

CULTURAL RELATION ON DISCOURSE MARKERS IN PUNCHLINES OF RICKY GERVAIS' SUPERNATURE STAND-UP COMEDY SHOW

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Abstract

This research investigates the intricate functions of discourse markers (DMs) in Ricky Gervais' stand-up comedy as comedic mediation. It explores their alignment with humor theories and their impact on punchline delivery in the stand-up comedy culture. The purposes of this research are (1) to define the categories and functions of DMs utilized by Ricky Gervais in formulating punchlines and (2) to define the application of DMs in the punchlines within the framework of three theories of humor. The data was obtained from Ricky Gervais' Stand-up Comedy Show entitled "SuperNature" on Netflix. A qualitative descriptive was applied. The theoretical basis of this research is Brinton's (1996) theory, which entails the category and function of DMs and Raskin's (2008) theory regarding the creation of humor. Through examination, the research reveals that Gervais employs diverse DM functions to navigate and enrich his comedic narratives, including the textual and interpersonal categories. The textual category, specifically on DM as an information indicator, indicates the highest overall outcome, with 18%. Moreover, their appearance showcases the dynamic role of DMs in appealing to humor theories. It can be shown that DM commonly appeared in the punchlines on the show, reaching a significant number of 46% in the incongruity category, aiding and amplifying punchlines. Lastly, cultural differences in applying DMs in stand-up comedy in each community might reflect uniformity or distinguishment. DMs are ambiguous for their cooccurrence in similar and many contexts, not to mention cultural comedy differences.

Keywords: *Discourse Marker, Humour Theory, Punchline*

1. Introduction

Discourse Markers (DMs) refer to linguistic components that play a pivotal role in organizing language, providing connection to guide communication in languages effectively (Vanderbauwhede, 2021). These markers imply relationships between different parts of the conversation or text and convey the speaker's attitude within the content (Takamura, 2020). In spoken language, DMs manifest as words and phrases, such as *I mean, like, yes, oh, uh, well, I think*, etc. and are typically overlooked during communication (Uicheng & Crabtree, 2018). These phrases, however, are conspicuously capable of guiding communication by structuring information, clarifying the relationship between ideas, managing conversation flow, expressing attitudes and emotions, providing clarification or examples, and managing uncertainty and politeness. Furthermore, DMs convey sincerity, emphasis, and the speaker's stance, resulting in coherent, cohesive, and understandable interactions. Despite their agility, Heine (2021) advanced that DMs are usually less grammatical, allowing exclusion without affecting grammaticality or propositional content.

Beyond aiding speakers in organizing their expressions into a cohesive and meaningful whole, using DMs facilitates listeners' comprehension of speakers' utterances. DMs contribute to speech cohesiveness by serving as conversation starters, markers of topic changes, or pauses before resuming speech (Norricks, 2016), connectors between utterances, creating a seamless flow of dialogue (Schourup, 2016). These functions ensure no vacuum between conversations, promoting a continuous and coherent exchange of ideas (Trihartanti & Dianita, 2020).

Likewise, DMs also convey various meanings and functions according to the speaker's background (Muller, 2005). Different cultures may use DMs at different frequencies and preferences. They might also deliver different interpretations and meanings depending on cultural context. In one culture, a pause with "um" may indicate hesitation or uncertainty, whereas in another, it simply serves as a natural pause in the flow of speech. These subtle nuances can significantly impact how messages are perceived and understood (Schiffrin, 2008). Thus, Nugraha (2016) and Naufalia (2022) suggested understanding the specific language terms, conditions, and even a social custom. The speaker should know the nation's cultural background to convey messages, facilitating comprehension (Nur Ariesta & Simatupang, 2019; Yuda Yuwana & Ananda Pertiwi, 2022).

Considering their significant function in the communication process and projecting one cultural significance, DMs have also generally assumed heightened significance within the domain of stand-up comedy. Constructing premises and punchlines—characterized by concise culmination to elicit laughter—constitutes a core element of effective comedic performance depends on the effective use of DMs, as they emerge as subtle administrators among comedians' linguistic toolboxes, steering the rhythm of funny narratives (Attardo, 2017). Given the intricate nature of spoken language and comedy narratives, linguistic features such as DMs become integral to the creative process in stand-up comedy as humor markers (Gironzetti, 2018). Additionally, as the art of comedy culture, stand-up comedy humor ranges across cultural boundaries, including shared norms, values, and practices associated with each community; it differs significantly for its respective communities (Bell, 2007). Therefore, as stand-up comedians strategically balance the narrative and surprise, the application of DMs to assist humor in punchlines becomes an intriguing topic for investigation.

