

AN ANALYSIS OF ETHNICITY REPRESENTATION IN STAND-UP COMEDY

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Abstract

Recently stand-up comedy has increased popularity in Indonesia. A lot of Indonesian comedians who are very talented act in stand-up comedy competition held by KOMPAS TV. These comedians attract the audiences through their verbal humor. One of the many functions of stand-up comedy, apart from entertaining, is dealing with current issues and topics which many people in society are concerned. Some frequently seen topics are, for instance: class, gender, ethnicity or other social differences, etc. Hence, stand-up comedy can be regarded as a relevant topic on the study relates to language and culture. Several Indonesian comedians have an intriguing way of portraying their characters linguistically; especially when they change their speech depending on their own character's ethnic background and involve their ethnic humor in their performance to represent certain ethnic groups. Ethnic humors usually involve stereotyping. Stereotype can help one to identify certain groups. This study investigates how certain ethnics are stereotyped in Stand-Up Comedy Indonesia season 4, a competition held by Kompas TV Indonesia in 2014. The data were collected from two shows of two different comedians. The comedians characterize two different ethnic groups in Indonesia: Betawinese and East Indonesian. The result of the analysis shows that their jokes in their performances are influenced by the ethnic backgrounds of the comedians.

Keywords: ethnic, humor, stand-up comedy, stereotype

i. Introduction

Humor is a common part of human language, it is shown from the phenomenon that humorous conversations are frequently used by people in a daily life. Humor and language are narrowly related. Linguistic and cultural competence are required in humor. A good comedian must have both a linguistic competence to make the listeners laugh while delivering jokes in her/ his own language and a cultural competence to avoid a misperception to the listeners who might have a different culture. A joke might be funny in one culture but it can even be considered inappropriate and offensive in another culture. Therefore, a good understanding of other cultures is required in telling jokes and it also plays a significant role in perceiving humors.

There are a lot of ways in delivering humors. It is divided into verbal and nonverbal. One of the types of verbal humor is Stand-up comedy. Stand-up comedy has gained popularity in the USA since the 18th century. A Stand-up comedian is usually known as a comic. The comic's monologue contains brief jokes or humorous stories. Apart from entertaining, the other function of stand-up comedy is presenting numerous issues and topics concerned by many people in society, such as politics, gender, ethnicity, religion or other social differences. Several issues which are frequently told are ethnic humor and stereotype.

According to Wiseman and Gonzales (2005) ethnic humor is defined as humor in which "perceived behaviours, customs, personality, or any other traits of groups of its members by virtue of their specific sociocultural identity". Davies (1990) also states that the most common targets in ethnic humor "live on geographical, economic, linguistic edge of the society or culture where the jokes are told, live in small communities, or rural areas on the periphery of a nation, are immigrants concentrated in blue-collar occupations. "in a multicultural society, ethnic humor is more dominant in minority groups because their need for social cohesion is stronger. Majority groups that are not forced to choose between acculturation already maintain a strong sense of ethnic identity. Nuswiro (2012) provides an example that a minority group such as East Indonesians in Java must try to assimilate into the Javanese way of life, they will use ethnic humor as a means of

trying to maintain their ethnic identity and traditions while the assimilation process occurs. Ethnic humor represents a way to maintain cohesiveness within their culture.

Gonzales and Wiseman (2006) also states that how ethnic jokes are perceived is influenced by many factors. One of them is ethnic identification. Ethnic identity refers to the degree to which an individual is influenced by, committed to, and positively evaluates one's ethnic group. In ethnic humor, humor may be used intentionally to conceal an offense to another culture. Individuals who significantly identify with their ethnic group may ethnic humor directed at their group offensive and not funny. Therefore, the listener's orientation toward the target of the humor should have an effect on the perception of the humor.

Leveen (1996) proposes four basic combinations in relation to joke relationship. This relationship deals with the membership of the joke teller or the hearer regarding the ethnic group discussed in the joke. They are:

1. Group member telling a joke to another member
2. A member telling a joke to a non-member
3. Non-member telling a joke to a member
4. Non-member telling a joke to a non-member

Additionally, Leveen (in Nurwanto, 2012) points out that these combination may be complicated in some different ways, especially if there is an interethnic audience present, which is common in stand-up comedy. Depending on the joke, the comedian can shift from member to non-member.

Stand-up comedy has commonly used ethnic humor which leads to ethnic stereotypes. Ethnic humor is usually applied to minimize the bad impact of some ethnic stereotypes which are considered negative. Stereotypes are narrowly related to ethnic groups. According to Hilton (1996) stereotype is belief about the characteristics, attributes, and behaviors of members of a certain group. Stereotypes also emerge in response to environmental factors, such as different social roles, group conflicts (Robinson, 1995) and differences in power. (Fiske, 1993). Other times stereotypes emerge as a way of justifying the status quo or in response to a need for social identity. In other words, they emerge in various context to serve particular functions necessitated by those context.

