



The Commodification of Chinese Stereotypes in Humour of Stand up Comedy Indonesia

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Abstract

Various researchers and experts have found that even from the colonial era, the Netherlands have displayed negative Chinese stereotypes through various literary works which show that the Chinese are greedy, like to cheat and steal. At that time, there were also around 57% of Chinese immigrants who worked as a merchant in Indonesia, hence they played a major role in the development of the Indonesian economy. Since then, stereotyping of Chinese ethnicity has been a social reality in Indonesian society, where stereotype means an assessment of someone who is only based on the perception of the group in which the person can be categorized. Nevertheless, Stand Up Comedy Indonesia commodified the stereotype in a form of humour. Using critical discourse analysis Teun A Van Dijk, this article will unveil every text that contains Chinese stereotype and has been commodified in Stand Up Comedy Indonesia. This research found that the humour of Stand Up Comedy Indonesia which has the purpose of "Let's Make Laugh" is now no longer purely just to entertain the public, but there is a new focus on how to change the use value of humour into exchange value, in other words there is a commodification of Chinese stereotypical humour.

Keywords: Commodification; Chinese Stereotype; Humour

Introduction

Humour will always become a part of our lives, for it helps us to relieve tension and unwind the weariness. It has coloured the society through various media such as radio, television, newspapers, internet, and so on. For instance, there is a section named "Humor" in Kompas and "Senggang" in Jawa Pos. While in television, there were comedy programs such as Lenong, Extravaganza, and Bajaj Bajuri.

In 2011, Kompas TV created a program called Stand Up Comedy Indonesia. It is a comedy competition where a comedian jokes about a certain topic while standing in front of many people. In the same year, Metro TV also aired a similar program called Stand Up Comedy Show. Since then, this kind of comedy program has attracted the interest of the public and has its own niche audience.

With the tagline "Let's Make Laugh!", Stand Up Comedy Indonesia has various rounds in the competition and one of them is Guest Star Roasting. In this round, the comedian participants will make a series of jokes and tease a certain guest star. The jokes are presented to invite laughter from the audience with no means of hurting the feeling of the guest star. But, there was a time when Ernest Prakasa became

the guest star. He who is a Chinese Indonesia became the target of the tease and jokes that is filled with so many Chinese stereotypes. Chinese stereotype is a social reality in Indonesian. But sadly it was turned into humour that was delivered by the comedian participants in Stand Up Comedy Indonesia in such a way. This shows how Chinese stereotype was commodified in a form of humour and through television rating, which possess economic dimension. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to reveal the forms of commodification on Chinese stereotypes in the humour of Stand Up Comedy Indonesia.

In addition, this research is expected to contribute to the academic field in new media studies related to commodification, stereotyping, and humour. Practically, this research is also expected to form individual critical thinking in order to understand that humour may have another intention beside to entertain, namely commodification through television rating.

Literature Review

Commodification

Vincent Mosco said that commodification is the process of transforming use values into exchange values. Adam Smith and classical theorists of political economy distinguish between use value which is the value of a product that can fulfill a person's satisfaction with their wants and needs, with an exchange value which is a value based on the ability or price of the product in the exchange process in the market. So that commodification is understood as a process through it, the things we value based on their use are converted into marketable products, or commodities, which are assessed in terms of the prices that consumers will pay to get them (Mosco, 2009).

David Hesmondhalgh argues that commodification involves the process of transforming objects and services into commodities. Basically according to Hesmondhalgh, the production of goods is carried out not only for use but also for exchange. With the development of capitalism, this process involves an ever-increasing exchange in the market in terms of space and time, with money as the medium in the exchange. Hesmondhalgh saw that culture was also commodified through industrialization. The industrialization process increases the intensity or intensifies the commodification of culture (Hesmondhalgh, 2007).

When political economic theorists think about the form of commodities in communication, they tend to start with media content. Specifically, from this perspective, the process of commodification of communication involves transforming messages, from a few data to meaningful systems of thinking, into products that can be marketed (Mosco, 2009). For instance, the writing of various articles in newspaper written as an information which has use value, but then it is traded as a commodity. Advertisements in newspapers also become a high-priced commodity sold by newspaper owners to advertisers. Up to now, new media and digitalisation have increased the commodification opportunity, for it has better storage capabilities and transmission speed.

