Chapter 2
Theoretical Background

This chapter will explain the theories which are used to analyze the data. There are several theories explained, such as definition of pragmatics, Cooperative Principle (CP), Conversational Implicature, and theory of humor in situational comedy.

2.1. Pragmatics

Levinson in Huang (2007, p. 2) defined Pragmatic as ‘the systematic study of meaning by virtue of, or dependent on, the use of language’ which covers the field of implicature, presupposition, speech acts, and deixis. Although the difference between semantic and pragmatics study cannot be clearly determined, there are 2 different purposes which become the main concern of them. Semantic deals with sentence meaning whereas pragmatics concerns with utterance meaning (Leech, 1983). While semantic relates the literal meaning with the entities of the world, pragmatics studies about the meaning which being communicated by the speaker and hearer. Leech (1983) also added ‘Pragmatic study concerns about utterance meaning in relation to speech situation’. It comprises of 5 aspects which called speech situation. The first aspect is speaker and hearer as the ones who conduct the communication. Second, the context of utterance which provides background settings that shared by both parties. Third, the purpose of utterance conveyed in the utterance. Fourthly, a speech act which reflects the action performed in the utterance, i.e. apologizing, promising, swearing, etc. Fifth, the product of verbal act of how an utterance conveys the speaker’s intention through speech act. For example, when someone utters “Would you please be quite?” can be perceived as a question, a request, or a sentence (Leech, 1983). These speech situations can help determine the speaker’s meaning which may be different from what the speaker express.

Thomas (1995, p. 22) believed that pragmatic is a meaning in interaction which ‘involves negotiation of meaning between speaker and hearer, the context of utterance and the meaning potential of an utterance’. Speaker’s meaning consists of 2
important aspects which help the interpretation. First is utterance meaning which determine the *sense* (semantic meaning of words) and *reference* (a context of who and what is being referred to). Second, pragmatic force conveys speaker’s communicative intention of the utterance. Fail to fulfill these aspects will misinterpret the speaker’s meaning.

It is concluded that to interpret pragmatics meaning, there are more to observe than the remark made by the speaker. Moreover, in communication there are 2 parties who may have different interpretations and intention upon what has been talked about. Hence, a certain principle is needed to be established as a guidance to conduct a smooth communication.

### 2.2. Cooperative Principle

Grice (1975) in ‘*Logic and Conversation*’ cited in Thomas (1995, p. 61-62) stated the cooperative principle “make your contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged.” Thomas (1995) also added that this principle does not mean people must communicate within such constrained rules, but rather guide the communication with regularities in interaction. Thus, cooperative principle was designed to support the speaker and hearer to conduct successful communication by using the 4 maxims of conversation. A speaker who follows or observes the Cooperative Principle generates no implicature, meanwhile non-observance of maxims resulting on implied meaning.

#### 2.2.1. Quantity

Grice (1975) in Yule (1996) stated that one should “Make your contribution as informative as is required” (for the current purposes of the exchange)” and “Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.” For example, in the dialogue:

1. A : Where’s the chocolate?
   B : It is in my bedroom.
B answer has the right amount of information which directly fulfills the answer that A demands.

2.2.2. Quality

The sub maxim of quality state that in giving information, one should “Be truthful” (Grice, 1975 cited in Yule, 1995). For example, in a sentence

2. “The first president of Indonesia is Soekarno”

The sentence has obeyed the maxim of quality because it is valued as true, and there is evidence that support the statement. Hence, in order to follow maxim of quality, Grice suggests 2 items of 1) Do not say what you believe to be false 2) Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

2.2.3. Relation

Grice (1975) in Yule (1995) stated that one should provide a relevant responds to an utterance. Muhartoyo (2013) suggested that the participant should use related subject which recognized by both parties.

3. A : I’m out of petrol
   B : There’s a garage around the corner

A statement states that A is looking for a petrol station to fill his tank. B then answer with pointing out the location of the nearest garage, so that A can fill his tank. Thus, the dialogue observes the maxim of relation by being relevant to the context.

2.2.4. Manner

Grice (1975) in Yule (1995) suggested for being perspicuous in making utterance. He also emphasizes the perspicuous by 1) avoid obscurity of expression, in which using expression that is not understood by others. 2) avoid being ambiguous ,
or saying something that have multiple meanings. 3) *avoid unnecessary prolixity*, or extensive use of words, and lastly 4) *to be orderly* in conveying an utterance.

