

**THE PRINCIPLE OF IRONY AND BANTER IN JEFF DUNHAM'S
STAND-UP COMEDY ENTITLED *SPARK OF INSANITY: MEET
ACHMED THE DEAD TERRORIST***

A GRADUATING PAPER

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for Gaining the Bachelor Degree in English Department



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Atas perhatiannya, kami mengucapkan terima kasih.

Wassalamu'alaikum Wr. Wb

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MOTTO

“People’s dreams... don’t ever end!”

Marshall D. “Kurohige” Teach

DEDICATION

I dedicate this paper to my mother and myself.

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Praise be to Allah SWT who has blessed me to finish this graduating paper entitled *Principle of Irony and Banter in Jeff Dunham'S Stand-Up Comedy entitled Spark of Insanity: Meet Achmed The Dead Terrorist*. All blessings and praise may be bestowed upon the Prophet Muhammad SAW who has provided guidance to make me complete this phase well.

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I hope this paper will be useful for people who read this and researchers who will use this paper as a reference.

Yogyakarta, 2022

The Researcher



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LIST OF ABBREVIATION

CP : Cooperative Principle

PP : Politeness Principle

The Principle of Irony And Banter in Jeff Dunham's Stand-Up Comedy
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ABSTRACT

The principles of irony and banter are difficult to understand and identify because their use in conversation is often misunderstood literally including in conveying an implied message through the principles of irony and banter in stand-up comedy. Therefore, this study focuses on analyzing the principles of irony and banter to convey the implied message in the stand-up comedy entitled *Spark of Insanity: Meet Achmed the Dead Terrorist* by Jeff Dunham which mainly discusses Islam and terrorism. The researcher uses the theory popularized by Geoffrey Leech which discusses the principles of irony and banter. This study uses qualitative methods and pragmatic methods for data analysis and finds 4 principles of irony and 10 principles of banter in Jeff Dunham's stand-up comedy material which indicates that Jeff Dunham tends to use the principle of banter than the principle of irony to convey the message because it is more easily accepted by the audience in general.

Keyword: irony, banter, stand-up comedy

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ABSTRAK

Prinsip ironi dan kelakar sulit untuk dimengerti dan diidentifikasi karena penggunaannya dalam percakapan sering disalahartikan secara literal. Termasuk dalam menyampaikan suatu pesan tersirat melalui prinsip ironi dan kelakar dalam *stand-up* komedi. Untuk itu, penelitian ini berfokus untuk melakukan analisis terhadap prinsip ironi dan kelakar untuk menyampaikan pesan tersirat dalam *stand-up* komedi yang berjudul *Spark of Insanity: Meet Achmed the Dead Terrorist* oleh Jeff Dunham yang membahas tentang keislaman dan terorisme. Peneliti menggunakan teori yang dipopulerkan oleh Geoffrey Leech yang membahas tentang prinsip ironi dan kelakar. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif serta metode pragmatik untuk analisis data dan menemukan 4 prinsip ironi dan 10 prinsip kelakar dalam materi *stand-up* komedi Jeff Dunham yang mengindikasikan bahwa Jeff Dunham lebih cenderung menggunakan prinsip kelakar daripada prinsip ironi untuk menyampaikan pesan karena lebih mudah diterima oleh khalayak umum.

Kata kunci: ironi, kelakar, *stand-up* komedi

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

The use of language in everyday life is very diverse, one of which is used as a means of irony and banter. In a broad sense, the irony is an utterance that assumes a double audience, comprising one group that hearing shall hear and shall not understand, and another group that, when more is meant than meets the ear, is aware both of that more and the outsiders' incomprehension (Fowler, 2009, p. 295). Meanwhile, Geoffrey Leech (1983, p. 142) in his book *The Principle of Pragmatic* explains that irony is a pragmatic phenomenon which later becomes a principle to speak very politely to the interlocutor with the opposite intention. Leech (1983, p. 82) identifies irony as a second-order principle that constructs the use of the politeness principle and can be conveyed in the following general form;

"If you must cause an offence, at least do so in a way which doesn't conflict with PP, but allows the hearer to arrive at the offensive point of your remark indirectly, by way of implicature."