Stereotype

Stereotype is an assessment of someone who is only based on the perception of the group in which the person can be categorized. Jones and Colman define stereotypes as relatively fixed and simplified generalizations about particular groups or classes. In practice, they generally focus on negative characteristics, not profitable, although some define stereotypes in a positive context as well. (Jones; Colman, 1996 in Kuper & Kuper, 1996). Stereotypes are divided into four, namely: physical, social system, social role, culture and language (Utama, 2013).Widjajanti Darmowijono, a doctoral candidate from the University of Amsterdam in the Netherlands, examined Dutch literary works and found that since the colonial era, the Dutch had displayed negative stereotypes of Chinese ethnicity through various literary works which showed that the Chinese were greedy,deceptive,like to steal(<https://entertainment.kompas.com/read/2008/05/14/19583642/stereotip.negatif.tionghoa.sengaja.dicipta.belanda> accessed on May 15, 2018 at 22:16).

In 1930, there were 105,455 Chinese Indonesian and approximately 57.66% of them worked as a merchant (Suryadinata, 2002). As time goes by, there were also a stereotype that says; Chinese Indonesian has a large role in the economic field in Indonesia (Utama, 2013). In a book written by Abdul Baqir Zein, the words of Mely G. Tan are stated that there are Chinese stereotypes that show that they are rich (Zein, 2000). In addition, Utama also wrote in his journal that there were physical stereotypes in the Chinese ethnicity, which is slanted eyes (Utama, 2013).

Research Methodology

This research uses critical paradigm. The critical paradigm sees that the construction of a reality is influenced by historical factors and the social, cultural, economic, political and media forces concerned. Social criticism related to the emergence of mass culture began at least since the mid-19th century, and in the mid-20th century occurred in Britain with the emergence of more radical (and populist) critical theory as presented by Richard Hoggart, Raymond William, and Stuart Hall (McQuail, 2012). The critical aspect of this research is the critical process of revealing the commodification forms of Stand Up Comedy Indonesia humour.

This study also uses a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is a research that emphasizes analysis on data that cannot be expressed in numbers (quantification). Qualitative research is research characterized by an inductive, interpretive and constructivist mindset (Bryman, 2008). This type of research is discourse analysis of a video where Ardit and Gamayel making some jokes and teasing Ernest Prakasa in Stand Up Comedy Indonesia Kompas TV.

Discourse analysis method is applied in this research, where the researcher is only an observer and is not directly involved in the process of the observed program program. This research method is used to critically observe Kompas TV's Stand Up Comedy Indonesia which is uploaded to YouTube to get various form of discourses that appear during the event. This method serves to clarify every scientific theory about case studies taken by looking for and learning about the types of reference readings such as books, journals, monographs, and so on.

Data in the form of video transcription will be analyzed based on Teun A Van Dijk critical discourse analysis, with the following steps (Payuyasa, 2017);

1. Macrostructure Analysis (Thematic) which refers to the overall meaning that can be observed from the theme or topic raised by the use of language in a discourse.
2. Superstructure Analysis (Schematic) related to introduction, content, and closing in the discourse of the entire text.
3. Microstructure Analysis in depth related to meaning (semantics), sentence arrangement (syntactic), and word choice (stylistic).

Results and Discussion

In the analysis section, the discourse will first be explored and analyzed in the form of video transcription that contains stand-up comedy by Gamayel and Ardit. The analysis was carried out based on Teun A Van Dijk critical discourse analysis, which starts from the macro structure analysis (thematic), superstructure analysis (schematic), and microstructure analysis (semantic, syntactic, and stylistic). Using this guideline, the stand-up comedy humour that contains Chinese stereotypes will be analyzed specifically. At the end of this section, the forms of commodification on Chinese stereotypes will be explored.

Macro Structure Analysis (Thematic)

Macro structure refers to the overall meaning that can be observed from the theme or topic raised by the use of language in a discourse. Stand Up Comedy Indonesia is aired on Kompas TV and also uploaded on Youtube. It has a tagline "Let's Make Laugh". This competition was the first stand-up comedy competition in Indonesia that is broadcasted by television stations. Therefore, this event is considered as the highest benchmark for a career achievement of a comedian in Indonesia. So in this event, the comedian participant namely comics, including Gamayel and Ardit, presented a humour that is not only to entertain the public but also intended to win the competition.

The stand-up comedy that is performed by Gamayel in the Guest Roasting round is titled "Ernest is like a Bencong", while Ardit's is titled "Time for Revenge". The two videos' duration is around 5 minutes. Both of the humour roasting attacked, taunted, and sneered Ernest Prakasa. Gamayel and Ardit produced a variety of humour that invites laughter, as well as attacking Ernest Prakasa with the humour they had prepared beforehand.

