

Decomposition of Political Reality through Arthur Asa Berger's Humor Strategy: A Pragmatic Study in Indonesian Stand-up Comedian

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Abstract

Political discourse in Indonesia has increasingly moved beyond formal institutional arenas into popular cultural spaces, including stand-up comedy, where issues of power, corruption, leadership, and political legitimacy are transformed into humorous narratives. However, previous pragmatic studies of humor have largely focused on conversational maxims, politeness, or general humorous effects, with limited attention to how political reality is decomposed through systematic humor strategies in Indonesian stand-up comedy. This study examines how Arthur Asa Berger's humor strategies operate as pragmatic mechanisms for constructing political criticism. Using a qualitative descriptive design with a pragmatic approach, this study analyzed purposively selected YouTube performances by Ridwan Remin, Pandji Pragiwaksono, and Akbar. Data were collected through digital observation, listening, note-taking, and transcription of discourse fragments containing political criticism. The data were analyzed using pragmatic decomposition based on Berger's four humor categories: language, logic, identity, and action. The findings show that identity-based humor reduces political authority into caricatures and trivial labels; language-based humor uses puns and lexical ambiguity to satirize corruption and party pragmatism; logic-based humor employs analogy, contrast, and reversal to simplify systemic political failures; and action-based humor uses gesture, imitation, and visual parody to ridicule political behavior. These findings indicate that Indonesian stand-up comedy functions not only as entertainment but also as a sociopragmatic medium of social control. This study contributes to humor and pragmatic studies by demonstrating how Berger's typology explains the transformation of complex political realities into satirical, critical, and publicly accessible discourse.

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Introduction

Political discourse in Indonesia is currently experiencing a dynamic expansion, shifting from the formal state sphere to the popular stage through the phenomenon of stand-up comedy (Nisa et al., 2025). Stand-up comedy is not merely entertainment, but has transformed into a new form of rhetoric as rigid and sacred issues of power are deconstructed into more fluid discourses and situations. In today's democracy, comedians (stand-up comedians) act as social observers, capable of wrapping public anxieties about the policies and behavior of political actors into humorous narratives. This phenomenon creates a unique discursive space that demands in-depth analysis of

language used strategically to communicate criticism without losing its aesthetic value (Ardania et al., 2026).

Arthur Asa Berger's humor strategy, particularly pragmatic decomposition, plays a significant role in political discourse, as evidenced by various studies. Humor, including irony, sarcasm, and satire, is frequently employed in political contexts to advance arguments and critique opponents without direct confrontation, as seen in French presidential debates where candidates use humor to obscure true intentions and ridicule adversaries (Birkelund, 2023). This aligns with Berger's theories, which are applied to analyze humor in media, such as Ronny Chieng's stand-up, where humor critiques societal norms and fosters empathy through exaggeration and irony (Nurhantoro et al., 2025). In political satire on television, humor serves a dual role: simplifying complex issues for public engagement while potentially fostering cynicism towards political institutions (Abbas, 2025). The pragmatic analysis of humor, as demonstrated in the British sitcom "Mind Your Language," shows how breaking conversational norms creates humor, highlighting cultural tensions and stereotypes (Faqi & Faqe, 2025). Similarly, humor in political discourse, such as in Brazilian politics, is used strategically by different political factions to either deceive or poetically critique opponents (Barros, 2021). The pragmatic dimensions of humor are further explored in the context of war rhetoric, where leaders like Churchill and Zelensky use humor to boost morale and demoralize enemies (Прядун & Ніконова, 2024). Additionally, humor's role in cognitive complexity is examined through script opposition, where humor arises from the clash of incompatible scripts, requiring audiences to engage with multiple meanings and cultural contexts (Abbas, 2025). Overall, humor in political discourse is a multifaceted tool that serves to entertain, critique, and influence public perception, demonstrating its power as a rhetorical strategy across various cultural and political landscapes.