Stereotypes function to people understand how to interact with others. According to Leveen (in Jakoaho and Marjamaki, 2012:29), using a derogatory stereotype about a person's ethnicity can be viewed as a sense of pride when sharing a joke with people from other backgrounds. In line with Leveen. Rappoport (in Nurwanto, 2012:147) states that using ethnic humor as a way of showing pride in one's group identity.

Stand-up comedians use stereotypes and ethnic humor to minimize any negativity effect from stereotypes. Ford and Tonander (2012) state that one of the main features of stereotypes is to simplify the understanding of other people by giving information about them based on group membership. While McGarty et al (in Jakoaho and Marjamaki, 2012) state that there are three guidelines to understand the nature of stereotypes.

1. Stereotypes are assistance to explanations to help one to understand or make sense of a situation
2. Stereotypes are energy-saving tools to reduce the effort of understanding for the hearer
3. Stereotypes are group beliefs shared by people. They should be formed according to established norms and views of these groups and their characteristics.

Indonesia is famous for its wide variety of ethnic groups. The common stereotypes of some Indonesian ethnic groups are from Sundanese and East Indonesian. For example, Sundanese women are considered as a gold digger, they only want to marry a rich man so it will be easy for them to have a lot of money to spend on. East Indonesian are rude and temperamental as they like fighting and easily get angry.

This research focuses on ethnic stereotypes in a stand-up comedy competition called Stand-up Comedy season 4 held by Kompas TV. The show was aired on TV every Sunday at 8-10 PM. The comics chosen from different ethnic backgrounds, they are East Indonesia (Abdurrahim Arsyad/ Abdur) and Betawiness (David Nurbianto/ David).

i. Methodology

This research is in qualitative in nature, it investigates the ethnic stereotypes described in the stand-up comedies. It is also based on description instead of statistical calculation. This research applied a method consisting of three steps namely, collecting, analyzing, and presenting the data (sudaryanto, 1993). The data were collected from the videos of a semi-final and grand final of stand-up comedy Indonesia season 4 which were downloaded from Youtube.com. These videos were then transcribed using broad transcription and were loosely translated. After that, they were analyzed by using the frameworks explained in the previous sections. Nine excerpts from the videos were analyzed in this research.

ii. Findings & Discussion

This section discusses ethnic stereotypes in the comedies presented by the comics. As previously mentioned, there are two comedians representing different ethnic groups. East Indonesian is presented by Abdur and Betawinese by David.

The data are presented on the form of excerpts of transcription. The translation is written under each utterance. The underlined parts are the ones supporting the explanation.

1. East Indonesian stereotype

In Abdur's stand-up comedy, the topic brought is about the characteristics of East Indonesian people. They have dark skin and curly hair living in remote area and disadvantaged regions unlike other more advanced cities in Indonesia such as Jakarta and Surabaya. Abdur is also able to deliver his jokes from his point of view as an East Indonesian.

Excerpt 1

- | | |
|----------|--|
| Abdur | : <i>Tahun ini tingkat kriminalitas di Jakarta terancam akan lebih tinggi lagi kalau saya tidak jadi juara SUCI 4.</i>
<u>The number of crimes is increasing in Jakarta this year, it will be higher if I am not the winner of SUCI 4</u> |
| Audience | : (laugh) |
| Abdur | : <i>Teman- teman, saya punya keluarga datang empat orang berarti kampak di luar ada empat bis.</i>
<u>Dude, four members of my family are coming today. It means there are four buses full of axes outside.</u> |
| Audience | : (laugh) |
| Abdur | : <i>Di bawah bangku situ saya punya mama ada simpan parang, beliau ada tunggu momen itu.</i>
<u>My mom is keeping the axe under the chair, she is waiting for the moment.</u> |
| Audience | : (laugh, applaud) |

Excerpt 1 tells how Abdur is trying to threaten people that something bad and even worse will happen if he loses the competition. He also tells the audience to support him since his family is ready with four buses full of axes even his mother keeps the axe under her chair to show how mean and rude they family are. He is also implying that his family is ready for fighting if they do not get what they want, they will do anything for it even if

they have to hurt others. It can be seen here that Abdur brings the stereotype of East Indonesian people as people who are very mean and temperamental.

Another excerpt shows us East Indonesians are uneducated. Living in remote area limits their chance to get a better education and this condition is becoming worse as they have a big problem with a financial issue. Therefore, this situation leads them to be labeled as uneducated people.

