



FERRY DARMAWAN & YASRAF A. PILIANG

Cartoonist Visual Communication through Online Political Cartoon in the Era of the Government of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono

ABSTRACT: *Cartoonists are communicators who convey the communication message through cartoons. Since the Reform period, freedom of expression for cartoonists got fresh air along with the enactment of legislation known as Law Number 40 Year 1999 on the press, which stated that the freedom of the press is the rights of all citizens. Furthermore, the presence of new media as a forum for cartoonists to convey his ideas has changed communication patterns become more open and engage the wider participation of the reader. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY), as a political figure, was giving better freedom for media expressions, including political cartoons. Using the method of discourse analysis, this study examines the cartoonist visual communication through a political cartoon featuring a cartoon of President SBY. The result of this research shows that there are interactive participants that serves as a the act of communication for cartoon and the readers. In this digital era, cartoonist did not use labels or names of cartoon characters, because the cartoon depiction using digital tracing techniques. Visual messages are delivered directly to the figures reported, in this case called subjective modality. Later most, visual communications done by cartoonists can be said very freely, although he was talking about an incumbent President.*

KEY WORD: *Visual communication, discourse analysis, political cartoons, Reform era, freedom of expression, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, and incumbent President.*

RESUME: *"Komunikasi Visual Kartunis melalui Kartun Politik Online pada Masa Pemerintahan Presiden Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono". Kartunis adalah komunikator yang menyampaikan pesan komunikasinya melalui gambar kartun. Sejak masa Reformasi, kebebasan berekspresi kartunis mendapatkan angin segar seiring dengan diberlakukannya UU (Undang-Undang) No.40 tahun 1999 tentang pers, dimana disebutkan bahwa kemerdekaan pers adalah hak asasi warga negara. Ditambah lagi, kehadiran media baru sebagai wadah bagi kartunis menyampaikan ide dan gagasannya mengubah pola komunikasi menjadi lebih terbuka dan mengikutsertakan partisipasi pembaca lebih luas. Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY), sebagai seorang tokoh politik, telah memberikan kebebasan yang lebih baik bagi media pers untuk berekspresi, termasuk kartun politik. Menggunakan metode analisis wacana, penelitian ini mengkaji komunikasi visual kartunis melalui kartun politik yang menampilkan kartun Presiden SBY. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terdapat partisipasi interaktif yang berfungsi sebagai tindak komunikasi bagi kartun dengan pembacanya. Di era digital ini, kartunis tidak menggunakan label atau penamaan untuk tokoh kartunnya, karena penggambaran kartun menggunakan teknik digital tracing. Pesan visual yang disampaikan bersifat langsung kepada tokoh yang diberitakan, dalam hal ini disebut modalitas subjektif. Akhirnya, komunikasi visual yang dilakukan kartunis begitu bebas, meskipun yang dibicarakan adalah seorang Presiden yang tengah berkuasa.*

KATA KUNCI: *Komunikasi visual, analisis wacana, kartun politik, masa Reformasi, kebebasan berekspresi, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, dan Presiden yang tengah berkuasa.*

About the Authors: **Ferry Darmawan** is a Lecturer at the Faculty of Communication UNISBA (Bandung Islamic University), Jalan Tamansari No.1 Bandung, West Java, Indonesia; and **Prof. Dr. Yasraf A. Piliang** is a Lecturer at the Faculty of Fine Art and Design ITB (Bandung Institute of Technology), Jalan Ganesha No.10 Tamansari, Bandung, West Java, Indonesia. For academic interests, the authors can be contacted via e-mails at: ferrydarma_1@yahoo.com and ya_piliang@yahoo.com

How to cite this article? Darmawan, Ferry & Yasraf A. Piliang. (2015). "Cartoonist Visual Communication through Online Political Cartoon in the Era of the Government of President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono" in *SOSIOHUMANIKA: Jurnal Pendidikan Sains Sosial dan Kemanusiaan*, Vol.8(2) November, pp.195-204. Bandung, Indonesia: Minda Masagi Press and UNIPA Surabaya, ISSN 1979-0112.

Chronicle of the article: Accepted (July 3, 2015); Revised (September 3, 2015); and Published (November 30, 2015).