Superstructure Analysis (Schematic)

superstructure analysis in this study is related to introduction, content, and closing in the discourse of the entire stand-up comedy presented by Gamayel and Ardit, in the form of humour roasting. Ernest Prakasa himself is an Indonesian Chinese. He is well known with that stature by the public. Based on this fact, Gamayel opened his stand-up humour that is related to Chinese stereotypes. He said,

*"*waving 50,000 paper money before Ernest's face* Aha! Your eyes are open once you see this. They are open widely. So oriental! Ernest Prakasa, a policeman adores him a lot, we are friends. How is Glodok? The money deposit is running swiftly, isn't it?"*

The sentences above are full of deep and implicit meanings, but it is presented just in the name of humour. Gamayel began his jokes strongly, where he emphasized the word "oriental", giving meaning to the cognition or public awareness about Chinese stereotypes. As what is found in the literature review above, such cognitions are racist thoughts that is unconsciously degrading and differing the minority groups, and in this case is the Chinese people. Through this, the discourse meaning of racialism is strengthened and established in a form of humour. Stand Up Comedy Indonesia formed a consensus and justification that racism is not something wrong.

On the other hand, Ardit started his jokes by saying the following,

*"Thank you for everyone who comes. Thank you so much. Ernest Prakasa is one of the founder of Stand Up Comedy Indonesia. *bow respectfully to Ernest Prakasa with Tionghoa gesture* Maybe without him, Stand Up Comedy Indonesia will be better. Don't feel like you're commendable."*

Unlike Gamayel, Ardit started by thanking the audience and briefly explained about Ernest, where later Ardit only touched the stereotypical side of Chinese in a form of gesture.

Superstructure analysis also criticizes the contents of the discourse, which in this section is when Gamayel said,

"Ernest Prakasa is the first Indonesia comic to tour around Indonesia. Amazing. He is also the first comic who use his daughter's education fund. Oh no, he puts his daughter's

education on stake. But fortunately the tour was a success, if it didn't, where will your daughter go study? Roxy?"

Meanwhile, Ardit said,

*"In early 2015, I was in Samarinda and Ernest called me. I was wondering why. Haven't I pay the installment yet? But well I picked it up and on the phone he asked me to call him back right away.... His second stand-up comedy tour is so amazing, it was the first tour that has three show time *clapping respectfully*. But people have no idea that the reason behind it was the auditorium is rented per day, not per hour. This guy is amazing in raising the profit. It's just his pure instinct."*

Once again, both Gamayel and Ardit brought up the Chinese stereotypes that is a social reality, but were presented as a humour that was seemingly has a purpose to entertain the public. As found in the literature review, or specifically in Van Dijk's text theory, minority groups are described and expressed in a convincing manner, appearing to be natural. In this humour, the Chinese stereotypes are told in such a way.

Microstructure Analysis

Microstructure analysis observes in depth the meaning (semantics), sentence arrangement (syntax), and word choice (stylistic) as follows.

1. Semantics

Semantic analysis in Van Dijk critical discourse analysis scheme is categorized as local meaning. In this event, the local meaning can have a plural meaning. Considering that language is used as a medium to bring issues, interests, and also propose opinions.

On the video Gamayel said,

*"*waving 50,000 paper money before Ernest's face* Aha! Your eyes are open once you see this. They are open widely. So oriental! Ernest Prakasa, a policeman adores him a lot, we are friends. How is Glodok? The money deposit is running swiftly, isn't it?"*

The local meaning that has a plural meaning in the sentence spoken by Gamayel above is about money, eyes, and Glodok. The Chinese stereotypical form spoken by Gamayel here was about the Chinese tribe who were often stereotyped as merchants who certainly has a purpose to make money. Gamayel emphasized this stereotype by offering 50 thousand rupiah paper money before Ernest's face. There is also another meaning in this emphasis on money, which is about bribery and doing everything with money. This was expressed by Gamayel when he said that the police adores Ernest, Chinese Indonesian individual. In addition is the word "Glodok", which is a huge department store where most of the merchants are Chinese Indonesian.

