

Generated Function of Meme In Online Conversation

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Abstract— *Meme digital content has become widely copied, imitated, and deployed by a lot of people through the Internet. WhatsApp messenger group became one of the instruments to spread of the meme. This study aims to understand the form and function of meme in WhatsApp messenger group conversations. This study is a qualitative study, using a grounded strategy approach. The results showed that there are three types of memes that are being used, that is text, image, and video. All three are presented in variety different forms. Of the different forms there are two functions that generate memes in conversation, which is the decoy and instrumental function.*

Keywords—*Meme, Online Conversation, Function of meme, Online Communication*

I. INTRODUCTION

These days the computer with its internet network has become the main means of production and spreader of humor content, especially digital humor [1]. Digital humor is produced by a lot of people and being widespread through the Internet. Digital humor replicated by the masses and became viral in a dynamic form, which allows people to combine forms of visual, audio, and interactive to it.

Forms of replication of a digital humor, by copying and imitating popular content into a new form, with humor involved in it called by meme or internet meme [2]. Shifman defines a meme as " a group of digital items sharing common characteristics of content, form, and / or stance; that were created with awareness of each other; and were circulated, imitated, and / or transformed via the Internet by many users " [3]. Some popular phenomenon which is then replicated and becomes viral, such as by PSY Gangnam dance video uploaded on YouTube, the video clip " Leave Britney Alone ", and many more.

Digital content such as for example the dance Gangnam by PSY or a movie called Downfall or "Leave Britney Alone", was not only viewable, but some viewers may copy and imitate some of the elements contained in it, then turn it into a a new form by including the element of humor in it ,

The new shape is transformed into content that is really new, so-called memes. Shifman [2] argues that the phenomenon is not a form of personal events, but called by him as "but the shape and reflect the general social mindset". That is because the production of a meme is not personal but tend to be created to be addressed to a group of people.

Distributing meme is not an individual activity, not limited to being an activity to deliver a message from one person to one other person. However, it must involve a discourse or social phenomena that are important to society. Discourse or social phenomena are then copied and replicated into new forms and disseminated to other individuals at random over the internet. Dissemination of content in the form of a meme humor always involves discourse.

A study conducted by Pearce & Hajizada [4] shows the results that the humor involved in a meme can be a means or a tool to protest, where it contains a statement of disagreement to the government. Meme can be used to convey messages disagreement, which can be disseminated via the internet. The spread of memes containing disapproval used also for a message to reach a wider audience. A more research conducted by Hatab [5], to show that the humor involved in the process of the Tunisian revolution in the range 2010-2011. In the revolution, there was a mobilization through social media, where political satire is widely used in discourse or conversation in social media. Humor is intended to defame the president. Discrediting the image of the president carried out through the use of proverbs, songs, poems, and advertising. Humor in languages that contain puns, synonyms, antonyms, lexical ambiguity, and rhyme.

Meme always involves the perspective of social groups, forms of behavior, and memes shape the mindset [6]. However, a study conducted by Boxman-Shabtai & Shifman [1], [7], showed that the memes tend to show content that is global rather than purely local. Memes using themes of sex, gender, and animals dominate digital humor in the form of a meme. But how

to use memes in a digital conversation? What kind of meme used and propagated by people in social media? Therefore, this study was conducted to try to understand the forms of memes that are used and disseminated through social media, as well as the function of the meme.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A. Digital Humor

In the middle age, the meaning of humor or humorous were far differ than today's. During those time, humorous is a term in physiology, which refers to the body fluids. Yellowish bile, blackish bile, and blood are the form of body fluids. All the three of them (humorous) keep one individual's emotion in balance. Whenever imbalance occurs in the body fluids, one's emotional became unbalanced [8]. On 1598, two of Ben Jonshon's books entitled "Every man in His Humor", and "Every Man Out of His Humor", tell us about eccentric people (crazy; aberrant; odd). Whereas those people live in 'imbalance', and made normal people had been always laughing at them. Thus, the idea of present humor appear, situations which made people laughing at an absurd, silly, and exaggerative attempts made by the "eccentric people".

