Humor in Ludruk: between Insults and Compliments

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Abstract: This research aims to elaborate the construction of humor in ludruk. To that end, a ludruk show entitled Goro-goro Kartolo aired by a local TV station in East Java, Jawa Pos Televisi Surabaya (JTV), is used as the source of data. Ludruk shows are known for their unique features, one of which is the humorous contents. Humor in ludruk comes both in verbal and nonverbal form. While verbal humor is constructed by making use of the conversation between ludruk performers; nonverbal humor is delivered through physical motion made by the performers. In this research, however, the analysis is limited only on verbal humor that is constructed through conversations made by ludruk performers. Basically, humor is intentionally constructed to create comical impression. In order to evaluate how humor is constructed, analysis was performed on the compliance and violation of principles of politeness. The analysis shows a predominance of conversations that violate and satisfy the approbation maxim and modesty maxim. It is concluded that the compliance and violation of both maxims are generally achieved through the use of insults and compliments made by performers either to themselves or to others.

Keywords: ludruk, humor, principles of politeness, approbation maxim, modesty maxim.

1. Introduction

Ludruk is a type of traditional art performance that can be classified as a folk theater. Ludruk makes use of many elements, including motion (imitation of motion), dance, kidung, music, and story.

The art of ludruk grows and thrives in East Java region, specifically in Jombang, Surabaya, Malang, and the surrounding areas. Ludruk was originally only performed as a mute theater containing dances. Ludruk has then undergone dynamic improvements, in terms of its main elements and supporting elements such as dances, musics, and verses. These improvements also affected the way the show itself was called.

In around the 13th century, ludruk was a show performing physical attractions of self-hurting. This type of ludruk was called ludruk bandan. Ludruk bandan was part of healing ceremony. It presented stories about the struggle against colonialism and also about supernatural powers possessed by the ancestors. Then, ludruk bandan developed into ludruk lerok with the addition of music, singing, and verses elements. Story-wise, ludruk lerok no longer presented themes like ancient supernatural powers, but themes of the struggle against the colonialist were still used. The next phase of development was from ludruk lerok into ludruk besut with the addition of the element of remo dance. In ludruk besut, the main story presented was still about the nationalism and struggles against colonialism, but with the addition of a story about the daily life of Pak Besut. Pak Besut was characterized as a commoner that was economically and politically oppressed. Afterward, ludruk besut developed into ludruk panggung, which had its name from the way this show was performed on a stage (panggung). Here, the stage was introduced as a new element added to the show. The stage served as a boundary between the performers and the audience. Up to the period of ludruk panggung, stories about struggling against colonialism were still presented as the main topic.

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Nowadays, ludruk shows make use of electronic media such as radio and television. For ludruks that utilize electronic media, the show is presented in the form of cassette recording, compact disk (CD), and also social media such as Youtube, so that it can be repeatedly played.

Jawa Pos Media Televisi Surabaya (JTV) is one of the TV stations that air ludruk as one of its programs. The program is entitled “Goro-goro Kartolo” and has aired on JTV since 2012. However, even before that, the show itself has already aired under the title “Ludruk Kartolo” from 2004 to 2011. The development of ludruk from time to time does not seem to change its nature to always deliver a certain message in every story it performs. The stories were performed through verbal exchange between the ludruk performers during the whole show. Here, humor is used as a strategy in delivering a message to the society.

Humor can make the audience feel amused, thus provoking laughter. In ludruk, humor is constructed both verbally and nonverbally. As aforementioned, while nonverbal humor may result from the motions and dances, verbal humor comes from the conversation between the performers. The example of verbal humor is as shown in the following conversation,

**T:** Iya arep bahagiakna aku iki kapan, kapan wong ngganteng? Hm?
‘Yes, when will you make me happy, o you handsome one? Hm?’

**S:** hehe wong ngganteng potonganku koyok bekingking ngene wong ngganteng, kon delok teka bolongan sedotan ta?
‘hahaha how could you call a snail-look person like me handsome, or perhaps you are looking at me from the end of a straw?’

