Humour as a Reflection of Linguistic Intelligence in the Indonesian Language within the Islamic Cultural Context

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Abstract

This study delves into the intricate interplay of humour, psycholinguistics, morphology, themes, rema, and language intelligence in the Indonesian language context. Employing a detailed analysis of seven humorous texts, the research dissects linguistic constructs that emphasize abrupt contextual shifts and cognitive disruptions as the core of Indonesian humour. By investigating the strategic use of themes and rhema, this study reveals how humour often arises from semantic illusions, morphological play, and phonological ambiguity that challenge the reader's expectations. Through a psycholinguistic lens, it highlights the cognitive processes involved in humour comprehension, demonstrating the pivotal role of language intelligence in detecting and appreciating linguistic incongruities. Additionally, the study connects these humorous strategies to broader Islamic cultural values, such as adab (etiquette), ikhlas (sincerity), hikmah (wisdom), and amanah (moral responsibility), showing how humour reflects ethical communication embedded within Islamic civilisation. The research concludes that humour in Indonesian is a linguistic phenomenon and a reflection of cultural and spiritual intelligence, emphasising how language structure and religious values converge in crafting and appreciating comedic expression

Keywords: Linguistics Humour; Themes and Rema; Indonesian Language Intelligence; Islamic Cultural Context; Systemic Functional Linguistics

Introduction

Humour, as a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon, has greatly interested linguists, psycholinguists, and researchers for many years. Its exploration extends to linguistics, psychology, and even cultural studies. The study of humour has undergone significant advancements in recent years, uncovering new insights into how humour functions within linguistic and psycholinguistic frameworks. Within the Indonesian Muslim community, humorous practices have developed within the framework of Islamic culture, making humour not merely a communication tool but also a reflection of religious, ethical, and cultural values. In the Indonesian Muslim community, such humour is often embedded in religious sermons, pesantren conversations, and digital da'wah content.

Humour is fundamentally tied to language, and its linguistic underpinnings are pivotal in creating and interpreting humorous content. Attardo points out that humour often relies on linguistic structures, such as incongruity, surprise, and violations of expectations[1]. Additionally, psycholinguistic research has delved into the cognitive processes that underlie the perception and production of humor, shedding light on the mechanisms that make certain linguistic constructs amusing[2].

Within the Islamic cultural context, humor is not judged

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[1] Salvatore Attardo, *The Linguistics of Humor: An Introduction* (Oxford University Press, 2020).
[2] A Lopez and J Vaid, *Psycholinguistic Approaches to Humor* (Routledge, 2017).

merely by its comedic effect, but also by its alignment with Islamic values and ethics. Good humor contains wisdom (hikmah), does not offend others, and conveys moral messages[3]. Among scholars and kiai (Islamic clerics), humour is often used as a rhetorical strategy to convey religious teachings in a more engaging and relatable way[4]. From a civilizational perspective, humour can also be seen as a product of Islamic civilisation in the Indonesian context—an expression of Islamic values blended with local wisdom. Pesantren humour, for example, reflects a unique cultural communication style that showcases verbal intelligence and represents how Indonesian Muslims balance spiritual piety with social openness[5].

In his theory of Multiple Intelligences, Howard Gardner identifies linguistic intelligence as the capacity to use words effectively in oral and written forms. This intelligence includes sensitivity to word meanings, rhythms, sounds, and the ability to manipulate language in context. In the case of humour, individuals with high linguistic intelligence can produce wordplay, irony, satire, and verbal wit with skill and contextual awareness[6]. Raskin, through his Semantic Script Theory of Humour (SSTH), argues that humour arises from semantic script opposition, where two conflicting meanings emerge in a single utterance[7]. The ability to trigger such opposition requires a high degree of linguistic competence, not only in terms of vocabulary mastery but also

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[3] Al-Ghazali, *Ihya' 'Ulum Al-Din [Revival of the Religious Sciences]* (Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-Ilmiyah, 2005).

[4] Zulkifli, *Sufism in Java: The Role of the Pesantren in the Maintenance of Sufi Traditions in Java* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).

[5] A Azra, *The Origins of Islamic Reformism in Southeast Asia* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004).

[6] H Gardner, *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (New York: Basic Books, 1983).

[7] Victor Raskin, *Semantic Mechanisms of Humor* (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publishing, 1985).

socio-cultural awareness[8].

This research aims to delve deeper into humour's linguistic and psycholinguistic aspects, focusing on texts that employ changes in linguistic elements to generate humour. The research will incorporate both global and local elements in linguistic humour[9]Examining how the incongruity theory of humour, as manifested in written discourse it impacts the reader's understanding and amusement[10].

The study of humour is not merely an academic endeavour; it has practical implications for language and communication. Understanding the mechanisms that underlie linguistic humour can contribute to developing more effective communication strategies, language teaching techniques, and applications in fields such as marketing and advertising. Understanding linguistic humour is vital in an Indonesian context, where humour is deeply ingrained in daily communication, especially through social media. Indonesian culture has a rich tradition of humour, encompassing wordplay, puns, and linguistic surprises[11]. Analysing humour within the linguistic and psycholinguistic domains will not only provide valuable insights for Indonesian linguists but will also contribute to a broader understanding of how humour operates in diverse cultural contexts.

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[8] Victor Raskin, "The Demise of The Joke," *HUMOR* 36, no. 2 (2023): 197–205.

[9] Salvatore Attardo, *The Routledge Handbook of Language and Humor* (Routledge, 2020).

[10] J. C. Meyer, "Humor as a Double-Edged Sword: Four Functions of Humor in Communication," *Communication Theory* 10, no. 3 (2000): 310–31.

[11] R Y Yuwana and D Angelianawati, "Kecerdasan Budaya Berbahasa Indonesia: Penemaan Humor Bahasa," *PT Akselerasi Karya Mandiri ...* (Merauke: PT. Akselerasi Karya Mandiri, 2024), https://e-publisher.my.id/index.php/ptakm/article/view/penerbit.fill.my.id%0Ahttps://e-publisher.my.id/index.php/ptakm/article/download/penerbit.fill.my.id/53.

