CHAPTER II
THEORY AND METHOD

2.1 Theoretical Framework

2.1.1 Conversational Humor

Conversational humor is a form of humor that emerges in natural and spontaneous communication, whether in everyday interactions or scripted narratives such as TV shows, films, and books (Dynel, 2009; Roshida, 2018). Defined as verbal expressions intended to entertain the listener, conversational humor can either contribute to the overall meaning of an exchange or shift its tone in a humorous direction, often involving non-literal interpretations (Dynel, 2009).

While humor is commonly associated with positive social interaction, research suggests that conversational humor can also serve as a face-threatening act, functioning as mock impoliteness, verbal play, or social critique (Sinkevičiūtė, 2017). This dual function reinforces relationships while also challenging social norms, highlighting its complexity as a sociopragmatic phenomenon.

Although linguistic research on humor has often focused on canned jokes due to methodological constraints, increasing attention has been given to spontaneous or pre-constructed interactional humor. Dynel (2009) argues that "conversational humor" is a more inclusive term than "conversational joking/jokes", as it encompasses a broad range of humorous expressions, from single words and phrases to multi-turn exchanges. This term better reflects the fluid and dynamic nature of humor in conversation, capturing instances that do not rely on structured joke-telling but still contribute to humor within discourse

2.1.1.1 Types of Conversational Humor

To address the first research question in this study, the writer draws on Dynel's (2009) theory regarding various forms of conversational humor. According to Dynel, conversational humor can be classified into seven specific types: witticisms, retorts, teasing, banter, putdowns, self-deprecating humor, and anecdotes.

1. Witticism

A witticism is a sharp and context-dependent humorous remark that displays verbal creativity and wit (Dynel, 2009). Unlike structured jokes, witticisms are seamlessly embedded within discourse and can function independently or in response to preceding utterances.

Dynel (2009) categorizes witticisms into several linguistic forms, including:

a. **Stylistic Figures**

    (1) Simile/Comparison ("She is like a killer who arrives at your doorstep in pigtails holding a bunch of roses.")

    (2) Metaphor ("You make a plate of cooked spaghetti tense.")

    (3) Hyperbole ("Your cardigan is a blemish on the whole male population.")

    (4) Paradox ("I don't believe in astrology. I'm a Sagittarius, and I'm skeptical.")

    (5) Irony ("It's great that you've started growing hair on your legs.")

b. **Puns**

Exploiting multiple meanings of words or phrases for humorous effect. For example:

> "Take life with a pinch of salt, a slice of lemon and a bottle of tequila. (idiom 'take something with a pinch of salt' read at the idiomatic level, i.e. 'remain doubtful of something', and literally)"
> <div align="right">(Dynel, 2009: 1289)</div>

c. **Allusions: Distortions and Quotations**

Allusions are indirect references to cultural, literary, or historical elements that rely on the listener's recognition (Dynel, 2009). For example:

> "Did I do a Rip Van Winkle?
> (the eponymous hero from 'Rip Van Winkle' by Washington Irving)"
> <div align="right">(Dynel, 2009: 1291)</div>

d. **Register Clash**

According to Dynel (2009), register clash is a humorous disruption of expected language levels by either upgrading (overly formal speech in casual contexts) or downgrading (informal expressions in formal situations). The example is as follows:

> "The PM cocks his head like a Snow White listening to the animals."

<div align="right">(Dynel, 2009: 1291)</div>

2. Retorts

In conversational humor, a retort, as discussed by Dynel (2009), is a quick and clever response made in reaction to a preceding statement. Retorts often involve sarcasm or subtle aggression, challenging or undermining earlier statements for comedic effect. The example is as follows:

> Daughter : "Dylan took a tampon from Gabby's backpack, stuck it in his mouth and it got real big from his spit."
> Mother : "I've been seriously underestimating him."

<div align="right">(Dynel, 2009: 1292)</div>

3. Teasing

Teasing, as explained by Dynel (2009), includes various playful and humorous remarks that serve different purposes like mock challenges or imitation. Unlike some views that see teasing as always playful but aggressive, Dynel suggests that the aggression in teasing can vary and might not be present at all. When teasing, the speaker does not aim to genuinely offend but engages in a humorous exchange. If the intention is to hurt, it is considered a putdown instead of a tease. For instance:

> Female : You manifest the Peter Pan syndrome.
> Male : And you have the Captain Hook syndrome. (teasing)
> Female : There's no such syndrome.
> Male : Obviously there is. You have it! (teasing)

<div align="right">(Dynel, 2009: 1293)</div>

4. Banter

Dynel (2009) describes banter as a rapid-fire series of humorous remarks that are meant to entertain each other rather than discuss a topic seriously. This quick-witted "verbal ping-pong" usually happens in spoken conversation

but can also occur in instant messaging. Banter continues until one person runs out of clever responses. For example:

Female (age 25)	: Drink up your beer!
Male (age 45)	: Yes, mummy!
Female	: And make sure you change your nappy when it's wet!
Male	: I will! And when I do, I will go straight to bed to meet my teddy bear!
Female	: But only after you both brush your teeth.

(supportive, maximally collaborative, i.e., joint fantasizing)

(Dynel. 2009: 1294)

5. Putdowns

Putdowns are remarks that are truly abusive and disparaging, often carrying no humor that the target, or "butt," would appreciate. According to Dynel (2009), these remarks are a form of putdown humor, rooted in ridicule, mocking, or sarcasm. The target can be the direct addressee or another party who may or may not be able to overhear the conversation. For example:

> "Your talent is like the Loch Ness monster. Nobody has seen it yet."

(Dynel. 2009: 1294)

6. Self-denigrating Humor

According to Dynel (2009), self-denigrating humor (or self-deprecating humor) occurs when speakers make humorous remarks about themselves, often to soften criticism, display humility, or entertain others. Such humor is more about self-teasing than genuine self-disparagement. It cushions the impact of admitting mistakes and demonstrates intelligence and composure. By laughing at their own shortcomings, speakers project a positive self-image, aligning with the valued ability to find humor in one's problems. For example:

> "In today's performance, the role of the idiot will be played by myself."

(Dynel, 2009: 1295)

7. Anecdotes

Anecdotes, according to Dynel (2009), are humorous narratives shared within conversation, typically drawing from personal experiences or exaggerated storytelling. These stories can turn mundane or even dramatic

events into amusing tales that aim to entertain and provoke laughter. For example:

> "My flight back home was full of surprises. At the airport in Paris, customs officers wouldn't let me keep the wine I had bought at the Portuguese airport. It goes to your head … and knees very easily. For over 20 minutes we conducted a rhetorically rich dialogue: 'You can't carry any liquid onto the plane'. 'I think I can. I was informed I would be allowed to'. 'No, you can't'. I was just about to empty the two bottles, but I asked for the reasons. What I heard was, 'You can only have liquids bought at European airports in your hand baggage'. The French are so lovely and knowledgeable, aren't they? I felt like a primary-school teacher, explaining to them the difference between Lisbon and Lebanon."
>
> (Dynel, 2009: 1296)

2.1.2 Impoliteness Strategies

Impoliteness strategies, despite being discussed for approximately 35 years, particularly in sociopragmatics, are still significant in understanding communication dynamics (Culpeper, 2016). These strategies contrast with politeness tactics and focus on disrupting social harmony by targeting the concept of "face," which encompasses the emotionally sensitive aspect of the self (Culpeper 1996). Overall, Jonathan Culpeper's scholarly work in the field of impoliteness has been very instrumental in developing a theoretical framework that enhances the study of impoliteness.

Culpeper, with Derek Bousfield and Anne Wichmann (2003) presented analysis of the concept of impoliteness by questioning the face-attack at the core of the original definition as a trigger for social conflict and disharmony. Subsequently, Culpeper (2005) built up on his model by stressing intentionality and context in the study of the impoliteness. He highlighted that there is a difference between the speaker's attitude and the recipient's attitude, and that an utterance might be considered impolite even when it was not the speaker's intention. It is for this reason that the dynamics of impoliteness are very fluid, and the definitions of what is considered impolite or not depends on aspects such as context and perception by the interlocutors (Culpeper, 2005).

Several of Culpeper's ideas and modifications contributed to the development of a more nuanced understanding of impoliteness, which is based on its construction in the interaction between the speaker and the hearer. This perspective also brings out the interactional nature of the process between the speaker's intention and the hearer's interpretation as a way of explaining the complexity of the impoliteness process in interpersonal communication.

2.1.2.1 The Strategies

Culpeper (1996) proposed an impoliteness paradigm that was comparable to Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness strategies, but with an antagonistic intent. Culpeper (1996) in *Toward An Anatomy of Impoliteness* begins by analyzing politeness strategies, particularly those outlined by Brown and Levinson (1987), and then constructs a framework for impoliteness based on these strategies. This approach is not merely for convenience; it reflects the idea that impoliteness essentially feeds off and exists in opposition to politeness. By examining the core concepts of both politeness and impoliteness strategies, Culpeper highlights their interrelated nature and provides a comprehensive understanding of how impoliteness functions within communication.

