

# THE DISCOURSE OF SATIRE IN POLITICAL CARTOONS

## WACANA SATIR PADA KARTUN POLITIK

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### Abstract

Focusing on the use of political cartoon about Donald Trump, this study aimed at analysing the satire in political cartoons. The study first identified the types of satire in political cartoons based on how the cartoon is delivered by the cartoonist. Second, identified the features of satire, both in verbal and visual. Third, revealed the satirical messages in political cartoons. This study employed qualitative method. This study resulted that: the political cartoons significantly employed the direct form of satire; second, among the types of the features of satire, topicality is significantly used in the political cartoons; third, the political cartoons deliver the satirical messages to criticize Trump and his political life for being liar, and irresponsible, and to criticize his new policies.

**Keywords:** discourse, satire, political cartoon

### Abstrak

*Memfokuskan pada kegunaan kartun politik mengenai Donald Trump, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis satir pada kartun politik. Tujuan utama penelitian ini adalah untuk mengidentifikasi tipe satir berdasarkan bagaimana cara satir disampaikan oleh kartunis. Kemudian, mengidentifikasi fitur-fitur dalam satir, baik secara verbal dan visual. Terakhir, mengungkap pesan satir dalam kartun politik. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif. Hasil penelitian ini adalah: pertama, kartun politik secara signifikan menggunakan tipe penyampaian satir secara langsung; kedua, diantara jenis-jenis fitur satir, aktualitas secara signifikan digunakan oleh kartunis dalam kartun politik; ketiga, kartun politik menyampaikan pesan satir untuk mengkritisi Trump dan kehidupan politiknya karena telah menjadi pembohong dan tidak bertanggung jawab, dan untuk mengkritisi kebijakan-kebijakan barunya.*

**Kata kunci:** wacana, satir, kartun politik

## INTRODUCTIONS

In our society, information, ideas, or opinions can be delivered through mass media. The existence of mass media is very important especially in spreading information through the public since many events happen every day and bring effects to the society. Political cartoon is one of mass media to speak up public opinions and to complain the society services and policies. In these days, the internet has come to be one of the most powerful device in sharing news and

information. Cartoonists of political cartoons also spread their cartoons through internet.

As the development and spreading of political cartoon are getting broader, people are more creative in creating cartoon. A political cartoon delivers messages of the cartoonists. People might think that editorial cartoon is only about jokes, but actually there is something behind it that refers to the implicature of the cartoon and the relation in the elements which is analysed in order to understand the meaning and the satirical purposes of the political cartoon.

According to Diamond (2002: 252) political or editorial cartoons have appeared in the editorial sections of newspapers and magazines for over two hundred years. Editorial cartoons are sometimes referred as political cartoons, because they often deal with political issues. The cartoonist draws all meaning-making using multi modes to carefully show the full import of the image but not so completely as to leave the viewer without a clue. Audiences need to pay close attention in order to find the purposes behind its satirical details.

In cartoons, there are written texts or thought bubbles in a form of dialog which supports the message along with the picture. According to Halliday and Hasan (1985), a text is a semantic unit since it emphasizes on the importance of language as an instrument of social interaction among the members of any speech community. Language itself creates meanings. The meaning has to be expressed or coded in words and structures in order to be communicated. However, text is not only a semantic unit but also an instance of social interaction. It connects one person to another by sharing knowledge. The same is true in political cartoon. Cartoonists give or create written text or thought bubbles along with the picture. Thus, the text and picture carry messages which are also the instances of social interaction.

Along with the features, a political cartoon usually has a satirical content which is usually humorous about a political person event, institution or idea, and reflecting the cartoonist's own values or opinions on the issue (School Programs Section, National Museum of

Australian, 2002: 4). The cartoonist selects a certain social scenario which takes prior knowledge to be understood. The opinion may express certain ideologies, issues, self-contrast with others, and/or use to reinforce certain positions and attitudes.

