

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the basis for the existence of this research, which includes the background of the study, the research question, and the goals of the study, which aim to provide readers with an understanding of the urgency of this research.

1.1 The Background of the Study

Humour is an important component of communication because it allows the speaker to entertain others while expressing ideas, opinions, and social criticism without offending others (Kuipers, 2011; Martin, 2007.; Meyer, 2000). In linguistic studies, humour is viewed not only as entertainment but also as a communicative process that is constructed through language use, including conversation (Attardo, 1994). In conversations, speakers are generally expected to cooperate by providing clear, relevant, truthful, and sufficient information. When such cooperation occurs, communication runs smoothly, and the intended meaning can be understood by the listener. However, speakers may intentionally communicate in unexpected ways to create implied meanings and produce certain effects, such as humour (Grice, 1975). Therefore, studying humour from a pragmatic perspective helps to understand how language is used to construct humorous interactions (Attardo, 1994).

A similar construction of humour can be observed in stand-up comedy shows, especially when comedians impersonate two different characters and create dialogue between them. Comedians usually generate humour by presenting conversations in which one character responds in an unexpected way. This construction can be seen in Trevor Noah's stand-up comedy, *How the British Took Over India*. In his performance, Trevor Noah impersonates the colonizer and the colonized to humorously illustrate how the British colonized India. As the conversation unfolds, the audience naturally expects it to follow ordinary conversational patterns. However, the colonized consistently gives unexpected responses, for example, by interpreting the colonizer's statements differently, shifting the topic, and giving irrelevant information. As a result, these responses

repeatedly cause laughter by interrupting the audience's expected conversational flow. This indicates that the humour results from the dynamic interaction between the two characters rather than from individual jokes.

The conversational patterns can be found in Trevor Noah's performance and explained through a pragmatic perspective. Grice (1975) argues that speakers are generally expected to follow conversational rules by providing clear, relevant, sufficient, and accurate information. However, speakers can intentionally flout these rules to convey implied meanings. In his performance, Trevor Noah plays the colonized as a character who frequently flouts conversational maxims, causing the conversation to shift into unexpected topics. The mismatch between the audience's expectation and the actual response then produces an incongruity, which is recognized as a part of the main mechanisms of humour (Attardo, 1994).

Many previous studies generally focus to examining the Cooperative Principle and Incongruity Theory separately, resulting in a limited explanation of how humour is constructed through the interaction between flouted maxims and incongruity. In Trevor Noah's *How the British Took Over India*, the humorous effect does not arise from a single factor. Instead, humour develops step by step. The colonized's unexpected responses first flout conversational maxims and then create the consequences. These implicatures then create an incongruity between the audience's expectations and the actual responses given. Because this interconnected process has received relatively little attention, it is important to examine how these two theoretical frameworks work together to elaborate how humour is constructed.

In this context, this study becomes important because it aims to explain how humour is constructed through the interaction between flouted maxims and incongruity, rather than merely identifying isolated linguistic features. This study offers a more thorough explanation of how humour is created and why it becomes humorous by combining Grice's Cooperative Principle and Incongruity Theory. Specifically, the Cooperative Principle reveals how Trevor Noah generates humour through the colonized's flouting of maxims, while Incongruity Theory explains why these unexpected responses lead to laughter by flouting the colonizer's expectations. Therefore, this research is expected to provide a deeper

comprehension of humour construction in Trevor Noah's *How the British Took Over India* and contribute to pragmatic studies, especially on humour in stand-up comedy.

1.2 The Research Question

How does Trevor Noah construct the humour in his stand-up comedy titled *How the British Took Over India*?

1.3 The Research Goals

- 1 To explain how humour is constructed in Trevor Noah's *How the British Took Over India* through flouted maxims and incongruity.
- 2 To demonstrate how Grice's Cooperative Principle and Incongruity Theory complement each other in explaining humour construction