

VERBAL HUMOR IN JUNGER'S 10 THINGS I HATE ABOUT YOU: A STYLISTIC STUDY

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Abstract

Focusing on Junger's 10 Things I Hate About You, this research aims at 1) revealing the linguistic types of verbal humor, and 2) revealing the functions of verbal humor. This research used a qualitative method. In addition, as this research concentrated on the spoken forms of humor, the linguistic units were in the form of utterances. The data were obtained from the movie and its transcript, classified using data sheet, and analyzed using content analysis. To check the credibility of the analysis, investigator triangulation was applied. The results of the study reveal that three categories of verbal humor, i.e. wordplay, allusion, and verbal irony are employed. However, as for wordplay, there is one sub-type which is not uttered by the characters, that is syntactic structure. In addition, all of the three functions of verbal humor, i.e. social management, decommitment, and defunctionalization are manifested in the verbal humor.

Keywords: verbal humor, Junger's 10 Things I Hate About You, stylistics

INTRODUCTION

Humor is a universal form of language. They often use humor in their social and cultural interactions. That is why humor is contextualized between its citizen. Felsch (2004:3) said that humor often varies by locality and does not easily transfer from one culture to another. The reason is that humor often relies on a context, and someone not understanding the context will usually not understand the humor.

A skillful manipulation of language is needed to create humor. Each speaker will choose various styles of manipulations when uttering humor. Therefore, a stylistic analysis is needed to explain the style of the

speaker. It is used because it can reveal the creativity which the speaker used to create humor in the right time and at the right place. Also, according to Abe (2014: 1), a stylistic analysis is used to know the process and the reason behind every sentence that has been made by someone to create humor.

In general, humor is divided into verbal and visual. The first is verbal humor that can be written or spoken. It usually plays with words to create the humorous effects. Franzini (2002: 24) defines verbal humor as a specific humor resulting from the manipulation of language as in riddles, wordplay, puns, jokes, sarcasm, wit, and name-calling. The second is visual humor

that does not use words in order to produce humorous effect. It can be defined as a humorous situation, which is not created, described, and expressed by a text. It always uses visual images to create the humor, such as facial expression, body movement, make up or clothes which are arranged in some ways which makes the viewer laugh. The sample of this kind is a situation of two clowns who are doing a monkey dance. Because this research is intended to analyze the style of someone when uttering humor, the verbal humor is chosen as the main focus of the researcher.

Since humor is a universal form of language, every human in their life will always overcome this kind of situation. Although this movie has a typical romantic comedy story, it has caught the researcher's attention because of the fact that it is adapted from a Shakespearean play, which is notably known for the serious story. Also, since the verbal humor produced in this movie is relatable to daily life, it makes a good example for the researcher to show the style of the verbal humor uttered by the characters, especially in a romantic comedy movie.

This research has two objective which are (1) revealing the types of verbal humor, (2) revealing the functions of verbal

humor uttered by the characters in Junger's 10 Things I Hate About You.

Related to the style the characters choose to express their verbal humor, the researcher would like to know the types of verbal humor. According to Spanakaki (2007), there are three kinds of verbal humor, which are wordplay, allusion, and verbal irony. The researcher would like to analyze if they employed the three types of verbal humor in their humor language.

The last is that the researcher would like to know the functions of humor uttered by the characters in the movie. The function of their humor is very important to be analyzed since people may not only use humor to amuse somebody, but there even the situation which they do not consider to be funny at first, but when they look back, sometimes brings the funny moment out. It is not only found in everyday life situations, but can also be found in any kind of works such as literary works, or movies. One of the famous romantic comedy movies is Junger's 10 Things I Hate About You, a modernization movie of Shakespeare's late comedy play entitled *Taming of the Shrew* are other intentions. Attardo in his book *Linguistic Theories of Humor* (1994: 323-329) states that the functions of humor on the communicative process can be grouped

