

Why is it Funny: Memes About the Film *Pengabdi Setan*

What makes things humorous? A universally accepted definition of humor does not exist (Gulas & Weinberger, 2006 in Warren & McGraw, 2016). Humor, according to Warren and McGraw (2016) is “a psychological response characterized by the positive emotion of amusement, the appraisal that something is funny, and the tendency to laugh (behavioral: laughing, cognitive: appraising something as “funny”, or emotional: experiencing the positive emotion of amusement)” (p.407). As the years progressed, several theories have been introduced to explain the reason behind our laughter and what it is that makes us laugh, for instance, relief theory, superiority theory, and incongruity theory (Berger, 1993; Meyer, 2000 in Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2004). The theory that will be used to analyse this particular issue is incongruity theory.

Based on incongruity theory, people find things that deviate from expectations or that are surprising to be humorous (Berger, 1976, 1993; McGhee, 1979 in Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2004). This theory, with its emphasis on cognition, states that the instigation of humor in the mind of the receiver is caused by the violation of an expected pattern, therefore, in order to experience laughter, a cognitive capacity to pay attention to and understand incongruous events is required (Berger, 1993; McGhee, 1979; Veatch, 1998 in Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2004). The concept of incongruity, however, has been defined differently in various literatures. A few of which are (a) something that is unexpected (i.e., surprise), (b) some contrast of concepts or ideas that do not normally go together, or the simultaneous perception of incompatible elements or perceptions (i.e., juxtaposition), (c) something that is different than what typically occurs, or something different than what is

normally expected (i.e., atypical), and (d) something that departs from beliefs about how things should be, something that threatens your sense of how things should be (i.e., a violation) (Warren & McGraw, 2016).

The issue in the article *Setya Novanto dan Chicco Jerikho Jadi Meme Film Pengabdi Setan* is generally circled around a specific technique of humor that is covered by the incongruity theory known as satire, that is, making a fool of or poking fun at well-known things, situations, or public figures. This is evident from various aspects of the article. The subject of the article itself is about the trending hashtag “#ibusudahbisa”—started by the director of the film on Twitter, Joko Anwar—that encouraged several other social media users to make a parody of the supposedly frightening character in the film *Pengabdi Setan*.

Among the five pictures that were uploaded with the article, four of them depicted the use of satire: a parody of the character in a picture with Setya Novanto (an Indonesian politician infamous for avoiding conviction in corruption cases), another with Chicco Jerikho (an Indonesian actor) in a poster for the movie *A Copy of My Mind*, one among personnel of JKT48 (an Indonesian idol group), and the last one alongside Ryan Gosling in the poster for the movie *La La Land*. The first picture depicted the use of visual surprise, i.e., a sudden unexpected visual or physical change, in which the supposedly frightening character is seen “relaxing” at the beach among other people. The absurdity, satire, and visual surprise in the content of the pictures provided with the article pose as evidence that the humor depicted in this issue is consistent with the approach of the incongruity theory.

References

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