INTRODUCTION

The presence of digital media has changed the world and the way we think about ourselves, including the universe. In particular, digital culture is associated with the speed of social change, leading technology and social transformation in just a short time. In digital culture, we also witnessed the birth of a culture of participation that allows public to become more involved in the creation and dissemination of meaning as stated by a figure of postmodernism, Keith Basset (1996), and cited also by Glen Creeber & Royston Martin (2009), as follows:

[...] the rapid development of the New Media and computer technologies [...] have the potential to transform the very nature of the public sphere and open up new channels of communication to a proliferation of new voices. The public intellectual of today must now be much more alive to the possibilities for participating in what could become a new "cyberspace democracy" - an expanded public sphere which is less academic and less elitist, and demands the use of more accessible forms of language and discourse than those which intellectuals have become used to (Basset, 1996; and Creeber & Martin, 2009).

Freedom of expression in a democratic country is correlated with freedom of the press as an implementation of democratic values in a country that adheres to the democracy based government system. After the New Order government (1966-1998), the principle of press freedom in Indonesia discovered a new face with the enactment of Act Number 40 Year 1999 on the Press, which clearly states that freedom of the press is a fundamental right of citizens (Setneg RI, 1999).

Press in the Reform period (1998 to date) provides wide scope for the media to disseminate information to the public to do the criticism of the government. Therefore, the political communication in the era of Reform is not only top down, but also bottom up. In line with the development of freedom of the press, freedom of expression through the media is increasingly widespread. Not only the mainstream media, but the new media has also become a

field to share information in today's society. That is because nowadays most people get information through the media rather than personal experience, including political issues. There are many forms of information on politics in the media, one of them is cartoon.

Political cartoons, as a form of visual communication, are an object of discourse. The messages in the cartoons are the discourse construction of a cartoon maker to observers. The development of new media is utilized by the cartoonist to spread his ideas in the form of political cartoons. Moreover, when the political cartoons are in the space without limits, such as internet site, every people in the world can see and interpret, because the image is a universal language.

"One picture is worth ten thousand words" – Chinese proverb, perhaps wrongly attributed to Confucius, but if he didn't say it, he should have (cited in Navasky, 2013). Through those pictures, the world will provide an assessment of the state and its political dynamics. Political representation in the cartoon can keep the honor of the dignity of the country or even generalize the "depravity" of a country.

Depiction in cartoons often shows graphical display that not in accordance with the ethical and morality, or displayed any form of harassment against something. Several cases of political cartoons that shook the world, such as the case of the *Danish Daily*, *Jyllands-Posten*, 30th edition of September 2005, which angered Muslims around the world by featuring 12 cartoons that are very insulting and harassing the Prophet Muhammad.¹ Or the case of war caricatures that occurred between Indonesia and Australia, where the two countries mutually cartoonist published political cartoons about the issues associated both countries, such as Papua problem, the *manusia perahu* issue, and the latest is the problem of phone tapping by intelligence Australia against the President SBY (Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono).

¹See, for example, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jyllands-Posten_Muhammad_cartoons_controversy [accessed in Bandung, Indonesia: 10 June 2015].

Meanwhile, in describing a character in their cartoons, cartoonists usually based on their experience in recognizing political figure. Cartoonists play the role as communicators in editorial cartoons. The message conveyed in the form of pictures based on cartoonist' opinion, such as behaviour, expression, gesture, verbal, and nonverbal communication of a cartoon character that visualized.

Visualization of President SBY in the cartoon cannot be separated from the cartoonists opinion in understanding SBY figure that associated with his political behavior. This matter is a consideration for political cartoons or editorial cartoons to be published. A figure character will be depicted with humor in cartoons or so-called caricatures. Generally, in depictions of political figures, there will be symbols that can be interpreted with a certain perspective in the discourse, such as potbelly posture that represents state officials, the color of clothing that represents a political party, and so on.

Based on previous researches, the metaphor is often used as a tool of language in the political cartoons. This was done to soften the message, so it does not look straightforward, especially if the figure depicted is the ruler or someone who has authority (*cf* Ahmad, 2001; and Sunarto, 2005).

Relying on some facts and literature studies on the development of political cartoons in Indonesia, especially after the reform, the narrative style of political cartoons experiencing a kind of shift. This may be related to the issue of openness and a new democracy that accompany the journey of post-reform government.

Based on the description above, the authors formulate the problem in this article as follows: "How is the cartoonist visual communication through online political cartoons in the era of president SBY?".