The primary objectives of this research are as follows: 1) to investigate how linguistic and psycholinguistic elements contribute to the creation of humor in written texts; 2) to analyze the impact of linguistic changes in generating humor and amusement; 3) to explore the role of morphological features, themes, and sentence structure in linguistic humor. The selection of humorous texts in this study was not random. Each example was chosen based on its linguistic richness and potential to demonstrate the interplay between theme–rheme structures, morphological manipulation, and psycholinguistic incongruity. The primary criteria for selection included:

The texts exhibit subtle or overt linguistic play, such as lexical ambiguity, morphological shifts, or contextual misalignment, reflecting deeper structural patterns relevant to psycholinguistic and functional linguistic analysis. Cultural and Communicative Relevance: Most examples were drawn from Indonesian digital culture, particularly social media, where humour circulates widely and reflects contemporary societal norms, expectations, and critiques. These texts serve as modern reflections of how Indonesians engage with language to entertain, persuade, and comment on social life. Clarity of Humour Trigger: All chosen texts demonstrate a clear trigger mechanism for humour, be it semantic contradiction, morphological punning, or pragmatic disruption, which makes them suitable for structured linguistic analysis. Variability in Humour Strategy: The data set includes diverse humour strategies (e.g., punning, literalism, incongruity, irony), providing a broad representation of the types of humour circulated in Indonesian discourse, and allowing the analysis to explore how different linguistic devices operate across contexts.

The humour texts were purposively sampled to illustrate how Indonesian speakers utilise language intelligence to encode

meaning, create cognitive dissonance, and engage the audience in playful reinterpretation. This strategic selection aligns with the study's aim to reveal how humour reflects broader patterns of language use in Indonesian society, particularly in ways that engage both structure and interpretation. Moreover, it is often considered an essential part of human communication. It serves multiple functions, such as enhancing social bonds, relieving tension, and conveying complex ideas in an accessible and entertaining manner[12]. The Incongruity Theory of Humor posits that humour arises from incongruities, or disparities between what is expected and what occurs[13]. This incongruity theory serves as the foundation for understanding linguistic humor.

This discovery affirms the significant emotional impact inherent in the composition of national anthems, serving to influence and persuade their audiences. In the context of the emotional resonance evoked by figurative language, it becomes imperative to delve into the underlying structure of meaning. Sukardi and Yuwana emphasize the need for this study. Researchers present information to readers and listeners in the form of clauses, with crucial information often positioned at the beginning, known as the theme[14]. The structure of a clause that embodies the textual meaning, particularly the information system, is referred to as the theme structure[15], as noted by Yuwana,

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[12] J. R. Martin and D. Rose, *Working with Discourse: Meaning Beyond the Clause (2nd Ed.)* (Continuum, 2007).

[13] J. M. Suls, *A Two-Stage Model for the Appreciation of Jokes and Cartoons: An Information-Processing Analysis* (Academic Press, 1972).

[14] M I Sukardi and R Y Yuwana, "Iklan Dan Film Sebagai Solusi Penunjang Penanaman Minat Membaca Usia Dini," 2017, 929–37, https://publikasiilmiah.ums.ac.id/xmlui/handle/11617/8948.

[15] Sol Kim, "'Butter Balla Here!': The Functions of Humor in Primary English Classrooms in Korea," *English Teaching* 76, no. 3 (September 30, 2021): 115–37, https://doi.org/10.15858/engtea.76.3.202109.115.

Santosa, and Sumarlam.

Complementing the theme is the theme, which extends the preceding information[16]. Together, these components constitute thematic-theme structures. According to Halliday and Matthiessen, the thematic structure is integral to characterising a clause as a message[17]. Tomasowa emphasises that the rheme-theme structure explicitly manifests the textual component of the text, particularly in the thematic organisation of message delivery[18]. The thematic structure provides insight into how elements of the ideational metafunction are arranged in sequences conveying messages and information within clauses. To identify these elements of message delivery and information transmission, textual analysis is employed, drawing from the framework of Systemic Functional Linguistics[19] as well as Thompson[20].

Linguistic humour relies on various linguistic devices, including puns, wordplay, incongruity, and surprise. Attardo highlights the significance of themes and rhemes in linguistic humour[21]. The shift from the norm, often achieved through linguistic manipulation, can evoke laughter. Humorous texts are

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[16] Rawuh Yuda Yuwana, Riyadi Santosa, and Sumarlam Sumarlam, "Dasar-Dasar Strategi Humor Indonesia Memanfaatkan Pengalaman Berbahasa Cak Lontong," *Bahasa Dan Seni: Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra, Seni, Dan Pengajarannya* 47, no. 1 (December 19, 2019): 44–57, https://doi.org/10.17977/um015v47i12019p044.

[17] M. A. K. Halliday and C. M. I. M. Matthiessen, *An Introduction to Functional Grammar* (London: Arnold, 2004).

[18] F. H. Tomasowa, *Analisis Klausa Bahasa Indonesia: Pendekatan Sistemik* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 1994); H Subiyanto, "The Complexity of Functional Syntactic Structures of Sarcasm Expressions," *Leksema: Jurnal Bahasa Dan Sastra* 4, no. 2 (2019): 123–34.

[19] Martin and Rose, *Working with Discourse: Meaning Beyond the Clause (2nd Ed.)*.

[20] G. Thompson, *Introducing Functional Grammar (3rd Ed.)* (Routledge, 2014).

[21] Attardo, *The Linguistics of Humor: An Introduction*.

replete with linguistic surprises that challenge the reader's expectations, thus creating amusement[22].

