# MULTIMODAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF HUMOR AND SARCASM ON "EMOTIONAL DAMAGE" VIDEO FOOTAGE MEMES

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## Abstract

This study aims to reveal the existence of the sense of sarcastic humour that is hidden in some visual data in the form of semiotic and verbal data in the form of transcriptions that have been selected from several video data. The approach used in this analysis is using Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) and combined with theory from The Language Metafunction. The results found are in the form of three interpretation results generated from video data, in the form of insult, satire, and dark humour. Based on these three results, it is revealed that there is an underlying purpose, making the sarcastic humour of the "Emotional Damage" meme a bridge between ironic and non-ironic humour. The research contributes to a deeper understanding of contemporary communication nuances and the multifarious dimensions of humour and sarcasm.

**Keywords: humour**, language metafunction, MDA, sarcastic humour.

## INTRODUCTION

The universality of humour also helps scholars in the fields of psychology, anthropology and sociology to establish their goals and interests (Robert & Yan, 2007; Dynel, 2009). The first of these two roles is social management, such as enhancing current connections, resolving uncomfortable circumstances, and gaining attention. The second function is defunctionalization. Humour is presented using One of the tools used to spread messages to communicate with others called language (Kuswoyo, 2016; Afrianto et. al, 2014). People use language to build social life (Puspita and Pranoto, 2021). Proceeding with the presentation of the definition, the objective of this study is to uncover and identify the constituent elements contributing to sarcastic humour. Based on Cambridge (2023) sarcasm is a form of verbal irony that involves saying something intentionally different or opposite to what is meant, often with a mocking or humorous tone.

Research on sarcastic humour using MDA provides a comprehensive understanding of the multimodal aspects of sarcasm, the contextual nuances involved, the interactional dynamics, and the social and psychological effects. Until now, the theory and types of humour have been included in the digital humour session. Internet users themselves consume the majority of the digital humour created online. They seek solace there or in this case can be called 'memes' (Dynel, 2020). Many themes are brought up in memes, especially what is going on now, viral. The meme maker could be anybody. They sacrifice themes, people, or organizations for their content and that may be funny to some, while the rest may be offended (Aggarwal et al, 2021). Memes, a picture, a video or a piece of text that is constantly used or distributed by people on the internet and sometimes with small changes that make it funny (Oxford, 2023). The same is true of memes' data that will be examined in this study by Steven He with his iconic "Emotional Damage".

Generally, the video of Steven He saying "Emotional Damage" is used as a reaction video after watching someone's video that has been roasted so that the Indonesian slang says "kena mental". Either ironically or unironically. The term "emotional damage" is often used humorously to describe situations where someone may be emotionally affected or scarred by a particular event or experience. These memes can range from lighthearted and relatable to darker and more introspective. On September 21, 2021, Steven He uploaded a video entitled 'When "Asian" is a Difficulty Mode' on his YouTube channel. In that video, he looked like he was playing a game and his character was dead after getting a scathing comment from an enemy who was an 'aunt'. The 'aunt' said, "Steven, when you get so fat?" and then the character dies with "emotional damage" in the report. Frustrated, Steven took one of the slippers he was wearing and slammed it on the floor and then said "Emotional Damage". Since then, several compilations with other meme video sources and an additional video of Steven

saying "emotional damage" have been created.

Based on the data of memes with Steven's clip it is unique to the linguistic approach because the conversation in it is thought to contain sarcasm wrapped in a response from Steven at the end, making the video meme humour. Moreover, the study of sarcasm humour with an approach to using the multimodal theory of analysis would be appropriate for application to the study. Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) is an analytical approach that focuses on studying modes of communication other than language, such as images, gestures, sounds, and spatial arrangements. It examines how different modes work together to convey meaning and shape our understanding of messages in different contexts. The content of humour presented has the entertaining function of the conversation in it that contains sarcasm. The discourse of sarcasm that is uttered in every conversation is either direct or indirect. It will, therefore, be linguistically interesting to examine in addition to using multimodal analysis approaches as a support theory to enhance the research later.

Linguistics research on humour has been done a lot. Research by Pranoto & Suprayogi (2021), Ilahiyati (2019) and Putri et al. (2021). When we look at the gaps in the research, it focuses only on the aspect of the humour that will be viewed by the impact on the target; like the audience and the students. Putri (2022) has done an analysis using MDA based on Kress and Van Leeuwen. Hidayat et al., (2019) also did an analysis using an MDA. Drawing from research employing multimodal analysis, it is evident that such studies often involve data in the form of advertisements, particularly those possessing intriguing semiotics warranting analysis. Despite these endeavours, a comprehensive analysis of multimodal humour and sarcasm remains has not been found. Should such an investigation prove successful, it has the potential to establish a new benchmark in humour research and serve as a reference in the realm of multimodal analysis.

