UNDERSTANDING THE CHARACTERISTICS OF MADURESE THROUGH THEIR ETHNIC HUMORS

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Abstract

Ethnic humor is one of the most popular humor in Indonesia. The most favored ethnic humor among Indonesian is the ethnic humor of Madura, despite the fact that the number of ethnics in Indonesia is abundant. This article will discuss about Madurese ethnic humor. The goal is to seek out its characteristics. The target of this study is to find out the characteristics of Madurese ethnic humor, both in terms of form, content and function. From the discussion, it was found that humor, contained in the texts of humor Madura, cannot be regarded as ethnic humor as found in other cultures in the world, which is dangerous and has the possibility to create negative impacts and conflicts. Madurese ethnic humor is humor about Madura, which is made by the Madurese themselves, or by others, that serves as entertainment rather than as a tool to criticize.

Keywords: Humor, ethnic, Madura, Indonesia, culture

Introduction

Ethnic humor is one of the most popular humor in Indonesia. Ethnic humor is a kind of humor that made by a group or its members which contains behavior, customs, personality, or other behavior of another group or its members were seen based on specific socio-cultural identity of the group that makes the humor. (Berger, 2006:135). Ethnic humor is an integral part of expressive culture that reflects the opinions and evaluation of an ethnic to the personality, nature, customs, patterns of behavior and social institutions of other ethnic with standards of their culture. (Shuffelton, 1993:189). Ethnic humor is mostly regional and addressed to a member of a particular ethnicity. (Islahudin, 2010:115)

The most favored ethnic humor among Indonesian is the ethnic humor of Madura, despite the fact that the number of ethnics in Indonesia is abundant. The example of humor text as following could be part of a book, as well as humorous stories “Orang Madura Naik Haji” (Madurese Pilgrimage), (Islahudin, 2010:115) and can also be a book of humor, such as the book "Humor Madura" (The Humor of Madurese) (Musa, 2004:30). Despite the fact that the number of Indonesian ethnic is abundant, most well known ethnic humor among Indonesian is Madura and Batak.
ethnic humor. Therefore, this article conducted a study of Madurese ethnic humor. The aim is to seek out the characteristics of Madurese ethnic humor. The target of this research is to find out the characteristics of Madurese ethnic humor, both in terms of form, content and function. From the results of these studies, expected to bring a major contribution to the development of national culture.

Research on Ethnic humor has been done by some scholars, but no one has discussed about Madurese ethnic humor viewed from the aspect of form, content and function. Among the research on ethnic humor, the most complete study has been conducted by Christie Davis, entitled *Ethnic Humor Around The Worlds* (1990). According to his study, Davis discussed the history of the emergence of ethnic humor. He mentioned that ethnic humor had been going on since long time ago, when men and women first began to feel the difference between the two. Moreover, when a feeling of tribalism and ethnic identity emerged, ethnic humor was increasingly popular.

Then, on the function and the theme of ethnic humor, he said that the function of ethnic humor, in addition to mock and to ridicule those who are outside the group, is also to maintain and to strengthen the sense of identity of a person who is in the group. He noted nearly 30 countries, calling the theme of ethnic humor is conflict between stupid-clever. According to this study, in ethnic humor, the theme of dumb-ingenious is the most dominant theme in modern times, although other types of humor are also popular. Ethnic humor allows us to entertain ourselves by lowering the status of other groups. Because of its content vulgarity, ethnic humor is not widely used anymore, instead the humor is often utilized for political purposes, though not very visible.(Berger, 1998:65-73)

As with Davis, this article will also discuss about the aspects of ethnic humor on its function and will seek out the characteristics of Madurese ethnic humor.

**Madurese Ethnic Humor**

In a study of ethnic humor, according to Berger (1998), there are four elements that must be considered. These are the subject of humor, the forms of humor, the technique of humor used to produce something funny, and the theme of humor. (Berger, 1998:65-73) In this subchapter, some Madurese ethnic humor will be analyzed based on the method proposed by Berger. One example of Madurese ethnic humor that will be analyzed is as follows:

*Tole,* “Ton, di Madura tidak ada sekolah TK (Taman Kanak-Kanak).”
*Tono,* “Bohong Kamu, di TV sering saya lihat ada acara anak-anak
Dari salah satu kota di Madura.”

“Itu bukan TK, tapi TNK”

“Kok, TNK?”

“Ya, orang Madura menyebutnya TNK (Taman Nak Kanak).”
Kamalipour (2012) divides the subject of ethnic humor into two, namely ingroup humor, namely the humor of ethnic group about himself and his world through its particular prism of cultural and with its sense of cultural, such as Jewish humor, African humor, American humor, whereas outgroup humor is the humor of ethnic group about another group that is not of its culture, such as the greedy Jews, lazy African and others. However, either ingroup and outgroup humor both use invective techniques addressed to certain racial groups and nations or libelous by lowering attributes of a particular group. Ethnic humor can be categorized as ingroup and outgroup humor with many variations. An outgroup humor tends to parodying the characteristics of other group that deviate from the dominant norms, such as cultural differences in clothing, physiognomy, social traditions, business practices or religious habit. While, ingroup humor, its tone more friendly, group members made a joke for himself and make richer humor and familiar rather than an outsider. (Kamalipour, 1988:127)

