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Marginalization of Minority Ethnicities in Ethnic Humor Discourse in Indonesia: A Critical Discourse Analysis

Surahmat¹, I Dewa Putu Wijana², Sulistyowati³

¹Faculty of Language and Arts Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia

^{2,3}Faculty of Cultural Science Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia

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CORRESPONDENCE

E-mail: surahmat@mail.unnes.ac.id

A B S T R A C T

This study aims to explain the role of ethnic humor as a practice of marginalization against minority ethnic groups in Indonesia. The research data consists of 270 instances of ethnic humor sourced from books, websites, and social media. The data were analyzed using Fairclough's critical discourse analysis approach, which includes three stages: description, interpretation, and explanation. Textual characteristics of ethnic humor were analyzed using SketchEngine, a corpus management and text analysis software developed by Lexical Computing. The findings indicate that ethnic humor can marginalize minority ethnic groups in Indonesia through three mechanisms: (1) negatively representing the targeted ethnic group, (2) constructing unequal social relations, and (3) justifying the behavior of the targeted ethnic group as inferior, strange, or even negative. The ideology embedded in ethnic humor discourse can be traced through patterns of language use, including word choice, sentence structure, and discourse organization. Words, sentence structure, and discourse organization are ideological because they contain experiential, relational, and expressive values. The results of this study reveal that ethnic humor, often appreciated for its entertainment value, can marginalize minority ethnic groups in two ways: by restricting their identity and roles. These findings reinforce previous research, such as that conducted by Pérez (2022), which argues that the ideological nature of ethnic humor can be harmful as it reinforces the dominance of majority groups. This finding also reinforces the findings of Mendiburo-Seguel & Ford (2023) which show that ethnic humor can strengthen ethnic prejudice. This situation suggests that ethnic humor should be approached cautiously to avoid negative impacts on Indonesia's multiethnic society.

I. INTRODUCTION

Ethnic humor has become an integral part of the multicultural fabric of Indonesian society. It entertains, fosters internal group solidarity, and regulates intra-group and inter-group relations. Its presence can be observed in everyday conversations, books, magazines, and websites. In today's era of social media, ethnic humor is also reproduced through platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. It has become one of Indonesia's most popular types of humor (Lesmana, 2016). The forms of ethnic humor in Indonesia are diverse, ranging from anecdotes, wordplay, riddles,

mockery, and even bullying (Wijana, 2015)

Ethnic humor is defined as a type of humor that uses the characteristics, beliefs, and behaviors of a specific ethnic group as the source of humor (Apte, 1985). Ethnic humor differs from other types of humor because it employs specific scripts. Raskin (1985) describes these scripts as language distortion, foolishness, stinginess, and deceitfulness. These scripts are constructed by creating an oppositional narrative between the targeted ethnic group and the group employing humor. Within these various scripts, the targeted ethnic group is stereotyped with peculiar traits, beliefs, and behaviors, contrasting

with other ethnic groups portrayed as possessing normal traits, beliefs, and behaviors.

Ethnic humor has many social functions that can be counterproductive to one another. On one hand, ethnic humor has a positive impact as it can serve as entertainment that alleviates fatigue. The pleasant sensation it creates can also be used to ease communication. When used in the appropriate context, ethnic humor can strengthen group solidarity and reinforce societal values. Based on research in the United States, Hylton (2018) suggests that ethnic humor can be a strategy to counter racist narratives. On the other hand, Horisk (2024) argues that ethnic humor can be harmful as it disseminates unjust knowledge about marginalized groups. According to the prejudiced norm theory developed by Ford & Ferguson (2004), disparaging humor can make individuals exposed to it more likely to accept ethnic prejudice. This occurs because humor possesses specific linguistic features that can shift one's cognitive mode from serious, critical thinking to non-serious, uncritical thinking. Through a study rooted in social psychology, Mendiburo-Seguel & Ford (2023) further explored this issue and reinforced the finding that aggressive ethnic humor can increase tolerance toward ethnic prejudice.

The use of ethnic humor in Indonesia becomes problematic because it is produced and interpreted within a racially charged social context. Indonesia is a multiethnic country, home to more than 364 ethnic groups (Irawanto et al., 2011). These ethnic groups coexist, cooperate, and compete with one another. Interethnic relations in Indonesia are often marked by tensions resulting from prejudice and discrimination, particularly against minority ethnic groups. For example, Setijadi (2017) demonstrates that ethnic groups identifying as indigenous tend to perceive Chinese Indonesians as outsiders who are solely focused on business, lack nationalism, and are not religiously devout. The competition for space and resources in Papua has led to the marginalization of indigenous Papuan tribes (Dewi, 2024). Discrimination against Papuan students still frequently occurs in cities such as Yogyakarta, Malang, and Surabaya. Another example is the rejection of migrants from Madura by the local community in Cempaka, Kalimantan (Rahman, 2019).

Researchers argue that ethnic humor plays a role in marginalizing minority ethnic groups

in Indonesia by perpetuating ethnic stereotypes and prejudices. This role can be realized because humor possesses unique linguistic, cognitive, and psychological features. Linguistically, humor has the ability to implicitly convey taboo topics by leveraging society's tacit knowledge (Aarons, 2014). The rhetoric of "It's just a joke" allows humor to achieve its ideological aims precisely by denying its own ideological nature (Weaver, 2011). Cognitively, humor always involves ambiguity, which can obscure the racist knowledge it contains (Suls, 1983). Humor can also shift serious, critical thinking to a non-serious, uncritical mode of thinking (Ford et al., 2015). The ability of humor to marginalize minority ethnic groups can be observed in the frequent use of negative stereotypes in ethnic humor. Negative stereotypes are a discursive practice that can both spread and reinforce overgeneralized knowledge. Such knowledge can either reinforce existing ethnic prejudices or make them more easily accepted socially.

