

Social Criticism in Bintang Emon's Stand-Up Comedy Video "Corruption Is Not Just an Act of Theft"

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Abstract

The video raises the issue of corruption as a social problem that has a wide impact on society and is conveyed through a comedic style that contains satire on the reality of law enforcement in Indonesia. This study aims to analyze social criticism in the Bintang Emon stand-up comedy video with the theme of corruption on Instagram using Teun A. van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis. This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. The research data was in the form of speech in one Bintang Emon stand-up comedy video with the theme of corruption uploaded on @bintangemon's Instagram account. Data was obtained through the technique of watching and recording by observing the content of the video, then analyzed using the Teun A. van Dijk Critical Discourse Analysis model which includes macro structures, superstructures, microstructures, social cognition, and social context. The validity of the data was tested using the theory triangulation technique by comparing the results of the analysis based on the concept of Critical Discourse Analysis by Teun A. van Dijk and the theory of social criticism. The results of the study showed that the video contained social criticism of corrupt practices which were described as a form of state erosion that benefited a few people and harmed the wider community. In the macro structure, the main theme was found in the form of the importance of eradicating corruption. In the superstructure, the discourse is arranged through opening, development, and closing that builds a humorous effect as well as sarcasm. In the microstructure, the use of diction, sentence forms, and language styles strengthens the message of social criticism.

Keywords

Critical Discourse Analysis, Instagram, Corruption, Social Criticism, Stand Up Comedy, Teun A. Van Dijk.



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INTRODUCTION

The development of information technology has changed the way society conveys and receives social criticism. While previously social criticism was primarily conveyed through print media, literature, and demonstrations, digital media has now become a new space for

people to voice their opinions on various social, political, and legal issues. Social media allows individuals to quickly produce and disseminate messages to a wide audience, making it an effective means of public communication. This shift has enabled social media to function not only as a medium for entertainment but also as a space for public discussion, influencing how society understands various social phenomena.

One form of social criticism that has developed in digital media is stand-up comedy. Unlike formal criticism, stand-up comedy utilizes humor, satire, irony, and parody, making its message more easily accepted by the public. Humor serves not only as entertainment but also as a medium for reflection on various issues occurring in social life. Ramadhan and Achmad (2024) explain that comedy has evolved into a new form of social criticism, where satirical humor can convey criticism of policies and social realities in a more engaging way without losing the substance of the message.

Instagram has become one of the social media platforms widely used by content creators to convey social criticism. The Reels feature allows users to convey messages in the form of short videos that are easily accessible and shareable. Through a combination of visual, audio, and linguistic elements, Instagram is able to expand the reach of social criticism. Research by Jessica (2024) shows that Instagram functions not only as an entertainment medium but also as an effective political communication platform because it can shape public perception of social issues through comedic content.

One comedian who consistently utilizes Instagram as a medium for social criticism is Bintang Emon. Unlike other comedians who emphasize everyday humor, Bintang Emon is known for frequently addressing current issues, such as corruption, democracy, law enforcement, and government policy. This criticism is delivered through impersonation, satire, and irony, thereby capturing the attention of a wider audience. Research by Ramadhan and Achmad (2024) concluded that the use of satirical humor in Bintang Emon's Instagram Reels content not only provides entertainment but also serves as an effective medium for conveying social criticism on various public issues.

One of Bintang Emon's videos that is interesting to study is a corruption-themed video with the statement, "Corruption is not just an act of theft. It is the erosion of the state from within." In the video, Bintang Emon impersonates a prosecutor delivering a speech about the importance of eradicating corruption. At first glance, the speech resembles an official statement from a law enforcement official, but the overall context of the video actually satirizes the weak law enforcement in eradicating corruption. The humor created through this impersonation serves as a form of social critique of the prevailing realities in society.

