

A CULTURAL-BASED MEDIATION TO SOLVE DEFAMATION CASES: A FORENSIC LINGUISTIC STUDY

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Abstract: Defamation cases found through social media have increased significantly. The government has done restorative justice in handling defamation cases. This study aims to describe formulating a cultural-based mediation. This research is descriptive qualitative research. The data of this research was the language used on MY's Facebook comment and police report regarding the case. An interactive model (data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing) is applied to analyze the data. The findings of this research show that cultural-based mediation may serve as an alternative to solving a defamation case as long as both parties share the same culture. It may be effective if the police have not yet handled the case and a third party who can act neutral and fair is present during mediation. If else, the case will be handled by the police, which can be based on an expert's opinion, the linguists.

Keywords: mediation, defamation case, forensic linguistic

INTRODUCTION

In this modern era, the number of defamation cases is increasing from time to time, including in online media (Onishi, 2012; Kok Yew, 2019; Moutos et al., 2020). The phenomenon is in line with El Asam & Samara's (2016) and Reisach's (2021) findings that there is an increase in the number of cases like defamation, fraud, and verbal offenses on social media, especially on Facebook, with 91.4% of the total cases (Kasakowskij et al., 2020).

Several studies have been conducted concerning defamation. One fundamental research on defamation through a linguistic perspective is Tiersma's (1987), which analyzes defamation cases through Speech Act theory. Tiersma's framework was then applied by Shuy (2010) to analyze defamation cases in social media. Volovelsky & Raynzilber (2013) found defamation cases in diverse online media, like the blog, Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and other media. Additionally, Chan

& Yap (2015) studied metaphors used to defame the Hong Kong election based on socio-political views. Not to mention, Tsochataridou et al. (2016) and Wright (2017) also applied forensic linguistics on a textual basis, such as on email, blogs, social media, and documents. Finally, Kusmanto et al. (2021) studied defamation cases on Facebook from a socio-pragmatic perspective.

Based on the previous studies, many defamation cases were assessed from various perspectives. It is the work of forensic linguists to determine whether defamation is present in a particular situation, as Shuy (2010) exemplified in his analyses of 12 defamation cases. This research applied a forensic linguistic approach to reveal meaning in the legal context. Besides, the current research shares similarity with the previous research involving socio-cultural views in its discussion. As Lewis (2015) said that modern "language wars" are closely related to cultural-economic aspects; hence, culture cannot be separated in

the research analysis. However, there is a gap among those studies. This research may fill in the gap as there were no studies yet in the context of Indonesia, where culture plays a significant role in daily communication and even in social media.

The case studied in this research is a defamation case in MY's Facebook account. On December 7, 2020, at around 14.00 Central Indonesian Time, a reporter's husband, AN, was called by a leasing firm and informed that MY had not paid the lease for November. AN's husband then called MY, but MY did not pick up. Later, AN's husband messaged MY via WhatsApp, "there is a call from a leasing firm about your motorbike leasing problem," and MY did not reply to the message. MY considers AN tone impolite because he is AN's uncle. MY feels discomfort and offended by the AN's tone. On December 10, 2020, at around 15.00 Central Indonesian Time, AN posted a provoking status on Facebook. On December 11, 2020, MY called AN's husband after sending a screenshot of AN's Facebook status. AN said MY blustered at that time but did not precisely know what he was talking about. At 15.30 Central Indonesian Time, MY commented on AN's Facebook post, which is considered a threat to MY's reputation.

In some defamation cases, the weaker party becomes the suspect. One of the causes is public ignorance about the boundaries of "language wars." Additionally, it occurs because of linguistic disruption in the digital era and is real (Pagel, 2012). Based on law enforcement on cybercrimes, in 2020, there were 6 cases among 15 categories of prominent criminal cases, including defamation, fraud, pornography, illegal access, hate speech, and hoax. The case settlements reached 30% (1,462 out of 4,800 cases) (Prabowo, 2021:61).

