Communication Behavior of Korean Roleplayer Community on Twitter: A Virtual Ethnographic Study

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Abstract

This study aims to find out how the communication behavior carried out by Korean roleplayers community on Twitter. Researchers use a virtual ethnographic approach to obtain comprehensive data, with data collection techniques including utilization of NVivo software for big data analysis, interviews with the roleplayers for data deepening, observing the communication behavior of roleplayer accounts in real time, and documenting their activities by taking screenshoots on accounts with specific communication behavior. The results showed that the prominent communication behaviors carried out by Korean RPs community were social interactions such as getting acquainted, chatting, making friends, dating, and conflicting. In doing so, the roleplayers use the facilities provided by Twitter, and use those facilities to create their exclusive media, such as RP-only base auto menfess accounts, RP base agency accounts, and unlabeled RP base accounts. The roleplayers also use media other than Twitter such as KakaoTalk, Plato, RP base accounts, and Cyber Accounts. Each of these media represents a degree of closeness between each other. The communication behavior of these roleplayers proves that the Theory of Dramatism prevails in cyber communication, where we can find elements of dramaticism such as actors, plots, and tensions. Meanwhile, the fact that the variety of media they use represents the quality of their relationships proves the validity of the Media Multiplexity Theory as well.

Keyword: Communication Behaviour, Roleplayer, Virtual Ethnography, Dramatism, Media Multiplexity

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

The development of technology in this millennial era have provided many benefits for society. The technology that at least has been owned and used by almost everyone are computers, laptops, and cell phones. The technology that enables face-to-face interaction is called "internet". Thanks to internet, people's lives have changed a lot because of the industrial revolution. Digital transformation which is illustrated as an exchange of data in the field of communication technology and is very sophisticated is called the industrial revolution 4.0 (Palupi and Fitri, 2020).

Today's society is very open to New Media such as social media. Based on an article from DataIndonesia.id, Indonesia has a large number of active social media users, about 170 million and around 61.8 percent of the population in 2021 (Karnadi, 2021). With that many users, new communities emerged on social media that are frequently visited by many users, one of the most talked about communities is the K-Popers community. People who like Korean Pop (K-Pop) culture are called K-Popers or K-Pop Lovers.

Suray Agung Nugroho in his paper entitled 'Hallyu and Indonesia' describes the arrival of the Korean Wave in Indonesia when the Indosiar TV station presented a popular drama titled "Endless Love" in the 2000s. The drama starring Song Hye Kyo and Won Bin, was then re-aired on RCTI TV station. This is where more and more people in Indonesia are starting to get to know South Korea so that things like fashion, makeup, drama, or music are in great demand in our country (Nugroho, 1997). Based on Twitter report released on January 26 2021, the highest number of K-Popers on Twitter is held by K-Popers Indonesia. Not only as the country with the largest number of K-Pop fans on Twitter, Indonesia also recorded a record as the country that talks about K-Pop the most on this social media platform. Indonesia's position was then followed by the Philippines, South Korea, Thailand, the United States, Mexico, Malaysia, Brazil, India and Japan (CNN Indonesia, 2022).

On social media Twitter, there is cyber culture that arises from various phenomena in it, one of which is the representation of virtual identity where a person can form an identity as theirself, imitate others, or even deliberately not display any information about their identity (anonymous) (Maulida, 2020). Fans of Korean culture who are active on social media Twitter then discovered what is called a "roleplayer". Roleplayer is someone who does the roleplay activity itself. This roleplayer belongs to the phenomenon of virtual identity representation because the players imitate other people (idols) and do not display any information about their real or anonymous identities. Roleplay can be interpreted as

pretending to be someone else. This game requires players to play the role of imagination, working together to construct stories and play out the story. Players perform actions such as tasks chosen according to the character's role.

In roleplaying, Korean roleplayers displayed communication behaviors. Behavior is a function of the interaction between an individual and his environment. Actions or actions of organisms that can be learned or observed are called behavior. Communication behavior is an act of verbal or non-verbal communication that is found in a person's behavior (Rorimpandey, 2016). Through Twitter, Korean roleplayers interact with fellow roleplayers such as making acquaintances, making friends, exchanging information about each other's characters, and other activities they can do to communicate. Communication carried out by Korean roleplayers and the communication that exists between them is a communication behavior. The communication behaviors that occurred were carried out by Korean roleplayers because of their own will and there was no coercion from other factors. The existence of behaviors of Korean roleplayers in communicating and social interactions that occur through social media Twitter, made researchers interested in observing this problem and made this research titled "Communication Behavior of Korean Roleplayer Community on Twitter: A Virtual Ethnographic Study".