Psycholinguistic research provides valuable insights into how humour is processed by the human brain. Meyer emphasises that humour often involves cognitive processes such as pattern recognition and mental flexibility[23]. Humour triggers specific cognitive reactions, including the sudden recognition of incongruities and the subsequent resolution of these incongruities, leading to laughter. The cognitive mechanisms that underlie humour comprehension have been a topic of extensive research[24].

As an integral part of linguistics, Morphology plays a role in constructing humorous expressions. Word formation, morphological manipulation, and the creation of neologisms can lead to humorous interpretations[25]. Morphological elements contribute to the linguistic surprises that are fundamental to humour[26]. However, cultural elements significantly influence the creation and interpretation of humour. Different cultures have unique forms of humour, and understanding these nuances is crucial[27]. In Indonesia, a rich tradition of humour, including linguistic play and puns, has shaped how humour is expressed in

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[22] R Giora, *On Our Mind: Salience, Context, and Figurative Language* (Oxford University Press, 2003).

[23] Meyer, "Humor as a Double-Edged Sword: Four Functions of Humor in Communication."

[24] M Buijzen and P. M. Valkenburg, "Developing A Typology of Humor in Audiovisual Media," *Media Psychology* 6, no. 2 (2004): 147–67.

[25] M. R. Nababan, A. Nuraeni, and Sumardiono, "Pengembangan Model Penilaian Kualitas Terjemahan," *Kajian Linguistik Dan Sastra* 24, no. 1 (2012): 39–57.

[26] G. Brône, K. Feyaerts, and T. Veale, *Cognitive Linguistics and Humor Research* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2015).

[27] Yuwana and Angelianawati, "Kecerdasan Budaya Berbahasa Indonesia: Penemaan Humor Bahasa."

the language and daily communication.

Several preceding studies in this research have employed diverse data sources. For instance, Faradi conducted an analysis of the discourse from the 2014-2019 presidential election debate, which was linked to discourse learning in educational institutions[28]. Similarly, Usman explored the speech of the West Lombok Regent, associating it with discourse learning in schools[29]. Furthermore, Wulansari examined a newspaper article titled "What's Up with Monas?" published in The Jakarta Post[30]. It's crucial to note that these three studies utilized the framework of Functional Systemic Linguistics, distinct from the present study's approach.

Method

This research employs a multifaceted approach to investigate humour's linguistic and psycholinguistic aspects in written texts, focusing on texts that use shifts in linguistic elements to generate humor. The methodology explores the role of morphological features, themes, and sentence structures in linguistic humour. It draws upon both qualitative and quantitative techniques to analyse linguistic data effectively.

To conduct this research, a diverse set of texts will be collected from various sources, including social media, literature,

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[28] Abdul Azis Faradi, "Kajian Modalitas Linguistik Fungsional Sistemik Pada Teks Debat Capres-Cawapres Pada Pilpres 2014-2019 Dan Relevansinya Dengan Pembelajaran Wacana Di Sekolah," *RETORIKA: Jurnal Ilmu Bahasa* 1, no. 2 (2015): 233–49.

[29] Hakim Usman, "Pidato Bupati Lombok Barat Atas Rekomendasi Pansus LKPJ DPRD Dan Relevansinya Dengan Pembelajaran Wacana Di Sekolah: Kajian Linguistik Fungsional Sistemik," *Litera Jurnal Bahasa Dan Sastra* 1, no. 2 (2015): 159–73.

[30] Atsani Wulansari, "Analisis Wacana 'What's Up with Monas?' Dengan Pendekatan Linguistik Sistemik Fungsional," *Transformatika: Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra, Dan Pengajarannya* 12, no. 2 (2016): 29–45.

and written communication. These texts will be chosen for their potential to exhibit linguistic humor through shifts in context, theme, or morphological constructs. Transcription and Compilation: The selected texts will be transcribed and compiled into a research corpus. This corpus will form the basis for the subsequent linguistic analysis.

The research will conduct a thematic analysis of the collected texts to identify themes and their subsequent shifts, especially those that create humorous effects[31]. The analysis will focus on identifying the thematic structure in humorous texts. Furthermore, morphological elements in the text, including word formation, neologisms, and linguistic surprises, will be analysed[32]. The research will investigate how morphological features contribute to humorous interpretations and linguistic shifts. Besides, the psycholinguistic analysis will delve into how readers perceive and process humour. It will explore cognitive mechanisms, such as incongruity resolution[33]. Eye-tracking and reaction time measures may be employed to investigate the cognitive processes involved in humour perception[34].

Moreover, a sub-analysis of the cultural aspects of humour will be conducted, with a specific focus on the Indonesian context[35]. This will provide insights into the unique linguistic and cultural elements that shape humour in Indonesia. Data

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[31] Attardo, *The Linguistics of Humor: An Introduction*.

[32] Nababan, Nuraeni, and Sumardiono, "Pengembangan Model Penilaian Kualitas Terjemahan."

[33] J. P. Meyer and N. J. Allen, *Commitment in the Workplace: Theory, Research, and Application* (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, 1997).

[34] Buijzen and Valkenburg, "Developing A Typology of Humor in Audiovisual Media."

[35] Yuwana and Angelianawati, "Kecerdasan Budaya Berbahasa Indonesia: Penemaan Humor Bahasa."

interpretation combines qualitative and quantitative techniques. Thematic and morphological analyses will be primarily qualitative, while psycholinguistic analysis may involve quantitative measures.

Result and Discussion

Results

1st Data

Membaca setengah jam per hari itu sama dengan membaca 30 menit per hari.

(Reading half an hour per day is the same as reading 30 minutes per day.)

Clause 1:

Membaca (Reading)	**setengah jam per hari (half an hour per day)**	**itu sama dengan (is the same as)**
Theme	Theme	Rema
Marked Topical	Marked Topical	

Clause 2:

membaca (reading)	**30 menit per hari. (30 minutes per day.)**
Theme	Rema
Marked Topical	

2nd Data

Anda tahu, kenapa bom atom dijatuhkan di Hiroshima dan Nagasaki? kalau tahu, cerita dong.

(You know, why were atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki? If you know, please tell (us).)

Clause 1:

Anda (You)	Tahu (know)
Theme	Rema
Unmarked Topical	

Clause 2:

kenapa (why)	bom atom (atomic bomb)	dijatuhkan di Hiroshima dan Nagasaki? (were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki?)
Theme	Theme	Rema
Interpersonal & Marked Topical	Unmarked Topical	

Clause 3:

Kalau (if)	tahu ((you) know)
Theme	Rema
Textual	

Clause 4:

Cerita (tell (us))	dong. (please.)
Theme	Theme

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Marked	Textual
Topical	

3rd Data

Jangan membalas budi, karena belum tentu Budi melakukannya.

(Don't repay a kindness, because Budi may not necessarily do that.)

Clause 1:

Jangan (Don't)	**membalas budi (repay a kindness)**
Theme	Rema
Marked	
Topical	

Clause 2:

karena belum tentu (because may (be) not)	**Budi (Budi)**	**melakukannya. (do that)**
Theme	Theme	Rema
Textual	Unmarked	
	Topical	

4th Data

Yang penting bagi pemimpin adalah "n", karena tanpa "n", pemimpin hanyalah pemimpi.

(The important thing for a leader is "n", because without "n", a leader is just a dreamer.)

Clause 1:

Yang penting bagi (The important thing for)	pemimpin (a leader)	adalah "n" (is "n")
Theme	Theme	Rema
Marked Topical	Unmarked Topical	

Clause 2:

karena tanpa "n" (because without "n")	Pemimpin (a leader)	hanyalah pemimpi. (is just a dreamer.)
Theme	Theme	Rema
Textual	Unmarked Topical	

5th Data

Di Inggris dan Amerika, orangnya tidak pernah minum dan mandi dengan air, karena di sana air itu adalah udara.

(In England and America, people never drink and bathe with water, because there, the water is air.)

Clause 1:

Di Inggris dan Amerika (In England and America)	orangnya (people)	tidak pernah minum dan mandi dengan air (never drink and bathe with water)
Theme	Theme	Rema
Marked Topical	Unmarked Topical	

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Clause 2:

Karena (because)	**di sana (there)**	**air itu (the water)**	**adalah udara. (is air.)**
Theme	Theme	Theme	Rema
Textual	Marked	Unmarked	
	Topical	Topical	

6th Data

Jangan suka ngurusi orang lain, karena belum tentu orang itu ingin kurus.

(Don't interfere with other people because those people may not necessarily want to lose weight.)

Clause 1:

Jangan Don't)	**suka ngurusin orang lain (interfere with other people)**
Theme	Rema
Marked	
Topical	

Clause 2:

karena belum tentu (because may (be) not)	**orang itu (those people)**	**ingin kurus. (want to lose weight.)**
Theme	Theme	Rema
Textual	Unmarked	
	Topical	

7th Data

Jangan mengarungi lautan, karena karung lebih cocok untuk beras.

(Don't sail the seas because bags are more suitable for rice.)

Clause 1:

Jangan (Don't)	**mengarungi lautan (sail the seas)**
Theme	Rema
Marked	
Topical	

Clause 2:

karena (because)	**karung (bags)**	**lebih cocok untuk beras. (are more suitable for rice.)**
Theme	Theme	Rema
Textual	Unmarked Topical	

Discussion

1ˢᵗ Data

Clause 1:

The marked topical theme in Clause 1 is "*Membaca* (Reading)", indicating the activity of reading, and "*setengah jam per hari* (half an hour per day)" provides additional information, establishing a seemingly formal recommendation. "*itu sama dengan* (is the same as)" is the rhema element in Clause 1. Rema provides information that explains or adds to the topical theme. It

sets up a comparative statement, prompting readers to expect a different perspective.

Clause 2:

The marked topical theme in Clause 2 is "*membaca* (reading)" referring back to the reading activity from Clause 1. "*30 menit per hari* (30 minutes per day"* is the rhema element in Clause 2. Rema provides information that explains or adds to the topical theme. It mirrors the first time reference numerically.

The Illusion of Logical Equivalence: When "Half an Hour" and "30 Minutes" Become a Punchline

This data reveals how humour can emerge from a linguistic illusion, where two identical time expressions, "half an hour" and "30 minutes," are framed as if they represent two different durations. The joke reflects the reader's expectation of meaningful contrast, only to deliver a redundancy disguised as a serious claim.

The humour in the comparison between Clause 1 and Clause 2 lies in the abrupt change in the amount of time used for reading. Clause 1 sets an expectation that reading for half an hour per day is a good or serious standard. However, Clause 2 suddenly changes the duration to only 30 minutes per day, which is shorter. This contrasts two-time measures that are supposed to be serious and makes it sound absurd.

The comparison between the two clauses also involves morphology and sentence structure. Clause 1 uses the phrase "*setengah jam per hari* (half an hour per day)" with a longer and more formal structure. On the other hand, Clause 2 uses a shorter and simpler phrase, "*30 menit per hari* (30 minutes per day)." This

difference in morphology and sentence structure alters the reading experience and creates a contrast that invites laughter.

From a psycholinguistic perspective, the humour hinges on expectation violation. The brain processes the first clause and prepares for new information in the second, but instead, it's caught off guard by a redundant restatement. This incongruity triggers amusement when the reader recognises the absurdity.

The humour in this case is related to understanding the sudden changes in time associations and differences in morphology and sentence structure. Language-intelligent readers will quickly recognise these changes and grasp the absurd contrast between the two clauses that are supposed to be serious. They will realise that Clause 2 creates a tickling contrast by altering the time and blurring the serious meaning that might be expected from Clause 1.

By using psycholinguistic and morphological approaches and considering the pattern of thematic use in relation to Indonesian language intelligence, we can better understand how sudden changes in time associations and differences in morphology and sentence structure create humor by disrupting the reader's expectations and making a sharp change in meaning. The language intelligence of readers is reflected in their ability to recognize these changes and sense the absurd contrast between two clauses that are supposed to be serious.