1. **Politeness Strategies**

   Brown and Levinson (1987) outline a theory where individuals use specific strategies to mitigate face-threatening acts (FTAs) and maintain social equilibrium. Their model is based on the idea that people have a "face"—an emotionally sensitive concept of self—which they wish to preserve. Politeness strategies are thus employed to avoid or minimize the threat to this face. The process of choosing an appropriate politeness strategy involves assessing the degree of face threat, which is influenced by factors such as relative power, social distance, and the imposition's rank.

   Brown and Levinson (1987) propose five superstrategies, arranged from least to most face-threatening:

   1) Bald on Record: The FTA is performed directly and clearly, without any minimization to the face threat.

2) Positive Politeness: Strategies that address the addressee's positive face wants, aiming to make them feel liked and appreciated.

3) Negative Politeness: Strategies that attend to the addressee's negative face wants, respecting their desire for autonomy and freedom from imposition.

4) Off-Record: The FTA is performed indirectly, allowing for multiple interpretations and thereby avoiding direct responsibility for the act.

5) Withhold the FTA: Choosing not to perform the FTA at all, thereby avoiding any face threat.

2. Impoliteness Strategies

Culpeper goes further than the concept of FTAs by providing a similar framework for impoliteness strategies. Thus, while politeness is used to maintain or enhance face, impoliteness strategies are used to threaten or even deteriorate face. Culpeper (1996) categorizes impoliteness into five primary strategies: bald on record impoliteness, positive impoliteness, negative impoliteness, sarcasm or mock politeness, and withhold politeness.

The following provides a detailed overview of the types of impoliteness strategies that Culpeper (1996) suggested:

1) Bald on Record Impoliteness

This strategy involves performing the face-threatening act (FTA) in the most direct, clear, unambiguous, and concise way possible in situations where face is not irrelevant or minimized (Culpeper, 1996). It is distinct from Brown and Levinson's bald on record politeness, which is used in specific low-threat circumstances such as emergencies, minor face threats (e.g., "Come in" or "Do sit down"), or when the speaker holds significantly more power than the hearer (e.g., "Stop complaining" from a parent to a child). Contrary to this, bald on record impoliteness is intentionally face-damaging (Culpeper, 1996).

In the documentary "Soldier Girls" (Broomfield and Churchill, 1981), impoliteness serves a specific purpose within the military training environment, particularly in interactions between recruits like Private Alves (PA) and the sergeants (S1, S2, S3) (Culpeper, 1996). The example is provided below:

15

S2: **you're nuts you're nuttier than a fruit cake Alves**

<div align="right">(Culpeper, 1996: 362)</div>

This statement is direct, clear, unambiguous, and insults the recipient (Alves) openly without any attempt to mitigate the face threat. It fits the criteria of bald on record impoliteness where the impoliteness is expressed bluntly and explicitly.

2) Positive Impoliteness

Positive impoliteness strategies, according to Culpeper (1996), are meant to undermine the addressee's positive face wants, or their wish to be accepted and included. Culpeper (1996, p. 357) outlines several positive impoliteness strategies that damage the target's positive face by conveying exclusion, disinterest, or a lack of solidarity. These include ignoring or snubbing someone by failing to acknowledge their presence, excluding them from activities, and disassociating by denying common ground or avoiding interaction. Speakers may also show disinterest, unconcern, or lack of empathy, use inappropriate identity markers like formal titles in close relationships or nicknames in distant ones, and employ obscure or secretive language to exclude the target. Other strategies involve seeking disagreement by raising sensitive topics, making the target uncomfortable through inappropriate jokes or excessive small talk, and using taboo words or derogatory names to demean them. For example:

SI   : **bullshit** tell that **god damn** lie to someone
PA   : I didn't sergeant
SI   : that believes your **ass** private you've already been
PA   :
SI   : proven to be a damn habitual liar

<div align="right">(Culpeper, 1996:360)</div>

The sergeants' use of positive impoliteness strategies is evident in their deployment of taboo words such as "bullshit," "ass," "damn," "goddamn," and "hell" in a relatively formal setting like the sergeant's office. It serves to assert dominance and challenge the private's assertions directly, reflecting a deliberate attempt to disregard norms of polite discourse and to provoke a response.

