or as communicative repertory. These principles of language are usually unconsciously applied during the process of socialization and enculturation.

Shipping

Within the subculture of fan fiction, shipping is commonly understood as placing two fictional characters in a romantic relationship. The creators of such fictions are women. The “ship” in “shipping” is derived from the “ship” in the world “relationship.” Moreover, the active verb “to ship” refers to the act of creating a romantic storyline involving two characters. It is common for writers of fanfiction to fictionalize relationships between heterosexual couples as well as same-sex couples. Shipping which conforms to an official storyline is referred to as canon; those who engage in the practice of shipping are called “shippers.” Unexpectedly, the potential candidates for shipping often extend beyond fictional characters to include celebrities (Kircher, 2015).

Boys’ Love and *Fujoshi*

Fujoshi is the term for women who are fond of boys’ love manga, also known as *yaoi* (Winduwati, 2015, pp. 5-6). The Japanese term *yaoi* is a portmanteau of the three Japanese phrases *yamanashi* (no climax), *ochinasi* (no ending), and *iminashi* (no meaning). *Yaoi* is characterized by homoerotic and homosexual romances between two or more young, attractive male characters. Outside of Japan, the term “boys’ love” or the abbreviation “BL”

is used more commonly than *yaoi*. Nurizky (2012, p. 3), while quoting Wim, states that the genre of boys' love first appeared in the form of a Japanese manga. According to Graffeo (2014, pp. 1-4), the Japanese term *fujoshi* means "rotten girl." *Fujoshi* is the term for women who ship two male characters in romantic context; the term for men who do the same is *fudanshi*. *Fujoshi* enjoy fantasizing over their favourite male characters by reading and collecting *doujinshi*, fanfiction, fan art, and other merchandise. However, their enjoyment of boys' love related content has no relation to their sexual orientation.

3. Method

This paper is a qualitative study which applies an ethnographic approach. Haris in Creswell (2014, p. 125) mentions that ethnography is a qualitative research method in which the researcher identifies and interprets patterns of value, behaviour, belief, and language within a certain group that possess a shared culture. Therefore, ethnography demands that a large sample of the target community be observed. Most ideally, a researcher embeds themselves as a member of the society to observe and learn from the interactions of the community members.

Subjects

The Subject of this study is the shipping practices of the *fujoshi* community. In Indonesia, the *fujoshi* community is not very visible, and is only observable on social media or at community events such as Japanese pop culture events. Most members use pseudonyms and do not make their personal information—such as name and occupation—public. When interacting, most individuals use English to conceal their nationality.

Data Collection Method

Kuswarno mentions five data collection methods in ethnography: introspection, participatory observation, deep interview, observation without participation, and document analysis (2011, pp. 48-59). In this study, we used four of the five methods, excluding observation without participation. Using the introspection method, we observed our own emotions while spending time within the *fujoshi* community and carrying out activities common to members of that group. We also attempted to determine whether these emotions were purely subjective, or whether the other *fujoshi* felt similar emotions. Later in the study, we compare the data collected with our own subjective experiences within the community. Using the participatory observational method, we observed the interactions between *fujoshi* on social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Tumblr from 2013 to 2016. Observations were also made of *fujoshi* gathering and interacting at certain popular events in Jakarta, such as the Anime Festival Asia (AFA), Comic Frontier (Comifuro), OTP-Con, and other independent small events, both spontaneous and organized. We once also attended a gathering of MakoRin shippers whose fandom revolves around the anime *Free* and a wedding parody put on by RivaEren shippers who enjoy the anime *Attack on Titan*. Deep interview methods were used while conducting direct observations of selected participants within the community. Interviews with seven individuals were conducted between and August 1–6, 2016.

Meanwhile, we collected documents and newspaper articles and magazines related to the *fujoshi* community and the boys' love genre. We analysed typical patterns found in books or movies with or without boys' love storylines which motivated *fujoshi* to ship characters. We also clarify how the depiction of same-sex couples in boys' love fiction differs from the relationships of real LGBT people.

