

# JOKES AS A HUMOR DISCOURSE: PRAGMATIC STUDY

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## ABSTRACT

*Understanding humor in the current situations is extremely required since it could be used to release tiresome, fatigue and stress. By using humor, it is possible to say the truth elegantly, and softly, without disturbing someone's feeling. Violating politeness principles in a conversation could create humor utterances. Usually, humor is worth doing when the situation we are speaking is frozen and rigid.*

**Keywords:** *humor, pragmatic, discourse*

## ABSTRAK

*Pemahaman humor pada saat sekarang ini sangat diperlukan karena humor dapat digunakan untuk menghilangkan rasa capek, penat, dan stres. Dengan humor dimungkinkan untuk mengatakan kebenaran dengan elegan dan halus tanpa menyakiti perasaan seseorang. Pelanggaran prinsip dalam percakapan dapat menciptakan tuturan humor. Biasanya, humor bermanfaat ketika situasi pembicaraan mulai beku dan kaku.*

**Kata kunci:** *humor, pragmatik, wacana*

## 1. Introduction

Humor has extremely significant roles in human life. Sigmund Freud, the distinguished psychologist, cited by Bill (1938) in Soedjadmiko (1990) maintains that humor is like soul-emptiness filler. For communication, especially, humor may be easily used to express a social criticism.

By using humor, it is possible to say the truth elegantly, and softly, without disturbing someone's feeling. Recently, a reality show program has emerged on TV seeking new jokers for the humorous world conducted by a national private tv station. Therefore, the more comprehensive study on humor language with linguistic perspective, the better it should be, particularly from socio-linguistics, and pragmatic outlooks.

It is true that talking about humor or joke can not be separated from a social language. Afterwards, in order for us to be able to understand and manipulate a language that can

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impact humor sense, we must be able to understand what language is and how language causes humor?

To begin with, it is a must to recognize the essence of linguistics as a science. Linguistics is the study of language with which communication takes into account. In addition, as a communication medium, language is speech sounds produced by speech organs in conjunction with the grammatical rules of a language. If the language study is related to social context, it must be intensively studied in sociolinguistics.

In sociolinguistics, for example, there must be politeness varieties in every language. Wijana (2004) asserts that Javanese, Sundanese, Balinese have politeness varieties which are well known as speech levels, from the lowest level up to the highest one, and so does Indonesian or bahasa Indonesia. But it is not complicated as the other languages. Sociolinguistics merely discusses linguistic attributes and variations. Accordingly, the study of pragmatics is extremely required to explore whatever beyond the language. It is more concerned with the conversational strategies used by the speakers of how to produce utterance types, and the external linguistic elements. That is how language is used to communicate. As mentioned by Parker and quoted by Wijana (1996):

“Pragmatics is different from grammar which is the study of the internal structure of language (grammar is generally divided into a number of particular of study: Semantics, syntax, morphology, and phonology). Pragmatics is the study of how language is used to communicate.

## **2.The Essensial of Humor**

It is still not recognizable where and when the word of humor which means jokes, comes up. Suprana (1995) cited by Rustono (2000: 33) proposed that there was a Greece man particularly interested in naming everything related to health. The man used “humor” as a reference because it was regarded as a good medicine. While, in medical terms, the word humor has something to do with liquid in the human body. however, in encyclopedia, dictionaries, and thesauruses, humor means something funny, and jokes (Webster 1976, Hamlyn 1998, Mcloed 1992, and Cutcheon 1995).

Hamlyn (1995: 806) points out that humor is an ability to entertain and make people laugh by using utterances or written form. Humor it self will not sound funny, laughable if it is not understandable, emerging antipathy attitude, and breaking ones’s feelings and not meeting the appropriate time, place, and situations. In addition, there is a complete definition of put forward by Suprana (1995:9) i.r. humor is merly one of communication strategies

whose stimulus in the level of highest complexity results in predictable responses and psychologically reflective imitation. Thus, it can be concluded that the essence of humor is just a tool. Therefore, its roles and values depend on the purpose, and the use of users.