Excerpt 2

Abdur : *Pencuri di timur dapat tangkat dapat pukul sampai busuk, sampai busuk. Pencuri disini dapat foto.dapat syuting, wawancara, masuk tv, masuk penjara fasilitas mewah. Nah makanya orang timur disana pikir-pikir.*

“Ah kita pencuri yang sama tapi kok kita tidak pernah masuk tv heh. Ayo kita mencuri di Jakarta saja.”

Akhirnya mereka datang mencuri disini, dapat tangkap. Alhamdulillah dipukul sampai busuk juga. Karena apa? Mereka tidak masuk tv? Karena mereka ini bukan pencuri yang berijazah.

: In East Indonesia the caught thieves are beaten to death. But here, the thieves are captured, shot, and interviewed on TV even they get the luxurious facility in the prison. Therefore, the East Indonesians are thinking about committing a crime in Jakarta to make themselves appear on TV. So they steal things in Jakarta but get caught and Alhamdulillah they are beaten to death. Why? They are not even reported on TV? Because they do not have a degree certificate.

Audience : (laugh, applaud)

The excerpt tells about how eastern people are treated differently from other ethnic in Indonesia because they are considered as uneducated. Why Abdur says that eastern people do not have a higher education is due to several reasons. East Indonesian face several problems that make them hard to get a higher education. Living in a disadvantaged region and having financial issue are some of the causes. Therefore, most of them work as farmers in their own region even if they go to big cities, people may think that the job that suits most to them is a debt collector. Moreover, it can be assumed that the types of jobs which are suitable for East Indonesian are the jobs which a degree certificate is not required. So that explains what Abdur is implying by saying that East Indonesian do not have a degree certificate.

The next excerpt tells about the condition in East Indonesia which is far left behind and it does not get the attention especially from the government.

Excerpt 3

Abdur : *Media – media di Indonesia isinya keluhan orang-orang Jakarta, kami di timur sampai tahu keluhan kalian disini. Banjir, kelebihan air itu diliput kami kekurangan air luput.*

The media in Indonesia only report the problems of Jakartanese people. We, from the East even know your problem here. Flood seems to be the main issue. Despite the fact that it is only an overflowing water. What about us? We do not have enough water in the east, who cares?

Audience : (laugh, applaud)

In this part, Abdur says the problems faced by East Indonesian are not exposed opposed to other place in Indonesia such as Jakarta. He also states that the problem faced by other places in Indonesia is not as complicated as the problem faced by East Indonesian. He also succeeds to present one of the stereotype of East Indonesia as a place with a serious water problem especially a shortage of clean water. Therefore, he criticizes that the problems in East Indonesia should get government's attention to treat East Indonesia equal to other cities in Indonesia.

East Indonesian is also stereotyped as overconfident even though they do not have a pretty face. In Abdur's comedy, he talks about how an East Indonesian's appearance is and compares to an Indonesian famous actor who has a good look. He describes East Indonesians' appearance based on what they wear and how east Indonesian people look by comparing them to a handsome actor coming from Jakarta, Iko Uwais.

Excerpt 4

Abdur : *Film-film Indonesia sering mendiskriminasi orang timur. Kalau Iko Uwais berperan jadi orang timur gampang, tinggal jemur dia di panas pake baju merah, celana biru kaos kaki kuning sepatu hijau terus joget bombastic terus selesai. Tapi kalau orang timur jadi Iko Uwais itu susah. Kalaupun main dengan Iko Uwais pasti jadi tukang pukul, pegang parang terus bilang "hei kau stop tipu-tipu aku heh!"*

Abdur : Indonesian movies always discriminate East Indonesian. It is easy for Iko Uwais (an Indonesian famous actor) to play a role as an East Indonesian, he only needs to have a sunbath, wears a red t-shirt, blue pants, yellow socks, and green shoes then do a bombastic dance. On the other hand. It is hard for East Indonesian to play a role as Iko Uwais even when they are in the same scene, they will be a bad guy holding an blade and say "hey you, stop tricking me!"

Audience : (laugh, applaud)

From the explanation above, it can be seen that Abdur's comedy shows differences of the physical appearance between East Indonesia and other parts of Indonesia. His jokes present irony thus explaining that East Indonesian are very confident by wearing colourful outfit which is assumed that it does not match to their skin colour. Abdur also implies that having the physical appearance such as dark skin, curly hair makes them hard to be part of movie cast even if they join it the most suitable part for them is playing a role as a bad guy who likes fighting.

