

LANGUAGE AND HUMOR IN THE BIG BANG THEORY: TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Agry Pramita

UIN Sunan Gunung Djati, Bandung

agrypramita@uinsgd.ac.id

Abstrak

Penelitian ini menguraikan gaya bahasa dan humor dalam TV series Amerika berjudul The Big Bang Theory. Tindakan ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis bagaimana peran serta kecenderungan gaya bahasa dalam dialog membangun cerita sehingga mampu menghipnotis banyak penonton. Melalui permasalahan tersebut penelitian sederhana ini menyajikan analisa dari sudut pandang analisis tekstual mengenai bagaimana kemampuan suatu karya memposisikan dirinya dalam suatu arena fiksi populer, serta bagaimana karya tersebut baik secara sadar maupun tak sadar membentuk siapa saja yang menikmati karya tersebut.

Kata kunci: Gaya bahasa, Humor, Populer, The Big Bang Theory.

Abstract

This research describes the style of language and humor in the American TV series entitled The Big Bang Theory. This action aims to analyze how the role and tendency of language style in dialogue builds a story so that it can hypnotize many viewers. Through these problems, this simple research presents an analysis from the point of view of textual analysis on how the ability of a work to position itself in an arena of popular fiction, and how the work, consciously or unconsciously, shapes anyone who enjoys the work.

Keywords: Language style, Humor, Popular, The Big Bang Theory.

1. INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of popular culture that is increasingly growing cannot be denied that its development is one of the consequences of modern technology which always creates practical mechanisms in life. This modernity takes part in the world of literature where people today are very familiar with various popular fiction products that can be easily accessed anywhere. In addition, modern technology has also led to the advancement of publishing, capitalism that causes literature to be considered as a commodity, and the encouragement of materialism that always attaches importance to the tastes of many readers.

Modernity has offered popular culture which is always associated with economic motives. Everything that is popular is always mass-produced and then distributed to various forms of market in order to reach various levels of society. With the main goal of attracting as many people as possible, popular works do not care about quality as long as people still like these popular works,

which will be marked by indicators of sales success (Adi, 2011, p. 12). The community is pampered with works that are planned and conditioned to meet the tastes of the community itself. When consuming popular works, people are not required to have various interpretations. As long as a work is entertaining and easy to understand, it is classified as a popular work.

The push for the production of popular works encourages the creativity of producers to continuously develop variants of popular culture, including films and tv series. Nowadays it is not difficult to enjoy a film adapted from a popular novel or even adapted from a noble novel. It is not surprising that film as a form of contemporary literature is far more popular than the novel which is the source of adaptation (Bodgan & Knopliken, 1982). However, basically the production of a film is not supposed to be based on a novel, but to develop it as widely and freely as possible. From the point of view of the film world, literary works become the radar to create new works that are presented through more attractive media. The existence of films in the midst of society is a complement to the aspects of life that are difficult to separate from people's daily lives. Film is an inseparable part of literature as a work of art with all the idealistic sides and all the economic sides of the producers.

The TV series has also got a fairly wide space in the community. However, the distribution pattern is different for each region. In Indonesia, we will find a TV series with a number of episodes reaching one thousand, which is not surprising because it is in accordance with the trend of popular literature which always meets the tastes of the people, so in this case the producers of TV series in Indonesia have achieved extraordinary success. Not only from the appreciation of public acceptance, but also from creating extraordinary commercial benefits. But in America, the pattern of showing a TV series is only once a week and in one *season* the maximum number of episodes is twenty-four episodes. In the world of American television, a TV series is said to be popular if it is able to win various *awards* and is also able to penetrate dozens of *seasons*. One of the genres that is still gaining a place in society today is the comedy genre, a genre that contains humorous things and always invites laughter. One of the comedy tv series that is currently popular in America is *The Big Bang Theory*.

The Big Bang Theory is a science fiction-themed sitcom series produced by Chuck Lorre and Bill Prady and executive producer Steven Molaro. First aired on CBS television station on September 27, 2007. The setting of this sitcom is Pasadena, California with five main characters: Two roommates who are very genius both work at the California Institute of Technology; Leonard Hofstadter as an experimental physicist and his colleague a theoretical physicist Sheldon Cooper. Their apartment neighbor, Penny, is a blonde waitress at a restaurant who is obsessed with becoming an actress. Howard Wolowitz, a man who always fails to socialize, an aerospace engineer, and Rajesh Koothrapali an Indian astrophysicist (*The Big Bang Theory About*, 2021).

The four friends with extraordinary genius antique personalities discover a new world that is very foreign since their meeting with Penny. The meeting brought them into normal human social life in general such as partying,

celebrating birthdays, enjoying American reality shows that they had never done before. The hilarious scene of the strangeness and naivety of the four nerds in this series is the main theme in which each episode is always packed with a different look. The convention presented in this tv series is a phenomenon of the nerd community which is always considered strange, *rejected*, and the tendency of those who close their social interactions to be limited to certain communities. On the other hand, at the same time, inventions or breakthroughs are presented which lead to the audience's acceptance of some fresh inventions, especially how the clashes of nerd life with normal human life are presented in a very comical and entertaining way.

The Big Bang Theory has always been at the top of American ratings since its premiere and is able to rival other comedy series. Massive audience reception for this television series took place not only in America, but also in the UK, which aired on Channel 4 with the number of viewers for its first episode estimated at one million people. Meanwhile, this series also occupied the top position in Canadian film ratings. The international broadcast of this science fiction comedy series has touched more than 30 countries in the world.

Besides that, the strength of the script of this series is also a pleasure to enjoy, the audience will be spoiled with the theories of physics that are packaged in such an entertaining way that it seems that physics is a very fun theory. The audience's appreciation for this series is very responsive, in August 2009 this sitcom won TCA's best comedy series and after that many awards were won by this sitcom. In addition, this series also won various other nominations such as Ewwy Awards, Primetime Emmy Awards, TCA Awards, Satellite Awards, American Film Institute, 2nd Ewwy Awards, People's Choice Awards, Primetime Emmy Awards, Golden Globe Awards.

The interesting facts above are interesting to study, apart from the big themes that tend to go against the existing mainstream, the language style used in the dialogue is the main fictional element considering the genre of this series is comedy. The element of humor offered in this series is not just an illustration of the setting or characterization of each character, but how clever and comical dialogue becomes the main commodity which according to the researcher plays a big role in the process of building a successful story (Rahmanadji, 2007).

2. METHODS

2.1. Language Style

Literature, especially fiction is said to be the world in words. This is because the world is created, built, offered, abstracted, and at the same time interpreted through words, through language. Whatever the author will say or otherwise interpret by the reader inevitably has to do with language (Nurgiantoro, 1977, p. 3). Language, which is the main medium in literature, becomes the pivot point in

the mediation arena of the author's creativity to the literary connoisseur. Meanwhile, according to Russian formalists, literary language is a language that has the characteristics of deautomation, a deviation from the way of speech that has been automatic, routine, ordinary and natural. The deviated linguistic elements themselves can vary, for example, deviations in meaning, lexical, structure, dialect and others.

Considering that there are many elements that make up a literary work, this study, will be analyzed only on literary means. This is done because literary means have relevance to the object to be studied. The story tool is a technique used to select and arrange the details of the story (events and events) into a meaningful pattern. The purpose of using story means is to enable readers to see facts as they are seen by the author, to interpret the meaning of facts as interpreted by the author, and to feel the experience as felt by the author. Literary tools can be interpreted as a method (the author) of selecting and compiling the details of the story in order to achieve meaningful patterns (Stanton, 2007). For this reason, it is seen that it is important and then it is necessary to do research on literary facilities. This method of literary means aims so that the reader can see the facts of the story conveyed by the author.

In this simple analysis, the language element that is the focus of the researcher's research is the comic language style of the American tv series *The Big Bang Theory*. Analyzing a film certainly cannot be separated from the analysis of the language style in the dialogue of the story. However, the analysis of a film cannot be done if it is only seen in terms of language style. It is necessary to analyze other factors such as atmosphere and sound. Language style, atmosphere and sound are important elements that form the unity of the production of a film or TV series. When analyzing language style, the analysis does not stop at the analysis of verbal dialogue, but all language styles that are able to support the characterization of a character. Both what is said and how to pronounce it are also very important in forming a theme.

Fresh creativity is needed in making a film script to be able to represent the desired atmosphere. By choosing the right language style, it will be able to direct the audience to estimate what they want by the screenwriter. To facilitate the transmission process of what is desired, it is necessary to pay attention to the diction and style of language used, where the use of language that is light and easy to understand really supports the audience to more easily enjoy a film as a whole.

The use of appropriate and interesting language style will be able to attract the attention of the audience. Through language style, filmmakers can express innovative things that can attract the attention and pleasure of the audience (Adi, 2011: 68). The popular works (film) industry is required to bring a different freshness between films. Freshness will be present if a film brings creative innovation that suits the tastes of the audience, but is too creative to forget the existing conventions is also not good because it causes the film to not get the audience's attention because it is difficult to understand.

The writer uses some steps in doing the research. The process consist of three steps; collecting data, analyzing data and presenting the data. Firstly the data were collected by doing library research, the data consist of main data only from the object of

the research. The main data consist of the dialogue, narrative and any other significant information on the series of *The Big Bang Theory*. The second step is analyzing the data. In analyzing the data from *The Big Bang Theory*, the writer firstly collect all of the data which are considered match to the analysis. Then classify the data into each group, and analyzes them by using textual analysis on humor in the series. The last step is presenting the data. Those data are described in form of words. As Robert C. Boghan dan Sari Knopliken state in *Qualitative Education: an Introduction to the Theory and Method* that: "Qualitative research is descriptive, the data are collected in the form of words or pictures rather than the numbers" (1982; 28). The written result of the research contains quotations from the data to illustrate and subsisted the presentation. The result of qualitative research is in form of words and described to convey a better understanding about the data and the result of the interpretation of the data.

2.2. Humor

Comedy which is closely related to humor seems to be a basic human need to balance life which always requires us to be serious in our attitude. Looking for happiness, joy, pleasure, joy is an essential instinct possessed by humans. There is no limit to the search for joy, so there is no definite meaning for humor. Cuteness usually arises in what is considered unnatural or common. Strange things often provoke laughter because of the assumption that they are of low value or ridiculous. Thus, the existence of humor as a means of entertainment is very important.

Humor utterances are a form of communication that is usually shared in social interaction. It plays an important role in everyday life. According to Hu (2012), humor is mankind's greatest blessing, it can add interesting elements to the topic of communication, bring happiness and pleasant feeling to people, change a person's mood, and even construct a way to a happy life. Understanding humor in the current situations is extremely required since it could be used to release tiresome, fatigue, and stress. The main aspects of humor are to amuse people, evoke laughter and evoke a good mood which should be the primary aim of every humors situation. Since the literature is produced by all interaction happened in human life, humor is one of important tool to bring a certain value and a way to engage closer.

The theory of humor according to Manser is divided into three groups; The theory of superiority, that is, if the laughter is in a super position while the object being laughed at is in a lower level. Theories of imbalance, hopelessness, and bissociation. In his bissociation theory, it is stated that the thing that underlies all forms of humor is bissociation, i.e. suggesting two situations or events that are impossible to happen at once. Theories regarding the release of tension or liberation from stress. This type of humor can arise from lies and deceit that can appear in the form of sympathy and understanding, can be a symbol of releasing tension and pressure, can be in the form of lay or elite expressions and can also be serious like satire and cheap like street humor.

The three types of humor theory above have very significant differences. Starting from the context, the purpose of delivery to the driving factors for classifying these theories. The variety and complexity of this classification of humor theory proves the seriousness of humor which is usually considered nothing more than a funny thing. Meanwhile, the definition of humor itself drags experts to finally reclassify the types of humor that can always be found in social life. As a form of expression, Arwah Setiawan (1988) of humor can be divided into three types, namely;

1. Personal humor, namely the tendency to laugh at ourselves, for example when we see a tree that looks like a person is defecating.
2. Humor in society.
3. Humor in the arts or the art of humor which is still divided into three parts; behavioral humor such as humorous pantomime, literary humor and graphic humor.

Meanwhile, in terms of axiology, humor can function to convey all desires and all goals of ideas or messages, make people aware that they are not always right, teach others to see an issue from various points of view, humor can entertain, launch thoughts, make the others tolerate things, and help others understand complex issues. Besides some of the functions of humor that have been mentioned, there are still some functions of humor that have long been known to the wider community, namely humor plays a role in the process of wisdom which makes people able to focus their attention for a long time because of a sense of comfort, and even tends to be fun so that a sense of wanting to follow arises. humor to the end. From the explanation in the previous paragraph, it is clearly illustrated the positive value of humor. However, to create a good humor, you must keep in mind the situation and conditions. In this case, humor as a means of social communication is expected to be understood and accepted by various individuals.

2.3. The Scope of the Research

In relation to language style, this theory of humor is considered very fitting. Given that one of the media to convey a humor is a word game. The analysis of language style in popular literature using the scalpel of humor theory is considered very fitting to analyze the tv series *The Big Bang Theory*, which is a science-fiction comedy-tv series. Through this simple *textual analysis* approach , it is hoped that it will be able to answer questions;

1. How do the language style and *setting* or atmosphere in the tv series *The Big Bang Theory* build a unified whole humorous theme?
2. What styles of humor are dominant in the tv series *The Big Bang Theory*?

Through the two questions above, it is hoped that this simple research will be able to present an analysis from the point of view of textual analysis regarding how the ability of a work to position itself in an arena of popular fiction, and how the work, consciously or unconsciously, shapes anyone who enjoys the work.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Big Bang Theory tells the story of a major collision between the lives of geeks and the lives of ordinary people, which is represented by a meeting between two physicists, a space engineer, and an astronomer with a beautiful and sexy girl. The unique encounters and friendships between the five cause unnatural occurrences and invite laughter. Leonard and Sheldon are two physicists who work in a university laboratory. Along with two other co-workers, Howard and Raj, the four of them live and have fun in their own world (*nerds*). Hunt for comics, costume parties, play games, watch *Star Trek*, speak *Klingon* and other *geeky-nerdy* activities. All run on a scheduled and regular basis. All those activities as *geeky* that little by little began to bother because the presence of Penny, a neighbor across the hall apartment Leonard and Sheldon are very pretty and sexy.

As a comedy that elevates the world of *nerds*, *The Big Bang Theory* is deemed to have succeeded in representing the world of *nerds*, which everyone knows is quite small and static: there and there. Sheldon and Leonard's main room, as the main setting of this comedy, really succeeded in making non-geeks to recognize life outside of them which in fact invites laughter. In addition, the image of the atmosphere of a group of *nerds* in this tv series is considered very representative of the lives of people like them. In this case, the physical atmosphere which is also an important element in building a *nerdy* and *geeky* atmosphere is very successful in supporting the delivery of the main theme that the producer wants to create.



Picture 1

When all the common people party while enjoying the beautiful fireworks on New Year's Eve, the *geeks* in *The Big Bang Theory* series are no less engrossed in their own world.

From the picture above, it can be seen how careful the producer is in the process of characterizing each character. Raj Koothrapalli (orange costume) looks very hysterical in the costume of one of his favorite comic characters, *Aquaman*. Meanwhile, Howard was seen laughing out loud in his favorite *Batman* costume. Leonard (green costume) was laughing in his *Green-*

lantern costume , a fictional comic book character complete with a ring and a green lantern in his hand. Finally, Sheldon in a red *Flash* costume who is a fictional comic character with super-fast powers.



Picture 2

Comic Book Store is a fixed setting that is almost always present in every episode of *The Big Bang Theory*. The role of this setting reinforces the feel of a *geek* who is considered to really love the world of fiction, especially American superhero fiction.

Leonard is the closest to normal of the four geeks in this story. Leonard more or less still knows how to socialize, tolerate and so on. Leonard was born into an intelligent family. His mother who was so rigid and dominant made Leonard a submissive and forgiving person. This is what makes Leonard the only human who can survive with Sheldon Cooper. Meanwhile Sheldon is the most unique and most attention-grabbing figure in this series. Sheldon is a *self centered* genius . All things must be done according to his wishes, according to his schedule, and according to his mind. No one can argue with Sheldon, because if he has an argument Sheldon will issue scientific facts at length to prove his argument. Lots of details and always invites laughter from the audience which is conveyed through the character of Sheldon. As his favorite sitting position, schedule of play, wash, and *take-ou t* her so tightly bound, the habits knocked on the door three times, and so on. All of Sheldon's strange habits he can explain logically with interesting scientific facts.



Picture 3

One of the selections of details that is very simple but gives a very *geek* impression for anyone who watches this series. The picture above is the atmosphere of the Sheldon bathroom where the bathtub is covered with a curtain of the periodic table of elements.

Howard is a space engineer, which is an engineer who makes equipment for space purposes. The biggest project that Howard is working on is the space toilet, which is a toilet that will be used by astronauts in space. Outside of his job, Howard was a tacky seventies-style man who still lived with his mother. Howard always had various ways to attract women, but always failed. The last geek in this series is Raj, an astronomer from India who always talks out loud without control. Uniquely this Raj, he can not speak in front of women in a conscious state. If there were women around him, Raj would automatically fall silent and be unable to say a word. The way to outsmart Raj's disorder is to get him drunk. When drunk, Raj becomes a charming man who can attract many women. The last character is Penny, the layman. Penny is a beautiful and sexy young girl who has the ability of a female *blonde* lower yet very good at when socializing. Penny works as a waitress and dreams of becoming an actress. Penny is a character who is tasked with connecting these four geeks with social life in the real world. Overall, the setting of *The Big Bang Theory* succeeded in supporting the characterization of each character. Not only does it support characterization, but the theme of this tv series is also emphasized through choosing the right setting.

In addition to a very representative setting, *The Big Bang Theory* series brings a very innovative freshness of humor. After observing this series from the initial season to season 5, the researchers found three dominant language styles found in *The Big Bang Theory*. The three language styles are hyperbole and sarcasm. While presenting hyperbole and sarcastic fashion, the jokes in the dialogue are packaged using scientific terms and are very *up to date* among the general public. One of the humorous conversations that occurred in the early episodes of season one for example, when three friends Leonard, Howard, and Raj were discussing how Sheldon breeds. Sheldon who can not socialize at all and has no interest in women (because for him the theory of physics is a million times more important than building a relationship with a woman), it is strongly suspected that they will reproduce by mitosis, dividing themselves. There is a hyperbolic feel that contains an element of humor in the scene, the conditions

in which Raj, Leonard and Howard both know the fact that Sheldon's lack of interest in women is even more exaggerated with mythical expressions. The mythical diction used seems to emphasize and at the same time exaggerate the impossibility of Sheldon's liking for women.

One of the *scenes* in episode 14 season 3, Sheldon is messing around with a theory that keeps him awake all night until he forgets everything, when they have breakfast together in the office cafeteria Sheldon still looks busy solving theories that still confuse him. While Leonard and Howard cursed at him, Sheldon still didn't care;

Howard : "How long has he been stuck?"

Leonard : "Intellectually about 30 hours. Emotionally about 29 years"

(Both chuckles)

Howard : "Have you trying rebooting him?"

Leonard : "No, I think it's a firmware problem"

The second dialogue stated by Leonard is very hyperbolic in tone. The sentence greatly exaggerates the condition of Sheldon who loves theoretical physics more than his personal life as a man. Leonard and Howard consider Sheldon's miraculous behavior as a joke and also with Leonard likening this strange attraction only makes Sheldon suffer as long as he lives on earth.

The following dialogue is still using hyperbole language style in episode 16 season 4;

Howard : "There. There must be a thousand of dollars here,
Why don't you put it in a bank?"

Sheldon : "I don't trust banks, I believe when the robots rise up,
ATM's will lead the charge"

Sheldon's level of uniqueness in his imagination of the presence of a phase where the world will be controlled by robots makes him reluctant to use ATM services. The reason is that if he keeps his money in the bank the money will not be able to return to his hands. A very excessive imagination, where ordinary people are all fully aware that there is no living being in this universe other than humans. But this does not apply to a Sheldon.

The style of sarcasm is also not uncommon in every episode. When Sheldon and Penny come to Stan Lee's house, Sheldon's favorite comic book writer makes Stan Lee angry that their arrival is neither very disturbing nor very unexpected considering when this incident took place at night;

Penny : "Are you Stan Lee?"

Stan Lee : "Oh damn"

Penny : "Hi, I'm Penny and this is my friend Sheldon. Sheldon here is a huge fan of you, he supposed to meet you at the comic book store yesterday but he kinda end up in jail"

Stan Lee : "I see, and you'd just come over to my house uninvited? You know, you fan boy is unbelievable. Do

you think you can just ring my door bell anytime you want? I mean, why don't you just come on in and watch the Lakers game with me?

Sheldon : "Well, I'm not much of a sports fan, but thanks"
(enters Stan Lee's house)

Sheldon, who was unable to read the situation of Stan Lee's anger and was very disturbed by their presence, was unable to read the tone of anger in Stan Lee's previous statement.

On one occasion Sheldon asked Penny, "Do you know why I am here?" Penny spontaneously answered, "I always figured it was to study us, to discover our weakness and report back to your alien overlords". After asking and hearing Penny's answer, Sheldon did not immediately understand the true meaning of Penny's sarcastic answer. Sheldon's inability to read the sarcasm of his interlocutor is due to his personality who always rationalizes all the things he is facing and the things that are in his mind. Stan Lee's anger as well as Penny's sarcastic response was only seen by Sheldon as an ordinary response and a sincere invitation to watch the Lakers basketball club game. This invites laughter from anyone who witnessed these scenes because they are considered funny and ridiculous. Sheldon as a geek who is not able to socialize like humans in general invites laughter to those who witness.

Events that are similar to the scene above are very often found in the series *The Big Bang Theory*. The tendency that causes the inability to read the context of sarcasm is masterminded by the same thing, namely the strangeness of the geeks in this series socializing with ordinary people. Always and always invites laughter because the ability to read sarcastic tones for the general public is only an easy matter because they are used to socializing with many people. But in the life of a geek, it becomes very difficult to do, because they have a weakness in analyzing figurative meanings. This lack of geek triggers the nuances of humor and cuteness because they are considered inferior, different from usual and strange at the same time.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The Big Bang Theory attracts 14 million viewers every week. The series is also successful airing in more than 30 countries. This is quite surprising considering that cultural differences do not become a barrier in enjoying this one tv series. Thick with *geek* culture complete with all the American superhero comic characters who are actually known by the wider community to bridge the community outside America to join together in the comic harmonization of *The Big Bang Theory*. Theoretically it may be beneficial for future research in investigating humor used in society with other social factors. Practically, it may be useful for people to learn about the proper way in using nerdy humor to different

setting with different participants. *The Big Bang Theory* is well packaged with hyperbolic and sarcastic language style, atmosphere and diction but consistently contains elements of humor that are ridiculous, fascinating, strange, synonymous with humor and ultimately stimulate the audience to laugh.

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