Specifically, President Jokowi asked the Chief of the Indonesian National Police, General Listyo Sigit Prabowo, to make guidelines related to the Electronic Information and Transactions Law (UU ITE). Furthermore, the President requested that the articles with multiple interpretations should be interpreted carefully (detiknews, 2021). As a follow-up to the instruction, the Chief of Indonesian National Police issued Circular Letter Number: SE/2/11/2021 concerning Ethical Cultural

Awareness to Create a Clean, Healthy, and Productive Digital Space for Indonesia.

Several points in the circular letter reveal that all members of the National Police should be highly committed to enforcing the law to provide a sense of justice for the community. Also, the National Police should prioritize educative and persuasive steps to avoid allegations and ensure that Indonesia's digital space remains clean, healthy, ethical, and productive. One of the guidelines for police investigators in receiving public reports is that they must be able to distinguish between criticism, opinion, hoax, and defamation. In receiving the report, investigators should communicate with both parties, especially the victims (not to be represented), and facilitate and provide any possible mediation for the two. It is a way to bring restorative justice as long as the case is not related to racism, discrimination, separatism, and radicalism (SE/1/II/2021, 2021).

In line with the Circular Letter, the government also has issued a Joint Decree (SKB) on Guidelines Criteria for the Implementation of Information and Electronic Transactions on Wednesday, June 23, 2021, signed by the Minister of Communications and Informatics, Johnny G. Plate; the Chief of Indonesian National Police, General Listyo Sigit; and Attorney General, ST Burhanuddin. The SKB will later become the reference in interpreting several ITE Law articles considered catchall. Such articles are 27, 28, 29, and 36 (Joint Decree of the Minister of Communication and Information of the Republic of Indonesia, Attorney General of the Republic of Indonesia, and the Chief of Indonesian National Police of the Republic of Indonesia Number 229 of 2021, Number 154 of 2021. Number KB/2/VI/2021 concerning Implementation Guidelines of Articles, n.d.).

Besides ITE and criminal law experts, analysis of such cases may involve linguists in handling such cases. Expert opinion is one document the investigators will refer to during mediation. In handling such a case, linguists must adopt broad perspectives to determine an approach and theory to provide a well-informed analysis. In MY's case, a linguist's analysis can be a basis for the police to do a mediation. In that case, both litigant and defendant are Javanese and have a family relationship. Therefore, it is necessary to

consider the socio-cultural aspects of Javanese culture during the analysis.

"Language wars" are the use of language intentionally as a means of the speaker/writer to attack the ideas, thoughts, behavior, honor, or physical condition of the other person or group, either directly or indirectly, for their benefit (Aziz, 2020). It may include suggestion, criticism, incitement, defamation, insult, slander, and libel. In other words, "language wars" are driven by hatred against someone (Lakoff, 2000). Furthermore, criticism as a form of "language wars" shows impoliteness (Bin & Abdul, 2002), and it is in line with the Javanese culture that direct criticism is considered disrespectful.

Based on the Criminal Code article 310 and ITE Law 19/2016 27 paragraph (3) amending Law 11/2008 on Information and Electronic Transactions, defamation has three meanings: 1) an intended act of attacking someone's face, honor, and/or reputation, 2) accusing something, and 3) having a clear intention, so the public knows. More specifically, defamation is defined as an act of damaging the good reputation of someone, either slander or libel (Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa, 2021). According to Kusno (2021: 295), defamation is a process, method, or act that causes another person's name to look wrong or disgraceful by intentionally attacking someone's honor or reputation through accusation with a clear intention to publicize it. Defamation is not always guilty before the law if the truth is conveyed and there is no intention to defame, even though the effect is still there; the person may be free from any legal consequence. However, a person's reputation is not always guilty before the law if what is conveyed is the truth. There is no intention to defame, even though the effect still tarnishes one's good name (Spaic et al., 2016). Therefore, it cannot be called defamation.

