MULTIMODAL CORONAVIRUS MEMES: METAFUNCTION ANALYSIS

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisa fakta kondisi sosial yang terjadi semasa pandemi virus corona, khususnya rasa ketakutan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan semiotika sosial. Rumusan masalah yang digunakan adalah (1) Apa saja bentuk ketakutan pada meme virus corona, dan (2) Bagaimana aplikasi Memes menggambarkan ketakutan pada virus corona. Penelitian ini menggunakan tiga teori metafungsi dalam linguistik fungsional sistemik (SFL) yang diusulkan oleh Kress & Leeuwen. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi kasus dan dilengkapi informasi yang diperoleh dengan deskripsi data. Penulis menggunakan buku dan jurnal ilmiah, sumber data diunduh dari Memes Apps, dan tahap akhir menyimpulkan hasil analisis. Berdasarkan hasil penelitian ditemukan proses ideasional, tekstual dan interpersonal. Mode visual dan verbal dapat memudahkan pembaca menangkap representasi yang disampaikan pembuat meme virus corona.

Kata kunci: ketakutan, meme, virus korona, SFL, Metafungsi

Abstract

This research aims to reveal evidence on the facts of social conditions that occur due to the coronavirus pandemic, particularly emotions of fear. This study uses a social semiotics approach. The formulation of the problem discussed is (1) What are the forms of fear in coronavirus memes, and (2) How do the coronavirus memes depict fear on the Memes app. This research uses Kress & Leeuwen's three metafunction theory and systemic functional linguistics (SFL). This research uses a qualitative descriptive method using a case study approach and is equipped with a description of the data and information obtained. The author uses books and scientific journals, the data source is downloaded from Memes Apps, and the final stage concludes the results of the analysis. Based on the results of this research, ideational, textual and interpersonal processes were found. Visual and verbal modes can make it easier for readers to capture the representation conveyed by the creator of the coronavirus meme.

Keywords: fear, meme, coronavirus, SFL, metafunction

1. Introduction

Since the first official announcement on December 31 2019 by the Wuhan Municipal Health Commission (WHO, 2020), Covid-19 quickly spread in China until it spread to other countries between the end of 2019 and the beginning of 2020. Anticipating and reducing the number of coronavirus sufferers, WHO implemented maintaining physical distance and large-scale movement restrictions, which are known as lockdowns or regional quarantines, to slow the spread of COVID-19. Based on WHO, 2021 data, the total number of global deaths caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 was at least

3.4 million. The relatively high number of COVID-19 death cases has resulted in individuals starting to fear that they will be infected by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Fear is defined as an unpleasant emotion caused by the belief that someone or something is dangerous, likely to cause pain or a threat (Press, 2001). According to human behavior expert Dr. Gail Gross, the emotion of fear is a basic survival tactic that is built into the human species. Fear originated in the early days of mankind in the form of the human body's fight-or-flight response as a means of protection from environmental dangers such as the global pandemic -coronavirus disease.

The word meme was first introduced in the book The Selfish Gene (Dawkins, 1976). The word meme originally came from the Greek word 'Mimeme' which has the meaning of being the smallest designation of cultural units that are similar to genes. Dawkins suggests how memes are described as a unit capable of reproduction, like genes that develop by multiplying from one body to another through sperm and egg cells. Dawkins also put forward the term meme to tell the principles of Darwinism in explaining the spread of cultural ideas or phenomena.

Internet memes are not viruses, but they do make it possible to communicate about viruses, especially if the virus is - due to a global pandemic - a ubiquitous topic. As a means of communication, facilitating discursive exchanges about events within society and criticism. Memes are a means of conveying information using images or writing media to entertain and the message conveyed is easy to understand by readers. Currently, memes are being used as a means of voicing social conditions, particularly the fear of coronavirus disease.

There are three previous studies related to this study, first, a study conducted by (Isnaniyah & Agustina, 2020) aims to reveal the meaning and the social representation of Covid-19 memes in social media using the theory of semiology by Barthes. Some forms of memes, such as critical memes, parodist memes, and motivating memes, were used to depict the social conditions. Covid-19 memes exposed several social issues such as rising unemployment, changing life routine, changing the management of education, closing public access, and social distancing.