4. John went to McDonald’s and bought 2 hamburgers.

The statement is conveyed in the right manner because “John” has to go to McDonalds first, before buying 2 hamburgers. Otherwise, it is impossible for him to buy the hamburgers, because it is sold in McDonalds.

Below is the example of a dialogue which contributes to the 4 maxims.

5. Husband : Where are the keys?
Wife : They’re on the table in the hall.

According to Thomas (1995), the wife has successfully observed the four maxims of being truthful (Quality), providing right amount of information (Quantity), clearly answer the question (Manner), and gives the husband relevant answer to his question (Relation).

The maxim of conversation act as a set of specification to communicate sincerely, relevantly, and clearly while providing sufficient information (Levinson, 1983). Conversational maxims facilitate a rational cooperative exchange. However, this kind of communication does not always happen as suggested, but speakers and hearers can still interact by relying on people assumption of conforming to the maxim (Grice (1975) in Levinson (1983). So, even though it seems the question does not request for immediate answer, such as example (3), it maintains co-operation toward the maxim to give the required information.

### 2.3. Conversational Implicature

Implicature can be described as interpreting what is said to what is implied (Thomas, 1995). Thomas (1995) also explained that to imply means indirectly deliver some meaning through language. Implicature is one of the mechanisms to produce indirect speech, which occurs when there is a mismatch between expressed meaning and implied meaning (Thomas, 1995). She also added that indirectness
provides series of benefits that makes conversation more such as i) make one’s language more/less interesting ii) to increase force of one’s message iv) competing goals iv) politeness / regard for ‘face’.

Horn (2004, p.3) in Huang (2007, p. 27) suggested that conversational implicature is ‘a component of speaker meaning that constitutes an aspect of what is meant in a speaker’s utterance without being part what it said’. When a speaker and hearer observe the Cooperative Principle, they generate no implicature because what is said has conveyed the intended meaning of the speaker and hearer.

Huang (2007, p.29) suggested two choices of using CP in which 1) one can abandon all the cooperative principle, or 2) interpret that the non-observant maxim has generated implied meaning by maintaining deeper level of co-operative principle. Below is the list of 5 major ways of non-observant maxim which used to generate implied meaning namely, flouting, violating, infringing, opting-out, and suspending the maxims (Thomas, 1995).

2.4. Non-Observance of Maxim

2.4.1. Flouting

Thomas (1995) pointed out that flouting means fail to observe the maxims in order to lead the hearer to look for implied meaning. Speaker may not use the suggested maxim in the cooperative principle in order to make the hearer realize that the speaker is intentionally generates an implied meaning. Flouting can generate figurative language such as irony, metaphor, meiosis, and hyperbole (Grice, 1975). Simpson (2011, p.34) stated ‘Irony has a frequent and common definition: saying what is contrary to what is meant.” (cited in Savkaničová, 2013). Meanwhile, metaphor expresses something which has more of less fancifully resemblance to the mentioned substance (Grice, 1975). Meiosis is an understatement which meant to present greater effect, whereas hyperbole is an overstatement. It can be conclude that these figurative languages can be produced from the further meaning which generated from flouting maxim.
2.4.1.1. **Flouting Maxim of Quality**

Flout maxim of quality means breaching the rule by telling the untruth or saying something without adequate evidence. As Grice exemplified in Knowles and Moon (2006, p.68), a remark of “You are the cream in my coffee” breaches the maxim of quality because it is untrue. Thus speaker should interpret the remark by other possible meaning, in this case by drawing parallel between the hearer and the cream. Grice (1989) stated that ironic utterance is generated through exploit quality maxim. For example, a ‘patently false’ remark provokes the hearer to look for other possible interpretation, which generate flouting maxim of quality (Thomas, 1995).

2.4.1.2. **Flouting Maxim of Quantity**

In flouting maxim of quantity, speaker gives less or more information than required to the hearer (Thomas, 1995, p.69).

*Petruchio has come to ask Baptista for his daughter's hand in marriage.*

Petruchio : And you, good sir! Pray have you not a daughter Call’d Katherina, fair and virtuous?