Furthermore, the research objectives have been refined to align with the issues under consideration. Firstly, the study aims to systematically define the categories and functions of discourse markers utilized by Ricky Gervais in the punchlines during his stand-up comedy show *SuperNature*. This entails analyzing the DMs Gervais employed to structure and articulate his comedic narratives. Secondly, the research seeks to define the application of DMs within the category of the three established theories of humor in stand-up comedy punchlines.

The research delimits its focus to Brinton's (1996) inventory and dichotomy of DMs, emphasizing the textual and interpersonal approaches. The investigation further ties the application of DMs in delivering stand-up comedy punchlines to Raskin's (2008) three humor theories—namely, incongruity, hostility, and relief. The study only focuses on punchlines—statements that elicit audience laughter—in Ricky Gervais' *SuperNature* Stand-Up Comedy Show. However, acknowledging potential overlap in the meanings attributed to DMs signals the need for caution in generalizing functional significance across diverse contexts and cultures. These nuanced considerations underscore the research's commitment to a meticulous and contextually sensitive exploration of the role and impact of discourse markers within the specified comedic framework.

1.1 Discourse Marker

A discourse marker is a linguistic aspect that indicates the organization and structure of a conversation or discourse. Unlike content words, DMs do not carry significant meanings or change the sentence's meaning. Instead, they support grammatical functions by connecting ideas in writing or an utterance (Schiffrin, 1987). Fraser (1999) stated that DMs are a class of lexical expressions drawn primarily from the syntactic categories of conjunctions, adverbs, and prepositional phrases. With certain exceptions, they signal the relationship between the interpretation of the segment they introduce and the preceding segment. From another perspective, Brinton (1996) summarised DM as phonologically short items that serve pragmatic or procedural purposes but have no or little referential meaning.

According to Rofiq & Priyono (2021) DMs are necessary for a discourse to appear logically constructed, clarify the relationship between sentences, and assist speakers in conveying meaning to achieve communicative goals. Cohesive discourse cannot be constructed without a strong understanding of linguistic ties (Raftinia & Heryono, 2020), contact will be awkward and strange when conversations appear without DMs (Rohmah, 2020), even though the sentence is grammatically correct and acceptable (Etyas & Saputri, 2019). Moreover, DMs partake in certain distinguishable features, including connectivity, multifunctionality, optionality, non-truth conditionality, weak clause association, orality, and multi-categorical, meaning that DMs emerge in

a variety of ways in various applications, depending on their structural settings and the language user's worldview (Crible et al., 2019).

Brinton's study (as cited in Farahani, 2022) identifies DMs as distinct linguistic features across multiple dimensions. DMs are phonologically short, a-syntactic, and semantically distinct from a sentence's conceptual or propositional content. They serve various functions, including textual and interpersonal communication. DMs are sociolinguistically and stylistically associated with spoken discourse, indicating an informal register. However, their frequent occurrence is accompanied by stigma and negative assessment as "informality." These features picture the role and characteristics of DMs in communication.

Brinton (1996) further compiled DMs based on previous significant studies:

Table 1: Brinton's Inventory of Discourse Markers

| | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------|------------------------------|
| Ah/uh/um | If | Right/all right/that's right |
| Actually | I mean/think | So |
| After all | Just | Say |
| Almost | Like | Sort of/kind of |
| And | Mind you | Then |
| And {stuff, things} like that | Moreover | Therefore |
| Anyway | Now | Uh-huh |
| Basically | Oh | Well |
| Because | O.k. | Yes/no |
| But | Or | You know |
| Go "say" | Really | You see |

Source: Brinton (1996)

