

**HUMOR IN DIALOGUE MEMES ON INSTAGRAM
@PUNHUBONLINE: A LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF
COHESION AND INCONGRUITY**

THESIS

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COHESION AND INCONGRUITY**

THESIS

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STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

I state that the thesis entitled *“Humor in Dialogue Memes on Instagram @punhubonline: A Linguistic Analysis of Cohesion and Incongruity”* is my original work. I do not include any materials previously written or published by another person, except those cited as references and written in the bibliography. Hereby, if there is any objection or claim, I am the only person who is responsible for that.

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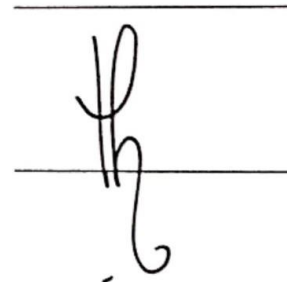
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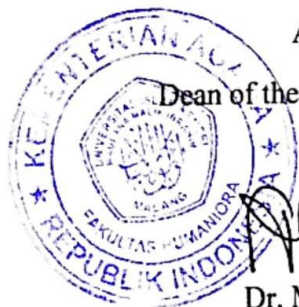
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MOTTO

“It’s okay to not do anything special. You don’t need to be better than anyone else. You’re special because you were born into this world.”

Carla Yeager

DEDICATION

This thesis is proudly presented to:

My parents, Alm. Moh. Fathul Munir and Erni Harsiati

My little brother, Muhammad Abduh Azka

All of my big family

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The Researcher

Indi Ilma Fadila

ABSTRACT

Fadila, Indi Ilma (2025). Humor in Dialogue Memes on Instagram @punhubonline: A Linguistic Analysis of Cohesion and Incongruity. Thesis. Department of English Literature, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Advisor: Dr. Hj. Meinarni Susilowati, M.Ed.

Keywords: Humor, Dialogue Meme, Cohesion, Incongruity

This study aims to explain how humor is constructed in dialogue memes posted on the Instagram account @punhubonline. This study uses a qualitative approach with Halliday and Hasan's (1976) discourse analysis to examine cohesion in dialogue, while incongruity is used to explain how unexpected responses produce humor. The results show that dialogue memes are structured as short conversations that remain linguistically connected, making them easy to follow. Humor emerges when responses in the dialogue deviate from the expected direction of the conversation, creating a mismatch that generates a humorous effect. Cohesive elements such as personal references, demonstrative references, nominal substitution, nominal ellipsis, conjunction, repetition, and near-synonymy help maintain the connection between turns, allowing the conversation to remain coherent even when incongruity occurs. This study demonstrates that humor in dialogue memes is not random, but arises from the relation between cohesion and unexpected responses, highlighting the importance of dialogue structure in producing humor. This finding is important because it demonstrates that humor in dialogue memes is closely related to how utterances are connected and how unexpected responses disrupt the flow of conversation.

مستخلص البحث

فضيلة، عندي علما (٢٠٢٥) الفكاهة في الميمات الحوارية على إنستغرام @punhubonline: تحليل لغوي للتماسك النصي والتناقض. البحث الجامعي، قسم اللغة الإنجليزية. كلية العلوم الإنسانية. جامعة مولانا مالك إبراهيم الإسلامية الحكومية مالانج المشرف: الدكتوراة حاجة مينارني سوسيلوواتي، ماجستير التربية.

الكلمات الأساسية: الدعاية، الميم الحواري، الفكاهة، الكُغَرابة (عدم الاتساق).

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى توضيح كيفية بناء الفكاهة في الميمات الحوارية المنشورة في حساب إنستغرام @punhubonline. تعتمد الدراسة على المنهج النوعي باستخدام تحليل الخطاب لهايلداي وحسن (1976) لدراسة التماسك في الحوار، بينما يُستخدم مفهوم عدم التوافق (Incongruity) لشرح كيفية نشوء الفكاهة من الاستجابات غير المتوقعة. تُظهر النتائج أن الميمات الحوارية تُبنى على محادثات قصيرة تبقى مترابطة لغوياً، مما يجعلها سهلة المتابعة. وتظهر الفكاهة عندما تنحرف الاستجابات في الحوار عن المسار المتوقع للمحادثة، مما يخلق نوعاً من عدم التوافق الذي يؤدي إلى التأثير الفكاهي. تسهم عناصر التماسك اللغوي مثل الإحالة الشخصية، والإحالة الإشارية، والاستبدال الاسمي، والحذف الاسمي، والروابط، والتكرار، وشبه الترادف في الحفاظ على ترابط الأدوار الحوارية، بحيث يظل الحوار متماسكاً رغم حدوث عدم التوافق. وتبين هذه الدراسة أن الفكاهة في الميمات الحوارية لا تظهر بشكل عشوائي، بل تنشأ من العلاقة بين التماسك والاستجابات غير المتوقعة، مما يبرز أهمية بنية الحوار في إنتاج الفكاهة.

ABSTRAK

Fadila, Indi Ilma (2025). *Humor in Dialogue Memes on Instagram @punhubonline: A Linguistic Analysis of Cohesion and Incongruity*. Skripsi. Jurusan Sastra Inggris, Fakultas Humaniora, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Pembimbing: Dr. Hj. Meinarni Susilowati, M.Ed.

Kata Kunci: Humor, Meme Dialog, Kohesi, Keganjilan

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan bagaimana humor dibangun dalam meme percakapan yang diposting di akun Instagram @punhubonline. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan analisis wacana Halliday dan Hasan (1976) untuk menganalisis kohesi dalam percakapan, sementara ketidaksesuaian digunakan untuk menjelaskan bagaimana respons yang tidak terduga menghasilkan humor. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa meme percakapan disusun sebagai percakapan singkat yang tetap terhubung secara linguistik, sehingga mudah diikuti. Humor muncul ketika respons dalam dialog menyimpang dari arah percakapan yang diharapkan, menciptakan ketidakcocokan yang menghasilkan efek humor. Elemen kohesi seperti referensi pribadi, referensi demonstratif, penggantian nomina, elipsis nomina, konjungsi, pengulangan, dan sinonimitas membantu mempertahankan koneksi antara giliran bicara, memungkinkan percakapan tetap kohesif meskipun terjadi ketidaksesuaian. Studi ini menunjukkan bahwa humor dalam meme percakapan tidak acak, tetapi muncul dari hubungan antara kohesi dan respons yang tidak terduga, menyoroti pentingnya struktur percakapan dalam menghasilkan humor. Temuan ini penting karena menunjukkan bahwa humor dalam meme percakapan erat terkait dengan cara ucapan terhubung dan bagaimana respons yang tidak terduga mengganggu aliran percakapan.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

The rapid development and widespread use of social media have made Instagram one of the most popular platforms today. A CNBC report shows that Instagram had around three billion active users as of September 2025 (Vanian, 2025). This platform provides features that allow users to share images and videos accompanied by captions. In addition, interactions through likes, comments, and shares facilitate the spread of uploaded content.

One type of content that is often found is memes. The term “meme” is now used to describe humor in the form of images, text, or a combination of both on the internet (Musztafa, 2020). Dynel (2024) added that this term is often linked to humorous content shared online, though not all memes have to be humorous. Memes have a high appeal to many users. As Suciartini (2020) stated that memes are enjoyed by people due to their simple language and humorous components.

With the increasing popularity of memes, various accounts that specifically share memes have emerged on social media. One of the popular accounts is @punhubonline, which consistently posts memes in the form of dialogue. The displayed dialogue reflects a short daily conversation and uses simple language. The humor in these memes commonly arises from an unexpected response within the dialogue structure.

These memes show brief dialogue, where the humor arises from the relationship between each response, rather than from separated lines. Thus,

dialogue memes can be viewed as mini-discourses that are constructed by linking conversational turns. Therefore, the appropriate way to analyze them is through a linguistic perspective to examine how humor is constructed through textual cohesion within the dialogue.

Many dialogue memes on Instagram @punhubonline display a mismatch where a character's response goes against what is usually expected in everyday conversation. This kind of incongruity fits with Berger's (1993) theory of humor, which explains that humor arises from the disruption of expected patterns. In this study, Berger's (1993) framework is used to classify the types of humor found in dialogue memes and to examine how incongruity is constructed through linguistic cohesion.

Based on this focus, this study examines how humor is created through incongruity by analyzing dialogue memes from @punhubonline. The memes usually consist of short conversational sequences in which the utterances are linguistically connected through cohesive devices. However, the final response in the dialogue often introduces a mismatch in the form of an unexpected response within the structure of the conversation, which functions as the source of humor.

Previous studies on humor in memes mostly focus on identifying humor techniques, mechanisms, and functions across different social media platforms (El-Masry, 2021; Musa et al., 2021; Putranti, 2020; Umamah et al., 2023; Zahoor, 2020). Using humor theories such as Berger's humor techniques, Attardo's General Theory of Verbal Humor, Grice's cooperative principle, and Sultanoff's relief theory, these studies show that memes use various linguistic strategies to create

humor and to serve social or psychological purposes, especially in educational settings and during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Other studies have applied Berger's (1993) humor theory in media other than memes, such as talk shows, comedy films, Instagram reels, stand-up-style performances, and religious sermons (Kamalin, 2021; Kräussl, 2022; Ningrum et al., 2023; Pamungkas et al., 2022; Shafary, 2023). These studies consistently find that humor is built through language and logic, often involving incongruity, norm violations, and unexpected responses. However, humor in these studies is mostly discussed as a set of techniques or effects, not as a process that develops through interaction.

In addition, several studies have examined memes using discourse-based approaches, including discourse analysis, critical discourse analysis, and cognitive discourse frameworks (Annisa, 2020; Destira et al., 2021; Hassan, 2022; Prayitno, 2023; Zeb et al., 2025). These studies view memes as meaningful texts that reflect ideology, social issues, and cultural values. However, they tend to focus more on representation and ideology, while giving little attention to how short dialogue structures and interaction patterns contribute to the creation of humor.

Many studies have investigated humor in memes, but few have specifically focused on dialogue-based memes on Instagram that present humor through short written conversations. While several studies discuss humor in memes using various theoretical frameworks, limited attention has been given to the textual structure of dialogue memes, particularly in relation to linguistic cohesion and incongruity.

Some of these previous works adopt Berger's (1993), Sultanoff's (1994), or Attardo's (2004) to classify humor techniques. However, these studies often emphasize interpretation or contextual meaning rather than examining how humor is constructed within the structure of written dialogue. This indicates a research gap in analyzing dialogue memes as textual discourse, where humor emerges from the relationship between utterances.