The selection of corruption as the research topic is based on the fact that corruption remains a serious problem in Indonesia. Corruption not only causes state losses but also hinders development, widens social disparities, and undermines public trust in state institutions. According to a report by the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK), Indonesia's Corruption Perception Index (CPI) score for 2024 was 37, indicating that corruption eradication still faces significant challenges, despite a slight improvement

compared to the previous year. This situation demonstrates that the issue of corruption remains relevant for study as a social issue that attracts significant public attention.

To uncover the meaning of the social criticism in the video, this study utilizes Teun A. van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Van Dijk views discourse not only as a series of languages but also as related to social structures, ideologies, power relations, and the knowledge possessed by society. Van Dijk's analysis encompasses three main dimensions: text structure (macro, superstructure, and micro), social cognition, and social context. This approach allows researchers to uncover how criticism of corruption is constructed through language choices, discourse structures, and the underlying social context.

Several researchers have conducted research on Bintang Emon. Ramadhan and Achmad (2024) examined the humorous style of political satire in Bintang Emon's Instagram Reels content using Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic approach. The results showed that satirical humor is used as a medium for social criticism of the political situation in Indonesia. Furthermore, Jessica and Indinabila (2024) analyzed Bintang Emon's comedy content on the government's political style through a semiotic approach and found that humor can shape public perceptions of political reality. Other research on the reception of Bintang Emon's political satire content shows that audiences interpret Bintang Emon's content as a form of social criticism presented in a lighthearted manner, making it easier for young people to understand.

Based on this previous research, it can be seen that most research still focuses on semiotics, language style, and audience reception. Few studies have specifically analyzed a single Bintang Emon video on the topic of corruption using Teun A. van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis, specifically examining its macrostructure, superstructure, microstructure, social cognition, and social context comprehensively. This situation indicates a research gap that serves as the basis for this research.

The novelty of this research lies in its focus on analyzing a single Bintang Emon video on Instagram about corruption using Teun A. van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis approach. This research not only identifies the form of social criticism conveyed but also explains how discourse structure, linguistic strategies, social knowledge, and social context work together to construct a critique of corrupt practices in Indonesia. Thus, this research is expected to contribute to the development of critical discourse analysis studies on social media, particularly regarding the use of stand-up comedy as a medium for conveying social criticism.

METHODS

This study uses a qualitative descriptive method to describe and analyze the social criticism contained in Bintang Emon's stand-up comedy video on Instagram about corruption, based on its meaning, discourse structure, and the underlying social context (Sugiyono, 2023:17). This method was chosen because it aligns with the research objective, namely to uncover the forms of social criticism conveyed through the speech in the video using Teun A. van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The theory used as the basis for this research is Teun A.

van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis, which encompasses macrostructure, superstructure, microstructure, social cognition, and social context. The research data consist of speech, dialogue, and linguistic elements contained in Bintang Emon's stand-up comedy video on corruption, uploaded to the Instagram account @bintangemon, with a duration of 37 seconds. The research data source is a video titled "Corruption is not just an act of theft," uploaded to Bintang Emon's official Instagram account.

Data collection techniques were conducted through listening and note-taking. Researchers repeatedly watched the video to understand the content of the speech, then transcribed the dialogue into text and noted sections containing social criticism. Furthermore, researchers conducted a documentary study by collecting various references in the form of journals, books, and previous research related to social criticism, stand-up comedy, Instagram social media, and Teun A. van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis to support the analysis. The validity of the data was tested using theoretical triangulation techniques, namely by comparing the analysis results based on the concepts of Teun A. van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis with social criticism theory and relevant previous research. This technique aims to increase the credibility and objectivity of the research results.

Discussion

Based on observations of Bintang Emon's 37-second stand-up comedy video uploaded to the Instagram account @bintangemon, researchers found social criticism delivered through a monologue using the impersonation technique of a prosecutor. The video addresses the issue of corruption as its main theme and uses a delivery style resembling a law enforcement press conference. Although presented as a comedy, the speech contains criticism of corruption and law enforcement in Indonesia. The data analyzed in this study is as follows.