One of the social scenario which is being portrayed in political cartoons is the issues related to the figure of Donald Trump. Trump has been elected as the present American's President. The new president of America has made many changes and policies in America. Many cartoons have been made referring his presidency. Likes and dislikes come from the people in America and even outside of America. Many editorial cartoon cartoonists create their artwork to voice their opinion about the new policies made by the new president. Thus, the researcher is interested in analysing political cartoons about the issues.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

### **Types of Study**

Since the objectives were to identify how satire is delivered; to identify the linguistic features of satire; and the satirical and context implied in the political cartoons, this research was included as qualitative research.

### **Time and Places of the Study**

The present study is written from August 2017 to July 2018 in Yogyakarta.

### **Subject of the Study**

The subjects of the study were political cartoons consisting fourteen cartoons from [theweek.com/cartoons](http://theweek.com/cartoons).

## Data, Instrument, and Data Collection Techniques

The form of the data were political cartoons about Donald Trump in online website in January to March 2018 based on the variety of the issues by filtering the certain cartoons about Donald Trump's presidency.

The main instrument in the study was the researcher herself supported by the data sheets. The data of the study collected using ethnographic observation method by Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009) in which it includes observing people enacting culture, analyzing documents and material culture, such as written text or cultural artifacts, and visual analysis which include interpretation.

## Data Analysis

The data is analysed following theory of Moleong (2001). Initially the data taken from [www.theweek.com/-cartoons](http://www.theweek.com/-cartoons), then classified base on the study question and put into the data sheet, each datum classified base on the study question, the data interpreted to answer the study question, explained the findings descriptively, and write the report of the study and conclusion.

## DISCUSSIONS

The first to discuss is the type of satire based on how the satire is delivered. The first type of satire employed in the political cartoons is direct form.



Figure 3. (DA-01)

In the direct form of satire, the satiric persona speaks out in the first person. This cartoon employs direct form of satire since it use “we” as the point of view. The character presents as the first-person satiric speaker, and also by the attitude and tone that such a persona manifests toward both the subject matter and the readers of the work. The “we” in the cartoon is uttered by the elephant. It can be known by the context of the discourse that “we” in the cartoon is then referred to Republican party. While, the “his” who is pointed by the character elephant is referred to the donkey who is then known to be illustration of Democrat Party.



Figure 4. (DA-02)

Meanwhile, in the indirect type of satire, the cartoonist uses narration. In the figure 4, the cartoonist employs the indirect form of satire. The cartoonist uses narration to describe the character of the cartoon in form of letter. “He” in the paragraph is referred to President Trump. The cartoon shows the paragraph which narrates Trump’s health report. The narration seems ridiculous as it mentions the descriptions such as “huge hands”, “great mind”, and “a very stable genius.” The way the letter written is then known to be ridiculous to the writer of the letter itself. The cartoonist shows the ridicules of the letter writer by the description that is written to describe the writer himself.

There are eight types of linguistic devices in satirical texts in political cartoons of Donald Trump, namely irony, paradox, antithesis, parody, colloquialism, topicality, vividness, and exaggeration.

First feature to be discussed is irony. Irony is the opposite of boasting. It is also called as mock modesty, dissimulation of self-depreciation. Based on the data analysis, there are twelve occurrences of irony found in Donald Trump political cartoons.

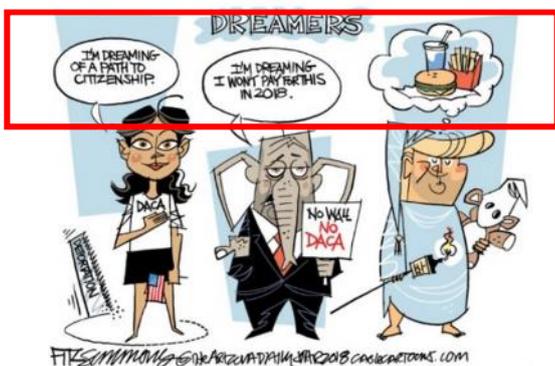


Figure 13. (DA-11)

This cartoon illustrates the situation of DACA which has been stopped by Trump government

due to some reasons. Most of immigrant under DACA are Mexicans. DACA program allows immigrants under 16 years to study and work in America without legal documents. The irony is shown by the cartoonist who indirectly tries to comment Trump by the three contrast dreams between of three different people. The dream of the three different people in the cartoon is the irony of the cartoon itself. The cartoonist illustrates the irony how people who is powerful enough to make a change for the country do not think about the country to be better; they only think about money and even the president only thinks about food. While, the young dreamers in DACA is being forced to leave America.

