

A PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF HUMOR USING MEDICAL TERMS IN *GREY'S ANATOMY SEASON 2*

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Abstract

This research is under the scope of pragmatics which has the aims to (1) find out the medical terms used to create humor in *Grey's Anatomy Season 2* TV series; (2) identify the types of humor using medical terms in *Grey's Anatomy Season 2* TV series; and (3) explain the functions of humor using medical terms in *Grey's Anatomy Season 2* TV series. The researcher applied the descriptive qualitative method. The form of the data used in this study was utterances and the contexts were dialogues taken from *Grey's Anatomy Season 2*. The main instrument of the study was the researcher herself. To enhance trustworthiness of the data in this study, triangulation was employed. Then, the research reveals three findings. The first is that the medical terms which are employed by the characters to create humor in *Grey's Anatomy Season 2* covering five basic medical terminology. They are disease, medicine, hospital position, anatomy, and medication process. Humor employed by the characters is represented in the forms of jokes and spontaneous conversational humor since unintentional humor does not occur in the data. In spontaneous conversational humor, nine forms are employed by the characters. They are irony, sarcasm, overstatement, self-deprecation, teasing, replies to rhetorical question, clever replies to serious statements, double entendres, and transformations of frozen expressions. Finally, only three out of four functions of humor that are found, i.e. social management, decommitment, and mediation.

Keywords: pragmatics, humor, medical terms, *Grey's Anatomy Season 2*

INTRODUCTION

Humor has an important role in daily life particularly during interaction or communication. To create positive atmosphere in communication, being able to tell funny things to others is needed. Understanding the right time to use humor is required since it can be employed to release tiresome, depression, and stress. Not only for laugh, but humor is also possible to be used to say the truth elegantly and softly, without disturbing someone's feeling.

The main aspect of humor is to entertain people, although it does not always mean laughter. Attardo (1994: 117) believes that the most common parameter of humor is laughter. However, humor does not always create laughter and laughter is not always the result of humor. There are still several possible reactions to humor.

A well-known medical drama, *Grey's Anatomy*, is chosen as the object of this research because it also belongs to a comedy TV series

which has medical theme. This series portrays the life of a group of intern doctors working in the Seattle hospital. It focuses on the fictional lives of surgical interns and residents while trying to maintain their personal lives, career, and relationships. There are a lot of humorous utterances said by the characters in having conversation since the genre is romance comedy medical drama.

However, the humor appearing here is a contextual humor which are mostly employs the medical terminology since the characters are doctors and physicians. The humor has the same intention such as to provoke laughter, insult, teasing, and other purposes. Humor in medical situation here has possibilities to relieve stress in patients and medical professionals. When doctors share humor with patients, humor gives patients the opportunity to forget about their anxiety and pain and also makes the doctors emotionally close to their patients. Medical professionals also use humor to release the tension among them while

working in the medical environment and to mock each other in insulting way or even just teasing.

The humor using medical terms in this drama mostly employ medical jargon, a type of medical language that is used in a particular context which may not be well understood outside the people who works in the hospital. Moreover, the intention might be different from the real use of medical terms or somehow the humor sounds too serious because during conversation, people encounter many different forms of humor communicated by different means and for different purposes.

Martin (2007:11) divides humor that occurs in everyday social interactions into three broad categories: (1) jokes, which are prepackaged humorous anecdotes that people remember and continue to one another; (2) spontaneous conversational humor, which can be in verbal or nonverbal forms which is divided more into 11 categories. Those are irony, satire, sarcasm, overstatement, self-deprecation, teasing, reply to rhetorical question, clever reply to serious statement, double entendres, transformations of frozen expressions and pun; and (3) accidental or unintentional humor.

Humor not only has entertainment function. The important functions of humor in conversation are the effects that the speaker may achieve directly by using humorous segments or texts in the discourse (Attardo, 1994: 322). According to Attardo in his book *Linguistic Theories of Humor* (1994: 323-329), the functions of humor on the communicative process can be grouped into four classes which are social management, decommitment, mediation, and defunctionalization.