Aligned with the irony principle, Leech also introduces banter theory as a minor theory that complements further explanations of irony theory, that banter is defined as a good manifestation in casual linguistic conversation, especially among young people with the intention of saying very impolite but having a friendly intention (1983, p. 144). Leech continued that banter is a third-order principle that exploits the irony principle and can be conveyed in this way;

“In order to show solidarity to the speech partner, say something which is obviously untrue and obviously impolite to the speech partner”

Leech (1983, p. 144)

Although Leech (1983, p. 142) said that the principle of irony and banter is a derivative and exploitation of the cooperative principle and the principle of politeness, the application and use of the theory of irony and banter is rarely discussed by linguists. In addition to the novelty of the research from the application of the theory, what makes the theory of irony and banter interesting to discuss is the use of the principles of irony and banter which may be unconsciously used by people in everyday life or even consciously as a means in performances to voice their disagreements and restlessness about sensitive subjects like in a stand-up comedy.

Stand-up comedy, which is one of the genres in comedy, usually performed by a person on stage who express opinions, personal experiences, or the restlessness in his life and presents to the audience in a humorous way (Pragiwaksono as cited in Masfupah 2018, p. 1). However, sometimes what they say on stage is considered an offensive joke and causes misunderstanding and controversy. This happens because several stand-up comedians present material that touches the boundaries between humanity, stereotypes, religion, and even racism. They think delivering jokes that touch or even cross the threshold of norms will make their audience understand that what has been a taboo limit to talk about is not a big problem and tends to be funny from another point of view. Nevertheless, that issue actually backfired for stand-up comedians, and certain parties considered some of these things inappropriate to be used as joking material.

Jeff Dunham is one of the stand-up comedians whose material he brought sparked controversy among many parties. He is a stand-up comedian and ventriloquist who delivers his comedy material with puppets. Jeff usually uses his abilities as a ventriloquist to make it look like he is talking to his puppets. According to tvtropes.org (n.d.), Jeff carries a puppet to represent people with certain stereotypes and personality, one of which is Achmed the Terrorist. As cited in jeffdunham.com, Jeff introduced Achmed as a terrorist who accidentally blew himself up with the WTC tower on September 9, 2001 and became the world's only beloved dead terrorist even though the remaining of his body just only bones (n.d.). Based on Achmed's persona, Jeff then made jokes related to Muslims and terrorists based on his conversation with Achmed. According to wikipedia.org, Jeff had eight special show based on the character he created and hosts his stand-up comedy shows live and has toured around the world, one of the show is *Spark of Insanity* which premiered on September 17, 2007 (n.d). Apart from that, he also uploads several clips of his stand-up comedy on Youtube. Many parties were offended by the material he presented in *Spark of Insanity* especially in Achmed the Dead Terrorist material. Even Malaysia, a country which has around 60% Muslim population as stated by livepopulation.com (n.d.) had banned Jeff Dunham's Achmed the Dead Terrorist material in *Spark of Insanity* in 2015. The reason why the material had banned is because it considers offensive to Muslims and the Islamic religion according to says.com (n.d).

From this case, the researcher feels that Jeff Dunham's jokes are very interesting to study because there are many principles of irony and banter in Jeff's

stand-up comedy. Researcher will use the theory of Geoffrey Leech about irony and banter to explain the jokes and stand-up material by Jeff Dunham and the critical issues presented.

1.2 Research Question

There are two research question in this paper:

1. How is the theory of irony and banter used in Jeff Dunham's stand-up comedy?
2. What is Jeff Dunham trying to convey in his stand-up comedy?

1.3 Objective of Study

The objectives of the study in this paper are:

1. To explain the principles of irony and banter used by Jeff Dunham in his stand-up comedy to address critical issues such as terrorism,
2. To know the message conveyed by Jeff Dunham in his stand-up comedy through the principal of irony and banter.

1.4 Scope of Study

Leech, the person who presented research on irony and banter theory stated that irony and banter principle are 'second-order principle' which allows people to be very disrespectful but in a style that seems very polite to others and deliberately offending the other person to create friendliness (1983, p. 142-144). Related with this explanation, this paper will only focus on the theory of irony and banter in its analysis.

1.4 Significance of Study

This paper is expected to be useful for readers and researcher to add insight and understand that a comedy can be studied in terms of language and

linguistics. For linguists, it is hoped to use the theory of irony and banter in other comedic analyses after reading this paper.

