

THE SOCIO-CULTURAL FUNCTIONS OF MEME LANGUAGE IN JAVANESE HUMOROUS TEXT: A SEMANTIC APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to describe the semantic meanings as well as the social and cultural functions of meme language within Javanese humorous content. This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach with a semantic analysis method. The data consist of Javanese words, phrases, and expressions used in memes that contain elements of humor. The data source is retrieved from the article titled '*85 Kata-kata Lucu Bahasa Jawa buat Status WA, Singkat dan Bikin Ngakak*' published on the Detik Jogja website <https://www.detik.com/jogja/budaya/d-8169502/85-kata-kata-lucu-bahasa-jawa-buat-status-wa-singkat-dan-bikin-ngakak>.

Data collection was conducted through documentation, observation (*simak*), and note-taking (*catat*) techniques. The data analysis technique consists of data reduction, semantic classification, and the interpretation of linguistic functions. The results of the study indicate that meme language in Javanese humorous content contains denotative, connotative, and figurative meanings derived from the social and cultural experiences of the Javanese community. In terms of function, Javanese meme language serves as a means of entertainment, emotional expression, social bonding or solidarity, and a medium for preserving local cultural values in the digital space. Consequently, Javanese meme language functions not only as a tool for creating humor but also as a representation of cultural identity and a reflection of contemporary communication practices among the Javanese people in the digital era.

KEYWORDS: meme language, digital, social and cultural functions, Javanese, semantics.

I. INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology has transformed human communication, including the utilization of regional languages such as Javanese. One of the popular forms of digital communication in the modern era is the linguistic meme, which constitutes brief humorous, satirical, or reflective expressions disseminated through social media and messaging applications like WhatsApp (Sukardi, 2018), (Rahmawanto, 2019), (Nadiah & Abdul, 2025). Memes function not merely as a source of entertainment, but also as a medium for social critique and an expression of the community's socio-cultural identity (Untari, 2017), (Lokal, 2015).

Mememes can be presented using various languages, including national languages (such as Indonesian), international languages (such as English), and even regional languages like Javanese. The memes selected for this study specifically focus on Javanese-language memes. Within the Javanese context, these memes consist of humorous words frequently employed to convey subtle social critiques, strengthen social bonds, and simultaneously preserve local cultural values (Lesmana, 2014), (Chatreepinyo & Wongthai, 2025), (Mulyanah, 2026). The curated content titled '*85 Kata-kata Lucu Bahasa Jawa buat Status WA, Singkat dan Bikin Ngakak*' published by the online media outlet Detik Jogja exemplifies an intriguing phenomenon of Javanese meme language that warrants scholarly investigation. This content demonstrates the community's creativity in utilizing the Javanese language as a vehicle for humor as well as social communication.

From a linguistic perspective, the phenomenon of meme language can be analyzed through a semantic lens to comprehend the literal meanings, figurative meanings, and the underlying socio-cultural contexts. This study is crucial because meme language frequently features wordplay, semantic ambiguity, and cultural symbols unique to Javanese society (Sukardi & Marmanto, 2018), (Studies et al., 2022), (Labradhi, 2026), . Research on Javanese

meme language is highly relevant to regional language preservation efforts as well as the development of digital literacy based on local culture (Maharani et al., 2025). Furthermore, it aligns with the needs of Javanese language education, particularly in enhancing speaking, reading, and writing skills (Transformasi et al., 2026).

The study of memes within linguistics and digital culture has been widely conducted. The concept of the meme was first introduced by Richard Dawkins as a cultural unit that replicates through imitation. In the digital context, memes are understood as forms of visual or verbal communication that convey messages of humor, critique, disappointment, hope, or cultural identity (Wisnuyah et al., 2022), (Rahmawati, 2024).

Research on linguistic humor indicates that humor frequently emerges from semantic ambiguity, violations of linguistic norms, or wordplay within specific social contexts. Within linguistics, semantic studies examine the relationship between linguistic signs and their meanings, encompassing denotative, connotative, idiomatic, and contextual meanings. Meanwhile, in the context of regional languages, several studies demonstrate that while the Javanese language in social media undergoes structural innovation, it consistently maintains cultural values such as *unggah-ungguh basa* (speech levels), subtle satire, and local philosophies.

Memes constitute digital cultural units that integrate text, images, and videos. They have become an effective vehicle for conveying humor (Irmadini et al., 2025), (Ahdanisa & Fateah, 2024). Furthermore, research on meme language in Indonesia indicates that memes can serve as a means of expressing identity and social solidarity (Rahmawati, 2024).

A study by Dian Maharani (2025) on memes was previously conducted using a descriptive semantic approach combined with a content analysis method on a number of viral posts. The results of the study indicated that numerous vocabularies undergo semantic shifts, the formation of new meanings (neologism), and shifts in connotation according to the digital context. This finding reinforces the importance of semantic understanding in interpreting language dynamics in the digital era (Maharani et al., 2025), (Faruk, 2024), (Vathanalooha, 2022).

A study by M. Sya'banul (2025) discussed humor in memes on online media using a semantic-pragmatic approach. The results obtained from this research revealed that out of 30 memes sourced from 3 Indonesian meme websites, four main themes were identified, each encompassing various topics. These four themes respectively include social, political, legal, and religious themes (Studies et al., 2022).

A study by Ismi Melati (2025) recommends the utilization of memes in designing interactive learning materials and digital marketing strategies that are responsive to the cultural characteristics of Generation Z, thereby enhancing the relevance and effectiveness of communication within both educational and marketing contexts (Irmadini et al., 2025).

Based on previous studies, the majority of research still heavily focuses on Indonesian-language memes or purely visual memes. Consequently, several research gaps remain within the existing literature, such as the limited semantic study of Javanese-language memes. Most studies tend to address humor or memes in a general manner without providing a profound semantic analysis of humorous Javanese words. Furthermore, semantic investigations into Javanese memes—particularly regarding humorous content on online media—have not yet integrated the analysis of the socio-cultural functions embedded within these Javanese memes.