By addressing this gap, this study applies Berger's (1993) humor theory to classify the types of humor found in dialogue memes on Instagram @punhubonline. While Halliday and Hasan's (1976) theory of cohesion is employed to analyze how linguistic cohesion operates within the dialogue structure. By combining these two frameworks, this study explains how cohesive structures and incongruity are formed through inter-utterances in dialogue memes, resulting in a specific type of humor.

This study aims to analyze how incongruity in dialogue constructed through cohesion within the dialogue structure drawing on Halliday & Hasan's (1976) theory.

B. Research Question

Based on the mentioned background, the research questions formulated in this study is "How is incongruity constructed through cohesion in dialogue memes on the Instagram account @punhubonline?"

C. Significance of the Study

This study contributes to linguistics by explaining how cohesive structure shapes incongruity and humor in written discourse in the form of dialogue memes. By applying Halliday & Hasan's (1976) theory of cohesion, this study offers a perspective on how a mismatch between expected and actual response within dialogue can create incongruity and humorous effect. The findings of this study can be used as a reference for students, English language learners, and future researchers who are interested in discourse analysis, humor studies, and the analysis of dialogue memes.

D. Scope and Limitation

This study is under the field of discourse analysis, because it examines dialogue memes as a discourse. This analysis focuses on cohesion between utterances based on Halliday & Hasan's (1976) theory of cohesion. Through this analysis, this study explains how incongruity arises through the cohesive structure between utterances in dialogue.

This study is limited to dialogue memes from the @punhubonline account on Instagram, so the findings cannot represent memes from other accounts and platforms. Only memes consisting of at least two turns of dialogue and containing mismatches or unexpected responses were selected. Other forms of memes, such as single caption memes or image-based memes were excluded. The data were collected from memes posted from 2022 to 2025.

E. Definition of Key Term

The following is the brief definition of key terms in this research:

1. Meme

Meme in this study refer to dialogue memes posted by the @punhubonline account on Instagram. The meme consist of short written dialogues with at least two turns and contain mismatches or unexpected responses.

2. Humor

Humor in this study refers to the humorous effect that arises from incongruity or unexpected responses in dialogue memes.

3. Incongruity

Incongruity in this study refers to a mismatch in dialogue memes that arises when a response deviates from the pattern established by the previous utterance. The mismatch creates a contrast within the dialogue, resulting in a humorous effect.

4. Discourse

In this study, discourse refers to dialogue memes viewed as short written discourse in which utterances are connected and form a unified whole. As Halliday and Hasan (1976) stated, discourse is understood as a unit of language that connects ideas together, rather than just a collection of separated sentences.

5. Cohesion

Cohesion in this study refers to the linguistic devices that connect utterances within a dialogue. Based on Halliday and Hasan (1976), cohesion refers to linguistic devices that bind the text together, allowing the text to function as a unified whole.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter reviews the relevant literature to help answer the research questions of this study.

A. Discourse Analysis as an Interpretive Framework

Discourse analysis (DA) studies language beyond the level of isolated sentences, focusing on connected linguistic units to create a meaningful text (McCarthy, 1991). This shows DA views language as a structured whole, where meaning emerges from the relationship between utterances within a text rather than from individual sentences alone. In line with this view, Liang (2011) pointed out that DA examines linguistic units larger than sentences or clauses, such as conversations and written texts.

Halliday & Hasan (1976) contributed to the understanding of discourse by introducing the idea of text as “a unit of language in use,” in which text is more than a set of grammatically structured sentences, but a cohesive linguistic unit. They introduced the concept of cohesion to explain how linguistic elements are linked together to create textual unity. Similarly, McCarthy (1991) defined a text as language elements that are interconnected through an identifiable relationship. This connection makes the text work as a whole to create continuity, rather than as separated linguistic units.

In line with this view, Todorov (1984) emphasized that discourse should be seen as human communication shaped by the interaction between the language system and historical context. Therefore, discourse does not stand alone, but it is

dialogical in nature, because it is always connected to what has come before and what follows. Thus, discourse analysis helps reveal the structure of a text, the relationships between utterances, and the social context behind it.

This theoretical foundation makes discourse analysis becomes relevant for examining humor in dialogue memes. As short written dialogues, memes rely on the relationship between utterances to create continuity within the text. By focusing on cohesion, discourse analysis allows this study to examine how dialogue memes are structured linguistically and how incongruity emerges from the connections between turns in the dialogue.

B. The Linguistic Construction of Humor in Discourse

Like other forms of discourse, humor does not only emerge from individual word or sentence structure. Instead, it is shaped by the connection of linguistic elements within a section of text. In conversation, humor is often created by the way a statement responds to and builds on a previous statement.

From a discourse perspective, the construction of humor can be observed through the textual relationship between utterances, particularly linguistic cohesion. Cohesive devices allow utterances to be connected and form a unified dialogue structure. When this structure produces an unexpected response, incongruity arises in the discourse.

In this study, humor is understood as an effect that emerges from such incongruity in dialogue memes. Rather than focusing on specific humor techniques, the analysis highlights how cohesive relationships between turns can still lead to

unexpected shifts in meaning. In this way, humor is seen as a textual phenomenon embedded in the structure of written dialogue.

1. Cohesion

Halliday & Hasan (1976) introduced cohesion as the relationship between parts of a text that makes it function as a whole. A text is considered cohesive when its elements are interconnected and meaningful to the reader (Utami, 2019). When the interpretation of one element depends on another element and the reader is required to process the text as a whole, cohesion occurs. For example, in the following text:

“Wash and core *six cooking apples*. Put *them* into a fireproof dish” (Halliday & Hasan, 1976), the word *them* refers back to *six cooking apples*, showing how meaning is tied across sentences. This illustrates that cohesion enables the reader or listener to fill in missing information that may not be explicitly stated in the text but is necessary for comprehension (Has, 2021).

Cohesive ties are expressed both through grammar and vocabulary, resulting in what are called grammatical cohesion and lexical cohesion (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). Grammatical cohesion consists of reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunctions, while lexical cohesion consists of reiteration and collocation.

a. Grammatical Cohesion

Grammatical cohesion is a form of cohesion expressed through grammar. It is related to the use of grammatical devices (Rositasari, 2019). The following are types of grammatical cohesion:

1) Reference

Reference is a part of grammatical cohesion that functions to point to another word or phrase in the text. It creates the relation between one element and other elements, both those already mentioned and those that will be mentioned (Renkema & Schubert, 2018). When the same thing is mentioned again in the text, cohesion is formed in the continuity of references (Has, 2021).

Halliday & Hasan (1976) divided references into two main types based on the function, namely endophoric and exophoric references. Endophoric references are divided into anaphora (referring to the previous text) and cataphora (referring to the next text). An example of anaphora is: “Three blind mice, three blind mice. See how they run! See how they run!” (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 31) This example uses the pronoun “they,” which refers to the “three blind mice.” Meanwhile, an example of a cataphora is: “I told *her* to go, but *Sarah* just stood there.” The pronoun “her” is a cataphoric reference because it refers to “Sarah,” who is mentioned later.

The next one is exophoric reference. Unlike endophoric reference, exophoric refers to something outside the text, namely a physical situation or context known to the speaker and listener. For example: “Will *they* come here?” where “they” refers to a group of people already known to the speaker and listener, even though they are not mentioned in the text.

Halliday & Hasan (1976) also stated that there are three types of reference: personal, demonstrative, and comparative.

a) Personal Reference

Personal reference involves the use of pronouns or possessive forms to refer to participants in discourse. Halliday and Hasan (1976) classified personal reference into personal pronouns (I, you, they), possessive pronouns (mine, yours), and possessive determiners (my, your, their). For instance:

“*Lisa* said *she* would come later.”

The word *she* refers to *Lisa*.

b) Demonstrative Reference

Demonstrative reference refers to the location or identity of something within or outside the text using words such as this, that, these, those, here, and there (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). For example:

“Leave *that* there and come here!” (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 58)

The word *that* refers to a previously mentioned entity or idea.

c) Comparative Reference

According to Halliday & Hasan (1976), comparative reference establishes cohesion by comparing one item to another, either generally (e.g., *same*, *similar*, *different*) or particularly (e.g., *more*, *better*).

Example of general comparison:

“They were *different* two colours.” (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 80)

In this example, the word “different” is used to compare two entities based on color. Although the specific colors are not mentioned, the comparison allows the reader to understand that the two objects are not identical.

Example of particular comparison:

“We are demanding *higher* living standards.” (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 81)

The word “higher” here refers to a comparison of living standards, which are not explicitly stated. Although early living standards are implied, they can be understood from the context.

2) Substitution

Substitution is a grammatical cohesion device in which another word replaces one item to avoid repetition. The reader or listener is able to infer the missing element from the previous clause (Renkema & Schubert, 2018). Halliday and Hasan (1976) classified substitution into three types: nominal, verbal, and clausal.

a) Nominal Substitution

Nominal substitution substitutes a noun or noun phrase with items such as one, ones, or same. Example:

“I need a *pen*. Do you have *one*?”

The word *one* substitutes for the *pen*.

b) Verbal Substitution

Verbal substitution replaces a verb or verb phrase using *do/does / did*.

Example:

“She said she would *call me*, but she *didn't*.”

Here, *din't* substitutes for *call me*.

c) Clausal Substitution

Clausal substitution substitutes an entire clause, typically using *so* or *not*.

Example:

“Will he come?” – “I think *so*.”

The word *so* substitutes for the whole clause *he will come*.

3) Ellipsis

Ellipsis is the omission of a word or part of a sentence that can still be understood from the preceding clause. It is functionally similar to substitution and is often regarded as “substitution by zero” (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). There are also three types of ellipsis: nominal, verbal, and clausal.

a) Nominal Ellipsis

In nominal ellipsis, a noun or noun phrase is omitted, but its meaning can still be inferred from the modifier or surrounding context. For example:

“I like red *shirts*. My sister likes blue.”

The word *shirts* is omitted in the second clause that intended to be *blue shirts* but remains understood by the reader.

b) Verbal Ellipsis

Verbal ellipsis occurs when a verb or part of the verbal clause is omitted because it is understandable from the previous clause. For instance:

“Are you *coming*?” – “I might.”

The verb *come* is not repeated, yet it is still implied from the preceding question.

c) Clausal Ellipsis

Clausal ellipsis omits an entire clause, typically in short answers or casual responses, where the full meaning is provided from context. For example:

“Will he come?” – “I think.”

The clause he will come is not expressed but remains interpreted by the listener.

4) Conjunction

Conjunction refers to the semantic connection that signals how one clause or sentence relates to another, either preceding or following it. While reference, substitution, or ellipsis, conjunction replace or eliminate the previous part of a sentence, conjunction does not. It simply connects two clauses in meaning. Halliday & Hasan (1976) classified conjunctions into four main types:

a) Additive Conjunction

Additive conjunction adds new informations that equally related to the previous clause using connectors such as *and*, *moreover*, *in addition*, and *besides*.