2. Betawinese Stereotype

Betawinese is an ethnic group and the native population in Jakarta. Unfortunately, the rapid development and migration demolished the native Betawinese to suburban even outside of Jakarta. They are commonly stereotyped as talkative, uneducated, and poor. They are also associated with bad things such as lazy and narrow minded. Moreover, in David's stand-up comedy, some of these characters are shown through David's way of talking. He always uses a loud voice with a Betawinese accent. Below is an excerpt that shows how Betawinese people are very talkative, they like talking a lot. David illustrates that Betawinese people especially the elderly talk a lot. Once they talk no one can stop them, so we can compile the speech into a history book.

Excerpt 5

David : *luh ma bikin PR aja nanya-nanya nenek gua, nenek-nenek orang betawi kaga bisa ditanya. Pertanyaannya satu jawabannya buku sejarah.*

David : You just give yourself a homework if you ask my grandmother, it is impossible for you to ask Betawinese grandmothers because if you ask one question they will give you an answer like a history book.

Audience : (Laugh)

In the following excerpt, David pretends to be a rider of motorbike taxi. He implies that the job suits him since Betawinese people are stereotyped as uneducated people so they only deserve a blue collar job.

Excerpt 6

David : *David ngomongin Jakarta? Ibarat kata nih, tukang ojek ngomongin rute, udah di luar kepala.*

David : David talking about Jakarta? It is just like a rider of motorbike taxi talking about a route. He knows a lot more than anyone else.

Audience : (laugh)

Betawinese people are also stereotyped as people who likes talking rudely. They just say what they want to say without being offensive. This excerpt below shows how David's mom says something considered rude but actually it implies how the line pops in her mind and it is said directly.

Excerpt 7

David : *nyai kita ditanyain enjoy Jakarta. "Biji mata loe meletak!" Beras abis, listrik nunggak*

David : Our mom is asked about enjoy Jakarta? "Your eyes ball are broken!". The rice is out of stock, we haven't even paid the electricity bill.

Audience : (Laugh)

The next excerpt talks about the poverty which is one of the major problems faced by Betawinese people. David says that even there is a big event in their own region they cannot afford to buy things there since they do not have enough money. So the only thing that they can do is watching people shopping.

Excerpt 8

David : *Ada yang pernah ke PRJ (Pekan Raya Jakarta)? masyaALLAH. kita orang betawi mah miskin jarang kesono. Tiket masuknya 30rb. Gua punya ponakan 15 biji. Gua punya duit gopek. 30 x 15 udah 450rb. Sisa tinggal gocap mau ngapain? Ya udah kita nontonin orang belanja.*

David : Has anyone here ever been to PRJ (Jakarta Fair)? masyaALLAH, we are poor Betawinese people, we rarely go there. The fee entrance is thirty thousand rupiahs. I have fifteen nieces but I only have five hundred thousand rupiah, the amount of money that I have to spend is four hundred and fifty thousand rupiahs, it means I only have fifty thousand rupiah left. Well, we can only watch people shopping.

Audience :(Laugh)

Excerpt 9 describes another stereotype of Betawinese people. Besides identified as uneducated and poor people, a Betawinese is described to be religious. It can be seen from the outfit that they always wear such as, a muslim cap and sarong. The outfit is usually worn when they go the mosque for praying. This characteristic is becoming very strong since a hero from Betawi called Si Pitung always wears a muslim cap and sarong. In this following excerpt David imagines himself to be one of the best singer in Indonesia, Sandi Sandoro. It is believed that they look alike. In his comedy, David implies it is impossible for him to play a role as Sandi Sandoro since if he joins the trio called Trio Lestari he will be wearing a muslim cap and sarong and it looks awkward.

Excerpt 9

David : *Gua kaga pantes meranin sandi sandoro, kalo gua masuk trio lestari ntr begini nih,(menunjukkan gambar dirinya menjadi anggota Trio Lestari) kalo yang lain ga papa, lah kalo gue pake peci ama sarung.*

David : I do not fit to play a role as Sandi Sandoro. If I join Trio Lestari, it will be like this (showing a picture of him in the group of Trio Lestari). The others look okay but I will be wearing a muslim cap and sarong.

Audience : (laugh)

iii. Conclusion

This paper investigates two stand-up comedies performed by two comics of different ethnic group in Indonesia namely East Indonesia and Betawinese. Based on the analysis above, it can be concluded that the jokes presented are influenced by their ethnic background. A certain issue their ethnicity are facing is brought as a topic in their comedies to raise people's awareness. For example, East Indonesians with inequality in national development issues and Betawinese with ethnic and religious issue. Both comedians also represent their ethnic group which means that although the jokes are based on several stereotypes, their jokes show the pride in the comedian's ethnicity. In addition, it is important to have a good understanding of different ethnic groups in Indonesia to comprehend jokes in stand-up comedy.

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