Netizens' criticism of the government's policy of "Meme Lockdown" during the Covid-19 pandemic; in Indonesia

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Abstract— Indonesia was shocked by the presence of the Corona-19 virus in early 2020. Indonesian people respond to policies related to handling Covid-19 by closing access to their territory and making memes about corona. One of the interesting phenomena that occurred during the Covid-19 pandemic was the number of banners or memes posted in the alleys of human settlements in Indonesia, as a form of freedom of opinion to respond to the policies of the Indonesian Government Program in preventing the more massive spread of Covid-19. This study uses a qualitative descriptive method with the data used in this study is a language game on photo uploads in the form of memes on Instagram accounts. The selected data is adjusted to the research needs and is representative data. The purpose of this study is to describe language games with sound and semantic substitution in the Lockdown Policy Meme on the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia through Instagram. The results showed that in the field of phonology tended to use substitution language games, while in the field of semantics, the most widely used was homonym language games. The language game in memes during the Covid-19 Pandemic has not yet become a force affecting the policies implemented by the Indonesian government. In other words, the anxiety and uncertainty were hidden in the Corona meme only meant as a pun or humor that can make the reader smile a little and feel optimistic. This paper has implications for developing criticism of government policies via the internet as a medium of communication and for managing the balance between stability and change due to the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia. This paper fulfils an identified need to study how the internet as public sphere and medium to communicate about government policies in the current era.

Keywords— Covid-19, Lockdown, Meme, Social Change, Social Media, Social Policy.

I. INTRODUCTION

The world is shocked by the spread of new viruses, namely the new type of coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) and the disease is called Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). Indonesia announced its first case in Indonesia in early March 2020 (Kompas, 2020). Until now 6,194,533 Confirmed cases, 376 320 Confirmed deaths, and 216 Countries, areas or territories with cases. (WHO, 2020a). Initially, epidemiological data showed 66% of patients were related or exposed to a seafood market or live market in Wuhan, Hubei Province of China (Huang, et.al., 2020). On February 11, 2020, the World Health Organization named the new virus Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV-2) and the name of the disease as Covid-19 (WHO, 2020b). Finally, it was confirmed that

the transmission of pneumonia could be transmitted from human to human (Relman, 2020). Until now this virus is quickly spreading still mysterious and research is still ongoing.

An interesting phenomenon amid the Covid-19 pandemic is a large number of banners or memes with posts posted on the entrance to residential areas and then posted on social media as a form of freedom of opinion to respond to the policies of the Indonesian Government Program in preventing the more massive spread of Covid-19. Some memes related to Covid-19 that contain language games that are the focus of this study are 'Jalan ini sedang di Download' (Figure 1), 'Lauk Daun' (Figure 2), 'Lagi Lockdown, Nekat Smackdown' (Figure 3) 'Calm Down' (Figure 4), 'Lockdown ngeyel Smack down' (Figure 5). At

first glance, these writings smelled of jokes or mere pun, but in fact, this is a mirror of anxiety that is not visible in Indonesian society. In the old era, news and information were controlled by media workers and distributed massively to the public. Meme is quickly spreading through the internet and one of them is Instagram media, the speed of information dissemination is supported by the availability of technology and internet networks (Brunello, J., 2012; Leung, L., and Lee, PS, 2005; Haythornthwaite, C., 2005; Robinson, JP, et.al., 2000; Isma, et.al., 2020)

In the era of cyber media, audiences are not only given space to interact in the mass media that converges technology to the internet but now the public has shifted even become competitors because the public is involved in the production and distribution of news and information. Enough with sophisticated devices such as mobile phones that are equipped with camera facilities, voice recorders, even image processors, and connected to the internet, the public can already spread the events he met right then and there. The increasingly affordable price of smartphones makes this technology a primary need and is easily owned by the public. This smartphone ownership makes the public tend to not only passively hit by the media but can be involved in the process of production and distribution of information including memes. Computer technology and the internet as new media have varied and have even changed the way of communication. People once went online seeking the anonymity it offered (McKenna and Bargh, 2000).

