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An Analysis Basic Strategy of Verbal Humor found In *Ellen DeGeneres Monologue Season 17,2019* : Pragmatic Approach study

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Abstract : Language is not only a means of communication between humans; however, it can convey funny expressions known as humor. Everyone likes something fun and funny. In entertainment, humor has developed; thus, physically offensive humor decreases and proceeds to verbal humor, especially on talk shows. As one of America's famous comedy talk shows, Ellen DeGeneres Talkshow successfully maintains its fame and verbal humor. Using a Pragmatic context approach, this study uses the theory of Victor Raskin's Three Major Elements of Humor, which consists of Incongruity, Superiority, and Release/Relief. This study aims to determine the types of humor elements that influential in Ellen Monologue Season 17, 2019, entitled "*A Look Back at Best Moment and Favorite Season 17,2019*". The research method used in this research is descriptive-qualitative for analysis of data transcript. This study found that the Ellen DeGeneres talk show has three strong elements of humor as a strategy to trigger audience's laughter, including Incongruity, Superiority, and Release. This three elements can work well together and have succeeded elements to significantly influence Ellen DeGeneres talk show. A jokes become accurate and precise when this element of humor is used.

Keywords: Verbal Humor, Pragmatic Approach, Context, Strategy, Three Major Element of Humor

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Abstrak : Bahasa tidak hanya sebagai alat komunikasi antar manusia, tetapi melalui bahasa dapat menyampaikan ungkapan-ungkapan lucu yang dikenal dengan humor. Semua orang menyukai sesuatu yang menyenangkan dan lucu. Saat ini di dunia hiburan, humor telah mengalami perkembangannya sehingga humor yang bersifat menyinggung fisik berkurang dan bergeser menjadi humor verbal khususnya pada acara talk show. Ellen DeGeneres Talkshow sebagai salah satu comedy talk show terkenal di Amerika berhasil mempertahankan ketenaran programnya dan humor verbalnya. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan konteks pragmatis, penelitian ini menggunakan teori Victor Raskin, the Three Major Elements of Humor yang terdiri dari Incongruity (ketidaksesuaian), Superiority (superior) dan Release/Relief (melepaskan). Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui elemen apa saja yang berpengaruh di Ellen Monologue Season 17, 2019 yang berjudul "A Look Back at Best Moment and Favorite Season 17, 2019". Metode penelitian yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah deskriptif-kualitatif untuk analisis data transkrip. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa Ellen DeGeneres talk show memiliki tiga elemen humor yang kuat sebagai strategi untuk memicu tawa penonton yaitu Incongruity, Superiority dan Release/Relief. Tiga elemen ini dapat bekerjasama dengan baik dan telah berhasil secara signifikan mempengaruhi program Ellen DeGeneres. Sebuah lelucon menjadi akurat dan tepat ketika elemen ini digunakan.

Kata kunci: Humor Verbal, Pendekatan Pragmatik, Konteks, Strategi, Tiga Element Utama Humor

Introduction

Language as the primary tool of interaction in humans indeed contains the intention to convey something to others. Fromkin argues that if you recognize a language, you will speak, and your statement is understood by people aware of that language¹. Every language the human expresses through words and sentences has a particular effect that

makes other people consciously understand the meaning. As mentioned, humans as social beings are always connected in the form of conversations with other people.

A conversation involves two parties between the speaker and the listener, who act as information givers and recipients. Horton defines that through dialogue, people exchange information, create many relationships, solve problems, and express

¹ Fromkin, V., Rodman, R., Hyams, H. 2010. *Introduction to Language*. Canada By Nelson Education.

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some goals in their activities². The conversation becomes the way humans interact, and it uses language to convey a specific meaning to people. It can be analyzed more than we understand that conversation can direct humorous situations known as humor.