Previous researchers have demonstrated that ethnic humor is a discursive practice that can influence the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of those exposed. Ford & Ferguson (2004) showed that ethnic humor can reinforce ethnic prejudice. According to them, humor that marginalizes certain ethnic groups does not create ethnic prejudice but rather strengthens existing prejudices. The study by Pérez (2022) and Kuipers & Van Der Ent (2016) also indicates that disparaging ethnic humor can reinforce stereotypes and racist ideologies within society. Such stereotypes can facilitate segregation between perceived superior and inferior groups. These findings support earlier studies by Billig (2001) and Weaver (2011), which demonstrated that ethnic humor has an impact on legitimizing racist discourse.

Ethnic humor has also attracted the attention of sociologists, who focus on examining humor's social functions and impacts in various social contexts. Islam (2018) demonstrated that ethnic humor plays a role in maintaining social hierarchies. Kuipers & Ent (2016) highlighted the role of ethnic humor in regulating relationships between the ethnic group using the humor and the targeted ethnic group. The presence and persistence of ethnic humor in society are seen as indicators of slow social progress toward a more progressive direction. However, (Shifman & Katz, 2005) pointed out that ethnic humor can have a positive

function in the process of intergroup assimilation.

Several researchers have also studied ethnic humor from a linguistic perspective. Pioneered by Victor Raskin and Attardo, research on the linguistic aspects of humor has developed rapidly. Raskin (1985) introduced the Semantic Theory of Humor to demonstrate script opposition as a minimal condition for humor. Meanwhile, Attardo, with the General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH), outlined the constitutive elements of humor. The linguistic study of ethnic humor was further advanced by Ermida, who focused on analyzing the narrative elements of humor. Although it has developed significantly, research on the linguistic aspects of humor tends to be limited to structural, semantic, and pragmatic studies. For example, the study by Burgers & van Mulken (2017) focused on understanding linguistic markers in humor. Aarons (2014) concentrated on the semantic-cognitive aspects of humor processing. El Refaie (2011) and Ibraheem & Abbas (2015) examined the pragmatic mechanisms in humor processing. In Indonesia, the linguistic aspects of ethnic humor have also attracted the attention of several researchers. However, most of these studies primarily focus on the grammatical, semantic, and pragmatic constructions involved in creating and appreciating humor. Wijana (2015) identified the forms of script opposition used in the semantic construction of ethnic humor in Indonesia. Arnawa (2022) explained Balinese humor's linguistic and cultural aspects, focusing on structural ambiguity, lexical processes, and logical manipulation in traditional Balinese humor. Meanwhile, Setyaningsih & Larassati (2023) examined the role of social and cultural contexts in the creative process of ethnic humor in Indonesia.

In the past five years, there has been an increasing trend in using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to study humor. Surahmat et al. (2024) employed CDA to explain the function of ethnic humor as a form of cultural violence against minority ethnic groups. CDA was also utilized by Zihni and Rahman (2021) to understand the ideologies within humor associated with specific figures. Zihni used CDA to explore the humor of Gus Dur, while Rahman et al. (2021) applied CDA to investigate the ideologies present in Bintang Emon's humor. None of these studies have addressed the use of ethnic humor as a form of marginalization.

This study aims to address this gap by analyzing the role of ethnic humor in the marginalization of minority ethnic groups in Indonesia. Marginalization refers to the restriction imposed on individuals or groups that hinders their opportunities to participate fully in society (Mowat, 2015). Marginalization has significant impacts and is considered one of the forms of social injustice as it prevents individuals or groups from having equitable opportunities to engage in social life (Bernt & Colini, 2013).

The researcher argues that ethnic humor plays a role in marginalization due to its ability to propagate and perpetuate ethnic stereotypes and prejudices. The presence of racist stereotypes and prejudices within ethnic humor allows it to underpin attitudes and behaviors that marginalize minority ethnic groups. Based on this argument, two research questions are posed in this study: (1) How is the formal language of ethnic humor used to represent minority ethnic groups in Indonesia? (2) How do these representations in ethnic humor contribute to the marginalization of minority ethnic groups in Indonesia?

II. METHODS

This study employs a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach, specifically Fairclough's model, to examine the relationship between language, discursive practices, and social practices in ethnic humor. CDA assumes that linguistic units in discourse are linked to the ideological and political motivations underlying them (Fairclough, 2010). This relationship is not direct but mediated by discursive practices (Fairclough, 2001).

The data for this study consists of 270 examples of ethnic humor concerning three minority ethnic groups in Indonesia: Chinese (71 examples), Madurese (93 examples), and Papuans (106 examples). These examples were sourced from websites, books, and social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok). Data were collected from diverse sources to provide a varied perspective, reflecting Indonesia's diverse society and the range of humor enjoyed from various media. Adult humor enthusiasts more commonly use books and Facebook, while younger audiences frequent newer social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok. All age groups generally use websites.

Written humor data from books and websites

were obtained through copying. Audiovisual data from social media were transcribed into text using Microsoft Word. Narrow transcription was applied to language-based humor (e.g., puns) because it contains unique linguistic information, such as phonological details, that can only be understood with phonetic codes. Broad transcription was used for other types of humor. The researcher focuses on general pronunciation in broad transcription to differentiate between words with distinct meanings.

Discourse analysis was conducted in three stages: description, interpretation, and explanation. In the description phase, the researcher focused on identifying the microstructure of the discourse, which includes the use of words, sentences, and stylistic elements. Microstructure is crucial as it generates lexical, grammatical, and general meaning within the discourse. The formal language also contributes to three types of textual values: representational, relational, and expressive. Representational value concerns how the text depicts the world's reality; relational value pertains to how the text positions social subjects about one another, and expressive value relates to the moral judgments of the text's user regarding specific objects.

To gain insights into the microstructural aspects of discourse, the researcher first identified the types and forms of ethnic humor in Indonesia. Categorization of discourse types and forms was done using two indicators: textual modality and the types of scripts employed. Textual modality and script types describe how humor creators realize their information and ideas within coherent discourse units according to specific linguistic rules. The researcher then explored the textual characteristics of humor, including lexical, grammatical, and schematic features, using SketchEngine, a corpus management and text analysis software developed by Lexical Computing. This software was used to categorize word types, frequency of word usage, and collocation analysis. Word class categorization was conducted using the Wordlist feature, while word frequency and collocations were examined using the Concordance menu.