Every human being needs humor to eliminate fatigue and boredom during activities that require a lot of concentration. The existence of humor can provide a sense of fun, cheerful, and makes the brain more relaxed. Humor can be in any form, such as daily conversation, drama, film, novel, short story, song, rhymes, comics, stand-up comedy, talk shows, memes, even in the learning process it is also not infrequently inserted humor to melt the atmosphere to be more relaxed and not strained. Humor is everything that can make someone laugh, be entertained, and feel pleasure. (Wijana, 2004) humor is a verbal and or visual stimulus that is spontaneously intended to provoke the smile and laughter of the listener or the person who sees it. Stimulation is all forms of human behavior that can cause feelings of joy, amusement, or funny on the part of the listener, audience, and reader.

The humorous discourse is a discourse that contains all forms of stimulation that have the potential to provoke a smile or laugh response to the audience, contains many implications of conversation as a result of deviations from the principles of cooperation and politeness principles, even though the actors are not aware of them (Brewer and Lichtenstein, 1982) Semantic-pragmatic categories, such

as expressions, humor, jokes, and anecdotes that overlap between them can be observed and categories can be combined in certain examples of humor (Haspelmath, 2003). Forms of disappointment in some linguistic formulations are presented with word plays, irony, and figures of speech. (Dynel, M., 2009). This study intends to understand meme phenomena circulating in Instagram social media related to the existence of the Indonesian government program in overcoming the spread of Covid-19, for example, behavior, perception, motivation, actions, and others, holistically, and employing descriptions in the form of words and language, in a special natural context.

II.   LITERATURE REVIEW

A meme is a cultural construct that in social settings moves from one person to another e.g., an idea, value, or pattern of behavior (Hill, M. L., et.al., 2017). 'Meme' which is interpreted (Dawkins, 1999) as a form of the birth of culture which is the formation of many replicators has developed into an internet 'Meme' as stated by (Shifman, L., 2012). This internet meme, if examined in communication studies, is a message that is packaged in the form of a media in the form of photos or images that can be changed or replicated in various forms following the objectives desired by the creators who made them and spread on social media. Meme as a pseudo-reality in cyberspace is difficult to determine which is truly original and which are engineered. Shifman, L., 2014). Combining humor with cultural relevance, Internet memes have become an ubiquitous artifact of the digital age (Beskow, D. M., et.al, 2020)

Research on memes is still being echoed by researchers from various parts of the world. Memes are often associated with politics, especially when presidential elections take place in a country such as the study of memes associated with presidential elections Donald Trump (Beohm, C., 2020; Woods, HS, & Hahner, LA, 2019) memes that are used jokingly become serious in politics (Löf, R., 2020; Kirner-Ludwig, M., 2019). Other research on memes on the internet is from the field of ethics (Wood, M. A., 2020; Marciszewski, M., 2020). Other researchers emphasize that memes are becoming a new culture in the current cyber media (Kanashina, S., 2020; Theisen, W., et.al, 2020). While meme research on social media that links with language use has also been carried out such as (Bernhard, E. M., 2020; Afifah, N., & Sari, R. P., 2020; Bolshakova, M. G., 2019). The researchers expanded their research area by examining memes used in the business environment in the context of promoting products and developing businesses (Ward, M. R., 2020; Hirsch, P. B., 2020; Kovalyova, I., 2020).

With the current Covid-19 Pandemic, the use of social media during the Covid-19 pandemic highlights the relationship between memes and the effectiveness of the quarantine program implemented (Abbas, A. M., et.al., 2020) The use of social media to obtain information during the covid-19 pandemic. The misinformation of sharing and social media fatigue during COVID-19 (Sulistyaningtyas, T., et.al., 2020) Analysis of the use of social media in Sri Lanka used Social Media to voice their opinions regarding such events and those involved in them, enabling the ideal avenue to explore the social perception. (Lenadora, D. S., 2020).

By looking at the description of studies on the use of social media during the Covid-19 pandemic period and research related to internet memes, this study highlights memes as a space of expression in response to lockdown policy undertaken by the Indonesian government to prevent the spread of the corona virus in terms of wider use of language in memes. But this policy also resulted in many people with low downward income being unable to do much in economic terms. The memes are used to convey protest to the government and to insinuate rich people to pay attention to the condition of the surrounding community.

III.   METHODOLOGY

This research is based on the phenomenon of lockdown banner photos due to Covid-19 which is currently on the Instagram network most phenomenally and loved by Indonesian people today. Instagram is a photo sharing application that allows users to take photos, apply digital filters, and share to various social networking services, including Instagram's own. The application is the right place for someone to express themselves through a photo, video and meme.

The design of this research is a qualitative research that is research that intends to understand the phenomena about what is experienced by the research subject, for example behavior, perception, motivation, actions and others, holistically, and by means of descriptions in the form of words and language, on a special natural context and by utilizing various natural methods (Moleong, 2013). The use of this descriptive method is because the research that will be conducted is a language game on the Lockdown discourse due to Covid-19 on social media Instagram.

The data used in this study is a language game on photo uploads in the form of memes in an Instagram account. The selected data is adjusted to the needs of research and in the form of representative data. Data collection is done using documentation techniques. This technique is done by taking photos or screen capture via mobile phones. The

data is then transferred to the computer for editing-cropping using a photo editing application on each data taken. This technique makes it easy in the data analysis stage because the research will be more focused on the photo alone without any disturbances such as likes and comments contained in the photo upload.

Fig.1: Calm Down (a play on the sentence of the word lockdown)

Fig.2: Lockdown 'ngeyel' Smackdown (ngeyel = Indonesian-Javanese) for insists a stern warning to anyone without the interest to enter the area because the area is 'Lockdown'. Daring to enter the area will result in 'smack down' which is interpreted as a sports show on television that shows wrestling, fighting, fighting strength in the ring, the word smack down becomes a strong message to anyone who reads it not to enter the area that is a lockdown

Fig.3: Jalan ini sedang di Download (This road is being downloaded, so do not enter the area)

Fig.4: Lauk Daun (in Indonesian means that what is eaten every day is only leaves without any other food (Indonesian satire for low economic conditions 'poor').

Fig.5: Lagi Lockdown – Nekad Smackdown (warning to the people in the area aimed at anyone who intends to enter the area not to continue their intention or a crackdown by the people in the area against migrants who are determined to enter the area)

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Memes appear as a way of criticizing in different ways. The meme was chosen by Indonesian netizen as a means of delivering criticism that was felt to be subtler. The element of humor contained in the meme pictures seems to be able to wrap criticism messages that are sometimes spicy, but the critic can still smile (Shifman, L., (2014). Through meme pictures, someone who is exposed to criticism can laugh at himself and the community. Meme makers can also represent the oppressed to protest the politicians who distort the mandate of their people. Although it may seem funny, satire is an attack on a person or institution (Schutz, 1977). This is an attack on untruth or injustice based on comedy sets, by combining the pleasure of humor and the morality of social criticism (Coletta, 2012).

Satire has historically been used as a 'tool to discredit authorized people' (Cameron, 1993), and has taken various forms, ranging from pamphlets, novels, poems, caricatures, films, and songs to memes produced by users. Although its presence continues, satire changes over time, because it reflects the mentality of the period in which it was created (Cameron, 1993, Da Silva and Garcia, 2012). People's expectations or understanding of what constitutes civic engagement and participation can also change due to the use of the internet and social media (Bennett, et.al, 2011); (Bimber, B., 2014). Miltner (2018) suggests that some memes are shared to express emotions. Participants in the study described spending time finding perfect memes to match interpersonal situations. Because of this, it is possible for people to look for memes as a type of emotional release. Emotions can also be important motivators for sharing memes (Guadagno, et.al., 2013).

Comedy is seen as an art form and pedagogical tool, and its main benefit is its ability to make the audience think critically (Friedman, 2014). Meme as part of comedy stimulates community participation which makes them a source of political communication in the form of discourse, criticism, and humor. In recent years, the results of the research have found the importance of memes in current political dialogue, which designates them as a form of involvement of every citizen and political satire (Plevriti, V., 2014; Shifman. L., 2014). It's easy to ignore memes because of their humorous nature, but this humor is an analytical intrinsic to the norms of society (Gray, Jones, & Thompson, 2009). Language games are language manipulations (phonetically, lexically, syntactically, etc.), creative language styles, variations of code, or styles used in everyday conversation (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1976). In line with Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's opinion, (Sherzer, J., 2002) adds the concept of language play as manipulation of language elements and components concerning social and cultural contexts in their language use.

Language play is a form of improper use of language and contains various deviations, such as phonological,

grammatical, forms of meaning and disorder, and various pragmatic violations, which are intended to achieve various objectives, such as joking, criticize, advise, forbid, and various other goals that are often not easily identified. Based on the research results it is known that language games in memes related to Lockdown and Covid-19 on Instagram in the field of phonology tend to use substitute language games. This substitution language contains meaning that is very different from the meaning of the word being replaced but contains almost the same pronunciation. Language Games with Sound Substitution Sound substitution is the process or result of replacing language elements by other elements in larger units to obtain distinguishing elements or to explain a particular structure. Based on the results of the study found data using sound substitution as an element of making memes. The following is an example of sound substitution language game data. In the sample data, there is a sound substitution located on the word 'Lockdown' which is replaced with Look Down, Lauk Daun, Calm Down, there is also the word Smack Down which is written behind the word Lockdown. The writing on the banner photo is a form of deliberate action as a manifestation of the community's attitude in responding to the Indonesian government's program in preventing the spread of Covid-19. This understanding, by the photos written on the banners presented, was present when the lockdown discourse was rife in Indonesia.

Banner makers use this moment to create an entertaining meme. This meme is funny because of the writing that when read according to the real meaning has nothing to do with the word lockdown itself. 'Lookdown' is a subtle allusion to the government and also people who have more property to see the economic situation in the surrounding environment to be more sensitive and caring. While 'Lauk Daun' in Indonesian means that what is eaten every day is only leaves without any other food (Indonesian satire for low economic conditions 'poor'). 'Calm Down' was written to remind the wider public who read to be calm in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia. The Lockdown sentence is Smack down', this sentence is a warning to the people in the area aimed at anyone who intends to enter the area not to continue their intention or a crackdown by the people in the area against migrants who are determined to enter the area. The word 'Smack Down' written behind the word 'Lockdown' means a stern warning to anyone without the interest to enter the area because the area is 'Lockdown'. Daring to enter the area will result in 'smack down' which is interpreted as a sports show on television that shows wrestling, fighting, fighting strength in the ring, the word smack down becomes a strong message to anyone who reads it not to enter the area

that is a lockdown in a way that relaxed or light humor that makes people who read smile without feeling intimidated.

Language Games with Sound Substitution

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'Lookdown' is a subtle allusion to the government and also people who have more wealth to see the economic situation in the surrounding environment to be more sensitive and caring. While 'Lauk Daun' in Indonesian means that what is eaten every day is only leaves without any other food (Indonesian satire for low economic conditions 'poor'). 'Calm Down' was written to remind the wider public who are reading to be calm in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia. The Lockdown sentence is Smackdown', this sentence is a warning from the community in the area aimed at anyone who intends to enter the area not to continue his intention or a crackdown by the people in the region against migrants who are determined to enter the area. The word 'Smackdown' which is written behind the word 'Lockdown' means a strong warning to anyone without the interest to enter the area because the area is 'Lockdown'. Daring to enter the area will result in 'smackdown' which is interpreted as a sports show on television that shows wrestling, fighting, fighting strength in the ring, the word smackdown becomes a strong message to anyone who reads it not to enter the area that is lockdown in a way that relaxed or light humor that makes people who read smile without feeling intimidated.

Semantic Field Language Games (Homophones and Homonyms)

Homophones are words that have different spellings and meanings, but have the same pronunciation. In a study of meme language games, two data were found that utilize

the field of homophones as the making of meme humor discourse. From the data above, the text utilizes homophonic language games by using the word 'Lockdown' which means people must stay at home unless they need to go out for certain reasons, such as going to work, buying food or taking exercise. (https://www.collinsdictionary.com, 2020) and 'Lookdown' means to feel that someone is less important than you or does not deserve respect.

The word 'Lauk Daun' in Indonesian means that what is eaten every day is just a leaf without any other food (Indonesian satire for low economic conditions 'poor'). The meme becomes even funnier because of the similarity of the sounds of lockdown and lauk daun, and the meaning of the meme itself, which is a slightly absurd notification or recommendation the words look down, calm down, and lauk daun are words that have very different meanings from one another, but have almost the same pronunciation.

The words in the meme are also the reaction of the people with the Indonesian government's program in preventing the spread of Covid-19 so that the researchers conclude that the sentences in the banner have an anxiety meaning even though it only appears as a joke that means consolation, even though in words The irony is stored with a satirical tone towards language which tends to be scattered with jargon without any real action in realizing it. Reality is always represented - what we treat as 'direct' experience is 'mediated' by perceptual codes. Representation always involves the construction of reality (Burton, 2010).