Data Analysis Method

We analyzed our data according to the three following aspects of data analysis outlined by Creswell (2014, pp. 275-277) and developed by Wolcott. They are description, analysis, and interpretation of the community. In this study, we studied our subject of analysis by collecting primary and secondary data through interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. The collected data was then interpreted with the above mentioned method.

4. Results and Discussion

Reasons for Becoming *Fujoshi*

First time encountering boys' love.

We discovered three reoccurring routes by which individuals become aware of boys' love content became interested in consuming it. The first route of discovery was accidentally discovering boys' love content while looking for officially published content related to a particular character, such as illustrations or short stories. The second route of discovery was being introduced to boys' love content by someone who was already a *fujoshi*. The third route of discovery was when an individual fantasized about a romantic interaction between two male characters and enjoyed the thought. We also found out that each individual had a different reaction when discovering boys' love content for first time. Some people were attracted and interested immediately, whereas others were not interested at first but slowly came to enjoy boys' love content.

An interesting aspect of becoming a *fujoshi*.

Fujoshis in the community revealed that they became interested in boys' love content due mainly to the following factors:

- Boys' love content has more interesting and unique storylines compared to other anime
- The potential to make new friends in the community
- Male characters are visually appealing
- Cute and heart-warming interactions between gay couples
- The level of dedication displayed by *fujoshi* for their favourite couple, which is expressed through fan art, fan fiction, games, songs, short animations, and special events
- Gatherings between *fujoshi*
- Freedom to fantasize about a straight male character as a gay character
- Gaining new knowledge about sexual relations between same-sex couples

The positive and negative side of *fujoshi*.

Members of the *fujoshi* community themselves admit that there are both benefits and consequences to their hobby. The benefits of belonging to the *fujoshi* community are friendship, motivation to learn a foreign language, increased productivity in one's spare time, entertainment, open-minded thinking, and extra income from selling boys' love creations within the community. Negative aspects include social stigma and an overly stubborn insistence on all shipped couples be same-sex couples, resulting in disputes within fan sub-cultures.

Shipping as a Communication Tool

Often, the male characters that appear in shipping fantasies created by *Fujoshi* are not gay in the official published content from which they are derived from. Common examples are Sasuke and Naruto from *Naruto* and Captain America and Ironman from *The Avengers*. The motivation behind *fujoshi* enjoying boys' love storylines and the practice of shipping two male characters can be explained by the following points:

- *Fujoshi's* dislike of female characters.
- Shipping with female characters is boring because the hints are obvious; however, shipping between male characters is more challenging because hinting at their romantic attraction is more difficult and interesting
- The characterizations of the female characters are considered shallow and uninteresting. Most female characters in Japanese animations are depicted as weak, sloppy, and passive—traits preferred by males
- Forbidden same-sex relationships between men are considered more attractive
- Personal reasons deriving from the psychological trauma resulting from being rejected by men

Members of the *fujoshi* community usually fulfil their shipping desires by collecting merchandise, discussing, making artwork, and organizing events related to their ships.

Collecting merchandise.

Fujoshi display their dedication by collecting merchandise of the respective characters they like. Such merchandise is categorized as official or unofficial. Unofficial merchandise usually features unique designs that would be impossible for official merchandise, such as illustrations of male characters in a romantic context. Thus, unofficial merchandise is more sought after and become objects central to the practice of shipping.

Participating in shipping discussions.

According to our observation, discussions mostly take place on social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Tumblr. However, discussion also occurs when *fujoshi* meet each other in the real world. The topics discussed usually revolve around the motivation and reasoning behind why they shipped certain characters, an activity commonly referred to as “head canon.”

Making creative works based on ships.

There are four categories of works that are commonly created by *fujoshi*. Fan art is illustrations featuring characters that can either be based on actual scenes from the series or completely fabricated. Male characters will generally be depicted as lovers and are often holding hands, hugging, kissing, or staring at each other. Fan fiction is a short story written by a fan. When a *fujoshi* writes fan fiction, the content is about a romance between two male characters. *Doujinshi* refers to short manga. The themes of *doujinshi* may vary, but generally they feature a romance or pornographic depiction of characters from a film, TV series, anime, game, or manga. Someone who authors a *doujinshi* is referred to as a *doujinka*. Finally is cosplay, or the act of wearing a costume and makeup to look like a character from an anime, game, manga, cartoon, movie, TV series, or other fictional work.