Moreover, the humor plays on time redundancy, which may seem trivial, but time in Islamic tradition is considered a divine trust (*amanah*). The absurdity of debating over equivalent time durations humorously mirrors how people may lose sight of barakah (blessing in time), emphasizing that quality of action is

more valued than mere counting of time, echoing the Qur'anic principle of *amal shalih* (righteous deeds), regardless of duration.

2nd Data

2nd Data

Clause 1:

The unmarked topical theme in Clause 1 is "*Anda* (You)", which refers to the listener or reader of the sentence. "*tahu* (know)" is the rhema element in Clause 1. Rhema provides information that explains or adds to the topical theme. It continues the idea of personal engagement or casual knowledge-sharing.

Clause 2:

Interpersonal & Marked Topical Theme: Clause 2 begins with "*kenapa* (why)", indicating a question about the reason or cause of an event. "*Bom atom* (atomic bomb)" is the unmarked topical theme in Clause 2. It sets a serious tone. "*Dijatuhkan di Hiroshima and Nagasaki*? (dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki?)" is the rhema element in Clause 2. Rema provides information that explains or adds to the topical theme. It brings a sharp shift to a historically tragic event.

Clause 3:

Clause 3 begins with "*kalau* (if)" indicating a conditional or conditional relationship. It continues the conversational structure. "*Tahu* ((you) know)" is the rhema element in Clause 3.

Clause 4:

The marked topical theme in Clause 4 is "*cerita* (tell (us))", indicating that the speaker will provide additional information. "*Dong* (please)" is the textual theme in Clause 4, serving as an

emphatic word. It adds an informal request, reinforcing the humorous absurdity. There is no rhema element in Clause 4, but it implies that the speaker will tell something.

Sudden Shift from Casual Talk to Tragic History: Humour Through Drastic Contextual Juxtaposition

The humour in this data lies in its sharp and unexpected shift from a casual, friendly opener to a historically weighty and tragic topic. This sudden contextual contrast plays on the reader's cognitive dissonance, where informal conversation introduces a topic that would typically require solemnity and respect, thus creating an absurd and humorous effect.

The humor in the comparison between Clause 1 and Clause 2 and Clause 3 and Clause 4 lies in the sudden shift in context. Clause 1 is an introductory sentence that doesn't explain anything. Readers may anticipate serious information or questions in Clause 2. However, Clause 2 suddenly poses a serious and weighty question about why atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.The pattern of theme usage in both clauses is crucial in creating humour. Clause 1 begins with an unmarked topical theme referring to the listener. Language-intelligent readers may anticipate a serious continuation. However, Clause 2 abruptly changes the theme and presents a question that dramatically alters the context.

Humour in this case is also related to understanding the sudden context shift. Language-intelligent readers will quickly recognise this shift and sense the absurd contrast between Clause 1 and Clause 2. They will realise that the speaker suddenly poses a serious question after a meaningless beginning. Understanding this humour depends on the reader's sensitivity to context shifts and social expectations. Language-intelligent readers recognise that

the tone and gravity of Hiroshima-Nagasaki do not fit with a casual "if you know, tell me" frame. The jarring contrast triggers a humorous interpretation by subverting expectations. The sentence structures are simple and familiar, heightening the shock when paired with historically sensitive content. The juxtaposition is conceptual and morphosyntactic, reinforcing the cognitive dissonance that leads to amusement.

Clauses 3 and 4 imply using language as a humour tool. Clause 3, starting with "kalau tahu (if (you) know)" creates the expectation that the speaker has serious knowledge to share. However, Clause 4 simply says, "cerita dong (tell (us), please)" which creates a humorous effect by exposing the mistaken expectation of serious information. Using theme and rhema theory and considering theme usage patterns in Indonesian language intelligence, we can better understand how the sudden shift in context creates humour by disrupting the reader's expectations.

This joke contrasts frivolous speech with a weighty historical tragedy. In Islamic ethics, speech (qawl) must be appropriate to context and intention. Humour here implicitly critiques the misuse of words for triviality, reminding that language carries moral weight, aligning with prophetic teachings such as "Speak good or remain silent" (HR. Bukhari-Muslim).

3rd Data

Clause 1:

The marked topical theme in Clause 1 is "J*angan* (Don't)", which gives instructions, commands, or prohibitions. "*Membalas budi* (repay a kindness)" serves as the rhema in Clause 1. Rhema provides information that explains or adds to the topical theme. It initially appears as a moral or ethical suggestion.

Clause 2:

Clause 2 starts with "*karena belum tentu* (because may (be) not)" indicating a cause-and-effect or explanatory relationship. "*Budi* (Budi)" is the unmarked topical theme in Clause 2, not prominent in the previous sentence. Now, it is clarified as a proper noun. "*Melakukannya* (do that)" is the rhema element in Clause 2. It provides information that explains or adds to the topical theme. It adds a humorous reinterpretation to the prior clause.

Lexical Ambiguity as a Source of Humour: When "Budi" Is Not Gratitude

This data reveals a humorous twist based on lexical ambiguity, particularly the double meaning of "budi," which can refer to gratitude and a person's name in Indonesian. The humour is born from the reader's misinterpretation, which is abruptly corrected in the second clause, creating a punchline rooted in semantic surprise. The first clause invites the reader into a familiar cultural maxim, "don't repay a favour too quickly," but the second clause undercuts this maxim with a literal reading: Budi, as a person, might not do the same. This reversal creates an unexpected twist that leverages lexical ambiguity and pragmatic misdirection.