Oxford Dictionary defines humor can laughing at a funny moment to express joy and entertain. In this case, humor is classified into verbal humor and non-verbal humor³. Everyone likes and enjoys all kinds of humor for a specific purpose because people love fun and entertainment. Now, entertainment television has shown the development of verbal humor more dominant than non-verbal because over time, the way to express a humor has evolved along with the sense of humor in social reality, such as the presence of many comedians with

their language appearances on various talk shows.

The Ellen DeGeneres show offers comedy talk shows and unexpected choices on daily television. Ellen talk show from the famous American television variety shows always exists on TV and always gives a new look every season. In 2020, Ellen's talk show won the Carol Burnett Award at Golden Globes USA. It is not easy to maintain a comedy program since the program is always required to be funny. Furthermore, many exciting and boring programs have strategies to trigger people's laughter so that their shows are constantly watched. The problem meant that a funny is needed something triggers someone to smile or laugh, even guffaw, and humor does not just hope an audience's laugh response without quality material. In the material, it is necessary to know the basic strategy for funny.

² Horton, W. S. 2009. *Theories and Approaches to the Study of Conversation and Interactive Discourse*, 2-64. Retrieved on January 06, 2021, from <https://www.studygate.net/publication/316147813>.

³ Oxford. 2015. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*. (9th ed). Great Clarendon Street Oxford OX2 6DP United Kingdom

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The humorous occurrence utilizes pragmatics to understand the utterances well, and as a branch of linguistics, pragmatics considers the basic understanding of utterance expressed by speakers related to context. Through the humor and pragmatics approach, the three major elements of humor formulated by Victor Raskin can analyze what triggers comedians use to express Superiority, Release tension, and interpret Incongruity. The three major elements of humor can be thought of as contingency theories of humor since it explains how humor works in different situations.

Victor Raskin is an influential figure in humor studies, and he was a distinguished professor of linguistics at Purdue Universitas since 1980. From 1987 until 1999, 12 years, He was the founding Editor of *Humor: International Journal of Humor Research*, Board of Directors with the title as Editor, International Society of Humor Studies. He also pointed the various humor theories in

three families of theories: Incongruity, Superiority, and Release.

a. Incongruity

Raskin clarifies that Incongruity claims what is expected and what happens at the end.⁴The point of the statement is this triggering focus on an element of surprise. The conflict being discussed can conduct various listeners' interpretations, while the speaker deceives the meaning. Therefore, surprise is the key to this element of humor. There are incongruities between what we observe and what we think or imagine. All humor made by comedians uses puns and misunderstandings. Then the comedian has succeeded with the punchline power to arise laughter. In this theory, Wilson illustrates that Humor occurs when other situations and general situations are conducive to creating funny. The humor occurs (X) = M1 and (X) = M2; however,

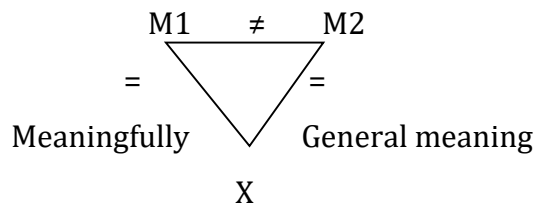
⁴ Raskin, V. 2008. *The Primer of Humor Study*. Germany.

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(X) would not happen if (M1) is connected to (M2)⁵. As formulated below :



b. Superiority

Raskin mentions that the trigger of superiority theory claims the humor attracts the target, and the aggressive character becomes the audience unable to resist the punchline by the actor. Dynel argues that Superior is dominant; thus, there is a victim of triumphing and losing⁶. Thus, In the context of Superiority, humor is used as a weapon, expressing hostility and resistance. Superiority theory is a roasting technique that involves a series of insulting jokes about specific people to triggering laughter in the stand-up comedy. Hence, people enjoy humor in

feelings of Superiority expressed by our awareness of other people's weaknesses.

c. Release/ Relief

Raskin represents that humor is conducted to provide a sense of liberation, and this trigger becomes people to release from troubles. It is identified by the language terms taboos such as sex, excreta, death, religion, and economy, which is a punchline that releases people's tension. The joke-teller conveys a refreshing discussion to the audience, and it has never been discussed before the most influential topic to create a funny situation. This trigger is more complicated since humor has a sensitive conversational character, and the conversation is conveyed effectively, not just eliciting laughter.