Humor differs from a common discourse. The common discourse is formed by bonafis process of communication. On the other hand, humor may usually be formed by non-bonafid process of communication (Raskin 1984, Wijana 2004, 6). Based on the above understanding, humor is a violation of principles of communication suggested by pragmatic principles, both textually, and interpersonally. It is the same as what Nelson (1990: 125) pointed out:

“Jokes, though encounter fairly frequently, in everyday conversation, represent tightening or heightening of language of a kind that is unnecessary to and disruptive of the normal pragmatic of the normal function pragmatic and informational functions of language. Many, perhaps most, jokes will be found to arise from a phenomenon which is pragmatic terms a potential source of confusion”.

To sum up, communication strategies could be used to get the purposes of humor discourse, namely laugh, and jokes. According to Wijana (2004) there are of which two supporting theories. Firstly, face threatening act, and secondly, interpersonal rhetoric.

#### **a. Face Threatening Act Theory (FTA)**

The concept of face threatening act (FTA) that firstly put forward by Goffman (1967) has to do with face or self esteem of someone. Goffman himself (1967: 5) cited by Thomas (1995: 168) defines FTA as:

...the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact. Face is an image or self delineated in terms of approved social attribute albeit\_ albeit an image that others may share, as when a person makes a good showing for his professions or religion by making a good showing for him self.

The term ‘face’ in the sense of reputation or good name seems to have been first used in English in 1876. Since then, it has been used widely in phrases such as ‘losing face’, ‘saving face’ (Thomas, 1995: 168). With other words, Yule (1996:60) added that face means the public self-image of a person. It refers to the emotional and social sense of self that everyone has and expects everyone else to recognize. Then, this concept is developed or extended by Brown and Levinson (1987). Meanwhile, Wijana (2004:2)

suggested that FTA could be translated into Indonesian as “Teori Menjaga Perasaan” because politeness in the conversation is to keep one’s self esteem. Regarding to this point of view, he added that respecting one another’s face should consider hearer’s self esteem that is called positive politeness. On the other hand, when we avoid intruding on other people lives, try not to be too inquisitive about their activities and take care not to impose our presence on them. It is called negative politeness (Finegan, 1992:326). Here are two examples in Indonesian (bahasa Indonesia) given by Wijana (2004:5):

(1) ‘Bila kamu ke kota, belikan saya dasi’. (if you go to town, buy a tie for me).

(2) Debby: ‘di mana mendapatkan dasi itu’. (where do you get the tie?).

Jane : ‘saya tidak akan memberitahu kamu’ (I don’t want to tell you).

The sentence (1) ignores politeness principles since it directly employs bald on record, so that the hearer’s desire is not to be impeded or put upon, to be left free to act as they choose. It is the same as sentence (2), the speaker is not by no means intended to consider the hearer as a part of him self (regardless of sense of equality). Those sentences will sound polite if the speaker expresses as the following forms:

(3) ‘saya tidak ingin merepotkan Anda, tetapi kalau ke kota maukah Anda membelikan saya dasi? (excuse me; I don’t mean to bother you, if you go to town, would you to buy a tie for me?).

(4) Debby: ‘Di mana Anda mendapatkan dasi itu?’ (where do you get the tie?).

Jane: Saya tahu itu sangat memalukan, tetapi saya sudah berjanji tidak akan menceritakan kepada siapa-siapa walaupun kamu ingin sekali mengetahuinya’. (I know it would be extremely embarrassing, but I have promised not to tell anyone about it although you are eager to know.).

The politeness strategies used in (3), and (4), are still on record because the utterances above (3) and (4) are still recognized as a request and refusal. If the speaker wants to be more polite, he may use off record strategy. For example, the utterances in (1) and (3) could be changed to (5). ‘Barangkali saya bisa sendiri membeli dasi ke kota’

### **b. Interpersonal Rhetoric Theory**

According to Leech (1983:131) politeness concerns a relationship between two participants whom they may be called ‘self’ and ‘other’. In conversation, ‘self’ will normally be identified with s and other will typically be identified with h; but speakers also show politeness to third parties. In his theory of politeness, Leech (1983:132) proposed six politeness principles that should be considered in conversation. The maxims of PP tend to go in pairs as follows:

1. Tact Maxim (in impositives and commissives).
  - a. Minimize cost to self, b. maximize benefit to other.
2. Generosity maxim (in impositives and commissives).
  - a. Minimize benefit to self, b. maximize praise of other.
3. Approbation maxim (in expressive, and assertive).
  - c. Minimize dispraise of other, b. maximize praise of self
4. Modesty maxim (in expressive and assertive).
  - a. Minimize praise of self, b. maximize dispraise of self.
5. Agreement maxim (in assertive).
  - b. Minimize disagreement between self and other.
  - c. Maximize sympathy between self and other.
6. Sympathy maxim (in assertive).
  - d. Minimize antipathy between self and other.
  - e. Maximize sympathy between self and other.