Theoretically, this process of decomposition of political reality can be sharply analyzed through the perspective of humor strategies developed by Arthur Asa Berger. Berger (1993) offers a highly systematic typology through four main categories: language techniques, logic, identity, and action. In a pragmatic context, these techniques are not simply tools for provoking laughter, but rather manifestations of speech acts aimed at triggering certain implicatures. For example, the use of irony or satire is a pragmatic effort to convey sensitive political intentions by disguising them behind humor, thereby minimizing the potential for social conflict or legal obstacles without diminishing the essence of the critique.

Scientific discussions on political humor within the realm of pragmatics have actually shown rapid development. Several relevant previous studies have tended to focus on analyzing violations of the cooperative principle proposed by Grice (1975) or the politeness principle proposed by Leech (2014). These studies have generally succeeded in mapping the discontinuities in information that create humorous effects. Vásquez (2021) explores multimodal humor in internet memes, while Landert (2021) examines the spontaneity of humor in improvisational theater. In the context of Indonesian culture, Khairanis et al. (2020) examine the creation of humor from a phonological perspective (sound play) in lecture discourse. Meanwhile, Pamungkas et al. (2024) highlight the use of humor in political communication on social media as an instrument for building a positive leader image.

This study aims to unravel the mechanisms of political reality decomposition in Indonesian stand-up comedy, focusing on the use of humor strategies as a critical instrument. In line with Yang's

(2026) research objective, which explores how stand-up comedians manage audience reception while conveying sensitive ironic messages, this study examines the interaction between the subject and the public within the discursive space. Furthermore, this study aims to map the discursive function of humor within the realm of power, as posed by Marques (2024) regarding the use of humor in formal politics and the media.

The research gap indicates that although humor studies have developed, the focus on macropolitical decomposition through Berger's strategies remains limited. Most previous studies have focused on literacy strategies in short fiction (Kizi et al., 2026) or the use of humor as a tool for interaction in multicultural online communities (Jegade, 2025). There is also a gap in understanding how humor serves as a tool for transparency amid political rivalry, in contrast to the focus on managing distrust among business rivals (Nicolaisen & Hansen, 2023). While global research has explored the deconstruction of feminine stereotypes (Rossi, 2024) and immigration satire (Yi & Al-Saggaf, 2025), analysis of the decomposition of local power structures through anglicized discourse strategies (González-Cruz, 2025) still requires further exploration in the Indonesian context. The research gap in Indonesian pragmatics literature shows that the technical mechanisms of constructing critique through Asa Berger's humor strategy have not been thoroughly studied. This study examines the novelty of applying Berger's typology to current national political issues. The analysis aims to dissect humor strategies, which operate as a decomposition of the complexity of power into simple logic that is both satirical and educational for the public.

The urgency of this research is particularly strong given the position of stand-up comedy as a tool of social control in the digital age. This research aims not only to describe the types of humor strategies used but also to contribute to the development of sociopragmatics in understanding the interaction between language, humor, and power. More specifically, this research aims to identify techniques such as absurdity, analogy, and even identity caricatures employed by stand-up comedians to expose anomalies in politics. Through this study, it can be seen that behind every burst of laughter from the audience, there are cognitive and pragmatic processes that connect the audience's lived experiences with the macro-political realities in the country.

Method

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design with a pragmatic approach (Rustono, 1999). Operationally, the analysis was conducted using pragmatic decomposition techniques to dissect the humor strategies used. This approach considers the dynamics of the dialogic ecology between content producers and audiences (Fantinelli, 2026) and applies pragmatic-multimodal analysis to examine the relationship between verbal and visual elements in talk show programs (Kasni & Budiarta, 2025). The operational basis for analyzing logical incongruence in discourse refers to the principle of incongruence, which has been discussed since the era of classical comedy (Conti, 2025), as well as the identification of pragmatic speech acts found in family discourse in digital comedy sketches performed by stand-up comedians (Osisanwo et al., 2024).

The material object of this study is the political discourse delivered by stand-up comedians, while the formal object focuses on humor creation strategies based on Arthur Asa Berger's typology. The research data sources were collected purposively from stand-up comedy performances by Ridwan Remin, Pandji Pragiwaksono, and Akbar on YouTube. These three sources were selected based on the comedians' vocalicity regarding issues of power and their representation of political

discourse relevant to the current national situation. The data analyzed consisted of discourse fragments suspected of critiquing public policies, state institutions, and the behavior of political actors.