1.2 Research Objective
To describe the communication behavior of Korean roleplayers on the Twitter platform.

1.3 Research Question
How does the Korean roleplayers display their communication behaviour on Twitter?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Dramatism Theory
According to Kenneth Burke (1945), Dramatism is a theory that tries to understand the act of human life as a drama. Kenneth Burke thinks that human life is a drama in itself. The goal of Dramatism itself is to provide a logical explanation in order to understand the motives of human action, or why humans do what they do. In the realm of Dramatism, something can be called a drama if it uses a number of situations related to conflict (Burke, 1966:29). To show the scenes on the drama stage, a situation is needed. Situations that occur in dramatization are characterized by conflict so that various intertwined scenes form plots or plots. Dramatism pays attention to language as a form of social action, all forms of symbolic action that occur in social relations are drama, and within these symbolic actions the use of rhetoric is developed to overcome situations experienced by individuals as social actors (Suparno, 2011).

Dramatism includes five terms necessary for a complete analysis of motives. Burke names these terms: "act" (what was done), "scene" (when or where it was done), "agent" (who did it), "agency" (how the agent did it), and "purpose" (why something is done). In Burke's theory, every narrative action is motivated by some aspect of the scene, agent, agency, purpose, or a combination of one or more of these (Burke, 2003).

2.2 Media Multiplexity Theory

Media Multiplexity is a theory that examines how people change communication channels that are useful as a way for 21st century relational maintenance (Aldira and Agustin, 2022). This theory was first developed in 2005 when the era of chat, telephone, and e-mail was gaining ground. But in the era of digital communication as it is now, what is taking over is social media such as for example Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and many more. Samuel Hardman Taylor explains that Media Multiplexity focuses on how the various media platforms on the internet create new forms of communication among people on the internet, and how that pave the way for future forms of communication, and build relationships among online users (Hardman, 2017). Media Multiplexity shows that relationships can be maintained using various communication media so that harmonious relationships can be created (Aldira and Agustin, 2022). This theory examines how pre-existing relationships were created, whether they began with face-to-face interactions or online contact, and how the internet has influenced these relationships to become what they are now. According to research on this idea, many people prefer online connections to in-person ones because they find it simpler to express themselves online (Parks and Floyd, 1996). The main focus of Media Multiplexity Theory is using multiple media to maintain interpersonal relationships (Balayar and Langlais, 2021).

2.3 Computer Mediated Communications

CMC is an asynchronous communication tool that can send one-to-one and one-to-many messages and at different times, so in other words CMC allows for another life. The other life in question is virtual life and is a form of CMC. Some forms of CMC include chat rooms, discussion boards, instant messaging, and virtual worlds (Puspita, 2015). One form of manifestation of Computer Mediated Communication is social media. Social media is a platform that focuses on the existence of users who provide facilities for activities or collaboration. Social media is a medium on the internet that provides opportunities for users to present themselves or share, communicate, interact, collaborate with other users and can form a virtual social bond. Therefore, social media can be referred to as online media that strengthens relationships between users as well as social ties. In human life in the 21st century around the world, social media is one of the most important internet-based and digitizing applications. Social media provides many facilities that can be used to interact with other people, this is also one of the advantages of social media.

III. METHODOLOGY

Qualitative method is used in this study with a virtual ethnography approach. A study strategy for examining social interactions that occur in virtual worlds is virtual ethnography. These exchanges frequently take place online on websites like newsgroups, chat rooms, and discussion forums. The research subject of this study is the Korean roleplayers on Twitter. And the research object is the communication behavior of Korean roleplayers on Twitter, like how they usually interact with each other. Data collection techniques that used by researchers were big data analytics, interviews, observations, and documentation in the form of photos or videos.

IV. FINDINGS

The researcher found that in the roleplayer world, there are accounts called base roleplayers. The base roleplayer account on Twitter or what is commonly called "base RP" by roleplayers is a place where roleplayers can find friends and interact with fellow roleplayers. These base accounts are created by someone who plays roleplayer and then managed by some admins or caretakers, who are also roleplayers. The duties of the owner and caretaker also vary, starting from paying attention to the condition of the base account, changing the account profile according to the provisions and rules of each base, also reprimands anyone who violates the base account rules and even gives sanctions to those who break the rules. There are 4 types of base RP accounts wihich are auto-menfess base, Open Agency base, Closed Agency base, and unlabeled base.

There are several characteristics found in Korean base roleplayer accounts on Twitter. Account creators or admins are the communicators who convey the message, they also make the rules for the followers. Meanwhile, the followers are communicants who provide feedback and respond back to the admin by obeying the rules and reporting to the account creator or admin if a rule violation is found. Korean roleplayers who follow the base accounts will be given the facilities that the base has, such as auto-menfess, making friends, playing games, attending events, and so on. The rules in the base are made by the account creator as a communicator and must be obeyed by all followers or base members as communicants. The language used is listed in the rules for each base, such as Indonesian, English, Korean, Thai, and others. Anonymity only exists in auto-menfess base where the identity of the message senders is unknown, whereas in other types of roleplayer base there is no anonymity because the communicator and communican tell the identity of the characters they play. The forms of interaction that occur in roleplayer base also vary, such as chatting, discussing, venting, promoting something, looking for friends or partners, and so on.

