

LINGUISTIC ASPECTS IN VERBAL HUMOR DISCOURSE: STAND-UP COMEDY OF THE COMEDIAN UUS

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Abstract

Uus is a comedian who demonstrates strong linguistic play and wordplay in his stand-up comedy performances. It is this use of language play that has made Uus one of the comedians who consistently succeeds in generating laughter in every open mic appearance. This study aims to describe the linguistic aspects utilized and to explain the functions of humor found in Uus's stand-up comedy. The primary data source of this research consists of Uus's utterances and performances in his stand-up routines. These were subsequently transcribed into written discourse for further analysis. A qualitative method was employed to analyze the collected data, as they were derived from transcriptions of Uus's speech taken from videos on YouTube.com. The research was conducted in three stages: data collection, data analysis, and presentation of the findings. The results indicate that in each of his solo comedy performances, Uus tends to employ linguistic aspects such as phonological features, ambiguity, homophones, and assimilation. In terms of humor function, his comedy serves as satire, social criticism, playful joking, and entertainment.

Keywords – *linguistics, humor, discourse, stand-up comedy*

Introduction

In daily life, humans cannot be separated from their relationships with others. Through others, people are able to interact and communicate. Communication may take the form of both serious and non-serious conversations. This is in line with what Maryam (2014) states, that individuals are never free from communication with others, and such communication may involve either serious or casual discussion. Non-serious conversations are usually expressed through jokes or humor. Communication in the form of humor tends to make people laugh, as if the burdens in their hearts and minds are temporarily reduced or even disappear.

If we observed closely, people who enjoy humor tend to appear more refreshed than those who are overly serious. This is because such activity can increase the production of endorphins, natural pain-relieving substances in the body. Based on research by Dr. Berk from Loma Linda University, California, USA (as cited in Triandana, 2014), laughter helps increase the number of natural killer cells (NK cells, a type of white blood cell) and boosts antibodies, thus playing an important role in fighting infections, allergies, and even cancer. This finding aligns with Martin's explanation (in Triandana, 2014) regarding the relationship between humor and human health. Research in psychoneuroimmunology shows that humor is connected to emotions and immunity, leading many healthcare providers to use humor to accelerate patient recovery by providing comedy rooms and clowns to entertain patients in hospitals. Therefore,

humor is considered a method that can help speed up recovery for patients suffering from chronic illnesses, cancer, and other diseases.

In addition to its positive effects on the body, humor also plays an important role in social life. Bergson and Freud (in Triandana, 2014) state that humor exists in every aspect of social life, in line with the customs and habits of a given community. This is what allows humor to continuously develop, as it follows what is happening in society. Various aspects of human life can become sources of humor, such as social inequality, unusual phenomena, current trends, political satire, and others. Humor can serve as a medium for conveying messages effectively due to its relaxed and entertaining nature.

In its delivery, humor can be presented through various media, such as audio media (radio) and visual media (cartoons). It can also be delivered in audiovisual form, such as in stand-up comedy. Although stand-up comedy is often referred to in Indonesian as *komedi tunggal*, Wel (2018) explains that it differs from traditional solo comedy. Stand-up comedy has its own structure and conventions, whereas traditional solo comedy allows more freedom in delivering material. In stand-up comedy, the performance should not have overly long beats, and it generally follows two main components: setup and punchline. Stand-up comedy is one of the most popular and widely discussed forms of humor, especially among younger generations and millennials. Unlike other forms of comedy such as comedy groups, sitcoms, *ketoprak*, or *ludruk*, which require interaction between performers, stand-up comedy is characterized by a single performer delivering material alone on stage directly to an audience.

The early development of stand-up comedy in Indonesia began between 1998 and 2004. According to Wel (2018), he initially struggled alone to promote stand-up comedy. Eventually, he had the idea to create a solo performance that could attract media coverage and public attention. On March 6, 2004, he successfully organized the first stand-up comedy show in Indonesia at Gedung Kesenian Jakarta. This performance paved the way for stand-up comedy to enter national television. In 2010, Ramon Papan, the owner of Comedy Cafe Indonesia, invited Iwel to hold open mic sessions at his café, which were later uploaded to YouTube. Along with Pandji Pragiwaksono and Raditya Dika—who were well-known Twitter celebrities—they performed open mic shows, and once the recordings were uploaded to YouTube, stand-up comedy quickly gained popularity. By November 2011, two television stations were airing stand-up comedy programs almost simultaneously. Since then, stand-up comedy competitions have appeared on television, leading to the emergence of many new comedians.