In this study, the writer conducted research analysis using the MDA with the theory of Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) The Grammar of Visual Design and combined with the theory of The Language Metafunction based on Halliday and Matthiesen (2014). The writer decided on a Multimodal analysis approach to finding the sense of sarcastic humour hidden behind selected visual and verbal language data that expose their meanings to the surface using this approach (Machin and Myer, 2012). Furthermore, the data the author finds are the results found on the Internet (Van Leeuwen, 2013). The study will see two aspects, both from language as a major factor which will then use The Language Metafunction Theory and supporting aspects of image, atmosphere, colour, and some points that will be explained by MDA Both theories are expected to fill the void in both the realm of humour and multimodal research.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The first, Firmansyah & Rokhmawan (2017) has done a review on pragmatic fields and a humorous representation of a Stand Up Comedy on Metro TV with a focus of the comedian Raditya Dika. Using a qualitative descriptive method, results in that the act of speech uttered by Raditya Dika represents some acts and the order to attract attention from the audience. Second, Putri et al., (2021) have been researching a youtube video from Uncle Roger. The result was found that there are 14 fields of speech under which Uncle Roger, the discourse serpent, found that chef Hersha Patel is under the BBC food, an Asian culture compared with the west, and the discourse produced is a taunting sarcasm or insinuation of hyperbole, a figurative and personified. Third, Eslen-Ziya (2022) conducted research in humor to find out how Twitter is used to talk about the environment, especially global warming issues in Turkey. There are two group separated and the supporters stance with references to scientific literature journals and articles marshaling these resources to buttress their contentions in the face of dissenting viewpoints. In stark contrast, the cohort of dissenters continues to adhere steadfastly to their favored hypothesis concerning climatic metamorphosis. Based on the research conducted by Ruiz-Madrid & Fortanet-Gómez (2015), ) that uses a seminar of two well-known people linked to their autobiography. So far, research with a combination of multimodal and humor analysis with memes' video files has not been found. Hence, to fill the gap of research in the field of linguistics, the writer decided to do research on multimodal analysis and focus on humor.

## METHOD

This research is conducted qualitatively. Cresswell (2018) stated that qualitative research is a method where researchers can explore and understand the meaning of social groups or individuals whose problems come from the human themselves or the social problems that occur around them.

To achieve the objective of this research, the data has been selected from one of the YouTube channels which displays a lot of clipped videos from the "Emotional Damage" meme. Seven videos have been selected that are, analyzed in semiotic mode; for the images obtained from the video, and linguistic for the text of the transcript. Hence looking at the steps to be taken later when analyzing the data, the results obtained from this research method are qualitative methods.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, this research delves into the multifaceted aspects of humour and sarcasm as observed in the video footage memes of the "Emotional Damage" genre. Based on data that have been explained, data analysis and reduction have been carried out to find and reveal the purpose of the humour and sarcasm hidden behind the video data. A total of three patterns were found based on video transcript data, and three of them were selected because they were related to the objectives of this study.



Based on the data that has been presented, it is found that there are seven data with details; three data for the insult category, three data for the satire category, and one data for the dark joke category. Data insult and satire are shown the highest and equal, while the rest are data dark jokes. A total of seven data are generated, which are then analyzed for conversation and the multimodal elements present in them. The characteristics of each type are explained. The explanation is carried out in detail and sequentially to address the research questions in the first sub-chapter of the introduction.

This thesis discusses linguistic features in the data to convey humour and sarcasm. It analyzes the data using The Language Metafunction by Halliday's theory (2014:30) to reveal specific techniques such as wordplay, irony, exaggeration, or juxtaposition and examines their effects on the humorous and sarcastic elements. Language Metafunction is used to describe social context. On the other hand, this research only uses two metafunctions: the ideational metafunction (2014:211) and the interpersonal metafunction (2014:134).
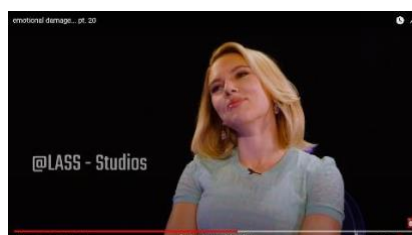
### *Insult*

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary (2023), insult is defined as threatening with insolence, indignity, or contempt. Based on Babou (2014) insult refers to an act that intentionally uses offensive or disrespectful language, behaviour, or gestures to belittle or demean someone.

