

Conference Paper

Reading "Mukidi": Discourse Representation in Indonesia's New Media Platform

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Abstract

This paper is an Ethnographic Content Analysis (ECA) analyses the viral messages of "Mukidi" in Indonesia's new media platform. It focuses on how the viral messages of "Mukidi" in social media (i.e. WhatsApp) exist in relation to how people, in the WhatsApp, talk about the messages. The results of the research show that "Mukidi" was not just an ordinary message, but also able to represent discourse on social and cultural values through the new media of communication. The theme of viral messages represented by "Mukidi" became the representation of the dynamics of daily life. The implication of such findings is our understanding that discourse is not just present in the mainstream media. Instead it spontaneously offers alternative probabilities in using social media for future communication.

Keywords: discourse, mukidi, new media, representation

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1. Background

According to the market research agency of eMarketer, the population of internet users in Indonesia in 2016 will reach 112 million people, which means more than 50 % of Indonesia's population. Such figure places Indonesia in the 5th rank in the world, beating Japan whose growth of internet user number is declining. Two years later, in 2018, an estimated 3.6 billion people will be accessing the internet, at least once a year [7].

The most significant growth is shown in users who access social media via mobile platforms. In Digital, Social, and Mobile report in 2016, WeAreSocial reported that favorite social platform used by Indonesian netizen is Facebook. The statistics of composition of social media users based on data from WeAreSocial.com, as the three highest orders, are BBM (19%), Facebook (15%), and WhatsApp (14%) [13].

From the statistics previously presented, it is known that social media platform potentially shapes its users' behavior. The viral messages disseminated via social media become a trending topic and form perception of reality. One of the viral messages becoming the topic of debate today is "Mukidi". This study was interested in exploring the construction of meaning of viral message "Mukidi" in shaping the discourse of social and cultural reality representation of Indonesia.

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2. Methods

This research is an ethnographic content analysis (ECA) of viral messages on “Mukidi”. Altheide ([1]; 1996) defines ECA as an integrated method, procedure and technique for locating, identifying, retrieving, and analyzing documents for their relevance, significance and meaning. The overall analytical theory framework for this research and article lies in Stuart Hall’s basic notion of representation. The source of data to be analyzed is the texts of viral messages with the theme “Mukidi”. Meanwhile, as a means of intertextuality, secondary sources; some other texts discussing the discourse, were also used. Krippendorff [9] mentions that essentially all of the reading texts have a qualitative paradigm, despite certain forms of narrative texts converted into numbers.

3. Finding and Discussion

3.1. Representation as a Construction

Hall [6] once wrote that representations are the distortion of reality. Communities come up with different forms of reality. Media corporation system, for instance, brings in reality in the form of graphic programs; news, talk show, reality show, entertainment. Reality built by media may generate particular discourse construction. Language is part of people’s construction. Codes and language former signs appear intentionally in a certain system. In forming excellent culture in an attribute level, way of life, and ideas, language runs on its own process. At the same time, language is, as well, trying to deliver the significance of communication. One of the purposes of language is as a representation system. Language contains elements like signs or symbols (words, writings, notes) that are used to show concepts, ideas, and feelings [6]. The production and sense circulation of culture, including communication activities, brings in language in different ways.

Media is a social institution whose system includes several associating parts. It not only plays role in distributing messages, but it also contains attributes, roles, and constructed rules. Media existence, according to George Gebner, played an importance role in society. This broad “public making” significance of mass media of communications-the ability to create publics, define issues, provide common terms of reference, and thus to allocate attention and power-has evoked a large number of theoretical contributions [11]. Media, in this context, is capable of constructing reality in a more specific form, as well as the reality which is constructed by new media.

3.2. New Media Platform: Scalable Society

Borgerson and Miller [2] stated that the pattern changes of media usage due to social media existence not only provide a new way in communication technology, but also create and motivate different social relations. The variations of new media created a scalable society, a more flexible society in receiving and responding to a message. According to Borgerson and Miller [2]; if some technology arises that allows the possibilities of scalable sociality, which would be the prediction with regards to social media.

Many studies on new media contribution in communication purposes have been performed. Kushin and Yamamoto [8] found out that there was new media contribution to making the voting policy by teenage voters in 2008 American election. O'Reilly [14] proposed that the growth of online political behavior has been facilitated partially by the recent emergence of new interactive, media-rich Web sites. These Web sites, often referred to as social media, exist under the conceptual umbrella of Web 2.0. Web 2.0 Internet networks are valued in proportion to their capacity to harness the participation of online communities in the production, amalgamation, and exchange of information.

Communication pattern brought by social media develops a new environment, which, according to Renninger [17], is known as polymedia environment. Polymedia environment makes it possible for the users to have counter-public communication, the kind of communication having an ability of constructing the interpersonal relationship reality into a public discourse. New media such as smartphones, by a number of media experts, is mentioned as potential media capable of creating augmented reality (AR). Liao [10] stated that, by communicating through AR, users bring in virtual world with real life environment in the form of 3-dimensional technology, real time, and interactive, like what has been trending around, "Pokemon Go". Polledo & Jar [15] revealed the social media usage-tumblr and flickr- to later distribute the illustrated message about "chronically disease".

New media society is a society who develops their own "world". Attributes, roles, and rules of play that occur in this community are all constructed virally. Denton [3] wrote that the community that is created by new media is imaginary community. New media society establishes global orientation with the possibility of individuals from unknown backgrounds as world community to take part in communications and global interactions. The established community is "borderless" with transnational and trans-local form.

3.3. Mukidi : Discourse Representation in Indonesia's New Media Platform

After #*Sonyadepari* and #*Awkarin* became trending topics in different social media platforms, #*Mukidi* came next. Who exactly is Mukidi? How did it become the most talked about topic, and how, in political economy, it became a public discourse will later be explained in this article? Even mainstream media has a special news section about this phenomenon, such as Jawa Pos, Kedaulatan Rakyat, and other online media.

Some of us may associate this name (Mukidi) to a silly and innocent Javanese man. The image of Mukidi has recently become viral on social media and instant group message applications, like WhatsApp. Mukidi comes in as a humorous and ticklish meme. The texts come in narrations like dialogues, and will later be illustrated as "meme"

This character, as its creator, Soetantyo Moechlas, said, is given such silly and bully-able name to make it more familiar with the readers [12]. The story of Mukidi has actually been around for nearly two decades from the 1990s. Around that period of time, Mukidi was one of the most favorite names, as well as Wakijan (Mukidi's best friend); Markonah (Mukidi's wife); Mukirin and Mukiran (Mukidi's two children), Sukilah (one who likes making excuses), Wakilah (Wakijan's wife), Mbah Marto Kapiran (Mukidi's uncle), and his friend, Mbah Karo Mengkono.

The discourse appearing through Mukidi meme is countless. Wiggins and Bowers [21] stated that meme is a combination of *iterated* messages disseminated intentionally among digital culture participants to make conversations "alive". Digital society generates a special digital culture, as what has been confirmed by Jenkins (2009) in Wiggins and Bowers [21].

Memes may come as a collective of other memes and be distributed through different media. The representation generated from iconic Mukidi is a reflection of daily Indonesian citizens' behavior. Mukidi, known to have strong Javanese characteristics, appear with all his innocence, as captured in this dialogue:

Heaven or Hell

Teacher : "Class, who wants to go to heaven?"

Students : (all together) "Me!"

Mukidi : (Sitting at the back, silent)

Teacher : "Who wants to go to hell?"

Students : "No way!"

Mukidi : (Remaining silent)

Group A (49 members)	Group B (21 members)
A: Oh, Mukidi, again and again.	1: This should just be Mukidi group. You guys can't seem to be serious. Mukidi... Mukidi...
B: There, I told you. Paijo will surely lose to Mukidi.	2: Nowadays, Johari is outdated. Mukidi windows is rising.
C: What if we produce batik "Mukidi", we'll earn a lot of money, won't we?	2: No need to abbreviate it as mukidi
D: why don't you just build Mukidi residence, sir?	2: The study method is abbreviated as MUKIDI
C: The payment is complicated; the owner must be Mukidi.	2: Do you have the new Mukidi joke?
B: Mukidi regency, Mukidi housing, Mukidi town house	2: Mukidi... Mukidi... What's the name of a major that starts by M? Mukidi said "Maybe computer application" hahaha, Mukidi's telling nonsense.
E: Thank God I scrolled down, it must all be about Mukidi	

TABLE 1: Conversation comparison in 2 Wags'

Teacher : (Approaching Mukidi) "Mukidi, do you want to go to heaven or hell?"

Mukidi : "None of them, Ma'am"

Teacher : "Why so?"

Mukidi : "Just before my father's death, he told me "Mukidi, no matter what happens, you should go to an ARMY."

The text above shows Mukidi as a naive student trying to define the word "go to" as an activity of applying to a certain institution. Why did Mukidi answer "Army"? The point from the previous dialogue can be taken from this statement "Just before his death, my father told me". Mukidi becomes a reflection that children who live in a culture which constructs parents as role models, will undoubtedly do anything to make them proud. Indonesia is an Eastern country; whose society constructs family relation in a "caring" way.

Mukidi became the topic discussion in these two WhatsApp groups (WAG), group A (49 members) and group B (21 members). The members of these two groups made "Mukidi" one of constructed discourses in a nearly same way. They constructed Mukidi as a representation of a new "presence" in the current Indonesian condition which is still on the transition stage.

The two WhatsApp groups constructed "Mukidi" in a virtually similar way. Mukidi was put as personification for something common and humane. In group A conversation, Mukidi plays as an index to something "brand new" and has its own "market" (for instance in statement C: "What if I sell batik "Mukidi"? Will I earn a lot of money?" Mukidi in a perspective of marketing communication is considered a brand. Brands

are divided into two concepts (1) as potential idea of culture and (2) as a collective cultural idea. Brand in the first concept is like car advertisement, Nike shoes, 501's Levi's [5]. Meanwhile, in the second concept, brand is more to "something" latent behind a product like: branded politicians, branded people, or even branded organic cosmetics [16].