Organizing a gathering.

There are three types of events organized by *fujoshi*, commonly referred to as *fujo-gath* within the community. They are fan service gatherings, fandom gatherings, and ship gatherings. Common to all three events is the ability for *fujoshi* to interact offline through activities such as singing karaoke, discussing ship, drawing fan art together, and exchanging collections of *doujinshi*, fan art, and fan fiction. At fan-service gatherings, attending *fujoshi* belong to a variety of fandoms and ships. At fandom gatherings, all attendees belong to the same fandom but may enjoy different ships. At ship gatherings, *fujoshi* attendees all like one specific ship which serves as the theme of the gathering.

Communication Tools in Shipping

The ten ethnographic components of communication in the practice of shipping according to Kuswarno are described below.

Genre of shipping.

Shipping as a communicative event comprised of sharing head canon, discussing, and joking about ships. For *fujoshi*, shipping usually contains a head canon element which is based on their interpretation of the actual story. They receive inspiration from watching scenes and learning certain information regarding the characters or the couple they ship.

Topic of shipping.

The topic of communication is the main focus or theme of the conversation occurring during the practice of shipping. Such conversations are usually about the characters and related subjects. For example, communicative topics may be head canon discussion, ship discussion, how to actualize the idea of a ship, or fan fiction and *doujinshi* recommendations.

Purpose of shipping.

According to our data, the goal of shipping is personal entertainment. Shipping is an escape from the stress, pressure, and boredom of everyday life. Furthermore, *fujoshi* experience personal satisfaction when they are able to let their imaginations roam freely with disregard for the official story.

Setting of shipping

When shipping alone, there are several necessary conditions for *fujoshi* to feel comfortable. Depending on location and time, each *fujoshi* has their own preferences. Some ship in their spare time, while some admit that they view fan fiction or *doujinshi* daily and think about boys' love stories or their favourite ship before sleeping. Some *fujoshi* don't mind doing such activities in public places, whereas some *fujoshi* prefer to enjoy their hobby alone. However, the secrecy of the hobby is a serious matter, with some individuals being vigilant to protect the internet histories of their smart phone and computer from the government and the wider society.

Participants of shipping.

Members of the *fujoshi* vary in age, ethnic background, and social status. Most *fujoshi* interact on social media and use a pseudonym or penname to conceal their real name. Within the shipping subculture, *fujoshi* are subcategorized into general *fujoshi*, *fujoshi* scanlators (one who scans and translates manga), *fujoshi* authors, and *fujoshi* informants. General *fujoshi*, or general audiences, show their dedication by collecting manga, novels, or merchandise without actually producing any creative work. Scanlator *fujoshi* assist with translating boys' love manga, novels, or *doujinshi* into the language of a target audience, such as from Japanese to English. Scanlator *fujoshi* are further divided into several smaller groups, such as the scanlator who prepares raw scans of manga or *doujinshi*, converting them to a digital format. The "cleaner" removes the dialogue from the manga so it can be replaced with an English translation. The "text provider" translates the dialogue into English. Both the cleaned version of the scans and the translations are handed over to the editor, who will combine them altogether. The result will be sent to a quality checker to be reviewed for both the quality and accuracy of the translation. *Fujoshi* authors produce works of boys' love content for shipping, be it original or interpretations of official content, such as works of fan fiction, fan art, or *doujinshi*. *Fujoshi* informants spread information regarding the ship to the *fujoshi* community. They are generally fluent in Japanese and up-to-date with news regarding the Japanese production team of a specific anime, game, or manga. Translations of news articles are shared to the fandom through social media platforms, such as Twitter or Tumblr.

Types of messages in shipping.

Messages in shipping, either verbal, verbal non-vocal, or non-verbal, are expressed through "fangirling" (Kuswarno, 2011, p. 43). Fangirling refers to the practice where fellow fangirls perform various actions in idolization of a specific object or subject, and the reaction upon seeing them. The reactions mostly consist of overflowing emotion and happiness.

Verbal messages (oral).