Stand-up comedy performers are known as comics (comedy microphone), or *komika* in Indonesian. Some well-known Indonesian comedians include Pandji Pragiwaksono, Raditya Dika, Cak Lontong, Arie Kriting, Ge Pamungkas, and Uus. Each of these comedians has a distinct comedic style. Pandji Pragiwaksono, for example, is known for his themes of nationalism. Raditya Dika is famous for humor based on everyday life. Cak Lontong, one of the senior comedians, is known for humor that makes audiences think. Arie Kriting often incorporates Eastern Indonesian culture and phenomena into his material. Ge Pamungkas is recognized for his expressive act-outs. Finally, Uus is particularly strong in wordplay and puns in his stand-up comedy. This linguistic play is what makes Uus one of the comedians who consistently succeeds in making audiences laugh during his open mic performances.

This success is inseparable from his ability to manipulate and find word equivalences to create humor. As stated by Sudjiman (in Solissa, 2021), language play includes word choice, sentence

structure, figures of speech, imagery, rhyme patterns, and others, all of which are used to convey meaning. One example of his skill in utilizing linguistic aspects can be seen below:

Discourse 1

(1) “Yesterday, I watched the news.

A soap was arrested by the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK),
 because it was involved in a *SUAP* case.”

In the humorous discourse above, Uus attempts to touch on political issues. Within this short segment, there is a clear use of linguistic manipulation. This involves a **phonological substitution**, where the phoneme /u/ in *suap* (bribery) is replaced with /o/, resulting in *soap*. This creates a pun between *soap* and *suap*. The function of humor in this discourse can be seen as **satire**, specifically criticizing corruption cases.

Studies on humor discourse in Indonesian stand-up comedy are still relatively limited. This motivates the researcher to further explore humor in stand-up comedy. Uus’s material, which is sometimes absurd yet still accepted as humorous, presents a unique phenomenon worthy of deeper analysis. Based on the explanation above, the research problems can be formulated as follows: what linguistic aspects are utilized in Uus’s stand-up comedy, and what are the functions of humor present in his performances?

Based on these problems, this study aims to describe the linguistic aspects used in Uus’s stand-up comedy and to explain the functions of humor found within it.

Practically, this research is expected to serve as a source of information and reference for studies on verbal humor discourse from a linguistic perspective in stand-up comedy. Theoretically, this study is expected to provide comprehensive knowledge about verbal humor, particularly in the stand-up comedy performed by Uus. It also contributes to understanding the application of humor theory, humor discourse structure, the use of linguistic aspects, and their functions, thus benefiting future researchers interested in studying other forms of humor discourse. As an output of this research, the author will create a “Humor: Stand-Up Comedy Poster.”

Methodology

This study employs a descriptive qualitative method. The researcher analyzes verbal humor discourse in accordance with its contextual use. The data obtained are then examined in terms of the use of linguistic aspects and the functions of humor discourse. The data are analyzed to address the research problems. The primary data source in this study is the utterances and performances of Uus in his stand-up comedy. These are subsequently transcribed into written discourse for further analysis. A qualitative method is appropriate for analyzing the collected data, as they consist of transcriptions of Uus’s speech taken from videos on YouTube.

This study is divided into three methodological stages: data collection, data analysis, and presentation of the analysis results. The data were collected through several steps. First, the researcher watched and observed the entirety of the humor in Uus’s stand-up comedy

material. Uus's utterances were then transcribed into written form for data collection. Audience responses—such as laughter, applause, and cheers—were also considered, as they indicate the presence of humor in the performance. In the transcription process, the researcher adopted the model proposed by Dressler and Kreuz (2000), in which each line of transcription represents spoken language segmented into units of intonation. As a result, the transcription of the stand-up comedy in this study consists of many short lines containing spoken utterances segmented based on the speaker's intonation. The researcher then identified and noted parts relevant to the research problems for further analysis.

The second stage is data analysis. This stage aims to identify the factors that cause humor. The data are then categorized according to each research problem and further examined using appropriate theoretical frameworks.

The third stage is the presentation of the analysis results. The researcher uses an informal style, relying on words to explain the findings.

Through this process, linguistic phenomena can be described and explained in accordance with the applied theories.

Finding and Discussion

Comedians creatively attempt to combine two different meanings, perceptions, and conceptions to achieve a humorous effect through linguistic aspects. This aligns with the essential characteristics of humor, namely unpredictability and a sense of incongruity. In this regard, homophony, as one type of ambiguity, serves as an important source of humor. In his effort to construct a premise, Uus frequently makes use of homophony.



Soalnya gue gak mungkin nyalon via liputan6.static6.com

Discourse 2

In discourse (2), the source of humor lies in the word “*nyalon*.” The word *nyalon*, as uttered by Uus in its context, derives from the base word *calon* and means “to run as a candidate.” However, Uus deliberately distorts its meaning. There is a use of a linguistic aspect in this humorous discourse, namely **ambiguity**.

