

HUMOR IN THE RELIGIOUS SPEECH: AN ANALYSIS OF THE RELIGIOUS TERMS

Bambang Hariyanto
UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta
bambang_h@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

Gus Baha' and Kiai Said (SAS) are two figures of traditionalist Muslims who have a significant influence on Muslim traditionalists, particularly within the *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU). The two figures have unique characteristics when delivering the speech, for instance, their speech method in inserting humorous terms. This paper tries to describe the humorous terms that are used by the two figures by using the speech acts theory of illocutionary act and elements of humor. The application of humor within the speech is important for a preacher to reduce and relax the situation. It is not just a way to approach the audience, but also a speech strategy to engage with the audience. This study employs a descriptive qualitative method to analyse the data. The results show that the humorous terms in the form of local language, nickname and foreign language are used by the speakers and can make the audience happy and enjoy listening to their speech.

Keywords: *humor, preacher, speech acts, illocutionary acts*

INTRODUCTION

Gus Baha' is a preacher and a source of pride for traditionalist Muslims. His phenomenal achievement is a result of his family's education. Besides Gus Baha', another figure is KH. Said Agil Siradj (henceforth SAS), the former leader of the *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU). They currently dominate the Islamic discourse in Indonesia, especially the traditionalist Muslims. Those figures are coming from the same ideological and Islamic community with *Aswaja* as their religious practice. However, the two of them have different educational backgrounds and social activities. For instance, SAS was active while he was at the university level (see Hariyanto, 2020, 2021). Therefore, it is very interesting to discuss further.

Currently, religious figures have an important role in the eyes of society. Therefore, their role is essential to describe and send the prophetic message from the religion. The art of speech from the religious figures is important in order to make their audiences fully understand. Given the context, inserting jokes or humorous terms is important. Humor is something unique and can not always be accompanied by a laugh, even though a laugh is also the expression of humor to some extent because it involves multidimensional aspects. Lefcourt (1986) mentioned ““Laughter can occur in the absence of humor and humor is not always accompanied by laughter” “the term humor is used to refer to certain perceptual-cognitive and emotional processes, whereas laughter refers to the physiological and behavioural concomitants or sequelae””.

In relation to humor, Thorson & Powell as cited by Marwan (2013), mentioned that there are several elements that can make something involve humor: first, is the creativity to produce humorous terms, such as the ability to relate everything to something funny and make someone happy. Second, a sense of playfulness, which means that always in a good mood. Third, social uses of humor, which mean the ability to relate a social situation with the humor, which mean the ability to reduce a stressful situation into a relaxed situation. The last is personal recognition of humor, which means self-reminder that we are a humorous person. However, talking about humor is not simple because it form of social and cognitive communication that plays a significant role in human interaction (Wijana, 2023).

Based on the aspect of humor elements, both Gus Baha' and SAS are able to make their audience feel happy and relaxed while listening to their speeches. For instance, the audience laughs when responding or listening to some jokes or statements from the speakers. Given the context, this article tries to describe the humorous terms of the religious speeches from the two figures while delivering the speech. To describe the data, this study applies the theory of Speech Acts of Illocutionary, particularly on the Representative Acts and the elements of humor.

METHODOLOGY

This article employs a descriptive qualitative approach to describe the data. This approach is in line with one of the features in qualitative research, that is, the interpretative analysis (Denzin 2013). Then, the source of data was gathered from the selected speeches of the figures (Gus Baha' and SAS) while delivering their speech. The video of Gus Baha' and SAS's speech was transcribed into a data sheet. Then, the transcription of the speech video was used as the original data form for further analysis.

ANALYSIS

This section presents the findings and the discussions of the study. There are two religious figures in this topic to be discussed. First is Gus Baha', and the second is SAS. Based on the data analysis, the speaker (Gus Baha') uttered 33 statements that consist of jokes. It happened while delivering the speech in *Pemprov Jateng* entitled "Ngaji Bareng Bersama Pemprov Jateng: Acara Maulud Nabi". Meanwhile, SAS's speech [entitled *Konsolidasi Menuju Muktamar ke 34 NU*] has 62 lines with various forms of humorous terms, such as using local and foreign languages.

Based on the Representative theory of Speech Acts of Illocutionary, one of the functions is to make a joke (Searle, 1985). Searle explores Austin's classification of Speech Acts into five points, which are representative, directive, commissive, expressive, and declarations. Here is the description: *First*, representatives, statements that may be judged true or false because they purport to describe a state of affairs in the world. For example: "It is a beautiful day outside"; "I predict that he will come." *Second* is directives, this is a statement that attempts to make the auditor's action fit the propositional content or request, beg, plead, to do something. Verbs denoting members of this are: ask, order, command, request, pray, entreat, invite, advice, and make a joke". For example:

"Shut the door, please!";

"I order you to leave.";

Third, commissives: statements which commit the speaker to a course of action as described by the propositional content. e.g., "I promise I will be there at 7:00"; "I vow to get revenge"; "I promise to give you the money."

Fourth, expressives: statements that express the "sincerity condition of the speech act." These expressive characteristics require a gerund transformation of the verb in the lower node, e.g., "I am feeling happy today"; "I really enjoy".

Fifth, declarations: statements that attempt to change the world by "representing it as having been changed," e.g., "My work here is done"; "I pronounce you man and wife"; "I appoint you chairman"; "I declare the meeting adjourned"; "I resign." watching movies"; "I thank you for giving me much money"; "my apologise for my bad behaviour."