3) Negative Impoliteness

According to Culpeper (1996), negative impoliteness is defined as strategies used to undermine the addressee's negative face wants, or their desire for independence and freedom from authority. Culpeper (1996, p. 358) identifies negative impoliteness strategies that damage the target's negative face. These include instilling fear, using condescension or ridicule to assert superiority, belittling the target, and invading their space, either physically or by discussing overly intimate matters. Speakers may also associate the target with negative traits, using pronouns like "I" and "you," or highlight their indebtedness to reinforce obligations. Below is an example of negative impoliteness:

> S1   : you're the one who is running your **little mouth** again you're the one intimidating and threatening my squad leaders.
>
> (Culpeper, 1996:363)

S1 uses the diminutive "little" to belittle Private Alves, referring to her as having a "little mouth". This diminutive term diminishes the importance of Alves's speech and suggests that her words are insignificant. S1 also explicitly associates Alves with negative aspects by criticizing her for "running her little mouth again". This phrase implies that Alves talks too much or speaks out of turn, which is perceived as a negative behavior in a military context where discipline and order are paramount. By explicitly linking Alves with negative behavior ("intimidating and threatening my squad leaders"), S2 positions her as a troublemaker or insubordinate, further reinforcing the negative perception.

4) Sarcasm or Mock Politeness

Culpeper (1996) suggests that this strategy involves performing the FTA with politeness strategies that are obviously insincere, remaining surface-level but intended to offend. This concept accords with Leech's (1983, as cited in Culpeper 1996) notion of irony in which the offense is conveyed indirectly through an implication. According to Leech, the Irony Principle (IP) is a means of offending the hearer without actually violating the Politeness

Principle (PP) so that the hearer is led to the point of offence. However, this use of sarcasm can be considered as socially undesirable because it increases hostility rather than fosters social harmony, which is the reverse of Brown and Levinson's off-record politeness. While sarcasm is mock politeness for social conflict, banter is mock impoliteness for social cohesion (Culpeper, 1996). The example is provided below:

> S1   : you really **impress** people with your little act girl
>
> (Culpeper, 1996:363)

The word "impress" typically conveys a favorable judgment, but here it is clearly false. S1's use of "impress" is intended to mock Alves, implicating extreme disapproval instead of genuine praise. This sarcastic remark highlights S1's underlying disdain while maintaining a veneer of politeness.

5) Withhold Politeness

Culpeper (1996) notes that withhold politeness refers to the failure to perform the politeness act, and this could be considered as intentional impoliteness. Brown and Levinson (1987) note the face-damaging implications of not communicating politeness: only when politeness is expected and not given, it is considered that a polite attitude is not present. For instance, not saying "thank you" to the person who offered you a gift is considered to be an deliberate impoliteness (Culpeper, 1996).

2.1.3 Impoliteness and Humorous Effects

Conversational humor can emerge from impoliteness strategies when face-threatening acts (FTAs) are reframed as amusing rather than hostile (Dynel, 2016, p. 117). Unlike traditional views that equate impoliteness with conflict, Dynel (2016) argues that impoliteness can function as a comedic device, particularly in scripted media, where stylized verbal aggression is often used to entertain rather than offend. The success of this transformation depends on two key factors: the speaker's intention to amuse, often through exaggeration or stylization (Dynel, 2016, p. 117), and the hearer's evaluation, where the recipient must recognize the humor rather than perceiving genuine hostility (Dynel, 2016, p. 118). If these

conditions are met, impoliteness becomes a comedic act rather than an aggressive one, though humor perception may vary, leading to divergent evaluations—where the target of the joke may feel insulted while the audience finds it entertaining (Dynel, 2016).

2.1.3.1 Conceptual Categories of Humorous Impoliteness

While Dynel (2016) does not explicitly categorize mechanisms of humorous impoliteness, her framework provides insight into how impoliteness contributes to humor. Four key strategies can be identified based on her analysis:

1. Mock (im)politeness, which occurs when an utterance appears impolite but is intended as playful, suspending normal politeness expectations for comedic effect (Dynel, 2016, p. 118). The humor arises from the contrast between the apparent face-threat and the actual lack of hostile intent, as the audience recognizes the exaggerated nature of the remark (Dynel, 2016, p. 118).

2. Strategic (im)politeness with benign intent, which refers to deliberate violations of politeness norms that are meant to entertain rather than harm (Dynel, 2016, p. 117). The humor in such cases depends on the audience's ability to recognize the playfulness of impoliteness, ensuring that the utterance is perceived as comedic rather than offensive.