1.5 Literature Review

There are several previous studies that discuss the same topic or problem as this research. Researcher found similarities and differences between these studies and this study. The differences found by the researcher indicate that this study has never been analyzed.

The first research was written by Setyo Nugroho, Markhamah, and Atiq Sabardilla entitled “Tindak Kelakar dan Ironi Pada Pemandu Acara Televisi: Kajian Pragmatik” published in 2014. This paper discusses the use of irony and banter theory in its application to the host of the event so that the event being hosted is lively and interesting. In addition, the research results from this paper are also intended as teaching materials in junior high schools.

The second research used as a literature review is Dewi Imrotus Sholikhah's paper entitled “*Flouting of Grice's Maxim in Jane Eyre Novel by Charlotte Bronte*” which was published in 2018 by the English Department of UIN Sunan Kalijaga. This study conducted by Imrotus Solikhah examines the violation of the Grice maxim in a novel. Although this paper does not discuss the theory of irony and banter, there are some similarities in the analysis carried out in violation of Grice's maxim. The researcher will analyze the theory of irony and banter in Jeff Dunham's stand-up comedy by using the analysis of the violation of the Grice maxim as Imrotus Solikhah did in his research. The fundamental difference is the focus of Imrotus Solikhah's research on the violation of Grice's

maxims and this research which focuses on the theory of irony and banter, which goes through Grice's analysis of the violation of maxims to explain the theory of irony and banter.

The third research written by Mei Dwi Fatmawati entitled "Prinsip Ironi dan Kelakar Pada Film Yowis Ben Karya Bayu Skak" published in 2019. In this paper, she explained the principles of irony and banter by Geoffrey Leech which were used and appeared in the film 'Yowis Ben'. She also took another perspective from the side of speech act and politeness to analyze the level of politeness in the theory of irony and banter.

It can be understood that the research related to this paper has a different object as the focus of the research. Although the above papers both use the theory of irony and banter as a means of discussion, the focus of research in this paper is different. These papers use hostesses and films as study subjects, while this paper uses stand-up comedy as research subjects. This paper also focuses on the use of the principle of irony and banter and intended to be able to understand the meaning and message to be conveyed through the principles of irony and banter.

1.6 Theoretical Approach

This research concentrates on analyzing the jokes delivered by Jeff Dunham in his stand-up comedy by using the irony and banter theory of Geoffrey Leech. However, before entering the focus of research on irony and banter, there are other factors that must be considered, such as aspects of pragmatics. The aspect of pragmatics bridges the background of the conversation with the use of the principles of irony and banter. In this paper, the aspects of pragmatics that will

be used are: Addresser or addressees, goal(s) of utterance, and context of utterance. Furthermore, explanation of the principle of irony can be stated as follows: if the speaker is forced to offend the speech partner, try not to clash with the politeness principle in a striking way, and let the speech partner understand the intent and purpose indirectly. As for the banter principle, Leech (1983, p. 144-145) said joking is a way of deliberately offending the other person to create friendliness. This can be stated in the following ways: to express solidarity with the speaker, say something offensive that is not true and/or clearly disrespectful.

1.7 Method of Study

1.7.1 Type of Research

The form of this research is descriptive qualitative. This means that this research intends to understand the phenomenon of what is experienced by the research subject, for example, behaviour, perception, motivation, action, etc., as well as by way of description in the form of words and language in a special context by utilizing various natural methods (Moleong, 2010, p. 6). While the object of this research is the principle of irony and banter in Jeff Dunham's stand-up material, entitled *Spark of Insanity: Meet Achmed the Dead Terrorist*.

1.7.2 Data Sources

The data sources of this research is Jeff Dunham's stand-up comedy entitled *Spark of Insanity: Meet Achmed the Dead Terrorist* and its subtitle which can be watched on Prime Video or you can watch it for free on the tubitv.com with the link <https://tubitv.com/movies/547570/jeff-dunham-spark-of-insanity>. Not all utterances in the *Spark of Insanity* stand-up show which has a duration of

one hour and twenty minutes will be taken, the data identified are the utterances of Jeff and Achmed in the segment of *Meet Achmed the Dead Terrorist* which has a duration of approximately ten minutes.

