# CHAPTER I
# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background of the Study

Humor is a multifaceted and broad concept that can be observed in almost every culture and language. It can be of many forms, ranging from mere jokes to complex narratives of events, sometimes replicating the norms or the values of society. Attardo (1994) noted that humor has social and cognitive roles because it unites individuals as well as offers criticism to society's norms. Therefore, humor plays a crucial role in popular culture, as it is both entertaining and subversive (Mintz, 2008).

Looking at the various types of humor, one can note that conversational humor deserves attention due to its focus on the interaction between interlocutors. This type of humor involves different verbal categories and interactional processes that may be perceived as humorous by speakers and hearers (Dynel & Sinkeviciute, 2021). It can be present in all forms of communication and across different discourse areas and can be either planned or spontaneous (Dynel, 2016).

However, conversational humor becomes more complex when power relations and politeness are involved, as it often incorporates explicit impoliteness strategies (Culpeper, 1996; Bousfield, 2008). Impoliteness in humor can serve an entertaining function by creating a sense of superiority or by violating social norms in a humorous way (Culpeper, 2005, 2011). This means that the analysis of impoliteness in humor requires context awareness, intention, and perception, which underlines the interconnected and contextual approach to humor and impoliteness research within the diverse culture (Dynel, 2013; Sinkeviciute, 2019).

Television has been particularly influential in shaping humor and integrating it into mainstream culture. Television has a great influence and is also a mirror to the culture and the beliefs of the society. Humor is commonly employed by television sitcoms and animated series to address issues of social and political

relevance, and often through slant humor, stereotype, and hyperbole (Gray, 2006; Raymond, 2013). When it comes to TV comedy, humor is most often used as a tool for expressing social commentary and criticism, which means that impoliteness strategies are used quite commonly to subvert expectations and stimulate people's thinking (Culpeper, 1996).

For example, adult animated series like *Family Guy*, *South Park*, and *The Simpsons* rely heavily on satire to draw attention to specific societal facets (Wong, 2024). These shows frequently employ social critique, particularly within the context of American culture (Zsila et al., 2020). Thus, in this context, humor, which works as a two-edged sword of legitimization and subversion, plays a particular role in reflecting attitudes in popular culture; its prominence in political satire, for example, hints at its potential as a social commentary (Lee, 2001). Juckel et al. (2016, as cited in Zsila et al., 2020) imply that animated comedies frequently feature negative humor in addition to portraying superiority without moral involvement.

Despite its role in entertainment and social commentary, humor, especially when built on impoliteness strategies, can be highly controversial. The problem arises when humor employs impoliteness strategies in ways that blur the line between comedy and offense, potentially reinforcing negative stereotypes or crossing ethical boundaries.

One show that frequently walks this line is *Family Guy*, a TV-14-rated animated sitcom known for its reliance on shock humor and satire (Azevedo, 2021). Created by Seth MacFarlane, the series has built a reputation for tackling controversial subjects through humor, drawing both acclaim and backlash from audiences worldwide (Azevedo, 2021). A particularly debated episode, "Turban Cowboy", exemplifies this approach.

The episode follows Peter Griffin as he befriends a Muslim man named Mahmoud, who is later revealed to be a radical terrorist planning an attack. Additionally, it includes a controversial scene where Peter jokingly kills several

people at a Boston Marathon race, an unsettling moment that aired just weeks before the real-life Boston Marathon bombing. Due to its insensitive timing and provocative content, the scene was later removed from reruns and streaming services, reinforcing concerns about *Family Guy*'s use of taboo topics and dark humor as impoliteness strategies (Azevedo, 2021).

While impoliteness in "Turban Cowboy" is used as both a tool for character interaction and a source of humor, its exact role in shaping humorous effects remains unclear. Does the use of impoliteness strategies contribute to humor, or does it merely serve as provocation? Without a structured analysis, it is difficult to determine whether the humor in this episode effectively engages audiences or simply reinforces offensive narratives.