The second previous study was a study by (Siregar et al., 2019), which analyzed 21 internet memes taken from the Meme Comic Indonesia instagram wall (MCI). The s Study employs Van Leeuwen's multimodal critical discourse analysis. The findings revealed five types of stereotyped language about women: women's personality characteristics, cooking domestic behaviour, physical appearances, teaching occupation, and motorcycle driving behaviour. The process of stereotyping women is also exposed in viewing the background of the features used by the creator. The motives for using stereotyped language as humour about women is shown by the creator as critics and warning attempts.

The last previous study written by (Devi, Pratiwy, and Sri, 2018) examines television commercials that show verbal and visual elements with Dettol (protecting children version). The research is carried out using (Halliday, 2004) Linguistic Functional Systemic and incorporating multimodal theory from (Anstev, M & Bull, 2010), and (Kress, G. & Van Leeuwen, 2006), whereas (Cheong, 2004) formulation used to evaluate the generic structure of advertising. The visual elements used in this analysis confirm to Hermawan's specifications (2013). The findings indicate that a theoretical paradigm focused on functional grammar and visual grammar is adaptable to multimodal TV advertising discourse. The findings indicate that ads have the most precise understanding of the message through linguistic and nonlinguistic analysis. Based on the research, the advertising comprised two kinds of elements, which combined to convey ideas that reinforce the brand message.

Hence, based on the description above, there are differences and similarities with this research. This research puts the coronavirus meme as a social image. Researchers focus on the images and words or sentences that are selected in the meme. In addition, researchers use the Memes app as research subjects who have never been analyzed by other researchers. Thus, this study is expected to provide a deep understanding of meaning-making and how the two modes collaborate with multimodal analysis (Kress, G. & Van Leeuwen, 2006) as a new discipline in linguistics.

There are two research questions 1) What are the forms of fear in coronavirus memes? 2) How do the coronavirus memes depict fear on the Memes app? This study's results are expected to contribute theoretically and practically. Theoretically, this study is intended to make an empirical contribution to the development of a theoretical multimodal analysis of fear depiction in Memes. Practically, it can help researchers better understand how to examine how fear is depicted in memes by looking at different aspects of the language and images used. It is hoped that this study will serve as a resource for those interested in researching how fear is depicted on social media.

Theoretical Framework

Social Semiotic

Social semiotics is concerned with meaning-making and meaning makers. (Hodge, Robert and Gunther, 1988), in their book Social Semiotics extended Halliday's approach from language to sign-making more broadly, and argued that societies develop and shape all semiotic resources to fulfil given social functions, express a social group's values, systems of knowledge (i.e. discourses), structures and power roles. In the field of graphic design, the multimodal and social semiotic viewpoint can be perceived as an illustration that connects our sensory abilities together opening up new opportunities for deeper visual interaction. Utilizing this design process, the graphic designers create content which helps improvise the act of meaningful visual communication between the content creators and their audiences.

Social semiotics analyses meaning social aspects (Hodge and Kress 1988). It investigates foreboding human behaviours and attempts to explain the meaning-making mechanism of visual, verbal, and aural forms of social interaction (Thibault, 1990). Hodge and Kress in Social Semiotics (1988) and (Gunther, Kress and Van Leeuwen, 1989) pioneered a transition from a focus on language to other semiotic structures in social semiotics (1996). Hodge and Kress initiated the change to other semiotics in their book, Social Semiotics (1988). Likewise, Kress & van Leeuwen made an essential contribution in the Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design (1996). They addressed numerous "multimodal" communities in which a single mode serves as "a socially and culturally influenced resource for meaning-making" (2009, 79).

A social semiotic approach to representation and communication sees all modes as meaning making systems, all of which are integrally connected with social and cultural systems (Jewitt, C., & Kress, 2003). Kress, et. all (2005 :3) affirm that meaning is made by individuals, who act in social environments and use socially and culturally shaped available resources. Social semiotics focuses on the role of human agents and social contexts in the construction of meaning.

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)

Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) is one of the linguistics streams, which introduces a theory called a systemic theory. Systemic theory of language views language as part of social phenomena which is certainly related to the social context of language use. As suggested by Sinar (2008: 19-24), systemic language theory covers functions, systems, meaning, social semiotics, and context.