The second stage of the analysis is interpretation. In the context of this research, interpretation involves explaining the interaction between the text and discourse participants (Fairclough, 2001). This interaction encompasses textual elements and those present "within" the discourse participant as

the interpreter. Given the complexity of interpreting humor discourse, which involves the text, cognitive factors, aesthetic tastes, and social background, the researcher focused solely on the forms of ethnic representation. Representation is the process by which an interpreter creates meaning from discourse according to their mental model. As Hall (1997) has shown, representation is not merely a reflection of reality but also a practice of creating new realities.

In the explanation stage, the researcher explained the role of ethnic humor in marginalizing ethnic minorities. At this stage, ethnic humor discourse was analyzed as a form of social practice whose usage influences and is influenced by social structures. The values inherent in ethnic humor have a reproductive effect, possibly perpetuating or altering existing social structures. This analysis is grounded in Searle's (1969) speech act theory, which posits that speaking is essentially acting. However, as critical discourse analysis, this study views discourse not merely as an act but also as a social practice involving social order, situational context, interactional history, and intertextual context (Fairclough, 2001).

III. RESULT

This study aims to explain the role of ethnic humor in marginalizing ethnic minorities in Indonesia using a critical discourse analysis approach. The findings will be presented below, covering the forms and scripts of ethnic humor in Indonesia, the language of ethnic humor, the interpretation of ethnic humor, and the role of ethnic humor in marginalizing ethnic minorities.

Forms and Scripts of Ethnic Humor in Indonesia

Ethnic humor is one of the most popular types of humor in Indonesia. In addition to its abundance, ethnic humor in Indonesia is also diverse in form and structure. Data indicates that out of the 270 humor samples analyzed, 247 (91.4 percent) are jokes, while the remaining 23 (8.6 percent) are conversational humor, as presented in the Table 1.

Table 1 Types of ethnic humor in Indonesia

No	Ethnic	Joke	Conversational Humor
1	Chinese	54	17
3	Papua	104	3
4	Madurese	89	3
Total		247	23

Table 2 Forms of ethnic humor in Indonesia

No	Ethnic	Textual Forms of Humor			
		Narrative	Monologue	Dialogue	Mix
1	Chinese	17	34	8	12
3	Papua	43	2	9	51
4	Madura	18	2	33	39
Total		78	38	50	102

Table 3 Script form in ethnic humor in Indonesia

No	Ethnic	Script Forms								
		LD	F	S	G	C	A	Cos	R	Other
1	Chinese	13	2	13	16	2	2	3	0	20
2	Papua	23	42	0	0	1	0	0	16	25
3	Madurese	21	37	0	3	7	0	0	4	19
Total		57	81	13	19	10	2	3	20	64

Jokes are a type of humor consisting of anecdotes memorized and passed from one person to another. The common structure found in jokes includes a setup and a punchline. Conversely, conversational humor is spontaneous and closely tied to the context, often losing its humor when retold (Martin, 2007). Jokes are a prevalent form of ethnic humor because they accommodate various forms of ambiguity and incongruity without being bound to the conversation's context. They can portray characters from the target ethnicity according to existing stereotypes and creative elements.

Based on their textual form, ethnic humor is predominantly composed of mixed discourse, with 120 examples (35 percent); narrative, with 78 examples (26 percent); dialogue, with 50 examples (17 percent); and monologue, with 38 examples (13 percent), as shown in the table below.

Narrative humor is a joke that arises when a narrative work can create and/or exploit incongruity and superiority among the participants in the narrative, such as the writer, narrator, reader, audience, and characters. Monologue humor features speech delivered by a single speaker, characterized by the absence of conversational turns, as the opportunity to speak entirely belongs to the humorist. Dialogue humor involves interactions between two or more characters, incorporating conversational turns. Mixed humor combines narrative and dialogue modalities within its structure.

In addition to textual forms, variations in ethnic humor in Indonesia can also be analyzed

based on the types of script opposition employed. Contrary to the findings of Raskin (1985) and Wijana (2015), which identified only four types of script forms, this study reveals eight forms of script opposition: linguistic distortion (LD), foolishness (F), stinginess (S), greed (G), cunning (C), atheism (A), cosmopolitanism (Cos), and rudeness (R). The number of each script type is detailed in the table below.

Linguistic distortion humor (LD) is a type of humor constructed by contrasting the dialect of the targeted ethnic group with the standard language considered proper and correct. The foolishness script is created by comparing the target group to another group (usually the humorist) perceived as more intelligent or knowledgeable, portraying the former as less intelligent, foolish, or uncivilized (Raskin, 1985). The stinginess script is organized by depicting the target ethnic group schematically and stereotypically as a group that employs strange, irrational, or even impossible methods to retain their wealth. The cunning script involves creating imaginary situations where members of the targeted ethnic group perform highly unusual actions to achieve their goals.

In addition to these four scripts, ethnic humor in Indonesia also includes the greed script. This is a variation of the stinginess script but differs as it portrays the target ethnic group's overwhelming desire to accumulate wealth. The atheism script contrasts the religious beliefs of the targeted ethnic group, which may be depicted as non-believing or less devout, with other ethnic groups that are portrayed as religious. The cosmopolitanism script constructs opposition between the perceived lack

of nationalism in the target ethnic group and the nationalism of other ethnic groups. The rudeness script is constructed by an oppositional portrayal of the target ethnic group as rude compared to another ethnic group depicted as polite.

The linguistic distortion script is used uniformly across nearly all ethnic groups. However, the data shows a tendency for other scripts to target specific ethnic groups. The foolishness script tends to target the Madurese and Papuan ethnic groups. The stinginess, greed, atheism, and cosmopolitanism scripts predominantly target the Chinese ethnic group, while the cunning script primarily targets the Madurese. The rudeness script is frequently used against the Papuan and Madurese ethnic groups. These patterns suggest the presence of stereotypes, assumptions, and ethnic prejudices underlying the use of these scripts.

Microstructure Analysis of Ethnic Humor

Language plays a crucial role in producing humor, including ethnic humor. It is responsible for various phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, and even pragmatic symbols used in humor (Ermida, 2008). In ethnic humor, language serves as a medium to convey three values: representational, relational, and expressive. Representational value illustrates how humorists employ words, sentences, and discourse structures to represent the world's reality. Relational value indicates how the language of ethnic humor is used to regulate inter-ethnic relationships. Expressive value reflects judgments about right or wrong, good or bad, and beautiful or ugly (Fairclough, 2001). These various values can be found in the use of different linguistic units.

Representational values of language in humor

The Chinese ethnic group is represented as homo economicus, a term used to describe individuals who are solely concerned with economic matters, neglecting social and spiritual issues. This representation can be both explicit and implicit. An explicit example of the representation of stinginess is evident in Humor 1 below.

Humor 1. Irit

Mungkin ada benarnya kalau dibilang orang Cina itu pelit. Gimana gak pelit man, saking pelitnya melek aja ngirit.

Humor 1. Frugality

Perhaps it's true when people say the Chinese are stingy. How could they not be, man? They're so stingy that even

staying awake is an effort to save.

(Source: Ernest Prakasa, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9GIBPrZMU0s>)

Meanwhile, an implicit stereotype of Chinese stinginess can be observed in Humor 2 below.

Humor 2. Pinjam Uang

"Chow, tolong pinjami aku sejuta yuan."

"Sayang sekali, ya aku nggak punya, tuh?"

"Kalau begitu seratus ribu saja, deh."

"Kalau segitu sih aku punya, tapi aku nggak mau minjamine, tuh?"

Humor 2. Borrowing Money

"Chow, can you lend me a million yuan?"

"I'm sorry, but I don't have that much."

"Well then, just a hundred thousand."

"I have that much, but I don't want to lend it to you."

(Source: *Humor China Lintas Generasi*)

The word "stingy" in Humor 1 and "I don't want to lend it" in Humor 2 represent the peculiar behavior attributed to the Chinese ethnic group, who are perceived as excessively fond of money. The Chinese are depicted as being so enamored with money that they are willing to do anything, even engaging in odd behaviors, to retain it. The script portraying the stinginess of the Chinese is a commonly employed trope in ethnic humor in Indonesia. Data reveals that this script appears in 13 pieces of Chinese humor.

Language also serves as a linguistic tool to represent the Madurese ethnic group negatively. The primary stereotype used in Madurese ethnic humor is that of being unintelligent. The use of sentences that reflect this stereotype can be observed in Humor 3 below.

Humor 3. Memarahi Habibi

Orang Madura naik pesawat buatan Habibi CN 235 yang menggunakan baling-baling, sebelum berangkat orang Madura sudah masuk dalam pesawat. Dia merasa kepanasan di dalam pesawat. Lalu dia berbisik ke penumpang sebelahnya.

Orang Madura: Habibi ini bodoh buat pesawat.

Penumpang: loh kenapa pak?

Orang Madura: wong yang panas di dalam kipasnya di taruk di luar (sambil menunjuk baling-baling pesawat yang ada di sayapnya).

Humor 3. Scolding Habibi

A Madurese person boards a propeller-equipped Habibi-made CN 235 aircraft. Before departure, the Madurese passenger enters the plane and feels hot inside. He whispers to the passenger next to him.

Madurese Person: Habibi is foolish for making this plane.

Passenger: Why do you say that, sir?

Madurese Person: Well, it's hot inside, but he put the fan outside! (while pointing to the propeller on the aircraft's wing).

(Source: *Humor Madura Untuk Penyegar Jiwa*)

In the humor above, the sentence “Well, it’s hot inside, but he put the fan outside” represents the perceived foolishness of the Madurese, as they cannot distinguish between the function of an airplane propeller and that of a ceiling fan. This script is a common stereotype used in Madurese ethnic humor and is employed in at least 37 different jokes.

Meanwhile, the Papuan ethnic group is represented as having a rough demeanor. This is evident from the use of language in the humor below.

Humor 4. Tinus Dapat Togel

Satu kali begini, Tinus de dapat togel 4 angka, 60 juta pica. Tinus pu senang apa e, de langsung pulang ke rumah. Baru sampe depan pintu rumah, tanpa toki pintu lagi Tinus sepak pintu. Begitu pintu tabuka, Tinus masuk, dan de pu maitua heran-heran lihat dia.

Begitu Tinus masuk, de menuju Televisi dan tendang televisi sambil bilang “Ganti”.

De jalan ke lemari baru de tendang lemari lagi baru de bilang “Ganti”

Tinus lanjut jalan ke dapur baru tendang rak piring kasih tahambur baru de bilang “Ganti”

Semua yang de lihat de tendang akan baru bilang “Ganti” Karena Tinus pu maitua su tra tahan jadi maitua tanya “Eeee Pace ko kenapa tendang barang-barang semua kasih hancur ? Ko su gila ka ??

Mace belum selesai bicara lagi Tinus tendang de pu mace baru bilang “Kooo lagi ganti”

HaHaHaHaHaHa

Humor 4. Tinus Wins the Lottery

One day, Tinus won the lottery with a 4-digit number, winning 60 million pica. Tinus was so happy that he went straight home. As soon as he reached his front door, he kicked it open without even knocking. When the door swung open, Tinus entered, leaving his wife bewildered at his behavior.

Upon entering, he walked over to the television and kicked it, saying, “Replace it.”

He then walked to the wardrobe, kicked it, and said, “Replace it.”

Tinus continued to the kitchen, where he kicked the dish rack, sending the dishes flying, and said, “Replace it.”

Everything he saw, he kicked, shouting, “Replace it!”

Unable to bear it any longer, Tinus’s wife asked, “Hey, why are you kicking everything and breaking it all? Have you gone mad?”

Before his wife could finish speaking, Tinus kicked her too and said, “Replace you as well!”