Tracing back humor to the "ancient philosophy" era, there were few opinions relating with "Humor". Plato considered 'humor' as "a mixed feeling of the soul". While, Aristotle stated that 'comedy' is "an imitation of men worse than the average; ... which is a species of the ugly" [8]. 'Humor' was interpreted as something ugly, because it contains laughable "flaws" or "ugliness". Aristotle even added that satirists or comedy writer as "a kind of evil speakers". The following are some other definitions for muse: G.W.F Hegel saw humor as an expression of self-satisfied shrewdness; Immanuel Kant considered that, "laughter is an affectation arising from sudden transformation of a strained expectation into nothing" [9]; Owen Lynch concluded humor as "an intended or unintended message that is considered funny or evokes laughter" [10].

Humor studies were inseparable from the three popular theories about humor; superiority theory, incongruity theory, and the relief theory [11]. According to the superiority theory, humor assumed as a superiority act. Humor was associated with the act of "laughing others", and placing own self on a better position (superior). According to the incongruity theory, humor appears from an awareness that something inconsistent with the logic being applied when perceiving an event. Something can be considered funny if it's illogical, or irrational, paradoxical, incoherence, wrong, or inappropriate. Relief theory considered jokes as a medium to relieve tensions

or stress. Humor act as a relief, just as how it's enacted on negotiations or meditations, in attempt to relieve tensions.

Humor studies' evolution had involved a new media on its circulations, that's computers with theirs internet connectivity as a carrier and generator [12], [1], [13], [7]. The main difference of the internet involvement in humor is, it can be presented in the form of multimedia, and interactions, and to be able reach the globe. That main differential had produced new a form of humor in the digital forms, such as: interactive humor, funny photos, phanimation, celebrity soundboard /prank calls, and PowerPoint humor [12]. Meanwhile, a recent popular digital humor category is called meme.

B. Meme on cyber communication

The term of meme was first introduced by an article of a biologist, Richard Dawkins's entitled *The Selfish Gene*. Dawkins defined meme as "small cultural units of transmission, analogous to genes, which are spread from person to person by copying or imitation." [12], [14]. Meanwhile, Shifman defined meme as "a group of digital items sharing common characteristics of content, form, and /or stance; that were created with awareness of each other; and were circulated, imitated, and /or transformed via the internet by many users" [12].

Meme "Kilroy Was Here" is an example of an old meme. It was popular during World War II. The meme was started by James J. Kilroy, a shipyard inspector, who drew a drawing of a man with a long nose looking over a wall, alongside a mysterious captain "Kilroy Was Here". Kilroy drew the drawing as a sign that he did an inspection of the ships, including the warships. When the warships were deployed, many soldiers saw the drawing, it was copied and imitated by the soldiers who returned home, so there was the meme. Meme "Kilroy Was Here" were copied & imitated, as the sign that someone had been there.

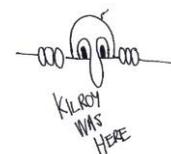


Figure 1. Meme "Kilroy Was Here"

Shifman considered that, the digital era, had change few fundamental aspects in the meme production [12]. Few of them imply the principals in understanding of a meme. Few principals of understanding a meme are: first, meme can be perceived as a part of the cultural information trades between individuals, and the unawareness of partake the circulation of information or discourses contained within. When circulating a meme with a discourse, there will be point of views, behaviors,

and actions of a social group involved. Second, most memes, were forms of repackaging or imitating. In communicational actions, people perceive a meme through senses, involving minds, and then rebuild to be re-circulated to the others.

In communications activities, a meme can be functioning as: referential communication, emotive, conative, phatic, metalingual, and poetic [12]. “Referential communication” means that the delivered contents were oriented to its contexts, or something outside what It’s said. Emotive function means, a meme involves emotions in its creation. Conative function means that a meme was oriented to a comprehensible action. Phatic function means, a meme was an establishment of a coarse form of communication. Metalingual function means, a meme was created by a structured symbols and codes. Poetic function means, that a meme can help to support aesthetic or artistic aspects in communicational actions.

III. METHOD

The study will be conducted using a qualitative approach, which seeks to understand the form and function of the memes in a digital conversation. This research will take advantage of a variety of data and various ways of collecting data to find the correct answer to the question of research [15]. Stage will be carried out through the following stages:

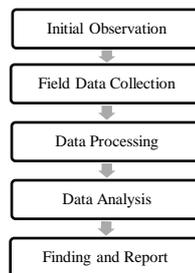


Figure 2. Research Procedure

By utilizing the method of grounded theory, this study analyzed the form of meme created, how to choose the content to create a meme, as well as how to determine the point of view of Indonesian society in the memes they've created, and how they use that meme.