Data 1

*(video 14)*

> *Girl: "Everyone's been talking about it you're just really ugly"*
> *Guy: "Thanks. It's lucky you're beautiful because there's nothing up here"*

It was clear that they intended to insult each other. The woman says that the man is very ugly, '... really ugly', blatantly and proudly insulting him intentionally (Babou, 2014). On the other hand, the man replied calmly that the woman was just beautiful and didn't have any intelligence in her mind, '... nothing up here'. This sentence very clearly shows the insult and ridicule from the man to reverse back the woman's insult, because it can be seen in the multimodal analysis that will be carried out after this that the man without hesitation points to his temples while making a gesture that ensures that he has no doubts about the meaning of the insult. On the other hand, the analysis based on the *interpersonal metafunction* perspective, the woman makes hurtful and offensive comments about the man's appearance, intending to humiliate or demean him, and this shows that the woman lacks empathy. Meanwhile, the guy responds to the girl's insults by being sarcastic and defensive and returning her insults. The element factor can be seen using Multimodal Discourse Analysis. Here is the explanation along with the picture.



For analysis from the perspective of compositional meaning, there is one figure that really illustrates that conversations and interactions that are carried out are a form of insults, in the first picture. In the background, there is a TV screen that reads "Playground Insults". They looked like they were in a TV show where they had to roast or insult each other. Meanwhile, based on the perspective of representational meaning, there is confrontation and reassuring glances so that what they say can be responded to by other participants.

***Satire***

"Satire" refers to the act of using satire with the intention of criticizing or ridiculing someone or something (Thu & New, 2017). A form of communication that uses irony or exaggerated humor to express criticism or opinions. The form of satire that is found in the transcript is intended as a joke and playful material.
Data 2
*(video 2)*

> *Girl: "I really, really, really love cupcakes."*
> *Boy: "You also love getting diabetes."*

Analyzing the ideational metafunction of this conversation, the girl said, "I, really, really love cupcakes.". She expressed her love for the cupcakes which symbolize a preference or desire. The satirical expression that is shown is in the phrase 'love getting diabetes'. The woman's expression of preferences, likes and desires, was responded to sarcastically and satirically offending and criticising the woman's weight and health by the man who asked her. Sweet foods like cupcakes which are mentioned as a favorite of women can cause diabetes. The body converts carbohydrates and sugar into glucose, and if the body consumes a lot of glucose, the glucose is released into the bloodstream and can cause diabetes (Hovhannisyan & Khanamiryan, 2022). The purpose of the man's satirical, sarcastic and ridiculous response is to refer to body weight and its effect on the woman's love of cupcakes (Thu & New, 2017).

On the other hand, the analysis of this conversation based on the interpersonal metafunction reveals that the girl who says she loves cupcakes and shares her preferences intends to share something about herself and wants to engage in a conversation. Meanwhile, the man who responds to this preference with a sarcastic comment can be interpreted as a teasing or mocking whose purpose is to play with his sarcastic humour. Here is the explanation along with the picture for MDA.



The first is based on an interactive meaning perspective. The short interaction seen is that the woman first talks about her preferences, which the blonde man then responds to sarcastically and playfully. Furthermore, analysis is based on the perspective of representational meaning. Figures in the form of interviews and objects using a microphone. These activities are mostly seen as short video content. This depiction of the activities of an obese girl interviewed by a man may reflect societal attitudes and stereotypes regarding body image, weight, food preferences, potential health problems as well as appearance. Especially with the sarcastic sentence that the man said by mentioning 'diabetes' highlighting the health consequences of consuming excessive sweets.

### Dark Joke

Based on Willinger et. al., (2017) and Mawardi et. al., (2022), dark jokes, also known as black humour, are humour or jokes that usually touch on sensitive or taboo subjects, death, disease, deformity, handicap, often have unnatural, controversial themes, and make the listener uncomfortable. These traits usually evoke laughter or amusement because of irony, sarcasm or unexpected twists. While other people may accept it, some find it offensive and distressing. In this study, one type of dark joke was found in the results of the research.
Data 7
*(video 13)*

Man: *"Number one, by the way. This one was kind of funny. 'This song is so good my dead great grandpa came back to life just to turn it off'."*
Woman: *"Oh my God!"*

Analysis from the perspective of *ideational metafunction* depicts the man who shares the dark jokes he reads in the comments column. In the transcript of the conversation, it can be seen from the sentence 'my dead great granpa' which shows that the theme of this humour is dark humor due to in line with the definition of dark jokes or black humour based on Willinger et al (2017) & Mawardi et al (2022), using the death theme. The commenter's use of the subject in his rendition of his dead great-grandpa makes it clear that this dark humour is exaggerated. The obvious goal is to depict an absurd sentence with a bit of sarcasm in it, which is to kill the song.