into three classes which are social management, decommitment, and defunctionalization. This research can give more information on defining humor using stylistic perspective. It is also useful for people who are interested in humor, especially in verbal humor in TV series or movies. In addition, this research is could also be useful for other researchers who are majoring in linguistics. It can give them additional knowledge in stylistics on knowing the style of a character when uttering humor and also its function.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employed a qualitative method to analyze the data. As what have been stated by Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009: 7), qualitative research gives explanation because it provides a deeper understanding of a phenomenon since it produces narrative or textual descriptions under a study. This research emphasized on defining language phenomena, specifically defining the use of verbal humor in particular context by interpreting the data. Because this study was concerned with language as the main object, the linguistic units were in the form of utterances indicating request while the context of data

was in the form of dialogue taken from 10 Things I Hate About You.

As the source of this research was a movie, the data collection techniques used was visual analysis where the researcher watched and interpreted the verbal humor uttered by the characters in Junger's 10 Things I Hate About You.

In analyzing the data, the researcher employed a content analysis. According to Nawawi (1993: 68-69), content analysis is a method to unravel the content written devices which illustrates the situation of the writer and the society of when it is produced. In this research, the researcher employed the content analysis of spoken word in the movie and written text of the transcript to find types of verbal humor used by the characters and its functions.

To gain credibility of the analysis, investigator triangulation method was deployed. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007: 141), triangulation is involving two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behavior. This is in line with Flick (2009: 445) who states that triangulation can take different perspectives on an issue under a study or in answering research questions. These perspectives can be done in using several methods or in using several

theoretical approaches. Whereas, according to Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009: 179), triangulation is used to establish reliability of data. (Flick, 2009: 445). The researcher realized the triangulation by utilizing some investigators outside this study whom are experts in verbal humor and stylistics to check the validity of the research.

DISCUSSION

1. Linguistic Types of Verbal Humor

a. Wordplay: Phonological Structure

1) Homonymy

Homonymy is taken from datum 3 where the characters use a word which has a different meaning, but has the same spelling and sound. The conversation is illustrated in the Extract (1) below.

- (1) MISS PERKY: Oh very clever, kangaroo boy. Says here you exposed yourself in the cafeteria?
 PATRICK: I was joking with the lunch lady. It was a **bratwurst**.
 MISS PERKY:**Bratwurst?** (Glances at his loins suspiciously) Aren't we the optimist? Next time, keep it in your pouch, okay? Scoot!
 (Datum 3)

Homonymy is the type of verbal humor because the characters use the same spelling as bratwurst, and is also spoken the same way. However, the meaning of each word is different.

2) Homophony

Homophony is a kind of wordplay which uses word pairs which has the same sound, but has a different meaning. It is also stated by Bader (2014: 20) that a homophone is a word pronounced the same as another word, but has a different meaning or a different spelling or both. Extract (2) which represents homophony is taken from a conversation between Miss Perky and Kat.

- (2) MISS PERKY: The point is **Kat**... (She suddenly makes the connection between Kat's name and the picture of a cat on her coffee mug. She finds it amusing and points to the mug)
 MISS PERKY: **Cat!** (She giggles, then turns back to Kat) People perceive you as somewhat...
 KAT: Tempestuous?
 MISS PERKY: "Heinous bitch" is the term used most often. (Kat is unflattered.)
 MISS PERKY:(continuing)You might want to work on that. Thank you.
 (Datum 8)

Kate is sent off to Miss Perky's office because she opposes Mr. Morgan's opinion in his class. Then, Miss Perky tries to give her an advice. However, when she grabs a mug, she realizes that there is a picture of a cat on it, and then she refers Kat as the cat in the picture. A humorous situation appears between them. That is because there is a contradiction of the word Kat and Cat.

3) Paronymy

According to Attardo (1994: 110), paronymy happens when the phonemic representations of the words are similar, but not identical. It means that the match between the two phonological structures involved is not perfect.

The instance of paronymy is described in these two following extracts.

(3) BIANCA: Um, I think I like the white shirt better.

JOEY : (Joey nods thoughtfully.) Yeah. It's more...

BIANCA: Pensive?

JOEY : Damn. I was going for thoughtful. So, you going to **Bogey Lowenbrau's** thing on Friday night?