For example:

“She likes coffee, *and* her brother does too.”

The word *and* adds related information.

b) Adversative Conjunction

Adversative conjunction indicates contrast or unexpected things from previous clause using words like *but*, *however*, *nevertheless*, and *yet*. For Example:

“He studied hard, *but* he failed the test.”

The conjunction *but* signals contrast between expectation and result.

c) Causal Conjunction

Causal conjunction expresses cause-and-effect relationships using *so*, *therefore*, *because*, and *as a result*. For example:

“It was raining, *so* we stayed inside.”

The word *so* indicates a consequence relation.

d) Temporal Conjunction

Temporal conjunction shows a time sequence or order of a clause using *then*, *after that*, *meanwhile*, *before*, and *finally*. For example:

“She finished her work, *then* went to bed.”

The word *then* shows the following action after the previous one.

b. Lexical Cohesion

According to Halliday & Hasan (1976) lexical cohesion is created through the selection of vocabulary rather than grammatical devices. It helps maintain topic continuity and semantic connection between clauses or sentences. Halliday & Hasan (1976) divide lexical cohesion into two main types: reiteration and collocation.

1) Reiteration

When a lexical element refers back to another element that has the same referent, this phenomenon is called reiteration (Halliday & Hasan, 1976). Reiteration can take the form of repetition, synonymy or near synonymy, superordinate, and general word.

a) Repetition

Repetition occurs when the same lexical item is repeated to maintain cohesion. For example:

“The *teacher* entered the classroom. The *teacher* greeted the students warmly.”

Teacher is repeated to maintain the same referent.

b) Synonymy / Near Synonymy

Synonymy occurs when a lexical item is replaced with another word that has the same or almost the same meaning. If the meaning is not entirely identical

but still closely related with a different nuance, it is considered near synonymy. For instance:

“The *child* was curious. His *inquisitive* nature often annoyed adults.”

Curious and *inquisitive* have similar meanings, but *inquisitive* can be more intense or sometimes have a negative connotation (asking too many questions).

c) Superordinate

Superordinate occurs when a specific word is later referred to using a more general category to maintain cohesion. In this case, the first item is a hyponym (more specific), while the second is its superordinate (more general). For example:

“Lisa bought a *Labrador*. The *dog* was very playful.”

The word *dog* is a superordinate of *Labrador*.

d) General Word

A general word refers to a nonspecific lexical item such as thing, person, matter, event, or place that is used to refer back to a more specific element mentioned earlier in the text. For example:

“He broke the *vase*. The *thing* was very expensive.”

The word *thing* is a general term that refers to *vase*.

2) Collocation

Collocation refers to the tendency of certain words to frequently occur together in the same context because they are semantically or habitually associated.

Collocation does not rely on identical or synonymous words like reiteration, but it relies on lexical items that are commonly linked in meaning. For instance:

“The *judge* entered the courtroom. The *lawyers* stood up immediately.”

The word *Judge* and *lawyers* are not synonyms, but they are related because they typically appear together within the same situational context, specifically in the context of court proceedings.

Based on this theoretical foundation, humor in this study is not only reviewed as a linguistic element. Instead, humor is examined as a discursive event that emerges through interaction, because its formation is shaped by the relationship between utterances within a dialogue. In dialogue memes, utterances are linked together to form a structured conversation. When this structure is disrupted by an unexpected response, incongruity arises. Therefore, humor in this study is understood as something that arises from the relationship between texts in dialogue, rather than from individual sentences in isolation.

In dialogue, utterances are generally arranged in a connected sequence so that the dialogue can continue. However, in humorous dialogue, this textual development is not always predictable. In dialogue memes, an utterance may follow the previous utterance cohesively, but introduce an unexpected response that disrupts the flow of the conversation. This textual disruption plays an important role in the formation of humor.

In humor studies, this kind of unexpected event or mismatch is referred to as incongruity. Incongruity refers to the mismatch between established direction of

the conversation and the response that follows. In dialogue memes, incongruity can be observed when the response deviates from the direction established by previous utterances in the conversation structure.

To further understand how the mismatch appears in a discourse, this study refers to Berger's (1993) classification of humor techniques. Although it is not used as the main theoretical framework, this classification of techniques helps identify the strategies used in creating incongruity.

C. Incongruity in Humor Studies

The most common definition of humor is something that is funny, that causes amusement or laughter (Rahmanadji, 2007). In humor studies, there are three classic theories that are often used as references: *Superiority*, *Incongruity*, and *Relief* (Gamage & Makangila, 2019). Each theories provide different perspectives on why people laugh, whether it's feeling superior to others, noticing a clash between expectations and reality, or releasing psychological tension.

Superiority theory views humor as closely related to social hierarchy. It suggests that people laugh because they feel they won over others and often mock those who are less fortunate (Musa et al., 2023). According to this view, humorous discourse contains elements of insult that arise from an imbalance of power between the humorist and the target of the humor (Umamah et al., 2023a). As a result, this type of humor can violate social norms and trigger negative feelings in the person being mocked (Rahmanadji, 2007). From this perspective, humor can function as a tool for asserting dominance or social superiority. As Berger (1993) stated, humor can be a used by dominant groups in society to maintain social control.

From the *Incongruity* theory's perspective, laughter arises because something is unexpected or surprising. According to this theory, when an expected pattern is disrupted, it triggers amusement in the mind of the receiver and arises humor (Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2004). This theory states that humor occurs when there is a discrepancy between what is expected and what actually occurs, between what one expects and what one gets (Berger, 1993). *Incongruity* theory focuses on the cognitive process of perceiving humor. As Buijzen & Valkenburg (2004) stated, cognitive capacity plays a role in understanding incongruent events for experiencing laughter. Similarly, Meyer (2000, in Umamah et al., 2023b) also explained that individuals perceive a discourse as humorous when they are able to detect, comprehend, and classify unexpected or mismatched shifts in the communication. In essence, laughter is a cognitive response to surprise, absurdity, or contradiction.

Relief theory has proposed by the psychology figure, Sigmund Freud (Gamage & Makangila, 2019). This theory explains that laughter is the result of releasing tension or stress. From the perspective of *Relief* theory, physical reactions or 'signs' of humor are considered most important, with the belief that humor arises from the relief felt when tension within a person arises and is released (Meyer, 2000). Laughter is assumed to be the result of the release of nervous energy, because it is associated with efforts to express pent-up desires and overcome various social and cultural barriers (Mousa et al., 2023). Thus, laughter appears as a form of relief, as if the individual has succeeded in 'smuggling' something that is usually restricted or prohibited (Taberski, 1998 in Gamage & Makangila, 2019).

Berger's (1993) defines incongruity as a mismatch between two or more elements in a given situation, whether in ideas, language, visuals, or behavior. This mismatch creates a tension by disrupting what is normally expected, which may create a humorous effect. In dialogue memes, incongruity often appears when a response does not align with the established context or expected direction of interaction.

In this study, incongruity is treated as a discursive phenomenon that emerges from the relationship between utterances in dialogue memes. Berger's (1993) discussion of incongruity is therefore used as a conceptual reference to explain the nature of mismatch in humorous discourse. At the same time, incongruity also functions as a guiding criterion in the data collection process. Dialogue memes were selected based on the presence of mismatches between expected and actual responses.

D. Memes on X as Digital Discourse

The term 'meme' was first introduced by biologist Richard Dawkins in 1976, which comes from the Greek mimesis, meaning 'imitation'. Originally, it was used to describe cultural phenomena such as human genes being spread, maintained and mutated through replication. Over time, memes can be understood as cultural information that spreads from person to person and gradually becomes a social phenomenon.

Building on this view, Shifman (2014) defined internet memes as groups of digital items that share common characteristics in form, content, and stance, which are consciously created and then distributed, imitated, or modified through the

internet. This definition highlights that memes have a communication pattern that is formed based on repeated and varied imitations.

Among various meme formats, dialogue-based memes are the most prominent for analysis as discourse. They adapt conversations that could occur in real life. Often these memes consist of two until four turns, with characters playing various roles. Therefore, even in a short form, the elements of discourse in these memes are still recognizable.

The humor in these memes arises not only from the choice of words, but also from the relationships between characters, their roles, and the expectations that arise during the conversation. Therefore, the humor in memes that depicts in the form of short conversations is achieved through the arrangement of discourse elements.

In the context of this study, memes from the Instagram platform, specifically those are posted in the @punhubonline account are treated as discourse events. These memes were selected because they consistently depict short dialogues that allow for an analysis of their cohesive structure. In addition, these memes contain unexpected responses that can be studied for their incongruity.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHOD

A. Research Design

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research design with a discourse analysis approach to examine how incongruity is constructed through cohesion in dialogue memes from the @punhubonline Instagram account. Discourse analysis is applied because it enables the researcher to explore the cohesive structure underlying the conversations. The main focus of this study is to explain how humor emerges from incongruity within the cohesive structure of dialogue.

B. Data Source

The data source of this study is dialogue memes from the Instagram account @punhubonline. This account was selected because it consistently posted short written dialogues that feature unexpected responses. The data were taken from memes posted in 2022 to 2025. From a total of 20 memes, 13 were posted in 2022, 5 in 2023, 1 in 2024, and 1 in 2025. The year 2022 was chosen as the starting point because it marks the first posting period of the account. While memes from 2023 to 2025 were included to provide additional variation and to account for possible developments in humor construction over time.

C. Research Instrument

In this study, the researcher was directly involved in the process of collecting and analyzing the data. As Creswell (2008) stated, a research instrument

is anything used to record, observe, or measure data. In this study, researchers applied data selection criteria, including selecting English memes consisting of at least two turns of dialogue and showing unexpected responses. The researcher examined each memes by focusing on how the dialogue is structured and how the utterances are connected, also how incongruity emerges from the connection between utterances.

D. Data Collection

The data were collected manually by tracing the feed post of Instagram account @punhubonline and selecting memes that met the research criteria. The criteria including memes consisting of at least two turns of dialogue and containing unexpected responses. The selection focused on dialogues set in familiar everyday situations, such as medical, service, and casual interactions, which follow recognizable conversational patterns. The selected memes were screenshotted and recorded in a data catalog (e.g., Meme_01, Meme_02), along with the upload date and a brief description. A total of 20 memes was considered sufficient for this qualitative study, as the analysis emphasizes linguistic patterns and humor construction rather than quantitative frequency.