3. (Un)truthfulness and pragmatic ambiguity, which contribute to humor through irony, sarcasm, and exaggerated misrepresentations of reality (Dynel, 2016, p. 121). The audience derives amusement from recognizing contradictions and decoding the speaker's intent, aligning with the idea that humor emerges from flouting conversational maxims (Dynel, 2016, p. 121).

4. Interactional status and divergent evaluations, which influence humor perception based on who experiences the impoliteness. The target of an impolite remark may feel insulted, while external observers perceive it as humorous entertainment (Dynel, 2016, Abstract). This effect is particularly pronounced in scripted media discourse, where characters

frequently serve as the "butt" of jokes for the audience's amusement (Dynel, 2016, p. 117).

2.1.3.2 Conditions for Humor through Impoliteness

Drawing from Dynel's (2016) theoretical perspective, this research posits that impoliteness can be effectively transformed into humor provided specific criteria are met. These criteria involve:

1. Clear Intentionality – The speaker must signal their humorous intent, often through exaggeration, tone, or contextual cues (Dynel, 2016, p. 118).

2. Shared Understanding – The audience must recognize the suspension of politeness norms as a playful rather than hostile act (Dynel, 2016, p. 117).

3. Emotional Detachment – The audience must remain psychologically distanced from the face-threat, allowing them to enjoy the humor without feeling complicit in real offense (Dynel, 2016, p. 118).

4. Benign Context – The setting should minimize real-world consequences, making it clear that the impoliteness is intended as entertainment rather than genuine aggression (Dynel, 2016, p. 119).

5. Pragmatic Awareness – If humor is driven by irony or sarcasm, it depends on conversational maxims that signal deviation from literal meaning, prompting the audience to interpret the utterance beyond its surface-level content (Dynel, 2016, p. 121).

2.2 Method

2.2.1 Research Method

This study is a descriptive-qualitative study that examines humor and impoliteness strategies in the *Family Guy* episode" 15 of season 11 entitled "Turban Cowboy." The main goal is to explore how humor and impoliteness are used to portray different themes and interactions in this particular episode. Specifically, the study aims to identify the various types of humor used in conversations between characters and analyze how impoliteness is strategically employed within these humorous exchanges.

2.2.2 Data, Population, and Sample

The data in this study consist of utterances that contain humor and/or impoliteness, specifically those that align with Dynel's (2009) conversational humor framework and Culpeper's (1996) impoliteness strategies. While the population includes all utterances spoken in the episode, not all are considered data. To qualify as data, an utterance must meet at least one of the following criteria:

1. The utterance contains humor, classified according to Dynel's (2009) framework.

2. The utterance contains impoliteness, as defined by Culpeper's (1996) impoliteness strategies.

3. The utterance demonstrates a combination of humor and impoliteness, where impoliteness contributes to humor construction, analyzed through Dynel's (2016) framework.

Given the extensive number of utterances, this study employs purposive sampling to ensure that only the most relevant dialogues those explicitly demonstrating both humor and impoliteness are selected for analysis.

2.2.3 Method of Collecting Data

The data collection process employs the observation method. For this study, the data collection involves the following steps:

1. Accessing and watching the "Turban Cowboy" episode of *Family Guy* from https://dl.tabar.sbs/English/Series/Family.Guy/S11/Family.Guy.S11E1 5.720p.WEB.DL.PaHe.EmpireBestTv.mkv on June 24, 2024.

2. Obtaining and reading the script of the "Turban Cowboy" episode from https://transcripts.foreverdreaming.org/viewtopic.php?t=21330 on June 24, 2024.

3. Identifying utterances that meet at least one of the study's selection criteria: (1) containing humor (Dynel, 2009), (2) exhibiting impoliteness (Culpeper, 1996). These selected utterances are then analyzed for their humor types, impoliteness strategies, and humor mechanisms.

4. Categorizing the selected dialogues based on the identified humor types and impoliteness strategies, then analyzing how impoliteness strategies enhance humor by examining the humor mechanisms.

2.2.4 Method of Analyzing Data

The data from the "Turban Cowboy" episode of *Family Guy* are analyzed using a distributional method, which involves identifying and categorizing conversational humor types based on Dynel's (2009) framework and analyzing impoliteness strategies using Culpeper's (1996) model. To address the third research question, the analysis examines how impoliteness strategies contribute to humor by assessing their role in humorous exchanges, applying Dynel's (2016) framework. Each excerpt is analyzed in terms of context, utterances, humor type, impoliteness strategy, and its role in humor creation to ensure a comprehensive sociopragmatic evaluation.