BIANCA: Yeah. I might.

(Datum 26)

The paronym creates a humorous situation between them. In the situation between Bianca and Joey, Bogey's party has become a hit news because Cameron and Michael spread many brochures of his party. Therefore, forgetting the name of the host of the party is impossible, unless, Joey has another intention. He does it because he has a higher social rank at school, so he has the power to pervert everybody who has a lower social status than him.

b. Wordplay: Morphological Development

There are many mechanisms in creating morphological development wordplay. According to Delabastita (1993: 109), derivation and composition are the two of ways of creating morphological wordplay development. The other ways according to Veselovská (2009, 26) in Kuchařová (2013: 16) are neologism, abbreviation, and conversion.

There is one kind of morphological development of wordplay in the movie which is neologism. The illustration of the conversation is presented in the following section.

(4) MISS PERKY: So, Cameron. Here you go. (reviews his transcript) 9 schools in 10 years, my my... Army brat?

CAMERON: Yeah. My dad's a...

MISS PERKY: That's enough. I'm sure you won't find Padua any different than your old school. Same little **asswipe shit-for-brains** everywhere.

CAMERON: Excuse me. Did you just say... Am I in the right office?

(Datum 1)

In this conversation, Miss Perky swears in front of Cameron which creates a humorous situation. He then is second guessing whether he is in the right room or not. The swear words Miss Perky's has said is categorized as neologism because they are

new words which does not have meaning. She just wants to express her anger because at that time while she is having a conversation with Cameron, somebody throws an egg at her windows.

c. Wordplay : Lexical Development

1) Idiom

Idiom is an expression in a group of words with a sum meaning which is etymologically based on the combination of their component meanings (Delabastita, 1993: 108).

Extract (5) which represents homophony is taken from a conversation between Michael and Patrick.

(5) MICHAEL: Patrick, uh, Pat. Let me explain something to you here. We set this whole thing up so Cameron can get the girl. Cameron. Joey's just a pawn.

PATRICK : So you two are gonna help me tame **the wild beast**?

MICHAEL : (grinning) We'll do some research. We'll find out what she likes. We are your guys.
(Datum 25)

Michael and Cameron are trying to help Patrick to get closer to Kat. They try to explain that the whole situation is set by them, so Cameron can date Bianca. In the conversation, Patrick refers Kat as the wild beast. That is because her behavior is like a wild beast which everybody considers it as scary. It is considered humorous because the

fact that Kat is a human, but he compares her as an animal. That comparison creates a humorous situation.

2) Polysemy

Bergen (2008: 1) states that polysemy is a condition when a word has multiple, related meaning. It is different from homonymy where the word has the same spelling and pronunciation, but has a different meaning or unrelated meaning to each other.

Polysemy is employed between Bianca's, Kat's and Walter's conversation. Their conversation is represented in the Extract 9 below.

(6) BIANCA: Where did you come from?
Planet Loser?

KAT : As opposed to planet "look at me! look at me!"?

WALTER: Okay, here's how we solve this one. Old rule out. New rule: Bianca can date...
BIANCA&KAT: (Bianca lights up and Kat looks upset.)

WALTER: (continuing)...when she does.
(points at Kat)

BIANCA: But she's a **mutant**! What if she never dates?

(Datum 12)

Bianca refers Kat as a mutant which has two meanings 1) an organism that is different from others of its type because of a permanent change in its genes or 2) an unpleasant and a frightening thing. This two

meaning can be both refer to Kat. The humorous situation happens because Kat is referred as a mutant by her own sister.

d. Allusion

1) Proper Name Allusion

According to Nash in Simpson (2004: 2018), allusion is a citation which more explicit and overt. This allusion has a function beyond decoration of a conversation. Further, he states that the cited text is not always in the form of a poem or other recognized piece of literature. It can be adapted from history, literature, cinema, and music (Spanakaki, 2007).