- Discussing ship with fellow *fujoshi* in face-to-face offline conversations
- Expressing feelings and opinions regarding a ship
- Swearing, using harsh words
- Showing gratitude and appreciation regarding a ship

Verbal non-vocal messages (written).

- Discussing ships with fellow *fujoshi* on social media
- Making creative works such as fan art, fan fiction, or *doujinshis* based on their ships
- Keyboard smashing, an act of pressing random capital letters on a keyboard or keypad to express their overflowing emotions
- Using emoticons to express facial expressions such as very happy, excited, or content
- Typing with capital letters without punctuation marks. This represents the process of fast information processing in the minds of *fujoshi*
- Spamming by posting a lot of comments, tweets, or status updates which are similar in content in a short amount of time

Non-verbal messages.

- Searching and collecting shipping merchandise
- Yelling, shouting, and screaming as an expression of amazement that can't be expressed through words

- Smiling widely or laughing suddenly as a reaction to finding hints in boys' love content
- Doing uncontrollable gestures such as rolling on the bed, biting a pillow, hitting a desk, or smothering one's face in a pillow due to overflowing emotions
- Nudging a fellow *fujoshi* friend to help them catch a hint in boys' love content

Messages in shipping.

The content of messages in ethnographic research is what is communicated in a communicative event, whether on the connotative or denotative level (Kuswarno, 2011, p. 43). In shipping, the level of the connotative and denotative reference can be determined from the process of interpreting a normal fictional scene (denotative reference) as something that contains boys' love hints understandable to *fujoshi* (connotative level). *Fujoshi* decide to ship certain characters based on specific criteria, such as the closeness or chemistry between the male characters in the story or in the denotative reference. There are several scenes or denotative references that connote boys' love for *fujoshi*.

- Physical appearances of males are categorized into two types. *Seme* are tall, possess masculine features, have a low voice, and tend to be aggressive and dominant. *Uke* have a petite body, feminine features, a higher pitch voice, and tend to be passive and submissive.
- Affection shown by one character to another can be either verbal or nonverbal, such as giving attention, touching, staring, saying certain words, or other ambiguous gestures
- Situations where two male characters have been friends for a long period of time
- Situations where two male characters occupy oppositional positions, either as foes or rivals
- Situations where two male characters are in the same room
- Information about shipped male characters, such as personality traits and harmonies astrological signs
- When the number of male characters in a series exceeds that of female characters

Despite the representation of same-sex romances, the love stories of official fictional boys' love works should not be equated with representations of homosexuality. They are heavily dramatized works of fiction and do not approximate reality.

Lillian Diaz-Przybyl, an editor at Tokyopop, a leading publisher of boys' love manga in the United States, stated that the interpretation of homosexuality in boys' love manga are often inaccurate. This is because these manga are drawn by female artists and are manifestations of women's fantasies about relationships between men.

The order of shipping.

This is the order of the shipping practice according to our data:

- 1) Watching or reading a fictional work
- 2) Identification of a favourite male character
- 3) Searching for another male character to be shipped with already identified character
- 4) Looking for hints or scenes with certain interactions that indicate potential chemistry between the male characters
- 5) Searching for fellow *fujoshi* with the same shipping interest
- 6) Looking for *asupan*, a term used by *fujoshi* to refer to fan art, fan fiction, and *doujinshi* which feature their ship
- 7) Making *asupan* if a *fujoshi* feels unsatisfied in regards to existing content involving their preferred ship
- 8) Interest peaks and they begin to get bored with their ship
- 9) Finding another series and starting the shipping process over again

Representation of the process is as follows:

