

## **AN ANALYSIS OF SPEECH ACTS CONTAINING HUMOR IN FULL HOUSE TV SITCOM IN MNTV SURABAYA**

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**ABSTRAK :** Tujuan studi ini adalah untuk menemukan dan mendeskripsikan alasan locutionary, illocutionary dan perlocutionary acts yang mengandung humor dalam TV sitcom Full House yang ditayangkan di Stasiun MNTV Surabaya 2010. Metode yang digunakan adalah deskriptif kualitatif. Data utama berbentuk video dan transkrip dialog antar tokoh dalam episode 18, "DJ Tanner's Day Off" yang ditayangkan ulang oleh stasiun tv tersebut. Analisa data dipresentasikan dalam bentuk tabel yang dihubungkan dengan tiap pernyataan masalah. Studi ini salah satunya menemukan bahwa illocutionary acts lebih memiliki peran dan tujuan utama dalam speech acts untuk menyampaikan maksud seseorang kepada yang lain, apakah untuk humor atau tidak.

**Keywords:** Speech acts, humor

### **INTRODUCTION**

Humans are not only individual but also social creature of God. They cannot live alone. Thus, they should always communicate with others by using language. Linguists have different meanings of language. According to Nasr (1984:1);

Language is a part of culture, it is a part of human behavior. Language is an acquired habit of systematic vocal activity representing meanings coming from human experiences. One can also say, simply, that language is an acquired vocal system for communicating meanings. This statement tells us

- (a) that language operates in a regular and systematic fashion,
- (b) that language is basically oral, and that the oral symbols represent meaning as they are related to real life situations and experiences, and
- (c) that language has a social function, and that without it society would probably not exist.

In addition, Wardhaugh (1977:3-8) has a particular definition of language. He states, "Language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols used for human communication, i.e. language as system, language as arbitrary, language as vocal, language as symbol, language as human, and language as communication". People use language to convey their messages and intentions to others and may make some things easier by saying than other things. Therefore, language has very important roles in their lives since it is as a means of communication. Furthermore, language is also used to establish or maintain relationships with other people.

Communication, as the most important role of language, is defined as "The action or process of communicating (Communicate: to pass something on; to transmit something; to exchange information, news, ideas, etc with somebody; to make one's ideas, feeling, etc clear to others; to have a good relationship because of shared feelings and understanding" (as cited in Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary, 1995:229-230). There is an important thing to make a more fun and attractive communication. We call it *humor*. Misunderstanding of communication among people can make them laugh or to be funny because the addressee cannot catch what the speaker intends to, yet the addressee considers he/she knows the act to do or the utterance to say. People like hearing humor, as their refreshment of stressful daily routines, to make more joyful lives, and of course, it can make them stay young as well as laughter is healthy.

According to The Grolier International Dictionary Volume One (1981:641), "Humor is the quality of being laughable or comical; funniness: something designed to induce laughter or amusement: the ability to perceive, enjoy, or express what is comical or funny." In The American Heritage Dictionary (1991:627), "Humor is the ability to perceive, enjoy, or express what is comical or funny." In Longman Advanced American Dictionary (2003:709), "Humor is the quality in something that makes us funny and makes people laugh; the ability to laugh at things and think that they are funny; the way that a particular person or group find certain things amusing." According to Raskin (1985:1):

Somebody hears or sees something and laughs. In most cases, this means that the person finds the audial or visual stimulus funny. Funny situations, funny stories, even funny thoughts occur everyday to virtually everybody. Laughter can be heard frequently in most societies though its exact meaning may differ from occasion to occasion and from culture to culture. In any case, however, laughter is more often than not the expression of the feeling of funniness.

Television is one of the mass media spread out among people from different kinds of backgrounds around the world. It has become a common electronic device in every house in the cities even in the villages or countries. Televisions have many interesting programs or shows, such as news, sports, reality, sitcom, etc. News programs give broad and updatable information about what is being occurred around the world to the people. Sport programs can provoke people live healthily. Humor programs on televisions by comedians can make the audiences and the viewers laugh. One of the popular TV sitcoms that had high rated viewers is *Full House*. It is an American television sitcom that originally ran in primetime from September 22, 1987, to May 23, 1995, on ABC (United States) as well as to have more than 190 episodes

(<http://www.tv.com/full-house/show/1026/summary.html>, accessed on January 21, 2011 at 09:20 a.m. WIB).