Language, as a function, relates to the use of language for social interaction. Language is organised in such a way as to carry out an interactionist function, namely how ideas in the form of language can be understood by other parties in a social environment (Sinar, 2008 : 19). The function of language is to create meaning; therefore, the most important language components are functional in creating meaning. There are three main components in creating meaning, namely the ideational, interpersonal, and textual components. The ideational component relates to how language users understand the social environment. The interpersonal component deals with how language is used in social interactions. The textual component relates to interpreting language in its function as a message (Sinar, 2008 : 20).

As a system, language, and other social systems work to create meaning (Halliday and Hasan, 1992 : 5). The system of language meaning or the semantic system is understood not merely as the meaning of words but also the language system. The semantic system provides semantic choices that can be used by language users in interacting with other parties, where this semantic system is directly related to other systems that are around the idea of interaction (Sinar, 2008 : 19).

Language as a social semiotics is language as a meaning system (Halliday and Hasan, 1992 : 4). Social semiotics sees signs in a broader sense, namely as a sign system which is part of interconnected orders as carriers of meaning in culture. Thus, a language in social semiotics gets its meaning through social interaction, with social intermediaries, and for social purposes (Halliday and Hasan, 1992 : 4-6).

A social environment is a place for the exchange of meanings. Therefore, the process of exchanging meaning is contextual, meaning that the use of language as a means of social interaction to create meaning from a series of. There are three available meaning systems as a whole is related to the context behind the (Halliday and Hasan, 1992 : 6) social contexts behind language use in an interaction process, namely the context of the situation, culture, and ideology (Sinar, 2008 : 23-24).

Metafunctions

Metafunctions of language are the internal forms of language that makeup grammar. By observing language metafunctions, it can be seen that the relationship between language and the world outside of language, namely the social environment of language and how language is used in social interactions (Sinar, 2008 : 28). Grammar in the view of SFL is a theory of human experience, where the experience is represented, connected, changed, and organised (Saragih, 2006 : 7). Language metafunctions consist of three components: (1) ideational components consisting of experimental and logical functions, (2) interpersonal components, (3) textual components (Halliday, 1994 : 8).

Kress and Van Leeuwen, (2006 : 40-41) develop the three components of Halliday's metaphors above for semiotic systems in a multimodal text. As previously stated, the semiotic system in multimodal texts means that it is not specifically related to language only as a semiotic system, but also other systems such as visuals. The three metafunctions are explained as follows:

(1) The ideational component: every semiotic system can represent aspects of world experience outside the sign system either directly or indirectly. In other words, the semiotic system must represent objects and their relationships with the world outside the representation system. This world may and often is another sign system. In this case, the semiotic system provides options for representing objects in different ways, where these ways can relate to one another.

(2) Textual component: every semiotic system must have the ability to form text, a complex of signs that stick together, both internally and with the context in it and for what the signs are produced. Here visual grammar also creates a gap in different compositional arrangements to realise different textual meanings.

(3) Interpersonal component: every semiotic system must project the relationships between the creator/producer who creates the sign or sign complex and the sign's recipient/reproducer. Therefore, the semiotic system must project a social relationship between the creator, the viewer (who receives the sign), and the object represented by the sign.

As the components of ideational metafunctions, semiotic systems offer different interpersonal relationships, some of which are supported by one form of visual representation, for example, naturalistic paintings and diagrams. The person being photographed may talk about something by looking at the camera. This is a process of interaction between the person being photographed and the people who later see it. But there may also be no interaction in the process, so there is only a "mirror" for the people who see the photo as a reflection of themselves.

METHOD

Since the analysis objected was an internet image meme, which was difficult to measured and easier to studied by focusing on interpretations used theory and considering meaning, this studied was a qualitative approached. The studied was structured to explain the observed phenomena used words rather than numbers. This was in line with (Litosseliti, 2010 : 34) concept of qualitative researched, which stated that qualitative researched was described as "research in which the researchers could incorporate their understanding in analyzing the subject matter."

The goal of employing a qualitative approached was to explain the truth behind the phenomena associated with meme-meaning researched. The purpose of this studied was to revealed the forms of fear and describe the fear depicted on coronavirus meme in memes apps. Thus, this researched aims to gain a better understanding of the visual and verbal sensed of memes. Multimodality offers a process to analyze a texted that had more than one analytical method in different modes. As a result, in this researched, the multimodal analysis looked at the various fear depiction modes in memes apps.