Humor is a very subjective concept because the topic might be funny for some people and might be considered outrageous for others. To say whether a humor is funny or not depends on many factors including age, culture, personal experience, level of education, and location. The kind of humor in *Grey's Anatomy* is contextual and somehow hard to understand or sounds outrageous for common people without medical background knowledge. Therefore, in dealing

with the humor using medical terms as a language phenomenon, pragmatic approach which is needed to be applied since it analyzes the use and meaning of language in social contexts.

Humor has been studied quite extensively over the years with linguistic approaches. There are several approaches that are possible to use, e.g. sociolinguistic approach, stylistic approach, discourse analysis and pragmatic approach. In pragmatic field, humor is considered as a violation of Grice's Cooperative Principle. This violation happens because of the flouting of maxims in Cooperative Principle. According to Cutting (2002: 36), flouting happens when a speaker fails to observe a maxim in which s/he has intention. The speaker does not purpose to mislead the hearer but s/he believes that the hearer knows what it means. When flouting is employed, it may be to effectively communicate a message, and this message might be uttered in the form of humor.

Then, the researcher chooses the second season of this drama because according to Nielsen Ratings, from all seasons of *Grey's Anatomy* which are ranked in the top ten among all viewers, it reaches its peak in the second season attracting an average of 19.44 million viewers per episode. Then, the researcher expects that there will be a lot of humorous conversations happens in this season since it becomes the favorite of viewers due to the interesting plot and which happens mostly in the hospital setting. However, the researcher would only take 5 episodes because with the duration of 40 minutes per episode, she expects that those would be enough.

The researcher is interested to apply pragmatics as the approach to analyze humor using medical terms *Grey's Anatomy Season 2* focusing on the context of humor. The phenomena of humor in *Grey's Anatomy Season 2* leave several problems that can be identified. The first problem is related to the medical terms employed by the characters to create humor. The second problem is on the types of humor using medical terms. The last problem is related to the

functions of humor using medical terms presented in the TV drama.

The objectives of this research are: to find out the medical terms used to create humor in *Grey's Anatomy Season 2*, to identify the types of humor using medical terms in *Grey's Anatomy Season 2*, and to explain the functions of humor using medical terms in *Grey's Anatomy Season 2*.

The results of this research are expected to give some significance. For students of linguistics, this research can be a reference for linguistics students who are about to conduct similar research in the areas of pragmatics, particularly humor using medical terms. For readers in common, this research is expected to stimulate the readers to understand the use and meaning of humor especially in the real medical case. Hopefully it will help the readers because this humor is difficult to be understood by people in general. In addition, the result of this research is also expected as a reference for other researchers, therefore there may be a further and deeper research in this topic.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research employed the descriptive-qualitative method. As stated by Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009: 166-167), a qualitative research is a research based on people's interpretation of their own experience. Moreover, this research applied pragmatic approach which also deals with the context of the humor, focusing on the explanation and interpretation that also gives descriptive results for this research.

The form of the data used in this study was utterances which could be in words, sentences, and spoken discourse. Thus, the context was the text as the dialogues in which the humor was presented. Meanwhile, the source of the data for this research was the TV drama *Grey's Anatomy Season 2*. The technique of collecting data was note taking. Those data were taken in the form of written texts which were only from the characters' speeches related to medical terms.

The main instrument of the research was the researcher herself who used her capacity to interpret and analyze the data. It is in line with

Bogdan and Biklen's statement (1982: 27) who state that a qualitative research involves the researcher herself as the key instrument. The secondary instrument of this research was the data sheet which was applied in order to make the researcher easier to analyze the data from the TV series. The data analysis was used as a method for analyzing the messages from humor using medical terms. The result of the analysis was in the form of description.

In this study, the trustworthiness was applied to ensure the quality of the findings. Vanderstoep and Johnston (2008: 179) state that trustworthiness could be achieved by conducting triangulation. The researcher involved a lecturer expert and some of her peer reviewers to check out the triangulation of the data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the analysis on *Grey's Anatomy Season 2* Episodes 1-5, the researcher found some data related to the kind of medical terms, the types and functions of humor employed by the characters.