The data collection process was conducted using a listening and note-taking technique (Mahsun, 2012). The procedure began with digital observation and transcription of verbal utterances into scripted text. In this case, the researcher acted as the primary instrument (human instrument) to classify the data into Berger's four categories of humor: language technique, logic, identity, and action (Berger, 1997). The final stage of analysis involved data reduction to select political content, which was then interpreted in depth to conclude how the complexities of power were simplified into a logical, humorous and critical narrative.

Table 1. Categories of Techniques in Humor

Categories and Techniques in Humor			
Language	Logic	Identity	Action
Allusion	Impossibility	Before After	Chase
Big talk	Accident	laughing stock	Slapstick
Definition	Analogy	Caricature	Speed
Excessive	Catalog	Strangeness	
Antics	As it happens	Embarrassed	
Insult	Comparison	Exposure	
Infantilism	Disappointment	Fantastic	
Irony	Ignorance	Imitation	
Misunderstanding	Error	Imitation	
More than literal	Repetition	Imitation	
Word Games	Setback	Parody	
The correct answer	Stiffness	Scale	
mockery	Theme/Variation	Stereotype	
Sarcasm	Unmasking		
Satire			

Data analysis was conducted in a fluid manner using pragmatic decomposition techniques. The stages included data reduction to select political content, a breakdown of cognitive-linguistic mechanisms, and in-depth interpretation to summarize complex political realities, simplifying them into a logical, humorous and critical narrative.

Results and Discussion

Results

Based on an analysis of the political discourse of Indonesian stand-up comedians, Arthur Asa Berger's humorous strategy is found to be the primary instrument for unraveling the complexities of power issues. The data demonstrates that stand-up comedians manipulate categories of language, logic, identity, and action to create laughter while simultaneously launching sharp criticism. The results of this study are presented through four sub-chapters that pragmatically examine this decomposition mechanism.

Humor Involving Identity

This category includes techniques related to character, stereotypes, and caricatures of individual or political group identities.

Data 1 CONTEXT: COMPARISON WITH PAST PRESIDENTS

I want Prabowo to win, because we've been led by all kinds of people. There were really nationalists like Soekarno, there were really smart people like Habibie, there were really religious people like Gus Dur, there were really pretentious people like him. The only ones who haven't are like Prabowo: not really nationalist, not really smart, not really religious, not really pretentious either. He's not pretentious, right? He's not pretentious, he's just cute. [04:12]

Discourse fragment (1) contains pragmatic decomposition through caricature and comparison strategies. Ridwan Remin as a stand-up comedian breaks down the ideal attributes of a national leader (smart, nationalist, religious) using the technique of parallel negation (the word "no") repeatedly. The decomposition part lies in the systematic erosion of the subject's traditional qualifications, leaving a cognitive void for the audience. The peak of the image decomposition occurs in the phrase "pretending to be cute," the stand-up comedian reduces the sacred masculine-military identity to simple, trivial logic. Pragmatically, Ridwan utilizes unconventional implicatures to pull the figure of power from the "serious" realm to the "absurd" realm. This process functions as a political desacralization, language is used to expose the contradiction between the branding of political identity and the expectations of the dignity of national leadership.

Data 2 CONTEXT: THERE ARE NO WOMEN IN THE PRESIDENTIAL AND VICE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES

"I'm not voting because of the presidential and vice-presidential candidates, none of the choices are women. Why would I vote for them? Where are all the men? There are young men, but they're following their fathers." [02:02]

The pragmatic decomposition technique, focusing on identity categories through allusion and redefinition, is applied to discourse fragment (2). Ridwan Remin begins his narrative by constructing an argument based on gender equality, but soon shifts focus to the structure of political kinship. The part of his decomposition that provokes laughter lies in the clause: "There are young people, but they follow their father." In this sentence, a sharp decomposition of identity occurs, the stand-up comedian analyzes the capacity of a young leader and reduces it to an extreme extent to a mere extension or shadow of his parents' power. Pragmatically, Ridwan exploits the audience's mutual knowledge regarding the issue of dynastic politics to trigger satirical implications. Humor arises from the conflict between the label "young people" which is usually associated with independence and renewal, which is then deconstructed into a figure who is "not independent" or merely a follower. This process functions as an instrument of desacralization that collapses the narrative of leadership regeneration into a comedy about family privilege.