Previous studies have not extensively examined how Javanese memes function as a medium for local cultural preservation, social solidarity, or social critique. There remains a scarcity in the utilization of authentic data sourced from popular online media (Informasi et al., 2024), (Widayati et al., 2025), (Zhetpisbayeva & Jubatova, 2025), (Karunakaran & Hong, 2025). Moreover, meme content from digital media, such as online articles, has rarely been analyzed as primary linguistic data (Pendidikan & Daerah, 2025). To date, specific research on humorous Javanese-language content in popular online media remains non-existent. Specifically, the content on Detik Jogja, despite being widely accessed by the public, has not yet been subjected to linguistic investigation.

This study features several elements of novelty, primarily characterized by a semantic analysis of Javanese-language memes utilizing authentic, real-world data derived from popular online media platforms. It bridges semantic theory with socio-cultural inquiries, moving beyond a rudimentary lexical examination to comprehensively investigate how these memes function as instruments for humor, social solidarity, cultural identity, and social critique. Furthermore, the scope of this research is deliberately confined to Javanese verbal memes within digital spaces, thereby distinguishing it from prior scholarly works that predominantly focused on visual memes or Indonesian-language variants (Lesmana, 2014), (Musaev et al., 2021). In addition to its

theoretical merits, this study offers significant pedagogical contributions, as its empirical findings can be directly implemented into the development of modern and contextual Javanese language learning materials.

The objective of this study is to delineate the semantic meanings alongside the socio-cultural functions of meme language within humorous Javanese content. Specifically, it aims to identify the denotative, connotative, and figurative meanings embedded in Javanese memes, while simultaneously analyzing their social functions as mechanisms for entertainment, emotional expression, social critique, and social solidarity. Furthermore, this research seeks to elucidate the cultural functions of Javanese meme language in preserving local values and sustaining the identity of Javanese society amid the digital era.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach integrated with a semantic analysis method (Waruwu, 2024), (Adiningrat et al., 2025). The qualitative approach was selected because the primary objective of this research is to comprehensively describe the linguistic meanings of memes alongside their embedded socio-cultural functions. Furthermore, semantic analysis is utilized to identify the denotative, connotative, and figurative meanings, as well as the socio-cultural functions within Javanese-language memes (Asyura & Effendy, n.d.). This approach is highly relevant given that meme language frequently capitalizes on wordplay, irony, ambiguity, and cultural symbols that cannot be adequately explained through statistical analysis.

The research data consist of words, phrases, or sentences extracted from 85 Javanese-language memes embedded within an online media article that contain denotative, connotative, and figurative meanings, as well as distinct socio-cultural functions. The primary data source is an online article titled “85 Kata-kata Lucu Bahasa Jawa buat Status WA, Singkat dan Bikin Ngakak” (85 Humorous Javanese Words for WA Statuses, Short and Laugh-Inducing), published by the media outlet *detikjogja*. The source content is accessible via the following URL: <https://www.detik.com/jogja/budaya/d-8169502/85-kata-kata-lucu-bahasa-jawa-buat-status-wa-singkat-dan-bikin-ngakak>.

The data collection technique employed is documentation, which involved downloading and archiving the article from *detikjogja*, followed by transcribing the 85 memes into an analytical worksheet. This was complemented by reading and note-taking techniques (*teknik baca dan catat*), which entailed repeatedly reading each meme to record its semantic elements, cultural context, and social functions (Adiningrat et al., 2025). Furthermore, data classification was conducted by categorizing the memes based on their semantic meaning types and socio-cultural functions. To ensure data trustworthiness, trustworthiness was established using triangulation across techniques, data sources, and theoretical frameworks.

The data analysis technique follows several systematic stages: data reduction, semantic coding, socio-cultural function analysis, and contextual interpretation (Waruwu, 2024). Data reduction was performed by selecting memes relevant to the research focus while eliminating duplicate or ambiguous data (Irmadini et al., 2025). Subsequently, semantic coding was executed to identify the types of denotative, connotative, idiomatic, humorous/ironic, social, and cultural meanings. During the socio-cultural function analysis stage, the memes were evaluated to identify their specific functions, such as entertainment, social critique, social solidarity, emotional expression, cultural identity, and Javanese language preservation (Studies et al., 2022), (Wanita, 2026), (Karunakaran & Hong, 2025). In the contextual interpretation phase, the meanings of the memes were interpreted within the framework of Javanese cultural contexts and digital communication. Finally, the analyzed data are presented using analytical tables complemented by descriptive narratives.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. RESULTS

The findings of this study demonstrate that the meme language within the “humorous Javanese words” content possesses a complexity of meaning that extends far beyond literal denotation, encompassing rich connotative and figurative nuances. Based on the data analysis, it is revealed that the majority of the memes exploit figurative language forms and wordplay to simultaneously construct humorous effects and convey socio-cultural messages. Semantically, the emerging meanings do not merely represent literal reality; rather, they encapsulate emotional expressions, social critiques, and reflections on the daily life experiences of Javanese society.

The semantic category coding for Javanese meme language is systematically designed to analyze denotative, connotative, and figurative meanings in relation to their socio-cultural functions. This categorization process involves clustering the data based on both their semantic dimensions and their corresponding social and cultural functions. Specifically, denotative meaning (D) is classified into five distinct categories: romantic relationships

(D1), domestic/household life (D2), the professional/work environment (D3), daily life experiences (D4), and emotional states (D5).

Connotative meaning (K) is categorized based on the emerging emotional and social nuances, which include disappointment (K1), social satire (K2), self-deprecating humor (K3), nostalgia/melancholy (K4), political/power critique (K5), and self-defense (K6). Meanwhile, figurative language or meaning (F) is analyzed through specific figurative forms, encompassing hyperbole (F1), personification (F2), simile (F3), metaphor (F4), and irony (F5).