Functions of Discourse Markers

Brinton (1996) determined that DMs' function is as tricky as their multifunctional occurrence (ambiguous mechanism). Cuencna (2019, p. 184) in her current research on DM juxtapositions, she justified these findings and concluded that "the patterns of adjacent discourse markers constitute an identical unit but may convey different function(s)." Nonetheless, Brinton was able to detail a dichotomy model explaining DMs' contribution to the coherence of spoken discourse by separating two categories of functions: (1) textual function, which is a function of the organization and the connection across different parts of a conversation or text; they serve as guideposts, directing the listener or reader through the conversation and aiding the formation of coherence and cohesion in speech by signaling topic shifts, indicating connections between ideas, or emphasizing the speaker's stance, and (2) interpersonal function, which emphasizes the ways the language is employed to express feelings, attitudes, and social meanings, along with fostering and sustaining inter-speaker interaction. Brinton's (1996) Dichotomy of DMs is as follows:

Table 2: Brinton's Dichotomy of Discourse Markers Functions

| Category | Function | |
|------------------|--|--|
| Textual Function | Opening frame marker | |
| | Closing frame markers | |
| | Turn takers (turn givers) to relinquish the floor. | |
| | Fillers/hesitators | |
| | Topic shifters | |
| | Information indicators | |
| | Sequence/relevance markers | |
| | Repair markers | |
| | Interpersonal Function | Response/reaction markers or back-channel markers. |
| | | Confirmation-seeking marker, Face-saver |

Source: Brinton (1996)

A detailed example derived from previous studies regarding the function of DMs on several discourses can be seen as follows:

Textual Function

(1) Opening Marker;

Teacher: Good morning, students!

Students: Good morning, miss!

Teacher: **OK**. Before we go further about my book, *The Story of The Tallow Candle*, by Hans Christian Andersen, I want to ask one of you...

(Rohmah, 2020)

The DM "OK" is employed to open the discourse. The teacher uses "ok" at the beginning of the conversation after delivering the opening greeting. Ok is initiated to open the conversation section at the beginning of the discourse, discussing a book entitled *Tallow Candle*.

(2) Closing Marker;

Frank: Why?

Athena: Because you're not funny. You can let me go now. **Well**, goodbye, Frank.

Frank: Goodbye, Athena.

(Hasniar, 2017)

In the data above, the utterance "Well" followed by *goodbye* is an expression of farewell for someone leaving. Both participants are saying goodbye to their partner. In this context, DM influences the person making the utterance because the other respondent will stop the conversation after the DM, which is *well* followed by goodbye. Hence, the speaker has closed the discourse.

(3) Turn-Takers;

Alex: You go. Go bear hunting with him and her.

Nate: Sorry, I don't have the license.

Sebastian: Be careful of the hunted bear. The bear will strike you.

Nate: I'm not having trouble with it, **so...**

Thiago: **So**, no, he'll say let's go hunting so he'll have the reason to shoot you.

(Cahyanti, 2021)

In the example above, the DM assists the speaker in taking or giving a turn. Nate leaves his utterance ending with *...so* (hedges) to let the other participants take their turn. Afterwards, Thiago replies by giving his favour, using *so...* in front of the sentence to express his views on *bear hunting* by saying, "**So**, no, he will say let us go hunting..."

(4) Filler;

Nancy: Is that the first time you ate this icy rice cube?

Nate: rice cube? Yeah, and we don't usually eat rice.

Nancy: Like that way?

Nate: We eat the, **uhh**, the warm one.

Nancy: **Uhh**, yes, this lontong you can eat it warm, then you have to heat it first. I just made it, so that's why, to make it stick together, I put it in the fridge.

(Cahyanti, 2021)

In the example above, both participants use the DM "uhh" as a filler of pause or hesitator. Using the hesitator itself fills in the delay of doubt between the utterances to be conveyed. They use this DM to serve the break; it signals that they are thinking or intending to utter appropriate words.

(5) Topic Shifter;

Trevor Noah: MEET TREVOR'S UNCLE BOBBY. I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW I HAD AN UNCLE BOBBY!!! **Well**, he shits his pants!!!

Audience: Burst of Laughter

(Rofiq & Priyono, 2021)

In the excerpt above, DM initiates a topic shift. This shift occurs when the topic that discusses Trevor's uncle Bobby transitions to a new topic that is still related to the previous segment. The next part tells us that Trevor recognized his uncle from the moment he spoke on the stage, implying that he now has an uncle, Bobby.