METHODS

Referring to the model of discourse analysis by Norman Fairclough (1995) to explain the pattern of communication of cartoonist in political cartoons, there are two aspects of contextuality, those

are relationship between the discursive practice with discourse that will be explored and mapping the sociocultural relations, non-discursive, and wider contextual of discourse, regarding the power relations, hegemony, and even ideology (*cf* Fairclough, 1995; and Badara, 2012).

Discourse analysis tries to reveal the use of language in a visual sign, not only through structural approach but also how language is used to communicate as an audience force to do certain behaviour or beliefs (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002). In a previous study of political cartoons, it also mentioned that the dominance of power will affect the visual appearance of a cartoon created by cartoonist that can bring ambiguities in the process of work. However, it is seen in political cartoons at regime era of the Old Order government (1959-1966) and the New Order government (1966-1998) in Indonesia that the system tends to authoritarian rule (*cf* Ahmad, 2001; and Sunarto, 2005).

Associated with the research object is the visual object, then social semiotic approach used in this research, particularly multimodality used in deciphering the meaning of the cartoon. Multimodality is a theory that used to discover how humans communicate and interact with other human beings as well as how they express themselves. Many "ways", or in the description Gunther Kress (2010) called the "mode", to do so, including through writing, gestures, posture, gaze, choosing fonts or colors, images, video, up to other visual forms. Representation requires that sign-makers choose forms for the expression of what they have in mind and see as most apt and plausible in the given context (Kress, 2010).

Social semiotics is a method that explores the nature and function of signs along with systems and processes underlying signification, expression, representation, and communication in human life. Mainstream semiology's preference for detailed readings of individual images raises questions about the representativeness and replicability of its analyses (Rose, 2012).

Semiotics offers a way of thinking about the meaning of the written/verbal language and visual texts that work together, and where the written/verbal language is not the main source through which meaning is mediated and represented. Although the artwork is different from the written/verbal language, but not completely different, and both have some similarities. As well as written text, art work consists of several parts, and the parts of the image pieces, signs, vector, or direction of the action is set on the canvas or medium.

The sign has been likened to the words. Visual text, such as works of art, has a structure and composition and can be likened to the art of crafting words. According to Gunther Kress (2010), sign is a message structure or trace message that has integrity socially. While the discourse refers to the social process in which the sign exist, the sign is a material object produced in discourse (Kress, 2010). So, the visual sign which is a part of social text is a message structures existing social conventions and/or perception, which also presents a discourse community in which producer identify the text visually.

According to M.A.K. Halliday (1985) and Gunther Kress (2010), texts are in a dialectical relation with context, text creates a context as much as context creates the text. Meaning arises from the friction between the two. Visual discourse analysis discuss the emerging discourse in the visual text, the text itself, the macro and micro conversations around the producing and displaying text, and visual texts as communication events (Halliday, 1985; and Kress, 2010).

According to J. Gee (2005) and P. Albers (2007), the main of visual sign are four language principles that work in discourse analysis. *First*, the visual language is reflective. It has the capacity to create and reflect the context, in which it was a visual language and reflect the reality of where it is. Furthermore, the visual language works at the level where the reader recognizes the language context. That is visual texts created to communicate the idea and even

have wider meaning (intertextual) than the written language. *Second*, the language allows interpreted in a particular context and based on previous experience. Meaning will be negotiated with the sign makers and their interaction with the text and other conversations. *Third*, the language consists of many different social languages. Every social language uses a different tool or media that will be used to communicate or convey the desired message. Because the visual texts that have been called "artwork" by a number of literacy and literary researchers, academics, and educators, visual language has become a "hybridization". And finally, *fourth*, there is the unit of analysis in visual texts, including structural, semantic, artistic, tactile (touch or palpation), and visual (Gee, 2005; and Albers, 2007).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Generally, a political cartoon is an illustration containing a commentary that usually relates to current events or personalities. An artist who draws such images is known as an editorial cartoonists. They typically combine artistic skill, hyperbole, and satire in order to question authority and draw attention to corruption and other social illness. Cartoons are also used to convey the message of communication, in this regard of visual communication. Political cartoons also often uses caricature, in the sense of depicting the figure is already well known and described in the form of perspective distortion. To display these messages, cartoonists have the option (multimodality) in executing the form of drawings.