In order to obtain the answer, then during the period of 2016 in this study were collected 224 memes that spread through the Internet for a period of 3 months, which is spread through a group conversation in WhatsApp Messenger. Its collected with purposive method. Once the data is collected, memes that will be processed and analyzed through several procedures, among others: the labeling of the phenomenon, the invention of the category, naming categories, preparation of the categories based on the nature and size, coding, and note the

code. To maintain the validity of the data then performed triangulation *activities*.

IV. RESULT

After the text edit has been completed, the paper is ready for the template. Duplicate the template file by using the Save As command and use the naming convention prescribed by your conference for the name of your paper. In this newly created file, highlight all of the contents and import your prepared text file. You are now ready to style your paper; use the scroll down window on the left of the MS Word Formatting toolbar.

1.1. Form of meme

The research results show form of memes spread through WhatsApp messenger Group are summarized in Table 5.1. Memes that spread via WhatsApp messenger Group has three types: text, images, and video. All three types of memes that have different form.

Table 1. Type of Meme

Type	Form
Text	- Story
	- Puns
	- Poetic
	- Exhortation
	- Random information
Image	- Photo
	- Image with text
	- Image with modification
Video	- Graphic parody
	- Video with modification
	- Video without modification

Text

- Story

Meme in this form contains the story of a fictional character or characters that are considered real. The story is often associated with an event that is close to the center spread of the meme. The story may be a story, or a conversation between two or more than two figures.

Table 2. Meme in story form

<p><i>Tambahi sekalian biar semangkin mukidi 😊</i> <i>MUKIDI 17-AN</i> <i>Jaya iku bertetangga dg Mukidi, tapi selalu saingan...kalo Jaya beli sepeda baru, Mukidi ya gak mau kalah, beli sepeda baru jg..</i> <i>Pas puasa rumah Jaya di cat merah,besuknya Mukidi jg ngecat rumahnya warna merah..</i> <i>Pas 17 Agustusan, Jaya masang spanduk di depAn rumahnya</i></p>

- Puns

Puns can be delivered through a play on words (wordplay) or the game of putting together a sentence. In view of linguistics and semiotics, puns show "signifiant", a distinction between the signifier and the signified (Attardo, 1994). Distinctions is happening tend to be a pivot that can distort the perception of the expected reader.

Table 3. Meme in a puns

Assalamualskum.... Hapunten sanes maksud riya' sareng sombong, dina waktos hari raya qurban simkuring bade ber Qurban Sapi 1 ekor. saumpamina aya waktos k sadayana tmn2, di antos ka sumpingana di Rorompok, jatah bagian 3 bungkus per orang. Supados praktis ku simkuring tos di kemas dalam bentuk Royco rasa sapi sachetan. Wasallam.:)....

- Poetic

Meme in poetic form tends to contain calls for introspection, which was presented into beautiful sentences. There is an element of exaggerating in the selection of the sentence, with an aesthetic purpose.

Table 4. Meme as poetic

Keramahan budi pekerti dan kelapangan nurani adalah sebuah nikmat yg disegerakan (diturunkan di dunia) dan kegembiraan yg dihadirkan (ketika masih di dunia) bagi siapa yg Allah kehendaki utk menjadi baik, sedangkan emosi yg berlebihan, mudah tersinggung dan meledak-ledak marah adalah sebuah petaka yg terus menerus dan siksa yg abadi.

- Exhortation

Exhortation shaped meme involving sentences containing advice, and encouragement to perform certain actions or attitude. Actions or attitudes that suggested the actions and attitudes that are considered good. Morality is an issue that is always involved in the preparation of this content. Forms of content meme like this tend to get the same response in the form of approval.

- Random information

The meme contains information, which is considered necessary. The information disseminated very diverse. Disseminated information comes from sources unknown to sources considered reliable. However, the

information disseminated is not an information that is seen 'serious', it has often seemed 'hoax'.