Messages that are not colloquially become official languages which are usually readily understood by readers. Official messages from the government are too official and some words are exclusive words so that only those who are capable of it are able to understand. That is why the power of words derived from knowledge has been named as the official sentence of those in power and rarely comes from the experience of everyday life. It makes sense if what is written is not infrequently contrary to what happens in life in society. In other words, there appears to be loose, even perforated, bonds between noise and sound, between words and deeds. Communication can be fresh as people get information to be shared in new ways, new audiences to be created, new positions to be played in communication, new types of policy and control. (Gershon, 2017).

This is where the power of words can be easily deflected to meet the interests of certain parties. In the context of the Covid-19 epidemic the anxiety experienced by the Indonesian people was merely entertained with words of wise and motivating, but there was no real action to

overcome. Among all memes, there are a number of memes that have a content and information format that allows them to achieve the maximum transmission process. This meme then spread and survived so firmly in culture, (Blackmore, S., 2009) called it meme-fountain and meme lexes. According to (Bauckhage, 2011), memes usually develop through comments, imitations, parodies or even the results of media coverage. Meanwhile, according to (Shifman. J., 2013), meme phrases are generally applied to describe propagation on content such as jokes, rumors, videos, or websites from one person to another via the Internet. Memes can spread in their original form, but many are also found to appear in their derivative forms, in the form of remixes, mimicry or user-made updates.

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Memes can spread in their original form, but many are also found to appear in their derivative forms, in the form of remixes, mimicry or user-made updates. Based on the above reality, it can be observed that the development of technology, especially social media (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram) is a reality and historical record that has brought changes in the culture of the world community and especially changes in the process of human communication and this communication process has implications for the style too human communication especially netizen communication style on social media. The communication process that was previously only through face-to-face communication, group communication, mass communication, but with the

presence of new media has brought a very big change. Social media is designed to spread messages through social interaction via the internet and is made with publication techniques that are very easily accessible and large-scale. The ability of electronic media enables designers of media setting agendas to create reality using a production model that (Baudrillard, 1983) refers to as simulation, namely the creation of real models without origin or initial reality, this is what he calls Hyperreality.

V.   CONCLUSION

Various kinds of entertainment can satisfy needs, depending on taste. One of the entertainment that we can use is comics and cartoons. Through words that are familiar to the eyes and ears, people write what they are going through. Although it reads strange, the word 'lockdown' is translated as 'look down' or side dish. This is the language of anxiety that is conveyed with humor, light but shows the absurdity of those who are still fond of words just for the sake of preserving power. The humor captured in the writing on the banner can be interpreted as a comment or humorous act about an actual event or problem that is ongoing, namely Pandemic Covid-19.

The phenomenon that can be observed now is when netizens make 'memes' on every interesting event in the social media. While other netizens are always fun to spread it to the social media, the spread is sometimes also followed by changing the meme, a netizen sees it as a joke or parody but some others see it as a satire or subtle resistance to someone who is the object in the composition the meme. So it can be understood that the spread or rapid growth of 'memes' because it is done by way of replication of existing memes. This means that memes continually replicate through certain habits or ideas so that they become repetitive patterns and eventually form a large-scale 'culture' pattern. The nature of memes not only replicates but also undergoes a process of evolution or change over time, and at the same time memes also sometimes survive the effects of new memes.

A meme can be a public image reflection. Therefore, the impact of social critics in memes could not contribute much to public policy. The memes that circulate are not just jokes, but are reflections of offline reality and are presented with interesting visuals. Of course, consolation can be the ringing of a critical reminder of the anxiety that is ignored by positioning entertainment as part of humanity worthy of review. Lest that consolation sterilizes anxiety just to ward off the boredom experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic. An experience that is interpreted as 'uncertainty' or something is approaching 'is felt by most of the world's population, this experience of being

something new is a word that is not easy to find in the English equivalent, whose semantic meaning can mean anxious, trembling, unmoored, expectant. Unfortunately, the anxiety reflected in the words on the banner about Covid-19 did not appear to be his power. In other words, the anxiety that is hidden in a millennial language is only meant as a pun or humor.

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