Bapista : I have a daughter, sir, call’d Katherina.

Bapista implies that he does have a daughter called Katherina, but he also believes that she does not possess the virtues that Petruchio claimed. By omitting partial information, Bapista has deliberately flouts the quantity maxim to generate the implication. Instead of overtly states that his own daughter is not fair and virtuous in front of her potential lover, Baptista implies remark through implicature.

2.4.1.3. **Flouting Maxim of Relation**

Flouting maxim of relevance can be done by producing a remark that irrelevant by changing the topic or failing to directly address the topic (Thomas, 1995). This flouting usually used to implies that the hearer is not interesting to continue the conversation and require speaker to change the topic.
A: Mrs. X is an old bag.
B: The weather has been quite delightful this summer hasn’t it?
– + > B changes the subject to avoid A’s remark.

**2.4.1.4. Flouting Maxim of Manner**

Flouting maxim of manner breaches the rule of maxim of manner to convey deeper meaning. It can be generated using obscure expression, ambiguous meaning, unnecessary prolixity, and not being orderly.

A: Let’s get the kids something.
B: Okay, but I veto I-C-E C-R-E-A-M-S (Levinson)

B’s answer is obscure expression because which can be simply conveyed by stating the word “ice cream”. However, B has done so to avoid the children (who are within their hearing distance) from hearing the word “Ice cream”.

**2.4.2. Violating**

Grice (1975) in Thomas (1995) stated that violating a maxim means giving unostentatious statement which is liable to mislead. Unlike flouting which trigger the hearer to perceive the implicature, violating a maxim prevents hearer from understanding the implicature. Here are the examples of violating the conversation maxim.

**2.4.2.1. Violation of the Quantity Maxim**

Supervisor : Did you read the articles and write up the review of literature?
Supervisee : I certainly read the articles. Weren’t they captivating!

The supervisee only mentions that he/she already read the articles, but hides the fact that he/she has not made the review of literature. This lack amount of
information is a violation of quantity maxim because without stating the adequate information, he or she has implies that the required task has not done.

2.4.2.2. Violation of the Quality Maxim

A : You stained my dress with red wine, you klutz!
B : Nobody will notice.

B states that nobody will notice the red stain on A’s dress instead of making proper apology. B is violating maxim of quality because by denying the stain, which is clearly noticeable, he has express the untruth. Hoping that A would agree that nobody will notice the stain and will settle the problem, B is escaping the responsibility of apologizing or cover up the stain.

2.4.2.3. Violation of the Relation Maxim

A : Did you like my presentation?
B : The attendance was impressive, wasn’t it?

B is giving irrelevant answer to A’s question, which is considered as being overtly uncooperative with the question. The change implies that for some reason, B does not want to answer A’s question. Given the possible reasons of a) B did not like the presentation or b) B did not watch the presentation. But, by maintaining the context, B give an answer which can be implied as no matter how bad or good is the presentation, the attendance of the audience are more than enough. Thus, B can avoid giving his personal opinion which is demanded by A.

2.4.2.4. Violation of the Manner Maxim

A : Where is Professor Fowler’s office?
B : Latitude 39 degrees, 7 minutes, 48 seconds, longitude 56 degrees, 37 minutes, 12 seconds, elevation 482 feet above sea level, door faces 4 degrees north of due west.
A : Thanks a bunch, I'll go right there. Just let me get out my GPS device.

Here the maxim of manner is violated through B’s answer which fails to give brief information and poses an obscure expression to answer the question about Prof. Fowler’s office (The Semiotic Advertising, 2012).

2.4.3. Opting out

Speaker refuses to co-operate the maxim as required (Thomas, 1995). Opting out may occur in a situation where someone is not in a position to give the information; required to breach the maxim, or choose to breach one maxim in the case of clash of maxim, which lead to non-fulfillment of the rules (Martinich, 1984). For example, people who have the right to remain silent, or doctors who guard the patient’s confidentiality.

Detective : Has the defendant ever told you she hated her father and wanted him dead?
Shrink : Such information is confidential and it would be unethical to share it with you.

2.4.4. Infringing

Fail to observe maxim without any intention to be deceiving or generating any implicature is called ‘infringe’ the maxim (Thomas, 1995). It occurs to people who is drunk, foreigners who does not have the ability to certain language, people who have impaired cognitive performance, and so on. Thus, it can be said that infringing is a non-observant that is done unintentionally.

