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## “Online Political Cartoons” Pragmatic Analysis and Their Contributions to Efl Students’ Pc, Avk and Language Hots

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### ABSTRACT

Political Cartoons (PCs), which have long been media hype, are simple drawings used to send specific critics/messages to the readers. They are, however, often overlooked and even seem to be useless in human life, i.e. in ELT. As a result, they serve as ornaments decorating the walls of the print, electronic, or online media’s columns. The messages sent desolately go far away. To linguistically benefit them, the objectives of this mini research were to identify the techniques of analysing PCs and cartoonist’s goals, and explain their contributions to the EFL students’ Pragmatic Competence (PC), Authentic Vocabulary Knowledge (AVK), and language Higher-Order Thinking Skills (HOTS). The qualitative paradigm used as a method of searching, collecting, processing, and analysing the data. The subject (respondents/informants) was the PNP’s English department students while the object (source of the data) was the two PCs which were then distributed to be analysed by the students. The library study and documentation were techniques of data collection while interpretational analysis used to analyse the data. The findings are (1) techniques of analysing PCs are Subject, Caption, Action, Message/theme, Symbols (SCAMS); (2) persuasive techniques used to identify the cartoonist’s goals in persuading the readers to think a certain way about a current issue are Symbolism, Exaggeration, Labelling, Analogy And Irony (SELAI). (3) These techniques contributed to enhance students’ PC, AVK and HOTS. In conclusion, PCs are media which can be used in enhancing EFL students’ PC, AVK and HOTS.

Keywords: Pragmatics, PC, AVK, PCs, EFL students, Language HOTS

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### Introduction

The rationales for raising this topic referred to the authors’ last four months observations indicating that, *firstly*, most PCs serve as ornaments adorning the walls of print, electronic or online media’ columns. PCs are prone to be considered as mere jokes, puns, and entertainment, not as a critique. The newspapers’ readers just see them at a glance but rarely read and even interpret the implied meaning behind the PCs. *Secondly*, in ELT context, the PCs are often discounted and therefore they are hardly ever used as ELT/learning tools for enhancing the EFL students’ PC, AVK, and language HOTS.

Some say it requires scores of things to do when dealing with and using them as tools for ELT. *Thirdly*, after interviewing, most of the EFL students tended to ignore PCs because they were less impact to their language development. *Fourthly*, if the PCs are interpreted, it results in the contra-productive interpretation and antagonism, as they do not fully understand the reasons the cartoonist draw such a caricature. To avoid having misinterpretation and dispute, they choose to not to interact with the PCs. *Lastly*, they realise that they have not yet had better experience and or techniques to analyse the PCs, political cartoonists’ points of view

(goals), and not yet known the benefits of interacting with the PCs. Of the above five rationales, the *identifications* of this study were what the techniques were used in analysing the PCs; understanding cartoonist's goals and how they affected the EFL students' PC, AVK and language HOTS. The *objectives* of the study were to *identify* the techniques of analysing PCs, understanding the cartoonist's goals and *explain* the impacts of PCs to the EFL students' PC, AVK and HOTS.

### Literature Reviews

Historically, PCs has emerged since 16<sup>th</sup> century ago in Italy and are now still used as a means of political communication to criticise politicians' policy, performance, conduct, etc (Walker, 2002). Of the beginning to the present day, the existence of PCs in mass media are to amuse and have messages and provide social commentary on the world around them. In conjunction to the ELT, the PCs can be actually used as tools for enhancing the students' PC, AVK and language HOTS.

As excerpted, Martinez (2011) elucidates, "Political Cartoons are drawings that portray government programs, policies, personalities, and global concerns in humorous way. PCs allow the artist to express their thoughts and opinions on a certain issue. They are creative outlooks to which people can represent a particular issue, through their point of view. PCs are used to show the readers what the artist is thinking; to get the reading thinking and question the meaning behind the cartoon. Besides, PCs are a major part in newspapers because they allow people to understand certain issues without confusion. Most political cartoons are one-side and are used to persuade the readers that their view on the subject is correct. Political Cartoons use symbolism and exaggeration to represent what they are trying to convince the audience.

Political Cartoons are a creative and fun aspect to journalism."