E. Data Analysis

The data were analyzed through the following procedures. First, describing the situational setting and participants involved, based on the information explicitly presented in the dialogue. Second, analyzing cohesion by identifying the cohesive devices used in dialogue based on Halliday and Hasan's (1976) framework. Finally,

identifying incongruity in the dialogue by examining how the cohesive relationship between utterances leads to an unexpected response within the dialogue structure.

CHAPTER IV

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the result of the analysis of dialogue memes collected from the Instagram account @punhubonline. The analysis focuses on how the dialogue is organized and how each utterance is connected to the others. It also examines the cohesive relationships between utterances and the emergence of unexpected or mismatched responses that create incongruity.

In this study, a total of 20 dialogue memes were analyzed. Each meme consists of at least two turns of dialogue and contains an unexpected response that disrupts the flow of the conversation. The data were arranged according to the date of upload, from the earliest to the most recent.

A. Finding

This section presents the findings of the analysis of dialogue memes from the @punhubonline account. The findings explain how incongruity is constructed through linguistic cohesion within the dialogue structure. Data codes (Meme_01, Meme_02, etc.) are used to support and illustrate the findings. The data are displayed in two columns. The right column is a screenshot caption explaining the context in which the data appears, while the left column is the meme as the main data.

1. Construction of Incongruity through Cohesion in Dialogue Memes

Data 1: Meme_01

The meme was uploaded by @punhubonline on September 22, 2022. The format is a two-panel dialogue consisting of three conversational turns between a doctor and a patient. The caption contained another example of humorous conversation, while hashtags such as #medicalmemes, #doctorlife, #nurseofinstagram, and #puns indicate that the meme is framed as healthcare humor, aimed at audiences familiar with medical contexts and enjoy the kind of pun humor.



Table 4.1

This meme depicts a man tells the doctor, “Doctor, I’ve been bitten by a wolf.” Then, the doctor responds with a follow-up question, “Where?” The man then replies, “No, just a normal one.”

In this meme, the field depicts a medical consultation between a doctor and a patient about being bitten by a wolf. It reflects the professional role of the doctor and the patient as someone seeking medical attention.

Cohesion is created through grammatical cohesion, especially nominal substitution: the word “one” in the patient’s response (“No, just a normal one”).

Nominal substitution is replacing a noun or noun phrase, one of which is by using “one.” Here, the patient uses “one” to refer back to the previously mentioned “wolf,” which comes from the doctor's utterance “Where,” which sounds similar to ‘were’ (in the word “werewolf”). This link keeps the turns connected, because “one” clearly points to the previously mentioned animal, so the dialogue feels structurally tied together even though the topic shifts.

Incongruity arises from the patient's response to the doctor's question, “Where?”, which refers to the location of the wolf bite. However, due to the similarity in sound between ‘where’ and ‘were’, the response that emerges is a discussion about the type of wolf, namely a normal wolf not the werewolf. The question of location being answered with the type of wolf causes incongruity and humor in the dialogue.

Data 2: Meme_02

The meme was uploaded by @punhubonline on September 22, 2022. The format is a two-panel dialogue consisting of three conversational turns between a doctor and a patient. The caption contained another example of humorous conversation, while hashtags such as #medicalmemes, #doctorlife, and #puns indicate that the meme is framed as healthcare humor, aimed at audiences familiar with medical contexts and enjoy the kind of puns humor.



Table 4.2

In this meme, the field depicts a medical interaction between a doctor and a patient seeking treatment. It reflects the professional role of the doctor and the patient as someone seeking medical attention.

Cohesion is created through grammatical cohesion in the form of personal references. Personal references are used to refer to participants in the discourse. The pronoun “you” used by the doctor refers to the patient as a conversation partner. The pronoun “I” used by the patient refers to the patient himself, in response to questions directed at him through the pronoun “you.” This link keeps the dialogue connected, as the response clearly points to the question asked by the doctor, even though the following turn changes the topic unexpectedly.

Incongruity arises because the doctor's response does not meet normal expectations of how a medical conversation should proceed. The doctor's statement, “Alright then, get out,” came in response to the patient's answer, “I'm fine...,” which was interpreted as a medical assessment indicating that the patient was fine. However, the phrase “how are you” is often interpreted as a greeting, to which the

answer is often a template, namely “I’m fine.” The doctor's response, which turned out to be unexpected, had a humorous effect.

Data 3: Meme_03

The meme was uploaded by @punhubonline on September 22, 2022. The format is a two-panel dialogue consisting of three conversational turns between a doctor and a patient. The caption contained another example of humorous conversation. While the hashtags such as #medicalmemes, #doctorlife, and #puns indicate that the meme is framed as healthcare humor, aimed at audiences familiar with medical contexts and enjoy the kind of puns humor.

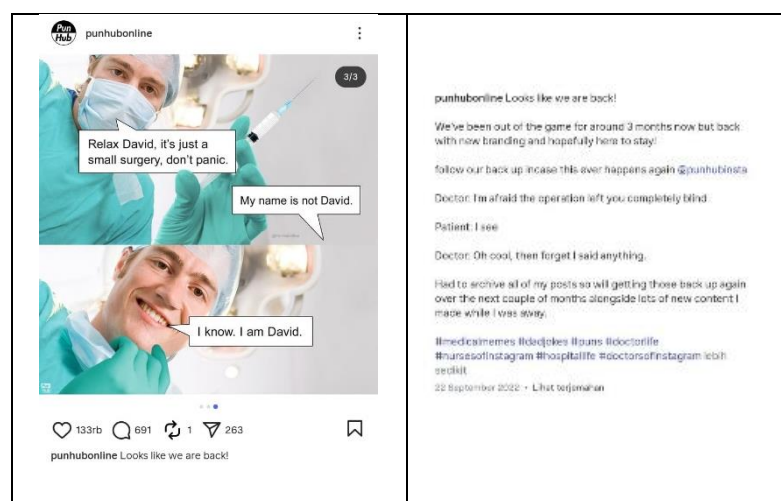


Table 4.3

In this meme, the conversation happens in a medical setting. The doctor is about to perform surgery, and the patient is getting ready. The dialogue showing the interaction between a doctor and a patient.

Cohesion appears in two ways. First, lexical cohesion through the repetition. Repetition is the repetition of the same lexical item within a discourse. In this dialogue, the name “David” is repeated three times. First, the doctor says, “Relax,

David...,” the patient replies, “My name is not David,” and the doctor says, “I know. I am David.” This repetition keeps the dialogue connected and the topic maintained because all three turns refer to the same name. Second, the use of grammatical cohesion through personal reference. Personal reference is used to refer to the participant in a discourse. In this meme, the pronoun “I” consistently points to the doctor, linking the sentences together.

Incongruity arises from misunderstandings in conversation. The doctor calls David to calm himself down before operating on the patient. The doctor's words seem to be directed at the patient, so the patient responds with clarification by saying, “My name is not David.” Then the patient's response also trigger clarification from the doctor, who explains that David is his name. This unexpected shift in the dialogue creates humor.

Data 4: Meme_04

The meme was uploaded by @punhubonline on September 24, 2022. The format is a two-panel dialogue consisting of three conversational turns between a waitress and a customer. The caption contained a short humorous conversation, while hashtags such as #waitresslife, #waiterproblems, and #puns indicate that the meme is that it aims at audiences who relate to everyday service and enjoy pun-themed humor.

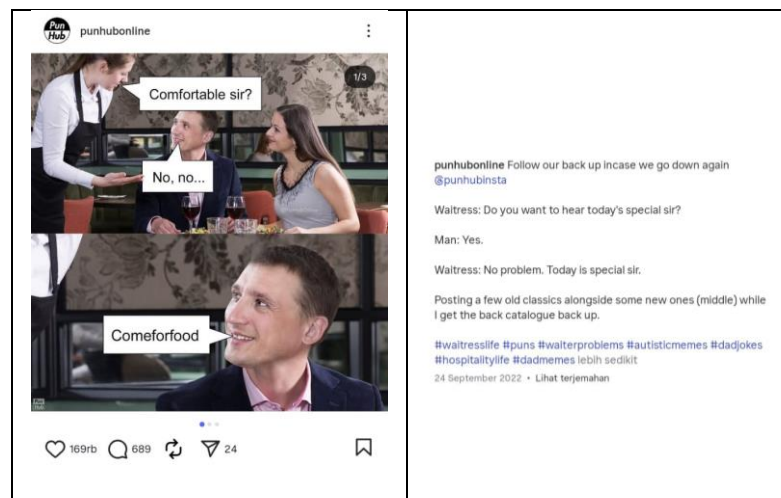


Table 4.4

In this meme, the conversation happens in a dining setting. The waitress asks the customer, “Comfortable sir?” and the customer replies, “No, no...” followed by “Comeforfood.” The dialogue reflects a formal relationship between the waitress and the customer.

This meme does not use cohesive devices as described by Halliday and Hasan. However, the similarity in sound between the words “comfortable” and “come for” maintains the connection between the utterances so that the dialogue can be followed well. The customer's response, “Come for food,” is still related to the waitress's question, “Comfortable, sir?”, so that the continuity of the dialogue is maintained.

Incongruity arises from the mismatch between the question and the answer. The waitress asks, “Comfortable, sir?” to get an answer about the customer's comfort. However, the similarity in sound between ‘Comfortable’ and “Come for table” leads the customer to answer his purpose for coming here, which is “Come for food.” This mismatch creates a humorous effect.

Data 5: Meme_05

The meme was posted by @punhubonline on September 24, 2022. The format is a two-panel dialogue consisting of two conversational turns between a waitress and a customer. The caption includes a short dialogue unrelated to the meme image. Several hashtags such as #waitresslife, #waiterproblems, and #puns, indicate that it aims at audiences who relate to everyday service and enjoy pun-themed content.

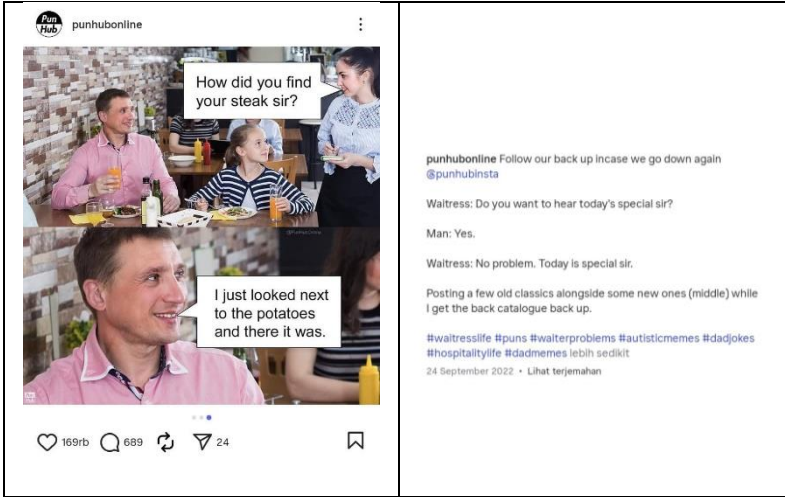


Table 4.5

This meme depicts a waiter asking a customer, “How did you find your steak, sir?” to which the customer replies, “I just looked next to the potatoes and there it was.”