According to Dictionary of Jargon (1987:497), "Sitcom is abbreviation of situation comedy a program, usually screened as a series, which takes a specific group of characters in a particular background and uses their (mis-)adventures and mutual interaction as the source of a continuing comedy." Furthermore, "A situation comedy is a popular (form of) humorous television or radio show typically having a number of standard characters who appear in different stories each week" (as cited in Longman Dictionary of English Language and Culture, 1992:1238). Nowadays, it is being rebroadcasted by a new private local TV station named MNTV (Matahari Nusantara TV) Surabaya. Even though it is a kind of old TV sitcom, the writer is interested in and decides it as a study because of some factors. They are the English used by the actors and the actresses is really understandable, the story talks about daily family interactions which doesn't only contain humorous conversations, but also good moral values, no many slang words, no many sexual/porn acts (sexual/porn acts are common in movies of western countries) as well as in simply and naturally conversations.

The show is about single parent Danny Tanner (Bob Saget) loses his wife in a car accident and is left to raise his three young daughters, DJ (Candace Cameron), Stephanie (Jodie Sweetin) and Michelle (Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen). With the help of his brother-in-law Jesse (John Stamos) and best friend Joey, (Dave Coulier) they learn that love and laughter can make a house a home (<http://abcfamily.go.com/shows/full-house>, accessed on December 4, 2010 at 11:10 a.m. WIB). The writer is interested in all of those characters since they deliver humor in their speech though sometimes the humor is implicit, for example:

DJ and Kimmy: *Stacy Q! She's so RAD!!!!*

Just then Stephanie comes in....

Stephanie :*Hi. What are you doing? What are you talking about? Can I play?* DJ and Kimmy stare at her.....

Stephanie :(waving her hands back and forth in front of their faces) *Hello? Hello?!*

DJ :*Steph let me explain this one more time. Your world is down here* (she puts her hand low near the floor) *and our world is up here.* (she puts her hand up really high)

Stephanie grabs a chair and then stands on it....

Stephanie : *Okay. Now can I play?*

There is an unexpected act done by Stephanie. DJ has an intended meaning to Stephanie in order not to join her conversation with Kimmy and she utters in connotative words. On the other hand, Stephanie gets misunderstanding and does what DJ intends to but it is wrong. By the time, the humor occurs.

The humor in the Full House TV sitcom is not always explicit but also implicit. If the writer cannot discover the humor, he can be assisted by the *laugh track*. Thus, the writer can analyze the mis understanding or mis-interpretation among the speakers to the addressees or the characters producing humor by considering the *laugh track* and the writer's interpretation himself. In this way, the writer concentrates merely to the utterances containing humor by using Austin's theory about speech acts, Searle's theory (1976) about Five Macro Classes of speech acts, and Raskin's theory (1985) about the factors contributing *humor act* as well as Taflinger's theory (1996) about six elements are required for something to be humorous.

"According to Austin, he pointed out that when people use language, they are performing a kind of action. He called these actions speech acts." (as cited in Fasold and Linton, 2006:162). In Joan (2002:16), "Austin (1962) defined speech acts as the actions performed in saying something." "Austin's claim is that the utterance of any sentence in a real speech situation constitutes three kinds of acts: locutionary act, illocutionary act, and perlocutionary act" (Jurafsky and Martin, 2000:728).

"Locutionary acts is the utterance of a sentence with a particular meaning, illocutionary act is the act of asking, answering, promising, etc in uttering a sentence, and perlocutionary acts is the (often intentional) production of certain effects upon the feelings, thoughts, or actions of the addressee in uttering a sentence" (as cited in Jurafsky and Martin, 2000:728). In this study, the writer uses those three acts to analyze the utterances containing humor.

## Discussion

The writer presents the discussion of selected *Five Macro Classes* of speech acts of Searle (1976) containing humor obtained on the table.

### 1. Representative

Danny : *I'm gonna miss my girls* (34). (hugging Michelle) *I'll miss you* (35). (hugging Stephanie) *I'll miss you* (36). (hugging DJ) *I'll miss you* (37). (hugging Kimmy) *I'll miss you* (38)!  
 Stephanie : *Daddy* (39). *Take it easy* (40)! *You're hugging other peoples' kids* (41)!  
 Danny : *Sorry Kimmy* (42). *Okay you do know that while I'm gone Uncle Jesse and Joey are going to be in charge* (43).  
*So you'll be on your best behaviour right* (44)?