The first and second researched questions was answered used the theory of systemic functional linguistics, namely metafunction, where this theory was described as a process of description and investigation at three interrelated levels: the leveled of semiotic modes and resources, and the origin and potential of meaning; design leveled, namely inter-modal relationships; and the leveled of sign-making and its context. These levels were often treated as analytical secrets, and form a sequential approached: from fashion, to design, to context. In this section we illustrate the application of a multimodal social semiotic approached to reveal the forms of fear present in coronavirus memes.

There are 2 steps the writer took in the research procedure, namely, first, selecting a meme on the Memes.com site in the coronavirus group menu. Then the writer chooses memes that have images and captions. Second, download the selected memes as data and then analyze them. Data obtained from a number of memes about coronavirus from the memes application for This social media was deliberately chosen review. because it was public where everyone was free to expressed and created memes according to their wished and no one had ever analyzed the multimodality of memes on it. The generated memes were not only based on one pointed of view (certain people). The data was images and texted in memes, and the root data was coronavirus memes in the memes application. There were five pictures of memes that were considered to represent the depiction of fear well.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Datum 1





Source: https://memes.com/m/n0Rp2Gm7E-Q

Datum 1 is one of meme found in apps Memes.com which posted on 04/26/2020. This meme placed in the covid's meme section, even all the parts of it show different things. The meme's particles in form are going to be discussed below to answer the appropriateness of 1st and 2nd research questions in this research.

In the first datum, the caption describes a bank employee who is frightened because 2 masked people enter the bank. However, the bank employee was relieved to find the two masks intended to rob. This situation usually occurs because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Usually if in normal circumstances (there is no pandemic), bank employees will feel afraid if there is a robbery, but because of the Covid-19 pandemic situation, employees are more afraid of people wearing masks who are likely to have contracted the Corona virus.

In the ideational component in the meme, there is a man, namely Robert Downey Jr. In the films he plays, he has a character as a hero who is brave in maintaining the security of the world. In the picture, he holds the chest with his eyes closed which can be interpreted as a form of expression of relief. This shows, implicitly, that even someone who is strong and brave is afraid if faced with an infectious disease, which in this context is the Covid-19 pandemic.

For the textual component, the sentence in the picture shows the situation which is "when you were working in a bank, and 2 masked people came in but they just robbed the place". At the beginning of the outbreak of the corona virus, masks were mandatory for people with corona viruses in an effort to prevent transmission of the corona virus. If the expression of relief shown by Robert Downey Jr. is associated with someone wearing a mask, then it means the expression displayed by Robert Downey Jr. is a relief from avoiding him from someone who is suspected of contracting the corona. Robert's brave character is relieved and wants to avoid the corona virus. This indicates that the corona virus is more frightening than even robbers or evil characters. Therefore, this meme describes a fear of masked people who are suspected of being exposed to the corona virus.

In the picture above is Robert Downey Jr. as represented participant. Moreover, the Interpersonal component is written below:

- When a participant does not make direct eye contact with the audience, this is called indirect gaze or aiming gaze. Indirectly, the offering of the gaze produces eye lines and gestures for the viewer. This phenomenon attempts to convince the audience to accept or reject image information because the participants are the source of the information. Therefore, the role of speech is to offer information.
- The construction of an image can make the viewer feel near or far from the represented participant, and the distance options can suggest a different relationship between the represented participant and the viewer. Close-up shot, medium-shot, and long-shot are three different forms of social distancing. At this point, the man is rated as a medium shot to show a certain part of the subject in more detail and to express the emotions of the subject. Participants encourage the audience to understand and feel the emotions of the subject.
- Layout and caption images on top and bottom, as shown. The title shows the very top, while the image shows the bottom. The top and bottom positions have different roles and values in this context. The top position, Ideal, presents the essence of information in an idealized or simplified form, while the bottom position, Real, presents relevant information in detail. In addition, the participant shot, which was very wide and almost covered the entire frame, gave the participant a high degree of advantage. Then, because the participant's position stands out more than the other elements in the image, the framing of the participant's position is substantial. The result, based on factors such as size, focus, color, and distance, it can be concluded that the participant is an essential element of the image.