The reference to the word 'it' to refer to 'this song' to turn it off 'turns it off', can already describe the sarcastic purpose of this dark humour. On the other hand, an analytical perspective based on the *interpersonal metafunction* describes an exchange that involves interaction between the man and the woman over comments that have been read before. The potential for these dark jokes is troubling because neither of them expected such comments to exist and they both understand and have a sensitivity to such content. Here is the explanation along with the picture for MDA.
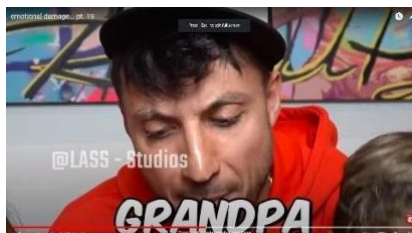
The interactive meaning involves the exchange of verbal and non-verbal cues between the participants. The man initiates the interaction by reading the comment aloud, intending to share the humour that turns out to be a dark joke with the others. The woman's shocked facial expression and exclamation indicate her response to the content, which may catch the woman off guard by the dark joke. The second analysis is based on the *compositional meaning* perspective and includes three individuals sitting in front of a camera, wearing red shirts, and engaging in a shared activity of reading and reacting to a dark joke comment. The last is an analysis of *representational meaning*. In this context, the red t-shirts may contribute to the overall representational meaning by adding a visual element that contrasts with the dark humour of the joke, creating a sense of irony or highlighting the unexpected nature of the comment.

## *Discussion*

Based on previous research, comparative analysis between the results of this research and previous research shows a noteworthy increase in the existing body of knowledge or can be said to add to the diversity of research in this field of humor. In research conducted by Firmansyah & Rokhmawan (2017), this analysis is carefully examined through the lens of the resulting semiotic modes and dialogic exchanges encapsulated in the video data set. Derived from investigations conducted by Putri et al. (2021), the results of this study provide a comparative perspective on this research, resulting in additional insights. Given the sentence semantics and supported by visual data evidence, visible augmentations emerge, manifesting as examples of insulting discourse, satire, and dark humor. This augmentation is realized through hyperbolic and figurative articulation. These findings reveal the resonance of the relationship between the conclusions drawn by Eslen-Ziya (2022) and current research, which is underscored by the typical and indifferent attitudes that characterize advocates of environmental change. The last is based on research conducted by Ruiz-Madrid & Fortanet-Gómez (2015), their previous research significantly supports and aligns with current research. Accordingly, the study reflects these findings, in that the researchers combined facial mimicry, gestures, and related strategies, thus supporting the nonverbal data evidence. This underlies the importance of including the verbal dimension, as exemplified by transcription, along with holistic elements of nonverbal expression. This multimodal analysis not only reinforces the integral role of nonverbal cues in humour but also aligns with the linguistic principles underlying the study of communicative dynamics.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the comprehensive analysis conducted, a range of significant findings has emerged, shedding light on the intricate dynamics of humour and sarcasm within the video footage of Steven He's a meme, titled 'Emotional Damage'. The analysis has led to the identification of three distinct underlying meanings embedded within the conversational data, these three meanings; insult, satire, and dark humor, manifest different facets of communication. Insulting elements, evident in the transcripts, reveal a deliberate intention to inflict emotional harm or belittle the recipient. Satirical elements, on the other hand, materialize as jestful and playful components, imparting a jovial undertone to the discourse. The analysis has brought to the forefront the presence of dark humour, a component characterized by its engagement with sensitive and contentious subjects. Employing the lens of Multimodal Discourse Analysis, the study unveiled intricate factors present in the video data, elucidated through the three metafunctions encompassed within The Grammar of Visual Design framework. These

metafunctions; Interactive Meaning, Compositional Meaning, and Representational Meaning, unfolded the complex tapestry of communication dynamics.

Ultimately, the research underlines the existence of concealed intentions and significance behind the seemingly innocuous short memes, particularly in the context of the 'Emotional Damage' meme. As these intentions and meanings come to light, the analysis demonstrates their integration into the underlying purpose, bridging both ironic and unironic dimensions. In conclusion, this exploration has unravelled a multi-layered narrative woven into the fabric of internet culture, underscoring the intricate interplay between language, imagery, and intention. By unearthing these concealed layers of meaning, the research contributes to a deeper understanding of contemporary communication nuances and the multifarious dimensions of humour and sarcasm.

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