(6) Information Indicator;

Trevor Noah: Everyone was stressed out about it. Megan Markle's family was in the tabloids. The Daily Mail is trying to destroy their lives! Man, when the Daily Mail comes after you, they don't mess around! They will find that one Uncle in your family who's an alcoholic **and** shits his pants!!!

Audience: Burst of Laughter

(Rofiq & Priyono, 2021)

As seen in the excerpt above, Trevor Noah used the example of the media discovering that one of your uncles is an alcoholic, and he adds new information that the uncle shits his pants. The DM works as new information indicators to connect two different pieces of information: an alcoholic who shits his pants. Thus, the marker between an alcoholic's information and shits his pants serves as a textual function in terms of a marker that indicates new information.

(7) Sequence Marker;

Trevor Noah: ...an African Pastor, and-and-This was like it was weird in a good way! He started giving a sermon. Moreover, he started talking about Martin Luther King. And **then** he started talking about slavery.

Audience: Burst of Laughter

(Rofiq & Priyono, 2021)

In the excerpt above, the DM functions as a sequential marker. It serves as the starting point for the Reverend's action sequence, which begins with Martin Luther King and ends with slavery.

(8) Repair Marker;

Trevor Noah: I'm not gonna front **like** she has a gangster vibe about her...

Audience: Burst of Laughter

(Rofiq & Priyono, 2021)

The appearance of DM, as in the previous quote, indicates self-correction of speech. Trevor initially tries to say, "I'm not gonna front," but then corrects himself by saying he has a gangster vibe. The function of the DM, as seen in the previous quote, is to function as a textual marker of correction.

1.2 Interpersonal Function

(9) Reaction/response marker;

Trevor Noah: If you have a black person playing the cello - It's safe to say that you've canceled out the blackness of that event! That's the safest way to introduce blackness into your family. Daddy!!! I'm dating a black man!!! What?!? He plays the cello! **All right**, bring him in, bring him in!

Audience: Burst of Laughter

(Rofiq & Priyono, 2021)

In the quote above, the DM *All right* shows the queen's agreement in responding to the situation, which has previously been stated. The premise says that a white person is identical to a cellist and a black person is not. So, when a white person realizes that her daughter is dating a black man who plays the cello, she responds with the word *All right* as approval. In conclusion, the function of *All right* in the quote is a response marker.

(10) Confirmation-seeker

Alex: I love the rice and everything served.

Nancy: It's not like that style, **right?** Alternatively, do you have?

Alex: No, it's different. We use tortillas instead of rice, we don't, it depends on where you are from, but we don't eat a lot of chicken, we prefer beef...

(Cahyanti, 2021)

The DM 'right?' indicates that the speaker seeks confirmation to share knowledge with the listener. Nancy ensures that Alex is on the same page as her by saying *right as* a confirmation seeker.

1.3 Three Types of Theories of Humour

Raskin (2008) in his *Semantic Mechanism of Humour*, he posited that punchline functions as a surprise element in a joke, distinguishing humor from non-humour and swiftly transitioning between conceptual stages. The punchline often introduces an irrelevant or inconsistent idea, creating unexpected twists that characterize the humor in jokes.

Raskin's conceptualization curated the three main strands of humor theories: incongruity, hostility, and relief—the incongruity rule centers on cognitive elements, emphasizing the clash or contradiction within a joke. The humor arises from the discrepancy between the recipient's expectations and the actual outcome, creating laughter through the surprise generated by conflicting meanings.

The hostility or superiority rule delves into the aggressive aspect of humor, aiming to belittle or humiliate specific targets. Humor emerges from a sense of superiority over others, with jokes often highlighting their misfortunes or flaws and frequently entailing racism. Those not targeted find amusement in feeling superior or in control of the situation.

The relief rule suggests humor is a tension-relieving mechanism, especially when discussing taboo topics like vulgarity, sex, death, or negative emotion. Freudian in origin, this theory posits that humor allows individuals to address sensitive subjects indirectly, providing a platform for expressing unconventional ideas while releasing tension associated with societal norms.