Each datum is further coded based on its socio-cultural functions to examine the role of memes within Javanese society. Social functions (S) encompass entertainment (S1), emotional expression (S2), social critique (S3), solidarity (S4), and self-reflection (S5). Meanwhile, cultural functions (B) consist of the value of patience (*kesabaran*) (B1), subtle satire (*sindiran halus*) (B2), the culture of feelings/empathy (*budaya perasaan*) (B3), Javanese social relations (B4), and digital cultural adaptation (B5).

A more detailed description regarding the data distribution based on meaning and functional categories can be observed from the semantic category coding results presented in the table below. Specifically, Table 1 illustrates the classification of heartbreak-themed meme data according to the denotative, connotative, and figurative meanings, as well as the social and cultural functions identified within this study.

Table 1. Semantic Category Coding Results of Heartbreak-Themed Javanese Meme Language

No.	Meme Data	D	K	F	S	B
1.	<i>Dijanjekna rabi, jebul mung rabi karo harapan, saiki harapanku wae wis minta cerai.</i> (He/she promised marriage, but I ended up marrying my own expectations. Now even my expectations are filing for divorce).	D1	K1	F2	S2	B3
2.	<i>Atiku wes koyok sandhal jepit ilang siji, sing isih tak gawa mung kenangan lan debu.</i> (My heart is currently like a missing flip-flop. The one left behind has nothing but memories and dust).	D5	K1	F3	S2	B1
3	<i>Nganti saiki aku durung ngerti, aku iki pacarmu apa admin grup keluarga.</i> (To this day, I still don't get it. Am I actually your partner, or am I just the admin of your family group chat).	D1	K2	F1	S3	B2
4.	<i>Wis tak ikhlaske, tapi nek onok statusmu karo sing anyar, atiku isih pengin banting HP.</i> (I've accepted it and let you go, but honestly, whenever I see your status with your new someone, I just want to smash my phone).	D5	K1	F2	S2	B3
5.	<i>Patah ati ki ora abot, sing abot kuwi nek mantanmu malah tuku mobil bareng pacar anyare.</i> (Heartbreak isn't even that heavy. What's heavy is watching your ex buy a car with their new partner).	D1	K4	F4	S1	B1
6.	<i>Dijak serius malah ilang, iki pacaran apa audisi ninja.</i> . (Asked them to get serious and they completely vanished. Are we dating or is this a ninja audition).	D1	K2	F4	S2	B2
7.	<i>Cintaku jebul kaya token listrik, entek pas arep nyetrika urip bareng.</i> (Turns out my love is like a prepaid electricity token: it ran out just as we were about to start living together).	D1	K3	F3	S1	B5
8.	<i>Bosku nek marah suarane kaya toa mushola rusak, sengau tapi nggeter sampe dalem ati.</i> (When my boss gets angry, they sound like a broken prayer room loudspeaker. High-pitched, piercing, and it makes my entire heart tremble).	D3	K5	F3	S3	B2
9.	<i>Wis tak tahan nangis, tapi pas krungu lagu Denny Caknan, langsung kaya sapi digodhog.</i> (I successfully resisted crying, then Denny Caknan came on, and I became a weeping bovine boil).	D5	K1	F3	S2	B1
10.	<i>Diputuske karo alesan kita butuh waktu, jebul aku butuh dokter jantung.</i> (They said 'we need time,' turns out I'm the one who needs a cardiologist).	D5	K3	F2	S1	B3
11.	<i>Bojo nesu merga aku telat bali, padahal sing tak gebug macet e, dudu wedok liya.</i> (My wife is mad at me for coming home late. Bro, I was fighting traffic, not another woman).	D2	K6	F1	S2	B4
12.	<i>Tresnaku tulus, tapi jebul ora isa ditukar hadiah kaya poin belanja.</i> (My love was genuine, but apparently, you can't redeem loyalty points in a relationship).	D1	K3	F3	S1	B3

13.	<i>Wis tak blokir nomere, tapi nek mabuk baper, tetep tak cari nganggo HP kanca.</i> (I blocked their number, but when the late-night overthinking hits, I'm out here stalking them from my friend's phone).	D5	K4	F1	S2	B5
14.	<i>Atiku wis krasa legan, tapi pas nyium parfum sing padha karo mantan, langsung semaput.</i> (My heart was already relieved, but when I smelled the same perfume as my ex, I immediately fainted).	D1	K3	F1	S2	B3
15.	<i>Dadi jomblo iku ora isin, sing isin kuwi nek iseh nge-stalk mantan saben sahur.</i> (So you're not ashamed of being single, but you're embarrassed if you're still stalking your ex every meal).	D1	K4	F5	S1	B3
16.	<i>Patah ati ki ora perlu obat, cukup mangan sega kucing, tambahi sambel biar iso nangis karo alasan.</i> (A broken heart doesn't need medicine, just eat cat rice with chili sauce so there's a reason for crying).	D4	K1	F4	S1	B1
17.	<i>Bojo nesu aku mung meneng, soale yen tak jawab, risiko bisa tidur neng kursi plastik.</i> (My wife was angry that I just kept quiet, because if I answered, I might end up sleeping on a plastic chair).	D2	K3	F1	S2	B1
18.	<i>Sing tak kira jodoh, jebul mung CPNS sing lulus administrasi tapi ora tes akhir.</i> (What I thought was fate, turned out to be just a CPNS who passed the administration but failed the final exam).	D1	K1	F5	S1	B2
19.	<i>Ngopi bareng kowe ra isa tak lali, soale sing mbayar aku.</i> (I can't forget having coffee with you, because I paid for it).	D4	K3	F5	S4	B4
20.	<i>Diputusse wong sing tak perjuangke, rasane kaya dikasih undangan mantan tapi isine tagihan.</i> (Getting dumped by someone I fought so hard for feels like receiving an invitation from an ex—only to find a bill inside).	D1	K1	F3	S2	B3

The coding results for the heartbreak-themed meme language demonstrate that within the denotative meaning dimension, the romantic relationship category (D1) emerges as the most prominent, whereas the professional environment category (D3) appears minimally. Furthermore, regarding connotative nuances, self-deprecating humor (K3) constitutes the dominant category, while political critique (K5) and self-defense (K6) are noticeably less prevalent. In terms of figurative language, the simile category (F3) tends to be more dominant; conversely, metaphors (F4) are less frequently utilized. In relation to social functions, the data are most heavily concentrated in the emotional expression category (S2), with the solidarity category (S4) occurring less frequently. Finally, regarding cultural functions, the culture of feelings/empathy (B3) is highly dominant within the dataset, while Javanese social relations (B4) and digital cultural adaptation (B5) are found less frequently compared to the other categories.

To obtain a systematic overview of the linguistic characteristics of Javanese life-themed memes, the data were classified based on denotative, connotative, and figurative meanings, as well as their corresponding social and cultural functions. The results of this semantic category coding are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Semantic Category Coding Results of Javanese Life-Themed Meme Language.

No.	Meme Data	D	K	K	S	B
1.	<i>Urip iku kaya kopi, peteng nanging nggawe melek.</i> (Life is like coffee: bitter, but it wakes you up).	D4	K3	F3	S1	B4
2.	<i>Sing penting aja mung pinter ngomong, tapi uga urip iku koyo pinter mangan yen disuguhi.</i> (What matters isn't just being good at talking, but also knowing how to eat when you're being treated).	D4	K2	F3	S3	B2
3.	<i>Kadhang sing nggawe susah dudu masalah, tapi grup keluarga.</i> (Sometimes, what causes stress isn't the problem itself, but the family group chat).	D2	K2	F2	S2	B3
4.	<i>Nglakoni urip iku kaya sandhal jepit, nek ilang siji ya ra kepake loro-lorone.</i> (Going through life is like a pair of flip-flops; if you lose one, neither is of any use).	D4	K3	D3	S1	B2
5.	<i>Legawalah nalika urip, senajan legawa iku ora kalebu sayuran.</i> (Accept life with equanimity—even though "equanimity" isn't a vegetable).	D4	K3	F4	S3	B1
6.	<i>Aja gumunan, aja kagetan, utamane yen mantan wis nikah.</i> (Don't be easily impressed or taken aback especially if your ex is already married).	D1	K1	F1	S2	B3
7.	<i>Ora perlu mewah, sing penting ora ketahuan ngutang.</i> (It doesn't have to be fancy, as long as nobody notices the debt).	D4	K3	F5	S3	B2

8.	<i>Wong sabar kuwi cedhak karo sukses, nanging adoh karo saldo.</i> (Patient people are closer to success, but farther from having money in their bank account).	D4	K3	F1	S1	B1
9.	<i>Nek kowe ora isa dadi sing paling pinter, dadi sing paling sregep mangan wae.</i> (If you can't be the smartest, at least be the best at eating).	D4	K3	F5	S5	B2
10.	<i>Aja wedi gagal, wedi nek gagal terus nanging tetep semangat ngutang.</i> (Don't be afraid of failure. Be afraid of failing over and over while still enthusiastically getting into debt).	D4	K1	F5	S3	B2
11.	<i>Sing penting iso ngguyu, senajan sing diguyu kowe dhewe.</i> (The important thing is to keep laughing even if you're the one being laughed at).	D5	K3	F5	S1	B3
12.	<i>Kerep mikir nasib, ujunge malah lali ngopi.</i> (If you spend too much time worrying about your fate, you'll end up forgetting to drink your coffee).	D4	K4	F5	S5	B2
13.	<i>Wong jujur saiki langka, sing akeh wong jujur yen lagi ora ketangkep.</i> (Truly honest people are rare these days. Most people are only honest until they get caught).	D4	K2	F5	S3	B2
14.	<i>Urip iku kaya angkringan, nek ora isa pesen akeh ya numpang ngopi wae.</i> (Life is like a roadside coffee stall if you can't afford to order a feast, just grab a cup of coffee).	D4	K3	F3	S3	B2
15.	<i>Lha wong urip wae angel, mosok ngopi wae dilarang.</i> (Life is already hard don't tell me I can't even have a cup of coffee).	D4	K1	F1	S3	B2
16.	<i>Rasah kakean mikir, ndhisik mikir duit saiki malah mikir mantan.</i> (Don't overthink things. I used to think about money now I can't stop thinking about my ex).	D1	K4	F5	S2	B3
17.	<i>Sing penting uripmu bahagia, ora peduli tetangga ngomong "kok isih jomblo?".</i> (The most important thing is that you're happy even if the neighbors keep gossiping about you being single).	D5	K3	F5	S4	B4
18.	<i>Ngimpi dadi wong sugih sih gampang, sing angel tangi esuke.</i> (Dreaming of becoming rich is easy—the hard part is waking up tomorrow morning).	D4	K3	F5	S5	B2
19.	<i>Urip iki mung mampir update status, ora usah kakean drama.</i> (Life is just a quick status update no need for so much drama).	D4	K3	F4	S3	B2
20.	<i>Aja kakean ngeluh, sing luwih abot uripe wae isih iso guyon.</i> (Don't complain too much. Even people with a tougher life can still laugh).	D5	K1	F5	S3	B2
21.	<i>Yen wis kesel kerja, elinga... gajian isih seminggu maneh.</i> (When you're exhausted from work, just remember... payday is still a week away).	D3	K3	F5	S5	B4
22.	<i>Ndelok saldo munggah wae wis kaya ndelok pelangi, langka.</i> (Seeing my bank balance go up is like seeing a rainbow it's so rare).	D4	K3	F3	S1	B2
23.	<i>Dadi wong sabar kuwi abot, apamaneh yen sabare kudu ngadepi mantan nikah.</i> (Being patient is hard—especially when you're patiently watching your ex get married).	D1	K1	F5	S1	B2
24.	<i>Wong pinter kalah karo wong bejo, nanging wong bejo kalah karo sing kenal bos.</i> (Smart people lose to lucky people—but lucky people lose to those who know the boss).	D3	K2	F5	S3	B2
25.	<i>Yen wis dewasa, dolananmu ganti... saka layangan dadi cicilan.</i> (When you grow up, your toys change... from kites to monthly bills).	D4	K3	F5	S1	B2
26.	<i>Aja ngimpi dadi sugih nek tangine isih sore.</i> (Don't dream of becoming rich if you're still waking up).	D4	K3	F5	S3	B2
27.	<i>Urip kuwi kudu seimbang, yen tangis wis cukup ya saiki ganti karaoke.</i> (Life should be balanced. If you've cried enough, it's time to start singing).	D5	K3	F5	S2	B2
28.	<i>Isin karo tangga ora iso mbayar listrik, padahal tanggane uga utang beras.</i> (You're embarrassed because you can't pay your electricity bill, while your neighbor is buying rice on credit).	D4	K2	F5	S3	B2
29.	<i>Aja ngarep dianggep, wong sing ngono wae ora ngurus rambut.</i> (Don't expect to be noticed by someone who can't even take care of their own hair).	D4	K1	F5	S3	B2
30.	<i>Nek uripmu rasane angel, elinga... sinetron wae isine luwih parah.</i> (If life feels hard, just remember—even TV dramas have worse storylines).	D5	K3	F4	S3	B2

