

A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF MEMES

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Abstract

People nowadays use memes from internet to express their thought. Memes are pictures that consist of image/s and text that usually used in the internet whether it is just to entertain or have the specific purpose/s behind it. People can easily find and create memes in the internet using certain website. Memes have many deep meaning that people cannot understand without knowing the social content of it. In order to find out the deep meaning or the purpose of the memes, this study was conducted to analyse the relationship between picture and text in the memes with the meaning and the social function of it. The writer chose five famous and best memes randomly from the Google picture used keyword “best memes” as sample. The memes are taken randomly based on the needs of this research. Then the memes, as samples, were analysed using critical discourse analysis. Critical discourse analysis itself can be defined as “above the sentence” or “beyond the sentence”. It means it’s not only about the structure of the sentence but also about the meaning and the power behind the sentence. Finally after analyzing it, the writers found that memes are created with many purposes not only based on humour but also for express somebody’s feeling or even to give sarcasm to others.

Keywords: *Critical Discourse Analysis, Memes*

INTRODUCTION

In globalization era, almost every people in the world are using internet, whether it is for communication, searching information, or just entertaining themselves. Internet also becomes the biggest source of the social media. Many social media are built to make people easier in communicating but social media are created not only to communicate with friends but also to share people’s daily activities, share the music that they listened, and even share the pictures.

The purposes of sharing those kinds of things are also varied, it can be just to show off, to sell things, to make humour, or even to provoke people. Those kinds of purposes are also appeared in the memes that people usually share in the social media. Memes itself is pictures that consist of image/s and text which have many

meanings. In order to know the meaning inside the memes, the writers conduct this research. The writer proposes a research question: “what are the purposes of the memes?” and “what are the deep meaning of the memes?” The purpose of this study itself is to know the purpose and the deep meaning of the memes. The writer used a critical discourse analysis to get the answer of those questions.

Discourse is any kinds of text whether it is written or spoken, and visual description that unified whole. So, it can be concluded that discourse analysis is a method to analyse any kind of written and/or spoken text, and also the visual description. Besides the writer, there are also some other writers that analysed this kinds of study. First related study has been done by Abdul Aziz TurhanKariko from English Department of Binus University in

2013 with title *Analysis on Internet Memes Using Semiotics*. He studied five random memes specially only on images that contain characters and humour-based captions, these memes are posted anywhere on the internet from 4chan.org or 9gag.com, and they are even shared by users on social media network Facebook (Kariko, 2013).

He conducted the study to know the relationship between images, text, and meanings connect with each other to form social messages, political, universal emotions, or even just to be funny and entertain its users. He found out that memes contain humour, as well as reflecting universal emotions, social message, cultural message and many more. The difference between Kariko's study and this study is Kariko limit his sample only in humour-based memes meanwhile this study did not limit its sample. This study not only use humour-based memes as sample but also other kinds of memes.

The second related study has been conducted by Brandon Eychaner from Truman State University in 2013 with title *Memos and Humour: A Linguistic Analysis*. This paper seeks to explore several topics, including a possible cognitive model of humour, the linguistic features of a specific meme paradigm, and integration between the cognitive models of humour and the study of meme humour. In this experiment, 10 random images were taken from the top 100 memes of each type under inspection for 30 total images.

The results seem to indicate a significant relationship between the type of meme and the average subjective humour associated with each type. The difference between Eychaner and this study is in the method of the study. Eychaner used experimental method to conduct his study

meanwhile the writer used critical discourse analysis as a method to find out the deep meaning of the memes.

The third related study has been conducted by Ryan M. Milner from Communication Studies and the Graduate Faculty of the University of Kansas with title *The World Made Meme: Discourse and Identity in Participatory Media in 2012*. This study is a dissertation that focuses on better understanding of discourse and identity in participatory media through an investigation of memes and the collectives producing them. To answer question of mediated cultural participation, Milner used a critical discourse analytic method and focused on three criteria indicative of cultural participation: processes, identities, and politics.

The results were mixed. First, while the formal processes necessary for making memes were open, they required literacy to engage. Second, while meme collectives were readily and broadly accessible by diverse identities and perspectives, they were gate kept by subcultural insiders who privileged some and marginalized others. Third, while diverse political commentary did occur, it happened in a relatively narrow frame of perspectives. The difference between Milner and this study is in the purpose, this study only wants to find out the deep meaning and the purpose of the memes.