Defamation cases can be analyzed using a forensic linguistic approach. Forensic linguistics applies linguistic knowledge to analyze legal disputes (Olson, 2004; Gibbons & Turell, 2008; Coulthard et al., 2010). It analyzes the context of language use in criminal and civil law (Ariani et al., 2014; Nini, 2019; Nini, 2020). Specifically, forensic linguistics is the study of language in a legal context, for example, criminal case notes, court minutes, court

decisions, legal discourse, defamation, extortion, murder, dispute, plagiarism, corruption, and the others (Shuy, 1993; Solan, 2010; Susanto, 2020; Miranker & Giordano, 2020; Karlińska, 2021). The scope of forensic linguistics is not only limited to language-related cases but also other legal aspects, such as the legal settlement process starting from investigations and trials to legal decisions. Coulthard, Johnson, and Wright (2017) divide research areas within forensic linguistics into two. First, the Language of the legal process includes research on legal documents (e.g., Law, regulation, insurance policy, testament, etc.), emergency calls and police interviews, and trial discourse. Second, language as evidence includes forensic phonetics, authorship attribution, plagiarism, and being an expert witness. Defamation falls under the second category where linguists can provide analysis of language uses to aid the investigation process.

Speech acts can be an approach to uncovering elements of "language wars" in the defamation case. Austin (1962) categorizes speech into two: constative and performative. The constative utterance is to say something true or false (Austin, 1962), including all descriptive utterances, facts, definitions, and others. It may also refer to an utterance to report, inform, or state something (Searle, 1971: 39). For example, "that person is the thief" uttered by a witness in court has the consequence of being right or wrong (Saifudin, 2020:3-5).

Thus, a performative utterance is not an utterance aiming to explain or state something; to describe something and have consequences whether it is true or not; instead, it is to form or create actions.

Austin (1962) divides speech acts into three: locution, illocution, and perlocution, all of which occur when an utterance is uttered. Austin (1962) defines locution as simply saying something, conveying information, talking, asking, and the others. Additionally, locutionary utterance obeys the conditions of truth and requires references that depend on the speaker's knowledge at the narration time (Austin, 1962 in Saifudin, 2020:5-11).

The second act is illocution: an act of doing something based on what is said (Habermas, 1998 in Saifudin, 2020:5-11). It is what is achieved by communicating the

intention to achieve something. In other words, an utterance can contain a specific "power" of which people can create something new, make people do something, change the situation, and the others.

Meanwhile, perlocution is a state of mind caused by, or as a consequence, saying something. According to Austin (1962), perlocution is "what we produce or achieve by saying something," such as convincing, persuading, obstructing, telling, surprising, or misleading. The perlocution should therefore be understood as a causal relationship between two events, in which the cause is the production of utterance by the speaker itself. Perlocution also should be distinguished from locution and illocution. Perlocution is the effect or impact of the utterance (locution) with a particular intention (illocution). Perlocution is more natural, not governed by convention, and cannot be confirmed by questions.

METHOD

This study used a descriptive qualitative method, as in Moodie, 2020; Banegas, 2020, to produce descriptive data in the form of written and spoken words about the characteristics of individuals, circumstances, and tendencies of certain groups that could be observed (Moleong, 1994:6). The object of this research was the language used on MY's Facebook comment. The data of this study were documents from a Facebook account. To maintain the confidentiality of the speaker, the names were initialized. The data source was also from a police report with permanent legal force. In this paper, the data is translated into English. The data analysis technique in this study used an interactive model (Miles & Huberman, 1992:19-20), consisting of three components: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The data analysis was carried out interactively with the data collection process.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Chronologically, on December 7, 2020, at around 14.00 Central Indonesian Time, AN's husband was called by a leasing firm that MY had not paid the lease in November 2020. AN's husband called MY, but MY did not respond. AN's husband then contacted MY through WhatsApp, as follows.

'Itu ada telepon ada LEASING motor tentang masalah pembayaran.'

'There's a call from the leasing firm about your motorbike lease problem.'

The locution is to inform MY that the leasing firm called and informed her that MY was in motorbike arrears. The illocution of AN's statement is that MY had to immediately pay the motorbike arrears so that the leasing firm did not contact her anymore. Meanwhile, the perlocution is the MY's discomfort and feeling of being offended by the AN's tone, which was considered an impolite tone to the older people.