By definition, cartoon is a pictorial parody or imitation, which, by the devices of caricature, analogy, and ludicrous juxtaposition, sharpens the public view of contemporary or topical issues, events, political/social trends. Cartoons come in various forms of the comic strip, animated cartoons for the electronic media, i. e. Tom & Jerry (Mohammed, 2014).

In the ELT/learning context, cartoons have long been discussed and used as learning media. Some of them used cartoons as a learning strategy serving as entertainment and students' learning motivation stimulus (Clark, 2000). Cartoons used as stimuli to develop students' AVK and develop language HOTS and encourage discussion skills (Doring, 2002). Furthermore, Rule & Auge (2005) explains that cartoons can achieve better test scores, create learning environments, enhance motivation, memory, and connect new materials to prior knowledge. In addition, cartoons can improve students' PC and AVK.

In associated with the title above, studies indicate that the academic benefits of using PCs as a tool for teaching/learning a foreign language are, firstly, PCs can facilitate the EFL students to enhance their pragmatic competence. They can "interpret" linguistic meaning in contexts. If a cartoonist draws a caricature with a word of "*son of a bitch*," the word can be interpreted as "*a zoological thing*" if it refers to the abstract or dictionary meaning; as "*an undesirable man*," if it judged from the perspective of contextual or discourse meaning, and it is "*to insult a person*" if it is rated from the cartoonist's intended meaning (the illocutionary force or speaker's intention) (Li, 2008)." Besides, Li adds that the PC is important as it aids the EFL students to solve structural ambiguity of a word, sentence, or cartoons. Pragmatics is associated the sentence with the "who, when,

where and what” is meant for the speaker’ issue and suitable for analysing the messages sent by the cartoonists. Contextual meaning and force are more important than the word itself. Essentially, PC enables the readers to uncover the speaker’s intended meaning, i.e. cartoonist’s point of view.

Secondly, PCs is, according to Anderson & Krathwohl (2001), able to develop students’ learning domains from lower (remembering, understanding, applying) to higher order thinking skills (analysing, evaluating, and creating); and from concrete (factual & conceptual) to abstract knowledge (procedural & meta-cognitive (think about thinking): knowledge of one’s own cognition and about oneself in relation to various subject matters). These HOTS, definitely, bridge the students to come to a particular clarity of communication to contextually interpret, reduce ambiguity and confusion, and improve their attitudes about thinking things. Thirdly, PCs is to bring the students closer to AVK. Every political cartoon has its unique sketch and authentic vocabulary to criticise and send certain messages to the reads for example, “*US, Singapore, IDR currencies, orange vest and rat*, etc are vocabularies which are identical with *corrupter*.” AVK enables students to identify and possess authentic vocabularies.

Besides, AVK, which has the same standards definition of ESP, meets specific needs of the learners and make use of specific methodology and activities in terms of grammar, lexis, register, study skills, discourse, and genre. Register analysis, as one of AVK/ESP development stages, is described as a set of lexical features that contribute to emphasise the difference among language specialties (Dudley Evans, 1998). As authentic materials, PCs demonstrate situations that learners are likely to encounter through their day-to-day socio-cultural interaction, produced for purposes other than

to teach language. Authentic materials are an effective way to language acquisition. It is also useful to vocabulary acquisition (Zoghi, 2014). According to Lewis (1993); (Zoghi, 2014) “vocabulary is often described as the cornerstone of language learning.” Without authentic vocabulary, learners will be unable to form the simplest of utterances contextually, and therefore unable to communicate at even the most basic level. Knight (1994); (Zoghi, 2014) argued, “Vocabulary acquisition is often prioritised in the learning process by students and teachers. Nowadays many teachers use authentic materials such as magazine, newspapers and advertisements, written notes and messages for vocabulary acquisition (Zoghi, 2014).

To activate and develop the students’ PC, AVK and HOTS, Martinez (2011) offers a simple technique of analysing cartoons known as the SCAMS (Subject, Caption, Actions, Messages/theme, and Symbols). *Subject* is what the topic of the cartoon. As defined, *Caption* is what the title of the cartoon. *Activity/Action* is what is happening in the cartoon? Look for movement, actions, and dialogue. These provide clues to the message and what the symbols represent. *Message* is to ask ourselves the questions to decipher or interpret the meaning, “What is the author’s point of view? What is the theme of the cartoon? What is the purpose for making this cartoon?” Symbols are what the images or signs represent. Cartoonists will typically use symbols to represent something or someone else. After analyzing the cartoon with for all of the SCAMS, you should be able to figure out why the author chose that caption and what it means.