First, ideational component in the meme above, the participant represented is Ralph Wiggum from The Simpsons. Ralph is a strange child who is notorious for being off-kilter and for behaving strangely. His sentences range from absurd, or bizarre, interpretations of current events, to profound statements that go past people's heads; and his behavior varies between unconscious and stupid.

Second, textual component based on the situation described in description (1) "when someone coughs near you in the shop", it is explained that someone coughs near "you". Based on the current conditions of the Covid-19 pandemic, coughing is one form of spreading the Corona virus. Then next Ralph said in caption (2) "I am in danger". The figure of Ralph who behaves often strangely and just doesn't realize that he is in danger when he is near someone who is coughing. This indicates that people who usually don't just think about their surroundings feel scared, especially for normal people. Therefore, this meme shows a form of fear in the person who is coughing.

Lastly, the interpersonal component, the meme above was taken with a long or medium shot. Medium shot aims to allow the viewer to see the whole situation in the picture. The medium shot makes these elements an interactive source of subjective imagery (attitude). Ralph as a participant who is represented in the meme makes eve contact, which means that it demands the involvement of the audience so that memes or visual images like this are categorized as interactive participants, meaning that the producer or meme communicates with the audience through images even though the viewers are not direct. Engage in conversation Participants who are represented as "demanding or asking" for the attention of the audience so that the audience can feel and agree with events that are considered unique or have been experienced by both.

Datum 3

COVID coming in hard on senior year



when someone coughs near you in the shops



Source: https://memes.com/m/KOB7G7w

The second datum posted on 6/13/2020 in Memes apps which can be found in coronavirus memes group. The caption above depicts someone who was in a shop, then someone not far from them coughed. In the era of the Covid-19 pandemic, coughing is one of the symptoms of someone who is infected and is also a factor in the spread of the virus.



https://memes.com/m/NZEVNwL0RMm

The datum posted on 7/8/2020 on the Memes.com app. The meme above discusses the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the world of education. Due to the global spread of Covid-19, activities outside the home have become restricted, one of which is going to school. This has given rise to new policies related to education, for example the creation of a new curriculum and teaching and learning methods that are appropriate

for students studying from home. This makes students, especially final year students, overwhelmed. Those who should only focus on the exams they will face, instead have to make many adjustments.

Ideational component in the meme above, the participants represented are buses and trains. In this meme, bus is personified as "senior year students", and trains as "COVID". In this case, the two objects, namely the bus and the train, are the same color, namely yellow. It represents students where in school they wear clothes of the same color (uniform).

The textual component caption on the meme explains the situation, namely "COVID coming in hard on senior year". The corona virus was identified in early 2020 but became so rampant that in March 2020 WHO declared Covid-19 a global pandemic. In the world of education, March is a quite crucial month for students of the senior year because in the next few months they have to focus on graduation exams or exams to enter college. That is why the Covid-19 pandemic has become a fear for senior year students. So, fear is described because the purpose of the meme maker is to describe the fear felt by senior students in facing a more difficult graduation due to the impact of the outbreak of the corona virus pandemic. This results in all senior students experiencing threats in achieving graduation.

Furthermore, the interpersonal component in this datum, for the aspect of social distance where the above meme is taken with the "medium shot" technique. The purpose of this shot is to provide an overview of the situation in the image. Furthermore, to support the situation, the image layout was arranged from top to bottom. In this position, the audience or reader will see the two images by making a comparison between the image above and the image below. The two pictures illustrate the causal or general-specific relationship:

(a) the image above shows the represented participant, that is, the bus is running almost across the rail, but from the side, the train is going in the direction of the bus; then

(b) the image below shows the participant represented, namely the train which hit the bus in front of it very hard.

Datum 4:

social distancing got me like:



Source: https://memes.com/m/3eWKjM0xEZ8

The datum posted on 4/11/2020 in apps Memes.com describes a man who is afraid if other people do not keep their distance from him. This is related to WHO's policy of maintaining social distance to prevent the spread of the corona virus.

First Ideational component of this meme shows a represented participant, a man which holding a gun. During the Coronavirus pandemic, social distancing is a form of preventive action so as not to contract the Corona virus. So for people who are afraid of contracting the Corona virus, social distancing is a mandatory thing that cannot be violated.

The textual component shows about situation also applies to the man in the picture, and this is evident in the caption on (a) "social distancing got me like:". Later in the picture, a man gives a warning to keep his distance from him or he will shoot anyone who approaches. You can see in the picture that he is holding a gun and preparing to fire, which indicates a warning. Further information under (b) "6 feet or else". "6 feet" is the minimum safety distance in social distance, while the word "else" refers to shooting. This caption is used to describe the fear of contracting the Corona virus so that the public will do everything they can to maintain a safe distance.

The next point is interpersonal component. As we can see, the man as the represented participant is not looking straight at the camera but looking in another direction so that the resulting gaze looks natural. The social distancing in the image is categorized as a medium shot. At a corner point (frame size), a medium shot has the participant being represented giving the viewer a wider view. Showing the shooting angle using a moderate distance aims to show more detail so that the audience can observe the illustration displayed by the meme as a whole. In this case, it means that the represented participant (male) describes the attitude of someone who is afraid and defensive not to contract the Corona virus to viewers. Another element salience. In this case, the man stands out more than the text above, and because of the size of the frame he also catches the eye of the audience.

Datum 5:



Source: https://memes.com/m/KOB7kYnj343

The datum posted on 2/16/21, describes a person who is scared because he feels his throat is itchy. This happens because the Covid-19 pandemic attacks the respiratory organ system. In this case, an itchy throat could be one of the possibilities for someone to contract the corona virus.

An ideational component in the meme above features a dog with bulging eyes. In the picture, the dog as a participant is represented as someone who has an itchy throat.

The next point is the textual component. According to WHO, one of the slightly uncommon symptoms of people exposed to the Corona virus is discomfort and pain in the throat. This situation is described in the caption (1) "Every time I feel itchy in my throat". Then the attitude of the situation is illustrated in the caption (2) "Is that you Rona?". The hue in the context of a meme is short for the "coRONA" virus. Therefore, when represented by the participant feeling an itch in his throat, he immediately assumed that he had the Corona virus. Therefore, this meme indirectly describes a person's fear of contracting the Corona virus if he feels one of the symptoms of the corona virus.

Interpersonal component in the meme above are:

- The dog looks directly at the camera with a technique in a "close-shot". These techniques aim to make participants have a close relationship with the audience or readers. In addition, direct eye contact from the participants invites the audience to get involved and feel what the represented participants feel.
- ii) The position of the meme at the top is the vertical axis where the image and caption are at the top and bottom. The top is communicated through captions, while the bottom is communicated through images. These forms are usually called ideal and real. The top and bottom positions have different roles and values in this context. The top position, or Ideal, exists, and the essence of the information is idealized or generalized. Conversely, bottom positions, or Real, exist, and specific information is presented in detail.
- iii) The visual image layout composition reveals that the main focus information is the staring dog, which is then explained by the text at the bottom of the image. As a result, this design represents the ideal and real value of information. In the meme above, when viewed based on the layout, the represented participants are in the middle to observe more about the expressions and attitudes of the represented participants. In the picture, a dog is making a surprised expression with bulging eyes. The title above (a) "Every time my throat feels itchy" tells of a dog personified as a human being who feels frightened if he has contracted the corona virus because of a sore throat which is one of the symptoms of contracting the Corona virus.

CONCLUSION

This study found that meme shared intended meaning which has personal objective from the maker. The study found there are five data which can represented fear well in meme of Memes app. The data was analyzed using three language metafunctions by Kress & Leeuwen.

After analyzing the data, this study found that the relation between pictures and text are producing the depiction of fear. Picture which carries their own meaning when they are collaborating with the text, they produces fear. Each of the picture in meme had their own concept for the line or text. Through the concept, the text occurred as the relation for the image. This study found that meme is following the concept of mode in social semotic. It is found that verbal and visual are the modes which occurred in the data. Thus, the combination between the modes are the contribution for the depiction of fear It also found that fear according to the data has pose significant role in social life. All of the data are actually expressing the forms of fear to coronavirus in social life and how the fictional form-memes describes it.

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