The utterance of AN's husband should be viewed from the cultural context/norms that apply to both interlocutors (Su, 2019; Isosävi, 2020). In terms of context, AN must be more polite towards MY, since the younger should show more respect to the older (Sorlin, 2017; Ye, 2019). It is also in line with the Javanese culture that when communicating with older people, one should be polite, especially if both speakers have Javanese cultural backgrounds. Therefore, the utterance is expected to be utter as follows.

"Pakde. Maaf. tadi itu ada telepon ada LEASING motor tentang masalah pembayaran."

"Uncle, excuse me, there's a call from the leasing firm about your motorbike lease problem."

The above utterance can be considered more polite than that of AN's husband. It can be seen from the vocative "Pakde" or "Uncle." It follows Kusmanto (2019); Kusmanto et al. (2020) that using vocatives in communicating through social media can be polite. Besides, an expression such as "excuse me" can be considered polite and respectful (Kusmanto et al., 2019). If AN's husband uses this kind of utterance, his illocution would be well-conveyed for MY.

MY did not reply to AN's husband's message, probably due to his impoliteness and want to avoid conflict. In this context, MY still wants to *ngemong* (a Javanese way to save a younger person's face though it will hurt themselves in return). MY's not replying to the message is a way to instill a culture in younger people, specifically in politeness (Beeching, 2019).

However, AN later posted a status on Facebook on December 10, 2020.

"Ksh no org itu permisi dl ... kita yg tdk berhutang sm leasing motor da telatx bayar kok kita yg tlp2..bikin muyek aja.kl pny tanggungan bayar tepat waktu biar tdk meresahkan org yg tdk th apa2".

"How come my number was used without permission. We don't have a lease, but we're called to pay it instead. I just don't understand how it comes to this. So irritating. Please, if you got a debt, just pay it on time, so the other will not be driven into your problem."

Such text belongs to the context of "language war" since the utterance was addressed to MY, though AN did not mention the name. Theoretically, there are five degrees of "language wars":

- 1) omitting the reference,
- 2) stating the initial,
- 3) stating general characteristics of the insinuated person/party,
- 4) stating specific characteristics of the insinuated person/party, and
- 5) referencing directly.

AN Facebook status is as follows.

This utterance is a constative utterance that reports, informs, and states the contents of the utterance as it is. This utterance does not state the reference, yet by expounding the characteristics, it refers to MY, though only family and relatives will understand it.

AN's utterance, analyzing with speech acts theory, has illocution telling MY to ask for permission first before giving her phone number to the leasing firm because the leasing firm would call those numbers and ask her to pay MY's lease. However, she did not have any lease with the firm. It irritated AN. Besides, AN reminded MY that if one has a debt, they have to pay it on the due date, so the others will not be disturbed by the leasing firm.

It is also reasonable to suspect that AN wanted to embarrass MY to the public, at least to the closest people who knew him through Facebook, as the illocution of the utterance. If the intention of the utterance is just to remind MY, AN could meet or contact MY directly without conveying it to social media. Moreover, the utterance was addressed to his own uncle. There was a miscommunication between the MY, who intended to instill politeness, and AN, who feels that her name has been defamed. Such miscommunication occurs in several cases of defamation (Ikeo, 2012).

Eventually, this utterance has perlocution of humiliating MY to the public for not being responsible for his lease and disturbing other's lives for putting them into his problem.

On December 11, 2020, MY called AN's husband after sending a screenshot of AN's Facebook status. AN said that MY blustered that time but did not precisely know what he was talking about. On the same day, MY commented on her status as follows.

"He nduk nek duwe masalah Karo aku Moro neng omahku Ojo koar koar neng medsos, Kowe Kuwi seorang guru kudu ne tingkah lakumu kudu ISO di guguh kan di tiru, elingo nduk Kowe dadi manten sopo seng kalangkabut ngurusi, tempikmu bosok sopo sengurusi opo bojomu, opo morotuwomu, opo wong tuwo mu, anakmu mati ping Piro sopo seng ngurusi, Kabeh mau seng ngurusi ora loyo Yo pak lek Mul Karo Bulik sati, nek Kowe ora ngerti tekono Karo wong seng ngerti agomo Karo wong seng ngerti tatanane Urip, Kowe Kuwi sopo Kowe Kuwi mung mantu ponakan di jogo cocotmu elingo nduk karma iku berlaku" dan "Cocote seng nom ora nduwe Toto kromo, wong tuwo wes meneng malah seng Enom ngaplot ndik FB, di kiro wong tuwek Wedi Karo dapurane".