Humor in the comparison between Clause 1 and Clause 2 lies in the sudden shift in context. Clause 1 instructs not to repay kindness, which is a serious and socially responsible message. However, Clause 2 suddenly changes the context by stating that "because Budi may not necessarily do the same," creating an absurd contrast between the serious message and the absurd rationale. The pattern of theme usage in both clauses is crucial in creating humour. Clause 1 starts with a prominent topical theme, the command "*Jangan* (Don't)" instructing the reader to avoid specific behaviour. Language-intelligent readers will anticipate a

continuation of a serious message. However, Clause 2 abruptly changes the theme with a paradigm-shifting statement that Budi may not always reciprocate kindness.

Humour in this case is also related to understanding the sudden shift in context and the disruptive use of themes. Language-intelligent readers will quickly recognise this shift and grasp the absurd contrast between the two clauses that are supposed to be serious. They will realise that Clause 2 contrasts a serious message and an absurd statement. This example showcases how linguistic humour depends on the reader's ability to detect and reprocess semantic ambiguity. Readers must revise their initial interpretation of "budi" as a virtue and reinterpret it as a name, which produces the comedic effect. This moment of reinterpretation is a hallmark of language intelligence and psycholinguistic agility.

While the syntax of both clauses is relatively simple, the morphological ambiguity of "budi" carries a deep semantic payload. This dual reading is culturally specific and reflects the richness of Indonesian linguistic nuance, where names and values often overlap in word form. Using theme and rhema theory and considering theme usage patterns in Indonesian language intelligence, we can better understand how the sudden shift in context and disruptive theme usage create humour by disrupting the reader's expectations and making a sharp change in meaning. The language intelligence of readers is reflected in their ability to recognise this shift and sense the absurd contrast between two clauses that are supposed to be serious.

The double meaning of budi, gratitude vs. a person, reflects how culture often personalises moral values. In Islamic culture, *membalas budi* (reciprocating good) is part of *khuluq karimah* (noble character). The joke deconstructs this cultural norm, humorously showing how intentionality and names can mislead

moral interpretation, inviting reflection on sincerity in good deeds (ikhlas).

4ᵗʰ *Data*

Clause 1:

The marked topical theme in Clause 1 is "*Yang penting bagi* (The important thing for)" describing the importance of something. It establishes a serious tone. "*Pemimpin* (a leader)" is the unmarked topical theme in Clause 1. "Adalah 'n' (is 'n')" is the rhema element in Clause 1. It provides information that explains or adds to the topical theme and introduces a surprising and seemingly trivial detail.

Clause 2:

Clause 2 starts with "*karena tanpa* "n" (because without "n")" indicating a cause-and-effect or explanatory relationship. It links the thought. "*Pemimpin* (a leader)" is the unmarked topical theme in Clause 2. "Hanyalah pemimpi (is just a dreamer)" is the rhema element in Clause 2. It provides information that explains or adds to the topical theme.

A Single Letter Makes the Difference: Humor Through Morphological Wordplay

This data showcases how a single morphological unit, the letter "n", can shift the meaning of a word—and, by extension, the entire message—from one of authority to one of illusion. The humour arises from this playful manipulation of word formation, where the removal of a single phoneme turns "*pemimpin"* (leader) into "*pemimpi"* (dreamer).

Humor in the comparison between Clause 1 and Clause 2 lies in the abrupt change in context. Clause 1 describes the importance of something for a leader, creating an expectation that there will be important or serious information about a leader's role. However, Clause 2 suddenly shifts the context by stating that without "n," a leader is just a dreamer. This creates a ridiculous contrast between the expected understanding of a leader's role and the surprising statement in Clause 2.

The pattern of theme usage in both clauses is crucial in creating humour. Clause 1 starts with a marked topical theme describing the importance of something for a leader. Language-intelligent readers will anticipate a serious or metaphorical continuation about a leader's role. However, Clause 2 abruptly changes the theme with a paradigm-shifting statement that a leader is just a dreamer without "n."

Humour in this case is also related to understanding the sudden shift in context and the disruptive use of themes. Language-intelligent readers will quickly recognise this shift and sense the absurd contrast between the two clauses that are supposed to be serious. They will realise that Clause 2 contrasts the expected understanding of a leader's role with the surprising statement in Clause 2. The humour here is more than linguistic. It resonates with cultural and political undertones. Readers with language intelligence quickly identify the wordplay and recognise the metaphorical jab at ineffective leadership. This twist can be a subtle satire in Islamic or Indonesian cultural contexts, where leadership is highly valued.

The shift from *pemimpin* to *pemimpi* is minimal in form, yet maximal in semantic impact. This morpho-phonemic play suggests that a leader without action or structure (symbolised humorously by the letter "n") is a dreamer, full of vision but

lacking implementation. By using theme and rhema theory and considering theme usage patterns in Indonesian language intelligence, we can better understand how the sudden shift in context and disruptive theme usage create humour by disrupting the reader's expectations and making a sharp change in meaning. The language intelligence of readers is reflected in their ability to recognize this shift and sense the absurd contrast between two clauses that are supposed to be serious.

Furthermore, leadership (*imamah or khalifah*) is a central concept in Islamic civilization. The joke that removes the letter "n" to turn a leader into a dreamer critiques symbolic leadership without substance, echoing Islamic values that leaders must possess integrity (*amanah)*, knowledge, and vision, not just titles. It humorously challenges superficial authority.

5ᵗʰ Data

Clause 1:

The marked topical theme in Clause 1 is "*Di Inggris dan Amerika* (In England and America)" referring to a geographical location. It sets a geographical and cultural frame. "*Orangnya* (people)" is the unmarked topical theme in Clause 1. It introduces the actors. "*tidak pernah minum dan mandi dengan air* (never drink and bathe with water)" serves as the rhema element in Clause 1. Rhema provides information that explains or adds to the topical theme. It introduces an unexpected cultural claim.

Clause 2:

Clause 2 starts with "*karena* (because)" indicating a cause-and-effect or explanatory relationship. It establishes a causal link. "*di sana* (there)" is the marked topical theme, referring to the

previously mentioned location. "*Air itu* (the water)" is the unmarked topical theme, which refers to the prior claim. "*Adalah udara* (is air)" is the rhema element in Clause 2. It provides information that explains or adds to the topical theme. It delivers the punchline.

Breaking Physical Logic: Humour Through Category Confusion of Elements

The humour in this data stems from a deliberate confusion of physical categories, specifically between water *(air)* and air (*udara)*, which violates the reader's real-world knowledge. This creates a humorous cognitive dissonance, as the reader is led to believe a serious comparison only to discover a twist that defies elemental logic.

Humour in the comparison between Clause 1 and Clause 2 lies in the abrupt change in context and theme usage. Clause 1 begins with a discussion about people in England and America never drinking and bathing with water, which is an unusual statement in our cultural context. However, Clause 2 abruptly shifts the context by stating that "water is *air,*" which contradicts the common understanding of water and air. This sudden change creates a ridiculous contrast between the two statements.

The pattern of theme usage in both clauses is crucial in creating humour. Clause 1 creates an expectation that the conversation will continue with information about unusual drinking and bathing practices in England and America. Language-intelligent readers will anticipate a serious or anecdotal continuation. However, Clause 2 suddenly changes the theme with a paradigm-shifting statement, that "*air itu adalah udara* (the water is *air)*" which contradicts common knowledge.

Humour in this case is also related to understanding the sudden shift in context and disruptive theme usage. Language-intelligent readers will quickly recognise this change and sense the absurd contrast between the two clauses that were supposed to be serious. They will recognize that Clause 2 contrasts unusual and absurd information and the expected information in Clause 1. Understanding this joke requires linguistic flexibility and encyclopaedic knowledge of the elements, what water and air are, and their roles in daily life. The reader must reconcile the absurd conclusion with their real-world expectations, which makes the humour more sophisticated and layered.

Structurally, the humour is set up as a false cultural comparison, a rhetorical strategy often used in jokes. It mirrors real-world discourse around cultural differences before pulling the rug with an unexpected redefinition of a basic concept. It is grounded in the reader's realisation that something fundamental is being violated: the definition of water. The setup invites us to consider strange cultural habits abroad, but the punchline provides an absurd resolution that relies on a pun between *air* (water) and *udara* (air) in Indonesian.

The term "*air*" in Indonesian, meaning "water", is repurposed to mean "air" in English. This bilingual pun relies on readers' awareness of both languages and how word boundaries can blur across them, creating humorous reinterpretations. By using theme and rhema theory and considering theme usage patterns in relation to Indonesian language intelligence, we can better understand how the sudden change in context and disruptive theme usage create humour by disrupting the reader's expectations and making a sharp change in meaning. The language intelligence of readers is reflected in their ability to recognise this change and sense the absurd contrast between the two clauses that were supposed to be serious.

Moreover, Islam holds clear distinctions in creation (*fitrah*) and emphasises understanding the natural world as signs *(ayat)* of God. Confusing water and air breaks this divine order, making it humorous. It lightly touches on the importance of knowledge and clarity, as the Prophet emphasized learning and distinguishing truth from falsehood.

6th Data

Clause 1:

The marked topical theme in Clause 1 is "*Jangan* (Don't), " a command or instruction. It introduces a directive. "*Suka ngurusi orang lain* (interfere with other people)" serves as the rhema element in Clause 1. It provides information that explains or adds to the topical theme. It implies a moral or social commentary.

Clause 2:

Clause 2 starts with "*karena belum tentu* (because may (be) not)" which is a conjunction that connects this clause to the previous one. It opens a justification. "*Orang itu* (those people)" is the unmarked topical theme in Clause 2, which was not prominent in the previous sentence. It becomes the subject of the assumption. "*Ingin kurus* (want to lose weight)" is the rhema element in Clause 2. It provides information that explains or adds to the topical theme. It provides the ironic twist.

Body Shaming Reversed: Humor Through Assumed Intent and Morphological Irony

This data presents humour through the assumption of intent, specifically, the idea that interfering with someone's body (weight) implies that they want to lose weight. The humor surfaces from this faulty logic, highlighting how language can subtly critique societal norms like unsolicited body advice through ironic inversion.

In the comparison between Clause 1 and Clause 2, humour lies in the abrupt change in context. Clause 1 begins with a command not to interfere with others, which is a serious social message. However, Clause 2 suddenly changes the context by stating that "*orang itu ingin kurus* (those people want to lose weight)" which is a personal desire unrelated to the previous message. This creates a ridiculous contrast between a serious message and a trivial personal desire.

Besides, the theme usage pattern in both clauses is essential for creating humour. Clause 1 starts with a highly prominent topical theme, the command "*Jangan* (Don't)" instructing the reader to avoid specific behaviour. Language-intelligent readers will anticipate a continuation of the serious message. However, Clause 2 abruptly changes the theme to "*orang itu ingin kurus* (those people want to lose weight)" which is a ridiculous contrast to the previous message.

Humour in this case is related to understanding the sudden change in context and disruptive theme usage. Language-intelligent readers will quickly recognise this change and perceive the shift in meaning as absurd. They will recognize that the serious command in Clause 1 suddenly transforms into a statement about a personal desire unrelated to it in Clause 2. Readers with higher language intelligence will recognise the double layer: 1) the overt

moral advice, and 2) the implicit critique of unsolicited intervention. The punchline reverses the logic behind a socially normalised behaviour, turning it into something ridiculous.

Furthermore, the humour is built on straightforward syntax and morphology, making it accessible while carrying deeper implications. The shift from social instruction to personal preference subverts the expectation of moral clarity, leaving the reader with an amusing moment of reflection. It emerges from pragmatic violation, assuming one's intervention is helpful or desired. The second clause undercuts the moral superiority of the first, revealing a humorous truth: not everyone wants to lose weight, and perhaps they don't want your opinion either.

The word *kurus* (slim) carries not just a physical description, but cultural and emotional connotations, especially in contexts where beauty standards are scrutinised. The joke reflects how language encodes social norms and how violating those norms, even playfully, can be a powerful tool of humour. By using theme and rhema theory and considering theme usage patterns in relation to Indonesian language intelligence, we can better understand how the abrupt change in context and disruptive theme usage create humour by disrupting the reader's expectations and making a sharp change in meaning. The language intelligence of readers is reflected in their ability to recognise this shift and sense the ridiculous contrast between two clauses that were supposed to be serious.

This joke critiques unsolicited interference, something Islam warns against. *Amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* (enjoining good and forbidding evil) must be done with wisdom (hikmah). The humor here exposes social arrogance disguised as help, contrasting with Islamic etiquette of *adab* and respect for others' privacy and bodily autonomy.

7th Data

Clause 1:

The marked topical theme in Clause 1 is "*Jangan* (Don't)" . In this context, "*Jangan* (Don't)" is a prominent topical theme that commands the reader not to do something. It sets a serious warning."*mengarungi lautan* (sail the seas)" serves as the rhema element in Clause 1. Rhema provides information that explains or adds to the topical theme. It evokes imagery of challenge and bravery.

Clause 2:

Clause 2 has a textual theme "*karena* (because)" that denotes a logical relationship between this clause and the previous one. It signals a rationale. "*Karung* (bags)" is the unmarked topical theme in Clause 2, which was not prominent in the previous sentence. It is a sudden and unexpected subject. "*Lebih cocok untuk beras*. (are more suitable for rice.)" is the rhema element in Clause 2. It provides information that explains or adds to the topical theme. It delivers the punchline.

Literalism Gone Wild: Humor Through Sound-Based Pun and Semantic Misdirection

This data demonstrates humor that arises from phonetic similarity and literal misinterpretation. The pun between "*mengarungi* (to sail through)" and "*karung* (sack/bag)" hinges on auditory resemblance, which leads the reader into a trap of expectation. The serious adventure tone is humorously reversed by a mundane, domestic punchline involving rice bags.

Humour in the comparison between Clause 1 and Clause 2 lies in the abrupt change in context. Clause 1 commands the reader

not to "*mengarungi lautan* (sail the seas)" which is a great and dangerous adventure, but Clause 2 suddenly changes the context by stating that "*karung lebih cocok untuk beras.* (bags are more suitable for rice.)" This creates surprise and a drastic change in the context from

The theme usage pattern in both clauses plays a crucial role in creating humor. Clause 1 starts with a highly prominent topical theme, "*Jangan* (Don't)" instructing the reader to avoid a perilous situation. Language-intelligent readers will anticipate a continuation of a serious warning. However, Clause 2 abruptly changes the theme to "*karung* (bags)" and suggests that bags are more suitable for rice, which is a ridiculous contrast to the previous warning.

Humor in this case is also related to understanding the sudden change in context and using a disruptive theme. Language-intelligent readers will quickly recognise this change and perceive the shift in meaning as odd. They will recognize that the serious warning in Clause 1 suddenly turns into an unusual piece of advice in Clause 2. To appreciate the joke, readers must notice and mentally process the similarity in sound, while also recognising the absurd logic that underpins the second clause. This test tests both phonological sensitivity and cultural familiarity with the idiomatic expression being spoofed. The core of the joke is a phonological pun: "*mengarungi"* sounds similar to "*karung*". Readers begin with a heroic idiom but are swiftly redirected into a domestic and absurd scenario. This violation of semantic expectation, pairing something grand with something trivial, is a classic humour device.

In Indonesian culture, where idioms often take the form of metaphorical advice, this twist subverts the expected motivational tone. Instead of encouragement, the joke offers absurd practicality,

bags are for rice, not for sailing. The parallelism of the two clauses builds tension and sets up the reader for an insight or a moral. Instead, the second clause swerves sharply into ridiculous literalism. The contrast in subject matter, heroism vs. kitchen staples, is exaggerated by the grammatical symmetry, making the punchline land more effectively.

Using theme and rhema theory and considering theme usage patterns in Indonesian language intelligence, we can better understand how the abrupt change in context and the unusual theme choice in Clause 2 create humor by disrupting the reader's expectations and making a sharp change in meaning. The language intelligence of readers is reflected in their ability to recognise this shift and sense the absurd contrast between two clauses that were supposed to be serious.

This joke employs a phonetic pun to subvert metaphorical language. In Islamic rhetoric, metaphors are commonly used in da'wah and poetry. The absurd literalism shown here may humorously remind us that misinterpreting metaphor leads to misdirection, reinforcing Islam's call for *tafakkur* (deep thinking) and t*adabbur* (reflection) in understanding both divine and human communication.

Conclusion

The analysis uncovers the complex interplay among humour, psycholinguistics, morphology, themes, and rhema within the Indonesian language. In each instance, the essence of humour revolves around sudden contextual shifts brought about by linguistic components such as themes and rhema. These shifts challenge the reader's expectations, thereby facilitating the emergence of humour. Proficiency in language intelligence, demonstrated by the ability to perceive and appreciate these

linguistic disruptions, is vital for a comprehensive understanding and enjoyment of such humor. This study elucidates how the structure of language, psycholinguistic factors, and the manipulation of themes and rhema form an integral part of humour comprehension in Indonesian, emphasising the linguistic intricacies underpinning comedy expression.

Beyond linguistic creativity, the seven examples analysed also reveal a deeper cultural dimension, specifically, their resonance with Islamic values embedded in Indonesian society. Several humorous texts carry implicit critiques of social behaviour, leadership, speech ethics, or moral assumptions, all of which align with key principles in Islamic civilisation such as *amanah* (trust), ikhlas (sincerity), *adab* (etiquette), and *hikmah* (wisdom). Humour becomes a tool for amusement and a subtle vehicle for moral reflection and cultural critique. As such, the study highlights how Indonesian humour can embody the spirit of Islamic communication, where clarity, subtlety, and social consciousness converge, enriching our understanding of humour not merely as a linguistic artefact but as a mirror of religious and cultural values.

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