Table 2 presents the coding results of the Javanese life-themed memes, which demonstrate that within the denotative meaning dimension, the daily life category (D4) emerges as highly dominant, whereas romantic relationships (D1) are found less frequently. In terms of connotative meaning, self-deprecating humor (K3) constitutes the dominant category, while political critique (K5) and self-defense (K6) are entirely absent. Regarding figurative language, irony (F5) is predominantly utilized to construct humorous effects, conversely, personification (F2) is less frequently observed. From a functional perspective, memes centered on daily life themes tend to predominantly serve as social critique (S3) compared to the other categories. Meanwhile, culturally, the dominant category is subtle satire (*sindiran halus*) (B2), reflecting a distinct tendency to convey criticism indirectly.

Based on the semantic category coding process of the Javanese meme language, the research data are classified into meaning and functional dimensions. Accordingly, the results of the data classification concerning life-advice themes are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Semantic Category Coding Results of Javanese Life-Advice-Themed Meme Language.

No.	Meme Data	D	K	K	S	B
1.	<i>Dheweke kesel, atiku ya sambat.</i> (They're the one working hard, yet somehow my heart is the one complaining).	D5	K1	F2	S2	B3
2.	<i>Golek dhuwit iku gampang, sing angel golek alesan yen lagi ora duwe.</i> (Making money is easy. The hard part is coming up with an excuse when you're broke).	D3	K3	F5	S3	B3
3	<i>Wong urip kudu multitasking, misale ngopi karo mikir utang.</i> (People need to be multitaskers like sipping coffee while thinking about their debts).	D4	K3	F5	S3	B2
4.	<i>Jenenge urip mesti akeh cobaan. Nek akeh saweran, kuwi jenenge dangdutan.</i> (Life is full of trials. If it's full of cash being thrown around, that's a music concert instead).	D4	K3	F5	S1	B2
5.	<i>Kacang iku gurih, tapi nek di-kacangin yo rasane perih.</i> (Peanuts are tasty, but being ignored leaves a bitter feeling).	D5	K1	F4	S1	B2
6.	<i>Tangi isuk dudu merga semangat, nanging merga alarm utawa cicilan.</i> (You don't wake up early because you're motivated you wake up because of your alarm or your bills).	D4	K3	F4	S1	B3
7.	<i>Lali iku manungsa, nanging nek lali nyaur utang, kuwi kewan.</i> (Forgetting is only human but forgetting to pay your debt is a whole different story.).	D4	K3	F4	S3	B2
8.	<i>Sabar iku larang regane, mulane ora kabeh wong kuat tuku.</i> (Patience is expensive that's why not everyone can afford it).	D5	K2	F2	S3	B3
9.	<i>Prinsipku: Mangan ora mangan, sing penting turu.</i> (My life motto: Whether I eat or not, the important thing is getting some sleep).	D4	K3	F5	S1	B2
10.	<i>Aja nganti kaya wit gedhang, duwe jantung tapi ra duwe ati.</i> (Don't be like a banana tree it has a heart, but no heart).	D5	K3	F3	S3	B2
11.	<i>Bermimpilah setinggi langit, nek tiba berarti turumu kurang nengah.</i> (Dream as high as the sky. If you fall, you probably weren't sleeping in the middle of the bed).	D4	K3	F5	S1	B2
12.	<i>Mending humoris ning akhire manis, timbang romantis ning akhire tragis lan bokek.</i> (It's better to be funny and end up sweet than to be romantic and end up tragic and broke).	D5	K3	F5	S3	B2
13	<i>Urip kuwi kaya sinetron, dramane kakean tapi dhuwite kurang.</i> (Life is like a soap opera too much drama, not enough money).	D4	K2	F3	S1	B2
14.	<i>Nek kowe tresna, aja mung ngodhe. Aku dudu brangkas sing butuh kode.</i> (If you love me, don't just drop hints. I'm not a safe that needs a code).	D1	K1	F4	S1	B2
15.	<i>Gliyak-gliyak tumindak, turu ya pakoleh.</i> (Take it one step at a time—even sleeping gets results).	D4	K3	F5	S3	B2
16.	<i>Cinta iku kadhang kaya kripik singkong, iso ajur nek ra ati-ati nggawane.</i> (Love is sometimes like cassava chips it can easily fall apart if you don't handle it carefully).	D1	K1	F3	S3	B2
17.	<i>Kadhang ngalamun mikir masa depan, jebule kopine wis entek dhisik.</i> (Sometimes I daydream about the future, only to realize my coffee is already gone).	D4	K3	F4	S1	B3

18.	<i>Tresnaku marang kowe kaya kamera, fokus nang kowe thok, liyane ngeblur.</i> (My love for you is like a camera it's focused only on you, and everything else is just a blur).	D1	K1	F3	S1	B2
19.	<i>Bojone wong iku gampang di-godhani, sing angel iku nyaur utang dhewe.</i> (Flirting with someone else's wife may be easy, but paying off your own debts is the real challenge).	D2	K3	F5	S1	B2
20.	<i>Sepira gedhene utangmu, yen ditimbang ora bakal payu.</i> (No matter how big your debt is, it still won't be worth anything if you put it on a scale).	D4	K3	F5	S1	B2

The semantic category coding of the Javanese life-advice-themed memes reveals that within the denotative meaning dimension, the daily life category (D4) emerges as more dominant than the other categories. In terms of connotative meaning, self-deprecating humor (K3) constitutes the dominant category, surpassing disappointment (K1) and social satire (K2). Meanwhile, regarding figurative language, irony (F5) is predominantly identified, whereas the hyperbole category (F1) is entirely absent from the data. Additionally, the dominant social function observed resides in the entertainment category (S1), although emotional expression (S2) and social critique (S3) are also present. Conversely, within the cultural function domain, subtle satire (*sindiran halus*) (B2) is found to be more dominant than the culture of feelings/empathy (B3).