Hilma Nuraini Sari in his undergraduate thesis with entitled

⁵ Nurlatifah. 2009. A Pragmatic Approach to the Incongruity of Humor in the Dialogues of Kung fu Panda Movie, (17). State Islamic University Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta.

⁶ Dynel, Marta. 2013. *Humorous phenomena in dramatic discourse*, 1 (1), 22-60. Retrieved

on March 17, 2021, from <https://europeanjournalofhumour.org/ejhr/article/view/Marta%20Dynel>.

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Monologue Humor In The Ellen DeGeneres Show Season 17: A Pragmatic Stylistic Study, English Department Faculty of Art and Humanities UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, 2020. This thesis focuses on the humor found in Ellen Show Season 17 with a qualitative-descriptive method to discuss violations of maxim and figurative language to create a humor situation. This study has three formulations of problems: the type of figurative language used by Ellen, how the figurative language violates maxims, and figurative language that violates the maxims. The writer uses 30 video transcripts of Ellen DeGeneres, and it has the result to found nine types of figurative language that violated the maxim. This study aims to examine the finding humor situation through the pragmatic and stylistic approach. Besides, the audience becomes extracted by Ellen's performance.

From the background of the study stated above, the problem formulation of this study is what types of elements have an influential on Ellen DeGeneres

monologue season 17,2019 in audience's laughter trigger and also maintaining the fame of her comedy program, especially in this episode entitled "*A Look Back at Ellen Best Moment and Favorite Season 17, 2019*". The purpose of analysis in this study is to identify the types of elements that influential from the three major elements of humor in Ellen's monologue 17,2019 especially at the episode *A Look Back at Ellen Best Moment and Favorite Season 17, 2019* as a laughter trigger strategy to present a funny situation.

This object contains the pieces of all memorable episodes in season 17, 2019, and there are various segments that unforgettable activities. This selection has represented part of Ellen's monologue objects to arise humorous effect.

This study applies the qualitative method with a descriptive approach since this study presents Ellen DeGeneres utterances with the problem's three major humor elements to trigger laughter. Creswell J. W and Cresswell J. D explain that the qualitative method is an influential function in interpreting

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information.⁷ The qualitative study focuses on analyzing descriptions of a text that produce specific meanings, not numbers. Taylor, Bogdan, Reimer state that descriptive studies should discover detailed descriptions communicated through data study and theoretical.⁸ Therefore, the qualitative descriptive method is effectively dissects Ellen DeGeneres's utterances deeply.

A. Finding

Verbal humors were found that have laughter highlight of audience and it classified based on the characteristics of verbal humor in the video. The data was explained how the context and situation of Ellen DeGeneres in the studio. Based on a pragmatic approach, it will be proven whether Ellen DeGeneres' comedic material indeed uses the three major elements of humor strategies to trigger

laughter, funny, and maintaining the fame of her talk show.

Data 01



Picture 4. (00:02:03). Ellen's summer visit with the Royal Baby. (Source: The Ellen Show Youtube Channel)

Ellen : I knew how to hold him. Like that. He weighs 15 pounds, which the exchange rate, I believe, is \$17 here. [LAUGHTER]- [LAUGHTER]

Through a pragmatic approach, this utterance does not refer to trying to sell the royal baby at the exchange rate mentioned by Ellen. However, Ellen stated that the 15 pounds British currency exchange rate is almost the same as 17\$ in England. In rupiah Indonesia, it is around two hundred million rupiahs more. Fifteen pounds equals 6 kilograms in the British

⁷ Cresswell, J. W & Cresswell, J. D. 2018. *Study Design Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approach*. (5 ed). Los Angeles.