It also explains what Utama said in the literature review that stereotypes are divided into four, namely: physical, social systems, social roles, culture and language. The Chinese ethnic group has a social role as merchants in the social system and they also physically have slanted eyes. This is mentioned by Ardit in his joke,

*“But Ernest has one weakness, he will never be a commercial star of eyedrops advertisement. Use Insti, clear vision, tsstt *a gesture of using eyedrops*. Tsst, it slips, the target is narrow, isn't it? Eventually the one that is clear is his mind.”*

Ardit exaggeratedly stated that Chinese people's eyes are so small that even eyedrops couldn't get in. Ardit also displayed Chinese stereotypes that were similar to what Gamayel disclosed about money. Ardit said,

“Ernest's children have strange behavior. Sky, his daughter, asked whether an ant can sit. And this is used by Ernest as his comedy material. I think his daughter is intentionally taught that way. So he can get more money through this. Come on kid, eat this vetsin.”

“.....this guy is amazing in raising profit. It's just his pure instinct.”

In the literature review, Jones and Colman define stereotypes as relatively fixed and simplified generalizations about particular groups or classes, and in practice they have characteristics that tend to be negative. Through the series of sentences that are expressed by Ardit, the Chinese stereotypes form is found in doing everything they can to earn money and profits. This is also underlined by the word “instinct”, that seeking profit is the instinct of a Chinese. These are local meanings that also have a plural meaning, that the Chinese are merchants whose instincts are to make money, profit, while they also have small or narrow eyes.

2. Syntactic

Syntactic analysis is an analysis related to the composition and arrangement of the words of the speaker. The composition and arrangement of these sentences are as well as possible in the hope that the desired goals and objectives can be achieved. The goals and objectives of Gamayel and Ardit were to win this competition, especially in the guest roasting round. So their main goal at that time was to tease Ernest Prakasa through the humour they presented. The following are utterances from Gamayel that reveal Chinese stereotypical forms,

*“*waving 50,000 paper money before Ernest's face* Aha! Your eyes are open once you see this. They are open widely. So oriental! Ernest Prakasa, a policeman adores him a lot, we are friends. How is Glodok? The money deposit is running swiftly, isn't it?”*

*“Is this fake shoes? Let's prove whether these shoes is fake or not. Take it off, Nest, take it off. Let's see if the shoes can stand firm when it is thrown, if it's not then it's fake. *throwing the shoes* Oh it's standing, then these shoes is an endorsement.”*

The forms of Chinese stereotype that are displayed are money, doing everything they can with money, Glodok merchants, and fake item buyers. In addition, Gamayel said the word "oriental", as a reference to Ernest Prakasa who is Chinese Indonesian. While the following Chinese stereotypes that are mentioned in Ardit's jokes are,

“In early 2015, I was in Samarinda and Ernest called me. I was wondering why. Haven't I pay the installment yet? But well I picked it up and on the phone he asked me to call him back right away.... His second stand-up comedy tour is so amazing, it was the first tour

*that has three show time *clapping respectfully*. But people have no idea that the reason behind it was the auditorium is rented per day, not per hour. This guy is amazing in raising the profit. It's just his pure instinct."*

"Ernest's children have strange behavior. Sky, his daughter, asked whether an ant can sit. And this is used by Ernest as his comedy material. I think his daughter is intentionally taught that way. So he can get more money through this. Come on kid, eat this vetsin."

*"But Ernest has one weakness, he will never be a commercial star of eyedrops advertisement. Use Insti, clear vision, tsstt *a gesture of using eyedrops*. Tsst, it slips, the target is narrow, isn't it? Eventually the one that is clear is his mind."*

Various forms of Chinese stereotype that were revealed in Ardit's humour roasting above are stingy, as indicated by the statement "he asked me to call him back right away", which blatantly showed that the Chinese do not want to spend their own money to call, but asking others to call themselves back. In addition, similar to Gamayel, Ardit also showed that Chinese people have an instinct to make money and profit in various ways and on various occasions. Which are in emphasizing the physicality of the Chinese who genetically have slanted eyes and doing a Chinese bow gesture twice.

3. Stylistic

The stylistic study in critical discourse is the study of the choice of words used by speakers in conveying their message, purpose and ideology. The choice of words greatly affects the messages reception the opponent. Rude, smooth, weak, and gentle in language is not only influenced by the intonation of speech, but also the choice of words. Therefore, the stylistic analysis in this study will look at how Gamayel and Ardit chose their words in Stand Up Comedy Indonesia that reveals Chinese stereotypes. The following data and data analysis will be presented, where it is obtained and transcribed from the stand-up comedy of Gamayel and Ardit.