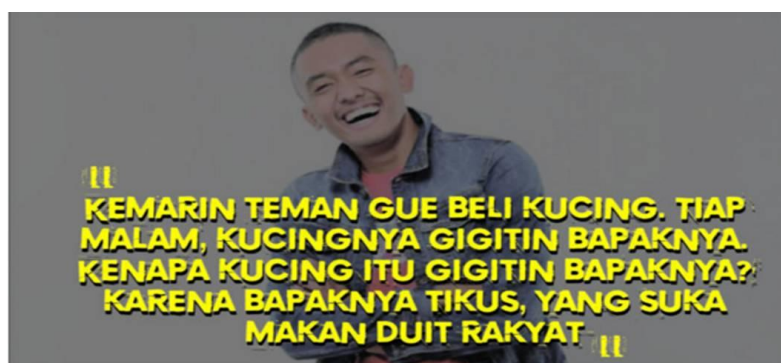
This manipulation deviates from the phonological level of language, as the word *nyalon* can also be associated with the base word *salon*, meaning “to go to a beauty salon.” The humor emerges from this confusion of meaning between *nyalon* (to become a candidate) and *nyalon* (to go to a salon). Meanwhile, the function of humor in this discourse is merely **to provide entertainment** for the stand-up comedy audience.



Discourse 3

The use of homophony as a source of humor in discourse (3) occurs in the word “*tol*.” The word *tol*, as uttered by Uus in its context, derives from the base word *tol* and, according to the Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI), means: (1) a fee charged to enter certain roads (such as highways or toll roads); (2) a road that requires users to pay a fee. However, Uus associates the tall toll gate with the similar sound found in the adjective *tall* in English, which also means “high.”

This is supported by Wijana (2004), who states that when the relationship involves similarity in pronunciation, such linguistic units are referred to as **homophones**. Meanwhile, the function of humor in this discourse is simply **to provide entertainment** for the stand-up comedy audience.



Discourse 4

The word “*tikus*” (rat) used by the comedian Uus in discourse (4) contains **ambiguity** of meaning. The meaning of *tikus* in his stand-up comedy is context-bound. When associated with public money, *tikus* carries a figurative meaning, referring to a thief or a corruptor. This is supported by the common notion that the natural enemy of a cat is a

rat. On the other hand, *tikus* can also carry a literal meaning as a “stealing animal” when associated with a cat.

The function of humor in discourse (4) is a **form of satire, intended to criticize certain parties indirectly**. The situation or context of the utterance in this humorous discourse illustrates a narrative involving a cat and a rat. The rat serves as a reflection of a thief figure. The line, “Every night the cat bites the father,” followed by the question, “Why does the cat bite the father? Because the father is a rat who likes to consume public money,” implies that the father figure is likened to a rat that steals public funds. The rat symbolizes an animal known for stealing, and it has been widely associated with the idea that those who steal public money are “rats in ties.”

“What’s your name?”

“Siska.”

“It’s hot, then.”

“Why is it hot?”

“Well, ‘Siska’—kubur (playing on sound toward Siska to *siksa* / torture).”

Discourse 5

In discourse (5), the source of humor lies in the word *Siska*. The word *Siska*, as uttered in its context, originates from a response stating a name and simply means “Siska.” However, the comedian deliberately distorts its meaning by utilizing a linguistic aspect in the humorous discourse, namely **assimilation**, which involves a change or manipulation of consonant positions within a word. This manipulation deviates from the phonological rules of the language, as the word *Siska* becomes associated with the sense of “heat” through its phonological resemblance to *siksa* (torture). Meanwhile, the function of humor in this discourse is primarily **to joke and provide entertainment** for the stand-up comedy audience.

Conclusions

Based on the observations of verbal humor used by the comedian Uus in each of his stand-up comedy performances, several linguistic aspects were identified as being utilized to create humorous discourse. From each open mic performance observed, these linguistic aspects include phonological features, ambiguity, homophony, and assimilation. Meanwhile, the functions of humor found in his performances to convey satire, social criticism, joking, and pure entertainment.

Suggestion

This study focuses solely on analyzing the use of linguistic aspects employed by the comedian Uus in his stand-up comedy performances. The authors hope that this research contributes to

enrich studies on humor discourse in stand-up comedy. It is also expected that future research will further explore stand-up comedy from different perspectives, such as examining individual comedians who have their own unique persona, including Raditya Dika, Cak Lontong, Arie Kriting, Dodit Mulyanto, Mongol, and others.

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