In this meme, the conversation about steak happens in a restaurant. It reflects the waitress’s role in serving and the customer as the person being served.

Cohesion is demonstrated through several grammatical forms, namely personal reference, demonstrative reference, and additive conjunction. Personal reference is used to refer to participants in a discourse. Here, the pronoun “you” is

addressed by the waitress to the customer as her interlocutor. Then the pronoun “I” is addressed by the customer to himself in response to the pronoun “you.” Demonstrative reference is used to refer to something inside or outside the discourse. Here, the pronoun ‘it’ is used by the customer to refer to the steak, which is the object of the conversation. “There” is also used to refer to the location of the steak. In addition, additive conjunctions are used to add information related to the previous statement. Here, “and” is used by the customer to connect information about the location of the steak.

Incongruity arises from a mismatch between the question and the answer. The waitress asks, “How did you find your steak, sir?” to find out the quality of the steak from the customer's point of view. However, the customer responds by giving a literal description of how he found the steak on the serving plate. This incongruity creates a humorous effect.

Data 6: Meme_06

The meme was posted by @punhubonline on September 29, 2022. The format is a two-panel dialogue consisting of four conversational turns between two people considered as friends. The caption includes a short conversational joke. Several hashtags such as #puns, #dadjokes, and #onliners, indicate that it aims at audiences who enjoy pun-themed jokes.

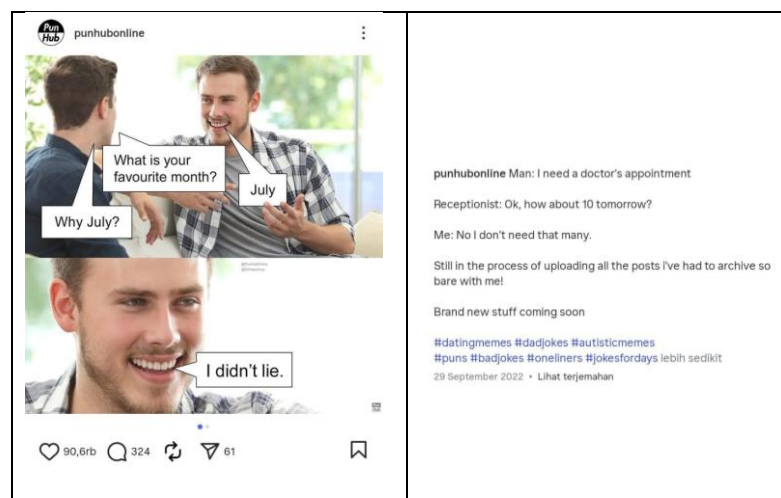


Table 4.6

This meme depicts two people having a conversation. One asks, “What is your favorite month?” The other replies, “July.” Hearing this, the questioner responds, “Why July?” and the other replies, “I didn’t lie.”

This meme presents a field where two men are in casual conversation with the topic of favorite month. It reflects the relationship between the two participants, presumably friends.

Cohesion is formed through grammatical and lexical forms. Grammatical cohesion takes the form of personal references used to refer to participants in a discourse. In this meme, the pronoun “your” is used by the first speaker to refer to the interlocutor with regard to his favorite month, and the pronoun “I” is used by the second speaker to refer to himself. Lexical cohesion takes the form of repetition of the word “July,” which is used as an answer to the first speaker's question, as well as a response from the second speaker.

Incongruity arises from the mismatch between the question and the answer. The question “Why July?” should be answered with the reason why the speaker

likes July. However, the second speaker instead answers with “I didn't lie,” because of the similarity in sound between ‘July’ and “Do you lie.” This mismatch creates a humorous effect.

Data 7: Meme_07

This meme was posted by @punhubonline on September 29, 2022. The format is a two-panel dialogue consisting of two conversational turns between two people considered as a couple. The caption includes another example of conversational jokes. The meme targeted audiences that enjoy pun-themed jokes and relate to dating life using several hashtags: #datingmemes, #puns, and #jokesfordays.

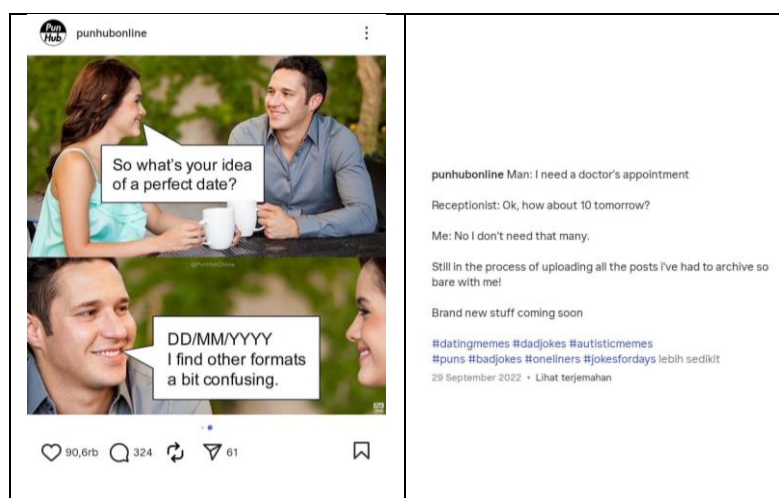


Table 4.7

The meme depicts a casual conversation between a man and a woman about the perfect date. The woman asks, “So what’s your idea of a perfect date?” The man replies, “DD/MM/YYYY. I find other formats a bit confusing.” The relationship between the participants depicts them as a couple or potential couple discussing personal preferences.

Cohesion is formed through grammatical cohesion in the form of personal reference. This cohesion is used to refer to participants in a discourse. The pronoun “your” spoken by a woman refers to a man in relation to his ideas. Then the pronoun “I” spoken by a man in response to a woman refers to himself. These references connect the turns, keeping the dialogue linked between the question and response.

Incongruity arises from a man's answer that does not match a woman's question. The word “date” has two meanings in different contexts, namely as a romantic activity and a calendar date. Both interpret the word “date” in different ways, so the answer given deviates from the question. This incongruity causes a humorous effect.

Data 8: Meme_08

This meme was uploaded by the account @punhubonline on September 30, 2022, accompanied by a caption containing other examples of the same type of humor. The format is a two-panel dialogue consisting of three conversational turns between two people considered as friends. Hashtags like #relationshipproblems, #datingproblems, and #puns are aimed at reaching an audience that enjoys pun-themed humor and relationship issues.



Table 4.8

The meme depicts a casual conversation between a man and a woman about having children. The man asks, “Do you have any children?” The woman replies, “Yes, I have one that’s just under two.” Hearing this, the man responds, “I know how many one is.” The relationship between the participants depicts them as friends.

Cohesion is demonstrated through several grammatical and lexical forms. The use of personal references to refer to participants in the dialogue is demonstrated through the pronouns “you” and “I.” The pronoun ‘you’ spoken by a man refers to a woman as his conversation partner. The pronoun “I” spoken by a woman refers to herself in response to a man's question. Then the pronoun “I” spoken by a man refers to himself in response to a woman. The use of nominal substitution in the word “one” eliminates the word ‘children’ to avoid repetition, so that the meaning of the woman's statement is “one child.” Then, lexical cohesion through the repetition of the word “one,” which was originally spoken by a woman, is spoken again by a man as a response.

Incongruity arises from misunderstanding. A woman says “under two” as additional information about her child's age, which is under two years old. A man responds to the woman's statement by saying that he knows what ‘one’ is. Here, he interprets the phrase “under two” as a definition of the number one. This unexpected response creates a humorous effect.

Data 9: Meme_09

This meme was uploaded by the account @punhubonline on October 3, 2022, accompanied by a caption containing other examples of the same type of humor. The format is a two-panel dialogue consisting of three conversational turns between a customer and a seller. Hashtags like #retailmemes, #puns, and #retailproblems are aimed at reaching an audience that enjoys pun-themed humor and retail issues.

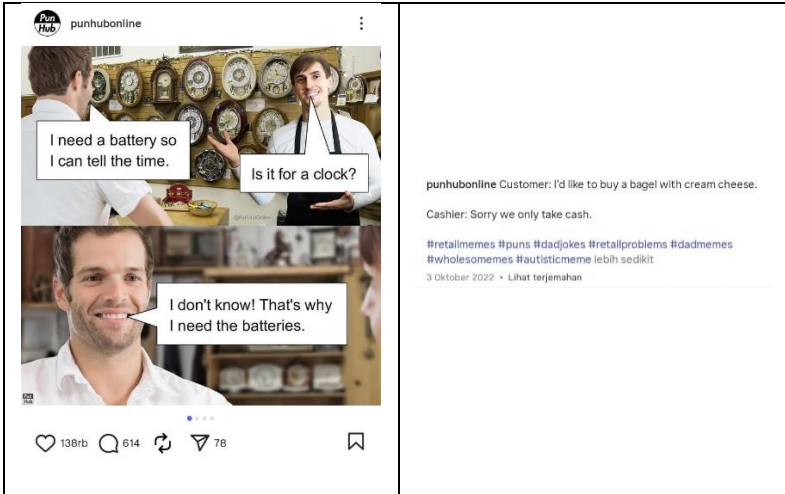


Table 4.9

In this meme, the conversation happens in a store between a customer and a seller. The customer says, “I need a battery so I can tell the time.” The seller replies, “Is it for a clock?” and the customer replies, “I don’t know! That’s why I

need the batteries.” It shows a formal relationship where the customer is seeking help and the seller is providing assistance.

Cohesion is formed through grammatical cohesion in the form of personal reference, demonstrative reference, and causal conjunction; as well as lexical cohesion in the form of repetition. Personal reference is used to refer to participants in a discourse. In this meme, the pronoun “I” is used by the customer to refer to himself. Demonstrative reference in the form of “it” is used by the seller to refer to the ‘battery’ mentioned by the customer. Causal conjunction in the form of “so” is used to connect cause and effect; if a customer has a battery, he can tell the time. Meanwhile, lexical cohesion is used through the repetition of the word “batteries” (plural of battery), which is said by a customer to emphasize that they need batteries.

Incongruity arises from the mismatch between the seller's question and the customer's answer. The seller's question about the watch battery was answered incorrectly by the customer. He did not know the time, so he needed a battery. From this, it can be assumed that the similarity in sound between “for” and “four” caused this misunderstanding and produced a humorous effect.