To discuss the pattern of communication of cartoonist through political cartoons, the authors have conducted a study documentation for the political cartoons that will be analyzed. The authors used a purposive sampling technique that is political cartoons, which studied are political cartoons featuring caricatures of SBY (Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono) as the main issue and the use of modality as an execution message form. Cartoons that documented a total of 18 political cartoons. See the picture 1.



Picture 1:
Online Political Cartoons as Research Object
(Sources: Research Data)

On the elements of representation, political cartoons will be described based on the structure of the discursive meaning, which are participants and visual language. Participants in the cartoon are cartoonist construction toward representations of reality related to the act of communication.

Interpret the relationships among the participants is how to understand the discourse of cartoons.

As mentioned in the previous chapter that there are two types of participants involved in any act of visual communication, namely: interactive participants and representative

participants. Interactive participant is a participant in acts of communication, participants who speak and listen, or who write or read, create images or see it. Representative participants are participants who are the object of communication where it can be a person, place, thing (including the abstract) represented through words, writing, or drawing, participants about who or which we speak, write, or draw.

Meanwhile, the visual language associated with the code (the combination of signs) that produce denotation and connotation meaning, as well as the cartoonist approach that is often used to convey messages such as symbolism, exaggeration, label, analogies, and irony. On the modalities elements, political cartoons will be broken down into two parts, namely: the visual modalities and language modalities. Visual modality is the degree of truth of representations that are displayed, and the language modalities related to utterances of truth in terms of probability, frequency, and the subjective or objective.

In this cartoon, see picture 2, there are three participants, namely SBY (Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono) as a participant #1, red dress woman named "Ayin" as participant #2, and figure Lapod (the name for a cartoon character who always appears in every edition, long noses and ears wide) as participant #3. Participants representative in this cartoon are SBY and Ayin. Both are figures that are being reported. Cartoonist tried to describe the proximity of the two figures with a spoken sentence by Lapod figures as interactive participants that questioned "No Woman No Trouble?". The position of cartoon woman on the shoulders of SBY has a meaningful connotation that SBY as a protector of that woman. The use of digital tracing technique makes the picture look like a cartoon character portrayed (high modalities).

Meanwhile, the text information displayed as a supporting character in



Picture 2:

Cartoon on "Semrawutnya Peradilan Kita" [Our Chaotic Justice] (Source: www.inilah.com, 16 June 2008)

the cartoon just explain who described (substitute labeling), but does not explain what is being said. Connotation meaning of the word "Pretty Woman" reminiscent of the title of a movie starring Richard Gere and Julia Roberts. But, is the reality represented the same as the meaning of Pretty Woman in the film? (low modalities).

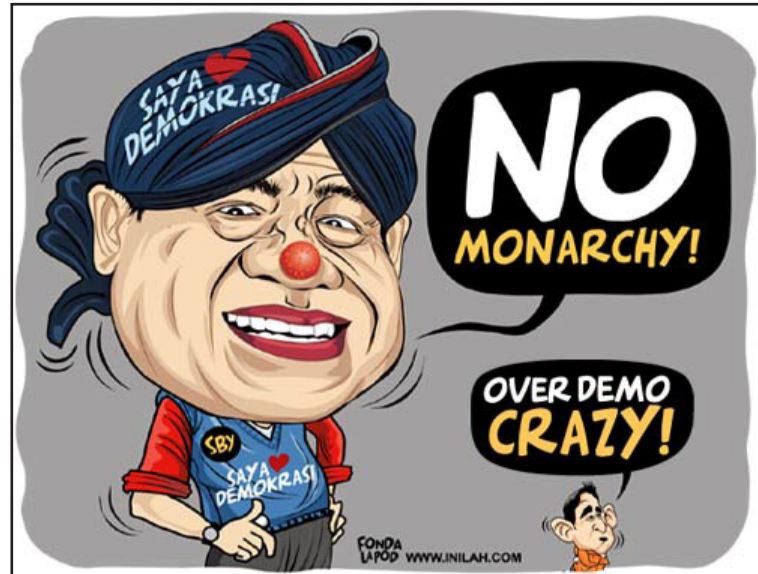
On 2nd December 2010 edition of the cartoon titled "Demokrator" [Palace Democracy] also found the same thing. This cartoon depicts a caricature of SBY wearing *blangkon* (typical hat of Javanese community). He is also wearing a red shirt with blue sweater and pin inscribed SBY. At the *blangkon* and sweater are worn text, "I (Heart Symbol) Democracy". SBY also said, "No Monarchy". On the SBY cartoon's nose, there is a clown nose like a red ball. In the meantime, the cartoon Lapod said, "Over Demo Crazy", with a gesture turned SBY. This event motivated by a polemic statement of SBY, which stated that Yogyakarta monarchy collided with the Constitution and democratic values. The statement offended the people of Yogyakarta, including Yogyakarta Sultanate, with the result that appears the discourse of referendum. See picture 3.