The data analysis reveals variations in meaning and function within the Javanese meme language themed around *sambat* ('complaining'). The data were subsequently categorized based on denotative, connotative, and figurative meanings, as well as their corresponding social and cultural functions. The results of this categorization are presented in Table 4 below.

Table 4. Semantic Category Coding Results of Javanese Meme Language Concerning *Sambat* ('Complaining').

No.	Meme Data	D	K	K	S	B
1.	<i>Kerja tak lakoni terus, tapi karo sambat. Jenenge wae urip, kudu imbang.</i> (I keep working, but I complain while doing it. That's life you've got to keep things balanced).	D3	K1	F2	S3	B2
2.	<i>Dosa sing paling menyedihkan iku, 'Dosambat Ora Duwe Dhuwit'.</i> (The saddest "sin" of all is complaining about having no money).	D5	K3	F5	S1	B2
3.	<i>Sirahku ngelu separo, apa kuwi gejala-gejala arep sugih ya?</i> (I've got a headache on one side. Is that a sign I'm about to get rich?).	D5	K3	F5	S1	B3
4.	<i>Wis lali kapan nampa gaji karo sumringah, saking akehe cicilan.</i> (I can't even remember the last time payday made me happy—there are just too many bills to pay).	D4	K3	F5	S1	B2
5.	<i>Aku urip sederhana ki dudu merga merendah, tapi pancen gak ana dhuwite.</i> (I don't live a simple life to stay humble—I live this way because I'm broke).	D5	K3	F5	S1	B3
6.	<i>Nek kowe butuh dhuwit, rene a. Ayo nangis bareng-bareng.</i> (If you need money, come over. We can cry about it together).	D5	K3	F5	S1	B2
7.	<i>Mendhing sambat wae. Soale nek ditimbang, masalahku sak gedhene ora bakal payu.</i> (I'd rather complain. Even if I weighed all my problems, nobody would buy them anyway).	D5	K1	F1	S2	B3
8.	<i>Dina Minggu iki rasane kaya dina Senen. Bedane, sing Senen isih duwe harapan gajian.</i> (This Sunday feels just like Monday. The only difference is that Monday still comes with the hope of payday).	D4	K3	F5	S1	B2
9.	<i>Rejeki kuwi kaya sinyal. Kadang ilang pas lagi lowbat lan adoh seka charger.</i> (Money is like a phone signal it always seems to disappear when your battery is low and you're nowhere near a charger).	D4	K2	F3	S1	B2
10.	<i>Ngopi dhewe, mikir dhewe, ngenes dhewe. Merga urip emang kudu mandiri, jare.</i> (Drinking coffee alone, overthinking alone, suffering alone. Well, they say life is all about being independent).	D4	K1	F4	S2	B3
11.	<i>Jare tangi isuk iku rejeki. Aku wis tangi, tha kok rejekine isih turon?</i> (They say waking up early brings good fortune. I got up early... so why is my good fortune still asleep?).	D4	K3	F2	S1	B3

12.	<i>Mula iku, aja nyawang aku. Yen tak sawang sorote mripatmu, ketoke kowe arep nembung utang karo aku.</i> (That's why you shouldn't look at me. The way you're staring at me makes me think you're about to ask me for a loan).	D5	K3	F5	S1	B2
13	<i>Wis kesel kerja keras tapi kok hasilé isih kerja lemes.</i> (I've been working so hard, but why does it still feel like all I get is barely enough to keep going).	D3	K1	F5	S3	B3
14.	<i>Wis ora duwe dhuwit, ra duwe pacar, tetep wae iso nyengir. Kuat tenan awakmu!</i> (No money, no girlfriend, yet you still manage to grin. You're incredibly strong!).	D4	K3	F5	S3	B3
15.	<i>Karepku liburan neng Bali, tapi dompetku ngajak liburan neng dapur wae.</i> (I want to vacation in Bali, but my wallet says the kitchen is the only destination I can afford).	D4	K1	F2	S1	B2

The semantic category coding results of the Javanese meme language concerning *sambat* ('complaining') demonstrate that within the denotative meaning dimension, the daily life category (D4) emerges as more dominant than emotional conditions (D5) and the professional environment (D3). In terms of connotative meaning, self-deprecating humor (K3)* constitutes the dominant category, although disappointment (K1) and social satire (K2) are also present. Regarding figurative language, the utilization of irony (F5) is predominantly observed in constructing humorous effects. From a functional perspective, the memes serve primarily as entertainment (S1) rather than emotional expression (S2) and social critique (S3). Meanwhile, culturally, the data reflect that subtle satire (*sindiran halus*) (B2) is found to be more dominant than the culture of feelings/empathy (B3).

The findings indicate that Javanese meme language possesses a rich semantic diversity constructed through the strategic utilization of denotative, connotative, and figurative meanings. The analysis was executed using a semantic category coding technique, which systematically classified the data based on dimensions of meaning alongside the socio-cultural functions embedded within each meme. The classification results reveal that connotative and figurative meanings heavily dominate the linguistic landscape of these memes. This dominance stems from the speakers' tendency to convey emotional experiences, disappointment, grief, and acceptance of life events through indirect, humorous, and creative expressions.