One of the types of allusion is proper name allusion. The use of names of fictional figures, the international names of entertainers or politicians, the famous names of past generations, writers, painters, etc is the form of proper name allusion (Leppihalme in Khadem & Dastjerdi, 2012: 179).

In the movie there are three proper name allusions used by the characters. The first example is between Michael's and Cameron's conversation represented in the Extract (10) below.

- (7) MICHAEL : (continuing) These guys...
 CAMERON: Wait wait. Let me guess.
 Cowboys?
 MICHAEL: Yeah but, the closest
 they've come to a cow is
 Macdonald's. (laughs at

his own lame joke) Hah
 hah...Macdonalds!

(Datum 6)

Michael introduces group of the students in the Padua High School. He is trying to describe the group of boys dressing as cowboys, when Cameron cuts him and saying the exact thing he wants to say. After that, Michael utters a joke using a proper name allusion. The expression he uttered is Macdonald's which refer to song entitled *Old Macdonald Had A Farm*.

Michael tries to make a joke about the group of boys dressing as cowboys. However, Cameron does not laugh when he hears the joke. It is because he thinks that the joke is not funny or he does not understand Michael's joke. Therefore, it creates a humorous situation.

2) Key Phrase Allusion

The second type of allusion is defined as key phrase allusion. It is a form of citation using things other than proper name such as nursery rhymes and children's tales, songs, well-known films and topical television programs, political slogans, commercial product slogans, various catch-phrases, clichés and proverbs, various popular beliefs, assumptions and stories Leppihalme in Khadem & Dastjerdi (2012: 179). Extract (13) demonstrates how key phrase allusion is deployed by the characters. The extract

below depicts a conversation between Michael and Patrick in the cafeteria.

(8) PATRICK: You're right. She's still pissed.

MICHAEL: **Sweet love, renew thy force!**

PATRICK: Hey, man! Don't say shit like that to me. People can hear you.

(Datum 41)

Patrick tells them in the cafeteria that Kat is still angry to him. Then, Michael utters the phrase which is a direct quotation from Shakespeare's sonnet 56. He says the phrase to give Patrick a support to not giving up on Kat. However, Patrick thinks that the phrase is too old for their age and he asks Michael not to say that kind of phrase to him. It is because people their age are considered to be weird when uttering the old phrases like Shakespeare's that is why it creates a humorous situation.

e. Verbal Irony

Nash in Mateo (1995: 172) states that an irony must have a contradiction between two stages where the speaker misrepresents the real content so that the contradiction must be assumed as normal. Therefore, a verbal irony must include a verbal expression as the device to utter/express a contradiction.

The instance of verbal irony is extracted from datum 27 which is a dialogue between Cameron and Bianca.

(9) BIANCA: You don't buy black lingerie unless you want someone to see it.

CAMERON: (perhaps encouraged by this development) Oh. So, uh, can I see your room?

BIANCA: **No. A girl's room is very personal.**

CAMERON: Oh.

(Datum 27)

Bianca creates an ironical utterance. Bianca rejects Cameron's request by saying that a girl's room is very personal while violating her sister's private room. What she has said is an ironical thing to the situation happens between them.

2. Functions of Verbal Humor

a. Social Management

Under this motive, the characters utter verbal humor to manage their social relationship. Three examples are extracted and explained further in this section. The first conversation is between Michael's and Joey's conversation. It is extracted from datum 15 which is illustrated as follows.

(10) MICHAEL: Is that a peach Fruit Roll-Up? 'Cause you don't see many... (Joey's friend grabs his wrist as he reaches for the Roll-Up.)

MICHAEL: (continues)...oh, okay. Yeah, Alright. (His wrist is released as he withdraws his hand.)

JOEY : **Are you lost?**

MICHAEL: No, actually, I just came by to chat.

JOEY: We don't chat.

(Datum 15)

The first function which dominates the data found in this research is social management. In the example, Joey tries to remind Michael that he is not supposed to sit with them. His utterance creates a humorous situation, because he chooses to intimidate Michael who has lower social status than him using an insulting question. Even though he meant his question as a joke, it still shows that he has other while asking the question.

b. Decommitment

The other function is decommitment. This happens when someone uses humor to deny any harmful intention for an action, or when a speaker trying to declare that he/she does not have any intention of carrying out or treating seriously an action that has been initially started (Kane et al in Attardo, 1994: 325).