Data 10: Meme_10

This meme was uploaded by the account @punhubonline on October 3, 2022, accompanied by a caption containing other examples of the same type of humor. The format is a two-panel dialogue consisting of two conversational turns between a customer and a waiter. Hashtags like #retailmemes, #puns, and

#retailproblems are aimed at reaching an audience that enjoys pun-themed humor and retail issues.

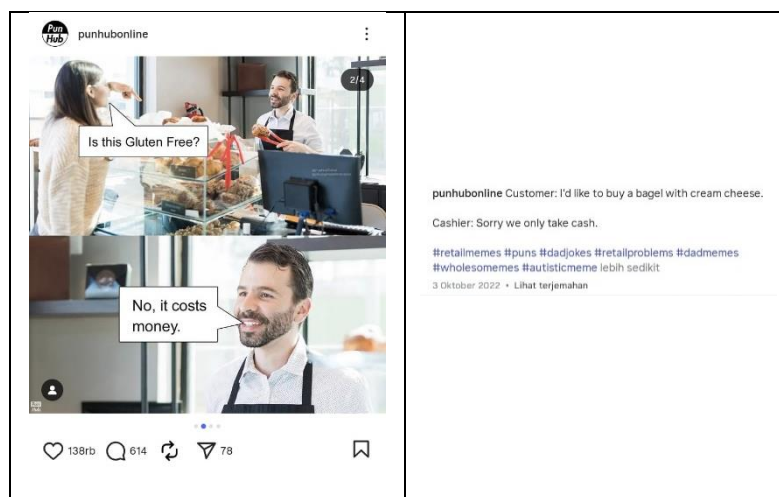


Table 4.10

This meme shows a customer asking a waiter, “Is this Gluten Free?” The waiter replies, “No, it costs money.”

In this meme, the conversation happens in a cafe between a customer and a waiter. The customer asks, “Is this Gluten Free?” the waiter replies, “No, it costs money.” It reflects formal relationship between the customer asking about the menu and the waiter responding.

Cohesion is formed through grammatical cohesion in the form of demonstrative references. The word “this” is used by the customer to refer to the food that is the subject of the conversation. Then the word “it” is used by the waiter to refer to the food previously pointed out by the customer.

Incongruity arises due to a mismatch between the waiter's response and the customer's question. The customer asks whether the food pointed to is gluten-free,

but the waiter replies that the food needs to be paid for. This misunderstanding arises from the ambiguity of the phrase gluten-free, which can mean gluten-free composition, as well as gluten-free meaning no charge. This mismatch creates incongruity.

Data 11: Meme_11

The meme was uploaded by @punhubonline on October 20, 2022. The format is a two-panel dialogue consisting of three conversational turns between a man and a woman. The caption contained postman jokes, while hashtags such as #mailmanproblems, #dadjokes, and #puns indicate that the meme is framed as healthcare humor, aimed at audiences relate to the world of delivery and enjoy puns.



Table 4.11

This meme depicts a man asking for help by saying, “Can you help on my crossword? The clue is ‘overworked postman’,” then the woman replies, “Sure, how many letters?” then the man replies, “I’m guessing, too many.”

In this meme, the conversation happens between a man and a woman discussing a crossword puzzle. The man says, “Can you help on my crossword?

The clue is ‘overworked postman’,” then the woman replies “Sure, how many letters?” The man replies, “I’m guessing, too many.” This shows an informal relationship in interacting about the crossword.

Cohesion is formed from several grammatical forms. The personal reference “you” is used by the man to refer to the woman as his conversation partner. The pronouns “I” and ‘my’ used by the man refer to himself and his ownership of the crossword. Nominal ellipsis also appears in the phrase “too many,” which omits the word “letters” at the end. These cohesive elements link each turn, making it clear who is speaking and what they are talking about.

Incongruity arises from the mismatch between a woman's question and a man's answer. The word “letters” has two meanings: letters of the alphabet and postal letters. A woman's question about how many letters should be answered with the number of letters in the crossword puzzle, not the number of letters sent by an overworked postman. This mismatch creates a humorous effect.

Data 12: Meme_12

This meme was uploaded by the account @punhubonline on November 17, 2022, accompanied by a caption containing other examples of the same type of humor. The format is a two-panel dialogue consisting of three conversational turns between a flight attendant and a passenger. Hashtags like #hospitalitylife, #serverlife, and #puns are aimed at reaching an audience that enjoys pun-themed humor and service issues.

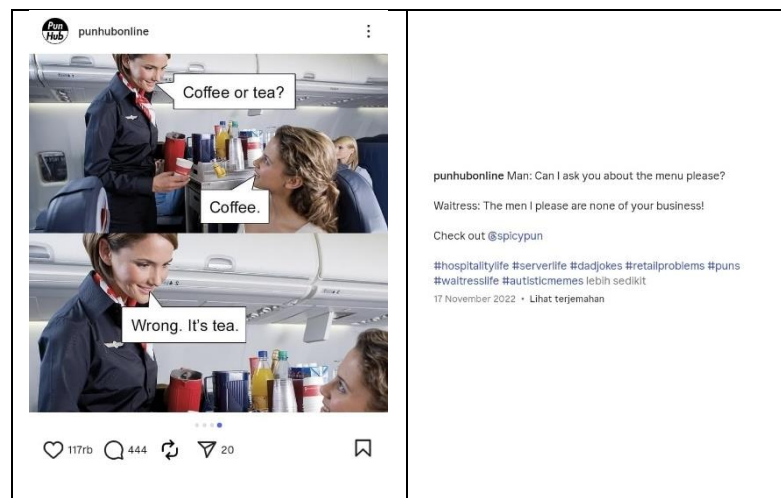


Table 4.12

In this meme, the conversation happens between a flight attendant and a passenger during drink service on a plane. The flight attendant asks, “Coffee or tea?” The passenger replies, “Coffee.” The flight attendant replies, “Wrong. It’s tea.”

Cohesion is formed through lexical and grammatical cohesion. Lexical cohesion takes the form of repetition of the word coffee, which is uttered by the passenger in response to the flight attendant's question, and tea, which is uttered again by the flight attendant in response to the passenger's answer. Meanwhile, grammatical cohesion appears through demonstrative reference in the form of the flight attendant's use of the pronoun “it” to refer to the drink she is carrying.

The incongruity arose from the flight attendant's unexpected response. Generally, when offering drinks, flight attendants are expected to respond affirmatively. However, after the passenger chose coffee, the response was to inform the passenger that their choice was wrong, as if playing a game of right or wrong.

Data 13: Meme_13

The meme was uploaded by @punhubonline on December 31, 2022. The format is a two-panel dialogue consisting of two conversational turns between an interviewer and a candidate. The caption also share another joke interview-themed. The use of hashtags such as #recruitmenlife, #hrlife, and #puns emphasizes the upload targeted at people close to work life, and who enjoy pun jokes.

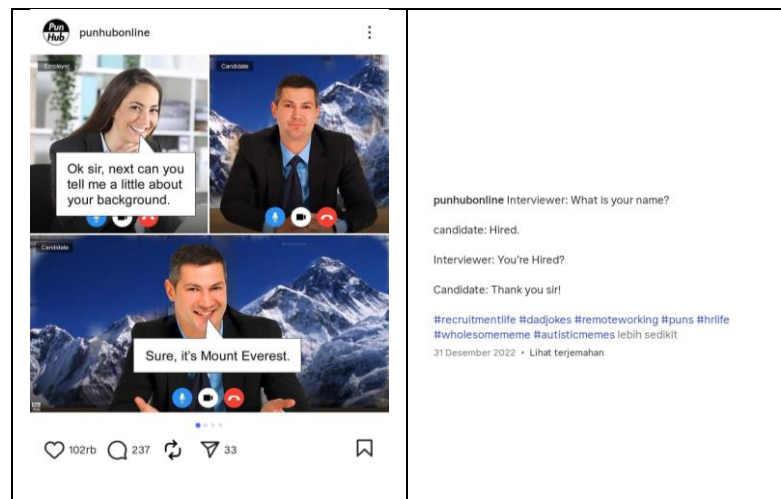


Table 4.13

This meme depicts an interviewer saying, “Ok sir, next can you tell me a little about your bakground,” then the interviewee replies, “Sure, it’s Mount Everest.”

In this meme, the conversation happens between an interviewer and an candidate during a job interview talking about background. It shows a formal relationship between the interviewer asking questions and the candidate responding.

Cohesion is formed through grammatical cohesion in the form of personal and demonstrative references. The personal reference “you” is used by the

interviewer to refer to the candidate. The pronoun “me” is used by the interviewer to refer to himself, who needs information from the candidate. The pronoun “your” is used by the interviewer to refer to the candidate's ownership of “background.” Then, the demonstrative reference ‘it’ is used to refer to the word “background” that has been mentioned by the interviewer.

Incongruity arises from a mismatch between the candidate's response and the interviewer's question. The candidate answered the question about background with a description of his visual background in the meeting room. The word “background” can be interpreted as the candidate's background information, or it can also be interpreted as a background image such as those used during online meetings. However, in the context of a job interview, the candidate should respond with their background information. This mismatch create humorous effect.

Data 14: Meme_14

The meme was uploaded by @punhubonline on January 25, 2023. The format is a two-panel dialogue consisting of four conversational turns between two passengers. The caption also share another joke airplane-themed. The use of hashtags such as #airhostesslife, #dadjokes, #hospitalitylife, and #puns emphasizes the upload targeted at people familiar to airline setting, and who enjoy pun jokes.

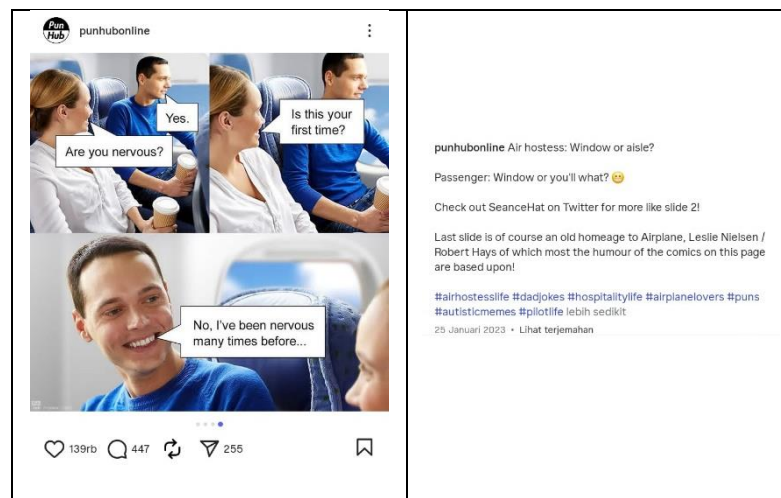


Table 4.14

In this meme, the conversation happens between two passengers during a flight. The first passenger asks, “Are you nervous?” The second passenger replies, “Yes.” The first passenger asks again, “Is this your first time?” and the second passenger replies, “No, I’ve been nervous many times before...” It shows a casual relationship between participants chatting about flying.