Data 3 CONTEXT: CRITICISM OF MONGOL LEGISLATIVE CANDIDATES IS STRESSED

"If you don't like being called a party that has no substance, then your next action is to try to prove that your party has substance. Right? But this year they just announced that Mongol Stress will be a legislative candidate from their party. His name has 'Stress'. The legislative candidate first runs, fails, then gets stressed. He's already stressed before he even starts." [01:52]

The analysis of discourse fragment (3) applies the pragmatic decomposition technique through logical and linguistic categories, utilizing the strategies of irony and incongruity. Pandji Pragiwaksono begins the narrative by constructing a logical premise regarding the substantiation of a political party. The part of his decomposition that triggers laughter lies in the series of sentences, "The name has 'stress' in it. The legislative candidate first gets elected, fails, then becomes stressed. He's already stressed before he even starts." In this utterance, a decomposition occurs regarding the dignity and qualifications of a legislative candidate. Pandji analyzes the political process, which should be formal and serious, then contrasts it with the denotative meaning of the subject's stage name. Pragmatically, the stand-up comedian uses the manipulation of the lexical meaning of the word "stress" to deconstruct the subject's mental readiness and credibility before the competition begins.

Humor arises from the reversal of chronological logic; stress is usually the result of political failure, but is decomposed into an innate identity. This process effectively reduces the party's professional image to a comedic narrative that questions the seriousness of their political recruitment strategy.

Humor Involving Language

This category focuses on linguistic manipulation, word play, and creative ways of constructing sentences to create laughter.

Data 4 CONTEXT: ROWING AND KARATE MATERIALS

"Indonesian rowing is number one! Why? Only in Indonesia can we row two or three islands at once. Karate also collects the most gold, why? Other countries usually use Dan 1, Dan 2, Dan 3... Indonesia: 'Dan teman-teman'." [01:14]

Pragmatic decomposition through language categories utilizing wordplay strategies is applied in discourse fragment (4). Akbar begins the narrative by giving appreciation to karate sport achievements, but immediately shifts focus to contrasting sociopolitical phenomena. The part of his decomposition to trigger laughter is located in the clause, "Indonesia: 'And friends'." In discourse fragment (4) there is a decomposition of technical terms in martial arts. Akbar analyzes the meaning of the homonym "Dan" which technically refers to karate belt levels, then deconstructs it into an Indonesian conjunction that refers to group involvement. Pragmatically, the stand-up comedian manipulates to satirize the reality of systematic collective or congregational corruption. Humor arises from the linguistic surprise of the use of terms that symbolize honor (belt) being decomposed into symbols of collusion.

Data 5 CONTEXT: THERE ARE STILL MANY CORRUPTORS IN INDONESIA

"Why are there still so many corruptors in Indonesia? Why? The law in Indonesia is weak. It's different from the laws of other countries. In Arabia, sandal thieves have their hands cut off. In Indonesia, thieves of state funds have their prison sentences reduced." [02:04]

This discourse fragment (6) uses pragmatic decomposition techniques through logical categories with parallelism and contrast strategies. Akbar contrasts two legal systems to expose law enforcement in Indonesia. The part of his decomposition that triggers laughter lies in the series of sentences, "In Arabia, sandal thieves have their hands cut off. In Indonesia, thieves of state funds have their prison terms cut off." This parallel sentence structure functions as a decomposition instrument for the diction "cut". The stand-up comedian analyzes the concept of punishment from a painful physical form (amputation) to a beneficial one (remission). Pragmatically, this decomposition highlights an ironic disparity of meaning, the authority of the law is explained to the point of showing injustice. Humor arises from the reversal of the logic of justice, corruptors who should be punished severely are instead "cut" off.