The italic underlined utterance shows a locutionary act produced by Stephanie who is triggered by Danny's action as in, "(hugging Kimmy) *I'll miss you.*" The illocutionary act is that Stephanie asserts her father that he is hugging other people's kid (Kimmy) as in "*You're hugging other people's kids!*"

She intends to the utterance because she thinks that his father is in hurry to hug his daughters till he does not realize that he hugs Kimmy too. The perlocutionary acts is that Danny apologizes to Stephanie as in, "Sorry Kimmy.", because he also hugs Kimmy who is not his daughter. The humor occurs when Stephanie reminds his father (Danny) that he hugs Kimmy who is not his own daughter. Her father may be ashamed because of Stephanie's utterance. However, Stephanie does not have any intention to make her father ashamed. In addition, her intended meaning is successful to receive Danny. In this case, Raskin's theory (1985) about the factors contributing humor act is true that "There should be human participants in the act" and "Something must happen in a humor act."

## 2. Directive

DJ : *Ohhhhh....* (161).

Stephanie : *What's wrong* (162)?

DJ : *I'm siiiiiick....* (163). (she lies in bed)

Stephanie : (rubbing her head) *Poor baby....* (164). *I'll go get Joey* (165).

*You just need some peace and quiet* (166). (screaming) *Joey, get in here* (167)!

Joey rushes in....

Joey : *What is it* (168)? *What's wrong* (169)?

The italic underlined utterance shows a locutionary act produced by Stephanie who is triggered by DJ's utterance and action as in, "I'm siiiiiick." The illocutionary act is that Stephanie commands Joey to get in her room because DJ says that she is sick as in, "Joey, get in here!" Stephanie is worried about her sister so she needs some help from another. Unfortunately, she says that Stephanie needs some peace and quiet but she calls and commands Joey to come in her bedroom loudly. The perlocutionary act is that Joey listens to Stephanie's utterance so he rushes in her room as in "What is it? What's wrong?" He may rushes in Stephanie's and DJ's room because of Stephanie's screaming. The humor occur when Stephanie previously says that DJ should need some quiet and peace but she commands Joey to get in her bedroom loudly even next to DJ. It is very contrastive with her previous utterance. She may forget of her suggestion given to DJ. She thinks it will be more effective to call and command Joey by screaming though it is different from what she asks to DJ. In this case, the theory by Taflinger (1996) is true that "The situation and its component parts (the actions performed and the dialogue spoken) must be inconsistent or unsuitable to the surrounding or associations."

## 3. Commissive

DJ : *Oh come on Dad* (57). *You just said I could have the autograph* (58).

*I'll only be missing one day of school* (59).

Danny : *I'm sorry* (60).

DJ :*I'll make it up (61). I'll go to school on Christmas (62).*  
 Danny :*DJ (63). We all have our jobs (64). My job is to go to L.A. and cover surfing competitions (65). Your job is to go to school (66).*

The italic underlined utterance shows a locutionary act produced by DJ who is triggered by Danny's utterance as in, "I'm sorry." The illocutionary act is that DJ promises to go to school on Christmas to make up her missing one day of school as in, "I'll go to school on Christmas." She intends to the utterance because she wants to tell her father, Danny, that she is serious to get the autograph. On the other hand, she will make her missing one day of school up in the Christmas which is certainly no school so it is a kind of ridiculous idea. The perlocutionary act is that Danny does not allow DJ to miss going to school although one day, even he affirms that her job is to go to school by using a polite answer, not directly refuses DJ's request. He utters so to give an understanding to DJ that everyone has their jobs as in, "DJ. We all have our jobs. My job is to go to L.A. and cover surfing competitions. Your job is to go to school." The humor occurs when DJ says an impossible action to do. She knows that there is no school on Christmas but she wants to make her missing one day of school up on that day. She tries anything to get the autograph. Danny is an adult man, so he understands DJ's intended meaning and of course, he cannot be fooled by his kid. In this case, Raskin's theory (1985) about the factors contributing humor act is true that "The life experience of an individual." In addition, also in Taflinger (1996) about one of six elements are required for something to be humorous, "It must appeal to the intellect rather than the emotions." It means, if DJ is not clever, she will not utter as in utterance (62). If she utters the utterance by showing sadness or crying, the humor may not occur or exist.