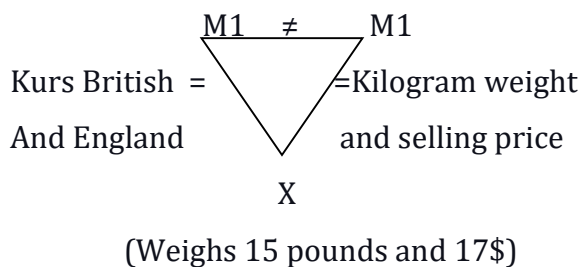
⁸ Taylor, S. T, Bogdan, R. DeVault, M. L. 2016. *Induction to Qualitative Study Methods*. (4ed). Canada.

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the funny part is 17 pounds heavier in England. Ellen utilizes wordplay to explain humor. Therefore this utterance "**He weighs 15 pounds, which the exchange rate, I believe, is \$17 here. [LAUGHTER]-[LAUGHTER]**" is categorized in the **element of Incongruity**. The audience was unable to predict the final joke, and it caused a surprising punchline. As formulated below:



Data 02



Picture 5. (00:02:22) Jennifer Lopez Answers Ellen's Burning Questions. (Source: The Ellen Show Youtube Channel)

Ellen :*Oh, the part of A-Rod? I love his penis. [LAUGHTER] [LAUGHTER] [LAUGHTER] [APPLAUSE] I really do. My favorite.*

Through a pragmatic approach, the ritual of taboo-breaking is ribaldry or blue jokes ignored by censors. It is not just to be sexually stimulating and also addresses deeper problems than just sexual appetite. The funny part is when it was strictly forbidden in the past, and now we laugh at the rules of holiness. That is the punchline.

Therefore, this utterance is categorized in the **element of Release** because it can detect **the taboo term sex "penis."** Ellen uses the Burning Question to create a controversial humor situation, especially in this utterance, "*Oh, the part of A-Rod ? I love his penis. [LAUGHTER] [LAUGHTER] [APPLAUSE] I really do. My favorite*". The laughing indicates that the audience enjoys a joke. Ellen was successful in releasing the stress from the game "Burning Question" since there are many questions that must be answered correctly with the bell.

Data 03

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Picture 9. (00:03:53). Ellen meets adorable viral hugging toddlers. (Source: The Ellen Show Youtube Channel)

Ellen : He's putting the thing up his nose. [LAUGHTER] The plane is going up the nose. Yeah, this is a tel-- [LAUGHTER] It's a television show. Can I hold that? [LAUGHTER] Don't ruin your image. This is really important. [LAUGHTER]-[LAUGHTER]

Through a pragmatic approach, this utterance is about mocking a little boy. Ellen utilizes the kid's silliness, putting a plane to his nose. Therefore, Ellen mentions, "**He's putting the thing up his nose. [LAUGHTER] The plane is going up the nose.**"

However, Those kid is only a humorous satire that refers to public figures on camera; it is categorized into the **element of Superiority**. Public figures always maintain a nice image, and it is very important to their own reputation. Thus, the personality on camera is not the same as the personality

in the real world, especially, "**Yeah, this is a tel-- [LAUGHTER] It's a television show. Can I hold that? [LAUGHTER] Don't ruin your image. This is really important. [LAUGHTER].**" This situation of sarcasm meaning illustrates same with the utterance above, such as "when on camera, they become someone friendly, after off-camera, they become monsters." When the camera is on, they are the same as theatre shows. In-studio, all audiences understand that He is just a two-year-old kid who does not understand what Ellen said. It is a punchline that had become the audience laughing.

Data 04



Picture 20. (00:01:38). Ellen's right posed with a mullet hairstyle in the 1980s, and Ellen's left posed with short blond hair until now. (Source: The Ellen Show Youtube Channel)

Ellen : Like if I look back at the '70s-- bad example. I don't remember the '70s. But the '80s went really fast, mainly because

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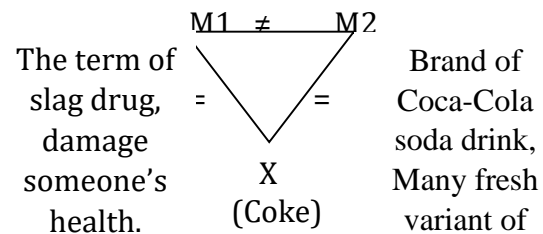
everybody was on coke.--[LAUGHTER] But it went-- I wish it went faster because I had a mullet during that time. And I think that was a--yeah. I look the same.