HaHaHaHaHaHa

(Source: <https://www.nabire.net/cerita-mop/>)

The humor above portrays a Papuan character who wins a lottery. The character, Tinus, kicks all the old items in his house, believing he now has enough money to buy new ones. He even kicks his own mother-in-law, assuming he can replace her

with a new one using his winnings. The depiction of rough behavior is evident in 14 jokes, making this script closely associated with the Papuan ethnic group.

Relational value of humor language

In addition to representing reality, ethnic humor language also conveys relational value. Relational value indicates an unequal relationship between the targeted ethnic group and the humor users. This can be observed in the use of pronouns such as “dia” (he/she) and “mereka” (they), as well as the definite articles “si” and “sang.”

Pronouns carry relational value because they imply the speaker’s self-positioning relative to their interlocutor or other subjects. In the context of ethnic humor in Indonesia, pronouns are used for two purposes: direct usage by the speaker and as part of a character’s dialogue with another character. The use of the pronoun “mereka” (they) has ideological significance because it positions the referred party as “the other” outside the speaking community. This positioning reflects a phenomenon of othering or social exclusion. Social subjects referred to as “dia” (he/she) and “mereka” (they) are intentionally excluded, as demonstrated in the following joke.

Humor 5. Pendidikan yang Timbang

Orang-orang China selalu mendidik anaknya agar tidak berbohong, tapi mungkin karena lupa, tampaknya tidak satu pun dari mereka mau mendidik anaknya agar tidak jadi penipu.

Humor 5. Unequal Education

Chinese people always teach their children not to lie, but perhaps they forget to teach them not to become cheaters.

(Source: Dada, *Humor China Lintas Generasi*, Kombat Publisers)

The word “they” (mereka) in the joke above indicates that the Chinese ethnic group is not considered part of the speaking community. Ethnic humor is linguistically excluded. Linguistic exclusion can lead to social exclusion because it prevents the targeted ethnic group from participating in speech events.

The relational value is also evident in the use of definite articles. Both “sang” and “si” are used to denote definiteness (Baskoro, 1998). However, the two words have different lexical and collocative meanings, which give them different relational values in their usage. The article “si” is attached to

subjects considered equal, inferior, or less respected, while “sang” is attached to subjects considered equal, superior, or more respected. The use of the definite articles “si” and “sang” in Indonesian ethnic humor demonstrates their relational function by indicating superior and inferior ethnic groups.

Based on an analysis of 270 instances of ethnic humor, it was found that the article “si” was used 27 times, with 17 occurrences referring to the Chinese ethnic group, 9 to the Madurese ethnic group, and 1 to the Papuan ethnic group. The article “sang” was used 32 times. The article “si” tends to be used for the ethnic group targeted by the humor 63% of the time, which is significantly higher than its use for non-target subjects at 37%. On the other hand, the article “sang” is more frequently used to refer to non-target subjects, 23 times (72%), compared to its use for target ethnic groups, 9 times (28%).

This pattern suggests that the article “si” tends to be used for ethnic groups that are less respected. On the other hand, the article “sang” is more likely to be used for ethnic groups that are more respected within the discourse. This pattern indicates that the choice of articles “si” and “sang” is not random but is regulated by the perceptions and motivations of the humor creators to manage the subjects mentioned in the humor. The article “si” can be observed in Humor 5 below.

Humor 6. Cerita Lucu Dasar Orang Cina

Si Ateng Cina glodok 70thn meninggal dunia sebelum imlek. Ketika arwahnya dalam perjalanan ke akherat, bertemulah Dengan malaikat.

Malaikat: “Teng, lu mau masuk surga atau neraka?”

Ateng: “Haiyaa, Ga pentinglah buat owe nelaka apa Solga, cuman owe mau tanya banyakan mana olang ke nelaka atau ke Solga?”

Malaikat: “Jaman sekarang banyak ke neraka, emang kenapa lu tanya gitu?”

Ateng: “Soalnya owe mau buka toko disitu.”

Humor 6. Basic Chinese Humor

Si Ateng, a 70-year-old Chinese man from Glodok, passed away shortly before the Chinese New Year. As his spirit journeyed to the afterlife, he encountered an angel.

Angel: “Teng, do you want to enter Heaven or Hell?”

Ateng: “Haiyaa, it doesn’t matter to me whether I go to Hell or Heaven. I just want to ask, where do more people go, to Hell or Heaven?”

Angel: “These days, more people end up in Hell. Why do you ask?”

Ateng: “Because I want to open a shop there.”

(Source: <https://detiklife.com/2016/10/09/cerita-lucu-humor-cina/>)

In the above humor, the article “si” refers to a Chinese character named Ateng, who passed away

at the age of 70. In the Indonesian social context, being 70 years old is categorized as elderly, a typically respected status. However, using the article “si” here is an expression of disrespect. The word “si” is deliberately used to regulate the social relations of the Chinese character, placing him in a less respected social position.

The expressive value of humor language

The most potent discursive feature expressing the expressive value of ethnic humor in Indonesia is the discourse schema represented in script opposition. There are eight script oppositions explicitly or implicitly reflecting the author’s judgment about a subject. These eight scripts include language distortion, scripts of stupidity, stinginess, greed, cunning, atheism, cosmopolitanism, and rudeness. In each of these scripts, certain traits are schematized as “good” or “neutral,” while the traits attributed to the target ethnic groups are schematized as “bad.”

This article will examine two forms of scripts that are used with particularly high frequency: language distortion and stupidity. The script opposition used in the language distortion script is the standard language versus dialect. The standard language is positioned as the language of the educated, used by the upper class of society. In contrast, the dialect is positioned as the language of the lower class, spoken by villagers from lower social strata.

Humor 7. Makan Radiator

Ada pasien Madura masuk IGD diantar keluarganya. Pada dokter si pasien mengeluhkan sakit pada perutnya. Sang dokter bertanya pada keluarga pasien, “Kenapa pasien ini? sepertinya menahan sakit yang sangat luar biasa.”

Kemudian salah satu keluarganya menjawab “Iki akibat makan radiator,” katanya.