Denotative meaning serves as the foundational bedrock for constructing more complex semantic layers. Conversely, connotative meaning is frequently observed in expressions imbued with emotional undertones. Within this context, the meme language functions as a vehicle to express the speakers' inner psychological experiences in a more subtle manner, rendering them more acceptable to the audience and society. Notably, the figurative meaning category emerges as the most dominant within the research dataset. Figurative meanings are manifested through various forms of figures of speech. The utilization of expressions such as "*pengin banting HP*" ('wanting to smash the phone'), "*rejeku kaya sinyal*" ('fortune as unstable as a cellular signal'), or "*atiku ya sambat*" ('my heart is also complaining') demonstrates a semantic shift from concrete objects to the emotional situations experienced by the speakers. Through the strategic deployment of such figurative language, life experiences and tribulations are repackaged into humorous forms, thereby generating a more engaging and entertaining communicative effect.

In addition to the dimension of meaning, the coding results reveal a robust social function embedded within the Javanese meme language. Memes are utilized as a medium for self-soothing and entertaining others, expressing emotions that are otherwise difficult to convey directly, and fostering a sense of solidarity among social media users who share similar lived experiences. Consequently, meme language functions not merely as a tool for communication, but also as a shared space for collective emotional experiences.

Regarding the cultural function dimension, the findings indicate that Javanese meme language represents enduring Javanese cultural values that persist within the digital society. Furthermore, the strategic utilization of Javanese vocabulary within these memes demonstrates a conscious effort to preserve local linguistic identity amidst the increasingly globalized current of digital communication. Consequently, Javanese meme language can be conceptualized as a form of cultural adaptation that seamlessly harmonizes the traditional communication practices of Javanese society with the evolution of contemporary social media.

B. DISCUSSION

The research findings indicate that Javanese heartbreak-themed meme language represents a form of linguistic creativity that integrates semantic, social, and cultural dimensions within digital communication. Based on the semantic category coding, the data were systematically classified into denotative, connotative, and figurative

meanings, alongside their corresponding social and cultural functions. The empirical evidence demonstrates that connotative and figurative meanings emerge as the most dominant categories compared to denotative meaning. This dominance strongly suggests that meme creators tend to convey profound emotional experiences such as grief, disappointment, jealousy, and a lack of closure through indirect, humorous, and highly symbolic language.

These findings reinforce Malkawi's (2024) study, demonstrating that this semantic shift not only affects the dramatic structure of the novel but also alters the reception of ideas and themes in the target language. Similarly, Musaev (2021) asserts that linguistic style is difficult to translate online because computers tend to translate figurative language literally rather than conveying its metaphorical meaning. This stands in contrast to memes, which incorporate images that substantiate the textual meaning.

Vathanalaoha's (2022) study states that ten contemporary British and American dramas are constructed upon imaginative texts. Similarly, the results of this study reveal that meme language also incorporates imaginative texts. Faruk (2024) asserts that Seno Gumira Ajidarma employed imaginative language when serving as a witness. Furthermore, research by Karunakaran (2025) offers a practical guide to creating persuasive digital content, highlighting how metadiscourse supports effective persuasion.

According to Zhetpisbayeva (2025), poets, much like jewelers, intricately weave the pearls of thoughts and emotions into cohesive strands of rhyme and meter. Similarly, memes also encapsulate strands of emotions, ranging from disappointment and sadness to happiness and anger. In her study, Mareta (2026) posits that the term *perempuan* (woman/female) is often preferred due to its associations with empowerment and activism, whereas *wanita* (woman) continues to be used within formal or professional contexts. This demonstrates the researcher's realization that the diction employed in memes is structured with highly selective deliberation.

Nurnaningsih (2025) states that discourse can be utilized to support tourism. Similarly, this study demonstrates that memes can be leveraged for tourism, political, and socio-cultural purposes, among others. In a similar vein, Wang (2025) asserts that newspapers can be used to serve political interests. Furthermore, according to Chatreepinyo (2025), these metaphors significantly influence educational practices and policies.

Mulyanah (2026) states that politeness strategies in speech acts are highly crucial, while Labradhi (2026) notes that sentences frequently exhibit ambiguity. However, the present study asserts that the language of memes is subject to varying interpretations depending on the context; thus, the concept of ambiguity does not strictly apply to memes. Furthermore, Rahmanto (2019) observes that face-to-face communication in *wayang kulit purwa* (leather puppet) performances is imbued with harmony. In a similar vein, the language of memes also demonstrates inherent politeness.

A key finding regarding meme language in this study is that memes do not inherently contain elements of humor. This stands in contrast to Utari's (2017) study, which characterizes memes as a form of public expression that functions primarily as entertainment while simultaneously conveying a message. The memes analyzed by Utari were specifically selected based on their humorous content. Conversely, the present study examines a more diverse range of memes, encompassing themes of sadness, disappointment, jealousy, resentment, and humor, while also incorporating various symbols. Consequently, this study supports and complements Utari's (2017) research, which limited its scope to viewing memes strictly as a humorous language that conveys messages.

In terms of the denotative meaning dimension, several linguistic elements are still utilized according to their lexical meanings to serve as the baseline for message construction. However, denotative meaning generally functions merely as an initial stepping stone before being expanded into broader meanings through connotation and figurative language. In digital communication, particularly within memes, interactions do not rely solely on literal meaning; rather, they leverage contextual interpretation to generate humorous effects and emotional resonance. The findings of this study demonstrate that literal meaning within memes serves as a foundational framework for constructing implicit meanings that are mutually understood by the social media user community.

These findings reinforce Maharani's (2025) study regarding the shifts and expansions of lexical meaning within the language utilized across Indonesian social media, particularly on platforms like Twitter and Instagram. Vocabulary extensively undergoes semantic shifts, the creation of new meanings (neologisms), and connotative alterations aligned with the digital context. Social media has thus become an active and dynamic arena for the creation, transformation, and expansion of meaning. Furthermore, this research aligns with Rahmawati (2024), who posits that denotation in memes encompasses literal or physically visible meanings, whereas connotation

represents the second level of the signification process, involving associations, feelings, cultural values, and ideologies.