Cohesion is formed through grammatical and lexical cohesion. Grammatical cohesion is demonstrated through the use of personal references in the form of “you” spoken by the first passenger to the second passenger. The pronoun “your” used by the first passenger refers to the second passenger's experience of flying. Demonstrative reference also appears through the word “this” used by the first passenger to refer to the experience of flying as the topic of conversation. Lexical cohesion appears through the repetition of the word “nervous,” which is the topic discussed by the second passenger.

Incongruity arises from the mismatch between the second passenger's response and the first passenger's question. The question regarding the first

experience of flying (“Is this your first time flying?”) was answered with an experience of feeling nervous (“...I feel nervous...”) because the initial topic of conversation was about feeling nervous. This mismatch creates a humorous effect.

Data 15: Meme_15

The meme was uploaded by @punhubonline on April 6, 2023. The format is a two-panel dialogue consisting of three conversational turns between a bartender and a customer. The caption contained hospitality jokes, while hashtags such as #hospitalitylife, #barlife, #datingproblems, and #puns indicate that the meme is aimed at audiences relate to the service world and enjoy puns.

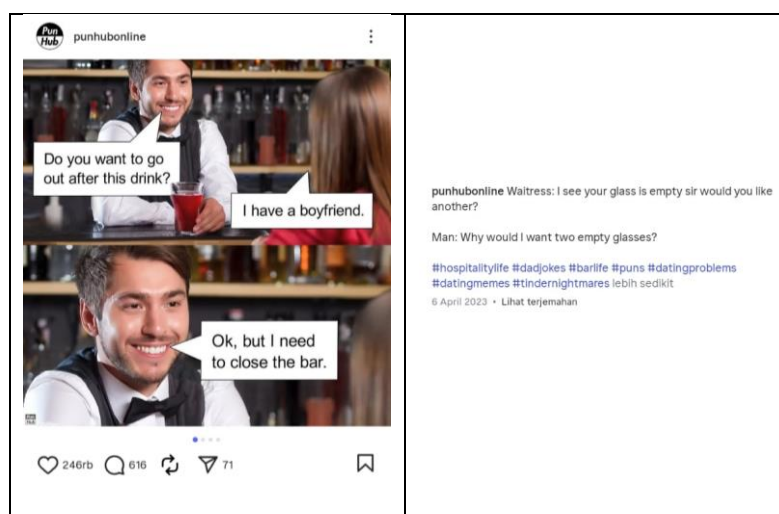


Table 4.15

In this meme, the conversation happens between a bartender and a customer at a bar. The bartender asks, “Do you want to go out after this drink?” Then the customer replies, “I have a boyfriend.” Bartender then replies, “Ok, but I need to close the bar.” It shows a casual but professional relationship between the bartender offering a question about going out and the customer responding.

Cohesion is built through grammatical cohesion such as personal, demonstrative references, and adversative conjunctions. Personal references in the form of the pronoun “you” are used by the bartender to refer to the customer as the interlocutor. The pronoun ‘I’ is used by the customer to refer to himself as the person giving information to the bartender. The pronoun “I” is then used by the bartender to refer to himself as the person giving information to the customer. Demonstrative references such as “this” in the phrase “this drink” refer to the drink being consumed during the conversation. Adversative conjunctions such as ‘but’ are used by the bartender to explain the contrast in the previous clause “Ok.”

The incongruity arises from a misunderstanding between the bartender's response and the customer's answer. The bartender's question, “Do you want to go...?” is answered with the information that the customer has a boyfriend. This response already shows a mismatch with the previous question. In response to the customer's answer, the bartender also gives a surprising response. The bartender's final response creates a humorous effect.

Data 16: Meme_16

The meme was uploaded by @punhubonline on September 6, 2023. The format is a two-panel dialogue consisting of two conversational turns between a victim and a rescuer. The caption contained cop and dispatcher jokes, while hashtags such as #dispatcherproblems, #policememes, #doctormemes, #nurselife, and #puns indicate that the meme is aimed at audiences relate to the rescue world and enjoy puns.


| | |
|---|--|
|  | <p>punhubonline Cop: Suspect is dancing naked downtown. Dispatcher: Copy that. Cop: I'll try but I'm not much of a dancer.</p> <p>#dispatcherproblems #dadjokes #policememes #puns #doctormemes #nurselife #doctorsofinstagram lebih sedikit 6 September 2023 • Lihat terjemahan</p> |
|---|--|

Table 4.16

This meme depicts a woman lying on the street asking for help, “Call me an ambulance.” The man approaches and responds, “You’re an ambulance.”

In this meme, the conversation happens during a medical emergency between a woman asking for help and a man responding. The tenor shows a casual interaction in an urgent situation.

Cohesion is built through personal references and lexical repetition. The words “you” and “me” link the turns, referring to the woman and the helper. The word “ambulance” is repeated in both turns, keeping the topic consistent and connecting the two statements. These cohesive devices help the dialogue stay linked, even though the meaning shifts unexpectedly.

The incongruity comes from a mismatch in meaning. Instead of responding in a serious medical context, the helper gives a silly or unexpected answer, shifting the situation from urgent to humorous. The cohesion keeps the turns connected, while the unexpected response creates the comedic effect.

Data 17: Meme_17

The meme was uploaded by @punhubonline on October 11, 2023. The format is a two-panel dialogue consisting of two conversational turns between two people considered friends. The caption includes another example of conversational jokes with the same retail theme. Hashtags like #puns, #dadjokes, and #retailproblems indicate the meme targets audiences that relate with retail life and enjoy pun-themed jokes.

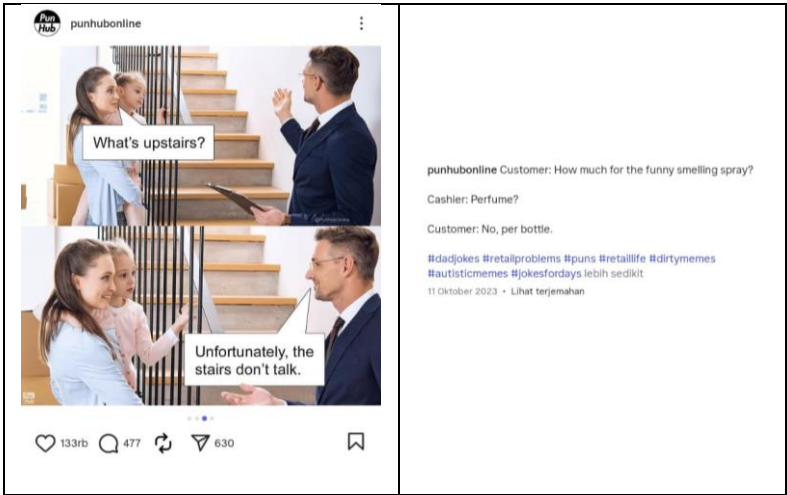


Table 4.17

This meme depicts a buyer and an agent having a conversation. The buyer asks, “What’s upstairs?” The agent replies, “Unfortunately, the stairs don’t talk.”

In this meme, the conversation happens between a customer and a real estate agent during a property showing. The relationship shows a formal interaction between the customer and the agent.

Cohesion is formed through lexical cohesion in the form of repetition of the word “stairs.” The word ‘upstairs’ was initially mentioned by the customer to obtain information about what was on the upper floor. Then the word “stairs” was repeated by the agent to refer to the stairs.

Incongruity arises from the mismatch between the agent's response and the buyer's question. The buyer's question expects an explanation of what is upstairs, but the answer that appears is an explanation that stairs do not talk. The similarity in sound between “what's upstairs” and “what's up stairs” causes this mismatch, creating a humorous effect.

Data 18: Meme_18

The meme was uploaded by @punhubonline on November 7, 2023. The format is a two-panel dialogue consisting of two conversational turns between a waitress and a customer. The caption contained conversational jokes about dating life, while hashtags such as #puns, #waitressproblems, #datingmemes, and #serverlife indicate that the meme is aimed at audiences relate to the service and dating world and enjoy puns.

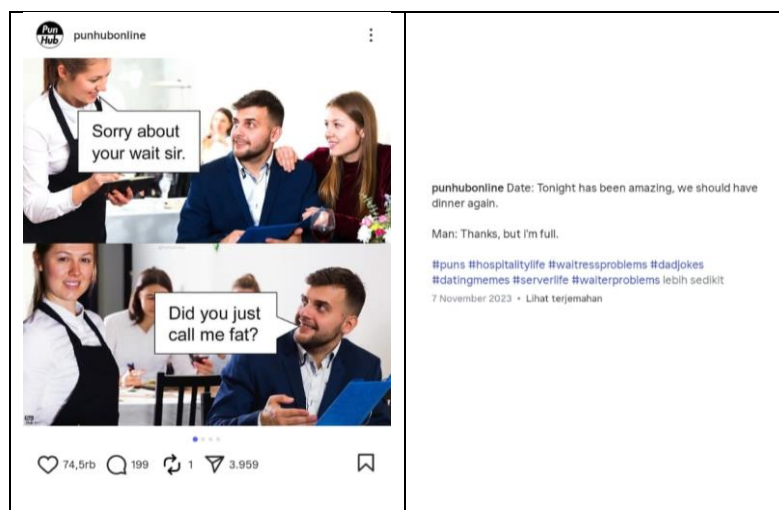


Table 4.18

This meme depicts a waitress politely says, “Sorry about your wait sir,” then the customer replies, “Did you just call me fat?”

In this meme, the conversation happens between a waitress and a customer at a restaurant discussing about apologizing. It shows a formal interaction between a waitress asking for apologize to customer.

Cohesion is formed through grammatical cohesion in the form of personal reference. The word “your” spoken by the waitress refers to the customer's ownership. The word “you” spoken by the customer refers to the waitress as a response to the previous utterance. The word “me” spoken by the customer refers to himself as the subject of the conversation. Cohesion here also uses near-synonymy, but not in lexical form, rather in the similar sounds of ‘wait’ and “weight,” which have a similar meaning to “fat” spoken by the customer.

Incongruity arises from the mismatch between the waitress's statement and the customer's response. “Sorry about your wait” is expected to elicit an apology for the long wait. However, the response that emerges is instead an accusation against the waitress regarding the customer's weight. This mismatch creates a humorous effect.