The pragmatics approach finds another meaning from Ellen's utterance, "***I don't remember the '70s. But the '80s went really fast, mainly because everybody was on coke [LAUGHTER]***".

The utterance is funny because it does not refer to the coke brand as a punchline. Ellen utilizes the same name to refer to one of the drug slang terms. Coke is abbreviated for "cocaine," It is one of many slang words for highly addictive narcotics. Cocaine often refers to the powdered form of the drug and various forms such as crack cocaine, freebase cocaine, etc. The short-term effect of cocaine is a stimulant that causes a person to move quicker, talk faster, and think faster.

The humor occurs when the Coke Company does not develop a new variant with the full taste of freshness; however, they have developed a new variant with the full taste of quicken death. Ellen has

used **an element of Incongruity** to create misunderstanding context. Therefore, this utterance is funny and surprising. If illustrated as below :



Data 05



Pictures. 21. (00:03:55). In the last part, Ellen talked about her impressions with this job. (Source: *The Ellen Show Youtube Channel*)

Ellen: [APPLAUSE] *It's just a pleasure to be here. I say it all the time. It's the best job I've ever had and I'm going to keep doing it for as long as I can because I love being here with all of you and because I've got to save up enough money to buy Greenland.-- [LAUGHTER] [LAUGHTER AND APPLAUSE] We'll be back!*

Hollywood artists usually buy private islands, and it has become a luxury habit such as Elvis Presley, Micheal Jackson has Graceland as their home. They have money

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from their work or business. Thus, they buy a private island for investment, self-reward, comfort, serenity so forth.

Through a pragmatic approach, the utterance above is only sarcastic that refers to the **element of Superiority**. Even if Ellen could buy Greenland, it would not be a luxury home such as Hollywood artist such as Ellen said, ***"It's the best job I've ever had, and I'm going to keep doing it for as long as I can because I love being here with all of you and because I've got to save up enough money to buy Greenland. [LAUGHTER AND APPLAUSE]."*** The Greenland island can not be bought for buildings because it is mostly covered in Ice. The funny part is that it was not built for Ellen's home; nonetheless, it became a luxury building for animals in minus temperatures.

A. Conclusion

In Ellen DeGeneres's first script, the Incongruity element takes the first role to create funny, and it has given a crucial influence to creating the material be clever jokes. Ellen's wordplay is

unfamiliar, and it increases the quality of the jokes. The element of superiority provides comedians a privilege to be the star of attention, which is justified not someone who should be judged. Release element increases the power of Ellen's script to complete accurate jokes.

Incongruity, Superiority, and Release have succeeded elements to significantly influence Ellen DeGeneres talk show because they can work well together. Therefore, Ellen DeGeneres's talk show becomes the famous comedy talk show in America because Ellen pays attention to a script of comedy show for the audience. Ellen's jokes are always on point because the humor has a strong foundation and has the three major elements of humor as a strategy for the audience's laugh response. The jokes become perfect and precise when this element of humor is used.

Every comedian comes from a certain country; definitely, they convey the problems that exist in the country, same as the Ellen DeGeneres talk show is in America. All humor has to do with

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America. In data analysis, Ellen DeGeneres show utilizes all aspects of America such as culture, social, American word slang, the rude American term for funny. The comedian must know the situation around in the country to be material humor.

A joke is less funny because it is familiar, and the element of surprise is lost, as the joke's pattern is known and recognized by the receiver. Humor without creative material is useless if the audience does not understand the language. Therefore, comedians must use language that the audience understands and establish good interactions with the audience so that the humor created is reciprocal, that is, laughter.

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