With the politeness maxims mentioned above, it could be explained why the following utterances marked with (+) put forward by Leech (1983: 134) are not commonly uttered because they are regarded as impolite.

- (5). + you can lend me your car.
- (6). – I can lend you my car.
- (7). + you must come and have dinner with us.
- (8). we must come and have dinner with you.

The offer (6) and (7) are presumed to be polite for two reasons. Firstly, because they imply benefit to h, and secondly, less crucially, they imply cost to s. but in (5) and (8), the relation between s and h on both scales is reversed.

There is something underlined here that people do not always use politeness principles to the other participants, sometimes they use impoliteness strategies because of some reasons.

There are three pragmatic parameters, namely intimate and distance relationships or distance rating, social status or powering rating, and rank rating (Wijana, 1996: 65).

## 2. Humor Discourse

The following are examples of humor discourse in bahasa Indonesia which is based on Wijana (1004). The humor happened because of the violence of politeness maxims in conversation.

- (9). + Pak, bolehkah saya pacaran sama anak Bapak  
- Boleh saja, kalau sama Tutik tiap datang harus bawa Ji-Sam-Su.
- (10) + Mbah dukun...saya minta umur panjang.  
- Nanti dulu... kalau kamu ngasih uang banyak umurmu panjang
- (11). + Pak Kasno, besuk jadi ngantor pagi-pagi sekali. Perlu saya bangunin jam 6, pak?  
- He, eh...ngak usah Kim, saya bias bangun jam 5.  
+ Nah, kalau gitu tolong bangunin saya, ya pak!
- (12). + Pak saya datang ingin melamar anak Bapak.  
- boleh-boleh anak gadisku ada 5, Tuti, Nika, Tina, Sari, Dewi, mana yang kau pilih?  
- Mana saja pak, kelima-limanya saya juga mau.  
+ Kau ini cari istri, pa mau dagang wanita?
- (13). + Aku pernah keliling dunia.  
-modelmu aja...paling juga pusing tujuh keliling itu yang sering kau lakukan.
- (14). + Aku tabrakan, motorku rodanya sampai jadi angka delapan.  
- tidak seberapa ... aku pernah tabrakan malah roda motorku jadi angka sebelas.
- (15). + Bung, apa bisa betulin rantai sepeda.  
-jangan rantai sepeda, rantai tank pun aku bias.
- (16) + Kucingku tiap hari makan bistik.  
- lalu kau sendiri makan tikus.
- (17). + aku paling seneng produksi luar negeri  
- Bohong! Buktinya istrimu produksi dalam negeri.
- (18) + Anda sukses, anak Anda lahir kembar 5, yang tiga meninggal.

In (9) the speaker (-), a father, should not maximize benefit to him self when he speaks to his daughter's boy friend. So, he violates tact maxim. Therefore, it leads to humor appearance. In (10), dukun 'shaman' (-) should not

maximize benefit to him and maximize cost to other. That is by giving a condition to his patient to pay before he does what the patient wanted. In (11) it seems not polite to have a boss wake his servant up in a conversation, so that the utterances sound funny, and humorous. Contracted with (9), in (12) that the speaker tries to violate tact maxim, that is by maximizing benefit to him self. Consequently; the utterances sound funny and make us laughing.

In (12), and (14) cases, it is understandable that, in the case of modesty maxim, strategies of minimizing dispraise of they are employed in order to get the effect of humour. Conversely, in (15) the hearer (-) shows his ability to speaker. So, it causes this discourse sounds funny. Because in the communication such a hearer should maximize dispraise him self.

As (16) and (17) show, partial disagreement is often preferable to maximize disagreement. As a result, hum or discourse appears. And finally, (18) utterance violates sympathy maxim because he should have expressed condolences in such condition.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Based on the above understanding, it can be concluded that humor is a violation of principles of communication suggested by pragmatic principles, both textually, and interpersonally. Therefore; it is very important to understand the theory of pragmatics, especially politeness principles as to be able to create jokes properly trough verbal expressions.

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