#### 4. Expressive

Jesse :*Exactly (365). She was hardly worth mentioning but we mentioned it.*  
*Everything is great (366).*  
 Danny :*Oh (367). Well, that's good (368).*  
 Stephanie :*DJ since you missed school today your teacher asked me to give you your homework (369).*  
 DJ :*(sarcastically)Thank you so much (370).*  
 Stephanie : *You're welcome (371).*

The italic underlined utterance shows a locutionary act produced by DJ who is triggered by Stephanie's utterance as in, "DJ since you missed school today your teacher asked me to give you your homework." The illocutionary act is that DJ thanks to Stephanie because she gives DJ's homework from her teacher but she says sarcastically as in, "Thank you so much." DJ does not only utter thankful to Stephanie, but also she may be ashamed because Stephanie says the truth that DJ missed the school that day. It is very contrastive with Jesse and Joey's

utterance that DJ is not sick that morning. Danny will trust more to Stephanie's intended meaning. The perlocutionary act is that Stephanie welcomes DJ's thanking to her as in, "You're welcome." Stephanie feels happy because she thinks DJ is assisted by her. The humor occurs when DJ is not pleased to Stephanie. DJ thanks her because Stephanie gives DJ's homework from the teacher. It is really embarrassing DJ in front of her father because her lie has been disclosed by Stephanie. In addition, the more embarrassing lie is that Joey and Jesse's utterances are untrue. In other words, DJ, Joey, and Jesse lie Danny or they are being liars. What an awkward and unpleasant thankful done by DJ is. In this case, Raskin's theory (1985) about the factors contributing humor act is true that "Every humor act occurs in a certain physical environment which serves as one of the most important contextual factors of the humor act." It means, one of the most important contextual factors of humor act is telling lie about DJ's missing one day of school.

### **Conclusion**

The objectives of this study are four altogether, mainly to analyze, describe, and explain speech acts which contain humor among the utterances of the characters of Full House TV sitcom. After doing this study, the writer finds some conclusions, as follows:

1. There are four kinds of Five Macro Classes of speech acts based on the theory of Searle (1976) which contain humor that are obtained in this study. They are Representatives, Directives and Commissives as well as Expressives. The writer does not find any Declarations in it. The writer concludes that Declarations may not match to be used in this TV sitcom because they cannot produce humor. Furthermore, the goal of humor is to make someone laugh but Declarations are usually seriously uttered.

2. The writer assumes that among the three kinds of speech acts (i.e., locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts), illocutionary acts have more roles and are the main purposes of speech acts to convey someone's intended meaning to others whether for humor or not. He has confidence in concluding this second point of conclusion because Austin says in the same way, as cited in Leech (1991:15), "Austin in fact distinguished illocutionary acts from other kinds of acts, notably locutionary and perlocutionary acts. But the other kinds of act can be largely discounted in an account of pragmatics." It is very clear and can be trusted because other linguists also mentions more "illocutionary acts" term than the others in their books.

3. Humor occurs because of many things. Misunderstanding, funny situation, and even unpleasant situation done by the characters or addressers can make people laugh. The writer agrees by the factors contributing *humor act* presented by Raskin (1985:3-4) and the six elements which are required for something to be humorous presented by Tafinger (1996). The theories are really relevant to help analyzing this study. Furthermore, because the writer connects

1. between speech acts and humor, humor can be generated from a simple utterance. Everyone can generate humor and they firstly do not need to learn how to generate it. Some requirements of factors contributing humor should exist.

2. Based on this study, the writer also concludes an unpredictable result. He previously thinks that adult men generate humor more than children, but in fact, he is wrong. Children generate humor more than adult men. They utter simple utterances but they can make us laugh. They sometimes do not understand what exactly to do but they think they know what to do. They sometimes cannot catch the elders' intended meanings so they are going to do something based on their understanding or even fantasy. In addition, they do not need any complicated utterances to make us laugh.

### **SUGGESTIONS**

Based on the results and discussion of this study, the writer presents some suggestions need to be put forward in order to improve the accomplishment of speech acts containing humor in TV sitcom. These suggestions are as follows:

1. The use of *laugh track* accompanying TV sitcoms, which its main purpose is to trigger a response from home viewers who may not understand all of the intended humor during a taped sitcom, should be not *over* and too many to be played during the program. The home viewers may be triggered to laugh, yet they do not laugh because of thinking that the sitcom is odd even confusing. Nowadays, the home viewers are smart to catch humor intended by the characters in TV sitcom. Thus, other researchers who want to do a further research like this study, the writer suggests that we can be assisted by the *laugh track* to know humor occurs but they may make us confused because we consider that the humor does not occur.

2. The writer also suggests that this study can be used as a reference to do a further research in analyzing other TV sitcoms using the same theory and methodology.

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