Mendengar itu sang dokter sangat kaget, lalu keluarga yang lain menjelaskan bahwa maksudnya makan itu ra “tidak” diatur.

Humor 7. Eating the Radiator

A patient from Madura was brought to the emergency room by their family. The patient complained of severe abdominal pain. The doctor asked the family, “What’s wrong with this patient? It seems like they are enduring extreme pain.”

One of the family members replied, “It’s because of eating the radiator.”

The doctor was very surprised, and then another family member explained that “radiator” actually means “not regulated.”

(Source: <http://dadangwe.blogspot.com/2015/11/guyon-meduroan-style-people-of-madura.html>)

In this humor, the Madurese dialect introduces morphological ambiguity. The dialect, represented by the phoneme “O,” is schematized as the cause of misunderstandings between the patient’s family and the doctor. Positioning the Madurese dialect as the source of the misunderstanding conveys the judgment that it is inferior to standard Indonesian.

The expressive value is also evident in the rudeness script. The rudeness script is constructed by depicting the target ethnic group speaking or acting rudely in specific situations. Such behavior, including swearing and kicking, is schematized as negative. This script predominantly targets the Papuan ethnic group, as illustrated in the following humor.

Humor 8. Sa Bicara Deng Ko

Satu kali tinus ada duduk mabuk pagi2, tra lama begini ahmad lewat dengan kambing kurban.

Langsung tinus bilang.. “Pace ko mau bawa monyet itu kemana ?

Karena ganas, ahmad de bilang “Ko tolol sampe, ini kambing bukan monyet”

Tinus langsung pica ketawa baru de bilang “baah ko ni pede skali, sa tra bicara deng ko, sa bicara deng ko pu kambing mo”

Humor 8. Talking to You

One day, Tinus was sitting drunk early in the morning when Ahmad passed by with a sacrificial goat. Tinus immediately said, “Where are you taking that monkey?” Annoyed, Ahmad responded, “Are you so stupid? It’s a goat, not a monkey.”

Tinus then burst out laughing and said, “Oh, you’re so confident. I’m not talking to you; I’m talking to your goat.” (Source: <https://www.nabire.net/cerita-mop/>)

In this humor, two characters from different ethnic groups are involved. Based on their names, Tinus is identified as Papuan, and Ahmad as a non-Papuan. Tinus uses implicature to call Ahmad a monkey. This term is considered rude as it demeans human status. In this context, such derogatory language is viewed negatively.

Interpretation of Ethnic Humor

Ethnic humor in Indonesia is a discursive practice that plays a significant role in producing and reproducing ethnic knowledge. Humor is interpreted both individually and socially, resulting in meanings that influence the audience’s understanding. This interpretative mechanism becomes political as it involves preexisting ethnic knowledge and biases.

The presence of ethnic prejudice in Indonesia can be traced back to the Dutch Colonial era.

In 1845, the Dutch administration issued the Regering Reglement (government regulation), which categorized the population into three classes: Europeans (including Americans and Japanese), East Asians (including Arabs, Indians, and Chinese), and indigenous people (Hosniyah, 2016; Suryadinata, 2023). This stratification policy profoundly impacted the social, economic, and political life of these ethnic groups (Hosniyah, 2016). When Indonesia gained independence in 1945, it embraced diversity as a fundamental principle of the state, symbolized by the slogan “Bhinneka Tunggal Ika” (Unity in Diversity). However, ethnic segregation did not disappear automatically. New forms of social segregation emerged, distinguishing between “native” or “indigenous” and “immigrant” or “foreign.”

During the New Order era (1967-1998), the government pursued political homogenization instead of acknowledging heterogeneity as a natural trait of Indonesian society (Lan, 2011). The New Order regime enforced assimilation policies, requiring ethnic groups considered non-“native” to conform their identities and cultures to those of the “native” groups. During this period, inter-ethnic competition and conflict occurred, often triggered by struggles for political dominance, territorial control, and natural resource access. However, these conflicts were generally repressed and “exploded” during the final years of the New Order regime in the late 1990s (Bertrand, 2008).

The relationships between ethnic groups have given rise to practices of ethnic discrimination, which continue to affect interactions among ethnicities in Indonesia. Minority ethnic groups frequently experience discriminatory actions. Examples include the refusal of landlords in Yogyakarta and Salatiga to accommodate students from Papua (Nababan, 2022; Putri & Kiranantika, 2020), the rejection of migrants from Madura in several cities in Kalimantan (K. Rahman, 2019b), and the higher fees charged to Chinese Indonesians for immigration document processing (Tyson, 2003).

Discriminatory behavior toward minority ethnic groups is linked to the persistence of ethnic prejudices. These prejudices are perpetuated not only through institutional regulations (Awaliyah, 2016; Tyson, 2003) but also through media coverage (Thaniago & Jovanović, 2017) and literary works (Taufiq, 2014). Ethnic humor is a form whose

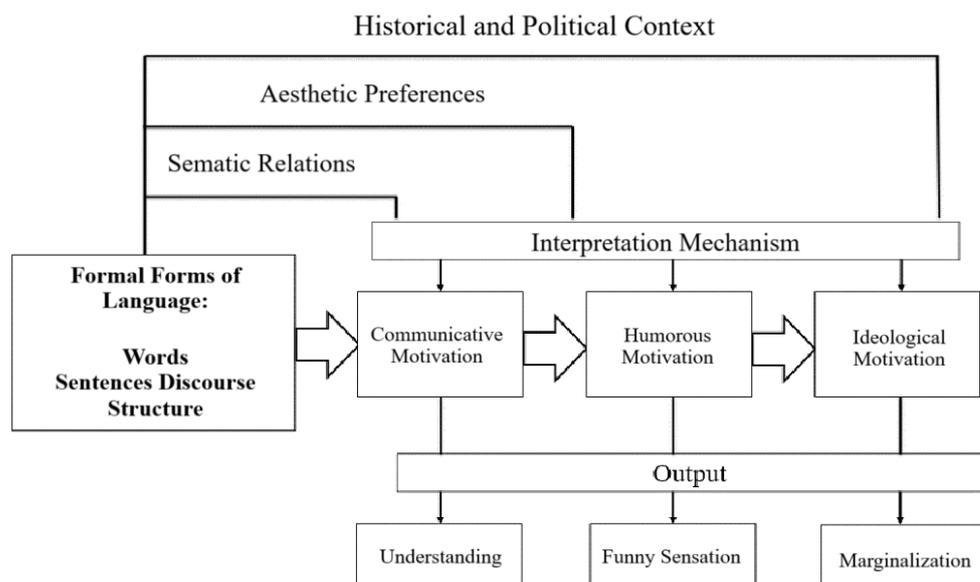


Figure 1. The role of ethnic humor in marginalizing ethnic minorities in Indonesia

