

**Research Article**

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**Happy Birthday: Form and Function of Language**

Oktiva Herry Chandra

Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Diponegoro, Semarang, Indonesia

**Abstract**

This article tells about the structure of greeting discourse, how people think about it and its function in social interaction. One of language functions is to tighten solidarity among members of a community. This can be done by using some expressions that show a positive intention of speaker to hearer. Saying congratulation to someone who has this special moment, such as birthday celebration, is one way to realize this function. When doing so, s/he is not only expressing her/his true feeling. Behind it, that expression represents diverse perception and value owned by people who produce and interpret them. The data were collected from the conversation contained in WA mobile application. They are taken from two groups, namely *Semarak Juring* and *Dosen dan Tendik*. The method of non-participatory participation was used and was followed by note taking technique. The result shows that the different representation of birthday greeting indicates various social relation between addresser and addressee. This representation also marks different functions of birthday greetings

**Keywords:** form, function, social function, sympathy and respect

**1. Introduction**

It has become a tradition in a social interaction for people to show empathy and sympathy as one of them is experiencing a good thing or bad thing in their life. This is usually realized in various ways; they show their feeling by giving material token, such as flower, or they may also give their attention by saying some greetings which are arranged by using selected and touching words. This type of interaction is experienced by every single person as they want to fulfill one of the communication functions, namely social functions.

Saying a happy birthday to someone who is celebrating that special moment is a manifestation of this social function. The media used is very diverse; some use letter cards, e-mail, or use certain applications in online media, such as mobile phones. Each device used will give different characteristics to other devices. This difference depends from the advantages and limitations of the device. When someone uses a card. The speech delivered will be limited and use less varied sentences, because cards usually have to be printed in large quantities. As the time goes by, people start thinking of using other facilities. One of alternatives is media on line, namely WA mobile application. People change from the traditional to modern one as this communication facility provides low-cost and ever faster transporter. Unlike the traditional media, people can write anything with a relatively short time and can be sent quickly as the use WA. People will be able to send more varieties of strong and expressive expressions. The weakness of this tool is the limited number of characters. Due to the limited space, the message will usually overlap with other incoming information. Thus, there are still weak and specific characteristics of each device.

An utterance in communication involving addressers and greetings will result in a conversation

structure that contains information exchange. Each utterance contains a message and this message is also functioned for a specific purpose. Austin (1962)<sup>[1]</sup> asserts that every speaker will do three things simultaneously in every communication act, which is to produce, use utterances for certain functions and give effect to the speech partners. There are no utterances that do not function socially. In terms of Searle (1976)<sup>[2]</sup> utterances can function as a medium to convey a fact, to make others do something, to express feelings and thoughts, to get someone to do what they say and to change or to create an intended status of an entity.

Saying birthday to a colleague or relative fulfilling one of the above functions. It is an expression used to convey feelings and thoughts to the person being addressed. It can turn into a wish or greeting wish for something good to be part of the dynamics of life. Viewed in social correlation, this expression reflects the desire of the addresser to be part of a society that has a good degree of solidarity. The principle of harmony and respect, according to Geertz as quoted by Magnis-Suseno, (1983: 86)<sup>[3]</sup> becomes a reference for Javanese people and eastern culture in general, when they establish a communication with other member of a speech community member. Birthday greetings are a reflection of this attitude. They, addressers and greetings, use these utterances to show solidarity and respect. This is not just a phrase whose meaning is only limited to words. Behind this utterance contained social values that have values of kindness and become a common understanding. Therefore, sometimes there are people who feel uncomfortable when not doing it.

In this paper, the author will discuss the structure and function of birthday greetings taken from several conversations contained on the WA mobile application at the Faculty of Humanities. The method of data retrieval is to use an engaged and free method of listening. The data collected is then analyzed to see the structure of the discourse, community perceptions and functions in association in the WA group. From the results of the analysis will be seen all three aspects.

## **2. Methods**

The design of this research is qualitative. The location is Semarang, especially the Faculty of Humanities, Undip. The type of data is written data taken from conversations in WA in *Semarak Juring* and *Dosen dan Tendik*. These two groups of communication facilitate the transportation of message and information among the members of faculty. The topics are various. Addressers give statement on very personal to official topic. Data on this research are conversation data among members of faculty on birthday greetings to a colleague and the response given to the greeting. Data were collected by using a non-participatory observation method. This method is accompanied by two other techniques, namely recording and recording techniques. There are 50 writings taken as research samples. Data processing is done by classifying and grouping. These processes are followed by analyzing the data.

## **3. Results**

The structure of discourse in conveying sympathy and empathy in the form of a birthday celebration greeting usually consists of three parts, namely; Opening, Content and Closing. In the opening section, the addresser shows empathy by giving a speech. The addresser uses several languages to convey it. Some use English "Happy Birth Day", Javanese "*Sunggeng Ambal Warsa*" and Indonesian "*Selamat Ulang Tahun*". It is often found the delivered speeches are written in a short and concise manner, for example HBD for Happy Birth Day, SUT or *Met Ultah* for *Selamat ulang Tahun* and SAW for *Sunggeng Ambal Warsa*. The difference in the use of these various language codes is usually influenced by social relations between the addresser and the addressee. The use of different languages itself marks the nature of the relationship. The use of the Javanese language version of the Javanese language *Krama* shows that the addresser wants to show a relationship of mutual respect with the recipient, because this language code is usually used in the asymmetrical nature of the relationship, giving respect to others. On the other hand, the use of English represents the symmetrical and egalitarian nature of the relationship; the addresser sees the relationship between her/himself and

the addressee in an equal position. The option of using Indonesian is in between. It can be drawn towards the nature of the symmetrical relationship and can also be drawn toward the asymmetrical relationship.