"I've already said that corruption isn't just an act of theft. It's the erosion of the state from within. A few people benefit, while many suffer losses. That's why I insist that corruption eradication must be carried out as vigorously as possible. I already have ample evidence, cases that I will uncover later. So, my friends here have the media too, so just take note. Don't mess with me about corruption, okay?"

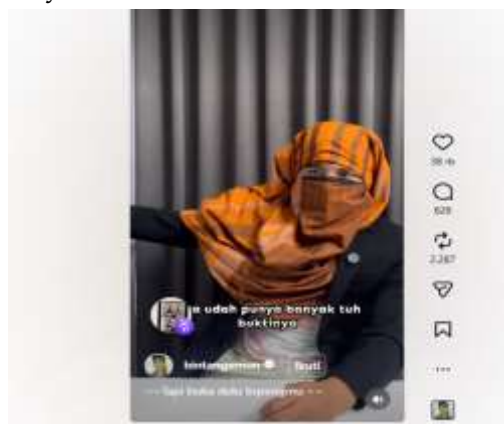


Figure 1. Bintang Emon discusses corruption

Source: bintangemon

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Macrostructure

Based on Teun A. van Dijk's (2008) theory of Critical Discourse Analysis, macrostructure is the global meaning or main theme underlying the entire content of a discourse. Macrostructure indicates the main issue the speaker wishes to convey, so that all parts of the text are interconnected to build a single main idea. According to Van Dijk (2008), a theme is a conceptual representation that forms the core of a text and guides readers in understanding the entire discourse.

This opinion is supported by research by Eka Tristiana (2023), who explains that macrostructure describes the main theme of a discourse, which serves as the center of development for the entire text. Through macrostructure analysis, researchers can identify the main message the speaker intends to convey to the audience. Similarly, Nurul (2025) states that macrostructure in Van Dijk's model serves to identify the main topic that builds the overall meaning of the text. This theme serves as the basis for readers to understand the direction of the news or the message the author wishes to convey.

Based on an analysis of Bintang Emon's video titled "Corruption Is Not Just an Act of Theft," the macrostructure identified is a critique of corrupt practices and the weak commitment to eradicating corruption in Indonesia. This theme is evident from the beginning of the monologue through the statement,

"Corruption is not just an act of theft. It is the erosion of the state from within."

This statement demonstrates that Bintang Emon does not position corruption as an ordinary crime, but rather as an act that threatens the very survival of the state. The phrase "corruption of the state from within" implies that corruption is a systemic crime that undermines state institutions, hinders development, and causes widespread harm to society. The theme developed is not only oriented towards the perpetrators of corruption, but also focuses on the resulting social impact.

This theme is reinforced by the following statement,

"Those who benefit are a handful of people, while those who suffer are many."

This sentence demonstrates the conflict between the small group that benefits from corrupt practices and the wider community that is victimized. The use of the terms "a handful of people" and "very many" emphasizes the social inequality caused by corruption. Through this theme, Bintang Emon encourages the audience to understand that corruption is a social issue that impacts society as a whole.

Furthermore, the theme of the importance of law enforcement is reinforced through the statement, "I insist that corruption eradication must be carried out as vigorously as possible. I already have a lot of evidence, cases that I will uncover later."

This statement builds the expectation that the character portrayed is strongly committed to eradicating corruption. However, within the overall context of the video, Bintang Emon uses the technique of impersonation as a prosecutor, creating irony. Through this technique,

social criticism is directed at the reality of law enforcement, which, in the public's view, still does not fully meet public expectations. Thus, based on Van Dijk's theory and supported by research by Kurniati, Kholidah, and Tristiana (2023) and Fadilah and Yuliati (2025), it can be concluded that the macrostructure of this video is built around one central theme: criticism of corrupt practices and the weak commitment to eradicating corruption in Indonesia. This theme serves as a foundation that connects all the speech in the monologue, ensuring that the message of social criticism can be fully understood by the audience.