Paradox is a satirical device which seems contradictory yet can be true or at least makes sense. Based on the data analysis, there are six occurrences of paradox found in Donald Trump political cartoons.



Figure 8. (DA-06)

The cartoon shows paradox because Trump still asks Uncle Sam to pass the bridge, though the fact that the bridge is not well built as

it illustrates with unconnected dots. Trump's statement "It's real" and question to the character of Uncle Sam "Have I ever lied to you?" are contradicted with the bridge condition which seems so unreal. The purpose of the paradox employed in the cartoon is to show the reader about the cartoonist's criticism itself toward Trump's infrastructure plan.



Figure 9. (DA-07)

This cartoon illustrates the issue of Trump that, after cancelling DACA, he said that he would like to reach a deal with Congress to protect dreamers from deportation in exchange for funding to build his long-promised wall at the U.S.-Mexico border. The president, however, went on to reject immigration proposals from congressional Democrats in recent month.

There is only one character in the cartoon who is known to be Trump who wears suit and red tie. There are two panels in the cartoon. The first one Trump is illustrated running to the direction of "bad guy", while he is pointed as "hero". The second panel shows Trump sitting in his chair. Beside him, there is a basket filled with a paper written 'DACA "DREAMERS"'. This cartoon then is known to be parodying Trump toward DACA program in America. This cartoon parodies Trump in declining the DACA program after his speech saying that he would protect the DACA's dreamers.

Colloquialism is one of satire weapon which is defined as an expression used in informal conversation but not accepted as good usage in formal speech or writing.



Figure 3. (DA-01)

Antithesis is an opposition or contrast between two things. This cartoon says that the one who has to be blamed is the donkey, but implicitly the cartoonist tries to blame the elephant. It shows the antithesis of the character elephant statement to the illustration in the cartoon where in the last panel shows the opposite effect to what it should be after the three statement in the first three panels which show the elephant's authorities. The statement of the elephant shows the opposition toward its first arguments.

There are thirteen parodies out of fourteen found in the Trump political cartoons. The first evidence of parody applied by Trump political cartoons can be seen below.



Figure 15. (DA-13)

This cartoon shows Americans’ protests on NRA due to gun mass shooting happening in schools in America. This cartoon illustrates how NRA responses to Americans protesting to NRA. It can be seen in the cartoon that the NRA officer seems does not care about what they protest.

The cartoon employs colloquialism in the dialog which is illustrated spoken by the NRA officer to the protester. The line spoken by the NRA officer above is a colloquialism which is informal to be said by an officer who should serve the citizens: in this cartoon are the protestant.

All the data in this research employs topicality in the satire. The first datum to prove the theory is discussed below.



Figure 6. (DA-04)

There are pictures of two persons with NRA letters in the cartoon. The two men are talking about their thought toward the letters

NRA and the communist logo inside it. As the addition, the cartoonist gives note in the corner of the cartoon said “FBI investigating Russia-NRA- Trump Campaign Spending”. The cartoon acquires the knowledge of NRA and Russia relationship. Also, there is communist logo illustrated in the cartoon in which the reader needs to know what happen to the NRA, Russia, and the communist. The cartoonist uses topicality to deliver the cartoon message so the reader could relate them to the issues.

Vividness in satire shows that the cartoonist uses a clear language. In the data analysis, there are only two cartoons which use vividness to deliver its satire in the cartoon.