English speaker : Would you like ham or salad on your sandwich?
Non-English speaker : Yes.
The non-English speaker does not intentionally convey implied meaning, but simply does not understand the question which conveyed in a language she or he does not understand.

2.4.5. Suspending

The speaker gives less information although they have the required information due to some reason.

‘…regularly provide less information than is required by their conversational partner, even though they have access to the necessary information’ (Keenan, 1976, p.70 as cited in Thomas, 1995, p.76).

‘Suspension of maxims may be cultural specific or specific to cultural events’ (Thomas, 1995, p. 77). In obituary, suspending maxim is used in which the name of the decease is not mentioned. It also occurs in poetry, telegrams, and jokes. For example, British acting community refers the play ‘Macbeth’ as ‘The Scottish Play’ because it is considered to bring bad luck to mention the name directly (Thomas, 1995). When a defendant is protected by the right to remain silent, he or she suspends the information (Martinich, 1984).

2.5. Humor Theory

As cited by Ermida (1968, p. 11) verbal humor ‘having signifier which conceals more than one signified’. To experience humor, one should be able to decipher its implied meaning. This characteristic is similar to the use of implicature in daily conversation.

Humor is ‘Something that makes a person laugh or smile’ (Ross, 1998, p. 1). Ross (1998) stated that ‘humor is a way in which people show allegiance to a group.’ People have different response to humor because humor relies on context, time, and place. Norrick (2009, [abstract]) suggested audience’s solidarity and mutual recognition of common ground can be established through conversational humor. In addition to tightening social bond, humor also filtering specific people who have the
shared knowledge similar common ground. Thus laughter has a social-bonding function, peacemaking function, which leads to health-boosting function (Wilkins & Eisenbraun, 2009). As people feel accepted by the society, they are most likely to feel happy.

2.5.1. Superiority Theory

Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) as the originator of the theory stated that laughter is ‘a kind of sudden glory’ which can increase self-esteem. According to Monro (1988), superiority humor is derisive in which it looks down on whatever being laughed or identified as inferior. Laughter is provoked through triumph, or superiority in contrast to those who is wrong, defeated, or inferior (Buijzen & Velkenburg, 2004). One of the characters of superiority humor, according to Bergson (cited in Monro, 1988) is the inflexibility of adjusting oneself to the reality.

2.5.2. Incongruity Theory

Incongruity is first coined by Immanuel Kant as “something that arises from sudden transformation of a strained expectation into nothing”. Incongruity is regarded as “something unexpected, out of context, inappropriate, unreasonable, illogical, exaggerated and so forth” (McGhee, 1979, p.10). This humor is provoked by allowing people to use cognitive capacity to notice incongruous event (Buijzen & Velkenburg, 2004). Incongruity humor, according to Ross (1998) is construed upon conflict between what is expected and what actually occurs in the joke; caused by an ambiguity at some level of language; and a surprising punch line.

Furthermore, incongruity humor employs 3 main aspects of literalization, reversal, and exaggeration (Taflinger, 1996). Literalization has occurred in the dialogue, in which B has perceived A’s request as a literal expression. For example:

A is asking for help to B (a robot). B, fails to interpret the implied meaning of this particular speaking pattern of figurative language, gives A his actual robotic hand.
A: give me a hand.
B: (gives an actual hand)

Reversal is reversing the normal and expected to the opposite. As Kress (2005) states that reversal challenges our expectation and assumption about something. Exaggeration is blowing up the normal thing out of its proportion. The practice of hyperbole is an example of exaggeration of expression.

In presenting an incongruous situation, irony is regularly practiced. Colebrook states that irony is ‘saying what is contrary to what is meant’ (Simpson, 2011, p. 34). Inference of non-conventional and opposition achieved by ignoring basic conversational strategies is the mechanism of producing irony (Simpson, 2011). Thus, in incongruity humor, irony is regularly applied.