To address this, this study systematically examines the different types of conversational humor present in "Turban Cowboy", categorizing them using Dynel's (2009) framework. It also identifies the impoliteness strategies embedded within these interactions, applying Culpeper's (1996) model. The study also utilizes Dynel's (2016) framework that provides insight into how impoliteness strategies function as humor devices in the episode and to determine how they contribute to the humorous effect of the episode. By doing so, this research clarifies the role of impoliteness in humor and its broader implications for media discourse.

Without such an analysis, the impact of impoliteness strategies on humor in *Family Guy* would remain largely speculative, and the complex intersection between offense and comedic value would go unexplored. This study fills that gap, offering a structured approach to understanding humor, impoliteness, and media representation.

## 1.2 Research Questions

Based on the examination of conversational humor and the impoliteness strategies used in the "Turban Cowboy" episode of *Family Guy*, the following research questions have been formulated:

1. What types of conversational humor are used in the "Turban Cowboy" episode of *Family Guy*?
2. What types of impoliteness strategies are employed within the conversational humor in the "Turban Cowboy" episode of *Family Guy*?
3. How do the impoliteness strategies produced by characters create humorous effects?

## 1.3 Research Objectives

To align with the focus on conversational humor and impoliteness strategies in the "Turban Cowboy" episode of *Family Guy*, the writer suggests the following three purposes of the study:

1. To identify and categorize the types of conversational humor used in the "Turban Cowboy" episode of *Family Guy.*
2. To analyze the types of impoliteness strategies employed within the conversational humor in the "Turban Cowboy" episode of *Family Guy.*
3. To examine how impoliteness strategies contribute to the humorous effect.

## 1.4 Previous Studies

In this section, the categorization is based on the writer's exploration of previous studies. The intention is to group them according to their focus on conversational humor, impoliteness strategies, and analysis of the *Family Guy* series.

Research on conversational humor in television and film has explored its functions, structures, and social impact, but little attention has been given to how it operates in animated sitcoms, particularly in combination with impoliteness strategies. Mafisawati (2015) analyzed conversational humor in *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows* using Dynel's (2009) conversational humor model, identifying teasing, banter, putdowns, self-denigration, retorts, irony, paradox, and hyperbole as key humor types. Her study highlights how humor functions within character interactions and social power dynamics, providing insight into scripted humor's role in shaping relationships. Dynel (2016) expanded on this by

examining conversational humor through (im)politeness theory, focusing on humor's dual role as a face-threatening and a face-maintaining strategy in the medical drama *House*. Unlike Mafisawati, whose research focused on humor as a narrative tool, Dynel's study connects humor to social norms and politeness expectations, making it relevant to humor that subverts politeness strategies. Shifting towards cultural perspectives, Farnia (2017) studied conversational humor in the Iranian comedy show *Khandevaneh*, also using Dynel's (2009) framework, but with a focus on cultural influences on humor perception. Her study highlights how humor is shaped by audience expectations and societal norms, which is an important consideration in analyzing humor in media discourse. Meanwhile, Amalia (2021) examined conversational humor in the British sitcom *Mind Your Language*, applying Berger's humor techniques and identifying misunderstanding, ridicule, irony, and insult as dominant strategies. While both Farnia and Amalia contributed to the understanding of cultural and pragmatic dimensions of conversational humor, they do not address how humor interacts with impoliteness strategies to create humorous effects in controversial contexts. Although these studies provide valuable insights into conversational humor in different media formats, none specifically examine how conversational humor functions in an animated sitcom known for its heavy reliance on impoliteness strategies.