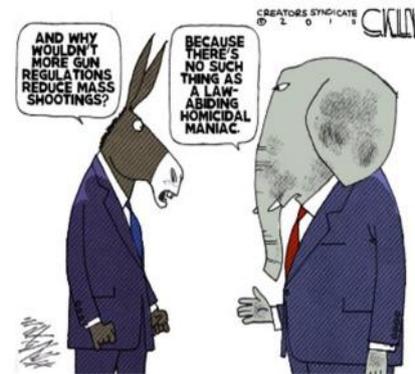


Figure 5. (DA-03)

Donkey : “And **why** wouldn’t more gun regulations reduce mass shootings?”

Elephant : **Because** there’s no such thing as abiding homicidal maniac.”

From the news, it can be acknowledged that the social setting in this cartoon is about Democrat and Republic parties that are currently debating on gun mass shootings in America. Trump’s government says that the only way to

reduce the gun mass shooting is by increasing the gun regulations.

In this cartoon, it shows the vividness of the language use by the dialog of the donkey and the elephant characters. The cartoonist shows the vividness between the question which is given by the donkey and the answer which is given by the elephant.

Another character of satirical text is that the text is exaggerating the language by going beyond the overboard. Its purpose is to emphasize meaning or the message. The exaggeration is expressed below.



“To whom it may concern. I have examined President Trump. **He is the best in every way! So fit! Such stamina! So fit! And such huge hands.** I found no evidence of hypertension or collusion! **And such a great mind – clearly and very stable genius.** He is capable of so **many great, great things** – including being his own doctor!

Unpresidented!”

The exaggeration in this cartoon can be seen by how the cartoonist describes Trump’s healthiness. In the third line, the cartoonist describes that Trump is the best in every way. What the cartoonist tries to emphasize in word

“best” in this line then is described as “such stamina! So fit! And such huge hands.” The cartoonist also highlights the description by adding the exaggerating adjectives like “great”, “a very stable”, and “capable of many so many great, great”. The cartoonist wants to highlight the description by exaggerating in order to show the satire itself.

Then, to interpret the satirical message of political cartoon, the analysis linguistic features and the context are collaborated. The analysis are discussed below. Based on interpretation and analysis of the data, the message that is conveyed in the cartoons are criticism to Trump’s government. The cartoons also criticize Trump’s failure in leading the country.

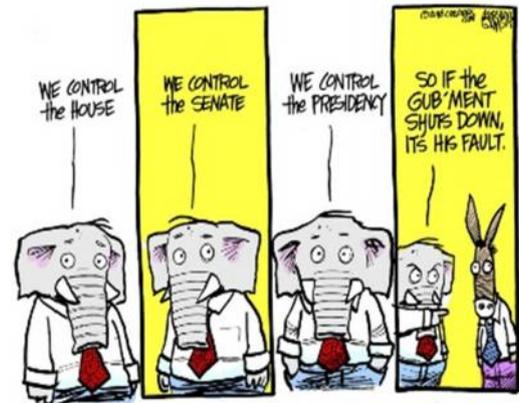


Figure 3. (DA-01)

This cartoon shows the criticism of Trump for being irresponsible. The cartoonist criticizes the Trump government by showing the ‘drama of blaming’ in the cartoon. The cartoonist indirectly shows the elephant guilty by showing how it blames the donkey. The fact that Trump puts the blame of government shutdown on Democrat because he argues that the problem is rooted on Obama’s policy that only focused on immigrant which then made the government suffer a financial loss.