Afterwards, the Educator Guides: North Caroline Digital History proposes five persuasive techniques used in identifying and understanding the cartoonists’ goal in persuading the readers to think of a certain

way about a current issue. The five persuasive techniques are, first, is *symbolism*. This is simple objects used to stand for larger idea. The second is *exaggeration*. The cartoonist exaggerates physical attributes of people or things in order to make a point. Third is *labelling*. It labels objects or people to make it clear exactly what they stand for. The fourth is *analogy* comparing between two unlike things. This means to help readers see it in different light. The last is *irony*. Irony is the difference between the ways things are and the way things should be, or the way things are expected to be. Cartoonists often use irony to express their opinion on an issue (<http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/nchist-eg/6460>).

After identifying the five persuasive techniques, the reader is then guided to the following questions are “To what political event or idea is the cartoon referring? What key person(s) are targeted in the cartoon? How has the artist depicted these people? Are they distorted in any way? Does the artist’s portrayal of characters cast them in a negative or positive light? Identify and explain any symbols incorporated in the cartoon; Identify and explain captions, labels, titles and/or speech bubbles. How do these contribute to the cartoon’s message? What is the message of the cartoon? How is the artist trying to persuade the reader? What impact and/or reaction is the artist attempting to trigger?” ([www.clrep.org/uploads/1/7/7/6/.../political\\_cartoons.pdf](http://www.clrep.org/uploads/1/7/7/6/.../political_cartoons.pdf)). These questions lead the analysers or readers to identify the main idea sent/intended by the cartoonist.

## Methodology

The use of qualitative method in this study was to search for answers towards the two questions formulated previously. The subject of this study was 30 PNP’s English

department students. The object was two online PCs. The PCs were then distributed to be analysed by the students. The purposive sampling was judgementally made use of as its main goal was to focus on particular characteristics of the students (have learned four language skills, semantics, pragmatics and interested in reading cartoons). The two selected PCs, i.e. “*sudah move on antara SBY dan Megawati*” (already move on between SBY and Megawati) and “*Dukun sebagai Konsultan Politik Pilkada: Peggadaan Suara* (Shaman as General Election’s Political Consultant: Ballots’ Doubling)” are still becoming trending topics today ahead of the general elections of the regents, mayors, governors, the House of Representatives and the President by 2018 and 2019 (Borg, Gall & Gall, 2010).

Technically, the library and online studies and documentation used to collect the secondary data as well as to analyse books, E-books, online journals, articles, proceedings relating to the PC, AVK, HOTS and the Five Persuasive Techniques used in analysing PCs. Documentation was to manuscript or make detailed records of the literature reviews and two online PCs (Moleong, 1993). The source of the data was the two political cartoons accessed in the Internet (see datum 1,2 below). Due to this was a case study, the *interpretational analysis* used to explain the two selected PCs and their contributions to the students’ PC, AVK and HOTS. The *procedures* were to record the data got from observation, break them into segments (i.e. words or sentences, etc), define specific categories to reflect the concepts that appear in the PCs, and code each segment for all categories that apply to that segment (Borg, Gall & Gall, 2010).



**Two Political Cartoons' Secondary Data**  
**Datum 1:** "Sudah Move on"  
**Datum 2:** Dukun sebagai Konsultan Pemilu

### Result and Discussion

Referring to the library and online studies and documentation, the result findings indicated that the (1) techniques of analysing the two PCs are Subject, Caption, Action, Message or theme, and Symbols (SCAMS). Then, (2) Symbolism, Exaggeration, Labelling, Analogy, and Irony (SELAI) are persuasive techniques which can be used by the readers to identify the cartoonist's goals (points of view). These techniques aim at persuading the readers to think a certain way about a current issue portrayed by the PCs' artists (Martinez, 2011).

