

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Language is very important in communication. One must know how to conduct his speech well in order to make the conversation run smoothly. It is not easy to do this, but there is a language strategy that can be applied to fulfill these purposes, namely the ‘politeness strategy.’ Politeness strategy is a strategy which is required to stabilize the relationship with others. In politeness strategy, there are some important factors that need to be considered to start a good interaction. Those factors include participants, context or setting, and function of the utterances. Participants here mean people who are engaged in an interaction. Context or setting deals with where the interaction takes place and whether it is a formal or informal interaction. Function of the utterances deals with why people do the communication and its purpose. (Brown and Levinson 91)

The topic of this thesis is about how people fail in using the suitable politeness strategy in a relationship within the setting of workplace. In a workplace setting, in order to be respected by the other colleagues as well as the superior, someone needs to know how to apply the appropriate politeness strategy

considering the three factors which I have stated in the previous paragraph. Unfortunately, there are still many people who apply the inappropriate politeness strategies in their relationship with other people of the same level or the hierarchical relationship. Later, what will become the main discussion in this thesis is the misapplication of politeness strategy and its humorous effects produced.

Some people might not be aware of their use of language in a relationship. Should they not use politeness strategies well in communication, funny things will appear or other people may get hurt or angry. In fact, this thing often happens in a company and as a result, it might ruin the relationship between the superior and the subordinates such as the employees. When dealing with a participant, someone needs to consider his power or authority over the hearer, the imposition that might occur when someone is distracting the other while the person is busy working and the relationship between the speaker and the hearer, whether the relationship is close or distant.

The title of my thesis is “The Occurrence of Humour Due to the Miscalculation of Politeness Strategies Used in the Series The Office”. I choose this topic because I want to analyze the funny things which might occur in a relationship among colleagues or between a subordinate and the superior in terms of politeness strategies. Furthermore, I want to help people who often encounter problems in their workplace to be capable of maintaining a good rapport with their superiors and colleagues. The significance of the topic I analyze is to make people aware of the importance of politeness strategy; therefore, they can apply it well in the workplace.

Politeness strategy belongs to the field of pragmatics, a branch of applied linguistics, since it deals with how people convey their contextual meaning within the utterances they make. In politeness strategy, we will have to be familiar with the term 'face.' This term should not be defined literally because it actually means 'a self image of a person.' Later, I will use the theories stated by Brown and Levinson, the linguists who discuss politeness strategy in details, in their book entitled Politeness. There are the calculation of face threatening act and several kinds of politeness strategies that I will discuss further. In analysing the data, I relate them to the theory of humour by McGhee and Suls. We also need to be aware that there are two views of humour. Holmes states that "something is humorous only if it was intended to amuse ... Others consider humour from the listener's or the audience's point of view, and some identify humour by the listener's response" (163).

The source of data that I am going to analyze is a famous American comedy television series entitled The Office which was adapted from the original British series. This series consist of seven seasons altogether. It is about the daily job activities of a manager whose name is Michael, and his subordinates named Jim, Dwight, Pam, Toby, and Roy. The rivalry among some of the workers, the love affairs between the workers, and even problems in the office are the elements that make this series interesting as well as humorous. I am interested in this film because I can find lots of scenes which contain the use of politeness strategies; besides, the element of comedy together with the story line is packed well and the portrayal of the daily job activities in the office is also creative. In this film, how

the manager, the employees and the warehouse workers interact with one another is clearly depicted. Moreover, the language registers used among them are various.

I hope this analysis can be used as an additional reference for the next researchers, especially those who are interested in discussing politeness strategy and its humorous effect in the workplace.

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1.2 Statement of the Problem

Here are the statements of the problems of this thesis:

1. Which politeness strategies are miscalculated by the characters in this TV series?
2. How may this miscalculation of politeness strategy lead to humour?

1.3 Purpose of the Study

There are two purposes of this thesis:

1. To identify the politeness strategies which are miscalculated by the characters in this TV series.
2. To find out how the miscalculation of politeness strategy may lead to humour.

1.4 Methods of the Research

Firstly, I decide the main topic of this thesis, namely politeness, which belongs to pragmatics. I get the theories about politeness from a book written by

Brown and Levinson and some journals. Then I gather the data for this thesis from the American television series The Office. This series is in the form of DVD and is divided into five seasons altogether. I take some parts of the series which I think are appropriate for the analysis of politeness strategies which lead to humour. After I gather adequate data, I will analyze and synthesize them and draw a conclusion.

1.5 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis consists of four chapters. The first chapter is Chapter One, the Introduction. This chapter contains the Background of the Study, Statement of the Problem, Purpose of the Study, Methods of the Research, and Organization of the Thesis. The second chapter is Chapter Two, the Theoretical Framework. The next chapter is Chapter Three, containing the analysis of the miscalculation of politeness strategies used in the series The Office which leads to humour. The last chapter is Chapter Four, the Conclusion. Then, it is followed by the Bibliography and the Appendix.