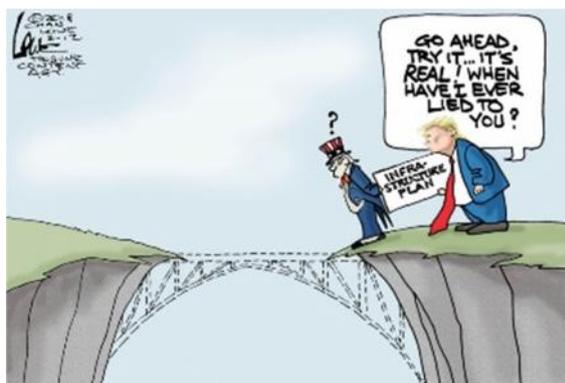


Figure 8. (DA-06)

This cartoon shows the criticism of Trump for being a liar. The cartoonist's indirect comment to Trump is by the dialog of Trump asking Uncle Sam to pass the bridge. Though the bridge is not well built, Trump still asks him to pass it and even asks him whether Trump ever lies to him. This cartoon illustrates Trump and American's situation in the issue of the uncertainty of Trump's infrastructure. Trump's promise does not feel to be certain as it does not say where that money will come from or what it should be spent on, leaving such pesky details to Congress. Thus, by featuring the devices of satire in the cartoon, the cartoonist criticizes the uncertainty of the infrastructure plan itself. It seems that Trump only gives a false hope to American.



Figure 11. (DA-09)

This cartoon shows the criticism toward Trump's new policy about gun mass shooting in America, especially about arming the teacher. There is no human portrait in the cartoon. However, it is known to be talking about people who are doing a protest which is illustrated by footsteps marks. They protest NRA's slogan "Guns don't kill people, people kill people." The idea truly does focus on the idea of the object rather than the person and that person's intent. When people see a mass shooting, they would argue that what the killer used as long as it is a gun is more covered than who the person was or what their reasons were. However, guns and knives alike can be used to cause grievous harm to others.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

### Conclusion

The conclusion of the study as follows: First, the cartoons that are analysed in the research significantly employ the direct form of satire. While, only one of fourteen cartoons employs the indirect form of satire. This then shows that the cartoonists of political cartoon, especially about Trump and his political life, because the characters, in the cartoons, address themselves to elicit and guide the satiric speaker's comments.

Second, there are eight types of linguistic features employed in Trump political cartoons. They are irony, paradox, antithesis, parody, colloquialism, vividness, topicality, and exaggeration. Of the eight types, the topicality is used significantly in the cartoons. In other words, the cartoonists want to show the knowledge of the

current issues happening in America related to Trump. Moreover, topicality makes a clue to the readers in order to hint them to the issue which is being criticized by the cartoonist. While, as the most occurring type of the delivering type of point of view in the cartoon, the cartoonists mostly use direct form where they use first person point of view of the character.

Third, with regard to the last objective of the research, the message that is conveyed in the cartoons are criticism to Trump's government. The analysis of context in the cartoon shows the current issues that is being criticized by the cartoonist and it also shows the situation that is drawn in the cartoon. The cartoons also criticize Trump's failure in leading the country. By presenting issue in the cartoons, the cartoonists want to alert the readers to realize the poverty of the people and demolish the authority of Trump as the president. By employing satirical weapons in the cartoons, the cartoonist is successful in illustrating Trump as being irresponsible, a liar, and incompetent.

### **Suggestion**

To English students especially those majoring linguistics are suggested to pay more attention to discourse analysis. By studying discourse analysis, students can recognize and uncover the phenomenon of the language seeing by studying discourse analysis, students can recognize and uncover the phenomenon of language. It is important for the students to know the context of discourse. Thus, it avoids the students misinterpreting the message of a language phenomenon. Further, students should

be aware of cultures depicted in language phenomenon because not all cultures are appropriate to follow in different society.

To English lecturer, visual communication is still a rare material found in the English Letter Program. Lecturers might use visual communication, such as cartoon, as a material in teaching discourse analysis for students. Besides, lecturers can use visual communication as a tool to introduce the real use of language as communication. Students will find out the way visual communication could be interpreted. Further, it helps students to enhance their vocabulary.

To other researchers, there are many researchers who have conducted research on discourse analysis. Yet, there are still many interesting topics under discourse analysis which have not been analysed. Future researchers are expected to conduct a further research about discourse analysis. The future researcher focusing on political cartoons can employ multimodal discourse, so they can have the deeper analysis both on the verbal and non-verbal elements.

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