If you look at the theory of Kamalipour, humor text above can be inserted into the outgroup humor, because it seems that the humor is not from Madura, as was stated in the preface to his book, “this collection of humorous stories, I called “Humor Madura” (Madurese Humor), but this is not my creation, I only collect stories.” (Musa, 2004:7)

Meanwhile, in the discussion about the shape of ethnic humor, this article uses the theory used by Berger (1998) which says that ethnic humor, in many respects, but not all of them, often forms a riddle (question and answer), though not always. There is also a form of humorous poems, songs, jokes and others (Berger, 1988:65-73) or jokes, which is a short narrative. (Berger, 2001:419) As noted by Berger, apparently the text above also form a riddle. However, in addition, as this form of humor can also be referred to as Pun, as proposed by Raskin (1985) that play on words that are not in the form of puzzles, called Pun. Humor like this, according to him, is in some cultures. (Raskin, 1985:23)

Likewise, in terms of technique, Berger also mentioned that the technique in ethnic humor is a form of insult, mockery, imitation, use of dialect, but what tends to be dominant is informed about ignorance, error, and stereotypes Berger, 1998: 65-73). Based on that, the authors noticed that the techniques used in humor above is the use of dialect. The funny part in humor as it is located at the end, which is the abbreviation TNK (Taman Nak Kanak). This acronym is considered funny, because it is different by its acronym in general. In Indonesia, what usually stands
for Taman Kanak-Kanak (Kindergarten) is TK not TNK. Because in Madura
dialect, there is a habit of calling first piece before mentioning the word in full, i.e.
in the words of kanak is called nakkanak, then the abbreviation TK was being turned
into TNK.

Monro stated that in everyday life, we are aware of things, events, or actions
that we accept as commonplace. If we break down something normal, will cause
something funny. (Monro, 1988:42). Meanwhile, al-Hufi call at-tanaaqud, that
humor occurs because the attitude of a person who is different from the more
common ones. (Lesmana, 2009: 47). This humor can be categorized into Madurese
humor which contains elements of local culture, because there are parts that we will
not find the humor in other cultures, the pronunciation of the word of taman kanak-
kanak into tamannak-kanak, so the acronym became TNK, instead of TK.
Therefore, in order to understand humor like this, according to Raskin, common
experience needed between speakers and listeners. So, there must be
communication between the experience of living among the speakers to the listener.
Otherwise, it would be difficult to feel that something is going to be ridiculous or
funny. (Raskin, 1985:222). People who are outside the Madurese ethnic must have
experience of Madurese dialect that tends to slice few parts of the word before
mentioning it in full.

Furthermore, in the research on humor theme, this article used the Raskin
theory (1985) which argued that ethnic humor text usually is conventional, fictional
and mythological. He added that there is a conflict between the possible and
impossible, the good with the bad. Its expression is simple, usually a distortion of
language that describes the stupidity, avarice and cunning of an ethnicity. (Raskin,
1985:180)

If you look at the theory proposed by Raskin, the theme of humor in the
above text can be said to be conventional, i.e. about kindergarten. This theme is not
only known by Madura ethnic groups, but also by other ethnicities in Indonesia.
Then, the theme also fictional. Basically, it is not true that kindergarten in Madura
is shortened to be TNK, because all schools kindergarten, in general, abbreviated
as TK. In this text there is a conflict between the possible and impossible, in this
case, TK the possible one and TNK is the impossible one. It is impossible to make
an abbreviation with the dialect, but should use the standard language. At this point,
it appears that the theme of this ethnic humor is about the folly of a particular ethnic
group.

However, according to this article, the text of humor above has not shown
sharply on the theme suggested by Berger, named that the theme of ethnic humor
focused on personal characteristics, physical characteristics, beliefs and behavior.
Ethnic humor is created by an ethnic about other ethnic and sometimes to
themselves. Although the contents of ethnic humor offensive, it is somehow not
funny to the group that gets mocked, but ethnic humor is often viewed as an
alternative in a way to avoid physical attacks or violence. The humor, by some
people, may be used as a tool to express their hostility and anger verbally is better
than using violence (Berger, 2001: 419)
Another example of Madurese humor is as follows

Polisi, “Hei, Tukang Becak, kamu salah jalan, Goblok, kamu nggak memperhatikan rambu-rambu jalan.”
Tukang Becak, “Siap, Pak. Saya memang goblok, kalau saya pintar, pasti saya jadi Polisi, Pak.”

(Musa, 2004:23)

Police officer, "Hei, Pedicab driver, your way is wrong, idiot, you do not pay attention to road signs."
Pedicab driver, "Yes, sir. I am stupid, if I were smart, I would have been the police officer, Sir."

