

CHAPTER II

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE OBJECT OF STUDY

2.1. Jokes and Humors

2.1.1. Definitions

“Joke” and “humor” are treated as synonyms and employed interchangeably. Joke is defined as any stimulation that evokes amusement and that is experienced as being funny (Wilson, 1979: 2). Amusement refers to a mental state having the characteristics of [PLEASANT] and [HUMOROUS]. In English, “funny” and “amusing” are both ambiguous. The former refers primarily to jocularity, but also to peculiarity. The latter describes a variety of pleasures. A day in the countryside or a dinner may both be “amusing” without being humorous. It seems that a greater imprecision is attached to amusing than to funny, so the latter was utilized in the experiments as the best label by which subjects might describe their experience of “amusement”. “Amusing” has a broader sense than “funny” which is synonymous with humorous or comic. Amusement and funniness in humor occur when a person who encounters an ambiguous construction suddenly becomes aware of his mistake in interpreting the ambiguity.



2.1.2. The Form and Content of Jokes

The structure of jokes is described and defined in terms of “form” and “content”. Content refers to the specific perceptions and meanings evoked by joke stimuli. In the case of a verbal joke, for example, the content consists of its sounds and of the meanings that these evoke. Form refers to the interrelation or pattern of these stimuli.

Jokes expressing erotic content are termed sexual. Those voicing hostile meanings are referred to as aggressive, and those with critical or abusive content are described as derisive. According to Freud, jokes that are devoid of motivational themes are christened as innocent (Wilson, 1979: 3).

Joke or humor is regarded as having “personal function” for the joker or audience, if it affects or expresses motivational states. If the joke is rewarding or gratifying, it is described as having a positive personal function. Conversely, if the joke is aversive or frustrating it is regarded as having a negative personal function.

The “social functions” of joking refer to its effects within the society in which it is expressed. Functional explanations have frequently coupled the academic heresies of tautology and teleology. To avoid these sins, the functions are impassively described by the effects of the joking – without any suggestion as to the overall “needs” or “purpose” of society, and without any implication that the joking necessarily arose to fulfill its subsequent effects. The effects of joking can be broadly categorized as either “conservative” or “radical”. Any effect of joking that tends to preserve the existing social organization is described as a conservative function; whereas effects that provoke change or undermine the social system are termed as radical functions (Wilson, 1979: 4).

2.1.3. Jokes and Motivations

Freud distinguishes the kinds of jokes in terms of motivation or aim they have conveyed to create amusement. They are comic, humor, and wit. Non-motivational jokes are comics and motivational jokes are humor and wit.

- Non-motivational Jokes : Comics

Comics are non-motivational jokes of which the funniness is evoked through the use of joke techniques alone. It is an innocent joke.

One example :

Struggling with the English language, a foreigner was frustrated by the reasoning behind the pronunciation of words like tough, bough, though. He gave up when he read the newspaper headline : "BAZAAR PRONOUNCED SUCCESS".

Considering the example above, the humor has no motivational theme and the funniness is obtained through the ambiguous verb "*pronounce*" which has four different meanings, namely :

- *Meaning 1 : to declare, to announce*
- *Meaning 2 : to declare, one's opinion*
- *Meaning 3 : to pass judgement*
- *Meaning 4 : to utter / make the sound of a word*

The ambiguity involves *meaning 1* and *meaning 4*. When reading the first lines, the two meanings meet the words : tough, bough, and though. Readers are geared to *meaning 4*, or how those words are uttered. But in the last sentence, the punch line, the frustrated man still thinks of *meaning 4*, but readers know well that it is *meaning 1*. They get amused and burst into laughter.

- Motivational Jokes : Humor and Wit

Motivational jokes are humor and wit. Humor is “a means to gain pleasure despite the painful effects which disturb it” (Brill, 1938: 797). Humor is created and used as a substitute to reveal emotional things which in serious situations are suppressed or repressed. Humor, according to Freud, is used “instead of getting angry”, and humor is closer to comic than wit. However the comic effect ends when the defendant cannot bear the joke and feels it as an insult to him.

One example :

Unlike suburbanites, city dwellers don't walk for their health : They run.

There is a play between *meaning 1* and *meaning 2*, where :

meaning 1 : city dwellers run for health (literal meaning);

and

meaning 2 : city dwellers run for health (figurative meaning : by running from muggers and other criminals).

Readers will first take *meaning 1* since it contrasts in speed with the phrase “walk for their health”. For those who are familiar with life in New York City, they will take *meaning 2* and laugh at the fact that New York is infamous of the many muggings, hold-ups,

rapes, and other crimes occurring in town. However, New Yorkers do not feel it as an attack toward themselves, and they can join the laughter. The joke becomes a milder way of stating the fact.

To Indonesians, the joke above is funny in a different way. They find a contrast in “walk for health” and “run for wealth” since city people in general are always hunted by time. They have to walk up early and run to office (or class) early. This might be the significant difference in universal and ethnic in this case New Yorker-jokes.

