

“The Way We Were”: A Linguistic Analysis and Its Application to The New Normal

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Abstract. Scientists, linguists with no exception, nowadays always try as hard as possible to relate the field they study with the corona pandemic. Therefore, the language, the object of their study, seems having relevance to the scaring disease, and can give contributions in handling it. In fact, there are still a few linguistic phenomena related with this disease can be analyzed linguistically for most of facts concerning with this disease are extra linguistic in character. Accordingly, in this occasion I will try to analyses the popular song lyric “The Way We Were” popularized by Barbara Streisand which concerns with “The way human being easy to forget everything”, and its role to always remind human beings with everything in their life. This song theme seems very relevant for all of us to remind us for always obeying health protocol in the new normal.

Keywords: Language, Song lyric, pandemic, new normal,.

1 Introduction

The corona virus disease 19 (covid 19) brings serious impact to every aspect of life of the human beings, social, economy, and politics as well. Accordingly, it is not surprising that every human activity are directed towards the eradication of the disease as soon as possible. For this purpose, all scientists concentrate their attention on how to handle and avoid this virus. Many of them forget and do not realize that according to their field of study, they actually do not have any adequate competence for handling this disease. Their field of studies are not directly relevant to the characteristics of the virus, and the spread of the corona pandemic. However, they always insisted on how their expertise to always have relation to the disease and will bring significant contributions in treating the corona pandemic. For example, whatever or whoever conducting the conference, they always try to relate or associate the conference with the pandemic issues, and The New Normal, after certain length of times they used to live with the corona virus.

For, linguistic studies, it seems rather difficult to connect the internal objects of its study (sounds, syllables, words, clauses, sentences, and discourses) with the characteristics of the virus caused the pandemic, and how this virus is healed and prevented by such linguistic units is also hard to imagine. However, some people do not stop to suggest that linguists must continuously try to relate in such way their field of study with the causes of the getting larger and larger the spread of pandemic.

As far as I know, there are still a few linguistic phenomena than can be associated with corona pandemic matters, and the rests of them still belong to extra linguistic matters which cannot be related to the internal structure of language. Therefore, as far as corona pandemic is

concerned, the linguistic matters are still very limited to be used as research data for explaining the relation of the virus spreading and the language structure. I have found some jocular discourses created during the pandemic. See (1) to (4) below:

(1) + Corona akan berakhir bulan Agustus. 'Corona will end on August'

- Tahu dari mana? 'Where do you get the news from?'

- Dari Sumedang. 'From Sumedang'

(2) Rapid Taste: The New Normal Snack House.

(3) SD Negeri Online 'On Line Elementary School'

(4) Pak Arya Saya Erni Marian Keles AK-B '19 mau tanya, Jadi Kelon atau tidak? 'Mr. Arya, I am Erni Maryan, Will we have on line class'

Discourse (1) is a conversation between a traveling Sumedang bean curd salesman and his costumer. This joke exploits the homonymic pairs tahu which can mean 'to know' and tahu which means 'bean curd'. Discourse (2) relies its wit on the nearly homophonic expressions test and taste. This discourse is a street vendor sign where the costumers can buy the snacks by doing rapid taste which at glance sounds similar to 'Rapid Test' for quickly identifying the pandemic sufferers. Discourse (3) and (4) respectively concern with the online class held by educational institution of all levels during the the corona pandemic. In (4) the creator exploits the interlanguage punning between Indonesian and English blending acronym kelon 'kelas on line (on line class)' and Javanese word kelon 'embrace while lying down'[1].

As such, this paper will try to search the real linguistic and literary contribution in preventing the spread of corona virus, instead of trying to explain the characteristics of virus which is clearly out of authority of these two scientific disciplines to explain. Any language conceals various genres of formula or discourses consisting of communal wisdoms by which the speakers answer all problems they face with in daily life. Those genres are riddles, poems, proverbs, novels, etc. For example, Rahyono notes that Javanese has no less than 30 traditional formulas for protecting and maintaining the unity of their community members from separation [2], [3].

Wijana investigates and interprets the role of Javanese and Balinese proverbs for fighting against any kinds of enemy and dangers, including disease pandemic [4]. Kutanegara try to compare the behaviour of young Javanese leader with a gong watching Buffalo, a Balinese proverb to which the author are more familiar with [5]. Sajarwo and Shahab describe how French society faced with bubonic plague in Albert Camus' novel La Peste [6], [7]. For more specific case, Sontag in her essay "Aids and its Metaphors" how Aids virus is described in metaphorical expressions [8].

This paper will try to analysis the human habit in facing with everything a long of their life time as as beautifully written in the song lyric entitled "The Way We Were" which is popularized by Barbara Streisand and Perry Como. The song itself is a sound track of a film of the similar title "On The Way We Were, stared by Barbara Streisand and Robert Redford. The success of the film quickly made the song so popular, and sung by many people, including English Department students of various universities in Indonesia. No matter how difficult the lyric to understand, they keep on singing the song and trying to analysis its full metaphorical lyric.

2 Research Methods

The data of this paper is just a song lyric obtained from google searching together with its Indonesian translation. By comprehending its metaphorical elements line by line, the message interpretation is done and concludes that the song is essentially critics against human habits who tend to forget the sad stories, and only remember the sweet stories they experience a long their life time. This bad habit would hypothetically bring bad influences when they start to enter the new normal after being suffered during the self isolation time.

3 Results and Discussion

Before moving to the data analysis, below I present the complete song lyric of The Way Were Were:

The Way We Were
Memories light the corners of my mind
Misty water-colored memories of the way we were
Scattered pictures of the smiles we left behind
Smiles we gave to one another for the way we were

Can it be that it was all so simple then
Or has time rewritten every line
If we had the chance to do it all again tell me, would we?
Could we?

Memories may be beautiful and yet
What's too painful to remember we simply choose to forget.
So it's the laughter we will remember
Whenever we remember
The way we were
The way we were

The song lyric consists of three couplets and fourteen lines, the songs full of impressive metaphors and rhyming as the strength of the lyric. Metaphors are expressions whose meanings cannot be directly reached by the symbols but through its interpretation based on similarities of the target and the source domain [9],[10], [11]. Some of them are The way we were to represent the human habit, light the corner of my mind to describe human effort to recollect their memory, scattered pictures to represent all the memories, smiles and laughter to represents the sweet memories, etc. The main theme of the song is human habit for very easy to forget his past bad experiences. They only remember the memories which bring them happiness. However, human beings tend to forget ones that bring sorrows and miseries.

This matter is clearly expressed by the second and the third line of final couplet:

What's too painful to remember we simply choose to forget.
So it's the laughter we will remember

Beside its function to deliver aesthetic values through the poetic language (Jakobson; Janet Holmes), the existence of literary works is often motivated by intentions of the creators to charge various kinds of human behaviour which are considered inappropriate at least in the perspective

of the authors [12], [13]. As far as the “The Way We Were” Lyric is concerned, the authors seem to claim that human beings’ habits of easy to forget their past memory will bring many problems in their future life. It is true that in certain conditions human beings should soon forget everything that cause discomforts to themselves.

However, not all things that cause badness should be soon to forget. There are also several bad memories important to recollect, and human being must take important lessons from them. Indonesian people have important acronyms for this phenomenon, i.e. Jas Merah (literally means ‘Red Jess’ and stands for “Jangan sekali-kali Melupakan Sejarah (Do not ever forget history)”). Human being should learn a lot from everything they experience during the lifetime. They do not Just remember the sweet memories or joyful experiences they finds along the course of their life. Human being should always remind each other for everything which is possible to bring inconveniences in the future. The Indonesian proverb says that they should “Lupa mengingatkan, Terlelap menjagakan” (To remind while forgetting, and to wake up while asleep) [14]. This message is very relevant with the human life conditions nowadays for after several months living with the pandemic.

Song lyric message and the new normal

Governments of all countries have tried various endeavours to reduce and limit the spread of virus contamination since its first appearance in Wuhan, China 2019. It will not certainly be possible, the government on any country to always enclose or lock down their people staying at home without allowing them to do their daily activities. The people should go back to do their livelihood to rebuild their family economy. The government do not have enough budget to continuously support the people life.

Accordingly, the government should announce the new normal to rise up and to enhance the economic condition. However, in the new normal time, should never forget, the health protocol tightly put into effect during the lock down time. However, as described by the lyric, human beings are predisposed to be always easy to forget with everything, with the past as well as what she has to do in the future. Accordingly, this song and or its message, should always be remembered by all people to always obey the health protocol, such as to wear masker, wash hands, avoid crowd, keep social distancing, have enough rest, etc. during the new normal.

4 Conclusion

For giving a more realistic contribution in preventing the spread of corona virus pandemic, linguists and literary critics should not deepen their knowledge about everything regarding the virus characteristics which is out of their field of study. However, to make the contribution more realistic, they can give various suggestions on how people in the past facing or fighting various kinds of difficulties a long of their lifetime as reflected in the various genres of literary works. As what has been described above, the song lyrics can be exploited by the people to always remind the people of their easy forgetting habit, and to obey government health protocol during the new normal is brought into effect.

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