Data 6 CONTEXT: PARTY TRANSFORMATION (PAN)

"Back when PAN first existed, Indonesia thought this was a party that would change the political map because it was filled with intellectuals. There was cultural figure Goenawan Mohamad, there was Amien Rais. Now? It's filled with artists, all my friends. Denny Cagur, Eko Patrio... that's why it's now called the National Artists Party." [09:27]

The analysis of discourse fragment (6) applies the pragmatic decomposition technique through identity categories with a redefinition strategy. Pandji Pragiwaksono flashes back to the intellectual history of a party to show the degradation of values. The sentence "Now? It's full of artists... that's why it's now called the National Artist Party." serves as a decomposition. In this discourse fragment, Pandji breaks down the party's official acronym and provides a new definition based on the reality of current political pragmatism. Pragmatically, the stand-up comedian uses a pun

on the acronym to deconstruct the party's image from being based on intellectuals to being based on popularity. Humor arises from the stand-up comedian's courage in reducing the grand ideology of an institution to merely a "vehicle for certain professions." This process effectively exposes the shift in the party's orientation from intellectualism to the pursuit of votes through public figures.

Humor that Involves Logic

This category arises from the mismatch between logic and reality, often using analogies or reversals of situations.

Data 7 CONTEXT: REASONS FOR CHOOSING TO ABSTINENT & THE CONCEPT OF THE KINGDOM

"I abstained from voting because I actually don't like the concept of democracy. Democracy is a foreign culture, our culture is a kingdom. I prefer the concept of a kingdom, because our social status is clearly different, like nobles, slaves. Those who are smart manage the government, those who manage agriculture. Nowadays, democracy doesn't have a clear social status, how can a carpenter become president?" [01:01]

The application of pragmatic decomposition through logical categories with a social hierarchy comparison strategy is used in discourse fragment (7). Ridwan Remin deconstructs the democratic system by confronting nostalgia for the feudal system. The sentence "Nowadays, democracy has unclear social status, so how can a carpenter become president?" contains a decomposition of vertical mobility in the modern political system. Remin analyzes the sacred presidential office and sharply compares it with the working class profession (carpenter). Pragmatically, the stand-up comedian exploits the incongruity (mismatch) between traditional social status and the highest position of power. Humor emerges when the logic of the royal hierarchy is used to expose the democratic system which is considered "illogical" from a feudal perspective, while simultaneously satirizing the personal backgrounds of certain political actors.

Data 8 CONTEXT: NEW PARTIES ARE NOT THE SOLUTION

"After PSI, we should stop thinking that the solution to Indonesian politics is a new party. Why? Because new parties will eventually become old parties. The solution to politics isn't to keep buying new shoes every time they get dirty. If your shoes are dirty and smelly, the solution is to wash them, not buy new ones. Because if you keep buying new ones, your boarding house will eventually smell bad." [08:21]

The analysis of discourse fragment (8) uses pragmatic decomposition techniques through logical categories with a domestic analogy strategy. Pandji Pragiwaksono breaks down the complexity of the systemic failure of political parties into the realm of everyday objects to show the wastefulness of the solutions offered. The decomposition that the stand-up comedian uses to trigger laughter lies in the series of sentences, "If your shoes are dirty and smelly, the solution is to wash them, not buy new ones. Because if you keep buying new ones, over time your boarding house will smell like your thumbs." This analogical structure functions as a decomposition instrument for the concept of a "new party." Pandji reduces political institutions to mere "shoes" and the problem of party morality to "the smell of your thumbs." Pragmatically, the stand-up comedian triggers the audience's cognitive process to realize that the addition of political platforms (new parties) without improving integrity will only pile up the same problems. Humor arises from the use of harsh diction (the smell of your thumbs) to describe the failure of a grand political vision.

Data 9 CONTEXT: THE ISSUE OF PRISONERS IN AND OUT OF PRISON

"They say that in Indonesia corrupt prisoners can go in and out of prison. That's fake news! The truth is that they go in first and then come out... they don't come back." [04:06]

Discourse fragment (9) uses logic with a reversal strategy in single comedy material. Akbar uses the technique of breaking expectations to describe the powerlessness of the law in Indonesia.