Image

- Photo

Meme in the form of photo, digital photo contains content without going through a process of modification. Photo tend to present an image ludicrous and ridiculous. These memes are not usually used as a confirmation of the topic in a conversation, but rather as a trigger of an issue and then potentially to be discussed.



Figure 3. Meme in a Photograph

- Image with text

The shape of this meme contains elements of image and text. Images and text are less likely to have relevance in harmony or paradoxical, but mutually reinforcing. Both elements build puns, so it does not present the expected perception.



Figure 4. Image with text

- Image with modification

The shape of the meme photo digital photo contains content that has been through the

process of modification. Photo has been modified to involve at least two layers of photo or more combined. Merging images into a paradoxical form of silly between two content of each layer. Paradoxical situation that is displayed is an puns.



Figure 5. Meme in the form of Image with modification

Graphic parody

This kind of meme is a parody of a digital graphic content. Meme makes a parody content, or utilize digital graphic content to mock a particular issue.



Figure 6. meme in the form of Image graphic parody

Table 5. Function of Meme and its Function

Form	Function
- Story	- Decoy
- Puns	- Decoy
- Poetic	- Decoy
- Exhortation	- Decoy
- Random information	- Decoy & instrument
- Photo	- Decoy & instrument
- Image with text	- Decoy or instrument
- Image modification	- Decoy or instrument
- Graphic parody	- Decoy or instrument
- Video with modification	- Decoy & instrument
- Video without modification	- Decoy & instrument

Meme as a decoy

A meme, will contain the discourse and way of thinking. Meme was even able to show and reflect the general point of view of a society [2]. In a conversation with a group WhatsApp Messenger, many discourses discussed. A discourse may have the potential to be discussed more than one person. Selection of the discourse occurs naturally, and from nowhere. The source of one discourse that can be discussed starting from a meme.

Memes can appear as a decoy, introduce a discourse to then group members will respond. Meme that could potentially contain a discourse that can be the subject of conversation can be shaped story, puns, poetic, exhortation, information, pictures, and videos that are not modified. The forms that meme still has the potential of discourse is "right". A discourse that is assumed to be true can be presented in a meme explicitly or implicitly.

A meme is still considered to contain the discourse to be true, have the potential to get comments that support or refute. Even a meme, which contains humor satire, they could potentially contain a discourse that is considered true. Discourse right through humor satire, is a satire itself. because satire contains viewpoint is considered true and reflect the results of one's thinking.

Meme in the form of stories, information, photo, and video without modification, could potentially contain true discourse considered high. This can occur as a result of the potential involvement of realistic content. Involvement realistic content in a meme, it deserves to be discussed and even debated. In fact, even if the content seems silly. Suppose meme "Happy Eid Day" (Figure 7), becoming one of the memes that are considered to have a value of truth, because it involves realistic content. This argue that reality becomes a thing of worth.

Video

Meme in the form of video, tend to contain a ridiculous event, without much modification. Even if the modification is done, then it tends to be simple, such as combining silly event with other events. The kind of content is not widely spread through the group WhatsApp Messenger for amenities or features within applications that do not support, as well as the size of the problem of storage capacity.

1.2. Function of meme

Of the various forms of such diverse meme, meme used in conversations via WhatsApp Messenger group with several functions, namely as a decoy, and as an instrument. A summary of the results is shown in Table 5.



Figure 7. Meme “Happy Idul Fitri Day”

Meme as an instrument

Meme that contain content ludicrous and ridiculous, by way of a modification to a realistic or fictional content, tend to be considered to have a low degree of truth. So, the existence of the meme just be a fixture in a conversation. The conversation will tend to continue without discussing the content of the discourse contained in a meme.

Meme typically contain hyperbolic message, or exaggerate one element in a meme, causing incongruity. But the incongruity that arises, it seems striking (figure 8). So, it can easily be recognized the existence of an anomaly that seems intentional. It makes people perceive became aware that the meme has a low degree of truth.

A meme that contains a low degree of truth, will tend to be ignored in a conversation. The meme is only a complement to the conversation. Meme simply be copied and spread from person to person. Disseminated in awareness, and have a role to build the collective perception of the content in that meme.



Figure 8. Meme instrumental “Khong Juring”

V. CONCLUSIONS

This study elaborated the function of meme in the digital conversation. There are two function of memes usage, decoy function and instrumental function. This shown another function of memes in some particular communication activities.

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