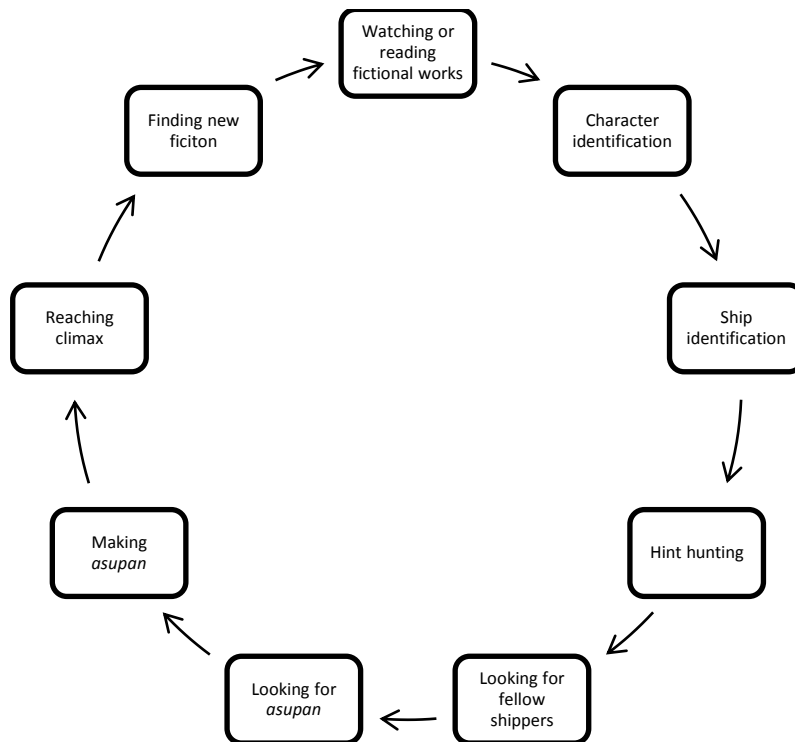


Figure 1. The process order of shipping

Rules of interaction in shipping.

The Rules of interaction in shipping are an unwritten agreement among members, according to which everyone is forbidden from criticising a ship regardless of their personal feelings. The rules are meant to avoid conflict between competitive *fujoshi* who feel that their ships are superior. Other rules detail how to name and write a ship.

- When naming a ship, the name of a male character who acts as a *seme* or top shall be mentioned first, followed by the name of the *uke* or bottom. For example, in the ship of Naruto and Sasuke, Sasuke acts as a *seme* and Naruto as a *uke*; therefore, the ship is titled *Sasuke-Naruto*.
- Ships are also referred to by the construction *seme* name “X” *uke* name, with X standing for the romantic relationship between them. For example, the ship name for *Sasuke-Naruto* in literature is *Sasuke X Naruto*.

The name of the ship can also be written by combining the name of the two paired characters, following the same rule whereby *seme* is mentioned first followed by the *uke*. For example, the *Sasuke X Naruto* ship can also be combined as *SasuNaru*. Another example is *Captain America X Iron Man* from Avengers, with the ship itself referred to as “STony,” with S derived from Captain America’s real name, Steve Rogers, and Tony from Ironman’s real name, Tony Stark.

Norms of interpretation in shipping.

Norms of interpretation involve common knowledge, habit, culture, value, beliefs, and taboo (Kuswarno, 2011, p. 43). In shipping, common knowledge includes international terms which are used similarly by *fujoshi* from different countries. In the *fujoshi* community in Indonesia, members advise each other as to when to reveal their hobby and when not to, due to the restrictions on discussing LGBT topics in Indonesia.

The Linguistic Terms in Shipping

There are unique language codes and terms used among members of the *fujoshi* community engaging in shipping. The terms serve as a description of what they are doing. Additionally, the terms also helps conceal the nature of their hobby from the general society. Members of the *Fujoshi* community learn these terms through a process of enculturation and socialization with other *fujoshi* community members. They gradually augment and

add to the terminology according to the communicative patterns of the community. The terms used are as follows:

- *Yaoi* refers to the Japanese boys' love genre. *Yaoi* manga depict a romantic story between two males and contain relatively explicit sexual scenes. *Fujoshi* use this term as a polite version of gay.
- *Shounen-ai* refers to *yaoi* without sexual scenes. *Shounen-ai* manga contain similar romantic scene between men but physical contact is limited to hugging and kissing.
- Bromance is a portmanteau combining the words "brotherly" and "romance" and refers to a close relationship between two male characters without a romantic component.
- *Seme* is a Japanese word for a male character who plays the dominant role in a gay relationship
- *Uke* is a Japanese word for a male character who plays the submissive role in a gay relationship
- *Seke* is a Japanese word for a male character who is versatile and can act as both *seme* and *uke*.
- Hints are scenes in fictional stories that give away clues as to the potential compatibility of two male characters. For *fujoshi*, hints are ambiguous scenes that imply hidden meanings, such as feelings between two male characters. Often they are simply the imaginative creations of *fujoshi*.
- Fandom refers to a community of fans of a certain fictional work, such as a game, anime, manga, or film. Unlike fans clubs or fan bases, fandoms are not limited to a certain geographic area and are often internet based.
- Canon is a term used to refer to events that occurred in the official storyline of a certain fiction work. Canon excludes works by fans. It can be character development, or relationships between characters. Canon has the potential to destroy a ship, or in this context, their imaginative boys' love ship.
- Head canon refers to the analysis or hypothesis of what might happen behind the scenes of a fictional story, based on what is happening in the actual storyline.
- Plot bunny is a condition where *fujoshi* suddenly come up with multiple ideas or story plots for their fan fiction or *doujinshi* material. The term "bunny" is used because it suggests the qualities of agility and productivity, similar to ideas popping in and out of one's mind.
- OTP stands for One True Pairing and refers to a pairing well-liked by *fujoshi* where the two characters are considered to be meant for each other.
- NOTP stands for Not One True Pairing and refers to a widely disliked pairing.
- Minor OTP and major OTP refer to, respectively, a ship that is rarely liked by other *fujoshi* in the community and a ship that is well-liked in the community
- A crack pairing is a pairing where it is difficult to imagine the characters together. Sometimes they don't even interact in the actual storyline. Such a pairing is usually meant for jokes by *fujoshi*. Crack pairings are categorized as a minor ship.
- Ship war refers to a conflict between different groups of *fujoshi*. In most cases, they think that their OTP is the best and tend to bash other ships without showing respect to other shippers.
- *Asupan* refers to anything that can satisfy a *fujoshi*'s needs, such as hints, fan fiction, fan art, *doujinshis*, and ship discussion.
- Idol shopping is the activity of buying boys' love or shipping merchandises. The prices are often expensive and the amount spent is high, driving *fujoshi* to collect more. They serve no function and are simply collectibles. Hence, the term idol implies a contradiction with religion.
- *Racun* means poison and is a term used to refer to pre-order catalogues of boys' love merchandise. The term has a meaning similar to idol. It is referred to as poison because they are poisonous to one's financial situation, and *fujoshi* are helpless to resist their temptation
- Sunken ship refers to a condition where a boys' love ship is made impossible due to circumstances such as a character's death or marrying another character, usually female, in an official storyline.
- Titanic refers to a sunken ship that is popular. The most popular Titanic was when the *Naruto* series ended. A lot of *fujoshi* were shipping Sasuke and Naruto when Naruto married Hinata in the official story. This development immediately sunk the Sasuke-Naruto ship.
- Otome Road is a street in Tokyo where visitors can find everything related to anime targeted towards the female demographic, including boys' love content.
- Closet *fujoshi*, is a term for *fujoshi* who hide her interest from family and society. Usually, only several close *fujoshi* friends know about their interest and even those in the community don't know their real identity.

Communication Competence in Shipping

According to Kuswarno (2011, p. 43-44), competence or incompetence in regard to communication refers to the communication knowledge and skill of a social community or society. It can vary by individual, but the ability and inability (competence and incompetence) can result in culture shock or miscommunication. In the *fujoshi* community, the incompetence of a member is inferred from how they hide their hobby. Miscommunication often happens when *fujoshi* are careless with their hobby and identity. According to our data, such *fujoshi* disturb the peace and make non-*fujoshi* uneasy. Another incompetence can be observed when a *fujoshi* breaks the rules of shipping, which instruct that one must not bash another's ship despite a difference of opinion. A violation of this rule often leads to a ship war. Incompetence in communication can also be experienced by new *fujoshi*. According to our data, it takes time and experience to learn all the language and terminology of the community. The speed of this process is influenced by how often *fujoshi* chat with other members of the community.