This humor is in the form of questions and answers. The difference between this humor and previous humor is that the emphasis of funny humor lies in the distortion of language, meanwhile the following humor does not. Therefore, although it was categorized as a Madurese humor by collector, but when it is viewed from its contents, it does not reflect elements of local knowledge at all. Such humor could have happened in other areas and the humor is also common for people to hear. For example, the subject of police and pedicab driver, the subject is conventional, especially in areas where there are pedicab transports. Such story we hear often times or read texts humor in other cultures in Indonesia. Likewise, judging from his words, there are no words indicating a particular dialect of the tribe and the distortion of language. Scolding word of goblok (stupid) and designation in the elderly Pak (Sir), is a common word, instead of specific words used by particular ethnicity.

Likewise, from its genre point of view, in the absence of the part that shows the characteristics of certain ethnic could also be said that humor is not an ethnic humor. Although the existing techniques commonly used in the texts of ethnic humor, the contrasts between stupid and clever, according to Davis, the theme contained in ethnic humor is between dumb and smart, clean and dirty, greedy and generous, cowardly and brave, egalitarian and hierarchical, ordinary people and educated people, proud and silent, raw and sophisticated, lazy and industrious, majority and minority, center and surface, within groups and outside groups, static and dynamic, white and colored, matching foods and foods that do not match. (Berger, 1998: 65-73).

What makes the text above funny, is the answer of the pedicab drivers who said that I am stupid, if I were smart, I would have been the police officer. Hufi mentioned this humor as at-takallushu al-fakihu, that humor occurs because someone smart is looking for an answer, when the person is in a tight squeeze (Lesmana, 2009: 48). Because he gets mocked with the word stupid, then pedicab driver then replied with such answer. Another part that can be considered funny is the word, ready, Sir. Here we see there is an element of intent of pedicab driver to
taunt the police, because a police officer does not deserve such word to be said by a pedicab driver. Typically, these words are used by a police officer to other fellow police officer who has higher rank. Raskin categorized such humor into the intended humor, that humor occurs, because the speaker was meant to be funny or was attempted to be funny. So, this humor was deliberately created. The aim was to mock, to deride, and to laugh. (Lesmana, 2009: 43)

Another example of humor is regarded as Madura ethnic humor is humor that takes the subject, the background or the language of the area but the contents of a general nature, as well as the following

Brudin, “Boo, sampeyan, sudah untung, saya mau janji. Kalau tidak, kan tidak ada yang sampeyan harapkan.”

(Musa, 2004:27)

Bank employee, “I have come several times to collect your debt liability, you just always gave promises.”
Brudin, “Hei, you, have already become beneficial, at least I have given a promise.
Otherwise, do nothing you expected.”

In humor above, there is an effort of the creator of humor to include words that are usually used by Madurese, like boo, sampeyan or the name of Brudin that humor can be incorporated into the genre of Madurese ethnic humor, but based on its contents point of view, it does not reflect local knowledge of the area. Such humor is usually also used by other ethnicities. To enter this humor into other ethnic categories, the words can be easily changed into the desired ethnic dialects. Based on all three examples of humor above, this humor is the most numerous.

Therefore, despite the fact that it is in the text of humor, it does not always cause the humor funny as found in the first example. What makes this text funny is not because of the dialect or distortion of the language, but because of the other part, namely words: have already become beneficial, at least I have given a promise. Otherwise, do nothing you expected. This shows the contradiction between dumb and smart, as proposed by Davis previously. In this case, the bank employee who is considered stupid, and Brudin is considered clever, because it can evade the debts charged to him. Another part that makes this text funny is in the first place where the word of good luck is located. Bank employee who does not successfully collect debts on Brudin, said good luck. Hufi call this humor as al-qalb wa al-aksu, that humor occurs because someone tossing and turning or opposes a state with another state (Lesmana, 2009: 48)

In addition, the words of bank employee: I have several times come to collect your debt liability, but you just always gave promises. Then, Brudin’s
answer of have already become beneficial, at least I have given a promise. Otherwise, do nothing you expected is not an expected answer by the bank employee. Hufi mentioned humor like this as al-ijaabah Ghair al-mathluub, that humor occurs because someone answered questions with answers that are not desirable (Lesmana, 2009: 48). If the answer of Brudin, for example, was Sorry, I cannot pay now, maybe two weeks, this text would have not been funny. This was confirmed by the opinion of the psychiatrist who say that people can laugh when words or phrases are said to be unrelated, the answers given do not match, one meaning is changed to another, and the abstract meaning converted into concrete meaning. (Lesmana, 2009: 49)

Conclusion

Based on the analysis above, this article assumes that Madurese humor, both of which are part of the book, and of the book, cannot be regarded as ethnic humor as found in other cultures. Ward said that among the type of humor, ethnic humor is a dangerous humor. An ethnic humor is intended for other ethnic groups. (Ward, 1999: 47). Therefore, the comedian is not recommended to use this type of humor. A funny humor, when it is said to be in a particular ethnicity, can be seen as an attack to the other ethnic groups. While, Houdmon said that ethnic humor, particularly in matters related to the organization, has the potential to create negative impacts and conflicts, ethnic humor therefore be avoided in workplace (Houdmont, 2012: 84). According to this article, an Madurese ethnic humor is humor about Madurese, which is made by the Madurese themselves, or by others, whose content is more likely in the nature of entertainment rather than as a tool to criticize

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