In this cartoon, see picture 3, there are three participants, namely SBY (Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono) as a participant #1, *blangkon* (Javanese hat) as a participant

#2, and figure Lapod as representative participants #3. Participants in this cartoon are SBY and *blangkon*. In this case, the news raised about the relation of SBY as a leader of the democratic state and a royal style of leadership in this democratic state, which is one of the province's that runs the empire-style system, Yogyakarta. The *blangkon* tail shape like a hand-drawn upside down, meaning the palace of culture that is closely related to the royal. But, the relation of text "I (Heart Symbol) Democracy" on the SBY's *blangkon* and sweater explained that no collision system of government.

Figure Lapod as interactive participants provide act of communication in the form of comments for the issues presented in this cartoon. Digital tracing technique in drawing cartoons makes closer resemblance to the original figures (high modalities). SBY depiction with clown nose is a symbol of the attitude of SBY that respond to the privilege of Yogyakarta (low modalities). SBY statement that stated "No Monarchy" is a reality that is conveyed. This text has a meaning of SBY as a democrat who refuses monarchy system (high modalities). The phrase "Over Demo Crazy" is a cartoonist opinion addressed to SBY attitude toward the issue of the privilege of Yogyakarta with the monarchy system, which the cartoonist considers that SBY statement is excessive (low modalities).

In addition to a digital tracing technique, the cartoonist also use the analog-digital technique in the portrayal of the cartoon, which cartoonists draw first with the manual outline cartoon as usual with a pen or pencil, then the outline image is scanned into the computer for coloring and completion. This technique used on 19th March 2013 edition of the cartoon titled "*Kudeta Pemerintahan SBY*" [Coup of SBY Government]. This cartoon depicts a caricature of SBY (Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono) wearing army uniform with



Picture 3:
Cartoon on "*Demokratorn*" [Palace Democracy]
(Source: www.inilah.com, 2 December 2010)

a blue headband. In his body, there is a full ammunition and weapons. SBY seemed to be doing the monitoring. Behind him, there is the hut inscribed "Post of Coup", and lookout towers with a soldier being telescoped. Various weapons of war, barbed wire until the rocket is available around the site.

Next, SBY figures are sacks marked "Tear Gas", but contains onion and garlic. Cartoon characters Lapod write: "*Siap-siap, Pak !!*" (Get Ready, Sir ... !!). This event motivated by the rising incidence of commodity prices of onion and garlic that make people anxious at that time. Both prices soaring even achieve unreasonable prices. Amid the rising prices, the President SBY did a press conference by stating that he had received intelligence coup against his government on 25th March 2013. See picture 4.

Participants representative in this cartoon, see picture 4, is SBY (Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono) as participant #1. This cartoon launched the idea of SBY panic in the face of issue on his government coup by describing SBY with a full arsenal as being for war. The cartoon Lapod present as participants #2, who commented on it. In this cartoon, a sack of onions reads "Tear Gas" is an interactive participant who commits an

act of communication to the reader, to explain issues that occur. SBY character depictions are not using the digital tracing make a low degree of similarity figures (low modalities). Issues considered by cartoonists as a coup diversion strategy issues by presenting depictions of sacks of onions and garlic reads "Tear Gas", which is a metaphor of community distress that moment by rising commodities (low modalities).

Cartoon depiction of the analog-digital technique produces images that do not resemble cartoon characters or multi perception. As on 12nd March 2014 edition entitled "Alutsista Bertambah, SBY Siap Tempur" [Increased Defense Equipment, SBY Ready for Combat], political cartoon consists of two columns that describe the behavior of the two sides of cartoons SBY. In the left column, there are pictures of three men which the first wearing blue dress with plaster mouth, the second depicted a blond with a long nose was laughing, and the third man dressed in Malay style is pointing to the blue dress man with a laugh as well. At the top there are the words "When our country was insulted by other countries". In the right column there is a man with Rambo-style, USA (United States of America)-Vietnam war hero in a Hollywood movie, complete with heavy weapons in the hands of white and red headbands, and in the background there is a helicopter war. At the top, there are the words "When No Conflicts" and the man said, "We are Ready if Must Combat". Lapod cartoon character says, "The Moment is Less Right Here ...". See picture 5.