production and interpretation cannot be detached from this social context. Additionally, the nature of humor, which often relies on implicature, implies that its interpretation is always intertextual. When interpreted, ethnic humor is influenced by ethnic knowledge or meanings derived from other texts that exist in society.

Marginalization of Minority Ethnic Groups in Ethnic Humor in Indonesia

The above explanation indicates that ethnic humor in Indonesia utilizes forms and language that produce and reproduce knowledge representing minority ethnic groups in a negative light. The knowledge generated through ethnic humor tends to be discriminatory because it is produced and interpreted within a socially and historically racist context. There is a relationship between the formal aspects of language, mechanisms of interpretation, and its use as a tool for marginalizing minority ethnic groups. This relationship can be illustrated in the following Diagram 1.

The diagram above illustrates that the microstructure of ethnic humor discourse in Indonesia (forms, scripts, words, sentences, and schemas) is connected to ideology. This relationship is mediated by communicative motivation and humorous motivation. Communicative motivation relates to the user's desire to convey information or messages to the audience. This motivation is realized through specific choices of words, sentences, and structures that can be decoded through interpretive mechanisms at both semantic and pragmatic levels.

On the other hand, humorous motivation concerns the user's aim to create a humorous effect in their discourse. This is achieved through ambiguity and incongruity, manifested through script opposition.

Ideological motivation is a higher-level, abstract motivation that does not directly relate to the text's form or the humor script. Ideological motivation is realized when humor texts are interpreted within a historical and political context that is racist. In this context, stereotypes and ethnic prejudices play a significant role. Ethnic humor texts can only be understood in terms of their ideological nature when interpreted with support from a racist historical and political context. When such a context is present, ethnic marginalization will occur in two stages: stigmatization and social exclusion.

Stigma refers to negative characteristics attributed to specific individuals or groups. The stigmatization process occurs through identifying and labeling undesirable traits in individuals or groups, thereby narrowing one's social identity to these negative characteristics (Chen & Courtwright, 2022). In ethnic humor in Indonesia, stigmatization is a prevalent phenomenon because ethnic humor scripts utilize ethnic stereotypes. Stigma is produced through generalizations that attach certain negative traits to the targeted ethnic groups. As a result of this stigmatization, representations restrict the understanding of these ethnic traits to the negative attributes ascribed to them.

Stigmatization of minority ethnic groups is achieved by leveraging preexisting ethnic

stereotypes. These stereotypes are normalized as common and accurate by activating ethnic prejudices present in society. Stereotypes can be used both explicitly and implicitly. Stereotypes may be personal knowledge or general, encyclopedic knowledge. In the context of ethnic humor, the stereotypes used are often negative, thereby potentially triggering negative effects towards the targeted ethnic group. In this context, the use of stereotypes constitutes a form of stigmatization.

In the humor discussed in the previous section, it has been outlined that Chinese, Madurese, and Papuan ethnicities are constrained in their identities through negative stereotypes. The Chinese are stereotyped as stingy, the Madurese as foolish, and the Papuans as rude. In such humor, non-definitive subjects are often used, so these negative traits are not only attributed to individuals but generalized as collective characteristics of the targeted ethnic groups.

The second stage of marginalization is social exclusion. The term exclusion is commonly used in political, economic, social, and cultural contexts. In this study, exclusion is understood as an idea or concept described by (Levitas, 2005) as "... a significant division between the included majority group and the excluded minority group." Exclusion becomes problematic because it affects how the included and excluded groups are perceived and how these two groups become models in concrete social life. The linguistic representation of social exclusion uses the pronoun "they" when referring to the excluded group.

The pronoun "they" projects the user's views and attitudes regarding which social subjects are considered members of their group and who is outside it. In the context of ethnic humor in Indonesia, the Chinese ethnic group is the most frequently excluded. Humorists often position themselves as the "other," who, for various reasons, cannot or should not be part of the in-group. Among the three minority ethnic groups, the Chinese are the most vulnerable to social exclusion.

Exclusion in ethnic humor parallels the exclusion that occurs in social practices within Indonesian society, both historically and currently. In the dynamics of interethnic relations in Indonesia, the Chinese have indeed been and continue to be treated as "the other" by other ethnic groups that identify as "native" or "indigenous." Such practices occur across various aspects of life.

According to (Suryadinata, 2023), this situation arises from political, economic, and cultural influences. The exclusion of the Madurese is manifested by positioning them as a second-class ethnic group whose knowledge and civilization are considered inferior compared to those of other ethnic minorities. Social exclusion of the Papuan ethnic group is influenced by racial background differences and the unique political processes involved in integrating the region with Indonesia.

IV. DISCUSSION

The findings outlined above indicate that the ideological nature of ethnic humor discourse can be evidenced through the formal linguistic structures it employs. Besides serving as markers and sources of humor, language in ethnic humor in Indonesia also functions as an instrument for marginalizing minority ethnic groups. The relationship between formal linguistic structures and their role in marginalization is illustrated in Diagram 1. More specifically, ethnic humor contributes to the marginalization of minority ethnic groups through two preceding processes: identity limitation and role restriction.

