

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents an overview of this study. It includes the background of the study, research questions, purpose of the study, significance of the study, and clarification of key terms.

Background of the Study

Every day, people from all over the globe are exposed to humor in their lives, whether at school, in their workplaces, their social activities, and even on the internet. Humor is universally recognized by many cultures, as humor is a universal phenomenon that occurred almost everywhere (Sen, 2012). Humor itself is one of the topics that is widely discussed in many fields of study across the history of mankind. As Billig (2005) describes, humor has been discussed since the time of Aristotle and beyond until the present day; humor also has a lot of important roles in society. One such example is described by Meyer (2000) who said that humor is a powerful communication tool, especially for politicians who can use humor as a tool for rallying people into supporting their cause, Nevertheless, humor can have a ‘double-edged sword’ because if it is used too much and too aggressive, it may drive people away from joining a cause (Meyer, 2000). Furthermore, Meyer also believes that humor can also be used as a form of attack against social misbehavior to drive society back to what it considers itself ‘normal’ which Billig (2005) also believed in. Humor also has its uses in the health sector, workplaces, and even education (Raskin, 2008). However, people often overlook the deeper meaning and the use of humor, and consider it merely as a form of amusement, especially if the humor lies within a form of entertainment, namely, a film.

Film, also known as motion pictures, is one of the youngest forms of art medium (Bordwell, Thompson & Smith, 2017). In just a century, film has exploded into something big and sought after by a lot of people that it turns itself into one of modern day’s source of entertainment. Humor and film often go hand-in-hand, and this is proven with many genres of film that integrates humor, as a part of its

narrative. To name a few, take action-comedy, romantic-comedy, sitcom, parody movie, and satirical movies. Humor in films is quite popular, one example of this statement is *Thor: Ragnarok* (Waititi, 2017). This action-adventure comedy film has a total revenue of USD 853,977,126 worldwide, according to Internet Movie Database (n.d) with the estimated film budget of USD 180,000,000. Through this film revenue, one can assume that the film has achieved some degree of success. Humor in this film is one of the reasons why this film is commercially successful. The humor of this film is described by one reviewer as “sublimely silly, saucy, and refuse to take themselves seriously.” (O’Sullivan, 2017). Humor in film is also nothing new. Thousands of comedy films have emerged into cinema for generations. From *L’arroseur arrosé* (1895) to *Jojo Rabbit* (2019), humor in film has been around for a long time. Along with time, the classics of comedy films start to appear, one such case is a film made by Monty Python.

According to their official website, Monty python is a comedy troupe originated from England. They are famous for their unique style of comedy. Their style of comedy often deconstructs its viewers’ perception of everything and anything, even how comedy sketches work (Gent, 2014). Monty Python is known for its tv series, *Monty Python’s Flying Circus* (1969-1974) which is popular in England. Monty python also won several awards such as BAFTA awards for Outstanding British Contribution to Cinema (1988), AFI star award (1998), and European Film Award Lifetime Achievement Award (2001).

However, studying humor is not as simple as assuming a film success through its revenue, award, and prestige. Humor is an interdisciplinary theory that spans across multiple bodies of academics, such as psychology, anthropology, philosophy, medicine, communication, education, linguistics, literature, and so on (Veatch, 1998). Three theories always emerge in many articles regarding humor, which are Superiority theory, incongruity theory, and relief theory (Berger, 1993 Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2004; Meyer, 2000). According to Superiority theory, people laugh because they feel some kind of triumph over others or feel superior to them (Meyer, 2000 as cited by Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2004). The theory suggests that people are amused and joyous when they see themselves as superior to others (Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2004). Then, relief theory theorizes that humor and

laughter are evoked because of the reduction of stress and the release of nervous energy (Meyer, 2000). This reduction of stress may reveal repressed desire and the overcome of social inhibitor (Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2004).

