

**AN ANALYSIS OF MALE HUMOUR ON  
MALAYSIAN RADIO**

**NOORALIDA MOHD NOOR**

**FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS  
UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA  
KUALA LUMPUR**

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MALAYSIAN RADIO**

**NOORALIDA MOHD NOOR**

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Registration/Matric No: TGC090006

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Designation: Associate Professor

## ABSTRACT

Some Malaysian radio hosts integrate humour in their shows. Using Content Analysis, this study investigates three areas of conversational humour on a Malaysian radio show: (1) the humour techniques present in the selected episodes; (2) the linguistic characteristics these humour techniques have; and (3) the humour functions these techniques serve. It centres on investigating humour found in the interactions of two male radio hosts and the listeners in a Malaysian radio breakfast show. The theoretical frameworks of Hay's Humour Types Taxonomy, Mihalcea and Strapparava's Verbal Humour Linguistics Characteristics, and Hay's Functions of Humour Taxonomy are used to analyse the data.

The results indicate that for the humour techniques, observational humour (i.e. funny remarks based on observation of a current situation, or a previous person's words) is found to be the most frequent technique used, followed by ridicule. The most frequently used linguistic characteristic of verbal humour is human-centered vocabulary (i.e. words describing human beings, social relations, and social groups), followed by negative orientation (i.e. words that have a negative load or negative connotations). In the categories of humour functions, general function (i.e. creating a positive self-identity) has the highest frequency, while solidarity function (i.e. establishing a sense of belonging between group members) has the second highest frequency. 14 humour techniques and 4 humour functions were found in the data. The humour also uses 4 of the 5 semantic categories of the linguistic characteristics of verbal humour. It is hoped the findings of this study are able to contribute to the pool of knowledge on humour in male speech in Malaysian setting.

## ABSTRAK

Segelintir pengacara radio menyelitikan humor dalam rancangan mereka. Dengan menggunakan Content Analysis, penyelidikan ini menyiasat tentang tiga perkara berhubung humor lisan di dalam sebuah rancangan radio di Malaysia: (1) teknik humor di dalam episod yang dipilih; (2) ciri linguistik humor yang didapati dalam teknik humor itu; dan (3) fungsi humor bagi teknik humor tersebut. Penyelidikan ini tertumpu kepada humor di dalam sebuah program sarapan pagi di Radio Malaysia di antara dua penyampai radio lelaki dan pendengar program radio tersebut. Rangka kerja teori yang digunakan bagi tujuan penyelidikan ini ialah Hay's Humour Types Taxonomy, Mihalcea and Strapparava's Verbal Humour Linguistics Characteristics, dan Hay's Functions of Humour Taxonomy.

'Observational humour' (i.e. humor mengenai keadaan sekitar, atau percakapan seseorang) ditemui digunakan sebagai teknik humour terbanyak, diikuti dengan 'ridicule' pada tempat kedua. Bagi ciri linguistik humor lisan pula, 'human-centered vocabulary' (i.e. perkataan berkenaan manusia, hubungan dan kumpulan sosial) ditemui terbanyak digunakan di dalam humour lisan yang diselidiki, diikuti oleh 'negative orientation' (i.e. perkataan berkonotasi negatif). Bagi fungsi humor pula, fungsi 'general' (i.e. membina identiti sendiri yang positif) didapati mencatat frekuensi yang tertinggi, manakala fungsi 'solidarity' (i.e. membina ikatan dengan ahli kumpulan) mempunyai frekuensi kedua tertinggi. 14 teknik humor dan 4 fungsi humour ditemui di dalam penyelidikan ini. Humor tersebut menggunakan 4 dari 5 kategori semantik bagi ciri linguistik humor lisan. Penemuan kajian ini diharapkan dapat menambah pengetahuan mengenai humor dalam percakapan orang lelaki di Malaysia.

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## LIST OF TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

(by Gail Jefferson, 1984)

- = 'Equals' sign indicates 'latching' between utterances.
- (( )) A description enclosed in a double bracket indicates a non-verbal activity.
- A dash indicates the sharp cut-off of the prior sound or word.
- :
- Colons indicate that the speaker has stretched the preceding sound or letter.
- (inaudible) Indicates speech that is difficult to make out. Details may also be given with regards to the nature of this speech (e.g.singing).
- .
- A full stop indicates a stopping fall in tone. It does not necessarily indicate the end of a sentence.
- / /
- Slashes between adjacent lines of concurrent speech indicate the onset and end of a spate of overlapping talk.
- ?
- A question mark indicates a rising inflection. It does not necessarily indicate a question.
- Under
- Underlined fragments indicate speaker emphasis.
- ° °
- Degree signs are used to indicate that the talk they encompass is spoken noticeably quieter than the surrounding talk.
- ...
- Three dots indicate an untimed pause

## LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS IN TRANSCRIPTION

X or X FM	The actual name of the radio station has been replaced with X FM.
D Crew	The actual name of the radio show has been replaced with D Crew
RH1	RH1 refers to Radio Host 1.
RH2	RH2 refers to Radio Host 2.
C	C refers to caller. The number that comes after it indicates the sequential order of callers to the show (e.g. C1 refers to the first caller).
VO	VO indicates a voice over
OP	OP refers to Optimus Prime's voice
*	* indicates a caller's name has been replaced with a letter/letters of their actual name.
#	# refers to the phone number of the radio station
<i>italics</i>	Whenever a speaker switches to another language from English, the spoken words are italicised (e.g. <i>sudah</i> ).
[ ]	English translation is given in square brackets.
// //	The pronunciation according to International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) is given in double slashes.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

Radio shows play a vital role in society as they keep the public up-to-date with current news, and entertain the public through music and the host's quick wit. Morning shows on radio are often aired early in the morning from either 5 or 6 in the morning, for two, three, or four hours every weekday. The general audience listening to morning shows comprise of those who are either on their way to work, or are awake early at home. In most cases, the listeners look for something entertaining on the radio show to begin their day. If they switch on their radio they will listen to songs and banter between the radio announcer and listeners on the radio.

Central to radio shows are the hosts who will either make or break the show. In Malaysia, numerous radio stations compete to be the most-listened-to and one way to achieve this is by integrating humour into their shows. Malaysian radio stations, just like those in other parts of the world, also use humour as a device to attract and entertain their listeners. Humour derived from remarks of radio hosts are intended to amuse the public (Fine 1984). Past studies on radio host talk have been conducted on sports talk but very few studies in both local and foreign radio programmes have been conducted on humour.

In this study, the focus will be on radio announcer talk from a selected radio show aired by a Malaysian radio station. Some scholars claim that men tend to have a greater sense of humour compared to their female counterparts (Gray, 1994; Manoel, 2013). Thus, this study is interested to look at how two male radio hosts of a Malaysian



English-medium radio station use humour in their interaction with each other and their listeners.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Malaysian radio shows generally use humour in their shows to attract listeners. Although no formal studies have been conducted on the language used by radio hosts in Malaysian breakfast radio shows specifically, this study would be able to bridge this gap by looking at the language of humour used by local radio hosts. The breakfast radio show chosen had two male radio announcers and they had been hosting the show together for many years with witty humour which attracted listeners in the morning. Since no research has been carried out on humour on Malaysian radio, this research hopes to provide insights into the humour and especially humour techniques present in a local radio show and Malaysian male radio host humour specifically.

This research focuses on the language of two radio hosts on a breakfast show aired by a local radio station. A survey by Nielsen using Radio Audience Measurement (RAM), Marketingmagazine.com.my stated that this radio station was Malaysia's number one English radio station, with its weekday breakfast segment being ranked the top English segment in Malaysia among the English listeners in 2013. Two male announcers hosted the four-hour show that aired daily from 6 till 10 in the morning every Monday to Friday. The main language used was English as it is an English-medium radio station. This radio station was selected because it had the highest number of listeners tuning in daily and was able to reach a wider demography of targeted listeners with its daily segments.

This study aims to investigate the interaction of the two male radio hosts with a focus on exploring the presence of humour techniques such as anecdote, fantasy,

ridicule, irony, joke, and self-deprecation in the talk. In addition, it intends to identify the functions the techniques serve, and the linguistic characteristics these techniques possess. Content Analysis will be used to analyse the language use in these three aspects of humour.

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

The following are the objectives of the study:

- (i) To investigate the use of humour found in the interaction of the two Malaysian male radio hosts.
- (ii) To study the language of humour in the interaction of the two male radio hosts with each other and their listeners.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

These are the research questions related to the study.

RQ1: Which humour techniques are used by the male radio announcers?

RQ2: What linguistic features (types of words) do these humour techniques have?

RQ3: Which functions do these humour techniques serve?

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

Many studies have investigated sports radio talk (Lefkowitz, 1996; Goldberg, 1998; Nylund, 2004, 2012; Zagacki & Grano, 2005) and humour in various fields such as peer relationship (Schieffelin, 1986; Kehily & Nayak, 1997; Lampert & Ervin-Tripp, 2006) and working environment (Holmes, 2006; Ho, Wang, Huang & Chen, 2011; Schnurr & Chan, 2011), television (Bo, 2008; Wu & Yong, 2010; Dynel, 2014).

However, not much research has been done on humour in radio talk. Therefore, this study hopes to shed some light on humour in connection with radio hosts on the airwaves. It may also act as a stepping stone for future researchers interested in humour on radio to explore this field further.

The findings of this research will contribute to the pool of knowledge of the various humour techniques, humour functions, and linguistic features of conversational humour related to radio, in general, and Malaysian radio scene, in particular. Since humour appreciation is culture-bound, the outcome of this study will be considered as a contribution as it will help create an awareness of the aspects of humour that may be found in spoken interaction generally and in the interaction of radio hosts with each other and listeners. The results of the study may also interest other local radio stations as it investigates one of the possibly effective formulas in making a successful radio show by integrating humour into radio shows.

## **1.6 Scope and Limitations**

There are several limitations in conducting this study:

- (i) The focus of this study will be on the male gender represented by the two male radio hosts.
- (ii) Only the two male identified hosts during the period of study will be included. Replacement host(s) will not be part of the study.
- (iii) As for listeners calling in, the caller's talk will not be analysed but their response either in laughter, silence or verbal reply may be included as it could lead to and play a role in the male hosts' response before and after the humorous instance under discussion. In addition, the radio hosts'

responses in the conversations with the callers which are relevant to the study will be included, as the focus is on the hosts' talk.

- (iv) Due to its limitations, the study does not intend to explore the prosodic features of the male radio hosts' speech such as the pauses, intonation, stress, rhythm, speed, and volume. The central aspect of the study is the content or the manifestation of humour in terms of techniques, functions and linguistic features. Hence the transcription of the data will not include and highlight the duration of pauses and existence of these prosodic features.
- (v) The results and findings may only act as a representation for the chosen male radio announcers and should not be generalised for all male radio announcers from all radio stations in Malaysia.

## **1.7 Conclusion**

Chapter 1 outlines the background of the study, statement of the problem, research objectives, research questions, significance of the study, and scope and limitations of the study. Next, chapter 2 reviews past researches and literature related to humour, gender, talk radio, and frameworks used in the research. Chapter 3 lists the aspects of the research design and research methodology used in this study, while Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study and the discussion of the results. Finally, chapter 5 provides a summary of the research and the findings.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter will present definitions, theories, and issues surrounding humour and gender, together with aspects of talk radio. The definitions of humour, theories of humour, and structure of humour are reviewed in sections 2.2, 2.3, and 2.4 respectively; while the techniques of humour and the linguistic aspects of humour are each explained in sections 2.5 and 2.6. Next, the functions of humour are elaborated on in section 2.7. Then the relationship between language, humour, and gender will be discussed in sections 2.8 and 2.9, with a review of past research in relevant fields. Lastly, descriptions of talk radio are presented in section 2.10.

#### 2.2 Defining Humour

What is classified as humour? Humour has been defined in various ways by linguists, psychologists and anthropologists. Scholarly research on humour is extensive and even though many definitions of humour and what people find humorous have been put forward, there is no one single definition of humour that is agreed upon and accepted by all disciplines of scholars. Attardo (1994) highlights the absence of a well-rounded definition of humour by quoting Sinicropi (1981) below:

The lack of a rigorous, or at least reliable, definition of humo[u]r and of its categories causes ... another difficulty that hinders research; it is represented by the fact that denominations of processes usually considered sources of humo[u]r ... are often used as if they were synonyms or if they shared a semantic space. This denotes that the semantic field to which they belong does not have precise boundaries.

(cf. Attardo, 1994:4)

Here, Sinicropi (1981) claims with the absence of concrete and reliable definitions of humour and its categories, research is hindered because it poses as a difficulty in conducting a research on humour. He adds that semantic fields such as parody, irony and satire are used to categorise humour, and these fields do not have precise boundaries to differentiate one from another. On the other hand, some scholars favour relaxing the boundaries and refuse to have artificial boundaries in defining humour; hence allowing for a general definition of humour. Words such as “laughter, the comic, the ludicrous, the funny, joke, [and] wit” have been used to define humour (Raskin, 1985:8). Raskin (1985:8) proposes using the term *humour* “in the least restricted sense, interchangeably with the word funny”, and this may consequently avoid confusion in the terminology of humour. Attardo (1994) highlights one criterion which makes it easier to differentiate what can be counted as humorous and what does not belong in this category, and that is laughter. According to Brock (2008:544), “laughter was long seen as an immediate consequence of humo[u]r”.

The definition of humour can be traced back to the civilisation of ancient Greek. Plato (427-347 BC), an Athenian Greek philosopher, is considered to be the pioneer in theorising humour (Piddington, 1933; Morreall, 1987). According to Plato, humour refers to “a mixed feeling of the soul” which is a mixture of pleasure and pain (Piddington, 1933:152). Plato’s view on humour is depicted in the *Philebus*, a dialogue between Socrates, who is the primary speaker, Philebus, and Protarchus regarding life of pleasure, and was composed by Plato between 360–347 BC (Schofield, 2002). The following abstract of *Philebus*, where Socrates is speaking, elaborates on Plato’s perspective on humour and laughter.

...Our argument declares that when we laugh at ridiculous qualities of our friends, we mix pleasure with pain, since we mix it with envy; for we have agreed all along that envy is a pain of the soul, and that laughter is pleasure, yet these two arise at the same time on such occasions.

(*Philebus* 50A, cf. Attardo, 1994:18)

Definitions of humour focus on either speaker intentions or audience interpretations (Hay, 1995). Humour, according to Berger (1976:113), is “a specific type of communication that establishes an incongruent relationship or meaning and is presented in a way that causes laughter”. Ross (1998:1) shares the same view as Berger and discusses the definition of humour as “something that makes a person laugh or smile”. Berger includes *laughter*, and Ross incorporates *laughter* and *smile* in the definitions and they both concentrate on audience interpretation. However, Winick (1976:124) focuses on speaker intention when he defines humour as “any type of communication that has a witty or funny intent that is known in advance by the teller”. Martineau (1972:114) combines both elements and says that “humour is conceived generically to be any communicative instance which is perceived as humorous by any of the interacting parties”. Martineau incorporates both speaker intention and audience interpretation in his definition of humour.

Palmer (1994:3) defines humour as “everything that is actually or potentially funny, and the process by which this funniness occurs”. However, he argues that “laughter does not necessarily mark the place of a joke – it might mark embarrassment, for instance” (Palmer, 1994:15). Attardo (1994), Brock (2008), and Ross (1998) share the same view as Palmer. Attardo cites the study of Olbrechts-Tyteca (1974), where criticisms are put on the concept that laughter is a criterion for identifying humour. Olbrechts-Tyteca (1974) claims that “laughter largely exceeds humo[u]r” (cf. Attardo, 1994:11). Laughter seems to be evoked by other things apart from humour alone. Brock (2008) lists the instances where laughter is independent of humour or only partly related to it, such as introduction of embarrassing topic, expression of surprise, reaction to impropriety, indication of turn-taking and many more. Ross (1998:2) agrees that “laughter is not a necessary or sufficient condition of humo[u]r”; nevertheless “from common sense point of view, it is a useful starting point for a definition”. Although

scholars clash their opinions on humour-laughter relationship, they usually agree with the fact that humour elicits amusement and may consequently evoke laughter.

According to Šmilauerová (2012), what people find funny is determined by their personality, personal taste, social background, upbringing, occupation, religion, and intellect or level of education. Besides these criteria, culture also plays a role in humour appreciation; as Nanda and Warms (2011:83) argue, "an observer cannot possibly get the joke without understanding their culture". Šmilauerová (2012) claims what people laugh at would change as they age and have more life experience that would enable them to identify humorous events. She states that people who have never been in a heterosexual relationship or marriage, or are unfamiliar with the stereotypical concept of a wife would not be able to understand the following joke, advertised in the New York Post.

For Sale by owner:

Complete set of Encyclopedia Britannica. 45 volumes.

Excellent condition. \$1,000 or best offer. No longer needed.

Got married last weekend. Wife knows everything.

(New York Post, cf. Šmilauerová, 2012:7)

It is the common knowledge of the stereotyped roles and behaviours of husband and wife in a marriage that allows us to appreciate the comical exaggeration present in the joke (Šmilauerová, 2012).

### **2.3 Theories of Humour**

Several humour theories and frameworks have been formulated through research and observation. Many of these theories have been brought forward by well-known philosophers like Aristotle, Plato, Hobbes, Kant, and Schopenhauer. All these theories tackle the reasons people laugh at some situations, but not show any responses in others



(Schwarz, 2010). The diverse amount of humour theories existing today can be classified into one of these three categories: Incongruity Theories, Superiority Theories, and Relief Theories (Hay, 1995).

From the viewpoint of Incongruity Theories of Humour, people laugh at things that surprise them, are unexpected, or are weird in a non-threatening way (Berger, 1976; Deckers & Devine, 1981; McGhee, 1979). This theory stresses on the cognitive process involved in perceiving humour. Morreal (1987:6) regards Incongruity Theories as “the most popular current philosophical theory of humo[u]r” and claims “the formal object of amusement is ‘the incongruous’”. Incongruity, according to Wilson (1979:9), relates to “the general proposition is that the components of a joke, or humorous incident, are in mutual clash, conflict or contradiction”. The resulting humour occurs because there is a difference between what the audience anticipates and what actually happens (Raskin, 1985). The initial and the primary part of the humour might elicit an expectation of how it will be in the end (Raskin, 1985). However, the punch line revelation causes the audience expectation to disappear and evokes a discrepancy that produces laughter (Raskin, 1985). Therefore, incongruity entails an instant of surprise resulting from the two opposite and conflicting meanings.

Superiority Theories of Humour (also known as Aggression, Hostility, Triumph or Derision Theory), in particular, describes how humour boosts one’s esteem over another. Hobbes says "that the passion of laughter is nothing else but sudden glory arising from some sudden conception of some eminency in ourselves, by comparison with the infirmity of others, or with our own formerly" (*Human Nature*, ch. 8, cf. Smuts, 2009). This is achieved when people laugh openly or silently at others because they feel triumph over or superior to them (Feinberg, 1978; Grotjahn, 1957; Gruner, 1997, 1978;

Keith-Spiegel, 1972; Morreall, 1983; Rapp, 1951; Ziv, 1984). Adults laughing at ridiculous sayings or doings of children, illustrates this concept (Meyer, 2000).

In the standpoint of the Relief Theory, people encounter humour and laugh since they feel their stress has been decreased (Berlyne, 1972; Morreall, 1983; Shurcliff, 1968). Sigmund Freud is the most influential advocate of the Relief Theories of Humour (Schwarz, 2010). He regards laughter as “an outlet for psychic or nervous energy” (Morreall, 1987:111). This means laughter and humour act as a way of release, which Freud explained about in "Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious" (1905/1960). Freud claims with humour, we laugh at ourselves and others (1905/1960), and this may be true due to the use of nouns representing human beings which are prevalent in humour exchanges.

Employees feeling unsafe by budget reductions in their company, for example, “laugh with relief at a joke told at the [beginning] of a luncheon meeting on the budget”: “Well, it turns out we still can afford to have lunch, but I don’t think the cook is accepting complaints” (Meyer, 2000). This kind of humour eases the situation and makes it seem more manageable, by highlighting that difficulties are not so overpowering and uncontrollable (Burke, 1984). The use of humour to reduce stress and tension is an application common to the Relief Theory of Humour.

## **2.4 The Structure of Humour**

In his book, *The View from Language*, Hockett (1960) states that humour has three different part: build-up, pivot and punch line. The *build up* is the body of humour which introduces the scene and sets the orientation and complicating action. The *pivot* represents the word or phrase that creates ambiguity, while the *punch line* concludes the humour by introducing “a conflicting point of view or a new scene entirely” (Norrick,

1989: 118). The punch line consequently serves a surprising effect and is the reason for the audience's appreciation and amusement, which usually results in laughter. Alexander (1997: 42) provides an example of the humour structure.

After waiting for half an hour in a Soho restaurant, the customer called over to the waiter: "How long will my spaghetti be?" he asked. "How should I know?" replied the waiter. "I never measure it."

The three parts of the structure of humour according to Hockett (1960) are:

*Build-up*

After waiting for half an hour in a Soho restaurant, the customer called over to the waiter:

*Pivot*

"How long will my spaghetti be?" he asked.

*Punch line*

"How should I know?" replied the waiter. "I never measure it."

The build-up here comprises the setting and complicating action. It lets the audience know about a restaurant patron who has spent time waiting for his spaghetti for half an hour. His question of "How long will my spaghetti be?" forms the pivot of the humour, where his question is misinterpreted by the waiter. The waiter's reply acts as the punch line concluding the joke by providing a surprise effect for the audience.

## **2.5 Techniques of Humour**

Jennifer Hay's (1995) Taxonomy of Humour Types lists twelve categories of humour techniques consisting of anecdotes, fantasy, insult (or ridicule), irony, jokes, observational, quote, role play, self-deprecation, vulgarity, word play and other. Besides the twelve categories mentioned by Hay, there are other humour categories classified by Berger (1993) such as comic lies, embarrassment, exaggeration, ignorance, repartee, sarcasm, and many more.

### 2.5.1 Anecdote

Anecdote is defined as a short and amusing story which depicts real or fake incident or character; often presented to demonstrate some point and/or make audience laugh (Cuddon, 1992). Hay (1995) adds that an anecdotal story is a story which is amusing to the speaker and it can be a story that relates to the experience or actions of the speaker or a mutual acquaintance. Anecdotes can also be of events which are not directly related to the speaker, audience or their mutual acquaintance but of other people (Hay, 1995). Below is an example of an anecdote that is amusing.

A little girl asked her mother, "Can I go outside and play with the boys?" Her mother replied, "No, you can't play with the boys. They're too rough." The little girl thought about it for a few moments and asked, "If I can find a smooth one, can I play with him?"

(Anonymous, 2015)

### 2.5.2 Fantasy

Fantasy is a humour technique derived from the construction of "humorous, imaginary scenarios or events" (Hay, 1995:68). It is often a collaborative action whereby the participants of the conversation produce possible or impossible episodes of events together (Hay, 1995:68). However, this humour technique does not necessarily require collaboration between the speaker and the listener. It may also be done by the speaker alone. Berger (1993) terms this humour as tall tales. The following is an example of fantasy humour technique, involving imaginary creatures: an orc and a troll.

A gay orc goes into a bar and in a high-pitched voice says,  
"Ok who painted my horse pink?"

A burly troll stands up, flexes his triceps and grunts, "That would be me!"  
The orc swallows and says, "Just wanted to say, the first coat is dry."

(Burrows, 2010)

### 2.5.3 Irony

Irony is either when one says something different than what they mean or the opposite of what they mean (Haverkate, 1990). “The humour in irony stems from the gap that exists between what is said and what is meant” (Berger, 1993:40). It has been pointed out that there are problems with the two criteria in defining irony (Roy, 1978, cf. Tannen, 1984). Tannen (1984:131) mentions that “to arrive at a satisfying definition of irony, [it] would require a major study in itself.” Hay (1995:71) uses a flexible compromise between the two criteria in her definition of irony in her research: “[i]f the speaker does not mean their words to be taken literally, and in saying them, is implying the opposite, or something with a markedly different meaning, then it is classed as irony”. She adds that “[k]nowledge of the speakers and the context will be important in identifying irony” (Hay 1995:71).

A Jewish man named Katzman decided to change his name to a French name so people wouldn't be able to recognize he was Jewish. He went to a Judge for help. “French, you say,” said the Judge. “Well, the French word for cat is chat and the French word for man is l’homme. We will change your name to Chat-l’homme.”

(Berger, 1993:40)

The irony in the joke about Katzman changing his name to sound French, is that his name ends up to sound even more Jewish, as *shalom* in Hebrew means *hello* (Berger, 1993).

### 2.5.4 Ridicule

Ridicule is a humour technique often used in interactions. Schwarz (2010) states that ridicule and derision are humour techniques which convey impoliteness and aggressiveness. She adds that speakers use ridicule to make fun of someone or to attack someone verbally. Hay (1995) uses the term insult to refer to this particular technique.

She defines insult as an expression that puts someone down, or associates a negative attribute to them. However, for the purpose of the research, the researcher chooses to adopt the term ridicule to refer to this technique as she feels the term insult is quite harsh and is meant to provoke anger rather than laughter. Berger (1993:48) claims ridicule is “a form of direct verbal attack against a person, thing, or idea”.

It is designed to cause contemptuous laughter and humiliation, ... [and] takes a number of forms: *deriding*, which involves attacking someone with a scornful tone; *mocking*, which is to imitate another's appearance or actions; and *taunting*, which is to remind someone of some annoying fact.

(Berger, 1993:48)

“By ridiculing someone or something, the speaker wants to express hostility and superiority by critici[s]ing the behaviour of a specific person or group in question” (Schwarz, 2010:109). According to Wilson (1979:212), ridicule enables the speaker to exhibit superiority over competitors and “supports existing status and power”. He categorises different types of ridicule such as “private ridicule”, “shared ridicule” and “self-ridicule” (1979:189-190). Wilson states that private ridicule happens when “the butt of the derision is absent and unlikely to hear of the wit, or dead and buried” (1979:189). Schwarz (2000) explains that this provides a platform to express overt hostility towards authority which in turn will create solidarity between people of similar opinion against someone who is the object of the humour. Shared ridicule happens when people make fun of themselves and the listeners simultaneously. Freud (1905/1960) discussed about shared ridicule when he claimed the Jewish enjoyed narrating anti-Semitic humour and thus demean their own ethnicity. Self-ridicule will be explained later in self-deprecation section.

The 1860 Oxford evolution debate is a well-known example of ridicule. It was held on 30 June, 1860, at the Oxford University Museum in Oxford, England (Thomson, 2000). Seven months prior to the debate, Charles Darwin's publication of

*On the Origin of Species* had been released, and the topic of the debate was on evolution of mankind (Thomson, 2000). The debate is famous for a question which Samuel Wilberforce, a bishop of Oxford, allegedly asked Thomas Huxley, an English biologist (Lucas, 1979). The question asked is a form of ridicule meaning to mock Huxley:

Now, is it on your mother's side or your father's that your ancestors were apes?

(Sidgwick, 1898, cf. Lucas, 1979)

### 2.5.5 Jokes

Hay (1995) uses the term jokes to specifically refer to canned jokes, whose basic form has been memorised. Question and answer jokes and narrative jokes are subdivisions of this (Hay, 1995). Question and answer jokes are jokes where the punch line lies in an answer to a question; while narrative jokes are jokes that are in a form of a story. With this type of joke, both the speaker and audience know that a joke is being told because overt statements like “This is a joke”, “I want to tell you a funny story”, or “Did you hear this one?” are made (Fry, 2011:55). All these introductory sentences inform the audience that humour is being presented. Below are examples of question and answer joke and narrative joke respectively:

Question: If it took eight men ten hours to build a wall, how long would it take four men to build it?

Answer: No time at all it is already built.

([http://www.tensionnot.com/jokes/one\\_liner\\_jokes/funny\\_questions\\_and\\_answers](http://www.tensionnot.com/jokes/one_liner_jokes/funny_questions_and_answers))

A man went to the police station wishing to speak with the burglar who had broken into his house the night before.

“You’ll get your chance in court”, said the desk sergeant.

“No, no, no!” said the man.

“I want to know how he got into the house without waking my wife. I’ve been trying to do that for years!”

(<http://www.coopsjokes.com/p1-50/page7.htm>)

### 2.5.6 Observational

Hay (1995:74) defines observational humour as humorous “comments about the environment, the events occurring at the time, or about the previous person’s words”. She claims when the speaker makes a witty observation which is funny, it is called *observational*. It is one of the main techniques of humour in stand-up comedy (Sankey, 1998). According to Double (2014:208), in observational humour, the speaker “makes an observation about something from the backwaters of life, an everyday phenomenon that is rarely noticed or discussed”. The following illustrates observational humour observing the M8, the main road in Scotland and also the fact that m8 is a short version of the word *mate*, which is widely used in social media and chat. *Mate* is a colloquial reference to friend, used in Australia, Great Britain, New Zealand and Tasmania.

It's ironic that Scotland's main road is the M8 and it has the least friendly people driving on it.

(<http://www.premierjokes.com/observational-jokes.html>, 2012-2014)

### 2.5.7 Quote

A quote, according to Hay (1995:75), “is a line taken from a television show or a movie, usually a comedy”. She states that the use of this humour technique depends on the dynamic of the group or duo, whereby some tend to use a lot of quotes in their interaction while some use very little. The speaker builds solidarity with the group members when he/she can memorise and deliver the quote satisfactorily and is greeted by laughter from the group members (Hay, 1995). The example below is a famous quote taken from the movie *Forrest Gump* and is one of the quotes people generally use in conversations, whether or not they are trying to be funny.

Life is like a box of chocolates. You never know what you’re gonna get.

(from the movie *Forrest Gump*)



### **2.5.8 Pretence or Role Play**

Berger (1993) states that pretence is when a person imitates a different state of being, for example, a dying man, or a newborn. He states that a human pretending to be a dog can be funny, as demonstrated in the following example.

Mrs. Doyle was furious. She rolled a newspaper into a club and struck her husband with it. He surprised her by playing the fool. He growled like a dog and caught the paper in his teeth. When she let go of her end, he dropped to his hands and knees and continued the imitation on the floor.

(West, 1964 cf. Berger, 1993:37)

Hay (1995:76) refers to this technique as role play, which is “the adoption of another voice or personality for humorous effect.” She adds that while doing a role play, the speaker is stepping into someone else’s shoes, and it “is a very much performance-based humour [since] the speaker is acting for their audience” (Hay, 1995:76).

### **2.5.9 Self-deprecation**

Self-deprecation or self-ridicule is “an insult directed at oneself” (Hay, 1995:78). In her research, Schwarz (2000) opts to use the term self-deprecation, and not self-ridicule because she feels the verb “ridicule” conveys a very negative association and is not meant to be amusing. She explains that self-deprecation presents the speaker’s own shortcomings with the intention of amusing the audience; hence establishing solidarity by making the audience identify with them. Below is a self-deprecation humour example.

I’m in shape. Round is a shape, right?

(<http://www.wikihow.com/Sample/Self-Deprecating-Humor>)

### 2.5.10 Wordplay

One of the most common techniques of humour is wordplay, where humour is produced by utilising the alternative meanings or ambiguities of a word in a clever and amusing way (Schwarz, 2010). A pun is the most typical wordplay which involves intentional use of homophonic (words with same sounds, such as *dear* and *deer*), homographic (words with same spellings, such as *wind* which can mean either air or turn), metonymic (words used to represent a thing/concept, for example, *Wall Street* symbolises the United States financial and corporate sector), or metaphorical language (words used to express something which is not literally related, for example, *all the world's a stage*) (Pollack, 2011). The following is a humour instance using wordplay as the technique, playing with several meanings of the word *looks*.

A doctor, as he came away from a lady's bedside, said to her husband with a shake of his head: "I don't like her looks." "I've not liked her looks for a long time", the husband hastened to agree.

(Freud 1905/1960:41)

### 2.5.11 Comic Lies

Comic lies "are based on the recognition that they are being lied to, so there is an element of paradox in this technique" (Berger, 1993:34). The humour lies in the audience knowing that they are being lied to while the speaker is doing their best to uphold the lie. The comic lie below is where a mother uses the element of Happy Meal at McDonald's drive-thru with her children.

If you don't behave in the drive-thru, you'll get a Sad Meal.

(Adapted from <http://www.buzzfeed.com/mikespohr/funniest-lies-parents-ever-told-their-kids#.vr8e5ABb>)

### **2.5.12 Embarrassment**

Saying something stupid or making a mistake can be embarrassing. Embarrassment, claimed by Berger (1993), involves being uncomfortably self-conscious, ashamed and probably even confused. When someone feels embarrassed, they may have an intense feeling of being exposed (Buss, 1980), and blush, tremble, fumble or stutter (Modigliani, 1968). We possibly “find embarrassment humorous because we feel superior to the person being embarrassed ... because we are not the person being discomforted or humiliated” (Berger, 1993:33).

Ms. Jones lived on the second floor of an apartment building in Chicago. One morning, she woke with a start when she heard the downstairs door open. She remembered she had forgotten to put out a milk bottle so she rushed to the kitchen, just as she was – *al fresco* – and stepped out across the hall. Suddenly, she realised that it was too late to get back to the apartment so she slipped behind a door which closed on the water meters and waited for the milkman to depart. But it wasn't the milkman. It was the water inspector, who opened the door and found, to his surprise, Ms. Jones standing naked. “Oh, I'm sorry,” she said. “I was expecting the milkman.”

(Berger, 1993:32)

The humorous event above regarding Ms. Jones involves mistakes (she thought it was the milkman so she didn't worry about being naked) and misunderstanding (“I was expecting the milkman,” she says, which could be interpreted that she had a tryst planned) (Berger, 1993).

### **2.5.13 Exaggeration**

Exaggeration, or also known as hyperbole, is a manifestation of something in an excessive way. Berger (1993:33) argues that exaggeration by itself is not naturally humorous and it “must be tied to something else if it is to be seen as comic.” (Berger, 1993) Some experts in comedy theories view exaggeration as a universal instrument for comedy (Draitser, 1994). Eastman (2008:156) claims that the “the easiest way to make

things laughable is to exaggerate to the point of absurdity their salient traits”. The example below illustrates the use of exaggeration by a Pulitzer Prize-winning American author and columnist, Dave Barry.

It is a well-documented fact that guys will not ask for directions. This is a biological thing. This is why it takes several million sperm cells ... to locate a female egg, despite the fact that the egg is, relative to them, the size of Wisconsin.

(Dave Barry, comedian)

#### **2.5.14 Ignorance**

In comedy, people have laughed at the ignorant, at the stupid, and at fools for so many centuries. Similar to embarrassment humour technique, they laugh at ignorance because they feel, as Hobbes described, a “sudden glory arising from a sudden conception of some eminency in ourselves by comparison with the infirmity of others, or with our own formerly” (cf. Berger, 1993:36). They find pleasure in comparing ourselves to the absurdity of others or their former self. The example below illustrates the technique of ignorance.

A little boy watched his mother smear herself with various gooey cosmetics. “What’s that for, mummy?” he asked. “To make myself beautiful,” she said, as she wiped off her face with a tissue. The boy eyed his mother. “Didn’t work, did it.”

(Berger, 1993:36)

In the extract above, the little boy is being honest and tells his mother what he thinks, which is what young children often do. Unfortunately, his reply was not complementing and consequently insults his mother. The humour lies in the unexpected reply of the little boy to his mother’s effort to look beautiful.

### 2.5.15 Repartee

Repartee, according to Berger (1993), is a form of verbal outwitting which counters aggression with aggression. “It is a form of verbal duelling in which the game is to rebut an insult with a better insult” (Berger, 1993:45). He claims that timing is essential because the repartee or comeback must be made immediately. This suggests that repartee is closely connected with wit (rapid construction and delivery of jokes). People find repartee amusing seeing “the determined defense of the ego by a person and the eventual embarrassment of a would-be, whose id suddenly finds itself attacked” (Berger, 1993:46).

In a properly-executed session of ... [repartee], two combatants will hurl insults back and forth, attempting to parry each of their opponent's thrusts while counterattacking with something even more humorous and/or offending. This exchange escalates rapidly until either a truce is reached or one of the jokesters is unable to top his opponent's last comment. Unlike most other forms of comedy, ... [repartee] is the only one that can be considered competitive, although the majority of practitioners don't bother to take it so seriously that “winning” is actually important.

(Blake, 2009)

Repartee involves an exchange of insults and wit, where one ridicules each other very quickly till they reach a truce or one is unable to come back with a witty remark. This humour technique may be considered competitive and the person who makes the last witty remark is the winner. Below is an example of repartee between Lady Astor, an American socialite who was the first woman to take a seat in British parliament, and Winston Churchill, a British Prime Minister for two terms (1940-1945 & 1951-1955). At a dinner party in 1912, Lady Astor annoyed with an intoxicated Churchill, blurted out and Churchill made a witty remark to combat her insult (Grothe, 2005).

Lady Astor: Winston, if you were my husband, I'd put poison in your coffee.  
Churchill: Nancy, if you were my wife, I'd drink it.

(Grothe, 2005)

### 2.5.16 Sarcasm

Sarcasm derives from *sarkazein*, a Greek word, “which means to tear the flesh or to bite” (Berger, 1993:49). Thus, sarcasm represents “a sharp, bitter, or cutting expression or remark; a bitter gibe or taunt” (Boxer, 2002:100). Bousfield (2007) explain that sarcasm is

[t]he use of strategies which, *on the surface* appear to be appropriate to the situation, but are meant to be taken as meaning the opposite in terms of *face management*. That is, the utterance which appears, on the surface, to maintain or enhance the face of the recipient actually attacks and damages the face of the recipient. ... [Hence] *sarcasm* is an insincere form of politeness which is used to offend one's interlocutor.

(Bousfield, 2007, cf. Lambrou & Stockwell 2010:213)

Basically, sarcasm happens when the intended meaning by the speaker is different than the sentence meaning (Brant, 2012). In addition, sarcasm involves an insulting comment which requires the listener to comprehend the negative association of the speaker in the contextual situation (Brant, 2012). Brant (2012) adds that irony, contrarily, although involves opposite meaning, does not include derision. In English, sarcasm usually occurs with prosodic cues (e.g. by speaking with a lower pitch and slower, or using a sarcastic tone) or kinesics cues (e.g. by rolling the eyes) (Boxer, 2002). The following is an example of sarcasm.

A woman's car stalled at a corner and remained there while the light turned red, yellow and green several times. Finally a traffic cop came up to her and said, “What's the matter, lady? Don't we have any colo[u]rs you like?”

(Berger, 1993:49)

## 2.6 Linguistic Characteristics of Verbal Humour

Mihalcea and Strapparava (2005) investigated one-liners for its humorous features and found that these verbal humour linguistic characteristics can be classified into five semantic categories which are *human-centric vocabulary*, *negation*, *negative*

*orientation, human “weakness” and professional communities.* The human-centred vocabulary of humorous texts deals with human-related scenarios and refers to the use of these four semantic classes: persons (e.g. *someone, human, soul*), social groups (e.g. *mosque, university, council*), social relations (e.g. *father, aunt, daughter*) and personal pronouns (e.g. *we, you, they*) (Mihalcea & Pulman, 2007).

In addition, humorous discourse often uses negation or negative word forms (e.g. *doesn't, isn't, don't*) and negative orientation, such as nouns with a negative load (e.g. *error, mistake, failure*), or adjectives with negative connotations (e.g. *bad, illegal, wrong*) (Mihalcea & Strapparava, 2005). Mihalcea and Strapparava (2005) state humour often uses words indicating human “weakness”, including nouns such as *ignorance, stupidity, trouble, beer, alcohol* or verbs such as *quit, steal, lie, drink*. They further elaborate that verbal humour also seems to usually target professional communities (e.g. *politicians, lawyers, policemen*) who are regularly linked to amusing situations.

Basically, the features may be grouped into two main categories: *human-centredness* and *polarity orientation* (Mihalcea & Pulman, 2007). *Human-centric vocabulary* and *professional communities* are categorized into the bigger category of human centredness; while *negation, negative orientation and human weakness* will fall under the broader category of polarity orientation. Mihalcea and Pulman (2007) conducted a study on one-liners and news article to analyse the two features most frequently found in humorous text: human-centredness and negative polarity. They discover that the four semantic classes of human centredness (ie. *persons, social groups, social relations* and *personal pronouns*) and negative polarity (i.e. negation, negative orientation, and human weakness) are consistently prevalent across the humorous one-liners and news article studied.

This study will classify the findings on linguistic characteristics of verbal humour into five classes: *human-centric vocabulary*, *negation*, *negative orientation*, *and human weakness*, and *professional communities*.

## **2.7 Functions of Humour**

Section 2.5 has discussed the different techniques of humour. Each of these techniques of humour may be used to serve several functions. This section will discuss the functions humour serve. According to Hay's Taxonomy of Humour Functions, there are four primal functions of humour namely *general* function, *solidarity* function, *psychological* function, and *power* function (Hay, 1995). Figure 2.1 illustrates these functions and its strategies.

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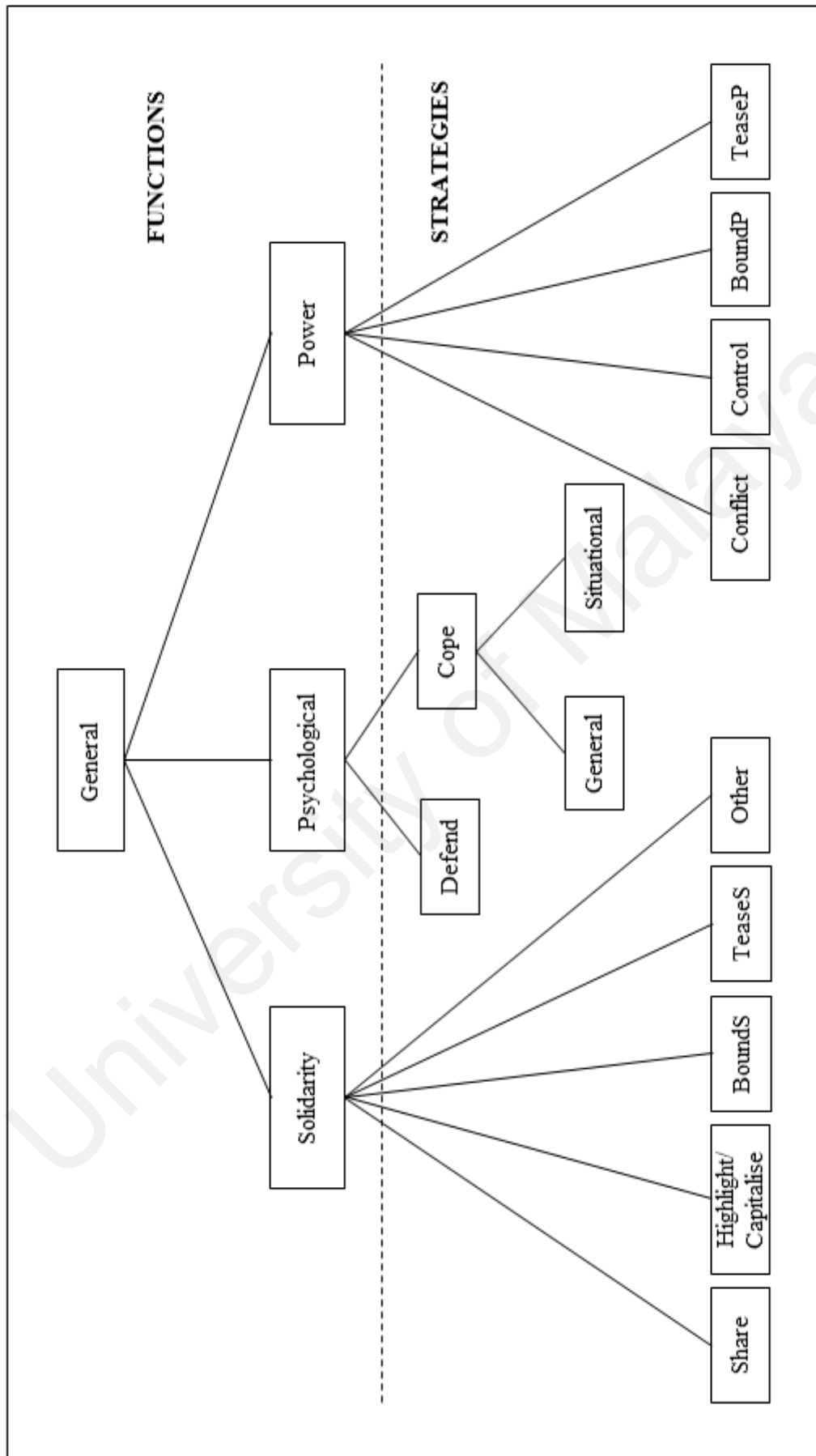


Figure 2.1: Hay's Taxonomy of Humour Functions

### 2.7.1 General

Hay's (1995) framework regards "every attempt at humour is an attempt to both express solidarity with the audience and construct a position of respect and status within the group". Tannen (1993) highlights that a successful attempt at humour both elevates the status of the speaker and also creates or maintains the sense of belonging in the group. Men are more likely than women to use humour solely for the purpose of impressing others, appearing funny, or creating a positive personal identity. This corresponds with the general functions of using humour. Interestingly, men tend to increasingly do this when they are in the presence of the opposite sex – women.

### 2.7.2 Solidarity

Many humorous exchanges, according to Hay (1995), serve the purpose of creating solidarity amongst the group members by using humour in order *to share, to highlight similarities or capitalise on shared experiences, to clarify and maintain boundaries and to tease for solidarity.*

A speaker usually *shares* humorous anecdotes or stories based on personal experience and this allows the listener to know them better, and consequently affects solidarity in a positive way. Sharing sensitive or very personal information indicates the speaker's trust of the listener, which in turn will also reinforce sense of belonging within the group. Ziv (1984) states "sharing similarities between self and others" as one of the functions of humour. When speakers use humour *to highlight on similarities or capitalise on shared experience*, they identify the similarities and shared interests between each other, thus strengthening the bond of solidarity.

Humour may be used *to clarify and maintain boundaries* and form the norms and values of acceptability. It also ascertains which people belong to which group (Holmes, 1997). Poking fun at outsiders functions as a boundary marker where it singles out the outsiders while simultaneously, reinforces the solidarity within the group members. Radcliffe-Brown (1952) claims *teasing* can strengthen the sense of belonging if it happens within a “Joking Relationship”. People frequently tease and insult each other in such a relationship and this serves as a strategy for expressing solidarity.

### 2.7.3 Power

Instances of humour also act as a platform for one to assert their power. Existing researches focussing on teasing highlight that humour is used as a device of social control particularly of children (e.g. Eisenberg 1986, Miller 1986, Schieffelin 1986). Schieffelin (1986) studied Kaluli society, and discovered that shaming and teasing were used as a tool for children to manipulate others in order to gain what one desires. Eisenberg (1986) claims the reason why teasing acts as a mechanism of social control is because it either enables someone to participate by coming back with a tease, or to feel defeated or shamed by the teasing. Hay (1995) states the following as the four strategies adopted to maintain or create power over other people: *to foster conflict, to control, to challenge and set boundaries* and also *to tease for power*.

Martineau (1972), In Martineau’s (1972) model of the social functions of humour, describes *fostering conflict* as one of the functions that humour serves. The function may be intentionally used to demean a listener, or relay an aggressive message by introducing a conflict within the group and is seldom used among close friends. Humorous exchanges intended to influence a listener’s behaviour is categorised as control. Numerous researchers such as Martineau (1972), Collinson (1988) and Graham,

Papa and Brooks (1992) have identified *to control* as one of the functions that humour serves. Hay (1995) explains that this type of controlling humorous exchanges is usually found in the workplace or hierarchical environment, and rarely occurs in groups of friendship.

As well as solidarity, *to challenge and set boundaries* is also a function related to power. This category “challenge[s] existing boundaries, attempt to set new ones, or create or maintain boundaries by making an example of someone present” (Hay, 1995:107). *Teasing* is also present in power, besides in solidarity. Teasing under the function of power is different in comparison to teasing for solidarity because the former “attack[s] personal details, or seem to make genuine criticisms serve[d] to increase or maintain the speaker’s power” (Hay 1995).

#### **2.7.4 Psychological Functions**

Hay (1995) claims humour is also used to serve psychological functions such as *to defend*, *to cope with a situational problem* and *to cope with a general problem*. Ervin-Tripp and Lampert (1992) define Ziv’s (1984) function: “protecting the self by identifying a weakness before anyone else does” as *defending*. Hay (1995) uses the category to apply to humorous remarks used to protect oneself, for example, by avoiding to reveal one’s personal information. The coping mechanisms of using humour has been highlighted by various researchers such as Pogrebin and Poole (1988), Fink and Walker (1977) and Ziv (1984). Hay (1995) has further divided coping into two classes: *coping with a situational problem* and *coping with a general problem*. Coping with situational problem refers to the use of humour to deal with a problem (e.g. a social gaffe of tactless remark or mispronouncing someone’s name) which arises in the duration of the conversation; while coping with a general problem includes the use of

humour to deal with more general problems such as death or sickness. Humour derived from something scary, gory or depressing is an example of coping humour. Hay (1995:110) differentiates *coping with situational problem* from *coping with general problem* by stating that the former “copes with problems we need to get through to survive the conversation”, while the latter “copes with problems we need to get through to survive life, or a period of our life”.

## **2.8 Gender and Language**

### **2.8.1 Dominance and Difference**

Over several decades, some scholars have argued that male and female speech patterns are governed by the fact that males hold a more dominant and higher social position in the society; while the others claim that the speech patterns are varied simply because male and female species are different from each other. The concept hegemonic masculinity corresponds to males holding primary power or status, whereas females are secondary to men. Connell (2005:77) defines hegemonic masculinity as “the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy”. In other words, hegemonic masculinity is the dominant and widely accepted form of masculinity in patriarchal societies. Talbot (2010) mentions that this type of masculinity is regarded as normal which traditionally has the blessing of the religious institution, the support of the state, and ultimately, the society itself. Some key concepts and practices surrounding the concept of hegemonic masculinity in a society are violence, dominance, and being ‘the breadwinner’ (Talbot, 2010).

As Gray (1992) puts it, *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus* when it comes to communication; and various scholars feel the asymmetry in the male and

female speech patterns exist due to the different upbringing males and females have. According to the *Two-Culture Model* theory, men and women have different conversational styles because their conversational goals are different (Maltz & Borker, 1982). These conversational goals are learned in the play groups during their childhood. Men are said to use talk to dominate whilst women are seen being dominated by talk (Thorne & Henley, 1975; Zimmerman & West, 1975; Henley, 1977; Thorne et al., 1983). The *Miscommunication Model* (Henley & Kramarae, 1988, 1991) suggests that communication failures and (what appears to be) male dominance in conversation occur because men regard conversation as a tool to negotiate status while women regard it as a basis to create intimacy.

The *Two-Culture* (Maltz & Borker, 1982) theoretical framework deals with the notion of girls and boys spending their time in subcultures of different social organisation. They learn and adopt different speech styles and behaviours (social rules) while playing in the same-sex groups as children. Hence, boys grow up conceptualising the interactional and conversational styles they were accustomed to during their childhood experience. Below is a summary of the contrasting group dynamics and language strategies in girls' and boys' play groups:

GIRLS	BOYS
Social Organisation	
Mostly in pairs 'Best friends' Non-hierarchical	Large groups 'Gangs' Hierarchical
Directives	
"Hey y'all let's use these first and then come back and get the rest cuz, it's too many of em"	"Man, don't come down in here where I am."
"We gonna paint em and stuff."	"Gimme the pliers."
"We could go around looking for bottles."	"Get off my steps"

(Goodwin, 1980)

**Figure 2.2: Language Strategies in Play Group**

Maltz and Borker (1982) have also discovered that although the two genders interact daily in the society, they have actually formed two sub-cultures in the set of rules for friendly interactions and friendly conversations. This formation of sub-cultures manifests itself in the male-female conversational differences.

Girls, according to Maltz and Borker (1982), are prone to play in small groups, usually in pairs. Friendship is viewed “as involving intimacy, equality, mutual commitment, and loyalty” (1982:424). The foundation of these criteria is language. Most of the work in girls’ friendship is achieved with words. They learn to “create and maintain relationships of closeness and equality, to criticise others in acceptable ways, and to interpret accurately the speech of other girls” by using words (1982:424). The correct and appropriate usage of words to create and maintain friendships is seen as important for girls in their childhood and this importance continues to exist in adulthood. Maltz and Borker (1982) claim that women’s conversation is interactional. In friendly talks, women negotiate and express a relationship on the basis of closeness and support, although it could include distance and criticism too (Maltz & Borker, 1982). Coates (1977:55) equates women’s friendly talk to a jam session, where the participants’ voices “combine to a shared text”. This illustrates that women’s friendly talk appears to be of cooperative nature.

In contrast, Maltz and Borker argue that boys “play in larger, more hierarchically organised groups than girls” (1982:425). They use spoken language mainly to “assert one’s position of dominance, to attract and maintain an audience, and to assert oneself when other speakers have the floor” (1982:426). These features live on in adult men’s talk where friendly interaction is distinguished by “storytelling, arguing and verbal posturing” (1982:429). In male-only interactions, the audience is of great importance and “narratives such as jokes and stories are highly valued, especially when they are well performed for an audience” (1982:429). The all-male audience is

significantly different from the all-female audience because “challenges rather than statements of support are a typical way for men to respond to the speech of other men” (1982:429). Men’s friendly talk seems to be of competitive nature as it usually involves monologues such as storytelling or a good-natured fight with words such as verbal posturing.

## **2.9 Humour and Gender**

Some of the data collected regarding the topic of humour and gender are largely restricted in some ways since some of these results are derived from self-report and questionnaire (e.g. Crawford, 1989; Crawford & Gressley, 1991), whilst the recorded data was mostly taken from conversations among friends in contexts which are informal (e.g. Ervin-Tripp & Lambert, 1992; Hay, 1995; Kotthoff, 2000). Cox et al. (1990) retrieved written feedback from undergraduates in a business school to imaginary embarrassing scenarios involving co-workers; and the analysis of the study is purely dependent on self-perception of the participants in hypothetical embarrassing incidences. Hence, the findings derived from these data may not be claimed to reflect the real nature of humour in relation to gender. However, lately more research has been done in other environments and settings such as workplace (Holmes, 2006; Ho, Wang, Huang & Chen, 2011; Cahill & Densham, 2014; etc.), stand-up comedy (Schwarz, 2010; Manoel, 2013; etc.), broadcasting media (Turckers & Burss, 2010; Dynel, 2014; etc.), and many more.

Conversational humour is a significantly valued form of verbal art across the world. In most parts of the western world, humour is an integral essence of daily interaction and socialisation. Lately, the Asian world is catching up on humour especially with the boom of stand-up comedian performances. Over the past five



decades, various linguists have studied conversational humour (Phillips, 1973; Norrick, 1994; Kotthoff, 1996), the use of humour across cultures and ethnicities (Eisenberg, 1986; Miller, 1986; Schieffelin, 1986), and also the relationship between humour and gender (Hay, 1995; Kehily & Nayak, 1997; Crawford, 2003; Holmes, 2006; Kotthoff, 2006; Lampert & Ervin-Tripp, 2006). There have also been several researches on humour carried out on Asian population (Nevo, Nevo & Yin, 2001; Ho, Wang, Huang, & Chen, 2011; Schnurr & Chan, 2011; Vittach, 2012).

Humour derives from an ongoing interaction, which is a kind of social play, expressed in ways such as story-telling, kidding and punning. Crawford (1995:2-3) mentions that people “can also use humo[u]r toward more serious goals. They can introduce forbidden topics and meanings in a safely indirect way. They can even ridicule, insult, and harass others with relative impunity”. Conversational humour can also act to maintain and also destroy gender relations (Crawford, 1995). There have been numerous studies conducted to identify male and female speech style (Lakoff, 1975; Philips, 1980; Holmes, 1984; Holmes, 1986; Cameron et al., 1988; Bashiruddin, Edge & Hughes-Pelegrin, 1990; etc.). Tannen (1990) states that women’s talk tends to seek agreement whereas men’s talk tends to challenge each other. Many researchers discover there are significant gender differences in conversational style. Having a sense of humour is usually associated with men. Lakoff (1975) claims that unlike men, women are humourless creatures:

It is axiomatic in middle-class American society that, first, women can’t tell jokes – they are bound to ruin the punch line, they mix up the order of things and so on. Moreover, they don’t “get” jokes. In short, women have no sense of humour.

(Lakoff, 1975:56)

In a study conducted by Crawford and Gressley (1991) to determine both the male and female participants' perception regarding the meaning of having a sense of humour, women were found to be highly attached to the form of story-telling jokes; while their male counterparts were more inclined towards hostile humour, jokes, and slapstick comedy. In her study, Marlowe (1989:146) discovers "males prefer sexual and aggressive humour". Men's humour has been characterised as being more competitive (Hay, 1995; Jenkins, 1985), and it has been pointed out that when the men are involved in humorous verbal sparring, they usually are prone to engage competitively, trying to surpass previous contributions with their own contribution (Hay, 1995). Hay (1995) suggests that "coolness" and wit are characteristics viewed more highly by males.

Kehily and Nayak (1997) conducted a research in two secondary schools in the United Kingdom on the use of humour between male pupils. The study suggests that humour is constitutive of masculinity and argues that "humour is a style utilised by these young men to substantiate their heterosexual masculinities" (Kehily & Nayak, 2010:70). They claim humour is used for "consolidating heterosexual masculinities through game-play, storytelling and the practice of insults" (Kehily & Nayak, 2010:70). Games involving "verbal sparring and physical *play-fighting*", assimilating a degree of "linguistic and bodily practices" were used by the male pupils as means in portraying dominance over young women and one other (Kehily & Nayak, 2010:70). Pushing, hitting, tripping, and kicking were favoured activities of physical play-fighting. Kehily and Nayak (1997) add that humour could be used together with play-fighting to downplay the outright violence, aggression or abuse. Back (1990) states the language used during play-fighting determines whether the physical attacks will be perceived as a playful or vicious gesture.

A co-relation between verbal sparring and masculinity was highlighted by Hewit (1986). He explains "the ability to hold your own in a slanging match can be especially

important once a boy moves into adolescence, and to do so the language has to be right” (1986:158). Kehily and Nayak (1997) found out that ritualised insults in the form of *cussing* or *blowing competitions* occur between two male opponents. Blowing competitions involve “the giving and taking of ritualised insults where language became the stage for the performance of masculinity” (Kehily and Nayak, 1997:72). The goal of this competition was to discover who could give the worst insult and thus redeem masculinity, as the quotation below illustrates.

Here, the ability to absorb ‘very personal’ comments with seeming indifference, and to respond sharply, are the weaponry required for successful verbal jousting. That ‘brash kids’ could be ‘reduced to tears’ indicates that a publicly recognised version of masculinity can be momentarily punctured and secured through these contests. These rituals show the techniques young men may utilise to make each other vulnerable, while emphasising the power of dominant versions of masculinity to produce anxieties within the structure of a competitive ‘game’. ‘Blowing competitions have the effect of creating clear-cut masculine identities, crystallising who is ‘hard’ or ‘soft’ through the public exposition of power and vulnerability.

(Kehily & Nayak, 1997:72-73)

In contrast to men, Crawford (1989:159) reports that women connect having a good sense of humour to compassion and not hostility: “women defined an outstanding sense of humo[u]r as one that breaks social tension, eases another’s unhappiness, and cheers rather than wounds”. Several researchers claim that, women’s humour between friends tend to be more co-operative than men’s since it expands on each other’s humour and does not exclude others (Jenkins, 1985; Ervin-Tripp & Lampert, 1992; Eder, 1993; Hay, 1995). Jenkins (1985) observes that women’s humour is co-operative, inclusive, spontaneous, integrated, supportive, and self-healing, whereas men’s humour is challenging, exclusive, pre-formulated, segmented, and self-aggrandising. Crawford (1989) discovers that her participants’ self-reports evidently agree with these claims. However, in her study, Eder (1993) observes an existence of competitiveness among girls, but discovers that “some girls . . . actively try to defuse jealousy and competitive

feelings” (1993:29) through their teasing. Goodman (1992), examined professional women’s comedy, while Hay (1995) and Kotthoff (2000), investigated informal friendship groups. They confirm that women generally are likely to produce humour which is more anecdotal, spontaneous, context-specific, narrative based on their personal experience compared to men, who tend to narrate standardised humour.

This research intends to investigate the humour found in the interaction of the two male radio hosts between them and with their call-in listeners. The types of humour techniques used and what functions these humour instances serve in their interaction. Hence, the results may provide some insights into male humour generally, and Malaysian male radio host humour specifically.

## **2.10 Radio Broadcasting**

Mass media in the modern era can be classified into three categories: print, broadcast and digital. Print media consist of newspapers, books, magazines, brochures, and many more. Broadcast media can be broadly divided into radio and television, besides films and audio recordings, whilst digital medium is the Internet. The division between these categories has become blurred as the former two (i.e. print and broadcast) are now available digitally on the Internet.

Radio is one of the earliest forms of broadcast communications and it became a mass broadcast medium after World War I. This was achieved primarily in the United States of America but gradually has spread across the world as an avenue for providing recent news, information, education, and entertainment. Radio in the 1920’s provided entertainment in the forms of musical variety and audio plays ranging from adventure, comedy, drama, horror, mystery, romance, and thrillers. It was not until the 1960’s that radio presenters became celebrities in their own right. Listener participation up to this

point was minimal. However, the first audience participation via radio phone-ins or listener call-ins started since at least in the mid-1940's in the United States of America.

In 1945, whilst at WMCA, a radio station in New York, Barry Gray felt bored playing music on air, and decided to transmit on air the telephone conversation he was having with the listening audience. The caller happened to be Woody Herman, a bandleader and one of the most popular celebrities back then. This spontaneous live interview became such a hit with both the listeners and the radio station bosses, resulting in the talk radio format. Subsequently, Gray started doing listener call-ins as well.

Talk radio is a radio programming broadcast consisting of talk shows discussing topical issues. Talk radio shows are typically hosted by one or two individuals, and regularly feature interviews with various different guests. It often includes listener contributions by broadcasting real-time conversations between the host and listeners who call in via the telephone to the show. Listener participations are usually screened by the show's producer, intending to maximise audience interest and also to attract advertisers. In Malaysia, callers' contributions are also screened for elements of sex, religion, anti-government and politics in accordance with the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Act 1998 (Act 588). Conservative talk, liberal talk, sports talk, and hot talk are amongst the variations of talk radio. Conservative talks deal with conservative or traditionally-valued ideas, whereas liberal talks relates to progressive or modern concepts and notions. Sports talks tackle sporting events and issues concerning athletes.

On the other hand, hot talks generally consist of subjects pertaining to pop culture, and its demographic target listeners are between the ages of 18 to 49 (Bachman, 1999). Hot talk is a preferred format for morning shows by radio stations. The radio

broadcasters for hot talks entertain listeners or attract their attention by using humour and/or melodramatic exaggeration in the show. Generally, in the hot talk radio format, the radio announcer does something outrageous and shocking (e.g. prank calls) in order to improve ratings. Before the introduction of radio phone-ins, any listener's response to the radio show was limited to written communication and did not happen live. The advent of the radio phone-in ushered in a new era of two-way real-time communication between the radio presenter and the listeners.

Radio shows that have phone-in sections are designed as entertainment for its listening audience. Fitzgerald and Housley (2002) explain that phone-in sections involve a number of callers invited by the host, to call the radio show and share their opinions on a specific topic for entertainment purposes. Hence, selected calls will be broadcast on air if they are deemed entertaining by the producer (Fitzgerald & Housley, 2002). The primary component of phone-ins is for listeners to be encouraged by the host to offer their view and discuss their opinions with the host over the airwaves.

In Malaysia, there are many radio stations broadcast in different languages such as Malay, English, Mandarin and Tamil. The chosen radio station is one of the most popular English-medium radio stations in Malaysia, while the chosen radio show is the most favourite show on the station. It uses a hot talk radio format, and is hosted by two male presenters. This research analyses the interaction of the two male radio presenters with each other and the listeners on the show. Hutchby (1996) considers talk radio to be a source of data with apparent advantages compared to other sources because he feels the data retrieved from the interaction is not affected since the speakers are not aware of the presence of a researcher. He outlines his reason below.

I consider talk radio to be a data source with distinct advantages over others used by researchers... The reason for this is simple: Although the participants were undoubtedly conscious of the fact that their talk was being broadcast to an overhearing audience, I took it that they could not reasonably be said to be aware – or to suspect – that some

particular member of the audience was taping the proceedings in order to engage in sociological analysis of talk. Essentially, what I captured on my tapes [was] the interactional episodes that were as unaffected as they could possibly be by my presence as a researcher.

(Hutchby, 1996:2)

This study aims to examine the humour techniques, the five classes of linguistic characteristics of verbal humour, and the humour functions in the interaction of the two male radio announcers with each other and the listeners of the radio show.

## **2.11 Summary**

Related to the aims of this thesis, this chapter presented relevant theories and definitions and structure of humour techniques and functions. The linguistic aspects of humour and issues surrounding humour and gender together with aspects of talk radio were included. The relationship between language, humour, and gender were reviewed in the past research in relevant fields.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology employed in the study. Section 3.2 discusses the theoretical frameworks used for the study, while section 3.3 describes about the corpus, the chosen radio programme. The research design of the study outlining the steps taken for data collection and data analysis is presented in section 3.4. Finally, the methodology of the research listing the stages of data collection, data selection and the criteria used in the selection of the episodes, and the stages of data analysis are explained in section 3.5.

This is an exploratory research that aims to investigate humour in the interactions of the two Malaysian male radio hosts in a local radio show. The show, aired every Monday to Friday from 6 till 10 in the morning, was conducted in English.

#### 3.2 Theoretical Framework

The study aims to examine male talk based on these three theoretical frameworks. The techniques and functions of humour used by the two male radio announcers with each other and with the male and female callers on the radio show will be identified. The instances (if any) of general, solidarity, power and psychological functions and the strategies used to express these needs will be analysed.

The study also intends to examine the five classes of linguistic characteristics of verbal humour such as human-centric vocabulary, negation, negative orientation, human



“weakness” and professional communities in the interaction between the two radio announcers and with the listeners of the show, if any.

The study is both quantitative and qualitative in nature. It will tabulate the frequency of the humour techniques, the linguistic features of verbal humour, and the humour functions in the interaction of the male hosts. Thus, the study aims to examine male talk based on these three theoretical frameworks. The techniques and functions of humour used by the two male radio announcers with each other and with the male and female callers on the radio show will be identified. The instances (if any) of general, solidarity, power and psychological functions and the strategies used to express these needs will be analysed. The study also intends to examine the five classes of linguistic characteristics of verbal humour such as human-centric vocabulary, negation, negative orientation, human “weakness” and professional communities in the interaction between the two radio announcers and with the listeners of the show, if any.

Being the most favourite meant they had a bigger demography of listeners and it appeared to be that the listeners might have enjoyed the show because of the interactional styles between the two male hosts. Hence, the researcher was interested in studying the patterns of interaction related to humour in the *D Crew* show to discover what might have attracted such a massive demography of listeners.

The framework comprise of Berger’s (1993) and Hay’s (1995) Humour Types Taxonomy to identify the humour types found in the data and investigate the functions of humour and Mihalcea and Strapparava’s (2005) Verbal Humour Linguistics Characteristics framework to analyse the linguistic features of the humour.

### 3.2.1 Hay's Humour Types Taxonomy

Hay's (1995) Taxonomy of Humour Types lists twelve categories of humour types that include anecdotes, fantasy, insult (or ridicule), irony, jokes, observational, quote, role play, self-deprecation, vulgarity, word play and other. All the other humour techniques which are not listed are categorised by Hay (1995) as the twelfth category under 'other' category. Besides the twelve categories mentioned by Hay, there are several humour categories that will be included from Berger's (1993) humour types. Five of Berger's (1993) humour types are also selected to be included in the study, namely, embarrassment, comic lies, ignorance, repartee, and sarcasm.

There are fifteen categories altogether chosen for the purpose of this research. (Please refer to Chapter 2 for a comprehensive review of these humour techniques).

### 3.2.2 Verbal Humour Linguistic Characteristics

Based on Mihalcea and Strapparava's (2005) claim that verbal humour linguistic characteristics can be classified into five semantic categories, the lexical items and phrases found in the data will be categorised into:

(i) **Human-centric vocabulary:**

Lexical items would be grouped into four semantic classes: persons (e.g. *someone, human, soul*), social groups (e.g. *mosque, university, council*), social relations (e.g. *father, aunt, daughter*) and personal pronouns (e.g. *we, you, they*) (Mihalcea & Pulman, 2007). This includes the use of words such as *you, I, man, woman, guy*.

(ii) **Negation and negative orientation:**

Negative word forms such as *doesn't, isn't, don't*; and negative polarity or nouns with a negative load like *error, mistake, failure*, or adjectives with negative connotations e.g. *bad, illegal, wrong*.

(iii) **Human “weakness”:**

Words that indicate human “weakness” such nouns like *ignorance, stupidity, trouble, beer, alcohol* or verbs such as *quit, steal, lie, drink*.

(iv) **Professional communities:**

Refers to humour that target professional communities such as politicians, lawyers, policemen who are regularly linked to amusing situations.

### 3.2.3 Hay’s Functions of Humour Taxonomy

Hay (1995) identifies four primal functions associated with humour and labels them as general, solidarity, power and psychological. Some humour instances have a general function which is to create a positive self-identity and nothing more. However, most humorous remarks serve to create solidarity or a sense of belonging within a group. There are five strategies in which humour is used to express solidarity. The strategies are sharing, highlighting similarities or capitalising on shared experiences, clarifying and maintaining boundaries, teasing and other. Humour also acts as a platform to create or maintain power. The four strategies adopted to establish power are fostering conflict, controlling, creating boundaries and teasing. On the other hand, psychological needs are served by defending and coping humour strategies. (Please refer to Chapter 2 for a comprehensive review of these humour functions).

### 3.3 Corpus

Corpus consisted of recordings of the shows during broadcast on air.

The list below outlines the topics of the corpus, the selected six radio episodes of the radio show.

No.	Date	Topics	Coding
1.	18 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2012	You've made a mistake with your friend, he just wouldn't let it go.  Your friend has made a mistake with you and you're not willing to let it go.	18/01/12
2.	10 <sup>th</sup> Feb 2012	Do you think your boyfriend loves football more than you?	10/02/12
3.	14 <sup>th</sup> Feb 2012	What's the most ridiculous thing you've done for someone on Valentine's Day?  Valentine's Day's story that bonged.	14/02/12
4.	28 <sup>th</sup> Feb 2012	Would you hook up again with your ex-boyfriend?	28/02/12
5.	5 <sup>th</sup> Mar 2012	Who's the bigger cheapskate: girls or guys? Why?	05/03/12
6.	29 <sup>th</sup> Mar 2012	What's the absolute worst excuse you've been given for being dumped?  What's the absolute worst excuse you've given to break up with someone?	29/03/12

**Figure 3.1: Topics of the Radio Episodes**

Radio, being a broadcasting media, is bound by law not to discuss issues considered sensitive or taboo by the government and/or society, such as sex, religion, government and politics amongst other things. Therefore, the topics discussed on air by the two male radio announcers tend to adhere to the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Act 1998 (Act 588). As such producers of the show avoid the inclusion of sensitive and taboo topics that one might expect in private conversations.

Each episode was divided into several sections: sports/entertainment news, road traffic news, Hollywood gossips, games, prank calls, and call-ins. Once the six episodes were chosen, all the songs, advertisements and prank calls were removed. Pure talk usually lasted around 2 hours per show. Most *D Crew* shows would have a topic that the

listeners could participate in by calling in or posting up on social media. The host would announce the topic of the day in the third hour of the show usually. Then, listeners would either post on Facebook or call the show to share their opinions or experiences relating to the topic.

Both hosts have an Asian background and were around the same age at the time of the data collection. Radio Host 1 (RH1) was 36 years old and has a Malay mother and an Indian father. Meanwhile, Radio Host 2 (RH2) was 32 years old and has a Chinese mother and a Malay father. In terms of academic qualifications, both of the male radio hosts received tertiary education. RH1 went to a local university and received an Engineering Bachelor's Degree, while RH2 had attended an Australian university and graduated with a Marketing Bachelor's Degree.

The two male hosts have been working together on air for over 2 years at the time of the recording of the data. When they were on air, references to past events outside the studio were made thus implying that they do meet outside the studio for work and socialising with a good rapport between them.

The complete data set comprises of fifty five (55) episodes equivalent of two hundred and twenty (220) hours. The data then were screened through according to four (4) stages of screening.

### 3.4 Procedure for Data Collection and Data Analysis

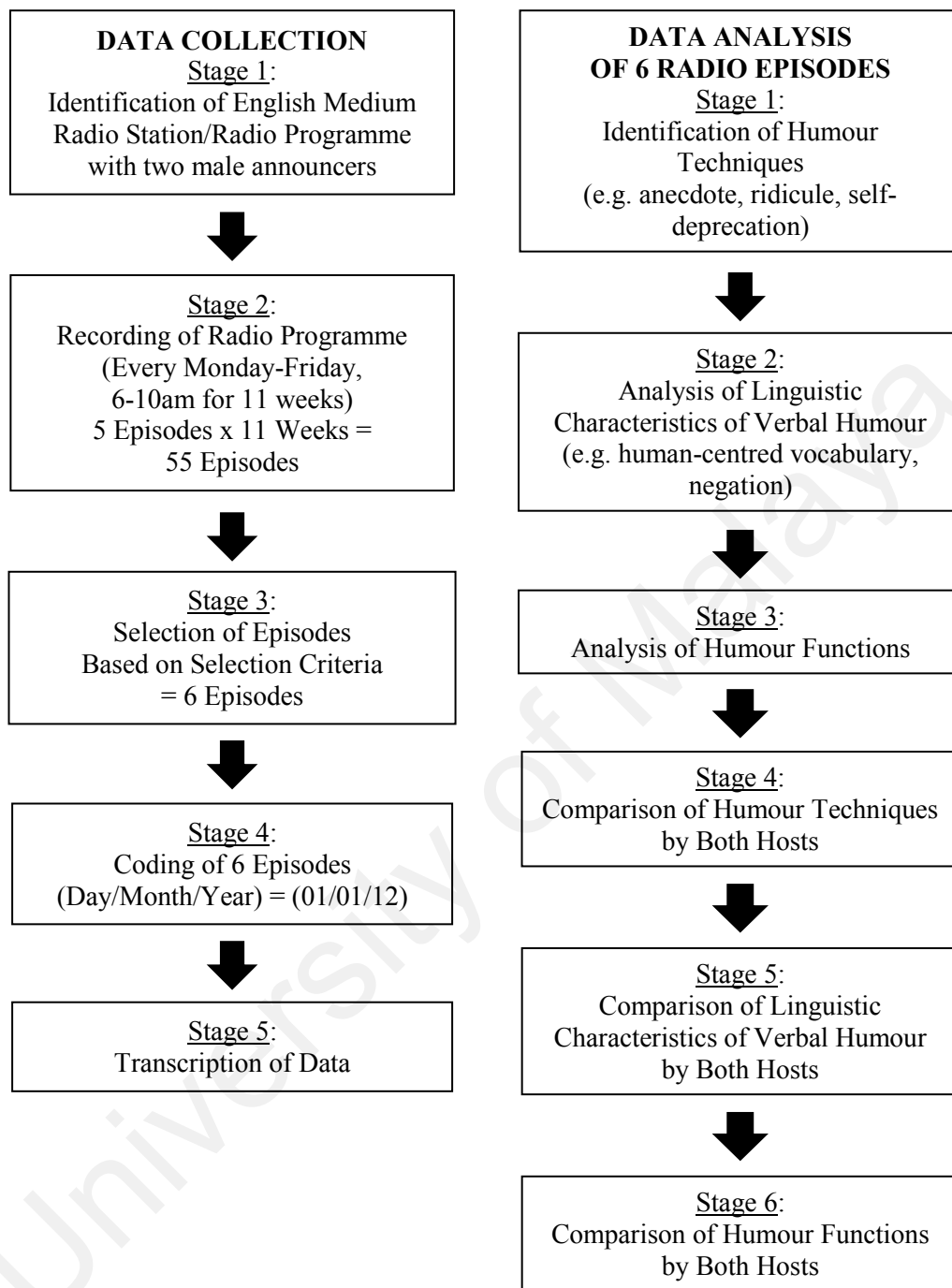


Figure 3.2: Procedure for Data Collection and Data Analysis

### **3.5 Methodology**

#### **3.5.1 Data Collection**

In Stage 1 of the data collection, an English-medium radio programme on a Malaysian radio station was identified. The researcher identified several radio shows conducted in English language that used humour with two radio announcers hosting it. However, since the study intends to analyse humour used by male radio hosts, only one breakfast show could meet this criteria. This selected programme was hosted by two males, aired daily from Monday to Friday, starting at 6am and finishing at 10am

In Stage 2, the recording of the episodes was done over a period of 11 weeks. They were recorded with a Sony UX digital audio recorder. The objective of the recording was to obtain a minimum of 6 radio episodes of the show revolving around the daily topic of relationship.

The data was then transcribed following the Gail Jefferson's (2004) conventions (Refer page viii.). Only talk relating to the topic of the day was transcribed and the final data started from the moment the daily topic was introduced till the end of the show. Hepburn and Bolden (2013) state that Jefferson's conventions follow and capture closely the rich subtlety of the spoken discourse delivery. However, due to the limitations of this study, prosodic features of the speech are not highlighted in the transcription.

### 3.5.2 Selection Criteria

The following criteria are listed below for each stage of the study.

(i) **First stage:**

Only episodes with the same two male radio hosts, RH1 and RH2, were used. Sometimes, the radio station would have a local celebrity guest host or another radio announcer to replace either RH1 or RH2. These were also excluded.

(ii) **Second stage:**

Episodes which did not have call-ins were not included. This also refers to episodes where celebrities or guests appeared on the radio shows and there would not be call-in sessions.

(iii) **Third stage:**

Only episodes that have a topic which listeners could comment on via a phone call would be selected. Some episodes consisted of either RH1 or RH2 role-playing as other people throughout the show would also be excluded.

(iv) **Fourth stage:**

The remaining episodes with both male hosts in, a topic that listeners could talk about via phone, and listeners calling in, would be analysed for its daily theme.

(v) **Fifth stage:**

The topics were examined to discover the relative themes and several episodes which revolved around the same theme were chosen for the analysis.

(vi) **Sixth stage:**

Only episodes which revolved around the issue of relationship were selected to be investigated. A total of six episodes were selected for analysis.



The study will investigate the use of humour by the two radio hosts from the moment they announce the topic of the day till the end of the show. They usually have call-ins till the end of the day. They also may repeat the conversations they have had with the listeners at the end of the show. The study, however, will not analyse or count the repeated conversations as they are already analysed the first time it is aired earlier in the same episode.

Due to the scope and limitations of the study, findings should not be generalised to be applicable for all conversations of male radio announcers, but only representational of the chosen radio show.

### **3.5.3 Data Analysis**

The study adopts a methodology which corresponds with both the communication processes and interpersonal communication that are simultaneously prevalent in a radio show. Content Analysis is used for its quantitative nature. The conversations between the two males are analysed to find distinct features relating to humour and gender.

The methodology comprises these various techniques:

- (i) Observation of the data (radio hosts' interaction)
- (ii) Selection of relevant data (radio episodes)
- (iii) In-depth examination of the selected data
- (iv) Identifying and quantifying of data according to categories systematically
- (v) Generalization of quantified data
- (vi) Explanation on quantified data

The methods were not carried out according to the order above since the analysis of the data was not done in isolation, but were incorporated and inter-related in one way or another in terms of their forms and meanings. Quantitative methods were used to measure the types of humour, as well as humour functions. The same method was also used to quantify the use and types of linguistic characteristics of verbal humour.

The analysis of the humorous exchanges are done sequentially following the analytic activity sequences below which are based on Berg's Social Research Approaches (2007:204):

- (i) Data are collected and converted into text (i.e. transcripts).
- (ii) Codes are analytically developed or inductively identified in the data and attached to sets of transcript pages.
- (iii) Codes are transformed into categorical labels.
- (iv) Materials are sorted by these categories, identifying similar phrases, patterns, relationships, and commonalties or disparities.
- (v) Sorted materials are examined to isolate meaningful patterns and processes.
- (vi) Identified patterns are considered in light of previous research and theories, and a small set of generalizations are established.

#### **3.5.4 Content Analysis**

Content Analysis, according to Holsti (1969), is "any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages". Berelson (1952:18) points out that Content Analysis is a quantitative research method dealing with "objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communications". Content holds a central position in mass communications. Berelson (1952) regards Content Analysis as vital in mass

communication researches since it is efficient in approaching the features of the communication process on three levels.

(i) **Characteristics of the Communicator**

General personality and characteristics of the communicator.

Intentions, motives and interests underlie the communication.

(ii) **Characteristics of the Communication**

Media characteristics of the communication.

Signification responses of the communicator.

Signification responses of the audience.

(iii) **Characteristics of the Audiences**

Reaction of the communication

Audience's environment (studio audience or listener)

The first level of the communication dealing with the characteristics of the communicators (the two male radio hosts) is the primary focus of this research. By counting the instances of certain linguistic forms and functions which exist in the two male radio announcers' speech in a quantifiable and systematic way, Content Analysis provides a viable platform in highlighting the similarities and differences between the two male radio hosts.

Content Analysis will be used to identify the frequency of humour techniques, humour functions and linguistic characteristics of verbal humour for both of the two male radio hosts. Stempel and Westley (1981) emphasize the importance for researchers conducting Content Analysis to abide by the basic guidelines outlined by Berelson (1952). According to Stempel and Westley (1981), Content Analysis has to be:

- (i) Objective:  
This is obtained by having the categories of analysis defined accurately in order for the results to rely on the procedure and not the analyst.
- (ii) Systematic:
  - (a) The same set of procedure is applied on all the content being analysed.
  - (b) Categories are made to ensure all relevant content is analysed.
  - (c) The analysis is able to obtain data pertaining to the research questions.
- (iii) Quantitative:  
The quantification of the frequencies or the numerical values of the various types of content occurs.
- (iv) Manifest Content:  
The selected content is coded as it appears.

(Stempel & Westley 1981:18)

This research aims to develop a general account of humour instances found in the interactions between the two male hosts and their general listeners and callers to the show.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

This chapter presented the framework of the study, the corpus, the research design, and the procedures for data collection and analysis of a total of six (6) radio episodes using Content Analysis.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1 Introduction

The main aim of this study is to investigate the use of humour and the linguistic features and functions that can be found in the interaction of the two male hosts in a local radio programme. The main corpus of the study will be the recording of the hosts' speech and their interactions with the call-in audience to the show. In this chapter, the findings from the analysis of the data consisting of excerpts from six radio episodes will be described and discussed. Total size of corpus is 14,000 words of transcribed data.

In terms of presentation, the general results of these three areas will be presented accordingly. The results from the analysis of humour techniques, linguistic features and humour functions will be tabulated. Following this the comparison of verbal humour of the two radio hosts, RH1 and RH2, will be presented. Lastly, a discussion on the overall findings will be presented.

Below is an example of the coding system used for the transcription and how the excerpts taken from the data will be presented. The names of the radio station and radio show have been replaced with 'X FM' and 'D Crew' respectively in the transcription.

The hosts are coded as RH1 and RH2. Callers to the show will be coded as C and the number after it corresponds to the sequence of the callers such as C1, C2, and so on. Each line is numbered and coded with the letter L and the line number in the transcription of each episode. In the conversation, the names of the callers will be replaced with either an initial letter or letters of their name, for example, in line 243, the caller's name has been replaced with \*A. The transcription follows Jefferson's

convention (1984). The conventions of the transcription, and the symbols and abbreviations used in the transcription can be found on page xiii and xiv. A sample of the transcriptions is available in the Appendix.

Sample 1		
L231	RH2:	apparently 57 percent of girls, have hooked up with an ex.
L232		have y'know, not about to, or would explore the possibility,
L233	RH1:	thinking about it,
L234	RH2:	no no no, this one
L235		/is/
L236	RH1:	<i>/sudah/</i>
		[have done it]
L237	RH2:	<i>sudah</i>
		[have done it]
L238		((chuckles))
L239		alright so, we wanna know do you agree with that,
L240		have you got any experience in this
L241		zero three nine five four three double three double one.
L242		okay
L243	RH1:	<b>*A, are you one of RH2's ex?</b> <span style="float: right;"><b>[observational]</b></span>
L244	RH2:	hey! oi!
L245	RH1:	((laughs))
L246	C2:	what?!
L247		((laughs))
28/02/12		

In Sample 1 above, the excerpt was taken from the transcription of episode 28/02/12 (indicated at the bottom right corner) which refers to the date of recording (28<sup>th</sup> February 2012). In cases where the radio hosts switch to another language from English, it will be italicised as in Line 236, "*sudah*". Below it will be the translated version in square brackets [have done it]. The examples of humour techniques and functions are highlighted and will be labelled at the end of the line in the transcription, for example, in Sample 1, the humour is highlighted in bold in line 243 and the humour technique, observational is indicated at the end of the line.

## 4.2 Techniques of Humour

This section presents the findings from the Content Analysis on the corpus of six radio episodes on the techniques of humour found in the interactions of the two male radio hosts. It will list and discuss the categories of humour techniques found in the interaction of RH1 and RH2 with each other, the callers, and the general listeners of the radio show. Each radio episode is unique in itself. The uniqueness derives mainly from the composition of the various daily topics introduced on the show and the contribution from the listeners based on these daily topics. Please refer to Figure 4.1 for the list of the daily topics.

No.	Date	Topics	Coding
1.	18 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2012	You've made a mistake with your friend, he just wouldn't let it go.  Your friend has made a mistake with you and you're not willing to let it go.	18/01/12
2.	10 <sup>th</sup> Feb 2012	Do you think your boyfriend loves football more than you?	10/02/12
3.	14 <sup>th</sup> Feb 2012	What's the most ridiculous thing you've done for someone on Valentine's Day?  Valentine's Day's story that bonged.	14/02/12
4.	28 <sup>th</sup> Feb 2012	Would you hook up again with your ex-boyfriend?	28/02/12
5.	5 <sup>th</sup> Mar 2012	Who's the bigger cheapskate: girls or guys? Why?	05/03/12
6.	29 <sup>th</sup> Mar 2012	What's the absolute worst excuse you've been given for being dumped?  What's the absolute worst excuse you've given to break up with someone?	29/03/12

**Figure 4.1: Topics of the Radio Episodes**

Table 4.1 shows the categories of humour techniques, as well as the overall frequency of humour techniques found in the corpus. There are fourteen (14) categories of humour techniques found in the interaction of the two male radio hosts. Eight of the fourteen categories are based on Hay's Humour Types Framework, whereas the other six categories (i.e. comic lies, embarrassment, ignorance, exaggeration, sarcasm, and repartee) categorised by Berger (1993) are present in the data but not available in Hay's framework.

**Table 4.1: Frequency for Humour Techniques**

No.	Techniques	f	%
1.	Observational	100	30.58
2.	Ridicule	68	20.80
3.	Pretence/Role Play	38	11.62
4.	Comic Lies	31	9.48
5.	Self-Deprecation	21	6.42
6.	Embarrassment	19	5.81
7.	Anecdote	15	4.59
8.	Ignorance	8	2.45
9.	Exaggeration	7	2.14
10.	Sarcasm	6	1.83
11.	Fantasy	4	1.22
12.	Word Play	4	1.22
13.	Irony	3	0.92
14.	Repartee	3	0.92
	<b>Total</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>99.99</b>

The top five techniques found are *observational* (n=100), followed by *ridicule* (n=68), *pretence and role play* (n=38), *comic lies* (n=31), and *self-deprecation* (n=21). The following sections present a detailed discussion and an example for each humour technique.



### 4.2.1 Observational

From Table 4.1, the data reveals that the most frequent humour technique is observational which has one hundred (100) instances or 30.58% from the total humour techniques. According to Hay (1995:74), observational technique of humour relates to comments made based on “the environment, the events occurring at the time, or about the previous person’s words”. In other words, the speaker is making a witty observation and a funny remark about something. Since the radio show was broadcast live on air, the humorous remarks made were based on the topic of the daily discussion and the words of the host or the callers.

The expressions in Example 1 below are instances of observational humour technique based on the daily topic of ‘The worst excuse for breaking up with someone’. The radio announcers invited listeners to share their experience of the excuse given to end a relationship. It could be the worst excuse they used, or the excuse they were given by their boyfriends or girlfriends to end a relationship. RH1 and RH2 were going through the top three excuses for breaking up from listeners posting on the radio’s Facebook.

<b>Example 1</b>		
L589	RH1:	ER. she said, because she sms too <i>pendek</i> . [short]
L590	RH2:	oh, serious?
L591	RH1:	how are you today? okay. <i>habis</i> break. [finished]
L592	RH2:	break?
L593	RH1:	<b><i>ini tak boleh must tulis karangan the next time.</i></b> [observational] [this is wrong must write an essay]
L594	RH2:	((laughs))
L595	RH1:	<b>a whole essay okay? don’t just give a short sms</b> [observational]
L596	RH2:	<b>you do that now or later <i>sebab</i> it’s a <i>karangan</i>.</b> [observational] [because] [essay]
L597		((laughs))
L598		laugh <i>lah!</i>
29/03/12		

In Example 1 above, they were discussing the top excuse given by a listener, \*ER. She wrote on Facebook that she was dumped by him because she sent short messages to her boyfriend. Observing this excuse, RH1 made a witty remark by saying in “a whole essay okay? don’t just give a short sms” (L595), which means that instead of a short text, one must write an essay to their boyfriend or girlfriend so that they will not get dumped.

RH2 made another observational remark by adding “you do that now or later *sebab* it’s a *karangan* [because it’s an essay]” (L596). He asked the listeners to start penning messages to their boyfriend or girlfriend because it would have to be an essay, and obviously require more time than short messages.

These three instances are observational technique of humour because they were formed in relation to the situation happening at the time and the previous person’s words. \*ER’s comment on Facebook (L589) triggered RH1’s remarks (L593 & L595), while RH1’s comments (L593 & L595) triggered RH2’s remark (L596).

#### **4.2.2 Ridicule**

Ridicule, according to Table 4.1, is the second most frequent humour technique observed on the radio show, amounting to sixty eight (68), or 20.80%. Hay (1995) refers to this technique as insult, a humour technique intending to mock a person. This study opts to use the term ridicule rather than insult because the word insult has an overly aggressive connotation. In conversations, ridicule is a humour technique widely used. Schwarz (2010) points out that derision and ridicule are humour techniques that are impolite and aggressive. She elaborates that ridicule is used to poke fun at someone or to verbally attack someone. This is mainly achieved by associating a negative attribute to them.

The theme for the episode in Example 2 was ‘What’s the strangest or weirdest thing that you’ve done for anyone on Valentine’s Day?’ Prior to the extract below, RH2 was sharing his story of being dumped on Valentine’s Day, after spending money on flowers, and arranging for dinner, and a movie for his girlfriend. Since that day, he has not celebrated Valentine’s Day much. From Example 2, it can be seen that RH2 was ridiculing RH1 for his effort on Valentine’s Day.

<b>Example 2</b>		
L31	RH2:	<b>I’m sure you’ve done some <u>ridiculous</u> stuff for Valentine’s Day too.</b> [ridicule]
L32		have you travelled countries or anything like that?
L33	RH1:	no.
L34	RH2:	<b>bought <u>ridiculous</u> presents, made something?</b> [ridicule]
L35	RH1:	yeah.
L36	RH2:	oh alright
L37	RH1:	that’s not ridiculous okay.
L38		creating a little treasure hunt for your loved one
L39		at the end of the day they find something simple
L40		like a card you made is nice!
L41	RH2:	oh my goodness.
L42	RH1:	what?
L43	RH2:	<b>did you hear that <u>ridiculous</u> story?</b> [ridicule]
L44	RH1:	it’s not ridiculous,
L45	RH2:	/I’m sure that you got/
L46	RH1:	/it’s romantic!/ [ridicule]
L47	RH2:	<b>yeah, in in <u>ridiculous</u> land.</b>
L48	RH1:	oh!
L49	RH2:	<b>okay I’m sure you got some <u>ridiculous</u> stories you wanna share with us.</b> [ridicule]
L50	RH1:	oh!
L51	RH2:	((laughs))

14/02/12

RH1 was derided by RH2 five times because of RH1’s sentimental feelings for Valentine’s Day. RH2 used the word “ridiculous” repeatedly in Lines 31, 34, 43, 47, and 49. The use of this word in the remarks is a form of ridicule because it was used to mock RH1 intentionally that he was being absurd and ridiculous. RH2 was verbally attacking and kept on ridiculing RH1 because the latter was defensive. RH2 kept on

ridiculing RHI by using the word “ridiculous” repeatedly to what the latter said in every situation he could.

### 4.2.3 Pretence or Role Play

In Table 4.1, pretence or role play is the third most frequent humour technique, totalled at thirty eight (38), or 11.62%. Pretence and role play refers to a person imitating a different state of being, for example, a child or a sick man (Berger, 1993), or by adopting another voice or personality by stepping into someone else’s shoes for humorous effect (Hay, 1995). Since the speaker is performing or acting for their audience, pretence and role play are performance-based humour (Hay, 1995). There are many funny instances of pretence and role play on the show. This might have been used to entertain the general listeners as well as attract them to continue listening to the radio station.

In Example 3, RH2 called his ex-girlfriend to discover whether or not she would go out on a date with him. The topic of the day was ‘More than half of the girls have dated their ex-boyfriend again’. RH1 and RH2 said there was a survey done that claimed 57% of girls had dated their ex-boyfriends. Prior to calling his ex-girlfriend, RH2 admitted that he and his ex-girlfriend did not have an amicable break-up. He told RH1 that he would test the claim by calling the ex-girlfriend. Here, RH2 was pretending to be genuinely interested in asking his ex-girlfriend out while RH1 and the listeners knew he was putting up an act to test the validity of the so-called claim.

#### Example 3

- L179 C1: tak sekarang ni, why do you, *kenape* you call i?  
[why]  
L180 I don’t, *tiba-tiba* out of nowhere, why why why?  
[suddenly]  
L181 could it be like, *dah perempuan lain sume dah dah tak suka you ke ape?*  
[all the women don’t like you anymore?]

L182	RH2:	<b>no no no I'm just wondering how you are,</b>	[pretence]
L183		<i>saje nak tanye</i> [just asking]	[pretence]
L184		<b>is it wrong for me to ask you to come out?</b>	[pretence]
L185	C1:	no <i>lah.</i> out of nowhere <i>kot. tiba-tiba je.</i> [maybe. all of a sudden.]	
L186	RH2:	<b>so is that a yes or no to the coffee?</b>	[pretence]
L187	C1:	no, I don't know, I don't know.	
L188	RH2:	<b>you don't know? that means there's hope.</b>	[pretence]
L189		<b>okay erm, let's meet up and we can talk about it okay.</b>	[pretence]
L190		<b>I'll pick you up.</b>	[pretence]
L191	C1:	eh you can't like force me.	
L192	RH2:	<b>I'm not forcing you I'm asking you nicely.</b>	[pretence]
L193		<b>come on, just just give me a chance with this.</b>	[pretence]
L194		<b>can we meet up next this Friday, Friday night?</b>	[pretence]
L195	C1:	erm, I don't know, I'll I'll text you.	
L196	RH2:	<b>seven thirty I'll see you at your place okay, no need to text.</b>	[pretence]
L197		<b>I'm just gonna come anyway.</b>	[pretence]
L198	C1:	ah okay.	
L199	RH2:	<b>okay I'll see you I'll see you Friday.</b>	[pretence]
L200	C1:	okay then.	
L201	RH2:	it's true.	
L202		((sobbing)) <b>the rule is true.</b>	[observational]
L203	RH1:	dude y'know Friday we're not gonna be in KL right?	
L204	RH2:	((sobbing)) <b>I know we're gonna be in Penang.</b>	[observational]
L205	RH1:	so why did you?	
L206	RH2:	<b>I don't know I got caught up in the moment.</b>	[observational]
L207	RH1:	<b>you're in trouble now.</b>	[observational]
			28/02/12

For the general listeners, it would have been amusing listening to RH2 trying to convince his ex-girlfriend to go out on a date with him on Friday night. He was successful in asking her out, as well as proving the claim was correct. The listeners knew that RH2 was pretending to ask her out in order to validate the so-called claim. The humour lies in the things RH2 said in his pretence.

What was more amusing is that RH1 and RH2 disclosed the fact that both of them would not be in Kuala Lumpur since they were scheduled to be in Penang on that particular Friday night and RH2 was in trouble since he needed to cancel the date he begged for. These are observational humour techniques, in which the funny comments made are related to RH2's phone call to his ex-girlfriend.

#### 4.2.4 Comic lies

Comic lies, according to Table 4.1, are the fourth most frequent humour technique observed with thirty one (31) instances, or 9.48% from the overall humour techniques. Comic lies relate to the lies made by a speaker. The humour derives from the audience knowing that the speaker is lying to them. Although the speaker realises that the listener or audience know about the act of lying, they still go on with the lie.

Example 4 below illustrates instances of comic lies. RH1 and RH2 were talking to a caller named \*N, who shared her experience of being dumped by her ex-boyfriend. The topic for the day was “The worst excuse to break up with someone”. \*N told the hosts that three years ago, her ex-boyfriend said he was not good enough to date her and hence wanted to end it. After a few days, \*N saw her ex-boyfriend holding hands with another girl.

##### Example 4

- L296 RH2: okay \*N! tell us tell us your story.  
L297 what was the worst excuse you've ever heard uh.  
L298 C3: erm okay well this happened like erm I think three years ago with  
L299 erm my ex-boyfriend  
L300 RH2: alright.  
L301 C3: and erm I was er I think still in high school and he told me erm  
L302 I'm not good enough for you.  
L303 RH1: oh he's not good enough?  
L304 C3: yeah he's not good enough for me.  
L305 and after like maybe erm I think erm after a few days,  
L306 RH1: uhuh.  
L307 C3: he was walking with another girl holding her hand.  
L308 RH1: oh.  
L309 RH2: yeah y'know why?  
L310 **because that girl is not as good as you so** [comic lies]  
L311 **he's, he's playing a more even field now.** [comic lies]  
L312 **cause you're too good,** [comic lies]  
L313 **he wanted to release you to go out with someone even better \*N.** [comic lies]  
L314 RH1: **RH2 too sweet.**  
L315 RH2: **he's looking out for you girl.** [comic lies]  
L316 RH1: yeah.  
L317 ((laughs))  
L318 C3: ((laughs))

29/03/12

Everyone listening to \*N's story knew that the excuse her boyfriend gave was not true. However, RH2 tried to console her with lies (L310-L313 & L315). These are examples of comic lie humour technique because listeners were aware of RH2 lying to \*N. The humour derives from the fact RH2 was trying his best lying and convincing \*N that her ex-boyfriend did not deserve her because she was too good for him. He continued with the lie saying that \*N's ex-boyfriend broke up with her to enable her to be with a better man than her ex-boyfriend.

#### **4.2.5 Self-deprecation**

From Table 4.1, self-deprecation is the fifth highest frequent humour technique observed in the corpus, amounting to twenty one (21) instances, or 6.42%. Hay (1995) defines self-deprecation as an insult aimed at oneself. It presents the speaker's own flaws with an intention of amusing the audience (Schwarz, 2000).

Self-deprecation humour from the radio show can be seen in Example 5. RH1 and RH2 were introducing the daily topic of the show which revolved around relationships and ending them. RH1 mentioned two types of people when it came to breaking up – one that was good at it, and one that was bad at it. The good one would not only be able to dismiss any responsibility on their part, but they would also be able to put the blame on their partner even though they were at fault. In contrast, the bad one was the people who did not know how to break-up with someone, and would end up getting into trouble doing it.

### Example 5

L30	RH1:	there are certain people who are really good at it when you break up,	
L31	RH2:	yup.	
L32	RH1:	and you realize you think it's your mistake.	
L33		oh yeah ah my fault.	
L34		but actually it's theirs.	
L35	RH2:	yeah.	
L36	RH1:	and then there are some people	
L37		who just don't know how to do it and get into trouble.	
L38	RH2:	<b>ah I'm bad.</b>	[self-deprecation]
L39		<b>even when it's not my fault it looks like it is</b> y'know what I mean?	[self-deprecation]
L40	RH1:	((laughs))	
L41	RH2:	<b>terrible. people blame me anyway.</b>	[self-deprecation]
L42	RH1:	yeah yeah yeah.	
L43	RH2:	aiyo.	

29/03/12

In the above example, RH2 self-deprecated by ridiculing his inability to end a romantic relationship with a girlfriend because he would be blamed regardless whether or not it was his fault. He admitted he was bad at breaking up with girlfriends (L38), and accepted the blame for the break-up even though it was not his fault (L39 & L41). The humour in this self-deprecation technique derives from RH2's way of ridiculing himself by telling the listeners how bad he was at breaking up with a girlfriend.

#### 4.2.6 Embarrassment

Table 4.1 shows that embarrassment is the sixth most frequent humour technique discovered in the interaction of the two male hosts. There is a total of nineteen (19) times, or 5.81%. An embarrassment humour technique refers to the use of humour to defend oneself in embarrassing situations arising from saying something stupid or making a mistake. Berger (1993) asserts that being embarrassed involves feeling uncomfortably self-conscious, ashamed, and possibly even confused. When



someone is in an embarrassing situation, they may feel exposed (Buss, 1980), and blush, tremble, fumble, or stutter (Modigliani, 1968).

Example 6 provides instances of embarrassment humour technique. The radio episode below was aired on a Valentine's Day and the topic was 'The most ridiculous or weirdest Valentine's Day stories'. Following the spirit of love and romance, RH2 labelled RH1 and himself as the "Bromance Crew" (L73) instead of the usual label, which also happened to be the name of the radio breakfast show. Bromance, derived from the words *brother* and *romance*, means an affectional non-romantic relationship between two men that is extremely close, but does not involve sex. While reiterating the opening phrases of the show, RH2 added "y'know it be" (L76) and RH1 asked whether or not RH2 called him *b* which is a short form for *baby*. *Baby* is informally used to address a sweetheart or a person someone is deeply fond of.

#### Example 6

L73 RH2: good morning! it's RH1 and RH2 on the Y dot FM Bromance Crew.  
L74 RH1: /huh?/  
L75 RH2: /two brand/ new gotchas everyday one at seven twenty one at eight twenty.  
L76 y'know it be.  
L77 RH1: ((laughs))  
L78 wait!  
L79 RH2: wait what? we're the bromance of the century.  
L80 RH1: okay okay you call me b?  
L81 RH2: **no, y'know it be! I'm trying to be hip hop talk.** [embarrassment]  
L82 RH1: okay.  
L83 ((chuckles))  
L84 RH2: **I wasn't calling you b!** [embarrassment]  
L85 RH1: alright.  
L86 ((chuckles))  
L87 RH2: **trying to get me into trouble and everything.** [embarrassment]  
L88 RH1: ((laughs))

14/02/12

When asked, RH2 quickly explained to RH1 that he was trying to do a hip hop talk and it was "y'know it be" (L81). RH2 was embarrassed by the thought of calling

RH1, *b* or *baby* and emphasised that he was not by saying “I wasn’t calling you b!” (L84). He later added “trying to get me into trouble and everything” (L87) which means RH2 calling RH1 *baby* would cause RH2 trouble. This is because it would be considered a homosexual relationship. Sex, and especially homosexuality is a taboo subject to be discussed on air openly in Malaysia due to religious beliefs and Asian customs. In Malaysia, it is generally not an acceptable practice to voice opinions and statements related to sex in public. The humour stems from the embarrassment on RH2’s part being accused of calling RH1 *baby* and the notion of being in a homosexual relationship that is implied in it.

#### 4.2.7 Anecdote

From Table 4.1, anecdote is the seventh most frequent humour technique observed in the corpus with fifteen (15) instances or 4.59% from the total humour techniques. Anecdote is an amusing short story portraying real or fake incident or character and is often presented to make audience laugh (Cuddon, 1992). Hay (1995) explains that an anecdote is a funny story related to the experience or actions of the speaker, a mutual acquaintance, or other people.

Example 7 below highlights an amusing anecdotal situation. The theme for the day was ‘Your friend has made a mistake towards you and you’re not willing to let it go’. Prior to the conversation below, RH2 told the listeners that the radio show producer, \*R, threw away RH2’s breakfast, *nasi lemak* that he had eaten half way and had to stop to go to the studio for a discussion for a while. When RH2 came back to continue eating, he noticed his breakfast had gone and was still upset with the producer for throwing his breakfast although a day had passed.

### Example 7

- L44 RH1: now that's not the story, not not not that that he threw it away,  
L45 it's that the whole day until today, RH2 is still, y'know not not letting it go.  
L46 RH2: of course I'm not gonna let it go dude!  
L47 **I'm scared to leave anything around him.** [anecdote]  
L48 **if I put my jacket on the floor he might throw that away too.** [anecdote]  
L49 RH1: ((laughs))  
L50 RH2: **y'know yesterday I left a bottle of water**  
L51 **and I wanted to go to the bathroom, I was scared for its life.** [anecdote]  
L52 RH1: alright alright alright.  
L53 RH2: **y'know \*R the producer might throw it away.** [anecdote]

18/01/12

RH2 provided an amusing anecdote, or a personal story when he said he was scared to leave anything, even his jacket because the producer could throw it away (L47-L48). He still held grudges against \*R, the producer when he said his jacket may suffer the same consequence as his breakfast, and might be thrown away by \*R too, if it is left on the floor unattended. Here, he exaggerated to what had happened to him yesterday after his breakfast was thrown away. He mentioned that he was scared to leave a bottle of water unattended to go to the bathroom, in fear that \*R might throw it away too. The anecdote humour technique is used by RH2 to tell the audience what had happened to previously in regard to his breakfast and he did it in a funny way with the use of exaggeration in his story (L47,48, 50, 51 & 53).

#### 4.2.8 Ignorance

Ignorance, according to Table 4.1, is observed eight (8) times or 2.45% from the total humour techniques in the corpus. With this type of humour, the audience laugh at the ignorant, the stupid, or the fools, because as Hobbes claimed, we feel superior to

them and their stupidity, or foolishness. In other words, it gives us pleasure witnessing the absurdity of others.

Example 8 shows instances where ignorance humour technique took place in the corpus. The daily topic was ‘The worst excuse to break-up with someone’. RH1 and RH2 were going through the top three excuses which will land the listeners in hospital if they use them to break up with their girlfriend. Both of them did the third and second excuse together. The first or the top excuse was revealed in the situation below.

<b>Example 8</b>		
L223	RH1:	I I I finally realize that I'm more in love with your sister than you...
L224		((silence)) ((laughs))
L225	RH2:	<b>I'm back.</b> [ignorance]
L226		<b>what did I miss?</b> [ignorance]
L227	RH1:	((laughs))
L228	RH2:	<b>what did you say?</b> [ignorance]
L229	RH1:	((laughs))
L230		I will get you.
L231	RH2:	<b>I went away.</b> [ignorance]
L232	RH1:	hospital?
L233	RH2:	<b>I wasn't listening.</b> [ignorance]
L234	RH1:	hospital?
L235	RH2:	<b>yeah yeah I wasn't listening.</b> [ignorance]
L236	RH1:	((laughs))
L237	RH2:	<b>I wasn't listening at all.</b> [ignorance]
L238	RH1:	((laughs))
L239	RH2:	guess what?
L240	RH1:	((laughs))
L241		what?
L242	RH2:	<i>saya tak terbabit dalam kes ini.</i> [ignorance] [I'm not involved in this.]
L243	RH1:	oh
L244		((laughs))

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Both of them were supposed to reveal the top excuse together. However, when RH1 disclosed the excuse, RH2 suddenly went quiet indicating to the audience that he was not there. The radio listeners knew that RH2 was pretending to be a fool and not know what had happened (L225, L226 & 228). The listeners would find this amusing as RH2 was doing his best to appear to be stupid. He then went on to emphasise his

absence when RH1 mentioned the top excuse (L231, L233, L235 & L237). This, in turn, would amuse the listeners even more because of its absurdity.

#### 4.2.9 Exaggeration

From Table 4.1, it can be seen that exaggeration was observed seven (7) times in the corpus, or 2.14% of the overall humour techniques. Exaggeration, or hyperbole, is an extravagant statement or figure of speech, which is not supposed to be taken literally. Berger (1933) claims that exaggeration by itself is not generally funny, and needs to be associated to something else to elicit a comical effect. Some experts regard exaggeration to be a universal comic tool (Draitser, 1994). Eastman (2008) states that the easiest way to make people laugh is to exaggerate till it becomes absurd.

An illustration of exaggeration is provided in Example 9. The topic for the day was ‘Would you hook up again with your ex-boyfriend?’. RH1 and RH2 were introducing the topic of the day by giving a scenario of how a boyfriend would not want his girlfriend to meet her ex-boyfriend.

#### Example 9

L1	RH1:	alright a lot of guys y’know	
L2		when you’re going out with your girl	
L3		you tend to think ah I don’t want her to go meet her ex.	
L4		why? we’ve got the main reason why you	
L5		((chuckles))	
L6		shouldn’t let them go visit.	
L7	RH2:	no. ever.	
L8	RH1:	big reason here.	
L9	RH2:	please, alright.	
L10	RH1:	stats. statistics.	
L11	RH2:	<b>we went out of our way.</b>	<b>[exaggeration]</b>
L12	RH1:	<b>crazy.</b>	<b>[exaggeration]</b>
L13	RH2:	<b>you need a calculator to understand this okay.</b>	<b>[exaggeration]</b>

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The two of them were telling the male listeners not to let their girlfriend meet the ex-boyfriend because of one “big reason” (L8). RH2 added saying “we went out of our way” (L11) indicating they went through massive trouble when in actual fact they got the statistics from a female magazine given by their producer. Here, they exaggerated their effort when in actual fact they did not do much to obtain the information. RH1 continued with “crazy” (L12), while RH2 told the listeners “you’ll need a calculator to understand this” (L13). These two utterances clearly exaggerate what would follow as the information revealed later was neither bizarre nor mathematically complicated for someone to comprehend it.

#### **4.2.10 Sarcasm**

Table 4.1 shows sarcasm humour technique was found six (6) times, or 1.83% of the total humour techniques in the selected six radio episodes. Sarcasm represents a sharp or bitter remark intending to offend the listener (Bousfield, 2007). Generally, this humour technique happens when the intended meaning is different than the sentence meaning. Besides, sarcasm involves a comprehension on the listener’s part to identify the insulting remark uttered by the speaker within the context. The identification of sarcasm delivered in English can be aided by prosodic cues (e.g. by speaking more slowly and with lower pitch, or using a sarcastic tone), or kinesics cues (e.g. by rolling the eyes) (Boxer, 2002).

Example 10 below gives an example of sarcasm. ‘What’s the most ridiculous thing you’ve done for someone on Valentine’s Day?’ and ‘Valentine’s Day’s story that bonged’ were the topics in the radio episode. A caller named \*T shared her story on Valentine’s Day. She adored a particular man who eventually emailed her and they started talking to each other. In the end, they decided to meet but to her astonishment,

the person who came to see her was his younger brother instead. It turned out that the younger brother found out \*T liked his older brother. So since he liked \*T, he decided to impersonate his older brother to woo her.

#### Example 10

L322 RH2: oh! I suppose it doesn't matter.  
L323 y'know what, as long as you're happy.  
L324 C3: it's embarrassing!  
L325 RH1: yeah then it's okay. it's it's okay. y'all is good y'all is good.  
L326 RH2: **but mentioning it on radio is not /embarrassing at all:/** [sarcasm]  
L327 RH1: /shoosh!/  
L328 C3: ((laughs))

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\*T went on to say that it was embarrassing for her when she found out she was pouring her heart out to the younger brother of the man she adored. Then RH2 went on to make a sarcastic remark that mentioning it on radio however was not embarrassing at all (L326) although the countless number of listeners were listening to this confession. He used a sarcastic tone by speaking slowly in a lower pitch when saying this. The sarcasm perhaps was intended by RH2 to insult and offend \*T.

#### 4.2.11 Fantasy

According to Table 4.1, there are four (4) fantasy humour exchanges, or 1.22% of the total humour technique found in the corpus. Hay (1995) defines fantasy as a humour technique deriving from the construction of humorous imaginary scenarios. This is often a collaboration between the participants of the conversation, but can also be done by the speaker alone.





#### 4.2.12 Wordplay

In Table 4.1, there are four (4) exchanges, or 1.22% of wordplay humour technique. Wordplay is produced by cleverly manipulating the different meanings or ambiguities of a word in an amusing way (Hay, 1995). A pun is the most common wordplay which involves intentional use of homophonic (words with same sounds, such as *bear* and *bare*), homographic (words with same spellings, such as *bank* which can mean either a financial institution or a river bank), metonymic (words used to represent a thing/concept, for example, *Hollywood* is used to symbolise motion picture industry in the United States), or metaphorical language (words used to express something which is not literally related, for example, *the light of my life*) (Pollack, 2011).

Example 12 presents a wordplay humour technique. The daily topic was ‘What’s the absolute worst excuse you’ve been given for being dumped?’ or ‘What’s the absolute worst excuse you’ve given to break with someone?’. A male caller called to share excuses he had given and received. Prior to the conversation in the extract below, he admitted he had used the excuse that he needed to study for a national examination, Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) examination, during the exam year several repeatedly. After that, the listener continued saying he was dumped for not calling his girlfriend then for three days. The actual reason was the girl already had a boyfriend.

##### Example 12

- |      |      |   |
|------|------|---|
| L145 | C2:  | I was I was dumped, for not calling for three days. |
| L146 | RH2: | oh?   |
| L147 | RH1: | wow.  |
| L148 | RH2: | wow! like karma.                                    |
| L149 | C2:  | that was the reason.                                |
| L150 |      | and I felt so bad I felt like,                      |
| L151 |      | oh I really did so was it was it so bad or so evil? |
| L152 | RH2: | yeah.   |
| L153 | C2:  | for not calling three days.                         |
| L154 | RH2: | dude y’know what?                                   |

L155	C2:	actually she already had a boyfriend.	
L156	RH1:	ah!	
L157		/((laughs))/	
L158	RH2:	/oh!/ <b>bro, it could be, karma a dish served with er,</b>	[wordplay]
L160	RH1:	<b>rice.</b>	[wordplay]
L161	RH2:	<b>rice yes that's the one.</b>	[wordplay]
L162	RH1:	yes.	
L163	RH2	((laugh))	
	&RH1:		
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In the excerpt above, RH2 tried to provide a reason, which was “karma” (L148) for what had happened to the listener since he had dumped several girls before. RH2 started playing with the word “karma” (L159) as it has a similar sound (homophonic) to *korma*, an Indian dish, when he said, “bro, it could be, karma a dish served with er” (L159). RH1 joined in the wordplay when he added “rice” (L160). Then, RH2 accepted the contribution by RH1 by affirming the word “rice” (L161). It can be seen here that the sound of the word “karma” is cleverly played by mentioning rice, hinting that “karma” could be a *korma* dish. The play on words and wittingly connecting ideas here is very amusing.

#### 4.2.13 Irony

Irony, according to Table 4.1, is observed three (3) times or 0.92% from the total of humour techniques in the selected six episodes. Irony is when one says the opposite of what they mean, or says something different than what they mean (Haverkate 1990). Berger (1993) claims humour in irony derives from the gap existing from what is said and what is meant.

RH2 was reminiscing his past in Example 13 below. The discussion was about the excuse RH2 gave to his girlfriend when he wanted to end their relationship. He told her that he needed to break up with her because he needed space to grow up.

**Example 13**

L68	RH2:	yeah and she was upset.	
L69	RH1:	((laughs))	
L70	RH2:	it was true.	
L71		I need to grow up.	
L72		I'm sorry (.) about that.	
L73		y'know but yeah.	
L74	RH1:	yeah.	
L75	RH2:	<b>thanks for bringing up a sore spot=</b>	<b>[irony]</b>
L76	RH1:	=I'm just saying.	
L77	RH2:	this always makes me look like a bad guy in this.	

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From the conversation between RH2 and RH1, it seems that he was not pleased to be reminded of this incident. RH2 then “thanked” RH1 “for bringing up a sore spot” (L75). On the surface level, it seemed that RH2 was thanking RH1, when in fact he was not grateful at all since he was reminded of a bad personal experience.

**4.2.14 Repartee**

From Table 4.1, there were three (3) occasions of repartee, or 0.92% of the overall humour types. Berger (1993) defines repartee as a form of verbal sparring that rebuts aggression with aggression. He adds that the motive of repartee is to counter an insult with a much better insult. Timing is important because the comeback or repartee must be made immediately, suggesting that repartee is closely connected with wit (rapid construction and delivery of jokes). Audience finds repartee amusing because they

could see the initial attacker's ego being squashed down by the supposedly victim (Berger, 1993). This is one of the humour techniques which may be considered competitive since the last person who is able to make a witty remark is considered the 'winner' of the verbal sparring.

Example 14 below highlights a repartee technique by RH1 and RH2. Prior to the conversation below, a listener called in to share his experience being dumped by his girlfriend. Both RH1 and RH2 found it hilarious and could not help themselves from laughing after listening to the caller's story. The following excerpt is after the listener hung up.

<b>Example 14</b>			
L544	RH2:	you always do that to me.	
L545		the poor guy probably thinks that RH2 I called up,	
L546		told them my sad story and starts laughing at me.	
L547	RH1:	<b>that's what he does</b>	[repartee]
L548	RH2:	<b>hey! I'm laughing at you</b>	[repartee]
L549		<b>you're a fun thing to look at</b>	[repartee]
L550		give us a call now #.	
L551		give me one last chance to tell us.	
L552		what's the worst excuse you've ever heard	
L553		for breaking up with someone alright?	
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In the above example, RH2 claimed that RH1 always made him appear as if he was laughing at the callers' sad stories. In actual fact, he was laughing at RH1, who, in his opinion, tend to show funny reactions to stories by the callers. Then, RH1 ridiculed RH2 by saying that was exactly what RH2 would do – laughing at the listener's sad experience (L547). He mocked back at RH1 by clarifying that he was actually laughing at whom he considered "a funny thing to look at" (L548-549). Here, RH2 is considered a winner because he is the one who came back with the last witty remark.

### 4.3 Linguistic Characteristics of Verbal Humour

This section illustrates the findings from the Content Analysis on the corpus of the six radio episodes for the linguistic characteristics of verbal humour observed in the conversations of the two male hosts. It will list and discuss the classes of verbal humour linguistic characteristics found in the interactions of RH1 and RH2 with each other and also with the general listeners of the radio show.

Table 4.2 shows the categories and overall frequency for the linguistic characteristics of verbal humour found in the corpus.

**Table 4.2: Frequency for Linguistic Characteristics of Verbal Humour**

No.	Linguistic Characteristics	f	%
1.	Human-Centred Vocabulary	483	72.85
2.	Negative Orientation	71	10.71
3.	Human Weakness	58	8.75
4.	Negation	51	7.69
5.	Professional Communities	0	0.00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>663</b>	<b>100.00</b>

There are four (4) divisions of linguistic characteristics of verbal humour found in the selected radio episodes, namely *human-centred vocabulary*, *negation*, *negative orientation*, and *human weakness*. *Human centre vocabulary* tops the list of the linguistic characteristics with four hundred and eighty three (483) instances or 72.85%. *Negative orientation* is the second highest linguistic characteristics with seventy one (71) times or 10.71%, followed by *human weakness* with fifty eight (58) instances or 8.75%. *Negation* comes in at fourth place with fifty one (51) times or 7.69%. *Professional communities* linguistic characteristics were not observed at all in the corpus.

### 4.3.1 Human-Centred Vocabulary

In Table 4.2, human centred vocabulary has the highest frequency with four hundred and eighty three (483) instances, or 72.85% of the total linguistic features of verbal humour observed in the corpus. The human-centred vocabulary of humorous texts corresponds with human-related scenes and refers to the use of these four semantic classes: *persons* (e.g. someone, human, soul), *social groups* (e.g. mosque, university, council), *social relations* (e.g. wife, father, daughter) and *personal pronouns* (e.g. I, you, they) (Mihalcea & Pulman, 2007).

Table 4.3 illustrates the human centric vocabulary found under the four semantic classes and examples of sentences present in the corpus.

**Table 4.3: Human-Centred Vocabulary**

No.	Human Centred Vocabulary	Words	Sentences
1.	Persons	RH1, RH2, Don Juan, *J SM, *N, *S, *R, *RR, *F girl, girls, guy, guys, man, dude, bro, people crew, fan, fella, king, producer someone, anyone	the poor <b>guy</b> gets thrown into the rubbish bin.  you deserve <b>someone</b> much better than me.  he's such a sensitive <b>fella</b> .
2.	Social Groups	football, game, team, relationship, bromance	we're the <b>bromance</b> of the century.
3.	Social Relations	friends, best friend, boyfriend, ex-boyfriends, ex, girlfriend, ex-girlfriend, Valentine, date, dates family, father, mum, sister, daughter, wife, aunty	wow, your <b>wife</b> caught you there, bro!  have you got a <b>date</b> this year, by the way?  you should have bought the <b>mum</b> a flower.
4.	Personal Pronouns	I, we, you, saya [I] he, she, it, me, him, us	no <b>I</b> 'm gonna hook <b>you</b> up with someone who <b>I</b> think is good for <b>you</b> .

Many words related to persons, social relations, and personal pronouns are found in the interactions between the two male hosts and the general audience of the radio

show. This may be because the hosts were interacting with the listeners on the topics of relationship, which involves people and social relations. However, very few social group related words were observed in their conversations. Freud (1905/1960) stated that we laugh at ourselves and others with humour and this is reflected in the use of nouns representing human beings found in the humorous exchanges in the radio episodes.

### 4.3.2 Negative Orientation

Negative orientation, according to Table 4.2, is the second highest with seventy one (71) times, or 10.71% of the total linguistic features of verbal humour observed in the corpus. Negative orientation refers to words such as nouns with a negative load (e.g. *error, mistake, failure*), or adjectives with negative connotations (e.g. *bad, illegal, wrong*) (Mihalcea & Strapparava, 2005).

Table 4.4 lists the words related to negative orientation and the sentences with these words present in the six selected radio episodes.

**Table 4.4: Negative Orientation**

No.	Negative Orientation	Words	Sentences
1.	Nouns	fault, mistakes, excuses, bohong [lie], noise, trouble, sampah [rubbish], rubbish, nothing.	even when it's not my <b>fault</b> , it looks like it is, y'know what I mean?  now he's full of <b>sampah</b> [rubbish].
2.	Adjectives	calculative, cheap (i.e. calculative), kedekut [stingy], cheapskate, expensive, wasted, scary, bad, worse, evil, scared, stupid, fearful, tearful, confused, upset, lazy, malas [lazy], insecure, quiet, jealous, guilty, wrong, poor, weird, funny (i.e. strange), opposite, lame, awkward, embarrassing, dangerous, weird, busy.	we're not <b>calculative</b> because we <b>malas</b> [lazy].  he ask for small change <i>pun</i> wanna be <b>kedekut</b> [stingy], <i>tengok lah</i> .  I think maybe it's good you didn't hear what I said. <b>scared</b> also at the end of the day.

Many nouns and adjectives with negative connotations were present in the conversations between the two male hosts and the general audience of the radio show.

### 4.3.3 Human Weakness

It can be seen from Table 4.2 that linguistic features of verbal humour related to human weakness were present fifty eight (58) times, or 8.75% of the overall linguistic features. Michalcea and Strapparava (2005) claim that humour often uses words indicating human “weakness”, including nouns such as *ignorance, stupidity, trouble, beer, alcohol* or verbs such as *quit, steal, lie, drink*.

Table 4.5 tabulates the types of vocabulary concerning human weakness and the sentences containing these words found in the data.

**Table 4.5: Human Weakness**

No.	Human Weakness	Examples	Sentences
1.	Nouns	stupidity, the Grinch.	you should ask him what’s the difference between <b>stupidity</b> and ...
2.	Verbs	discriminate, blame, boasts, hate, assume, slap, scare, lose, cry, forget, skip, leave, break up, broke up, caught, ruined, skipping, forcing.	he who <b>boasts</b> will <b>lose</b> ey then the father <b>slap</b> you you <b>ruined</b> my song bro

Several nouns and verbs referring to human weakness were found in the interactions between the two male radio announcers and the listeners of the show.



#### 4.3.4 Negation

Table 4.2 shows that there were fifty one (51) instances of negation, or 7.69% of the total linguistic features of verbal humour found in the interaction of the two male hosts in the six selected radio episodes. Negation or negative forms includes words like *doesn't*, *isn't*, and *don't*. Table 4.6 illustrates the negation present in the corpus.

**Table 4.6: Negation**

No.	Negation	Examples	Sentences
1.	Negative Forms	'm not, is not, 's not, tak [am not], 're not, wasn't, don't, didn't, won't, haven't, cannot	you should ask him what's the difference between <b>stupidity</b> and ...

The following are the negations observed in the corpus: “ 'm not (am not), is not/'s not, *tak* [am not], 're not (are not), wasn't, don't, didn't, won't, haven't, and cannot/can't”.

#### 4.4 Functions of Humour

This section presents the findings on the functions of humour found in the interactions of the two male hosts from the six recorded episodes. Four (4) humour functions were observed in the conversations of the two radio hosts with each other and also with the general listeners and callers.

Table 4.7 presents the categories of humour functions and the overall frequency of humour functions found in the corpus.

**Table 4.7: Frequency for Humour Functions**

No.	Functions	f	%
1.	General	105	32.11
2.	Solidarity	88	26.91
3.	Power	87	26.60
4.	Psychological	47	14.37
	<b>Total</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>99.99</b>

Table 4.7 shows the *General* function of humour tops the list of the humour functions (n=105, 32.11%). This is followed by *Solidarity* (n=88, 26.91%), and *Power* (n=87, 26.60%) as the top three functions in the present study's corpus.

#### **4.4.1 General**

Hay's (1995) Functions of Humour Taxonomy views every humour attempt as a gesture of establishing solidarity with the audience and to create a position of status and in-group respect. In addition, Tannen (1993:167) states that every successful attempt at humour not only elevates the status of the speaker, but also maintains the sense of belonging in the group. In terms of gender, men are prone to use humour primarily for the purpose of impressing, appearing funny, or creating a positive personal identity. This highly corresponds with the general functions of using humour. Interestingly, men tend to increasingly do this when they are in the presence of women.

Example 15 below is an illustration of humour serving general function. \*S, a listener, called to share his disastrous Valentine's Day story. He had a crush on a girl and finally had the courage to ask her out. They went on a date to a restaurant on Valentine's Day and sitting next to their table were the girl's parents. He felt all the effort he had put to impress the girl had been wasted since he had to respect the parents and felt it was inappropriate to sweep the girl off her feet with her parents present. The

excerpt below is after \*S told RH1 and RH2 that the girl's parents were sitting next to their table.

**Example 15**

L393 C4: but ya, y'know so like everything like down the drain lah.  
L394 RH1: habis!  
[gone]  
L395 RH2: that is so awkward.  
L396 C4: mesti la hormat the parents kan.  
[have to respect the parents, right.]  
L397 RH1: ah betul.  
[ah correct]  
L398 RH2: **you should have bought the mum a flower.** [general]  
L399 RH1: ((laughs))  
L400 RH2: **hi aunty, I can see where your daughter gets her looks from.** [general]  
L401 RH1: **ey then the father slap you.** [general]  
L402 C4: ((laughs))  
L403 RH2: **and then you say I can see where she gets her strength from.** [general]  
L404 C4: ((laughs))  
L405 RH1: ((laughs))  
L406 okay k. bro, next time plan harder.  
L407 go to a different state or something like that.

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Listening to \*S's story, RH2 suggested he should have bought the mother a flower and complimented her on her beauty (L398 & L400). RH1 then added that the father would slap \*S (L401), which RH2 replied that \*S could say that he was able to see where the girl got her strength from (L403). Men tend to use humour to elevate their status and gain respect from the audience (Tannen, 1993). The humour here basically serves the purpose of elevating both RH2 and RH1's status since RH1 laughed at RH2's funny remarks, and \*S laughed at both RH1 and RH2's witty observations of his personal experience. Presumably, the listening audience on the airwaves found it funny too and consequently, the two hosts would gain respect from them.

## 4.5 Solidarity

Table 4.8 below lists the result based on the divisions of solidarity function of humour. There are four categories of solidarity based strategies found in the interaction of the two male hosts, namely *to share*, *to tease*, *to highlight similarities or capitalise on shared experiences*, and lastly, *to clarify and maintain boundaries*. Both *Solidarity* and *Power* have *to tease* and *to set boundaries* strategies. Hence, for *Solidarity*, it will be labelled as ‘tease (S)’ for *to tease* strategy, and ‘bound (S)’ for *to clarify and maintain boundaries* strategy. Hay (1995) claims that many humorous remarks serve the purpose of establishing solidarity between the group members.

**Table 4.8: Frequency for Solidarity-Based Strategies**

No.	Solidarity Strategies	f	%
1.	Share	43	48.86
2.	Tease (S)	34	38.64
3.	Highlight/Capitalise	8	9.09
4.	Bound (S)	3	3.41
	<b>Total</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>100.00</b>

The most frequent strategy found is to share (n=43), followed by to teaseS (n=34), to highlight similarities or capitalise on shared experiences (n=8), and lastly, to clarify and maintain boundaries (n=3). The following sections present an example for each solidarity-based strategy.

### 4.5.1 To share

Table 4.8 shows that *to share* has the highest frequency with forty three (43) or 48.86% of the overall solidarity strategies. A speaker usually *shares* humorous personal stories or anecdotes, hence enabling the listener to know them better, and eventually affects solidarity positively. Sharing very personal or sensitive information signifies the

speaker's trust of the listener, which consequently reinforces the sense of belonging within the group.

Example 16 illustrates the strategy of sharing. \*D called to share her view on women being the cheapskate. She claimed that girls would count every cent when buying things and retrieving loans from friends; whereas the men would simply round the number off and not bothered by the excess.

<b>Example 16</b>	
L438	RH1: they're very calculative.
L439	RH2: yea.
L440	RH1: yea yea.
L441	C7: ya very calculate.
L442	even when they're paying debt
L443	they're like you owe me thirty two ringgit and fifteen cents
L444	whereas guys are you owe me thirty bucks.
L445	RH1: ah simple. we round things off.
L446	RH2: <b>/yeah because/</b>
L447	C7: /exactly!/ [share]
L448	RH2: <b>we're stupid.</b>
L449	RH1 & RH2: ((laugh))
L450	<b>we're too lazy.</b> [share]
L451	RH2: <b>we're not calculative because we <i>malas</i>.</b> [lazy] [share]
L452	RH1: yea yea. but ya!
L453	but see thank you for pointing that out.

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RH2 shared the reason why men did this with \*D. Above, both RH2 and RH1 gave three possible reasons – “because we’re stupid” (L446 & L448), “we’re too lazy” (L450), and “we’re not calculative because we *malas* [lazy]” (L451). They are trying to establish solidarity with the female listener, \*D, by agreeing that women tend to be more calculative compared to men. Here, both male hosts shared with \*D their story of why they round the numbers off. They stated that it is because they were stupid and lazy. They are establishing solidarity with the listener by agreeing and providing the reasons.

#### 4.5.2 To tease (S)

*To tease (S)* strategy has the second highest frequency with thirty four (34) times or 38.64% of the total solidarity strategies. Teasing, according to Radcliffe-Brown (1952), can strengthen the sense of belonging within a “Joking Relationship”. People often insult and tease each other in such a relationship and this functions as a strategy for establishing solidarity.

Example 17 highlights an instance where an insult or a tease is used to express solidarity. \*M called to share her Valentine’s Day mishap that happened several years ago. She wanted to surprise her boyfriend who was studying in Sydney, Australia, on Valentine’s Day. However, when she reached Sydney, her boyfriend was not there. Instead, he was in Kuala Lumpur, wanting to surprise her too. They both ended up spending their Valentine’s Day on Skype, talking to each other via video call, as discussed below.

##### Example 17

- L249 C2: we celebrated Valentine’s Day on Skype then.  
L250 RH1: /would have been cheaper if you just did it on Skype/  
L251 RH2: /*eee teruknya!* yeah you should have just/  
[/*eee* that’s awful!]  
L252 RH1: ya that’s why.  
L253 RH2: but you guys were in opposite lands so you  
L254 ((laughs))  
L255 C2: yes we were! so that was kind of hilarious la actually.  
L256 RH2: *alamak*.  
[oh dear.]  
L257 C2: so moral of the story, *kalau nak surprise*, please do your your homework.  
[if you want to surprise someone]  
L258 RH2: yes exactly. **thank you for sharing that with us, that’s brave.** [tease (S)]  
L259 **the most expensive Skype session of all time time time.** [tease (S)]  
L260 RH1: ((laughs))  
L261 RH2: ((chuckles))

14/02/12

RH2 thanked \*M by saying “thank you for sharing that with us, that’s brave” (L258). He actually was teasing \*M for being brave to share her embarrassing moment on the airwaves. Later, RH2 added “the most expensive Skype session of all time time time” (L259), imitating an echo, just to add salt to the wound. Here, teasing is done good-naturedly, and is considered as a basis for establishing solidarity with the listener.

### 4.5.3 To highlight similarities or capitalise on shared experiences

*To highlight similarities or capitalise on shared experiences* strategy was observed eight (8) times, or 9.09% of the total solidarity strategies. Ziv (1984) mentions sharing one’s similarities with others as one of the functions of humour. When speakers use humour to achieve this, they recognise shared ideas, shared interests and other similarities between speakers (Hay, 1995). Consequently, it strengthens the bond of solidarity.

Example 18 includes humour which refers to a similarity between a listener and RH2. The two hosts asked the listeners to share their opinion on who is the bigger cheapskate: men or women. A listener, \*AK posted on Facebook claiming that men were the bigger cheapskate because they would pay for everything in front of the women, only to complain later that the women made them pay for everything.

#### Example 18

L411	RH1:	*AK says er guys because they pretend to be gentlemen,	
L412		pay in front of the girls like, don’t worry I pay for everything.	
L413		then when behind the back, dude she made me pay for everything.	
L414	RH2:	((laughs))	
L415	RH1:	((laughs))	
L416	RH2:	that’s true in some cases.	
L417	RH1:	yea	
L418	RH2:	<b>I’m I’m guilty of doing that myself alright.</b>	<b>[highlight similarities]</b>
L419	RH1:	((laughs))	
L420	RH2:	okay.	
L421		((chuckles))	

05/03/12

RH2 highlighted a similar personal trait when he revealed, “I’m I’m guilty of doing that myself alright” (L418). RH2 confessed he was one of those men who would pay for everything in front of the women in order to impress them but would complain later. Here, RH2 self-deprecated and recognised a similarity between him and the men \*AK described. Thus, he shared his story on air to bond with RH1 and the general listeners to the radio show.

#### 4.5.4 To clarify and maintain boundaries

Table 4.8 shows that *to clarify and maintain boundaries* strategy was recorded three (3) times or 3.41% of the total solidarity strategies. Hay (1995) argues humour may be used to clarify norms and values, and form the boundaries of acceptability. It also determines who belongs in which group (Hay, 1995). Poking fun at outsiders functions as a boundary marker where it singles out the outsiders while simultaneously, reinforces the solidarity within the group members (Hay, 1995).

Example 19 highlights an instance where both RH1 and RH2 were making fun of the caller’s pronunciation. \*S called to share his experience planning a perfect evening on Valentine’s Day. He told the two hosts that he put so much effort into it like how Don Juan, a legendary fictional character who is a seductive womaniser, would do.

The pronunciation is given in brackets (i.e. [pronunciation]) in the example below.

#### Example 19

L358	C4:	so, I’ve been eyeing this girl forever,
L359	RH1:	okay.
L360	C4:	erm, and finally had the guts to ask her out and it was on Valentine’s.
L361		so, I everything was perfect. I I had the restaurant er reservation ready,
L362	RH1:	wah seh.
L363	C4:	I had everything.
L364	RH1:	wah seh. [wow]
L365	C4:	(inaudible) y’know the Don Juan // dʒuʌn // thing.



L366	RH1 &RH2: ((laugh))	
L367	RH1: <b>Don Juan</b> // dʒuʌn // !	[maintain boundaries]
L368	RH2: <b>Don Juan</b> // dʒuʌn //	[maintain boundaries]
L369	((laughs))	
L370	RH1: Don Juan // wan //	

14/02/12

However, instead of pronouncing Don Juan (pronounced as Don Wan) correctly, \*S pronounced it according to its spelling, which was wrong. Both RH2 and RH1 ended up laughing loudly, poking fun at \*S’s inability to say it accurately. Here, they both agree that \*S was not a member of their group, and that he has some unfavourable characteristics. So, this humour strategy reinforces the solidarity between RH1 and RH2 by singling out \*S.

#### 4.6 Power

The following table outlines the power strategies of humour. Humour may serve as a platform for one to assert their power (Hay, 1995). There are four categories of power based strategies found in the interaction of the two male hosts, which are *to foster conflict*, *to tease*, *to control*, and lastly, *to challenge and set boundaries*. For power-based strategies *to tease* and *to challenge and set boundaries*, they will be labelled as ‘Tease (P)’ and ‘Bound (P)’.

**Table 4.9: Frequency for Power-Based Strategies**

No.	Power Strategies	f	%
1.	Conflict	43	49.43
2.	Tease (P)	22	25.29
3.	Control	12	13.79
4.	Bound (P)	10	11.49
	<b>Total</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>100.00</b>

The most frequent strategy found is to foster conflict (n=43), followed by to tease (n=22), to control (n=12), and lastly, to challenge and set boundaries (power) (n=10). The following sections present an example for each power-based strategy.

#### 4.6.1 To foster conflict

Table 4.9 shows that *to foster conflict* has the highest frequency with forty three (43) or 49.43% of the overall power strategies. In his model of the social functions of humour, Martineau (1972) describes *fostering conflict* as one of the functions that humour serves. The strategy may be purposely used to demean a listener, or relay a provocative message by introducing a conflict within the group and is rarely used between close friends.

This strategy can be seen in Example 20. The topic of the day was whether guys or girls are a bigger cheapskate. A caller named \*L called and stated her opinion that guys are a bigger cheapskate using her husband as an example.

<b>Example 20</b>		
L118	C2:	er I think guys are the bigger cheapskate.
L119	RH1:	why?
L120	C2:	okay like for example my hubby,
L121	RH1:	uhuh.
L122	C2:	alright, every time we go out for (inaudible),
L123		he will always say, do you have small change ah?
L124		I don't have y'know,
L125		I only have all fifty ringgit and hundred ringgit, all big notes.
L126	RH2:	<b>because he has to spend the big money on you!</b> [conflict]
L127		<b>he ask for small change <i>pun wanna be kedekut tengok lah.</i></b> [conflict] [and you're just being stingy, see!]
L128	C2:	((laughs))
L129		he always does that!
L130		so I feel that all guys are cheapskate.
05/03/12		

RH2 responded to \*L by replying, “because he has to spend the big money on you!” (L126) and, “he ask for small change *pun wanna be kedekut tengok lah*” [and you’re just being stingy, see!] (L127). Here, RH2 tried to assert his power by fostering a conflict by demeaning \*L as being stingy when her husband asked for small change, and that she was being calculative with her money, not wanting to foot the bill.

#### 4.6.2 To tease (P)

In Table 4.9, it can be seen that *to tease* is the second highest for power based strategy with twenty two (22) times, or 25.29% of the total power strategies. Besides in solidarity, teasing is also present in power. Teasing for the function of power is different compared to teasing for solidarity. It is because the former makes personal attacks, or genuine criticism in order to elevate or maintain the power of the speaker (Hay, 1995).

Example 21 shows an instance of teasing for power. RH2 was telling the listeners that he could be very sensitive when it involved food.

<b>Example 21</b>		
L149	RH2	I I can be very sensitive when it comes to certain things okay. certain things.
L150		/with food/
L151	RH1:	/most things/
L152	RH2:	with food.
L153	RH1:	most things.
L154	RH2:	<b>shhh! you don’t get to speak goatee.</b> [tease (P)]
L155	RH1:	okay kay.
18/01/12		

Listening to RH2 saying that he was only emotional when food was involved, RH1 corrected him by saying RH2 was sensitive with most things (L151). RH2 then insisted that he was not emotional with most things, but only with food (L152). RH1 kept on

saying most things (L153), and RH2 retorted with “shhh! you don’t get to speak goatee” (L154). RH2 teased RH1 who had a goatee by addressing him as *goatee* and instructing him to keep quiet. Here, the teasing exerts RH2’s power over RH1 by attacking and criticising RH1’s facial feature (i.e. his goatee), and commanding him to be silent.

#### 4.6.3 To control

From Table 4.9, it can be seen that *to control* has the third highest frequency with twelve (12) or 13.79% of the total power strategies. This type of strategy intends to influence a listener’s behaviour. In his model of the social functions of humour, Martineau (1972) describes *fostering conflict* as one of the functions that humour serves. The strategy may be purposely used to demean a listener, or relay a provocative message by introducing a conflict within the group and is rarely used between close friends. Hay (1995) explains that this control strategy is usually found in the workplace or hierarchical setting, and seldom happens in groups of friendship.

This strategy is illustrated in Example 22. The following excerpt is a continuation from Example 3 (for pretence humour technique), where RH2 called his ex-girlfriend to find out whether or not she would agree to out on a date with him. It was amusing to find out that on that Friday night which the date was set for, both RH1 and RH2 would not be in Kuala Lumpur since they were scheduled to be in Penang for work. So, RH2 was in trouble since he had to cancel the date he asked for. Example 22 highlights RH2’s effort in trying to get out of the mess.

### Example 22

L219	RH2:	<b>you go call her back and</b>	[control]
L220		<b>/you're gonna apologize/</b>	[control]
L221	RH1:	/what what you mean I?/	
L222	RH2:	<b>on behalf of me</b>	
L223		<b>you say I'm delirious.</b>	[control]
L224	RH1:	no!	
L225	RH2:	alright. anyway you can also contribute on fb dot x dot fm.	
L226		we gonna chat.	

28/02/12

RH2 demanded RH1 to call the ex-girlfriend and apologise on RH2's behalf and tell her that RH2 was delirious (L219, L220, L222 & L223). RH2 was trying to assert power and control over RH1's behaviour by asking him to call RH2's ex-girlfriend and cancel the date by saying RH2 is mentally imbalanced. However, RH1 refused to do so, and this elicited RH2 to want to talk RH1 into it again.

#### 4.6.4 To challenge and set boundaries

To challenge and set boundaries strategy, according to Table 4.9, was observed ten (10) times or 11.49% of the overall power strategies. Like solidarity, *to challenge and set boundaries* is also a strategy related to power. Hay (1995) explains that this strategy test present boundaries, create new ones, or maintain existing boundaries by using someone present as an example.

The strategy is highlighted in Example 23 where RH1 is made an example in maintaining the existing boundaries. Prior to the conversation below, a caller named \*V shared her Valentine's Day story with the hosts and the listeners. Her first love cheated on her with her best friend on Valentine's Day two years ago.

### Example 23

L135	RH2:	we hope that email came from a sweet guy and may you and him,	
L136		forever be together and share wonderful=	
L137	RH1:	=flying off into the sunset. on a white horse.	
L138	RH2:	big big real big white horse.	
L139	RH1:	yeah.	
L140	RH2:	male one.	
L141	RH1:	named Pegasus.	
L142	RH2:	<b>yeah. that's too much.</b>	[bound (P)]
L143	RH1:	((laughs))	
L144		that's too much?	
L145	RH2:	<b>you added too much.</b>	[bound (P)]
L146	RH1:	((laughs))	
L147		sorry sorry.	
L148	RH2:	it was just nice.	
L149	RH1:	alright.	
L150		((laughs))	
L151	RH2:	<b>then you overcooked it.</b>	[bound (P)]
L152	RH1:	((laughs))	
L153		I'm sorry.	

14/02/12

RH1 and RH2 sympathised with \*V and wished her love and happiness. To express this, they used symbolism of riding on a male white horse flying into the sunset (L137, L138 & L140). Then, RH1 added that the horse was “named Pegasus” (L141). RH2 responded with “yeah. that's too much” (L142), “you added too much” (L145), and “then you overcooked it” (L151), suggesting RH1 had gone beyond the boundaries of acceptability when formulating the symbolism.

#### 4.7 Psychological Functions

The subsequent table presents the strategies for psychological function of humour. Hay (1995) claims humour is also used to serve three psychological functions such as *to cope with a situational problem*, *to defend*, and *to cope with a general problem*. However, only two are found in the interaction of the two male hosts, which are *to cope with situational problem*, and *to defend*.

**Table 4.10: Frequency for Psychological-Based Strategies**

No.	Psychological Strategies	f	%
1.	Cope- Situational	29	61.70
2.	Defend	18	38.30
3.	Cope - General	0	0.00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>100.00</b>

The most frequent strategy found is to cope with situational problem (n=29), followed by to defend (n=18), and to cope with general problem was not present in the hosts' interaction. The following sections present a detailed discussion and an example for each psychological based strategy.

#### **4.7.1 To cope with a situational problem**

From Table 4.10, it can be seen that *to cope with situational problem* has the highest frequency with twenty six (29) times, or 61.70% of the overall psychological strategies. Various researchers (Fink & Walker, 1977; Ziv, 1984; Pogrebin & Poole, 1988) have observed the coping mechanisms of using humour. Hay (1995) has further divided coping strategy into two categories: *coping with a situational problem* and *coping with a general problem*. Coping with situational problem relates to the use of humour when dealing with a problem (e.g. a social gaffe of tactless remark or addressing someone with a wrong name) which arises during the conversation (Hay, 1995).

This strategy can be seen in Example 24. A caller named \*A called to share her view on who was the bigger cheapskate. She was very adamant in saying that males were the bigger cheapskate when the males insisted on females paying for themselves. However, RH2 managed to manipulate her view, and said that since she wanted the males to pay for her, females were the bigger cheapskates then.

#### Example 24

L230 RH2: so you're admitting to it  
L231 so by admitting to it,  
L232 you're saying that girls are slightly bigger cheapskate  
L233 but, you do it wisely  
L234 girls do it wisely.  
L235 C4: hmm? sorry, I?  
L236 RH2: **I think maybe it's good you didn't hear what I said.** [cope- situational]  
L237 RH1: ((laughs))  
L238 RH2: ((laughs))  
L239 scared also at the end of the day.  
L240 RH1: yeah.

05/03/12

RH2 added that the women cleverly manipulated the men to get the men to pay for their expenses when going out. The above example illustrates that RH2 used humour to cope with the situation when he was asked to repeat what he just said. He diffused the tension by stating that it was good that \*A, the caller, did not hear him accusing the girls to be a bigger cheapskate by wisely manipulating the men to pay for their meals and so on (L236).

#### 4.7.2 To defend

*To defend*, according to Table 4.10, has the second highest frequency with seventeen (18) times or 38.30% of the total psychological based strategies. Defending is when someone protects themselves by identifying a weakness before someone else does (Ziv, 1984; Ervin-Tripp & Lampert, 1992). In her taxonomy of humour functions, Hay (1995) categorises humour used to protect oneself (e.g. avoid revealing one's personal information) as *to defend*.

Example 25 below illustrates the strategy. \*S, a listener, posted on Facebook admitting that women were the bigger cheapskate because they had to save up for rainy



days. She added they could help the men who needed financial support in times of difficulties with their savings.

#### Example 25

L263 RH1: \*S says I think girls are the bigger cheapskate  
L264 because for a good reason.  
L265 ah they have the natural instinct to save up money for tough times,  
L266 and when you really need money when it's tough times,  
L267 they have money to help you.  
L268 RH2: /yeah they have money/  
L269 RH1: /but before that/  
L270 RH2: to help themselves you mean.  
L271 RH1: what?  
L272 RH2: I never expect.  
L273 **never mind I don't wanna say I'm scared.** [defend]  
L274 RH1: ((laughs))

05/03/12

RH2 disagreed that women would help men who were in trouble because he felt that the women would only help themselves (L268 & L270). Then he continued saying that he never expected something (L272) but did not want to mention what that something was because he was scared (L273). RH2 defended himself by not revealing his personal opinion perhaps in fear of the negative reaction it might elicit from female listeners.

#### 4.7.3 To cope with a general problem

Table 4.10 shows there are no instances of *to cope with a general problem* strategy observed in the interaction of the two male hosts. This strategy corresponds with using humour to cope with more general problems such as sickness or health (Hay, 1995). The fact that the radio show evolved around daily topical theme might explain why this strategy was not observed in the six selected radio episodes.

## 4.8 Comparison of Hosts

This section compares the humour techniques, humour functions, and verbal humour linguistic characteristics found in RH1 and RH2's speech. Table 4.11 lists the types and frequency of humour techniques found in RH1 and RH2's interaction with each other, the callers to the show and the listeners on air.

### 4.8.1 Techniques of Humour

Table 4.11 highlights the distribution of humour techniques by RH1 and RH2 in the six selected radio episodes.

**Table 4.11: Humour Techniques by RH1 and RH2**

No.	Techniques	RH1		RH2	
		f	%	f	%
1.	Observational	23	7.03	77	23.55
2.	Ridicule	28	8.56	40	12.23
3.	Pretence/Role Play	7	2.14	31	9.48
4.	Comic Lies	0	0	31	9.48
5.	Self-Deprecation	2	0.61	19	5.81
6.	Embarrassment	10	3.06	9	2.75
7.	Anecdote	0	0	15	4.59
8.	Ignorance	0	0	8	2.45
9.	Exaggeration	2	0.61	5	1.53
10.	Sarcasm	4	1.22	2	0.61
11.	Fantasy	1	0.30	3	0.92
12.	Word Play	3	0.92	1	0.30
13.	Irony	1	0.30	2	0.61
14.	Repartee	0	0	3	0.92
	<b>Total</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>24.77</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>75.23</b>

It can be seen from Table 4.11 that the total amount of humour techniques for RH1 is eighty one (81), or 24.77% of the overall humour techniques. His top five humour techniques are ridicule (n=28 or 8.56%), observational (n=23 or 7.03%),

embarrassment (n=10 or 3.06%), pretence (n=7 or 2.14%), and sarcasm (n=4 or 1.22%). However, comic lies, anecdote, ignorance, and repartee were not observed in his speech.

From Table 4.11, it is evident that RH2 used three times more humour techniques than RH1 at two hundred and forty six (246), or 75.23% of the overall total. The five most frequent humour technique found in RH2's speech is observational (n=77 or 23.55%), ridicule (n=40 or 12.23%), comic lies (n=31 or 9.48%), pretence (n=31 or 9.48%), and self-deprecation (n=19 or 5.81%).

#### 4.8.2 Linguistic Characteristics of Verbal Humour

Table 4.12 illustrates the distribution of linguistic characteristics of verbal humour by RH1 and RH2 in the six selected radio episodes.

**Table 4.12: Linguistic Characteristics of Verbal Humour by RH1 and RH2**

No.	Linguistic Characteristics	RH1		RH2	
		f	%	f	%
1.	Human-centred Vocabulary	111	2.48	327	11.18
2.	Negation	14	7.78	37	20.56
3.	Negative Orientation	18	10.00	53	29.44
4.	Human Weakness	15	8.33	43	23.89
	<b>Total</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>22.97</b>	<b>505</b>	<b>77.01</b>

RH1 had one hundred and fifty eight (158) characteristics, or 22.97% of the total amount of linguistic features of verbal humour. In his humorous exchanges, RH1 used human-centred vocabulary the most (n=111 or 2.48%), followed by negative orientation (n=18 or 10%), and human weakness (n=15 or 8.33%). The least frequent linguistic feature by RH1 is negation (n=14 or 7.78%).

According to Table 4.12, RH2 had five hundred and five (505) features, or 77.01% of the overall linguistic characteristics of verbal humour. The highest characteristic used by him is human-centric vocabulary (n=327 or 11.18%), while the second highest is negative orientation (n=53 or 29.44%). Human weakness is at the third place (n=43 or 23.89), and the last is negation (n=37 or 20.56).

### 4.8.3 Functions of Humour

Table 4.13 below presents the distribution of humour functions by RH1 and RH2 in the corpus of six selected radio episodes. The categories of solidarity, power, and psychological functions are not discussed in the comparison of the two hosts. Besides the general function, the comparison is only done on the overall functions of solidarity, power, and psychological.

**Table 4.13: Humour Functions by RH1 and RH2**

No.	Functions	RH1		RH2	
		f	%	f	%
1.	General	20	6.12	83	25.38
2.	Solidarity	23	7.03	68	20.80
3.	Power	25	7.65	65	19.88
4.	Psychological	13	3.98	30	9.17
	<b>Total</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>24.77</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>75.23</b>

From Table 4.13, the most frequent humour function found in RH1's speech is power (n=25 or 7.65%), followed by solidarity (n=23 or 7.03%). General function is the third highest (n=20 or 6.12%) observed in RH1's speech. The least frequent humour function by him is psychological (n=13 or 3.98).

The highest humour function for RH2 is general (n=83 or 25.38%), followed by solidarity (n=68 or 20.80%), power (n=65 or 19.88%), and psychological (n=30 or 9.17%).

#### **4.9 Discussion**

From the results there are three observations that can be made. The first observation is that the two male radio hosts integrated a lot of humour into their show. RH2 used three times more humour than RH1 in the radio shows with observational, ridicule, pretence/role play, comic lies, self-deprecation, and anecdote as his preferred humour techniques. RH1's main humour techniques are ridicule, and observational. Even though RH2 surpassed the total amount of humour techniques, RH1 had more instances of embarrassment, sarcasm, and wordplay, than RH2.

Observational humour technique was a preferred humour technique by both hosts. Observational relates to humour made by observing the surrounding, or the previous person's speech. Since the radio show was interactional based on a daily topic set by the producer and/or the hosts, the humour present revolved mainly around the topic and its discussion, either between the two host, or between the hosts, and the callers to the show, or the general audience tuning in to the show. One of the factors which attracts listeners to a radio show is how entertaining and funny the show and the hosts are. The radio station of this study has been the top English medium radio show for years, with the breakfast show that was studied being the most listened to (in the category of English-medium breakfast show). The successful integration of humour into their breakfast show may be the essential reason for millions of listeners to choose the radio show.

Besides observational, ridicule was used a lot in the show. The two male hosts would mostly ridicule each other, and sometimes the callers, or the audience too. Marlowe (1989), Crawford and Gressley (1991), and Kehily and Nayak (1997) state that men's humour tend to be aggressive and hostile. It can be seen from the results that the two male radio hosts' humour is aggressive and hostile, when they ridicule each other on the show. This type of humour is very entertaining to be an audience to because it attacks the target 'victim' and gives pleasure to the listening audience. Pretence/role play and comic lies were present a lot of times in the radio show. Hay (1995) claims these two humour types are performance-based humour techniques and are usually performed in front of an audience. Since a radio show's main objective is to attract listeners, one way to achieve this goal is by incorporating these performance-based humour techniques, together with observational and ridicule humour techniques to entertain the audience. It can be said that the hosts are a type of performers performing for an audience on the airwaves. The two male hosts seemed to have been successful in integrating ridicule, pretence/role play, comic lies, and other humour types such as self-deprecation, embarrassment, anecdote, ignorance, exaggeration, sarcasm, fantasy, word play, irony, and repartee, judging from the caller's responses and the ratings they have received. On the airwaves, all of these humour techniques seem to be an entertaining performance for the audience tuning in.

The second observation deals with the linguistic characteristics of verbal humour. Mihalcea and Strapparava (2005) found that there are five linguistic features present in the one-liner verbal humour such as human-centric vocabulary, negation, negative orientation, human "weakness" and professional communities. The findings from this study discovered all the four semantic categories except professional communities. There are a lot of human-centric vocabulary (i.e. words representing human beings), observed in the humour of RH1 and RH2. This corresponds to what

Freud (1905/1960) said about humour: that we laugh at ourselves and others. Negation, negative orientation, and human “weakness” are present in the two male hosts’ humour, as Mihalcea and Strapparava (2005) claim verbal humour to have.

The third and last observation relates to the humour functions present in the two male hosts’ humour. The humour instances serve the general humour function the most. Hay’s (1995) framework views every humour attempt as an act of expressing solidarity with the audience and also establishing a position of status and respect within the group. Tannen (1993:167) highlights that a successful attempt at humour both elevates the status of the speaker and also creates or maintains the sense of belonging in the group. Men are more likely than women to use humour solely for the purpose of impressing, appearing funny, or creating a positive personal identity. This relates to the general functions of using humour. Both RH1 and RH2 used humour, mostly with observational humour technique, to gain respect from the audience, and to appear funny while elevating their status and creating a positive personal identity.

Solidarity function of humour is the second highest observed in the humorous instances. According to Hay (1995), many humorous exchanges serve the purpose of creating solidarity between the group members. Humour is used in order to share experiences and similar interests, maintain boundaries, and tease for solidarity. RH1 and especially RH2 shared some of their personal experience (i.e. via humour techniques of self-deprecation, and anecdote) mainly to bond with the audience and each other. They used other humour techniques like ridicule, sarcasm, irony, and repartee to maintain boundaries and to tease each other and the audience and this serves as a strategy to express solidarity.

Power function of humour is the third frequent function discovered in the conversations of RH1 and RH2 in the radio episodes. Scholars claim that a certain

power-based strategies such as to foster conflict (Martineau, 1972), to control (Martineau, 1972; Collinson, 1988; Graham, Papa & Brooks, 1992), to challenge and set boundaries (Hay, 1995), and to tease (Eisenberg, 1986; Miller, 1986; Schieffelin, 1986), are used in humour. Power for males is defined by masculinity, which is shaped by verbal sparring (Hewitt, 1986), and being competitive with each other (Kehily & Nayak, 1997). Instances of fostering conflict, controlling, challenging and setting boundaries, and teasing each other and the callers to the show are present in RH1 and RH2's humorous exchanges. Hay (1995) highlights that this type of humour function is usually found in workplace or hierarchical environment, and rarely occurs in friendship groups. However, in this study, the number of power-based strategies is almost the same as solidarity based strategies. This could be due to the fact that they were hosting a radio show for an audience and the power struggle and male competitiveness via verbal sparring between them and the callers would entertain the listening audience.

Psychological based strategies are the least frequent strategies found in RH1 and RH2's humour. These strategies are used to defend, or protect oneself, to cope with situational problem, and to cope with general problem. More than half of the psychological strategies found in the two male hosts' humour are to cope with situational problem. Since the radio show is an interaction of the two hosts with each other and the audience based on certain topics or themes, the humour present was used to survive the conversations. However, no coping with general problem strategy was observed in their humour. It may be because the radio episodes revolved around a daily topic and that hindered the hosts to talk about general problems they were having.

From this study, it can be seen that fourteen (14) humour techniques and four (4) humour functions are found in the interaction of the two male hosts. These humorous instances use four (4) of the five semantic categories corresponding to linguistic characteristics of verbal humour.



#### **4.10 Summary**

This chapter presented the findings and discussions of the investigation on the use of humour in the interaction of the two male hosts in a local radio programme. The findings were from the analysis of the data consisting of excerpts from six radio episodes. The conventions of the transcription, and the symbols and abbreviations used in the transcription used were presented. The findings of humour techniques, linguistic features and humour functions found were tabulated. A discussion on the overall findings followed.

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## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

The purpose of the study was to investigate the use of humour and the language of humour in the interaction of the two Malaysian male radio hosts with each other and their listeners. The focus on the research was on the radio hosts' talk and not on the audience. However, the audience contribution to the conversation was highlighted although not examined.

The first part of the study focused on the humour techniques found on the radio show. Hay's (1995) Humour Techniques Taxonomy was not extensive enough to cover all humour types present in the interaction of the two male hosts. They were anecdotes, fantasy, insult (or ridicule), irony, observational, role play, self-deprecation, and word play. Some of Berger's (1993) humour types such as comic lies, embarrassment, exaggeration, ignorance, repartee, and sarcasm were included in the list of the humour techniques investigated in the study. The biggest challenge of this research was identifying humour in the two male hosts' speech. Several indications were used when identifying the humour. They were laughter, either by the speaker or listener (the co-host or the caller), a change in the speaker's voice (which suggested comic), or the reaction by the listener (which suggested they heard something comical).

When speech is transcribed into words, it will be difficult for readers to visualise how the actual conversation took place when the paralinguistic elements (prosody, pitch, volume, intonation, etc.) are missing. This was the case with the study especially when the transcription did not include these paralinguistic elements. In addition, humour is extensively subjective and it relies heavily on one's prior knowledge and cultural background. Even people who have the same cultural background may not

agree on what is funny since it evolves around one's values in life too. So, the readers reading this study may not get the humour due to all the reasons mentioned above.

The second part of the research explored the linguistic features or the words found in these humorous exchanges. Mihalcea and Strapparava (2005) discovered there are five semantic categories of words found in spoken humour. These categories are *human-centric vocabulary*, *negation*, *negative orientation*, *human "weakness"* and *professional communities*. The human-centred vocabulary of humorous instances deals with human-related settings and refers to the use of these four semantic classes: persons (e.g. *everyone*, *mankind*, *soul*), social groups (e.g. *church*, *school*, *council*), social relations (e.g. *mother*, *uncle*, *son*) and personal pronouns (e.g. *I*, *she*, *you*) (Mihalcea & Pulman, 2007).

In addition to human-centric vocabulary, verbal humour often uses negation or negative word forms (e.g. *doesn't*, *wasn't*, *didn't*) and negative orientation, such as nouns with a negative load (e.g. *fault*, *loss*, *sin*), or adjectives with negative connotations (e.g. *forbidden*, *illegitimate*, *wrong*) (Mihalcea & Strapparava, 2005). Mihalcea and Strapparava (2005) state humour often uses words indicating human "weakness", including nouns such as *ignorance*, *carelessness*, *alcohol* or verbs such as *quit*, *blackmail*, and *cheat*. They further explain that verbal humour also seems to usually target professional communities (e.g. *politicians*, *lawyers*, *policemen*) who are regularly linked to amusing situations.

After the humour techniques were identified and categorised, these techniques were further examined for all the five semantic groups of linguistic features of verbal humour. The third or last part of the study explored the functions these humour techniques served. Hay's (1995) Taxonomy of Humour Functions lists four main functions of humour namely *general* function, *solidarity* function, *psychological*

function, and *power* function. Hay's (1995) framework views every humorous attempt is an effort to gain respect and impress the members of audience, and this is regarded as the *general* function.

Hay (1995) adds that many humorous instances serve the purpose of establishing solidarity within the group members by using humour in order *to share, to highlight similarities or capitalise on shared experiences, to clarify and maintain boundaries and to tease for solidarity*. A speaker often *shares* humorous events or stories based on personal experience and this enables the listener to know them better, and eventually affects solidarity positively. When speakers use humour *to highlight on similarities or capitalise on shared experience*, they relate to the similarities and shared interests between each other, hence constructing the bond of solidarity. Humour may also be used *to clarify and maintain boundaries*, which creates the values of acceptability. Consequently, this determines which people belong to which group. Furthermore, *teasing* can strengthen the sense of belonging and people in friendships frequently tease and insult each other and this serves as a strategy for expressing solidarity.

Humorous exchanges also act as a tool for one to assert their power. Hay (1995) mentions the following as the four strategies used to maintain or exert power over other people: *to foster conflict, to control, to challenge and set boundaries* and also *to tease for power*. *Fostering conflict* could be used to intentionally to demean a listener, or communicate an aggressive message by introducing a conflict within the group and is rarely used among close friends. However, humorous exchanges intended to affect a listener's behaviour is defined as *control*. Hay (1995) elaborates that this type of controlling humorous exchanges rarely occurs in groups of friendship but often found in the workplace or hierarchical environment. Apart from solidarity, *to challenge and set boundaries* is also a function related to power. This category challenges existing boundaries, and sets new boundaries by making an example of a member of the

audience (Hay, 1995:107). *Teasing* is also present in power, besides in solidarity. Teasing in the function of power is different compared to teasing for solidarity because the former attacks someone over their personal details in order to maintain the speaker's power (Hay 1995).

All three parts of the study were explored in the data and some observations were made and are explained in the next section.

## **5.1 Summary of the Findings**

This section revisits the research questions of the study and outlines the main findings of each question.

### RQ1: Which humour techniques are used by the male radio announcers?

From the Content Analysis that was done, observational humour technique is the most frequent technique observed in the corpus. This may be due to the fact that the radio show evolved around a topic or theme and the humour derived from observations made on these topics. Ridicule is the second highest humour technique used by the two male suggested to be favoured by men. Ridicule is greatly used by the two male hosts probably because they enjoy ridiculing each other and the audience. Pretence or role play is recorded as the third most frequently used in the corpus. This could be related to the setting of the radio show, which is a form of entertainment, and pretence or role play is a performance-based technique. Other techniques found are comic lies, self-deprecation, embarrassment, anecdote, ignorance, exaggeration, sarcasm, fantasy, wordplay, irony, and repartee.

RQ2: What linguistic features do these humour techniques have?

Four classes of linguistic characteristics of verbal humour found in the selected radio episodes: human-centred vocabulary, negation, negative orientation, and human weakness. The most frequent type of words found in the humour by the two male hosts is human-centred vocabulary. This may be attributed to the fact that the interaction revolves around the theme of human relationships, hence the words used to express this connection are closely related to human. Negative orientation has the second highest frequency found in the humour of the two male radio announcers. The third and the fourth most frequent are negative orientation and human weakness respectively. However, the linguistic feature of professional communities is not observed at all in the corpus.

RQ3: Which functions do these humour techniques serve?

There are four major functions served by the humour techniques found in the corpus. General function, which relates to creating a positive personal identity, has the highest frequency. Since the radio show is a form of entertainment, the hosts might want to appear funny and impress the audience, thus attracts them to listen to the show. Solidarity function, which serves the purpose of creating a sense of belonging, has the second highest frequency. The hosts used the solidarity-based strategies to share experiences and similar interests, maintain boundaries, and tease for solidarity, primarily to bond with each other and the audience. Besides general and solidarity functions, power, and psychological functions are present in the humour of the two male hosts.

## 5.2 Future Research

There were no formal studies have been conducted on male radio hosts' talk relating to humour. This research has illustrated the features of the humorous exchanges of the two male radio hosts of X FM breakfast show. It serves as an avenue for the public to gather information and become aware of the humour present over the air on Malaysian radio. In addition, it also acts as a platform and a stepping stone for future researchers to further explore this interesting and amusing scenario in Malaysia as it may be different in other Asian countries and western world.

This study did not look at the comparison of male humour to female humour, or the prosodic features of the humour techniques due to its research scope and limitations. An investigation of mixed-sex interaction of radio hosts on the patterns or preferences of humour techniques and humour functions will be an interesting aspect to look at. In addition, the prosodic features of humour (such as the pauses, intonation, stress, rhythm, speed, and volume) in speech will also be a captivating aspect to look at since it will provide a more in-depth insight into the formulations of humour techniques and humour functions.

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- <http://www.anecdoteexamples.com/for/humorous-anecdote/>

## APPENDIX

### Transcript of 18/01/12

- L1 RH2: alright, gotta say gotcha!  
L2 RH1: he's such a sensitive fella.  
L3 RH2: when it comes to certain things.  
L4 RH1: he's sensitive.  
L5 RH2: yeah.  
L6 RH1: y'know, he might forgive you, but he didn't forget.  
L7 RH2: ((chuckles))  
L8 yeah, sounds like a girl.  
L9 RH1: ((laughs))  
L10 RH2: what?  
L11 RH1: will explain about RH2, next on X.
- {song/advertisement break}
- L12 RH2: two brand new gotchas everyday, one at seven twenty one at eight twenty man.  
L13 RH1: yea y'know what,  
L14 RH2 might think I'm gonna exaggerate the story,  
L15 how about you explain?  
L16 RH2: okay. you see I'm a very sensitive man when it comes to my food.  
L17 okay especially with my food, mainly with my food.  
L18 and er yesterday RH1 bought this awesome *nasi lemak*.  
L19 imagine this okay, *nasi lemak* in the packet, it smells fresh uh,  
L20 there's the egg on top of it with the yolk that burst onto the *nasi*,  
L21 the *sambal*, this yummy fried chicken that was *rangup*  
L22 RH1: /uhuh/  
L23 RH2: /with/ all the little fried bits,  
L24 RH1: and then?  
L25 RH2: I was halfway through eating it  
L26 then we had to come back inside the studio to talk *lah*.  
L27 RH1: ah.  
L28 RH2: when I went outside, it was gone.  
L29 RH1: ((chuckles))  
L30 what happened?  
L31 RH2: the producer, \*R our producer,  
L32 wrapped it up and he threw it away.  
L33 some more the best part  
L34 /is/  
L35 RH1: /he/ thought you were done!  
L36 RH2: yea how can you think I'm done  
L37 when there's half left and it was still steaming?  
L38 okay and it sm- smells so good,  
L39 I was so looking forward to it,

L40 imagine you're looking forward to eat something  
 L41 you go outside and it's gone.  
 L42 what worst feeling could it be?  
 L43 some more it's *nasi lemak* dude.  
 L44 RH1: now that's not the story, not not not that that he threw it away,  
 L45 it's that the whole day until today, RH2 is still, y'know not not letting it go.  
 L46 RH2: of course I'm not gonna let it go dude!  
 L47 I'm scared to leave anything around him.  
 L48 if I put my jacket on the floor he might throw that away too.  
 L49 RH1: ((laughs))  
 L50 RH2: y'know yesterday I left a bottle of water  
 L51 and I wanted to go to the bathroom, I was scared for its life.  
 L52 RH1: alright alright alright.  
 L53 RH2: y'know \*R the producer might throw it away.  
 L54 RH1: shoosh! let me turn down his mike for  
 L55 right here's the thing,  
 L56 have you ever done a mistake to your friend,  
 L57 and he's not letting it go, he still brings it up back here and there.  
 L58 just give us a call, we wanna hear about y'know,  
 L59 that that mistake that your friend just won't let go.  
 L60 RH2: don't hang around \*R too much our producer,  
 L61 RH1: /shoosh!/  
 L62 RH2: /he/ might throw you away.  
 L63 RH1: your family even  
 L64 if you wanna share. #  
 L65 give us a  
 L66 /call right now/  
 L67 RH2: /nothing's safe/  
 L68 RH1: shoosh!  
 L69 \*F, next on X.  
  
 {song/advertisement break}

L70 RH2: talking about if you've made a mistake with your friend,  
 L71 and he just can't let it go.  
 L72 or the other way around, if someone made a mistake with you  
 L73 and you're not willing to let it go  
 L74 ((chuckles))  
 L75 and go on and on and on about it, normally RH1 is the king of this.  
 L76 RH1: huh?  
 L77 RH2: anyway, share with us,  
 L78 /#/

L79 RH1: /and you're the king of mistakes lah/  
 L80 RH2: #.  
 L81 just let it go man.  
 L82 RH1: okay okay okay  
 L83 RH2: LMFAO on X.

{song/advertisement break}

- L84 RH2: good morning!  
L85 so we're talking about things that you can't let go and this starts with a mistake.  
L86 RH1: oh your friends  
L87 ((chuckles))  
L88 RH2: yea.  
L89 RH1: yea yea.  
L90 RH2: alright, you make a mistake  
L91 and your friend just seems can't let it go no matter what  
L92 he keeps bringing it up even though you've apologised  
L93 and it's been a couple of years.  
L94 #  
L95 so \*B, what's the story man?  
L96 what mistake have you made that your friend just won't let go until today man?  
L97 RH1: yup.  
L98 C1: okay I don't quite remember when it happened *tapi* a friend of mine,  
L99 who erm I shall not name,  
L100 RH1: ((laughs))  
L101 C1: so we were hanging out this one time at a *mamak* stall,  
L102 and then er he asked me about this girl.  
L103 er the girl I can name. her name was er \*M.  
L104 RH1: okay.  
L105 C1: okay and then as soon as he said er what do you think of \*M,  
L106 I said no she's awful I don't really hang out with her I don't like her,  
L107 y'know, and then er while apparently he was trying to date this \*M  
L108 and now they're dating!  
L109 RH2: oh no.  
L110 C1: yea, so till this day I think it's been at least maybe six six months a year,  
L111 he's still er y'know, going all like er you wanna hang out with me?  
L112 but er y'know my girlfriend's gonna come along I know you don't like her.  
L113 RH1 & ((laugh))  
RH2:  
L114 C1: I get that a lot from him.  
L115 RH1: just tell him people change man, people change.  
L116 RH2: yeah yeah.  
L117 RH1: let it be! drop the subject.  
L118 RH2: or, you can say y'know you said that  
L119 coz you didn't want them to go coz you like her instead.  
L120 RH1: ah!  
L121 C1: or I can go to \*M and then tell \*M this dude he cheated on her,  
L122 then they'll break up right? and then I'll com comfort my friend again.  
L123 RH2: that's all the time we have.  
L124 RH1: dude you are scary dude.  
L125 RH2: yeah yeah yeah.  
L126 C1: ((laughs))



L127 RH2: that's crazy.  
 L128 RH1: thanks thanks.  
 L129 RH2: yeah, you're trying to make it worse!  
 L130 you're not gonna let go.  
 L131 thanks a lot \*B.  
 L132 you don't of course make the situation worse.  
 L133 RH1: exactly.  
 L134 anyone else got a story that your friend doesn't wanna let go,  
 L135 y'know who's the the best at keeping stories?  
 L136 RH2: who?  
 L137 RH1: parents. your mum especially.  
 L138 oh y'know when he was young he did this and then y'know,  
 L139 RH2: you need to call your mum dude, that's what you need to do.  
 L140 you need to apologize for whatever it is you did.  
 L141 RH1: ((chuckles))  
 L142 okay okay.  
 L143 RH2: but give us a call #,  
 L144 or you can put it up on our Facebook page alright, fb dot x dot fm.  
  
 {song/advertisement break}  
  
 L145 RH2: X dot FM playing all the hits.  
 L146 good morning. RH1 and RH2 the X dot FM D Crew.  
 L147 two brand new gotchas every day,  
 L148 one at seven twenty and one at eight twenty and you see,  
 L149 I-I can be very sensitive when it comes to certain things okay. certain things.  
 L150 /with food/  
 L151 RH1: /most things/  
 L152 RH2: with food.  
 L153 RH1: most things.  
 L154 RH2: shhh! you don't get to speak goatee.  
 L155 RH1: okay kay.  
 L156 RH2: okay so yesterday I had this steaming *nasi lemak*,  
 L157 with chicken, and *sambal*, and a *telur* on top.  
 L158 I ate it halfway through, came into the studio to talk,  
 L159 within a couple of minutes I went outside  
 L160 the producer had wrapped it up and thrown it away.  
 L161 I was so upset and I'm not gonna let this go.  
 L162 RH1: ((chuckles))  
 L163 RH2: until just now I see he's looking at me funny,  
 L164 until just now I won't leave anything around him or if I accidentally leave  
 L165 /(inaudible)/  
 L166 RH1: /even a used tissue/  
 L167 RH2: I go oh please, don't don't he might just throw it away.  
 L168 careful, don't leave anything around our producer he might throw it away.  
 L169 don't leave your ex-girlfriend he might throw her away.  
 L170 RH1: we we wanna know

L171 ((chuckles))  
 L172 about you.  
 L173 do you have a story that you can't let go?  
 L174 hi you wanna remain anonymous, so we call you nonamous.  
 L175 ((laughs))  
 L176 okay.  
 L177 C2: yea you can you can do that.  
 L178 RH1: alright.  
 L179 C2: normally I don't mind sharing my name but today I wanna go anonymous.  
 L180 RH1: okay nonamous, tell us your story.  
 L181 C2: okay, erm my ex-boyfriend,  
 L182 when I first met him his birthday was like 3 weeks actually  
 L183 we just met after we coupled up  
 L184 RH1: alright.  
 L185 C2: and I celebrated his birthday with a big surprise birthday party  
 L186 involving his whole family with a three hundred dollar watch,  
 L187 RH1: wow!  
 L188 RH2: how nice of you!  
 L189 RH1: nice.  
 L190 C2: yeah. but when he came to my birthday which was about after 1 year we met,  
 L191 RH1: uhuh.  
 L192 C2: he only celebrated with a, a stupid e-card that it took like what,  
 L193 five minutes to do?  
 L194 and and a muffin that cost one ringgit.  
 L195 I had to pay, and he had lunch in (Superia) that I had to pay for!  
 L196 RH2: your boyfriend broke?  
 L197 RH1: no no ex ex.  
 L198 RH2: ex ex, oh no wonder.  
 L199 C2: ex! it's an ex!  
 L200 RH1: okay okay.  
 L201 RH2: wow, so y'know, wow, that's pretty cheap.  
 L202 RH1: ((laughs))  
 L203 no nonamous, stuff like that you can hold onto forever.  
 L204 RH2: I think you have the right to.  
 L205 RH1: yea that one you have the right to hold on forever,  
 L206 don't worry, don't let that go.  
 L207 RH2: /actually/  
 L208 C2: /yeah/ I'm not letting it go.  
 L209 RH1: no no.  
 L210 RH2: unless you go out with somebody else and you need to forget that immediately.  
 L211 RH1: yea yea yea yea.  
 L212 RH2: are you dating anyone else now?  
 L213 C2: no, still single.  
 L214 RH2: okay, then let's meet up at  
 L215 /four thirty/  
 L216 RH1: /eh RH2!/  
 L217 RH2: /what?! I'm just saying!/

L218 C2: ((laughs))  
L219 RH1: RH2! RH2!  
L220 pre-warn if people dating your ex-boyfriend ah that that  
L221 ((laughs))  
L222 RH2: no don't do that. that's evil.  
L223 RH1: ((laughs))  
L224 oh that's evil?  
L225 RH2: don't do that, he might have changed.  
L226 RH1: ((chuckles))  
L227 okay.  
L228 RH2: four thirty alright?  
L229 RH1: ((laughs))  
L230 okay bye.  
L231 RH2: she said yes.  
L232 RH1: shhh!  
L233 anyone else wanna share,  
L234 #  
L235 or go to our Facebook page, fb dot x dot fm

{end of episode 18/01/12}