After identifying the two techniques and explaining the ways to analyse the PCs using the SCAMS and SELAI, then the students were asked to investigate, examine, and explore the PCs and its implied meaning. They analysed the cartoons individually or done separately and the results were very satisfactory. They were accurately able to identify SCAMS and SELAI of the PCs. As an example (see datum 2), the *subject* of the political cartoon was the ballots' doubling through shaman's services, the *caption* was the shaman's role in Indonesian general election. The PCs artist's rationale for choosing such a caption referred to a fact that in an odd moment, a politician tended to take a short path to double the ballots through the supernatural power of the shaman. This

practice has become a habit in the context of politics in Indonesia.

The students were also able to show the action in the PCs (see datum 2). The *action* was a candidate's demand to increase the number of ballots to the shaman they trust. The symbols were the box ballot brought by one of the candidates and Dimas Kanjeng. Dimas Kanjeng represented the symbols of the shaman who had supernatural powers to double everything including ballots, money, gold, pearls, etc (fact: Dimas Kanjeng Taat Pribadi is notorious figure who can double billions of IDR. He is now sentenced to 18 years in prison for fraud and money doubling). The *messages* sent by the artist was in the general election, the political contestants were still rife with using the shamans' services of reaping the ballots. The theme was the phenomenon of "shamanism" in the political stage (general elections) in Indonesia. The aim of drawing such a caricature was to inform the readers that the practice of "shamanism" in the general election is a tradition that cannot be denied in the political constellation in Indonesia. The *symbols* were Dimas Kanjeng Taat Pribadi associated as a tarnished character who was able to double the ballots while ballot box was a politician's vehicle for obtaining or acquisition of ballots.

Then, the PCs artist's points of view or goals of drawing such a caricature were Dimas Kanjeng (shamans) and the ballot box. These two symbols represented the artist's idea of shaman's role in the general election. The exaggeration was the Dimas' supernatural power to double billions of money was then associated to be able to double ballots in the ballot's boxes. The cartoonists labelled Dimas Kanjeng to explain or send their intended message or meaning. The candidates (politicians) who were willing to win the political race should be able to present pro

people's programs of eradicating poverty, improving quality of education, welfare and prosperity, etc. Ironically, they believed in shaman's supernatural power to win the race. This is a political shamanism in Indonesia. Instead of designing and campaigning pro-people's programs, the politicians are busy with thinking of his/her shaman's supernatural power to politically win the race. This is no wonder anymore.

After going through these techniques, the students were required to identify the "*main ideas* of the PCs." The students identified that the main ideas of the political cartoons (see datum 2) were to refer to the 2018-2019 general elections; the key person(s) were targeted in the cartoon were candidates for (being) a President, members of the House of Representatives, regents or mayors; the people were not distorted in any way; the artist casted characters in a negative light; the symbols incorporated in the cartoon were Dimas Kanjeng as shaman, politicians who needed shaman's power to double the ballots; captions, labels, titles and/or speech bubbles was the shaman's role in doubling the ballots; the speech bubbles and cartoon contribute to ease the readers understand the message; the message sent was the practice of shamanism is much rife in general elections; the artist tried to persuade the reader through drawing a caricature of Dimas Kanjeng, politicians, ballot box carried by hand and exaggerated their appearances or behaviours in a humorous or critical way and the impact the cartoonist try to trigger was the emergence of public understanding, consciousness and awareness that the Indonesian political stage is not only filled with a realistic number or calculation but the roles of the shamans' supernatural power overseeing the political process to the real political stage.

The analyses of the PCs using SCAMS, SELAI and identification of their main idea

impacted on, firstly, the students' pragmatic competence. They are able to understand, make out, and interpret the linguistic meaning in context (abstract/dictionary, contextual and the illocutionary force meaning or cartoonist's intention). They also have abilities to master the contextual knowledge (physical, epistemic, linguistic, and social contexts) allowing them to comprehend that the speaker' intended meaning is distinct from literal meaning. Briefly, PC is the ability to use and or interpret the language appropriately in a social context and this is the key to effective communication in a second language (Taguchi, 2009). As extracted, Shokouhi & Rezaei (2015) state that, "Pragmatics focuses on the use of language in particular situations; it explains the elements that influence on both literal and non-literal meaning in peoples' communication. It also concerns both the relationship between context of use and sentence meaning, and the relationships among sentence meaning, context of use, and speaker's intended meaning. Besides, pragmalinguistics includes strategies like directness and indirectness, routines, and a large range of linguistic forms which can identify or soften communicative acts. Pragmalinguistic knowledge needs mapping of form, meaning, force, and context. The benefit of studying language through pragmatics is that the people can express the other's meaning and the important disadvantage is that analyzing the peoples' concepts is hard objectively. This pragmatics is interesting because it's about how people make sense of each other linguistically, but it can be a disappointed area of study because it needs us to make sense of people and what they have in mind."