Communication behavior that exists in Korean roleplayer relationships on Twitter are :

1.   The initiation of interaction
Language has many function, one of them is to bind a person with their environment. To start a relationship or conversation, Korean roleplayers take the initiative to socialize with fellow others. They socialize with each other with sending menfess. To start the interaction, relevant keywords such as "friends", "mutuals", or "chat" have to exist in the menfess.

2.   Making friends

Friendship is a relationship that occurs between two or more people with the aim of socializing. The interaction initiation carried out by the Korean RP will result a chat, and the chat will continue if the topic continues. And then friendship can be happened between Korean roleplayers. Korean roleplayers can make friends by joining roleplayer agency, sending menfess, replying to menfess, joining roleplayer squad, and posting tweets looking for friends which will then retweeted by mutuals.

3. Dating

Apart from being friends, Korean roleplayers can also have romantic relationships. One of the ways they do to find a partner is by participating in a matchmaking event held by @WeGotLoves. Apart from that, they can also establish a love relationship by joining a roleplayer agency where members have to interact every day, thus allowing romantic feelings to grow between them.

4. Fighting or having conflicts

Kenneth Duva Burke said the goal of Dramatism is to provide a logical explanation for understanding the motives for human action, or why people do what they do. Burke has the view that life is not like a drama, but life itself is a drama. While having a conflict, Korean roleplayer requires a special situation as well as in interpersonal communication. This situation then forms a plot that is enveloped in a tense atmosphere. There are several terms that they use in the conflict, the term here is the same as "language" or "symbol" as described by Kenneth Burke. The examples are "chara", "pap", "mun". The creators of the terms in roleplayer itself are unknown, Korean roleplayers usually use these terms because they just go along with it. This can be strengthened by the results of interviews conducted by the researcher with informants and also by the results of the researcher's observations. While conducting an interview with a roleplayer of Dayeon from Kep1er, the researcher asked about the meaning and where the terms that the Korean roleplayers using came from, which Dayeon said "So basically, the terms in roleplayer arose because someone used it for the first time and it went popular".

According to Media Multiplexity Theory, the stronger the bond between online users, the more media are used to maintain the relationship. It is the same with Korean roleplayers, the closer they are with their roleplayer mutuals, the more they will interact with them on platforms other than Twitter. In the Korean roleplayer community on Twitter, they don't only interact and socialize using Twitter, but there are several other platforms. This alternative social media platform is used by roleplayers to interact more privately, and usually only roleplayers who are close to each other will exchange alternative social media. Based on the results of a big data search using NVivo, it was found that social media such as KakaoTalk and Plato are widely used by Korean roleplayers. KakaoTalk or commonly called KKT is a chatting application made in South Korea which is available for smartphone users which allows users to send messages as well as voice calls, video calls, file sharing, group chats, and other features. Meanwhile, Plato is a social media platform that allows its users to meet other users from around the world to play lots of online games. Online games on Plato include pool, mini golf, bingo, ludo, bankroll, ocho.

Based on the results of interviews with informants, it was stated that they use social media other than Twitter to maintain close contact and interact with their roleplayer friends. The researcher concludes that the closer Korean roleplayer is to their friends, the more they will interact with them on platforms other than Twitter such as KakaoTalk and Plato. The bonds that exist between fellow Korean roleplayers are weak bonds and strong bonds. According to the Media Multiplexity Theory, weak bonds occur between individuals who know each other but are not close, whereas strong bonds occur between individuals who share closeness or intimacy such as family, friends, or partners. Weak bonds and strong bonds also occur between Korean roleplayers because not all of them are friends or partners with each other, but can also be just acquaintances. However, with account exchanges such as KakaoTalk, Cyber Account, and Plato, it is possible for them to interact more frequently and get to know each other more closely.

V. CONCLUSION

The communication behavior of the Korean roleplayers on Twitter is a practice of CMC. Those interactions can happen because it is done with a computer that connected to internet. The interactions are chatting, discussing, making friends, dating, attending events, and playing games. The dramatism that occurs in the Korean roleplayers on Twitter includes actors, conflict, situations, atmosphere, plot, and symbols. The media that the Korean roleplayers used beside Twitter are KakaoTalk and Plato. Twitter as a social media, has sub-media that has facilities in it. There are two sub-medias used by Korean roleplayers on Twitter, which are base roleplayer account and cyber account. According to the data found, Korean

roleplayers most often interact on certain days, namely towards weekends and also during weekends because on these days they have free time for roleplaying.

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