"Hei Nduk, if you got a problem with me, just come to my house. Don't post it on social media. You know, right, you are a teacher who should be a good example to others. Just remember, when you got married, it was me who handled everything; when you got genitals sore, it was also me who took care of you, not your husband nor your parents; even when your children passed away, it was also me who handled everything. Nobody did all of them but me, your uncle, and aunt Sati. If you don't understand manners, just ask those who understand religion and those who understand the culture. Don't you know? You are just niece-in-law for me, so just shut your mouth up. And one last thing, karma is real; I've kept silent, but you still cannot close your mouth, and instead, you made a status on FB. You think I'm afraid of you?"

The above Facebook comment is reported to defame AN. It belongs to constative utterances that report, inform, and state the contents of the utterance. The utterance,

analyzed with the speech acts approach, has an illocution warning, if AN had a problem with MY, she was asked to come to his house and discuss the problem together instead of defaming him on social media. He also emphasized that AN had to honor her profession as a teacher that had to be an excellent example for other people (Ghofar, 2019). What was conveyed by MY was appropriate for AN to do if she wanted to resolve the problem. In Javanese society, it is common and appropriate for the young to respect the older in the family context (Wardani & Uyun, 2017). In this context, AN is MY's niece-in-law.

MY tried to remind her of everything he had done to her. When AN got married, it was MY who handled everything; when AN got a genitals sore, it was MY who took care of her; when AN's children passed away, it was also MY and Aunt Sati (supposedly MY's wife) who handled everything. It is suspected that MY's utterance is underlined by his feeling of a surprise why AN could utter something like that on Facebook, which can eventually defame him.

MY advised AN to come with someone who understands religion and someone who understands manners in his house. He also warns AN that she is just a niece-in-law, and thus she must keep her mouth—MY tries to emphasize her social distance in the family—besides, MY talks about karma and has to be more careful in uttering words. In the end, MY emphasizes that he has kept silent until AN posted her status about him. In Javanese culture, what she has done is called '*nglunjak*' (cross the line).

MY's utterance has illocution to embarrass AN because she advised on social media instead of direct utterance. Additionally, this statement contained personal matters about AN, as implied in the post. It embarrassed AN further. Furthermore, MY's utterance has the perlocutionary effect. If it is considered positive by AN, she should be aware of her mistake in posting a status on Facebook and try to improve her politeness to people who are older than her. Isosävi (2020) states that in this era, parents face the reality of children's politeness as per the environmental context. Similarly, Su (2019) states that the reporter failed to obey the politeness norm in a public context: social media. Therefore, AN

should come directly to MY to apologize for her faults. Hopefully, it can calm down the problem of both parties since they are still relatives. Moreover, in the Javanese context, if AN does not apologize to MY, she will be considered a person who knows no manner.

Meanwhile, if the perlocution is taken negatively, AN will consider MY's comment an insult. However, AN must remember that MY wrote the comment as a reaction to her own status. Additionally, MY's comment is pure words of advice from an older person to the younger since she has crossed the line.

Mediation Formulation of Defamation Cases on Social Media

This defamation case can be categorized as a criminal case, which may be resolved by mediation as an alternative to resolving cases outside the court under the cultural context. Therefore, mediation may be a wise choice to solve the problem (Megeirhi et al., 2020) and, simultaneously, educate both parties about their faults and what they should do (Chang et al., 2019). Moreover, mediation can reduce anger and social aggression among both parties (Li & Xia, 2020).

The purpose of mediation is to resolve disputes between parties by involving a neutral or impartial third party. Therefore, the third person in mediation is essential to maintain neutrality and fairness (Song et al., 2019).

Problem-solving through mediation is an alternative solution because it is not regulated in the Criminal Procedure Code (KUHAP). Still, in practice, mediation is mainly used to solve problems within the community. Therefore, the mediation is usually carried out by using a cultural approach.