The instance of decommitment is described in these two following extracts.

(11) MICHAEL : Hey. That's a cool picture. What's the collar for? Is it to keep him from licking his stitches? (He laughs at his own joke, then notices her lack of amusement.)

MICHAEL: (continuing) **Kidding.** No, because I know you're a fan of Shakespeare.

MANDELLA: than a fan. We're involved.

MICHAEL : Okay.

(Datum 37)

In this example, Michael is making fun of Shakespeare's photo in Mandella's locker. However, Mandella is not impressed by the joke, and after realizing that his effort has failed Michael salvages the situation by admitting that he is joking.

c. Defunctionalization

This kind of humor does not used to transmit any information, but it is used for playful purposes (Guiraud in Attardo, 1994: 328). It can also be called as a nonsense humor or puns. This is used by some characters in the movie. The first example is extracted in the conversation between Kat, Bianca and Walter below.

(12) BIANCA : Where did you come from? Planet loser?

KAT: As opposed to planet "**look at me! look at me!**"?

WALTER: Okay, here's how we solve this one. Old rule out. New rule: Bianca can date...

KAT&BIANCA: (Bianca lights up and Kat looks upset.)

WALTER : (continuing)...when she does. (points at Kat)

BIANCA: But she's a mutant! What if she never dates?

(Datum 11)

In the example the phrase "look at me! Look at me" does not transmit any information. Kat uses the phrase for playful purposes. She wants to tease Bianca's personality.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusions

All of the types of verbal humor are found, namely wordplay, allusion, and verbal irony. The first forms of wordplay is phonological structure which is categorized into three sub-types i.e. homonymy, homophony, and paronymy. The second form of wordplay uttered by the characters is in a form of morphological development which is created using neologism. Next, the third form of wordplay is lexical development which is manifested into two ways that are idioms and polysemy. However, there is one form of wordplay which is not uttered by the character that is syntactic structures. That is because it is harder to be created by teenagers or even to be recognized by their interlocutors. Additionally, allusion is uttered by the characters into two ways i.e. proper name allusion and key phrase allusion. Then, the last type uttered by the characters is verbal irony.

Social management is the most dominant function manifested in the verbal humor uttered. Only homonymy and morphological development have different function in the movie. Homonymy is used by a character to decommit a situation taking place, whereas morphological

development is used by a character to defunctionalize a situation in the movie. Other types are also having not just one function. Idioms are uttered by the characters not only just for managing social relationship, but also for decommitting a situation taking place in the movie. A proper name allusion is used to defunctionalize a situation in the movie, whereas verbal irony is used for all the three functions categorized in the research which are social management, decommitment, and defunctionalization

Suggestions

The readers are suggested to be more aware on what is meant by humor. It is revealed that humor is not always constitutes with laughing or smiling. In other words, what is called by humor does not always end up making people laugh or smile. That is why it is essential to know the types and the intention of verbal humor uttered.

Since humor is contextualized, bringing this study to the linguistic research should be regarded as challenging. There are many perspectives of linguistics which can be used for future researcher to examine humor. i.e. pragmatics, sociolinguistics, or stylistics. The future researchers need to decide on what they would like to focus first and then choose the most suitable

perspective. If the researcher would like to focus on how an utterance can be categorized as humor, then pragmatics would match the researcher's goal. However, if the researcher would like to focus on the society where the verbal humor is uttered, then the appropriate perspective would be sociolinguistics. Nevertheless, if the researcher would like to focus on how and why a speaker utters a verbal humor, stylistics would be compatible for his/her research.

In addition, if the future researcher is interested in analyzing humor through stylistics perspective, an improvement can be done by changing the object to a specific person so that it could be more focused on a specific style of a person. Also, if the future researcher would like to use movie or TV Series as his/her object, choosing a genre beside comedy could be more challenging.

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