Social Stratification within the *Fujoshi* Community

Stratification within the *fujoshi* community occurs as result of differences in behaviour within the community. Some *fujoshi* are considered high-class and are labelled as elite *fujoshi*, *fujoshi* goddesses, *fujoshi* masters, or ship captains. The nickname ship captain is given due to their unrivalled dedication to the ship. There are also other reasons that influence to a *fujoshi* to be considered as high-class, such as:

- Possessing deep knowledge of the boys' love genre
- Displaying dedication towards the ship by either creating a high volume of creative work or spending considerable amounts of money
- Creating high-quality fan fiction, fan art, or *doujinshi* which can be consumed by other *fujoshi*
- Gaining one's own followers and fans
- Traveling to Japan to shop for boys' love merchandise
- Appearing calm and collected, unlike regular *fujoshi*
- Dressing fashionably
- Being a first generation *fujoshi* who pioneered boys' love forums in Indonesia. Younger *fujoshi* respect first-generation fans for persisting in the hobby despite persecution and the limited accessibility of boys' love content

Lower-class *Fujoshi* are often referred to as newbie *fujoshi* or ship crew. The term ship crew often appears alongside ship captain. While the ship captain is known for their dedication, ship crews tend to simply enjoy work created by the captain. The *fujoshi* in this category are mostly still new with minimum knowledge about boys' love and shipping. At the bottom of this hierarchy within the *fukoshi* community are those referred to as unstable *fujoshi* or *fujoshit*. *Fujoshit* is a portmanteau combining *fujoshi* and shit, and is used to mock unstable *fujoshi* who are often considered vulgar. They are often vocal about their hobby and therefore give a bad name to the entire community. The term is mostly used by people outside the community. A *fujoshi* can be considered *fujoshit* when they tend to do the following things:

- Shout openly in public revealing their interest in boys' love content. Most of time, they use the more general term gay instead of *yaoi* or boys' love so that non-fans understand. This behaviour is considered rude and disturbing to both *fujoshi* and non-*fujoshi*.
- Ignite a ship war between *fujoshi* by bashing other ships

Stratification conditions the interactions between *fujoshi*. When engaging with a higher class of *fujoshi*, individuals will augment their language. According to several sources, *fujoshi* will police their attitude and behaviour to avoid being considered *fujoshit*. Some interviewees admitted to feeling proud and motivated to create more creative work whenever a *fujoshi* of a higher class appreciate their work. However, when engaging with lower class *fujoshi*, some sources admitted to acting more responsible to prevent newbies from becoming *fujoshit*. Meanwhile, when engaging with a *fujoshit*, most *fujoshi* admit they try to avoid them. If they happen to know the person, they often try to chastise them for their attitude.

5. Conclusion

Our ethnographic study of communication in the *fujoshi* community focused primarily on shipping. *Fujoshi* tend to ship boys' love to the point of worshipping the ship. To realize their fantasies, *fujoshi* collect

merchandise, create works, discuss, and organize gatherings or events in connection with their favourable ship. These activities are supported by various linguistic terms which influence the practice of shipping and inform the competence and incompetence of a *fujoshi* when shipping. All of these elements make up an ethnography of the *fujoshi* community. From a linguistic perspective, the variety and novelty of terms serve to conceal *fujoshi* from society. *Fujoshi* in Indonesia tend to hide their hobby from society due to intolerance of LGBT people in the country. When gathering on the internet, the majority of *fujoshi* use pseudonyms and seldom talk about personal information such as their addresses and personal life. Most of them strictly separate *fujoshi* related activities from their real lives. Personal information is given to close *fujoshi* friends only. An ethnography of communication in this community is unique both in the observed practices and the object of interest shared among community members. The *fujoshi* community has its own unique character that cannot be found in other communities, making it an interesting subject to be studied further.

We suggest further research on *fujoshi* and boys' love. The subject has not been discussed much in the communication field, leaving many aspects untouched, such as symbolic practices, personal communication, and group communication within the *fujoshi* community. We also recommend the *fujoshi* community to incorporate a social aspect into their events. We feel that *fujoshi* events are focused mostly on the fans and community entertainment, and do not attempt to invoke social sympathy or empathy. Moreover, *fujoshi* is identified with hedonism and consumerism. We feel this is unfortunate because despite giving pleasure to fellow *fujoshi*, they do not contribute positively to society.

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