The part of his decomposition that triggers laughter is the sentence, "The truth is that he went in first and then got out... he didn't come back." In discourse fragment (9) there is a decomposition of legal procedures. Akbar analyzes the phrase "going in and out of prison" which was initially considered a repetitive activity (corruption again), then deconstructs it into an event of escape or permanent disappearance of traces. Pragmatically, the single comedian exploits the violation of the principle of cooperation (maxim of quality) to provide surprising information. Humor arises from the reversal of the logic of prison procedures; where "getting out" should be temporary (permission or freedom), but is decomposed into the end of a detention. This process effectively satirizes the weakness of the correctional institution's oversight system.

Humor Involving Action or Visual Phenomena

This category focuses on physical movements, gestures, or absurd actions that imitate social reality.

Data 10 CONTEXT: ACTING SICK WHEN CALLED BY LAW ENFORCEMENT

"Have you been summoned by the Corruption Eradication Committee?' 'Oh... oh...'. 'Have you been summoned by the police, sir?' 'Oh... oh...'. 'Have you not been summoned yet?' 'Called by the Almighty, you idiot!'" [03:06]

The application of pragmatic decomposition techniques through action/visual categories by utilizing deceptive strategies and theatrical performance occurs in discourse fragment (10). Akbar deconstructs the defensive behavior of political actors when faced with legal instruments. The part of his decomposition to trigger laughter lies in a series of actions and utterances, [Imitating gestures of pain] "Sir, summoned by the Corruption Eradication Commission?' 'Ouch... ouch...' ... 'This sir hasn't been summoned yet, has he?' 'Called by the Almighty, you idiot!'" In discourse fragment (10) there is a decomposition of the formal authority of public officials through physical imitation. Akbar breaks down the official's verbal response into a mere onomatopoeia of pain ("ouch-ouch") which functions as an avoidance strategy. The stand-up comedian uses visual parody to deconstruct the subject's moral integrity, culminating in the reversal of the meaning of the word "called" from the legal realm to the eschatological realm. Humor arises from the contrast between high social position and cowardly behavior decomposed through ridiculous physical movements.

Data 11 CONTEXT: DEBATE STYLE AND ARTS

"The one who came closest to him was the Indonesian President, SBY, because he and SBY both have an artistic soul. When they debate, he likes to dance with transparent plates, but there are no plates. There really shouldn't be any because if there were plates, they could fall. It's better not to have any, so only his pride would fall." [09:27]

The analysis of discourse fragment (11) uses pragmatic decomposition techniques through action/visual categories with an imaginary visual humor strategy. Ridwan Remin creates a visual metaphor to analyze the non-verbal behavior of political actors in the public debate space. The sentence, "When he debates, he likes to dance with a transparent plate, yeah, there's no plate... the only thing that falls is his dignity." contains a decomposition of the subject's hand gestures which are reinterpreted as a failed traditional art performance. Remin analyzes the motoric movements of the debate into a futile visual phenomenon ("a transparent plate"). The stand-up comedian utilizes visual incongruity to trigger the audience's imagination, the failure to maintain the imaginary plate is deconstructed as a failure to maintain political dignity. Humor arises from a visual metaphor that reduces complex political rhetoric to a mere physical act of self-humiliation.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that Indonesian stand-up comedy functions as a pragmatic arena in which political reality is decomposed through humor strategies involving identity, language,

logic, and action. Rather than merely presenting political jokes as entertainment, the comedians analyzed in this study transform complex issues of leadership, corruption, dynastic politics, legal injustice, and party pragmatism into humorous narratives that are cognitively accessible and socially critical. This finding confirms that humor in political discourse operates not only as a rhetorical ornament but also as a mechanism of social evaluation. Through Arthur Asa Berger's humor strategy, this study shows that stand-up comedians reduce the symbolic authority of political actors by shifting them from the sacred sphere of power into the everyday sphere of laughter, ridicule, analogy, and bodily parody.

The identity-based humor found in this study strengthens Smith and Voth (2002) argument that political humor can shape public discourse by simplifying political issues and influencing how audiences perceive political actors. However, while Abbas focused on televised political humor as a form of infotainment and public influence, the present study offers a more specific pragmatic explanation of how such influence is linguistically constructed. For instance, Ridwan Remin's comparison of presidential figures does not simply create laughter; it decomposes the ideal image of leadership by stripping away attributes such as nationalism, intelligence, religiosity, and charisma. This strategy turns political identity into a caricature, allowing the audience to reassess the gap between political branding and public expectations. Therefore, this study extends Abbas's findings by showing that political humor works through pragmatic desacralization, in which humor weakens the symbolic distance between leaders and citizens.

The findings also correspond with Abbas's (2025) study on opposition script and cognitive complexity in humor. Abbas argues that humor emerges from the clash of incompatible scripts and requires audiences to process contradictory meanings. This mechanism is clearly visible in the present study, especially in the jokes about "stress" as both a stage name and a sign of political unreadiness, and in the contrast between "cutting hands" and "cutting prison terms." These examples reveal that Indonesian political stand-up comedy relies heavily on script opposition: legality versus injustice, leadership versus childishness, reform versus dynastic dependency, and democracy versus feudal logic. Nevertheless, the current study goes beyond a cognitive account of script opposition by linking the collision of meanings to political critique. In this sense, humor does not only create cognitive surprise but also exposes contradictions within political institutions.

This study is also consistent with Landert D. (2021), Davis and Hofmann (2023), Ladilova and Schröder (2022), and Lockyer and Weaver (2022) research on the spontaneous co-creation of comedy, which emphasizes that humor depends on the interactional dynamics between performer, discourse, and audience. Although Landert examined improvised theatrical fiction, the present findings show that Indonesian stand-up comedy similarly depends on shared knowledge between comedians and audiences. Jokes about political dynasties, corruption, party recruitment, or legal manipulation become effective because the audience already possesses sociopolitical background knowledge. The comedian does not need to explain the entire political structure; instead, a short phrase such as "young people, but following their father" is enough to activate the audience's recognition of dynastic politics. Thus, the pragmatic force of humor lies in the co-construction of meaning between speaker and audience.

The multimodal dimension of the findings is in line with Vásquez and Aslan's (2021) study on internet memes, which shows that humor often emerges from the interaction between verbal and visual semiotic resources. In the present study, multimodal humor appears through action-based and

visual jokes, such as the imitation of political actors pretending to be sick when summoned by law enforcement or the depiction of debate gestures as a “transparent plate dance.” These examples show that humor is not produced by verbal language alone. Gesture, facial expression, bodily movement, and imagined visual scenes function as pragmatic signs that intensify political criticism. Compared with Vásquez and Aslan’s focus on internet memes, this study shows that stand-up comedy produces a live form of multimodal humor in which the comedian’s body becomes a medium for decomposing political authority.

The findings further support Osisanwo et al. (2024), who found that humor in comedy skits performs pragmatic acts that shape the meaning of discourse. In this study, humorous utterances perform several pragmatic acts simultaneously: criticizing corruption, questioning leadership legitimacy, mocking party pragmatism, and exposing legal inconsistency. For example, the analogy of political parties as dirty shoes is not merely a joke about everyday objects; it performs an evaluative act that criticizes the assumption that new parties automatically solve old political problems. This shows that stand-up comedy can function as an indirect speech act in which criticism is softened through humorous analogy but remains politically sharp.

In the Indonesian context, the findings are closely related to Pamungkas et al. (2024), who analyzed Gibran Rakabuming’s humor strategy in political communication on X. Pamungkas et al. indicate that humor can be used to build a positive political image and attract public attention. However, the present study reveals the opposite direction of political humor: humor is not used by political actors to construct image, but by comedians to deconstruct that image. While political figures may use humor for impression management, stand-up comedians use humor for image disruption. This distinction is important because it positions comedy not as a campaign tool but as a form of social control that questions the legitimacy of political symbols.

The findings also align with Kasni and Budiarta’s (2025) multimodal-pragmatic analysis of humor in talk shows, which identifies irony, teasing, parody, and expressive speech acts as central humor strategies. Similar strategies appear in the present study, but with stronger political consequences. In the analyzed stand-up performances, parody and teasing are directed not only at individual personalities but also at broader structures of power, such as party transformation, legal inequality, and democratic contradictions. This shows that Indonesian political stand-up comedy expands the pragmatic function of humor from interpersonal amusement to institutional critique.

González-Cruz’s (2025) study on humor in Spanish satirical television highlights how discourse strategies can localize and adapt humor to specific sociocultural contexts. The present study confirms this contextual nature of humor. Indonesian stand-up comedians rely on culturally familiar references, including corruption cases, political acronyms, dynastic politics, and popular perceptions of leadership. Humor becomes effective because it is rooted in local political memory and collective frustration. Therefore, the decomposition of political reality in Indonesian stand-up comedy cannot be separated from the audience’s lived experience of bureaucracy, elections, law enforcement, and media spectacle.

Jegede’s (2025) discussion of humor as a pragmatic tool in multicultural online interactions emphasizes that humor can build solidarity but also produce tension due to different sociocultural interpretations. This insight is relevant to the present study because political humor in stand-up comedy is also potentially ambivalent. On the one hand, it creates solidarity among audiences who share similar dissatisfaction with political conditions. On the other hand, it may provoke resistance

from supporters of the criticized figures or institutions. Thus, political stand-up comedy operates in a risky pragmatic space where laughter, criticism, and offense intersect.

Finally, the findings resonate strongly with Yang's (2026) study on irony, politeness, offense, and audience reception in Chinese stand-up comedy. Yang shows that stand-up comedians manage sensitive messages through ironic performance and audience-oriented strategies. Similarly, Indonesian comedians in this study employ humor to deliver political criticism without presenting it as direct accusation. Irony, caricature, analogy, and parody allow them to negotiate between critique and entertainment. The novelty of this study lies in demonstrating that such negotiation can be systematically explained through Berger's four humor categories. By integrating Berger's typology with pragmatic interpretation, this study contributes to sociopragmatic studies of humor by showing how political stand-up comedy decomposes power into laughable, understandable, and criticizable forms. Therefore, Indonesian stand-up comedy should be understood not merely as popular entertainment, but as a critical discourse practice that enables society to reinterpret political reality through laughter.

.This study has several limitations. The analysis is limited to selected YouTube performances by Ridwan Remin, Pandji Pragiwaksono, and Akbar, so the findings may not fully represent the broader landscape of political stand-up comedy in Indonesia. The study also focuses mainly on verbal and pragmatic aspects of humor using Arthur Asa Berger's typology, which may not fully capture audience reception, affective responses, ideological positioning, or the role of digital platform circulation. In addition, the use of recorded performances limits observation of live audience interaction and spontaneous performer-audience negotiation. The qualitative design also allows possible researcher subjectivity in classifying humor strategies and interpreting political meanings. Future research should expand the corpus by involving more comedians, different political periods, and various digital platforms, while also incorporating audience reception, multimodal discourse analysis, comparative cross-cultural perspectives, or mixed-methods approaches to better understand how political humor shapes public perception, civic awareness, and democratic discourse.

Conclusion

This study concludes that Indonesian stand-up comedy functions as a pragmatic medium for decomposing political reality through humor strategies involving identity, language, logic, and action. By applying Arthur Asa Berger's typology, the findings reveal that comedians such as Ridwan Remin, Pandji Pragiwaksono, and Akbar transform complex political issues—such as leadership image, dynastic politics, corruption, weak law enforcement, and party pragmatism—into satirical, accessible, and critical narratives. Identity-based humor desacralizes political figures by reducing authoritative images into caricatures; language-based humor manipulates puns and lexical ambiguity to expose collective corruption and institutional inconsistency; logic-based humor employs analogy and reversal to simplify systemic political failures; and action-based humor uses gesture, imitation, and visual parody to ridicule the defensive behavior of political actors. These findings indicate that humor in stand-up comedy is not merely an entertainment device but a form of sociopragmatic criticism that enables audiences to reinterpret power relations through laughter. The study contributes to pragmatic and humor studies by demonstrating how Berger's humor strategy can be used to explain the discursive mechanism through which comedy transforms political

complexity into public criticism. However, this study is limited to selected YouTube-based performances and a qualitative textual-pragmatic analysis; therefore, future research should expand the data corpus, include audience reception, and apply multimodal or comparative approaches to better understand the broader role of political humor in digital democratic discourse.

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