The above conversation, taken from ludruk show “Goro-goro Kartolo” episode Berfantasi, shows that humor arises in Sapari’s (S) utterance that insults himself by using a metaphor comparing himself to a snail. Sapari’s utterance with self-directed insult satisfies the maxim of modesty stated in the principles of politeness. Using the analysis on the compliance and violation of principles of politeness as shown above, this research will describe further how humor is constructed in ludruk.

### 2. Theoretical Review

Several researches have been conducted on humor and ludruk, one of which is. In their research, analyzes the violation of cooperative principles and the violation of politeness principles that result in an implicature containing humor in the conversations in Ludruk Kartolo.

On that account, this research positions itself as a complement of the previous research on humor in ludruk, as it features a deeper analysis on how humor is constructed in ludruk through sentences uttered by ludruk performers in their conversations. In addition, the source of data used in this research is also a novelty. In the previous research, the source of data is in the form of compact disc recording, while in this research, the source of data is ludruk TV show entitled Goro-goro Kartolo aired on JTV.

In order to understand the construction of humor in ludruk, an analysis was performed on the compliance and violation of principles of politeness. The principles of politeness comprise the tact maxim, generosity maxim, approbation maxim, modesty maxim, agreement maxim, and sympathy maxim. The object of this research is conversations containing the element of humor, by either complying or violating the principles of politeness.
Humor in this research is defined according to the comicality basis, which states that humor may provoke laughter if it has the following characteristics: 1) surprising, as the result of an unpredictable expression, 2) capable of outwitting people, 3) violating a taboo, by expressing words that are considered inappropriate according to the local norms, such as those related to sex, 4) presenting bizarre or unusual things, 5) irrational and illogical, 6) contradictory to the reality, 7) containing mischievousness to tease other people, and 8) containing double-meaning words.

3. Data Analysis and Discussion

From the analysis, some compliances and violations of principles of politeness are found, in attempts to construct humor in ludruk. The humor is constructed from the compliance and violation of principles of politeness based on the comical action. Humor arises from the compliance and violation of maxims in the principle of politeness, including the tact maxim, generosity maxim, approbation maxim, modesty maxim, agreement maxim, and sympathy maxim.

According to the data, there is a predominance of the compliance and violation of approbation maxim and modesty maxim in the construction of humor. Generally, a conversation that satisfies the approbation maxim contains a compliment that is directed to the interlocutor. The compliment is delivered in such an exaggerated way that it creates an impression that the speaker is teasing the interlocutor. Meanwhile, a conversation that violates the approbation maxim contains an insult directed to the interlocutor. A conversation that satisfies the modesty maxim presents the modesty of a character in ludruk as reflected by self-directed insults, while a conversation that violates the modesty maxim presents the arrogance of a character in ludruk. The two maxims are approbation maxim and modesty maxim.

The approbation maxim advises a speaker to limit insults but add more compliments to other people. This maxim is well satisfied in the following conversation:

Situation: the conversation is between Lupus (L) and Kartolo (K). Lupus compliments Kartolo’s appearance that looks unusually more authoritative.

L : ... sampeyan kok malih koyok tiyang ngeten modele. Sampeyan macak sugih niku benten loh pak.
L : ‘... how come you appear like a fine gentleman. you look different when you appear like a rich person’

K : seje rek, wong sugih
K : ‘of course it is different, I am rich’

L : sik coba sampeyan mlaku, hmmm. lho ya
L : ‘let us see how you walk. well, now.

Lupus pays a compliment to Kartolo (K) for his unusual look. The humor in this conversation arises from the compliment given by Lupus to Kartolo, “Sampeyan macak sugih niku benten loh pak.” Lupus’ utterance is intended to tease Kartolo.

Meanwhile, a violation of approbation maxim also occurs in the episode of Kartolo Nglamak, as seen in the following conversation:

Situation: the conversation is between Wito (W) and Kartolo (K). Wito describes Kartolo’s physical traits that he knows of.
In the above conversation, Wito violates the approbation maxim by describing Kartolo physical appearance that is fat as a pig. Humor in the conversation arises because Wito uses a metaphor of a pig’s fat body to describe Kartolo’s fat body in an insulting way.