In creating humor, the characters flout medical terms based on the types and purposes they want to achieve. There are five kinds of medical terms employed by the characters in *Grey's Anatomy Season 2*. Those are disease, medicine, hospital position, anatomy, and medication process. These terms are not uttered just in a serious work situation but also in a humor creation. The medical terms are said by the characters who mostly work in the hospital as doctors and nurses.

Meanwhile, there are only two categories of humor employed by the characters. They are jokes and spontaneous conversational humor. The type of humor which cannot be found is unintentional humor because the humor in this drama mostly are done intentionally and all of the humor are in verbal way. Moreover, in spontaneous conversational humor, there are only 9 sub-types which are found. Those are irony, sarcasm, overstatement, self-deprecation, teasing, replies to rhetorical question, clever reply to serious statement, double entenders, and transformations of frozen expressions. The other

types of spontaneous conversational humor which are not exist are satire and pun.

First example is the disease terms. It is a kind of medical terms related to disease and illness names including general and scientific names.

Dr. Cristina: **You know what's ruined for me? Coronary artery bypass grafts and aortic aneurysms. God, I used to love aortic aneurysms.**

(Datum 20)

This dialogue happens when Christina tells Grey that she just breaks up with Bruke and feels sad about it. Burke ends their relationship because he chooses his work as the hospital chief to be his first priority rather than being with Cristina. Cristina expresses her sadness by cursing the disease that she has examined with Burke. The disease which later becomes the medical term as the remark of humor here is "aortic aneurysms". According to WebMD.com, it is the disease occurs in blood vessel when a bulge is in a section of the aorta, the body's main artery. This humor belongs to overstatement as she exaggerates her hate to disease as if the problem is the disease. Thus, the function is social management.

The next example of medicine terms related to chemical things and medical stuffs which are categorized as medicine is presented below.

Dr. Bailey: You **swallow a bitter pill** this morning, Yang? **They're dolls.**

(Datum 14)

The situation is in the morning when the interns prepare their stuffs to start the work and Bailey as the resident tries to make the situation warm and comfortable by creating a teasing humor using an unusual case that happened the day before. A patient was operated because of swallowing doll heads that doctors thought as balloon of drugs. The medicine term "pill" is employed to create humor by comparing it to dolls. Pill is a small solid piece of medicine which a person swallows to cure the disease.

Since the form is similar, she employs the term "pill" to create a humor to one of the intern named Cristina Yang. Then, it creates the social management function which has the intention to strengthen social bonds between the speaker and the hearer.

Third, the following example is humor employed in *Grey's Anatomy Season 2* using hospital position as the remark of the humor.

Dr. Bailey: OK, I'm sorry. **I thought I was your resident, not your hostess. I assign, you take.**
Is that a problem?

(Datum 26)

The context of Datum 26 is when Bailey shares the works that interns have to do, then Cristina gets to accompany Burke in doing an operation while she is not really in a good relationship with him. Thus, Cristina protests to Bailey to give another job. However, Bailey does not like to be interrupted especially by someone who denies her assignment.

Because Bailey is annoyed when Cristina refuses her assignment, Bailey answers by highlighting that she is Cristina's resident not her hostess. Bailey tries to remind Cristina sarcastically that she is an intern who has to obey the resident by comparing job position between a resident and a hostess. Thus, the hospital position "resident" appeared here as the medical remark. Resident is a term for the ones who have completed eight years of higher education and also physicians who enters a residency program are known as resident. The resident position is in higher rank than an intern who is the residency is just one year at the hospital. This humor belongs to the sarcasm type. Meanwhile, the function is mediation.

The type of medical terminology which is related to human body from head to toe and even the inside part of the body is called as anatomy. The example is in the following.

Dr. George: He's definitely coming. Ow!
 Want her doing tequila shots
 all night? I'll be the one
 cleaning up the vomit.
**Besides, I touched a heart
 today, Porny.**

(Datum 61)

The datum 61 happens in a bar near hospital. Grey gets drunk and in a broken heart and her interns friend accompanied her. She expects that Derek will come to the bar and chooses her than his wife, therefore she asks her friend whether Derek will come or not. George answers that he will come, so Cristina pinches him. Then, George replies by teasing Cristina that George had done a proudly solo operation while she got a patient that should watch porn all day long.