2.5.3. Relief Theory

Freud (1963) cited in (Monro, 1988) believed that laughter free us from repressed natural impulses (censor) such as sexual and malicious thought, providing relief through laughter. From the theories above, it can be seen that the main function of humor is to eliminate restrain from human thought. Relief theory applied when a person humorously state something that has been kept inside the mind to be expended. Once the person able to relief the tension through humor, he or she will feel less stress. Berlyne (1972) and Meyer (2000) as cited by Buijzen & Valkenburg (2004) stated that physiological tension needs to be reduced from time to time by laughing.

2.5.4. Benign Violation Theory

Benign Violation is a theory that explained how moral violation and negative emotion can trigger laughter and disgust simultaneously (McGraw and Warren, 2010). The situations which allow such humor to be conducted is:
a) the presence of an alternative norm suggesting that the situation is acceptable.
b) weak commitment to the violated norm
c) psychological distance from the violation

Things that become the target of the violation are personal dignity, linguistic norms, social norms, and moral norms (McGraw & Warren, 2010). Slapstick like Tom and Jerry consists of harmful acts. But, because it is presented in cartoon in which the characters are alive despite of the harm they suffer, it provides psychological distance from the audience. Thus the harmful actions appear to be benign.

### 2.6. Situational Comedy

As defined by Encyclopedia Britannica, Situation Comedy is “radio or television comedy series that involves a continuing cast of characters in a succession of episodes. Often the characters are markedly different types thrown together by circumstance and occupying a shared environment such as an apartment building or workplace. Sitcoms are typically half an hour in length; they are either taped in front of a studio audience or employ canned applause, and they are marked by verbal sparring and rapidly resolved conflicts. Encyclopedia Britanica”

Sander (2012) defined Situational Comedy as a situation, in which includes story with comic intent. Sitcom has consistent elements when it comes to characters and themes. Major characters remain unchanged, although each episode has a special appearance from the guest star. Situation comedy is filmed in front of live studio audience whose voice is recorded to be processed as a laugh track. The laugh track than used as desired by the film maker to give laugh cue when humor appear on the scene, or exploited to realize the desired effects. By using daily conversation, the dialogue also manipulated to make the audience frequently laugh (Xiaosu, 2009).

As stated by Taflinger (1996), the plot of situational comedy follows six criteria of comedy, such as societal norms, incongruity, appeal to intellect rather than
emotion, and the audience perception which believes that the occurrences are harmless. He also added that the characters are fundamentally human, and also ‘react in a mechanical manner to stimuli’.

2.7. Review of Previous Study

The previous research regarding maxim was done by Mária Savkaníčová (2013) in “Pragmatic Analysis of Ironic Humour in Black Books”. Here, the author explains how the characters in the British situational comedy Black Books flout the maxim in order to present the creation of humorous irony. The first part of the theory explains about humor and laughter, which continues to the Cooperative Principle, implication theory, and the pragmatic irony. There are several dialogues which taken as the object of analysis. It is concluded that one or more maxims of CP needs to be broken to produce ironic humor.

The second research is a scientific paper by Shuqin Hu (2012) from College of Foreign Languages, Qingdao University of Science and Technology, entitled An Analysis of Humor in The Big Bang Theory from Pragmatic Perspectives. It explains how humor is generated through implicature and the contrast between ostension and inference, maximal relevance, and optimal relevance. According to Relevance Theory, humor comes from the contrast between ostension and inference, maximal relevance and optimal relevance. The object of research is the dialogues from the situational comedy, “The Big Bang Theory”.

Next research is from a thesis entitled “A Study of Conversational Implicature as Found in the Dialogues in Silver Linings Playbook Movie (2012)” by Zeta A. Yoenita from Binus University (2014). The research analyzes the dialogues in the movie “Silver Lining Playbook. It classifies them into particularized and generalized conversational implicature, and non-observance of maxim of flouting and violating. As the nature of implicature is interpreted differently by different people, the writer also provided context of situation. It concludes that the implicature which are mostly used by the character of the movie are particularized implicature. Furthermore, it also explains the function of the implicature, in which the particularized implicature are used to present mockery, humiliation, refusal, complain, and disagreement.
On the other hand, this research presents the application of 5 non-observance of maxims to generate humor in “2 Broke Girls” situational comedy. The research analyzes the dialogues by using 5 non-observance of maxims to find the implied meaning. Furthermore, it observes the effects on theories of humor, namely superiority, incongruity, relief and benign violation theory.