Secondly, PCs directly affect the students AVK's development. PCs are one of the some ways of developing students' authentic vocabulary and understanding written texts.

The cartoons assist the students to acquire new and authentic words and phrases used in specific content and context, i.e. in political context. The words and phrases (captions or bubble speech) found in the PCs are to help students learn the meaning of new words and concepts in various contexts and across all academic content areas. Therefore, teaching PCs means providing explicit instruction on important and authentic words from text and context and teaching students strategies to facilitate them learn word meanings independently and contextually. PCs are critical for both oral and written vocabulary development to increase the students' full knowledge and understanding of more complex and various grade levels of written and spoken texts (Kamil et al., 2008; Loftus & Coyne, 2013; Weiser, 2013).

Lastly, PCs sharpen and increase the students' cognitive process from lower order thinking skills (remember, understand and apply) to higher order thinking skills (analyse, evaluate and create) (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). What happens in the students' brain or cognitive process when they are analysing the PCs. They start activating their brain to identify what the PCs are about; interpret, compare and explain them; analysing the meaning; evaluating/critiquing why they happen and finally creating or producing the conclusion that politicians (see datum 2) are still thinking of "heresy" in winning the race although such a belief or action that most people think is wrong because it disagrees with the beliefs that are generally accepted.

## Conclusion

The use of political cartoons as ELT's media in the EFL classroom has multiple benefits. Three of them are enhancing students' pragmatic competence, enriching and developing students' authentic vocabulary

knowledge and sharpening the students' higher order thinking skills. In addition, PCs enable students to connect between the learning atmosphere in the classroom and real world (Nunan, 1999). As cited, the other advantages of utilising PCs in the EFL classroom are, according to Haines (2006), to develop students' "*Multiple Intelligences*." Haines (2007) state that, "comics (graphic novels) and cartoons can enrich, enhance, develop, sharpen students' *Verbal/Linguistic intelligence*. Students learn best through words and language, and in producing written work. Most comics or cartoons require the use of language to tell the story. In creating a work, students can focus on what the characters say and think. There is no limit to what words can do in a comic. The PCs enrich students' *Visual/Spatial intelligence*. Students learn best through visual elements, and in producing artistic and design work. Comics or cartoons must include pictures; they can even explain comics or cartoons without words. Placing characters in sets and backgrounds encourages spatial learning.

The comics or PCs improve students' *Logical or Mathematical intelligence*. Students learn best when working with numbers or strategy. Comics or cartoons have a long history of formalism, which has always involved the mathematical arrangement of panels. Devising a plot involves the use of logic and strategy. The PCs enhance students' *Bodily or Kinesthetic intelligence*. Students learn best by incorporating movement. In creating a comic/cartoons book, many creators either study live models, or use their own bodies to create facial expressions and physical positions in order to draw characters. Students can thus figure out what their characters are doing by getting into positions themselves, in order to draw them. Students who are reluctant to draw can use photography and position models as the characters.

PCs or comics also enhance students' *Interpersonal intelligence*. Students can learn best when working in a group, and in producing work-involving emotions. Collaborating activities can lead to effective brainstorming in creating a comic. Interpersonal learners will create stronger characters by examining the characters' social relationships. They then increase *students' Intrapersonal intelligence*. Students may learn best when self-reflecting, and in applying their own emotions to the situation. They will examine the character's moods and motivations closely in creating their comics/cartoons. *Naturalistic students* learn best when relating things to their own environment. They will incorporate details about the character's physical environment and how it relates to the action of the story. They can also use photography to generate backgrounds as they move their characters from one location to another. *Musical or Rhythmic students* learn best when using music or rhythmical patterns. Comics or cartoons have rhythm through the repetition of panels or elements of panels. Additionally, students can incorporate or integrate music into their comics or cartoons story."

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