Data 19: Meme_19

The meme was uploaded by @punhubonline on January 31, 2024. The format is a two-panel dialogue consisting of three conversational turns between two people considered a couple. The caption contained conversational jokes about daily life, while hashtags such as #puns, #relationshipproblems, #jokesfordays, and #wholesomememes indicate that the meme is aimed at audiences who enjoy daily life jokes and puns.

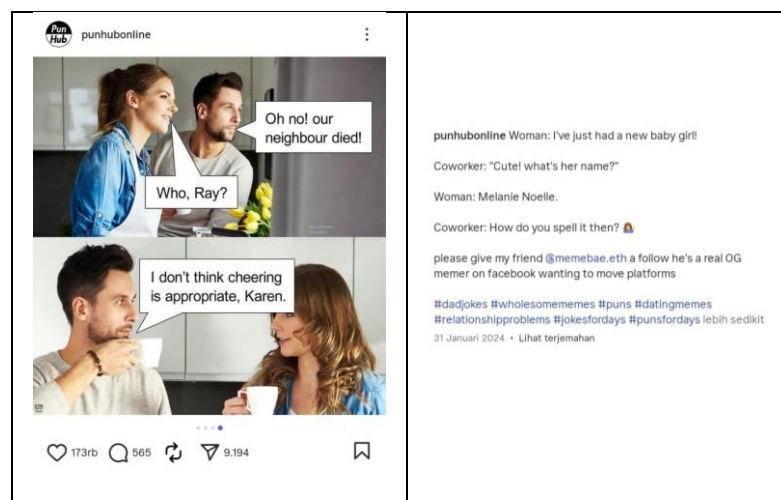


Table 4.19

This meme depicts a man tell the woman, “Oh no! Our neighbour died!” then the woman replies, “Who, Ray?” to which the man replies, “I don’t think cheering is appropriate, Karen.”

In this meme, the conversation happens between two people in a casual daily interaction. They are talking about something about their neighbor.

Cohesion is formed through grammatical cohesion in the form of personal references. The pronoun “our” that Ray says to Karen refers to their ownership of the neighbor. The pronoun “I” that Ray says refers to himself, in response to Karen's question. These references link the turns, making it clear who is talking and what the topic is about.

The incongruity arises from the mismatch between Karen's question and Ray's response. The question “Who, Ray?” is expected to be answered with information about who died. However, due to the similarity in sound to “Hooray,” the response that appears is instead advice not to express appreciation. This mismatch creates a humorous effect.

Data 20: Meme_20

The meme was uploaded by @punhubonline on July 11, 2025. The format is a two-panel dialogue consisting of three conversational turns between a seller and a customer. The caption contained conversational jokes in the same theme, while hashtags such as #retailproblems, #retaillife, and #puns indicate that the meme is aimed at audiences familiar with retail situation and enjoy puns.

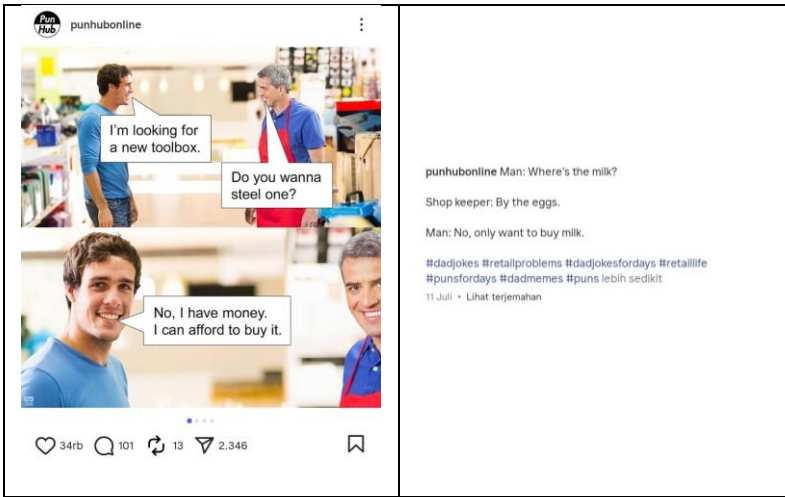


Table 4.20

This meme depicts a customer says, “I’m looking for a new toolbox.” The seller replies, “Do you wanna steal one?” The customer responds, “No, I have money. I can afford to buy it.”

In this meme, the conversation happens in a store between a customer and a seller. The customer asks about a toolbox, and the seller give a response.

Cohesion is formed through grammatical cohesion in the form of personal references, demonstrative references, and nominal substitution. The pronoun “I” used by the customer refers to himself as the person looking for a toolbox. The pronoun “I” is mentioned again by the customer to refer to himself again to explain

that he can pay. The pronoun “you” used by the seller refers to the customer as the interlocutor. Nominal substitution appears in the word ‘one’ in the phrase “steal one” to replace the word toolbox.

Incongruity arises from a mismatch between the seller's question and the customer's response. The question “Do you wanna steel one?” regarding the material of the toolbox is expected to receive a yes/no answer. However, because of the similarity in sound between ‘steel’ and “steal,” it triggers an unexpected response from the customer about his ability to pay. This mismatch creates a humorous effect.

In conclusion, the dialogue memes uploaded by @punhubonline account display humor through brief interactions that are close to everyday life, such as conversations in medical settings, restaurants, retail stores, flights, and other casual situations. The dialogues in the memes generally consist of two to four turns of conversation and are presented in the form of simple conversations, making them easy for readers to understand.

The analysis shows that cohesion plays an important role in maintaining the connection between utterances in the dialogue. Various cohesive devices, such as personal references, demonstrative references, conjunction, nominal ellipsis, nominal substitution, repetition, and near-synonymy are used to connect each turn of conversation. With these devices, the dialogue remains unified even when the direction of the conversation changes.

Humor arises when there is a mismatch in a dialogue that is still structurally cohesive. The response that arises does not match the expectations of the previous conversation, thereby disrupting the flow of the dialogue. This mismatch between the cohesive relationship within utterances and the unexpected response creates the humorous effect in the dialogue meme.

B. Discussion

The analysis shows that humor in dialogue memes on the @punhubonline is constructed through unexpected responses within the connected conversation. This is in line with previous research (Umamah et al., 2023; Shifman, 2014), which emphasizes that humor often emerges when an expected conversational pattern is disrupted. In these memes, responses do not follow the normal direction of the dialogue, creating a contrast between what is expected and what actually occurs.

Incongruity in data arises when responses shift the direction of the conversation through responses that are inappropriate to the question, thus creating humor. This aligns with Berger's (1993) view that humor arises from a discrepancy between expectations and reality. So the humorous effect is produced through a deviation from the normal flow of interaction.

Cohesion is crucial in this meme. Cohesive devices such as personal references (I, you), demonstrative references (this, that), repetition, or nominal substitution, nominal ellipsis, conjunction, and near-synonymy maintain clear connections between expressions. However, this study also finds that some meme dialogues show cohesion that cannot be fully explained using Halliday and Hasan's

(1976) categories. In several cases, the connection between utterances is built through similarity of sounds rather than similarity of words. The repeated sound creates a sense of continuity, but it cannot be categorized as lexical repetition. Similarly, some memes show a near-synonymy effect at the level of sound rather than meaning, which also falls outside the formal classification of cohesive devices.

In conclusion, humor in dialogue memes is created when an unexpected response appears in a cohesive dialogue. Although the response does not match the expected direction of the conversation, the use of cohesive elements keeps the dialogue connected. This structural connection allows the incongruous response to stand out and produce a humorous effect.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

A. Conclusion

Based on the analysis of dialogue memes on @punhubonline, we can draw the following conclusion. Cohesion is important in making the dialogues understandable. Cohesive devices keep the conversation connected. Even when the response is unexpected, these cohesive links make it easy to follow, and at the same time, the unexpected response creates humor.

Finally, incongruity, or the mismatch between what is expected and the response, is the main source of humor in these memes. The conversation remains linked through cohesion, but the response moves in a different direction or context, which makes it humorous. In short, humor in dialogue memes comes from the combination of connected sentences and surprising dialogue response.

B. Suggestion

This research still needs further development. Because this study only focuses on humor techniques from the language category, further researchers are advised to explore Berger's (1993) logic, identity and action techniques. In addition, the data selected only comes from one Instagram account, @punhubonline, which cannot represent other memes from other accounts or platforms.

In this study, the analysis only focused on the aspects of cohesion and humor techniques without considering visual elements that could influence the formation

of humor. Therefore, future research is recommended to expand data sources, combine different theoretical perspectives, or include multimodal analysis to provide a more comprehensive understanding of humor in other memes.

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CURRICULUM VITAE



Indi Ilma Fadila was born on November 24, 2002 in Kediri. She attended elementary school at SDN Tawang 1 and graduated in 2015. She continued her junior high school education at MTsN Kanigoro and completed it in 2018. After that, she attended MAN 4 Jombang and also boarded at Nur Khodijah 3 and graduated in 2021. In the same year, she continued her higher education at the State Islamic University of Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, majoring in English Literature.

APPENDIX

Types of Cohesion in Dialogue Memes on Instagram @punhubonline

| No | Data | Cohesion | | | | | |
|----|---------|-------------|--------------|----------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | | Grammatical | | | | Lexical | |
| | | Reference | Substitution | Ellipsis | Conjunction | Reiteration | Collocation |
| 1 | Meme_01 | ✓ | ✓ | | | | |
| 2 | Meme_02 | ✓ | | | | | |
| 3 | Meme_03 | | | | | ✓ | |
| 4 | Meme_04 | | | | | | |
| 5 | Meme_05 | ✓ | | | ✓ | | |
| 6 | Meme_06 | | | | | ✓ | |
| 7 | Meme_07 | ✓ | | | | | |
| 8 | Meme_08 | ✓ | | ✓ | | ✓ | |
| 9 | Meme_09 | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ | |
| 10 | Meme_10 | ✓ | | | | | |
| 11 | Meme_11 | ✓ | | ✓ | | | |
| 12 | Meme_12 | ✓ | | | | ✓ | |
| 13 | Meme_13 | ✓ | | | | | |
| 14 | Meme_14 | ✓ | | | | ✓ | |
| 15 | Meme_15 | ✓ | | | ✓ | | |
| 16 | Meme_16 | ✓ | | | | ✓ | |
| 17 | Meme_17 | | | | | ✓ | |
| 18 | Meme_18 | ✓ | | | | ✓ | |
| 19 | Meme_19 | ✓ | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | |
|----|---------|---|---|--|--|--|--|
| 20 | Meme_20 | ✓ | ✓ | | | | |
|----|---------|---|---|--|--|--|--|