1.4 Discourse Marker and Comedic Humour Across Language and Cultural Context

Deborah Sciffrin's (2008) Study on "Markers across Contexts, across Languages, and over Time" highlights the complexity of DMs and their dynamic interplay across various linguistic, cultural, and temporal contexts. DMs play multiple roles in capturing cultural norms and linguistic conventions that adapt to speakers' specific communicative needs across various social situations, emphasizing their fluid and context-dependent nature. It depicts how cultural norms and communication styles contribute to the use and meaning of DMs, acknowledging the diversity and richness of linguistic expression.

In portraying the connection between DMs and comedic humor, they are relational in language use, especially in cross-cultural interactions. DMs play a significant role in facilitating the comprehension and appreciation of humor across languages. Humor is a complex phenomenon influenced by language, social norms, and cultural values (Bell, 2007). For example, sarcasm may be more common in some cultures while considered impolite in others. Therefore, understanding cultural differences is essential for effective humor communication and comprehension (Mintz, 1985).

To draw a concrete example of DMs' existence in punchlines in two different cultures, a study conducted by Yuniar (2013) on "Ya, as Discourse Marker: Indonesian Stand-Up Comedy Strategy in Producing Laughter," and Rofiq and Priyono (2021) entitled "Discourse Markers Of Humor Analysis In Trevor Noah's Stand-Up Comedy" reflected a significant impact of DMs on enhancing punchlines regardless of language.

- (1) Arie: Beh, beh kan ada sistem fogging sekarang?
'beh, beh, don't we have a fogging system right now?'
Babeh: Iya, kebetulan hari itu nyamuknya lagi pake masker – **ya** jadi enggak bisa
'Yeah, the mosquito uses the mask by chance, well, it can't die.'
Audience: Laughing

(Yuniar, 2013)

- (2) Trevor Noah: MEET TREVOR'S UNCLE BOBBY. I DIDN'T EVEN KNOW I HAD AN UNCLE BOBBY!!! **Well**, he shits his pants!!!

Audience: Burst of Laughter

(Rofiq & Priyono, 2021)

Despite distinct styles of humor and languages. The usage of DMs remains agile in twisting the premise and setup into the punchlines. DMs complement comedian organizations in bridging the jokes. The two excerpts above employ a similar pattern in placing and operating the usage of DMs. “Ya” in Indonesian can be interpreted into various DMs such as “yes”, “right”, “well”, and various or even in the form of question tags in English. Therefore, “ya” and “well” above are topic changers and additional information, which cue the initiation of punchlines. Furthermore, both studies concluded, despite the language differences, equal outcomes: (1) “The finding, hence, suggests that existing discourse marker ya appeal to the producing laughter in stand-up technique. The relation between discourse markers and stand-up technique is established since ‘ya’ is performed as a punchline and call back technique both at the textual and interpersonal levels.” (2) Discourse markers can help generate laughter if it occurs in the punch line section, which is delivered by providing more information. Besides, discourse markers can also help generate laughter in terms of the use of particles as the use of discourse marker Ya in Bahasa Indonesia and its English equivalent terms found in this research”.

2. Method

The research employs a qualitative descriptive approach, as advocated by Creswell (2009) (as cited in Nosa, 2020). This method is particularly suited for analyzing non-numerical data, characteristic of case studies and text session transcriptions. The study focuses on identifying and describing comedian Ricky Gervais' utilization of discourse markers (DMs) in the punchlines of his stand-up comedy show, *SuperNature*. The qualitative approach involves collecting data for subsequent identification, description, and analysis. The research method adopts a descriptive approach to elucidate the specific usage of DMs in Ricky Gervais' punchlines.