This study is expected to give explanation about the deep meaning of the memes using critical discourse analysis. After knowing the deep meaning of the certain memes, the writer knows the purpose of those kinds of memes. At first the writer will explain about critical discourse analysis and memes itself.

METHOD

This study used critical discourse analysis or CDA as a research design to answer the research question; “what are the deep meanings of the memes?” and “what are the purposes of the memes?”. At first, the writers searched the most famous and popular memes in the internet by searching it in Google picture using keyword “best memes”. After all memes are appeared by Google picture, The writer chose five random memes based on the needs of this research. The memes are randomly chosen by differentiate it on its purposes and the writers had make sure that the memes were already shared by many users in internet. It can be found out by seeing how many times the memes are shared.

Then after found the five memes randomly as the sample of the research, the writer answered the research question by describing the context of the memes. It was done by finding out the meaning of the memes by analyzing the picture and the text in it. After that, the writer found the deep meaning of each memes and the last procedure to answer the research question is found the purpose behind each memes. All data analysis procedure of this research has been done by using critical discourse analysis (CDA).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Critical Discourse Analysis

Discourse is any form of written and/or spoken text or visual description that is unified whole. Discourse analysis (DA) itself is both a theory and a method (Rodgers, 2004). Discourse analysis can be defined as “above the sentence” or “beyond the sentence”. It means it’s not only about the structure of the sentence but also about the meaning and the power behind the sentence. Wodak& Meyer (2001) support

the statement by stated that DA focus not only on texts, spoken or written, as objects of inquiry but a fully ‘critical’ account of discourse would thus require a theorization and description of both the social processes and structures which give rise to the production of a text, and of the social structures and processes within which individuals or groups as social historical subjects, create meanings in their interaction with texts.

Although there is no formula for conducting critical discourse analysis (CDA), researchers who use CDA are concerned with a critical theory of the social world, the relationship of language and discourse in the construction and representation of this social world, and a methodology that allows them to describe, interpret, and explain such relationships (Rodgers, 2004).

Fairclough and Wodak (1997 cited in Rodgers, 2004) offered eight foundational principles of CDA. These principles are a useful starting point for researchers interested in conducting CDA. The principles are: CDA addresses social problems, power relations are discursive, discourse constitutes society and culture, discourse does ideological work, discourse is historical, socio cognitive approach is needed to understand how relations between texts and society are mediated, discourse analysis is interpretive and explanatory and uses a systematic methodology, and CDA is a socially committed scientific paradigm.

Beside those principles, CDA also have some approaches which stated by Deborah Schiffrin (1994). Those principles are: the speech act approach, interactional sociolinguistics, the ethnography of communication, pragmatic approach, conversation analysis, variationist

approach, and systemic functional linguistic (SFL).

Pragmatic approach is used in this study to analyze the memes. Pragmatic is a study of meaning in context. Griffiths (2006) stated that pragmatics is concerned with the use of the tools in meaningful communication, it is about the interaction of semantic knowledge with our knowledge of the world, taking into account contexts of use. Levinson (1983) conclude pragmatic as a study of language use.

Memes

"Meme" comes from the Greek word "mimema" (meaning "something imitated", American Heritage Dictionary) (Gill, 2016). A meme, a behavioral or cultural trait that is passed on by other than genetic means, e.g. by imitation, first coined in 1976 by Richard Dawkins as an example of replicator, information copied in evolutionary process, e.g. habits, skills, stories, or games passed on by imitation (Kariko, 2013). Dawkins described memes as a being a form of cultural propagation, a way for people to transmit social memories and cultural ideas to each other (Gill, 2016). Memes set up their own linguistic context (that is, idiosyncratic symbolic systems), which is readily observed in the image rather than in the language included within the meme (Eyechaner, n.d).

Mememes present image and text to deliver the maker message. All people can make meme using many applications. For example, using imgflip.com website. It's a free online image maker that allows user to add custom resizable text to images. First the maker has to choose the background or the image. The maker can use the image that the website provides or user can use another image by uploading it to the website. After that input the text you want

in the text box. Here is the screen capture of the website:

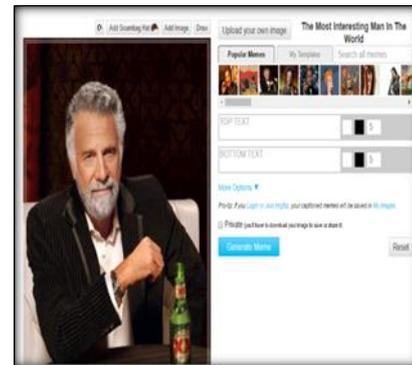


Figure 1. Website contains of memes

Findings and Discussion

There are five memes that the writer selected.

First meme is



Figure 2. First meme

This meme shows the baby who have expression of surprise. The baby's eyes are open wide and his mouth is close, it seems like the baby's is shocked by something. There is also text which writes "that moment when you realize it wasn't a fart". It makes clear that the baby shock because he didn't fart but he pooped in his panties.

The purpose of this meme is just to entertain the internet users. It is humour-based meme. The funny thing from this meme is the expression of the baby. Users

think the expression of the baby is just too cute.

The second meme is



Figure 3. The second meme

This meme shows two adults; a man and a woman, and one baby. They are from different race. The women and the baby are white skin meanwhile the man is a 'black'. At past time in America, there is a significance difference between white people and black people. Black people are identified as low people. The baby in this picture is holding the man's hand and the man is giving his smile to the baby. The baby and the man show a happy face meanwhile the woman do not see the man and look like she doesn't care about the man.

Besides the image of three people, there is also text write "no one is born racist". The text and the image shows that no one in this world are born racist. It can be proven by the image of the white baby who is smiling when holding a black man. This meme is created to persuade people to stop being racist because no one in this world is born racist. They are taught to be racist so stop teaches your generation to be racist.

The third meme is



Figure 4. The third meme

This meme shows three images. First image is a classroom with caption "best place to sleep". Second image is a bed with caption "best place to think" and the last image is a shower with caption "best place to think".

A classroom image with the caption means that many of students feel sleepy when they are in the classroom to study. A bed with caption image means that some of people like lay in the bed and eat snacks. They feel comfortable in laying in a bed while eating. The last image is a shower with the caption means that some people like to think while they take a bath. So it can be concluded that this meme is just to entertain the internet users. It is just like the first sample of this study.

The fourth meme is



Figure 5. The fourth meme

This meme shows a man with a really serious face. He looks like he is observing something very carefully. The image is completed with caption “10-year old girls are crying because they broke up with their boyfriend. When I was 10, I cried because I missed the morning cartoons”.

It shows that this meme is a sarcastic meme. This man use sarcasm when look 10-year old girls are crying for their boyfriend. This meme think those girls are too young to cry over boys.

The fifth meme is



Figure 6. The fifth meme

The last meme shows a man, who known as a candidate of the new president of United States, Donald Trump. He looks like wants to say something with anger. The image of his face added with caption “Says he is going to destroy ISIS. Too scared to speak in Chicago”.

This meme means to be sarcastic to Donald Trump because Donald Trump said that he will destroy ISIS in America if he is chosen as American president. He will deport all Muslim in America; he will not allow Muslim to visit America.

Besides that, Donald trump have said many bad things in his interview, and also in his twitter account. It makes some people feel angry at him especially people in Chicago. Many people in Chicago don't

like Donald Trump and made a demonstration while Donald Trump wanted to come to Chicago to do his campaign. Because of the demonstration, Donald Trump cancelled his campaign. This meme also can be a black campaign from the people who hate Donald Trump. So the supporters of Donald Trump are being decrease.

CONCLUSION

Based on the finding of the research, it can be concluded that the memes for the internet not only be used for humour purposes but also for another purposes. There are other purposes and meanings behind every meme. The writers found out other meanings beside humor-based meme. There is a meme who persuade people to being nice, to keep peace in this world. There is also a meme that being sarcastic and even the writer found out that meme can be used to be black campaign. It depends on the purpose of the makers of the meme whether s/he wants to spread the positive thought or negative thought. Hence by using or creating memes, people can express their feeling and their purposes explicitly to other people in internet.

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