Superstructure.

Based on Teun A. van Dijk's (2008) Critical Discourse Analysis theory, superstructure is a scheme or framework for constructing a discourse, describing how a text is systematically structured, from the introduction, body, to the conclusion. Superstructure demonstrates how the speaker organizes information so that the main message can be fully understood by the audience. According to Van Dijk (2008), each discourse has a specific organizational pattern tailored to the speaker's communication goals. This opinion is supported by Novita's (2024) research in the *Journal of Educational Linguistics (JOEL)*, which analyzed Bintang Emon's Instagram post using Van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis model. The study's results explain that superstructure functions to examine how the speaker logically structures the flow of message delivery so that the main idea is understood by the reader or listener. Systematic text organization is an important strategy in constructing meaning and strengthening the critical message being conveyed. In line with Wahyuni (2024), who wrote in the *Wahana Pendidikan Scientific Journal*, the structure of Bintang Emon's comedy content is not random, but rather constructed through stages that guide the audience from serious situations to humorous social satire. This structure effectively conveys social criticism without diminishing the comedic elements. Based on the analysis, Bintang Emon's video, "Corruption Is Not Just a Deed of Theft," has a systematic discourse structure, characteristic of stand-up comedy performances. This structure consists of an opening (setup), content development (development), and a closing (punchline).

Microstructure

Based on Teun A. van Dijk's (2008) theory of Critical Discourse Analysis, microstructure is the analysis of the linguistic elements used by speakers to construct the meaning of a discourse. Microstructure encompasses semantic, syntactic, stylistic, and rhetorical aspects. According to Yusuf and Kurniawan (2023), microstructural analysis aims to uncover the language strategies used by speakers to influence the audience's perspective on a social issue.

a. Semantics

According to Van Dijk (2008), semantic aspects relate to the meaning the speaker wishes to convey through the choice of information and the setting of an event. Based on the analysis, semantic aspects are evident in the phrase,

"The erosion of the state from within."

This phrase indicates that corruption is not only seen as an act of theft, but also as an act that systematically damages the state. The use of the word "erosion" reinforces the notion that

the impact of corruption is far-reaching because it harms society and weakens the government system. This aligns with Yusuf and Kurniawan (2023), who state that semantic aspects are used to construct a particular perspective on a social reality.

b. Syntax

According to Van Dijk (2008), syntactic aspects relate to the sentence structure used by the speaker to convey a message. In this video, Bintang Emon uses declarative sentences, such as,

"I insist that the eradication of corruption must be carried out with all due force."

This sentence demonstrates a firm stance and creates the impression that the character portrayed has the authority of a law enforcement officer. The use of the pronoun "I" also strengthens the character of the prosecutor being portrayed.

c. Stylistics

Stylistics relate to the speaker's choice of words (Van Dijk, 2008).

In this video, Bintang Emon chooses words such as "undermining the state from within," "a handful of people," and "uncovering the case." This choice of words emphasizes that corruption is a serious problem that only benefits a small group, while the wider community becomes the victim. According to Fadilah and Yuliati (2025), the choice of diction is a strategy to strengthen the speaker's message and stance on an issue.

d. Rhetoric

According to Van Dijk (2008), rhetorical aspects relate to the speaker's way of emphasizing a message through delivery style, intonation, and expression. In this video, Bintang Emon uses the technique of impersonation by playing the role of a prosecutor. In addition, the sentence, "Don't mess with me about corruption, okay?"

This is said in a firm tone, resembling an official's official statement. However, because it is delivered in the context of stand-up comedy, the remark presents an irony that reinforces the criticism of law enforcement in corruption cases in Indonesia. Based on this analysis, the microstructure of this video shows that Bintang Emon utilizes word choice, sentence structure, and delivery style as strategies to effectively convey social criticism of corrupt practices.