Humor is emotional, but wit is intellectual. Concerning wit, Freud pays little attention to “harmless wit” which he says as evoking less pleasure compared to “tendentious wit”. The latter is divided into “hostile wit” and “obscene wit”. However, the concept of “obscenity” has been changing from pornography to anything, which offends individuals or a community group. This might be an issue to re-examine Freud’s dichotomy of “tendentious wit” into “hostile wit” and “obscene wit”.

2.2.1. Sociolinguistics and Cultures

The information content of American humor can be divided into three types (Lover and Hutcheson, 1972; quoted in Bell, 1976: 72 ff), i.e., cognitive or factual information (the explicitly stated

information), indexical or socio-psychological information (the implicit information about people, event), and interaction management information which is normally paralinguistic (which serves as a feedback). These three types of information content are all present in oral communication, while in written discourse, the third can be ignored since in written communication the writer and the reader(s) do not interact directly, or the reader's comprehension does not give direct feedback to the writer as in the case of oral communication.

Cognitive or factual information can be understood through the form and meaning of the linguistic structures, namely the words and their relations in sentences and discourse. It is different from indexical information which involves social, psychological and cultural aspects. In other words, indexical information involves world knowledge or encyclopedic knowledge.

Sociolinguistic is defined as "the study of the ways people use language in social interaction" (Chaika, 1982: 2). Its significance in the analysis of humor is the contribution of social information about the character(s) in humor, or own from the language used.

Culture is defined as explicit or implicit patterns of behavior that make a group of people distinct from other groups. In

the study of American humor, the cultural information introduces every aspect specific to American culture, or the everyday behavior, traits, standards, values and comfortable for American people.

In reality, the social and cultural aspects of indexical information are often inseparable. They are so intertwined that it is often difficult to clear-cut which is social and which is cultural. For instance, In the American rules of address, "boy" is used as an identity of a servant such as bellboy, busboy, messenger-boy, office boy, room-boy. Dogs also called boy since they are faithful "servants". So when a White policeman met a well-known Black psychiatrist and author, Dr. Alvin Poussaint, the policeman insisted on using "boy" ignoring the social status of Dr. Poussaint. This event occurred in United States and it is rather difficult to find similar cases outside the cultural setting and context where the Whites intentionally consider themselves superior to the Blacks. The case where rules of address are violated is social reality, but the subordinating of the Black is a way of thinking of a group of people in the United States, and therefore, cultural.

However, generally humor can be understood by the people in the world except for some certain social and cultural cases. If we compare the form of Indonesian humor plays or films like *Srimulat*, *Ludruk*, *Warkop comedy film*, *Ngelaba*, etc. They are different from

American comedy films like *Hope and Gloria*, *Cybill*, *The Single Guy*, *Home Alone*, etc. Although they are different in form and content, however, we can still understand what jokes they intend to create.

2.3. The Serial Comedy Film “Hope and Gloria”

The Serial Comedy Film “Hope and Gloria” is shown by Indosiar on every Sunday morning at 06.00. It is produced by Twenty Century Fox Corporation, United States of America. The film is a kind of comedy film, whose dialogues constitute a humor, and always accompanied by laughing sound when there is a funny joke.

2.3.1. Setting and Characters

The setting is always indoor (studio) and very rarely done outdoor. The setting is usually located in two common places, namely, the house of Hope and Gloria and the office where Hope and Gloria work. Other settings are in restaurant, coffee shop, bar, etc.

The main characters of the serial comedy film “*Hope and Gloria*” are Hope Davidson (acted by Cynthia Stevenson) and her sister Gloria Davidson (acted by Jessica Lundy). Gloria is Louis’ wife (acted by Calony Thunder) and she has a child named Sonny

(acted by Robert Garraco) while Hope is still single. Hope, Gloria, Louis, and Sonny live together in one apartment.

Hope and Gloria work as a production staff of a television show in Denis Dupree Corporation. The director of this Corporation is Denis Dupree (acted by Alan Thicken). The other employers of that office besides Hope and Gloria are Gwillem (acted by Gregory David), Steve (acted by Tyvana Negro), and Dr Grassman (acted by Yulia Gilberg). However, sometimes there are some new characters momentarily playing in that film. This serial film is produced by Warner Bross Television, United States of America and the producer of the film is Steven Bernsmen.

2.3.2. The Plot of Comedy in The Serial Comedy Film "Hope and Gloria"

The film talks about a problem experienced by the characters especially the main characters, Hope and Gloria. The problem usually comes from the office where Hope and Gloria work or from the life of the housewife of Gloria and Hope. The problems can be anything such as ambition, desire, psychology, economy, conflict, belief, job, life, etc. However, in the last story, the problem can always be solved by the characters clearly.

CHAPTER III

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION