HUMOUR IN MEETINGS: A STUDY OF POWER AND SOLIDARITY IN THE MALAYSIAN ACADEMIC CONTEXT

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FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS
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KUALA LUMPUR

2012
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DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA KUALA LUMPUR

2012
UNIVERSITI MALAYA

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Name of Degree: Master of English as a Second Language (MESL)

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the linguistic features that describe the functions of humour associated with power and solidarity in a particular workplace settings referred to as NAS. The purpose of this study is to investigate the nature of humour that is manifested in tandem with the concept of power and solidarity in symmetrical and asymmetrical positions during academic management meetings. Moreover, the aim of the study is to ascertain the turn taking patterns accompanying humour in these respective meetings. The parameters of this study are confined to the different rankings of the participants who utilise humour either to be used for exercising power or building rapport in a hierarchical environment.

The data were recorded from four semiformal meetings at NAS with a total combination of 380 minutes and 189 seconds duration of time. Although the medium of instruction was primarily English Language, it was discovered that code switching in Malay occurred throughout the meetings. The age range of the participants ranged from 24-55 years old and they are all proficient in the English Language. The dominant ethnicity of the participants is Malay while there were only two participants who are Chinese and a native speaker of English from Canada.

All the four meetings were transcribed using Jariah Mohd Jan’s (1999) transcription notation which was adapted from Jefferson’s (1978) conventions. The adapted transcription highlights the distribution of turns between speakers, occurrences of
interruptions and the point when the prior speaker finishes his/her contribution in relation to the next speaker’s turn (Jariah Mohd Jan, 1999:226). The instances of humour were categorised using Hay’s Taxonomy of Functions of Humour (1995) which mainly focuses on the two functions which are power and solidarity. The organisation of turn taking accompanying humour was analysed based on Sacks et al. Turn-Taking Model (1974).

The findings revealed that teasing was the most popular function of humour in the power and solidarity category. Teasing was the predominant strategy utilised by the academicians to enact power or to maintain camaraderie among the team members. On the other hand, conflict was the least popular type of humour that was associated with power play and share was the lowest type of humour produced by the participants which functioned as rapport building.

The data suggested that the organisation of turns which subsumed humour were basically adhering to the second rule of SSJ Model of Turn-Taking (1974). The rule demonstrated that turns were taken through self-selection where the members of the floor will select themselves in order to make their respective contributions. This rule was discovered as the most applied rule by the participants especially for those in higher status in their attempt to produce humour.

This study provides great insights that the production of humour in academic management meetings is influenced by the status or position that one occupies. Moreover, this study will certainly contribute to the existing body of local researches as well as it could be used to extend on future studies on power and solidarity in relation to production of humour.
ABSTRAK

Kajian ini meneliti ciri-ciri linguistik yang menghuraikan fungsi humor yang dipengaruhi oleh dua faktor iaitu kuasa dan solidariti di dalam mesyuarat pengurusan akademik di tempat persekitaran kerja yang dirujuk sebagai NAS. Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji sifat humor yang dimanifestasikan dengan konsep kuasa dan solidariti dalam kedudukan simetri dan tidak simetri. Selain itu, matlamat kajian ini juga adalah untuk menyiasat pola pengambilan giliran yang mengandungi humor di dalam mesyuarat pengurusan akademik. Parameter kajian ini adalah terhad kepada kedudukan peserta yang berbeza yang menggunakan humor sama ada bagi menjalankan kuasa atau membina hubungan baik dalam persekitaran hierarki.

Data linguistik bagi kajian ini dikumpulkan daripada empat mesyuarat separa rasmi yang telah direkod secara audio visual di NAS dengan kombinasi tempoh masa selama 380 minit dan 189 saat. Bahasa pengantar yang digunakan adalah Bahasa Inggeris dan kajian menunjukkan terdapat percampuran kod dalam Bahasa Melayu berlaku sepanjang mesyuarat berlangsung. Lingkungan umur peserta adalah dari 24-55 tahun dan mereka adalah penutur yang mahir dalam Bahasa Inggeris. Majoriti peserta adalah berbangsa Melayu manakala seorang peserta berbangsa Cina dan seorang lagi adalah penutur asli Bahasa Inggeris yang berasal dari Kanada.


Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa humor yang dihasilkan di dalam mesyuarat pengurusan akademik tidak terkecuali digunakan untuk menunjukkan kuasa dan membina hubungan baik antara rakan sekerja. Status dan kedudukan tinggi di dalam organisasi mempengaruhi penggunaan humor yang dimanifestasi oleh konsep kuasa dan solidariti. Hasil kajian mendapati *teasing* sebagai strategi yang digunakan oleh para peserta untuk menunjukkan kuasa dan juga untuk membina hubungan baik dengan rakan sekerja. *Conflict* merupakan kategori humor yang paling kurang digunakan untuk menunjukkan kuasa manakala *share* ialah kategori humor yang paling sedikit dijumpai dan digunakan untuk mengekalkan hubungan baik bersama rakan sekerja.

Bagi pola pengambilan giliran yang mengandungi humor, dapatan kajian mendapati pola pengambilan giliran lebih kepada mematuhi peraturan kedua dalam *SSJ Model of Turn-Taking* (1974). Peraturan kedua ini menyatakan bahawa pengambilan giliran adalah melalui *self-selection* di mana penceramah yang lain akan mengambil giliran untuk bercakap selepas penceramah sebelumnya jika dia (penceramah sebelum) tidak membuat
pilihan siapa yang akan berinteraksi selepasnya. Peraturan ini dijumpai sebagai peraturan yang paling kerap dilaksanakan dalam cubaan untuk membuat humor oleh peserta peserta terutamanya bagi mereka yang menduduki status tinggi.

Kajian ini juga memberi pandangan bahawa pengunaan humor dalam mesyuarat pengurusan akademik adalah dipengaruhi oleh status atau ranking yang dipegang oleh seseorang. Adalah diharapkan dapatan daripada kajian ini akan menyumbang kepada kajian tempatan dan menggalakkan lagi kepada kajian lanjutan tentang kuasa dan solidariti melalui humor.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, my utmost gratitude and praise to Allah the Almighty for the strength and patience bestowed upon me.

My deepest appreciation to my respected supervisor, Associate Professor Dr. Hajjah Jariah Mohd. Jan for her mentorship and endless encouragement during the course of this dissertation. Her guidance and meticulous review of numerous drafts to the final version of the dissertation has provided me with valuable input and confidence, without which I doubt this dissertation would have been completed.

My earnest thanks is dedicated to the teaching team of the Faculty of Language and Linguistics, University of Malaya who taught the compulsory subjects which constituted me with the basic knowledge aiding me in pursuing this research. To all my friends and classmates, I would like to express my deepest appreciation for their assistance given throughout the course of my studies. My special thanks to Ms. Prabhalini Thevendiraraj for her constructive criticisms and suggestions during the editing sessions.

My deepest appreciation to the university I am attached to for granting me the scholarship and study leave to continue my master’s degree. Also, my deepest appreciation goes to my colleagues who were actively involved at the initial stages of the data gathering. Their cooperation definitely made the data collection possible.
Finally, my utmost gratitude and love to my beloved parents, Haji Mohd Omar b. A. Rahman and Hajjah W. Fatimah bt. Sulaiman, brothers and sisters for their unconditional support and encouragement during the period of my study. Without their prayers, love and trust, I may not have been able to complete my studies. Thanks for being a source of strength that definitely has kept me going. This thesis is dedicated to all of you.

**Nor Azikin binti Mohd Omar**

December 2011
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