Based on the description above of the Illocutionary Acts of Speech Acts, one purpose of the use of the representative is to make a joke.

a. Gus Baha'

In general, the structure of Gus Baha' speech consists of three main sections: opening or introduction, content/body and closing. This is the common structure for the speech. As mentioned previously, the act of representative in Gus Baha' speech is to inform and to make a joke to his audience. Therefore, related to the Acts of the speaker's statements are in line with Representative Acts of SAT, (Searle and Van der Veken, 1985). Data analysis found there are 33 utterances that consist of humorous terms. The terms are realized for "name of person" e.g. [Mbah Moen], "personal pronoun" e.g. [kulo] for "saya", "terms in books" [istilah-istilah dalam kitab] e.g. "maknawi, "sanad" etc. The following sample describes an excerpt of a humorous term.

Data 01

Line 2: 01.05- 01.57

"...Niki kulo yang kedua kesini semoga yang terakhir, tetapi Gus Yasin kayaknya masih memanfaatkan Abahnya [audien tertawa]. Itu kalau di adat pesantren itu kayak ya kayak titah itu. Akhire yo gak wani, jadi yo teko [audien tertawa]. Tapi saya mohon yang merasa bukan putrane mbah Moen jangan ngundang saya [audiens tertawa]. Itu artinya ya.., agak-agak gak bener lha.

Lha wong gak putrane mbah Moen kok, menyamakan dengan Putrane Mbah Moen [audien tertawa]. Tapi saya senang datang kesini, kulo bade niat, amdan [Sengaja] mboten syahwan [Nafsu]...”.

Based on data 01, we can see how the speaker able to entertain his audience with relax statement “...*Niki kulo yang kedua kesini semoga yang terakhir, tetapi Gus Yasin kayaknya masih manfaatkan Abahnya [audiens tertawa]* [...this is my second time to be here and I hope this is the last time, but Gus Yasin (as vice Gubernur) still used his father’s name “Mbah Moen” [audience laugh]”. Given the context, the speaker illustrates himself as a person who rarely attends the invitations, particularly from the bureaucrats, so here he reported to his audience about how clever Gus Yasin was able to force Gus Baha’ by using his father’s name to attend his invitation. Therefore, the audience laughs listening to Gus Baha’ story.

b. SAS (Said Aqil Siradj)

Within SAS’s speech, the speaker identified using the complete structure for his speech by giving an opening, content and closing segments. In general, the humorous statements are found in the content/body segment. Data analysis found that there are 62 lines with many humorous terms. SAS used many terms both in the local language and in a foreign language. For instance, in the local language, he used “flirty” for [genit] to describe Khofifah's character. Khofifah is the East Java Governor and the chief of Fatayat NU. The term “Bodolan”, which means "the former". SAS also used a foreign language, such as the term “Saadati wa sayidati” from the Arabic language, which means [ladies and gentlemen], “hikmah” [great wisdom], etc.

The speaker uttered the statement when he tried to reach two goals, first he wanted to explain on one side and the second, he wanted to entertain his audience. The following sample excerpt is the description. Retrieved from SAS 02 with the topic of Islam and Nationalism, here is the description for Data 02 and 03.

Data 02

Line 6:

“...Bodolan "the former" minister, Muslimat's first autonomy agency, this is the number one. The general chairman of the Muslimat, the Governor of East Java also happens to be, God willing, 10 years, then 10 years will be vice president, 10 years president. Dr. KH eh KH. sorry sorry, Dr. Nyai Hj. Khofifah Indar Parawansa, who is very progressive, flirty [genit], and extraordinary. Flirty positive, not flirty negative.

In data 02, the speaker uses the term ‘positive flirty’ [genit] to break the situation from very serious and formal to an informal and relaxed situation. It is a formal situation because the context of the speech was at the opening ceremony. Therefore, SAS, as the leader of the NU community at that time, used his authority to reduce the tension by inserting a joke in his speech. This context involves as part of the humorous elements and the act of representative for making humor.

In a further sample excerpt is in the data 03. In this context, the speaker described the story of Pangeran Diponegoro. For the educated people, of course, all of us know who Pangeran Diponegoro is. But today, not many people know the story of Diponegoro, while he was a child and educational background.

Data 03

Line 34:

“Perhaps many people who are attending here still do not know this story. There was a santri, his name was Dul Kamid, or Abdul Hamid. Javanese will call him Dul Kamid. He was in pesantren of KH. Hasan Besari, Tegal Sari, Ponorogo.

He learnt Islamic teaching, completing reciting the Quran, who is he? He was a son of Hamengkubowono III, namely the prince Abdul Hamid Diponegoro, a national hero who had terrorised the Netherlands from 1825 to 1830. Pangeran Diponegoro was a boarding school student, and he did not go to any formal school.”

In the sample excerpt above (Data 03), the speaker illustrates how the complete name of ‘Abdul Hamid’ is converted into “Dul Kamid”. This name basically refers to the original name of Pangeran Diponegoro. For the Javanese people often call this nickname with “Dul Kamid” as the shortened form. Given the context, the speaker is able to relate the story and context of the situation and make the audience laugh. Given the context, the speaker reaches his purpose to entertain and to inform his audience.

CONCLUSION

This section tries to conclude based on the above description. First, based on the figures discussed here, both Gus Baha’ and SAS are the prominent preachers within their community. Second, the informal terms are very useful to break the situation, particularly in order to relax the audience. Third, the theory of the Speech Act is useful for the preacher to reduce the tension of the audience and to break the situation. The last, by using informal language and relaxing, the religious figure can be more engaged with their audience. Although there is a beneficial contribution, using humor in an improper situation can also be dangerous. It is because it can lead to a misunderstanding for the audience.

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- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IuIghLkeBHE> (Ngaji Bareng Pemprov Jateng)
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rF1C0xG3Q-M&t=4675s> (SAS’s Speech)