Ethnic humor in Indonesia encompasses various textual forms and scripts. Four scripts are particularly distinctive because they have not been identified by previous researchers: greed, atheism, cosmopolitanism, and rudeness. The presence of these four scripts illustrates that minority ethnic groups in Indonesia experience unique forms of marginalization that differ from those in other countries. This uniqueness is evident in the Chinese ethnic group, which is marginalized through stereotypes of greed, irreligiosity, and lack of nationalism. In contrast, the Papuan ethnic group is marginalized through stereotypes of rudeness.

These findings reinforce previous research, such as that conducted by Pérez (2022), which argues that the ideological nature of ethnic humor can be harmful as it reinforces the dominance of majority groups. Pérez's study demonstrated that ethnic humor contains values that can entrench dominant ethnic prejudices against minority groups. However, Pérez did not provide detailed textual evidence to support his arguments. This study provides empirical textual evidence to show that the ideological nature of ethnic humor is realized through linguistic units, such as words, sentences, and discourse structures.

The schema presented in Diagram 1 can serve as a formula for examining the ideological aspects of various types of humor, including ethnic humor. Thus, studies on the relationship between microstructure and marginalization can be conducted with more precise criteria and variables. The reduction makes the relationship between microstructure, interpretation, and macrostructure of discourse more comprehensible.

This study also reinforces previous findings regarding the relationship between formal language forms and the practice of marginalizing minority ethnic groups, as presented in Diagram 1. It also supports the theory proposed by Mendiburo-Seguel & Ford (2023) about the impact of humor on ethnic prejudice. Mendiburo's research demonstrates that exposure to humor increases the acceptance of prejudices against minority groups. However, their study was limited to only one type of humor: mocking. This research utilizes various humor types in textual and script opposition forms. Even humor that appears non-aggressive can harbor values that marginalize minority ethnic groups by facilitating stigmatization and social exclusion.

Marginalization is conceptually close to social exclusion but differs in that it encompasses not just status but also the experiences and feelings associated with that status. To be marginalized means to feel that one is not accepted and, thus, to feel that one is not part of a community or cannot openly access various resources. In discourse, social group marginalization can manifest through limited involvement or engagement, as they are positioned peripherally.

In ethnic humor, marginalization is realized through three aspects: identity limitation, role restriction, and access limitation. Identity limitation is achieved by selectively presenting the target ethnic group's identity, particularly its negative aspects. This limitation impacts the reduction of the target ethnic group's self-perception as a social subject with multiple identities. When their identity is restricted, the potential of the ethnic group to participate in the collective life of society is also diminished. This results in restricted roles.

Role restriction is executed by positioning the target ethnic group as socially weak subjects. For example, the Chinese ethnic group's characteristic of stinginess is deemed incompatible with the values of generosity upheld in Indonesian society. Similarly, the perception of the Madurese

ethnic group as less intelligent is seen as a disqualification for holding important social roles. Likewise, Madurese's perceived lack of education and rudeness are considered barriers to optimal participation in societal life. Identity and role restrictions create limitations on access to discursive and social resources. Minority ethnic groups are perceived as only capable of taking on minor roles in society, thus being denied access to discursive and social resources. This condition underscores how ethnic humor serves as a form of marginalization against minority ethnic groups.

Given its potential implications for Indonesia's multiethnic society, studies on the ideology of ethnic humor must continue. Indonesia's troubled history, marked by ethnic conflicts such as the 1998 riots and the 2001 Sampit riots, as well as ongoing conflicts in Papua due to political disputes between Indonesian supporters and the Free Papua Organization, puts the country in a vulnerable position for future ethnic conflicts. Proper management of ethnic humor is crucial to prevent its misuse, which could potentially trigger future conflicts.

With the existing linguistic evidence, this study has demonstrated the role of humor in producing and reproducing ideological knowledge that can marginalize minority ethnic groups. However, the study has limitations due to the small sample size used. The selected sample of three ethnic groups does not fully represent the variety of ethnic humor present in Indonesia. Future research could strengthen these findings by incorporating a more diverse sample. As a discourse analysis study, this research focuses solely on explaining discourse interpretation mechanisms. Future studies could expand upon this by incorporating social psychology research to empirically examine the impact of humor on individual and group behaviors.

V. CONCLUSION

This study aims to explain the role of ethnic humor in the marginalization of ethnic minorities in Indonesia. Employing a critical discourse analysis approach, the research was conducted in three stages: (1) describing the formal linguistic forms of ethnic humor, (2) explaining the mechanisms of interpretation, and (3) explaining the use of ethnic humor as a social practice. The findings indicate that there are various forms of ethnic

humor in Indonesia. Pragmatically, the humor is predominantly of the joke type. Textually, the humor is mainly narrative and mixed in form. In terms of script opposition, there are several types of script opposition in ethnic humor in Indonesia, with the largest quantity observed.

While previous studies have focused on the psychological and social aspects of ethnic humor, this research examines the use of formal linguistic forms as discursive instruments in propagating ethnic stereotypes. Formal linguistic forms, including words, sentences, and discourse structures, reveal representational, relational, and expressive values. The findings indicate that the use of words, sentences, and discourse structures is ideologically charged when interpreted with racist ethnic knowledge and prejudices.

Although this study demonstrates a consistent relationship between formal linguistic forms and their ideological implications, it has yet to provide a solid argument for explaining the use of humor in concrete social practices. This limitation arises because the social function of humor is highly dependent on the influence of social context. Therefore, the researcher suggests that future studies incorporate social psychology-based research to examine the social impact on society empirically. Additionally, it is recommended that future research utilize a larger sample of ethnic humor to better represent the 364 ethnic groups that present. Research on ethnic language and humor needs to be continued because ethnic humor plays an important role in the life of a multi-ethnic nation

like Indonesia.

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The authors have read and followed the ethical requirements for publication in *Jurnal Arbitrer* and that the current work does not involve human subjects, animal experiments, or any data collected from social media platforms.

CREDIT AUTHOR STATEMENT

Surahmat: Collected data, developed the methodology, analyzed data, drafted the manuscript, and revised the content; **I Dewa Putu Wijana:** Supervised, provide a theoretical framework, critically reviewed, and edited the manuscript; **Sulistyowati:** Critically reviewed, provide a theoretical framework, and edited the manuscript.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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