The modesty maxim advises a speaker to limit compliments but add more insults to themselves. The modesty maxim is satisfied in the following conversation:

Situation: the conversation involves Sapari (S) that is venting to the pengrawit (Pr), i.e., members of the traditional band, about his long life in poverty.

W : lemu kumrusuh ngono
   ‘fatty and plump like that’

K : heh nang kali Dinoyo diluk ngkas
   ‘let us go to Dinoyo river in a moment’

L : lho, lha apa?
   ‘what for?’

K : tak ancup-ancupna
   ‘I will dip you in (that river)’

L : heh wonge lemu, mrusuh koyok babi
   ‘what a fat and tender body, like a pig’

In the above conversation, Wito violates the approbation maxim by describing Kartolo physical appearance that is fat as a pig. Humor in the conversation arises because Wito uses a metaphor of a pig’s fat body to describe Kartolo’s fat body in an insulting way.

The modesty maxim advises a speaker to limit compliments but add more insults to themselves. The modesty maxim is satisfied in the following conversation:

Situation: the conversation involves Sapari (S) that is venting to the pengrawit (Pr), i.e., members of the traditional band, about his long life in poverty.

S : ratune wong mlarat
   ‘the king of the poor’

Pr : Hahaha
   ‘hahaha’

S : ya apa rek, wong mlarat kok onok ratune. wis wis mulai biyen awak dhewe iki kepingin dadi wong sugih kok cek angele, dadi wong mlarat dadi gunemane tangga. Engko nek aku isa mangan ngono iku jare aku berbuat sing ndak-ndak. Isa tuku pakean ngono ae wis, aku sangkakna maling, nyolong. Wis enak ngene mlarat gak kepikiran. Upamane dimalingi ya dimalingi apa. Wong pakeane sak setel tak gawe iki thok.

   ‘how funny, how come there is a king for poverty. Well, I have been trying to be rich, but it was too hard, and being poor will makeme a gossip material. If I get some food, people will say I have done something illegal (to get it). If I buy clothes, people will think I am a thief, stealing. It is better off this way, being
In that conversation, the compliance with the modesty maxim is achieved when Sapari (S) repeatedly insults himself for his poverty. The humor arises due to an unusual thing, i.e. Sapari feels much better with him being poor. This is seen from his utterance that repeatedly insults himself for being poor. This is considered unusual because people in general would like to have a wealthy life.

Meanwhile, the violation of modesty maxim is shown in the following conversation:

Situation: the conversation is between Kartolo (K) and Lupus (L), in which Kartolo is trying to convince Tini and Fatimah that he is a rich boss.

K : *lha iki lek aku tuku gamelan sakyagane barang iki*
   ‘if I had bought this gamelan, I would have bought it along with the (gamelan) players’

L : *kula niki drivere, kula niki supire, niki bos kula*
   ‘I am the driver, I am the chauffeur, he is my boss’

In the above conversation, the violation of modesty maxim is seen when Kartolo is trying to show off by complimenting himself for his extreme wealth that he could have bought a set of gamelan along with the players. This is affirmed by Lupus’ (L) utterance that introduces himself as a driver and Kartolo as his boss. Humor in this conversation arises due to Kartolo's irrational and illogical arrogance that he could have bought a set of gamelan along with the gamelan players. In fact, gamelan players are not tradeable like the gamelan.

4. **Conclusion**

   In ludruk conversations, the principles of politeness are deliberately complied with and violated in order to construct a humor. According to the comicality basis as mentioned in page 2, humor in ludruk is generally constructed based on unusualness and mischievousness in order to tease other people.

   Humor constructed in ludruk conversations tends to use a form of insult, which is directed either to oneself or to other people, and a form of arrogance by making exaggerate compliments. A conversation with such elements is in general made by ludruk performers deliberately to create an unusual condition that provokes laughter.

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