The basis of mediation in a defamation case is based on social and cultural norms prevailing in society. There are no standard rules in the Criminal Procedure Code relating to mediation, which raises many pros and cons on what types of crimes can be solved with mediation.

Only a few criminal cases can be resolved through mediation. Raharjo (2008) found several criminal cases that could be resolved through mediation according to the Criminal Code: insults/defamation (article 310), slander/libel (article 311), persecution (article 351), minor persecution (article 352

paragraph 1), carelessness causing the death of a person (article 359), embezzlement (article 372), fraud (article 378), adultery (article 285), escaping underage girls (article 332), and thievery by family members (article 367 paragraph 2). However, it is still possible for other criminal cases to be solved through mediation by considering various aspects.

Principally, a defamation case can be resolved through mediation, considering several aspects. First, the defamation case has not been reported to the police, so the settlement's control is in both parties' hands. Meanwhile, suppose the defamation case has been reported to the police. In that case, the police can act as a mediator or appoint a third person to be a mediator and carry out the mediation process. The third person plays an essential role in mediating a case due to their neutrality and fairness in facing both parties (Ho et al., 2019). The mediator is assigned to find solutions to the problems at hand by bringing together arguments from both parties.

If the mediation process does not involve a third person, then both parties can carry out a negotiation. The negotiation can be attended by the victim and the perpetrator or represented by their families. The negotiation process is successful if they have reached an agreement, and the case is closed with both parties obeying the agreement. If mediation and negotiation still fail, the case will be handled by the police.

In this context, mediation can be carried out using a cultural approach based on both parties' backgrounds, Javanese culture. Since this case has been included in the police report, investigators can use forensic linguistic analysis of the utterances of the two parties for mediation. Two things should be a basis for investigators during mediation.

First, it is AN instead who may be reported of committing defamation by uploading a Facebook status on December 10, 2020: "*Ksh no org itu permisi dl ... kita yg tdk berhutang sm leasing motor da telatx bayar kok kita yg tlp2..bikin muyek aja.kl pny tanggungan bayar tepat waktu biar tdk meresahkan org yg tdk th apa2.*" Second, MY and AN should take mediation because they still have family relations as an uncle and nephew. Third, as a younger person, AN should take the initiative

to meet MY and apologize because that is how Javanese etiquette works.

In the end, AN can withdraw her report using the results of expert statements, and both parties agree to end the dispute by the given recommendations. Based on the case and the settlement with the cultural approach, it proves that the cultural approach as part of data analysis of defamation cases can be an alternative mediation.

The police investigators, as the third party, have successfully carried out their role as a mediator by utilizing a cultural approach. It shows that both parties are willing to follow the advice and considerations of forensic linguistic analysis. Indeed, in a case involving the use of language, both the reporting and reported parties are more likely to accept the mediation and the given suggestions. In this context, expert statements containing case analysis with a cultural approach become an instrument for police investigators to mediate both parties. The linguists' statements are not limited to analyzing case data with a cultural approach, but at the same time using a cultural approach as a mediation approach.

CONCLUSION

Based on the overall analysis, several conclusions are drawn. First, AN has a higher chance of being the perpetrator of the defamation. Second, both parties should take mediation because they still have family relations. Third, as a younger person, AN should take the initiative to visit MY and apologize because that is how it should be in the context of Javanese culture. Fourth, we made this analysis based on linguistic knowledge, without any coercion and direction from any party. Finally, the case ended peacefully with the mediation by police investigators based on the directions of linguists as outlined in the expert's statement.

A cultural approach can be effective in handling defamation cases by prioritizing mediation. A shared cultural perspective can touch the personal feeling of individuals so that they can understand each other. Therefore, in analyzing legal data, supporting data is needed in the form of a complete understanding of both parties' cultural backgrounds. If the initial data submitted by the investigator is still limited, the linguist can ask the police investigator to explore cultural information

based on case data and witness statements. Furthermore, a practical, cultural approach in defamation cases can be studied and applied in other cases, such as insults and threats. In

addition, it is necessary to examine the pattern of mediation in handling cases of different cultural laws.

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