Lastly, incongruity theory suggests that people are laughing at things they find surprising or unexpected (Berger, 1976; Deckers & Divine, 1981; McGhee, 1979 as cited by Meyer, 2000). Moreover, the theory violates the common assumption that people have in their mind to provoke humor (Meyer, 2000). However, the problem with humor studies is that there is no agreement between researchers about which theories that is viable as the answer for humor theory as most of these theories proponent believed that their theory could explain all forms of humor (Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2004). Although many researchers agree that these theories are complementary, researchers believe that both theories can complement each other to explain humorous occurrences (Veatch, 1998; Meyer, 2000; Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2004). Vandaele (2002) combines both incongruity and superiority theory, to constructs a framework called Humor Mechanism, and this framework will be used to answer the research questions in this study.

Previous studies on humor in film are quite plentiful these days. One of the Studies of film and humor is conducted by Fink (2013). In his study, Fink made a case study on an American animated sitcom *The Simpson* (1989-present) and analyzed the film based on its comic approach. Similarly, Juckel, Bellman, and Varan (2016) analyzed other US-based sitcoms to find an approach to identify its style of humor using a topology of humor. Coincidentally, the framework of the study also uses film as a subject of analysis. However, most of the studies mentioned before mainly focus on the narrative aspect of a film as its primary source of humor analysis. Thus, studies that incorporate film elements and humor theories remain scarce.

This study aims to investigate how humor operates in one of Monty python's feature films, *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (1975) using the framework of Vandaele's (2002) humor mechanism, and Bordwell, Thompson, and Smith Film Form (2017). This particular film is selected due to the humorous content this film provides, the absurdity of the humor, and since the Monty Python group directly directs, writes, and acts on this film themselves. Monty python's works are chosen

specifically due to the troupe tendency to write and act their sketches themselves and also due to their cult-like popularity.

Research Questions

This research raises two questions:

1. How does humor operate in the film *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*?
2. What does the humor in the film signify?

Purpose of the Study

This study attempt to analyze how humor operates in Monty Python and the Holy Grail, a feature film made by Monty python Troupe, and attempt to create meaning to what the humor is depicted in the Film.

Significance of the Study

This study is expected to uncover the humorous elements that exist in one of Monty python's feature film, *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*. This study combines film elements and humor theory to open a new approach to examining humor in literary works, especially in film.

Clarification of Terms

Humor

'The ability to be amused by something seen, heard, or thought about, sometimes causing you to smile or laugh, or the quality in something that causes such amusement' (Cambridge dictionary), 'any communication that generates a 'positive cognitive or affective response from listeners''. (Crawford, 1994, as cited by Sen, 2012). From these two definitions, it can be concluded that humor is an ability to make someone laugh or smile by evoking the feeling of amusement to their senses.

Incongruity

Incongruity is a violation of the expected pattern that provokes humorous responses onto its receiver (Buijzen & Valkenburg, 2004). In this study, it refers to a 'mismatch' between what is expected and what is happening.

Superiority

Superiority theory is a condition triggered by the feeling of superior from others (Sen, 2012). It means that superiority humor evoked at the expense of other people.

1.1 Organization of Paper

This study is organized in the following order:

a. ABSTRACT

The abstract gives a summary of the entire paper in a condensed and informative matter

b. CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

Chapter I serves as an introduction to the research that the paper presents. This section consists of six sub-section, which is background of the study, research questions, purpose of the study, significance of the study, clarification of term, and organization of the paper

c. CHAPTER II REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Chapter II shows a review of the topic that is relevant to the research, it includes a review of Vandaele's Humor Mechanism Framework (2002), Bordwell, Thompson, and Smith Film Form (2017), and previous studies in the field of humor and film.

d. CHAPTER III RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Chapter III elaborates on the research methodology and theories that are used in the research. This chapter is divided into four subsections, which are research design, film summary, data collection, data analysis.

e. CHAPTER IV FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Chapter IV breakdowns the findings with the aims of answering research questions presented in the previous chapters, which is how does the humor in the film operates and what does the humor signifies.

f. CHAPTER V CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Chapter V concludes the paper by concluding the findings, while also presenting future researchers a suggestion for research about a similar topic.