The anatomy word “heart” uttered by George in this sentence has double meanings. In medical field, it means the heart of human part he touched in a heart surgery and emotionally it means the heart of feeling because he saves the patient’s life. He uses this double entendres humor to mock Cristina. Therefore, the function is social management.

The last example is the medication process which is related to the medical activities and characteristics. The example from findings is presented below.

Dr. Karev : It's definitely a bullet.
 Tracked clear through his
 head.

Dr. Ellis : **Now are you people just
 going to sit here or get
 him into surgery?**

(Datum 48)

This conversation takes place in the X-ray room when a patient of gunshot wound is being examined. Then, Ellis Grey, who is Grey’s mother that is a famous surgeon, comes. She is actually being a patient of Alzheimer at that hospital but she has an illusion of being at work, thus she acts like she is the senior doctor and yells at them who just sit doing nothing but wondering how could there is a bullet in patient’s head.

The term “surgery” is a medical operation as the treatment of injuries or diseases by cutting open the body and removing or repairing the damaged part. This term is put in this sarcastic humor because Ellis tries to remind the doctors in a crude way to do the operation quickly and not just watch the X-ray. Therefore, this humor belongs to mediation function.

In terms of function, from four functions of humor proposed by Attardo (1994: 323-329), there is only defunctionalization that cannot be found since the characters do not apply pun and word playing to create humor using medical terms. The characters just play with the meaning and the intention of humor, but not the homophone of the word itself. Meanwhile, the other functions which finally found by the researcher after analyzing the data are social management, decommitment, and mediation.

From the data findings, all of the types of humor found in *Grey’s Anatomy Season 2* apply social management as the function, except transformation of frozen expression. However, self-deprecation, reply to rhetorical question, clever reply to serious statement, and double entendres have only social management as the function.

Dr. Izzie : She's my friend too but
 she's acting like she has no
 emotions or warmth, like
 she's missing a soul.

Dr. George : **God, she's gonna make a
 great surgeon.**

(Datum 33)

Izzie is quite upset to Cristina since Cristina has been operated to cut her fallopian tube and the baby, however she looks fine and begins to work again. When Cristina’s friends try to convince her, it seems like she does not need the support since she is too strong and cold. Thus, Izzie expresses her upset in that utterance above. Then, George replies a teasing to Cristina that with her emotionless and coldness she will be a great and professional surgeon.

The hospital position of “surgeon” is employed here to create humor. The type is teasing since Cristina is teased by George as a

great surgeon because of her emotionlessness that will lead her to be professional. This humor has no insult intention even though it upsets someone. Thus, the function is social management as a tool to facilitate in-group interaction and strengthen their friendship.

The example below is the second example of social management.

Dr. Derek : I'm well aware of Richard's recovery time. I'm the one who operated on him, remember?

Dr. Burke : I do. You operated. He survived and chose me to take over while recruiting your wife.

Dr. Derek : Clearly, **he has brain damage.**

(Datum 1)

The conversation above happens between two senior doctors who compete each other to be the chief of surgery. They have a quite high-tension conversation related to their chief who is being a patient of one kind of brain damage disease. Moreover, Burke asks about Richard condition. Derek emphasizes his answer that he is the one who does operation on Richard, so he is well aware of Richard's recovery. However, Burke also has something to be proud to mock Derek; Burke is chosen as the temporarily chief. In addition, Derek's wife is also recruited while Derek saves Richard's life.

"Brain damage" belongs to the disease term which is related to injury that happened at the brain. Derek makes Richard's mistakes clear by saying that Richard has a brain damage. It means not only the real brain damage or tumor in his brain but also the damage in his thought because of choosing Burke as the chief which is an unexpected decision. The type of humor is double entendres since it uses the word "brain damage" in different meaning not the real meaning in medical terminology. Then, the function is social management in order to embarrass or intimidate Richard.

The second function, Decommitment, are only found in understatement and transformation

of frozen expression. The following conversation is the example of decommitment.