Social Cognition

According to Teun A. van Dijk's theory (2008), social cognition is the knowledge, experience, beliefs, and ideology held by speakers and society in understanding an event. According to Van Dijk, a discourse is not born neutrally but is influenced by social knowledge that develops in society. Social cognition serves as a link between the structure of the text and social reality, ensuring that the message conveyed can be understood by the audience.

This opinion is supported by Eriyanto (2001), who explains that in Van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis model, social cognition shows how the speaker's knowledge and experience influence the formation of the text, as well as how the audience interprets the meaning of a discourse. Bintang Emon constructs social criticism based on the public's collective knowledge of the rampant corruption cases in Indonesia. Viewers can understand the meaning of this statement because they have previously obtained information through

media coverage of various corruption cases involving state officials. This shared knowledge enables the audience to perceive that the prosecutor portrayed by Bintang Emon is a satire on the reality of law enforcement.

This is evident in the statement, "I already have a lot of evidence, cases that I will uncover later."

This statement is not interpreted as a statement from an actual prosecutor, but rather as a critique based on the public's social experience of various corruption cases that frequently attract public attention. Therefore, according to Van Dijk's (2008) theory, the audience's understanding of this video is not solely derived from the text's content but is also influenced by their prior knowledge, experience, and social context.

Social Context

According to Teun A. van Dijk's (2008) theory of Critical Discourse Analysis, social context is the social conditions that underlie the emergence of a discourse. According to Van Dijk, a text cannot be understood solely from its linguistic elements, but must also be linked to social conditions, power relations, and emerging issues in society. Therefore, social context analysis aims to explain the relationship between the text and the underlying social reality.

This opinion is reinforced by Eriyanto (2001), who states that discourse is a social practice influenced by the situation, ideology, and power relations within society. Therefore, a text functions not only as a means of communication but also as a medium for conveying criticism, shaping opinions, and influencing public perspectives on an issue. Bintang Emon's video represents a critique of the state of law enforcement in Indonesia, which remains a public concern due to the rampant corruption cases. This is evident in the statement,

"Corruption is not just an act of theft. It is the erosion of the state from within."

Through this statement, Bintang Emon emphasizes that corruption is a social problem with a broad impact on people's lives. The criticism is not only directed at the perpetrators of corruption, but also emphasizes the importance of the commitment of law enforcement officials to eradicating corruption firmly and consistently. The use of stand-up comedy as a medium for conveying criticism demonstrates that humor can be an effective means of social communication. Through the technique of impersonating a prosecutor, Bintang Emon conveys the public's aspirations regarding the importance of fair, transparent, and vested interest-free law enforcement. In accordance with Van Dijk's (2008) theory, this discourse emerged in response to prevailing social conditions, so the meaning of the criticism conveyed cannot be separated from the underlying social reality.

Thus, the social context of this video demonstrates that stand-up comedy functions not only as entertainment but also as a medium for social criticism, reflecting public concerns about corruption and law enforcement in Indonesia.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis results using Teun A. van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis theory on Bintang Emon's stand-up comedy video entitled "Corruption Is Not Just an Act of Theft,"

it can be concluded that the video contains social criticism of corruption practices and law enforcement in Indonesia. Analysis based on macrostructure, superstructure, microstructure, social cognition, and social context shows that Bintang Emon conveys criticism through humor, satire, and impersonation techniques as a prosecutor. The main theme raised is corruption as an act that is detrimental to the state and society. The choice of words, sentence forms, and delivery style are used to strengthen the critical message. In addition, the criticism conveyed is based on public knowledge about various corruption cases that often occur in Indonesia. Thus, Bintang Emon's stand-up comedy not only functions as entertainment, but also as a medium of social criticism that invites the public to be more concerned about the importance of eradicating corruption and fair law enforcement.

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