1.7.3 Data collection technique

There are several techniques that can be used to collect the data, such as observation, interviews, documentation, and mixed technique or triangulation (Sugiyono, 2013, p. 224-225). In this paper, the researcher will use the documentation technique to collect the data from Jeff Dunham's stand-up comedy. Zain (2014, p. 95) said that the documentation method is the use of written sources to obtain data. Documents can be in the form of writing, drawings, or monumental works of a person, photographs, live pictures, or works of art that can be in the form of drawings, sculptures, films, and others (Sugiyono, 2013, p. 240). The data of this study will be taken using a documentation technique from Jeff Dunham's stand-up comedy transcript. There are several steps used by researcher to collect research data. Some of these steps are repeatedly watching Jeff Dunham's stand-up comedy entitled *Spark of Insanity: Meet Achmed the Dead Terrorist*, understanding the context and jokes used and writing down the subtitles as research evidence. It can also be referred as the documentation method to write down the problem in detail and develop a comprehensive case study database (Cresswell, 2010, p. 276). Lastly, the researcher identifies the utterance collected in Jeff Dunham's stand-up comedy and classifies the data into two categories based on the irony and banter principle.

1.7.4 Data Analysis Technique

The researcher uses the pragmatic method to analyze the data. Zain (2014, p. 101) said that the pragmatic method refers to the use of language which determines the language speakers themselves. This method will analyze the relationship between the context outside the language and the meaning of the utterance through the interpretation of the situation of the utterance to understand the principle of irony and banter in an utterances. Researcher will use this method in several ways: the first step is to find and identify the jokes that related with the Islamic religion by Jeff Dunham in *Spark of Insanity: Meet Achmed the Dead Terrorist*. The second step is to identify and align the jokes with the banter and irony theory by Geoffrey Leech. After that, the last step is to determine what the meaning that Jeff Dunham really want to convey to the speech partner. The pragmatic method is used because it is appropriate and suitable for this research.

1.8 Paper Organization

This paper consists of four parts. The first part is an introduction which includes background of study, research question, objective of study, scope of the study, significance of study, literature review, theoretical approach, method of study, and paper organization. The second part is a theoretical framework that explains all the theories used in this paper to analyze the problems, objects, and subjects in this paper. The third part contains findings in the analysis and discussion in discussing the theory of irony and banter contained in Jeff Dunham's stand-up material. The fourth part is the conclusions and suggestions which are a summary of this research.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

4.1 Conclusion

Based on the third chapter about the findings and discussion, researcher who use the theory of irony and banter proposed by Geoffrey Leech to analyze Jeff Dunham's utterances in his stand-up comedy entitled *Spark of Insanity: Meet Achmed the Dead Terrorist* aware and find some patterns that can be drawn into a conclusion.

First, the researcher found that there are four principles of irony and ten principles of banter in Jeff Dunham's utterance entitled *Spark of Insanity: Meet Achmed the Dead Terrorist*. The data shows that the principle of banter is more widely used in Jeff Dunham's utterances in his stand-up comedy. Second, after conducting an analysis of utterances containing the principles of irony and banter as well as an analysis of the pragmatic aspect, a pattern can be drawn that Jeff Dunham uses the principle of irony to convey a message of his disapproval of terrorist ideals which is a source of public fear through his offensive speech. Meanwhile, for the use of the principle of banter in his speech in stand-up comedy, a pattern can be found that Jeff Dunham wants to convey the message that people should not be afraid of the fear spread by terrorists. This is done by familiarizing the audience with the behavior of the terrorists that are not in accordance with what is imagined, so that a sense of kinship and friendliness arises through very offensive utterances that have the opposite nature and deserve to be laughed at.

After understanding the use of the principle of irony and banter and knowing what Jeff Dunham wants to convey, it can be concluded that Jeff is more inclined to use the principle of banter by using offensive sentences but prioritizing intimacy and kinship in delivering critical messages, especially terrorism. However, Jeff Dunham also continues to criticize the actions carried out by terrorists with the principle of irony which has greater offensive power but with polite language.

4.2 Suggestion

Researcher are aware that this research is far from perfect. This final project paper which analyzes the principles of irony and banter in Jeff Dunham's stand-up comedy, entitled *Spark of Insanity: Meet Achmed the Dead Terrorist*, still has many aspects that can be used as further research. The researcher suggests other researchers to analyze verbal irony which has many types and has not been widely studied by linguists. Another suggestion that might be taken is the difference in the object studied using the principle of irony and banter because the difference in the object will greatly affect the use of the principle of irony and banter.

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