Police : Ma'am, why don't you have a seat? We need to ask you a few questions. (*to a patient's wife*)

Dr. Addison: **Well, nothing like a domestic dispute to liven up a pre-op, huh?**

(Datum 51)

Datum 51 occurs in a patient room when the doctors and nurses prepare for an operation. Due to the suspicion of the doctor to the patient's wife which might be the one who shot her husband, the doctors call police. Then, the police come and take the patient's wife. Because of the crowded of polices in the patient's room, Addison as the one who does not know what has happened comes and asks a question using an overstatement by saying an exaggeration that it can be a domestic dispute to liven up pre-op.

The medication process called "pre-op" means pre-operation here said in the sentence to create a humor to the other doctors at that room. Therefore, the function is decommitment using the probing tactic. It is a function of humor in which a speaker can get information by making a humorous utterance. Addison wants to know what happens, so she says humor as an attempt to discover information.

Then, the function of mediation only found in the data which have the types of irony, sarcasm, overstatement, teasing, and transformation of frozen expression. The example of medication is in the following.

Dr. Bailey: **Are we saving lives or having a tea party?** Walk faster.

(Datum 23)

While walking to the patients' room to examine them, the interns have a chit chat behind Bailey. Bailey as the resident of the interns, irritated to their noise which are not proper to be talked when in working hour. This sarcastic humor she employed because the interns are having chit-chat behind her instead of starting their works. Thus, she critics them to focus on

works. Meanwhile, “Saving lives” is categorized as medication process. It has the same meaning as work. Meanwhile, the function is mediation since Bailey tries to carry out potentially aggressive interactions.

As the results, social management and mediation become the main functions of humor in *Grey’s Anatomy Season 2* since the humor are employed in their social group such as close friends among the interns, the doctors and the patients, or the doctors and the patients. The humor mostly have purposes to embarrass each other whether the embarrassments are just to tease or to criticize.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusions

This research investigates humor using medical terms performed in *Grey’s Anatomy Season 2* TV series. Based on the findings and discussion in Chapter IV, some conclusions can be drawn related to the formulation of the problems and objectives of the study stated in Chapter I.

In relation to the first objective of the research, there are 5 kinds of medical terms employed by the characters to create humor in *Grey’s Anatomy Season 2* i.e. disease, medicine, hospital position, anatomy, and medication process. From the findings in Chapter IV, it can be seen that all of these medical terms are applied. These terms are not only uttered for a serious work situation but also in a humor creation. Moreover, the characters who employ medical terms mostly are doctors and nurses.

The researcher finds only two types of humor employed by the characters. They are jokes and spontaneous conversational humor and the type which does not exist is unintentional humor. Jokes are the types of humor which are applied three times by the characters, particularly among the doctors’ conversation in order to relieve their tension and stress. On the other hand, in spontaneous conversational humor, there are only 9 sub-types which can be analyzed. Those are irony, sarcasm, overstatement, self-deprecation, teasing, replies to rhetorical question, clever reply to serious statement, double

entenders, and transformations of frozen expressions. The other types of spontaneous conversational humor which cannot be obtained are satire and pun.

Meanwhile, the functions of humor that are analyzed to reveal the intention of humor using medical terms consist of four categories. Those are social management, decommitment, mediation, and defunctionalization. However, the only function which cannot be found is defunctionalization since the characters do not apply pun or word playing to create humor. Meanwhile, the other functions which are finally found by the researcher after analyzing *Grey’s Anatomy Season 2* are social management, decommitment, and mediation.

Suggestions

After conducting this research, the researcher proposes some suggestions. The students majoring in linguistics who are interested in pragmatics are suggested to learn pragmatics more seriously. Therefore, they can conduct researches in pragmatic analysis to discuss humor as one of the interesting topic under pragmatics which is challenging to be explored, particularly the specific and contextual humor for example the humor using medical terms that the researcher has chosen in this study.

The readers in common are also suggested to read this research so they can improve their insight about humor in language phenomenon. In addition, the readers can understand how humor using medical terms are created and interpreted by employing the analysis of medical terms, types, and functions of humor. For future researchers, there are still many interesting topics under pragmatics approach which have not been examined yet. Moreover, this topic is not limited to general of humor as mostly analyzed by the previous researchers, but the future researchers may analyze the other various kind of specific humor, such as military humor, scientific humor, and sarcastic humor and the like. As a result, the future researchers will be able to write a good research and help to add more references related to study of humor.

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