Connotative meaning within this study emerges through expressions that delineate the psychological conditions of speakers following a heartbreak. For instance, the expression "*wis tak ikhlaske, tapi nek onok statusmu karo sing anyar, atiku isih pengen banting HP*" ('I have let you go, but if your status with the new person appears, my heart still wants to smash the phone') does not merely indicate the activity of browsing social media; rather, it encapsulates deep emotional nuances of jealousy and an inability to fully accept the separation. This finding demonstrates that meme language functions as a vehicle for emotional representation packaged within a humorous framework. Consequently, these results imply that social media memes frequently leverage connotative meanings to express personal experiences indirectly, thereby rendering them more relatable and acceptable to the audience.

In addition to connotative meaning, this study identifies a predominance of figurative meaning, which is manifested through the strategic use of metaphors, hyperbole, irony, personification, and similes. Expressions such as "*rejeku kuwi kaya sinyal*" ('fortune is like a cellular signal'), "*dompetku ngajak liburan neng dapur wae*" ('my wallet invites me to vacation only in the kitchen'), or "*atiku pengen banting HP*" ('my heart wants to smash the phone') demonstrate a semantic shift from concrete objects toward the abstract emotional experiences encountered by the speakers. The utilization of such figurative language illustrates that humor within memes functions not merely as entertainment, but also as a calculated communication strategy aimed at alleviating emotional tension resulting from heartbreak.

This study lends support to Wisnuyah's (2020) research, which asserts that the elements embedded within a meme comprise three mutually reinforcing components: text, image, and context. The visual components contained within the image can further clarify the information presented. Furthermore, images can be strategically utilized to alleviate emotional tension and substantiate the semantic meaning conveyed by the meme's text.

The utilization of metaphor and hyperbole within memes serves to intensify humorous effects while simultaneously conveying critiques or grievances in a more subtle manner. Twitter, as a social media platform, facilitates instantaneous communication with a global reach, including the dissemination of memes. The present study supplements Ahdanisa's (2024) research, which investigated the functions of humor in TikTok content, classifying them into comprehension, persuasive, and entertainment functions. However, Ahdanisa (2024) overlooked the correlation showing that stylistic devices—such as metaphor, hyperbole, and simile—simultaneously possess persuasive, entertaining, and other multi-faceted functions. Therefore, this study fills that gap by integrating these linguistic features into the functional analysis.

Viewed from a social function perspective, the Javanese meme language in this study serves as a medium for entertainment, self-expression, social solidarity, and social critique. The humor embedded within these memes enables individuals to express their heartbreak experiences without directly broadcasting their grief. A prior study by Lesmana (2014) noted that the majority of the public still perceives memes primarily as a means of entertainment rather than a tool for comprehending political issues or enhancing the efficacy of political messaging. Consequently, the present study complements Lesmana's (2014) findings by demonstrating that memes cultivate an interactive space that allows social media users to share experiences and foster a sense of togetherness. This finding indicates that digital memes function as a medium for collective communication that reinforces group identity through shared emotional experiences, whether across economic, socio-cultural, or political domains. Within this framework, humor operates as an effective social instrument for establishing interpersonal proximity among community members.

In terms of the cultural function aspect, this study demonstrates that Javanese meme language preserves local cultural values despite being produced and disseminated through digital media. Traditional Javanese cultural values—such as *legawa* (acceptance), *nrima* (resignation/contentment), *sabar* (patience), *tepa selira* (empathy/tolerance), and the tendency to convey critique indirectly—are explicitly reflected in various expressions identified within the data. Furthermore, the utilization of the Javanese language within these memes serves as a mechanism for preserving cultural identity amidst the dominance of Indonesian and foreign languages in the digital sphere. These results suggest that digital media does not inevitably lead to the erosion of local culture; rather, it can function as a vehicle for regional language revitalization through popular communication mediums like memes.

Theoretically, the findings of this study demonstrate that semantic analysis cannot be divorced from the social and cultural contexts of language users. Meaning within memes is constructed not solely through the relationship between a sign and its referent, but also through social experiences, cultural backgrounds, and the collective interpretation of the community. Consequently, Javanese meme language can be understood as a representation of digital culture that seamlessly integrates aesthetic, emotional, social, and cultural functions into a concise yet semiotically rich form of communication.

Consequently, this study demonstrates that Javanese meme language featuring humorous words themed around heartbreak, daily life, life advice, and *sambat* (complaining) serves not merely as a medium of entertainment, but also as a means for constructing social and cultural meaning. The dominance of connotative and figurative meanings confirms that modern Javanese society still maintains a communication tradition that prioritizes symbols, satire, and humor as message delivery strategies, even within a continuously evolving digital media ecosystem.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study successfully delineates the semantic meanings alongside the social and cultural functions of meme language within humorous Javanese content. The semantic dimensions encompass denotative meaning (literal meaning), connotative meaning (additional meaning), and figurative meaning. The vast majority of the analyzed memes utilize figurative language forms and wordplay to construct humorous effects while simultaneously conveying social and cultural messages. Semantically, the emerging meanings do not merely represent literal reality; rather, they encapsulate emotional expressions, social critiques, and reflections on the everyday life experiences of the community.

Meme language serves a social function as a vehicle for entertainment, emotional expression, social critique, and social solidarity. Furthermore, memes are utilized to sustain the use of the Javanese language within the digital sphere, introduce cultural values such as *unggah-ungguh* (etiquette/decorum), patience, *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation), and local wisdom and represent the daily lives of the Javanese community through humor that closely resonates with their collective experiences.

The cultural function of Javanese meme language lies in its capacity for preserving local values and the cultural identity of the Javanese community in the digital era. The utilization of the Javanese language within memes allows local cultural values to remain present and accessible to the public, particularly the younger generation who actively engage with social media. Through creative, simplified, and entertaining presentations, memes successfully render the Javanese language continuously relevant to everyday life, despite operating amidst the dominance of the Indonesian language and foreign languages.

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