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An Analysis of Humor Styles in the American Legal Sitcom 'SUITS':
A Case Study

Abstract

This qualitative study aimed at identifying and analyzing humor styles used in the American legal sitcom "SUITS", which is paradoxical in a real-life situation. In other words, legal and litigation contexts are often serious and formal. But employing humor use in the legal content is an interesting linguistic aspect that makes this sitcom more compelling. The researcher collected data from three seasons of characters' utterances which were randomly selected to find the content samples of humor styles. The semantic component analysis method was then applied.

The researcher found that humor can be categorized into four distinct typologies, namely: (1) Affiliative humor, (2) Aggressive humor, (3) Self-enhancing humor, and (4) Self-defeating humor. The most prominent humor style used is affiliative humor. The researchers observed that joke speakers often engage in spontaneous, witty joking, and self-deprecating humor including the use of funny narration in everyday life. Aggressive humor is the second most frequently humor style used. Often used when wanting to be sarcastic, speaking hostile, and also implying threats while ridiculing others and disregarding the negative consequences of how others may feel. Most are manipulative and abusive of others just to make themselves feel superior to others. And the remaining two patterns appear relatively less frequently. The semantic components that classify humor styles are divided into five distinct dimensions from the semantic component analysis: (1) Sense, (2) Stance, (3) Characteristic, (4) Purpose, and (5) Additional information. Moreover, the self-defeating humor is highly associated with the stance dimension. This study is highly utilized for individuals seeking comprehensive comprehension and proficient implementation of humor styles, particularly with regard to the application of humor styles theory within the legal context.

Keywords: Humor Styles, Semantic features, Componential analysis, Legal context, Legal sitcom