This event motivated by the attitude of



Picture 4:
Cartoon on "Kudeta Pemerintahan SBY" [Coup of SBY Government]
(Source: www.inilah.com, 19 March 2013)



Picture 5:
Cartoon on "Alutsista Bertambah, SBY Siap Tempur" [Increased Defense Equipment, SBY Ready for Combat]
(Source: www.inilah.com, 12 March 2014)

the president SBY opposite, which at the time, SBY attended aerospace exhibition in Surabaya, then he upload chirp in social media twitter, "We do not want war, but if it had to fight and defend sovereignty, we are ready". However, on the other hand, real events before the number of times when the states of Australia and Malaysia interfere with the sovereignty of the Republic of

Indonesia, SBY never take repressive measures even impressed silent.

This cartoon, see picture 5, depicts some of the participants in the different columns. In the left column, participants #1 is a cartoon of SBY (Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono), and participants #2 are two men were laughing. The relation between the participants #2 and #1 is mocked. Both are representative participants, which is the object in question. In the right column, cartoon of SBY as participant #3, and situation (helicopters and combat equipment) as a participant #4. The relation of both is the action of a situation in an aerospace activities, which SBY looks more.

Mainly, participant #1 relationships with participants #3 is a style in two different situations. Connotations meanings of the cartoon above, on the left column meaningful cartoon character in blue similar to SBY only silence when the neighboring countries, Australia and Malaysia, interfere with the sovereignty of the Republic of Indonesia. In the right column, meaningful similar figure SBY attitude that such a firm and courageous when visiting the exhibition ALUTSISTA RI (*Alat Utama Sistem Pertahanan Republik Indonesian* or Main Equipment and Weapon Systems of the Republic of Indonesia).

Both events are contradictory portrayal of the president SBY between talk and attitude. The cartoonist used irony approach to explain two things that are opposite of the attitude of President SBY. Cartoonists use two facts that happened to do a comparison of the attitudes and talk of President SBY. SBY depiction wearing dress-style Hollywood movie player, Rambo, an exaggeration and analogies for SBY attitude that only brave in the media only. Cartoon depiction does not use digital imaging touch, so that the degree of similarity cartoons against SBY is lower figure (low modalities).

Based on the perception of the reader, SBY in this cartoon image is also similar to another character, namely Prabowo. The phrase "The Moment Less Right Here ..." is a cartoonist opinion against SBY attitude in the second column. Supposedly, the

phrase "We are Ready if Must Combat" is pronounced when the number of times, the state of Indonesia harassed by neighboring countries, such as Australia and Malaysia. In fact, SBY does not respond with firm and even tend to remain silent. In contrast to his attitude, when in an aerospace exhibition event that firmly say, "We're Ready to Combat" (high modalities).

CONCLUSION

Based on the description of the visual discourse analysis of political cartoons that became the object of study, the conclusions of the visual language of cartoonists in the post-reform political cartoons as follows:

In the online political cartoons, there are interactive participants who commented on the issues raised in the cartoon, in this case the cartoonist uses Lapod cartoon characters.

The participants in the political cartoons displayed in accordance with the idea was conceived, and in political cartoons tend to be a lot of participants to play, such as characters, places, situations, and others.

The online political cartoons almost all do not use the label (naming) of the figure/ caricature figures depicted. Based on our analysis, the use of digital tracing to create a caricature cartoon character makes the image becomes increasingly similar to the character portrayed, so that no label can be drawn ready by proxy. But, also be found in the online political cartoon created by analog-digital techniques do not use the label, so that the reader would only guess who the character is a cartoonist in accordance with the perception of each, and this will be linked with the issues raised in the cartoon.

Each issue of political cartoons always brings cartoonist opinion or media (editorial policy). Cartoonist criticism, delivered in the post-reform era political cartoons, is direct to the cartoon character. Even beeline to figure quipped, without using metaphors or other figurative language (subjective modalities).

SBY (Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono) caricature portrayal of the main character of the political cartoon was selected as the research object is generally evident, even though he is currently airing cartoons is

still the head of state. So, in this case, the freedom of expression guaranteed cartoonist in communicating the idea freely.²

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