Writing in the long and short versions also shows this social relationship. The long version of Happy Birth Day, *Sugeng Ambal Warsa*, and *Selamat Ulang Tahun* is commonly used by those who place the addressee as a respected and valued person or because the addresser deliberately keeps a distance from personal reasons. Writing this version will usually be followed by a series of words and phrases that are formal. Formality is characterized by the use of words or phrases that are intact and do not experience shortening and follow good and correct writing standards. In contrast, writing greetings with a short or short version, including HBD, SUT or Met Ultah, and SAW marks a socially close relationship between addresser and addressee. The nature of this relationship ignores other factors, such as age and power. It is possible that writing with this version was sent by someone younger than the addressee and was addressed to someone with higher power. This writing version is also marked with a short and concise message content.

In the opening section, addressers or addressers also frequently include term of address. Writing terms of address by addressers inform the addressee about the nature of the relationship being communicated; whether the addresser is in the position of giving respect, of marking a close relationship, and of just expressing empathy. Respectful relationships are usually marked by mentioning titles (Prof. X, Mr / Mrs Deans, Mr / Mrs Head of department etc.), and full names (Mr / Mrs XXX, Ms / Mrs XXX etc.). The inclusion of such greeting words will usually be supported by expressions that refer to writing in a formal style, the use of phrases and longer sentences, as in the following example "may always be bestowed healthy favors, age favors, and blessings fortune ... Aamiin".

When the social relationship between addresser and addressee is close and intimate, the terms of address used are different. The mention of the addressee name is usually incomplete forms, for example *Bu. Sri* who is the first syllable of the name *Srikedah* or taken from the last syllable, such as *Mba Ning* from *Mba Yaning*. The use of nick name '*paraban*', for example *mas Blangkon*, *Maknyah Ratna*, *mas Bro* or *mba Bro* is also one marker of this type of relationship. This will usually be followed by phrases or sentences that are not formal, concise and concise, as in the following example "*semoga barokah*" hopefully God bless you or the addressers mix the codes with other languages "*Selamat Ultah, mas Bro...all the best*". "... Happy birthday, Mas Bro ... all the best".

The second part of the birthday greeting discourse contains prayers or hopes and attitudes of addressers towards getting older. The attitude of addressers towards this phenomenon of age has several views. Some people see birthday celebration not just increasing the number attached to a person's age, but it is mostly as a pleasure bestowed upon people in the world. This enjoyment is equal with other material pleasures, such as fortune, health and other worldly pleasures. There are also those who see birthday as a reduction in "rations" to be able to live in the world and enjoy life. Human age has an end, every time there is an addition, it means that it reduces the rest of life to that end. This is reflected in the phrase "*selamat menikmati dan mensyukuri sisa usia bu XXX...*" "enjoy and be grateful for the rest of the age of Mrs. XXX ...". Other addressers, this phenomenon is seen as a change to welcome a new age and leave old age. Here a birthday is seen as a change from something old to something new, not just changing days, months and years. The new age phrase implies a new life and hope that is totally different from the previous year. This is seen in the saying "*Selamat ulang tahun bu XXX. Selamat mensyukuri usia baru yang semoga selalu ...*". "Happy birthday, mom, XXX. Congratulations on thanking you for the new age, hopefully ... "

The second part of this type of discourse is also a place to say prayers and hopes for the addressees. The most dominant prayer delivered is prayer for health. This prayer supersedes the position of prayer in the form of greetings for long-lived to addressee that previously dominates when the birthday greetings were conveyed by card. Health is a top priority in one's life. This is understandable because health is expensive in the current era. It seems they want to say what is the

meaning of long life if you suffer pain throughout his age. This prayer will be followed by a request of luck or success in a better career as in the following statement “ ....*semoga makin sehat, makin sukses dan dimudahkan dan dilancarkan urusannya....*”. Prayer for healthy and luck is relatively much delivered by addressers.

On the other hand, others see health and happiness as the most important thing in life. The expression of happiness is partly written with the adjective *happy* or is always replaced by *cheerful*. This can be seen from one example, “*semoga tetap hepi dan ceria selalu*” “hoping you are happy and cheerful”. In addition to the two adjectives: healthy-fortune and healthy-happy, blessing is also a very important thing for some others. The adjectives of *blessing* is more often placed at the end of a birthday greeting. This word is a closing prayer and hope. This can be interpreted as blessing being the key of all; the health that is obtained, the abundant fortune will be more meaningful when all of them get blessing from the Creator. Blessing for Muslims means usefulness for others. This word is not identical with the amount of pleasure. A lot of favors are not meant as a blessing, when there is no impact or benefit for others. Thus, when blessing is a part of someone's prayer, the addresser, the word or phrase can be interpreted as a request to the addressee.

The final part of the discourse is marked in various ways. The most frequently occurring is the closing prayer in the form of the word *Aamiin* which means "Grant Our Prayer". The birthday greetings are basically in the form of requests or prayers to God and not only as a sign of the celebration of one's age, so it is very understandable if this statement ends with this closing word. This word or phrase does not always appear at the end of the utterance. Sometimes it will be replaced with other icons, such as flowers, hearts in red, birthday cakes, or no closing marker at all.

## **5. Conclusions**

The birthday greeting discourse, besides having a structure as a communication device, it also has a social function. The most basic function is as a means to strengthen solidarity between elements in society, especially between friends. It is a reminder that marks a change or increase in a person's age. When someone delivers a birthday greeting to someone else, he is showing a degree of closeness, respect and hope to the person being addressed. All of that can be seen through the written data, phrases and sentences, even without having to express it explicitly. Happy birthday greetings are not meant simply as a change of days, months and years, more than that, they describe attitudes or perceptions, prayers and hopes, and wishes of addressers.

## **References**

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