G: your eyes are open once you see this. They are open widely.

G: a policeman adores him a lot, we are friends.

G: he is also the first comic who use his daughter's education fund.

In some data from the transcription above, there is a certain way that Gamayel has in speaking. It emphasized Gamayel's message, intentions and ideology in roasting Ernest Prakasa. Gamayel is not only a comic, but he also has a job as a police officer. He knows a police officer life very well, which is related to money bribery when someone is ticketed. As a policeman, Gamayel wants to reveal that the Chinese he had ticketed on the street has bribed him with money, this shows that the Chinese is likely to achieve everything with money. This was also mentioned by Gamayel in his sentence which said that Ernest Prakasa used his children's education fund.

A: ... he asked me to call him back.

A: ... this guy is amazing in raising the profit. It's just his pure instinct.

A: ... i think his daughter is intentionally taught that way. So he can get more money through this..

The transcription above shows various choices of words that are used by Ardit in speaking and emphasizing the message and purpose in roasting Ernest Prakasa. In its emphasis on Chinese stereotypical

forms, Ardit carried out several repetitions of conveying the message that the Chinese likes to make a profit and certainly do not want lose money. The choice of words and the intonations that are used by Ardit and Gamayel contain messages and intentions to roast Ernest Prakasa, specifically about his ethnic group—Chinese.

Commodification of Chinese Stereotypes

The stereotypes of the Chinese ethnic above are social realities in Indonesian society. The stereotypes include four aspects, namely: physical, social system, social role, culture and language (Utama, 2013). In the literature review, there are also various stereotypes of Chinese that have been mentioned by various researchers before (e.g. greedy, deceptive, like to steal, has a large role in the economic field in Indonesia, rich, has slanted eyes). In the stand-up comedy that was performed by Ardit and Gamayel, they shared humour containing those Chinese stereotypes.

Therefore, Stand Up Comedy Indonesia that is aired on television is seen as an effort to improve ratings, where Chinese stereotypes were commodified in the form of humour, so that they had an economic dimension. David Hesmondhalgh argues that commodification involves the process of transforming objects and services into commodities, which the objects that become commodities here are Chinese stereotypes that are presented in the name of humour.

New media and digitalisation increase the commodification opportunity for communication with its higher ability—storage capability and transmission speed. Simultaneously, the stand-up comedy was also uploaded to Kompas TV Youtube account, which the YouTube video can also be monetized through advertisements and based on how many times the video was viewed.

Reporting from Forbes.com, every 1000 views on YouTube can get as much as 25 cents to 4 US dollars. Gamayel's stand-up comedy video which is the object of this research gets 1.1 million views, which if it is accumulated, the Kompas TV Youtube account will get a profit of around 2.2 thousand US dollars. Whereas up to now, there are 2.4 million video views of Ardit's video, which the profit can be around 4.8 thousand US dollars. This impressive number further explains and proves that there is indeed a commodification of humour, especially Chinese stereotypes.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The stereotypes of the Chinese ethnic above are social realities in Indonesian society. There are various characters from Chinese that have been mentioned by various researchers before. In the stand-up comedy that was performed by Ardit and Gamayel, they shared humour containing similar Chinese stereotypes. The forms of Chinese stereotypes are found in various sentences and gestures that are delivered in their stand-up comedy, including physical stereotypes, social systems, and social roles.

The discourse meaning of racialism is strengthened and established in a form of humour. Stand Up Comedy Indonesia formed a consensus and justification that racism is not something wrong. Through these various texts, minority groups, namely the Chinese ethnic group are poorly portrayed, minority groups are also depicted inappropriately, which is expressed in a convincing manner, appearing to be natural. The humour of Stand Up Comedy Indonesia which has the purpose of "Let's Make Laugh" is now no longer purely just to entertain the public, but there is a new focus on how to change the use value of humour into exchange value, in other words there is a commodification of Chinese stereotypical humour.

Stand Up Comedy Indonesia that is aired on television was seen as an effort to improve ratings, where Chinese stereotypes were commodified in the form of humour, so that they had an economic dimension. Simultaneously new media and digitalization enlarge the commodification opportunity, the video that is also uploaded into Kompas TV YouTube account is monetized through advertisements and based on how many times the video is viewed. Thus, this explains and proves that there is indeed a commodification of Chinese stereotypical humour, in this case commodification is done by the producer of Stand Up Comedy Indonesia and through television and YouTube.

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