Several studies have examined impoliteness strategies in humor across different media, yet little research focuses on animated sitcoms, particularly in controversial contexts. Wulandari (2018) investigated impoliteness strategies in American live-action comedy films, such as *Harold and Kumar Go to White Castle, Ted,* and *Expelled*, finding that bald-on-record, positive impoliteness, and negative impoliteness were all present, with positive impoliteness being the most dominant strategy. In the context of stand-up comedy, Shabrina & Pratama (2023) analyzed impoliteness in Trevor Noah's performances, identifying sarcasm and mock humor as key strategies. Similarly, Arlivia & Sembodo (2024) examined John Mulaney's stand-up comedy, applying Culpeper's (1996) framework and

Culpeper's (2011) five sources of pleasure to show how positive impoliteness (47.4%) primarily entertained the audience through emotional pleasure and superiority. While their study highlights how impoliteness can be entertaining, it focuses on a performer-audience dynamic, differing from scripted television humor. Elkholy & Ahsani (2023) explored Jeremy Clarkson's use of impoliteness in *Top Gear*, showing that negative impoliteness and withhold politeness were used as entertainment tools, but their research centered on a reality-based talk show rather than a fictional animated series. While these studies provide valuable insights into impoliteness strategies in humor, none specifically examine how impoliteness contributes to humor in an animated sitcom episode that has been widely criticized for its controversial content.

Existing research on *Family Guy* has primarily analyzed its linguistic, social, and representational aspects, but not its use of impoliteness strategies within conversational humor. Ricke (2012) examined vulgar language in the show, highlighting its absurd use and the presence of derogatory stereotypes in 9% of messages, but did not investigate how impoliteness contributes to humor. Porsgaard (2019) explored Jewish-English accents in *Family Guy* and their potential impact on linguistic stereotyping, focusing on phonetic representation rather than humor strategies. Pritchard (2021) analyzed the show's treatment of dwarfism, arguing that it subverts rather than reinforces stereotypes through autocritical discourse analysis, but did not assess the specific role of impoliteness in shaping humor. While these studies recognize *Family Guy*'s use of humor to subvert norms and provoke diverse receptions, none of them specifically examine how impoliteness strategies function within its conversational humor to generate humorous effects.

The novelty of this study lies in its examination of impoliteness strategies in conversational humor in a specific *Family Guy* episode, "Turban Cowboy", a perspective that has not been previously explored. By integrating Culpeper's (1996) impoliteness framework and Dynel's (2009) conversational humor model, this study analyzes how impoliteness strategies operate within conversational

humor and contribute to its humorous effects. Additionally, Dynel's (2016) humor framework provides insight into how impoliteness strategies enhance humor in scripted discourse. Through this sociopragmatic approach, the study offers new insights into how impoliteness strategies function within conversational humor in controversial animated media.

**1.5 Scope of the Study**

This study employs Jonathan Culpeper's (1996) impoliteness framework from Towards an Anatomy of Impoliteness and Marta Dynel's (2009) conversational humor model from Beyond a Joke: Types of Conversational Humour to analyze humor in the "Turban Cowboy" episode of *Family Guy*. Additionally, it integrates Dynel's (2016) discussion on humor as (im)politeness in scripted media, which provides insight into how impoliteness strategies function as humor devices in the episode. This study examines how impoliteness strategies operate within conversational humor contribute to humorous effects in controversial animated media.

**1.6 Writing Organization**

CHAPTER I        : INTRODUCTION

         This chapter covers the background of the study, research questions, objectives of the study, a review of previous studies, the scope of the study, and the writing organization.

CHAPTER II      : THEORY AND METHOD

         This chapter provides an overview of the research's theoretical framework and methods. The theoretical framework includes Dynel's categorization of conversational humor types (2009), Culpeper's impoliteness strategies (1996), and Dynel's framework for humorous impoliteness mechanisms. Then, it is followed by method that covers research method; data, population,

and sample; methods of collecting data; and methods of analyzing data.

CHAPTER III     : RESULT & DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the findings related to the research questions. Firstly, it identifies and categorizes the types of conversational humor employed in the "Turban Cowboy" episode of *Family Guy* based on specific instances from the dialogue. Secondly, it analyzes the impoliteness strategies used within these types of conversational humor. The discussion further explores how impoliteness strategies function as humor devices, aligning with sociopragmatic theories on scripted media.

CHAPTER IV     : CONCLUSION

This chapter offers the conclusions drawn from the findings and discussions presented in this study.