Mukidi is a *brand* with some local accent, but has global access. This means that Mukidi as a symbol is an index to a number of constructions behind it. Context becomes something crucial in framing Mukidi in a discourse. People construct the discourse of Mukidi in comparatively different ways, as the one which is implied in the dialogues of two WhatsApp groups before. Little John [11] once said that discourse is a series of symbols or messages forming language on certain purpose. In this context, language is a crucial item in implying discourse that's being discussed at the moment.

Mukidi phenomenon is a representation of society image that deals with difficulties in the current situation. Mukidi may appear as a specific image character with either settings or different circumstances from local to global. According to an urban sociologist Warouw JW [20], as quoted on *beritasatu.com*, community's interest of Mukidi memes, is a form of critic towards the current situation. Communities personify Mukidi as a certain image or situation. The using of iconic Mukidi is intentionally constructed as a representation to a certain critic. Digital society constructs moral values in textual contexts by making "virtual" standards as reference. The using of "meme" in constructing messages which are later spread virally could lead to explicit deviation. The tendency which comes in digital meme is often in hegemony structural context with conservative herbal content [4]. Discourse in new media field is disruptive, open, and participatory [19].

Mukidi is an index, a symbol becoming the indication of another symbol. An *Index* is a sign which refers to the Object that it denotes by virtue of being really affected by that Object ([18]: 14). The narrated texts in Mukidi is the representation of a certain discourse behind it. It is a suitable discourse for everyday life as we talk and write, and the influence of how "power" works in our society. Take this illustrated text about Markonah's excitement in welcoming Eid as an example:

Mukidi: Makeup Effect

Eid Fitri is coming and Markonah (Mukidi's wife) is interested in buying expensive French cosmetics, but not from the MLM like her other friends. A magical cosmetic which is more expensive than Bobbi Brown, Stila, Mac, as guaranteed by the salesgirl that the woman who wear it will look a lot younger than her real age.

After putting her magical makeup for a couple hours,

Markonah : "Sweetheart, honestly how old do you think I am now?"

Mukidi : (staring at her wife intensively) "From your skin, you're 20, your hair, umm 18 years old, your looks, 25 years old."

Markonah : "Oh, you must be flirting." (blushing)

Mukidi : "Just a second, sweetheart, let me take my calculator and sum it all up."

From the illustration above, like what most Indonesian citizens do in welcoming Eid, they tend to be more interested in constructing it as looking "physically" different than being a good different "person". In the text, Markonah asked, "sweetheart, honestly, how old do you think I am now?", then Mukidi answered, "From your skin, you're 20, your hair, umm 18 years old, your looks, 25 years old." But then he added, "Just a second, sweetheart, let me take my calculator and sum it all up."

If we look at it attentively, the text is full of humor because even though Mukidi obviously assured her wife's 'youth' after wearing one of the cosmetic brands, the next statement shows a slight mockery about his wife's looks. The mockery, in a broader context, implies a representation of women who always want to look younger than their real age. It happens because of the society's gender construction which only accepts women if only they have attractive looks, and Markonah defined it as looking younger. Is Markonah's perception about beauty wrong? It doesn't seem so if we pay attention to cosmetic advertisements contribution such as Bobbi Brown, Stila, and Mac which are categorized as high-end products and are doing their marketing tricks excessively. Markonah is one example of women who got affected with the idea of "looking younger"

4. Conclusion

The emergence of Mukidi in mass communication is constructed based on "needs". Personification attached to the figure in context of social media users becomes an instrument to deliver "response" towards a particular condition or figure. New media provides features to perform transformation in the form of communication. For instance, information field which is exchanged interpersonally more likely becomes a viral message and distributed publicly.

The message distributed through new media platforms, including WhatsApp, is constructed in many different ways. The benefit of distributing messages through applications like WhatsApp, is that they could easily transfer from one protocol to another protocol. Not only will it transfer "different" messages among imaginary society –naming

of internet user society- to the real society, but it will additionally give “interesting topic” to be talked about.

From the research, it can be concluded that, in framing the representation of a certain phenomenon, individuals or settings may occur as personification. The use of “index” is assumed as delivering “critics” more safely towards a policy or condition without considered attacking individuals in an abrupt manner. Nevertheless, in some Mukidi memes, readers could easily catch the index on who Mukidi appears to be.

In a broader stage, the following research may use interpretation of another discourse involving texts with more analysis units and a larger number of quantities. Character representations in textual mainstream media could be extracted from news article, book, TV shows, movie, or magazines. The emergence of meme through visual or visual audio context could also be observed to get a series of representation symbols in generating discourse and other contexts like certain rally campaigns, a campaign involving its communities in either a non-commercial activity or a commercial campaign. Observing comparison in variability stage related to a wider meme spectrum, provides an opportunity to identify another layer of discourse.

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