The research object centers on examining *Discourse Markers*, specifically within the context of punchlines in Gervais' *SuperNature* show. The methodology involves several steps. It commenced with identifying the research topic—DMs in punchlines within the stand-up comedy. A comprehensive literature review utilizing sources from online books and journals focuses on DMs. Two research questions were then formulated, addressing the function of discourse markers and their relation to the punchlines humor theory. Data collection involves watching the *SuperNature* show on Netflix for 1 hour and 4 minutes, with subtitles enabled. Subtitles are downloaded as the script guidance utterances and time stamps. Based on Brinton's (1996) inventory, punchline statements containing DMs were gathered. Furthermore, DMs were classified according to Brinton's (1996) dichotomy of category and functions. The subsequent analysis addresses the research questions, which are (1) to define the categories and functions of DMs utilized by Ricky Gervais in formulating punchlines and (2) to define the application of DMs in the punchlines within the framework of Raskin's (2008) three theories of humor.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 Result

The results of this research found 50 discourse markers data patterns based on their category and functions, with the details of the numbers as follows:

Table 3: Category and Function Distribution of DMs

| Category | Function | Occ. | Pct. |
|------------------|------------------------|------|------|
| Textual Function | Opening marker | 0 | 0% |
| | Closing markers | 5 | 10% |
| | Turn takers | 2 | 4% |
| | Fillers/hesitators | 6 | 12% |
| | Topic shifters | 5 | 10% |
| | Information indicators | 9 | 18% |
| | Sequence markers | 7 | 14% |
| | Repair markers | 3 | 6% |

| | | | |
|------------------------|--|----|------|
| Interpersonal Function | Response/reaction markers or back-channel markers. | 5 | 10% |
| | Confirmation-seeking marker, Face-savers marker. | 8 | 16% |
| TOTAL | | 50 | 100% |

From the 50 data, three patterns from the type of humor theory were found that the DMs applied and incorporated in the punchlines.

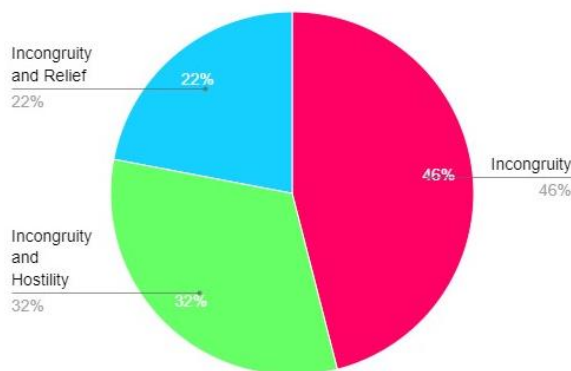


Figure 1. The Distribution of Humour Theories the DMs are Applied In

Discussion

From all the data demonstrated, a detailed analysis regarding the category and functions of DMs, as well as their application in the punchlines through humour theory, can be detailed as:

Textual Category Data 1: Closing Marker

Context: Ricky elaborated on the purpose of naming his special *SuperNature*.

00:45:31 - 00:45:49

Ricky: *The psychologist Piaget was once asked, "What's more important for the intellect of a person? Nature or nurture?" And he replied, "What's more important for the area of a field?" "Length or width?"*

"All right, if you don't know the answer, just fucking... (annoyed)

[audience laughing]

In the data above, Ricky applied "all right" as the DM, which falls into the textual category of closing the discourse. In the data, Ricky initiates the conversation by setting the stage with a hypothetical scenario involving the psychologist Piaget. The scenario revolves around a question posed to Piaget regarding the significance of nature versus nurture, to which Piaget responds with a metaphor involving the importance of "length or width" when considering the area of a field. This establishes the thematic context and sets of the discourse. After presenting Piaget's detailed questions, Ricky introduces the DM "All right," followed by an expression of annoyance, "If you don't know the answer, just fucking...", portraying the man signaling the discourse to end and shift the discussion. Therefore, "all right" is responsible for ending the discourse, showing that the man expects to stop Piaget from asking more questions.

The incongruity was employed in delivering the punchlines, involving the DM "all right." On Gervais's acts out, Piaget responded to the nature and nurture question in specific scientific details, demanding more criteria. Meanwhile, the man seemingly expects a straightforward answer to the first question. The prolonged question about the field, length, and width eventually irritates the man. In this context, the man assumed the prolonged question is asked to evade the primary question, as Piaget most likely does not know the answer. The incongruity appears as culturally a topic carrying or quoting a prodigy, in this case, Piaget, commonly brought up in a philosophical or scientific delivery. However, based on the data, the man's attitude toward the detailed questions is the opposite.

He subsequently signaled to close the discourse, using DM by saying, “**All right**, if you don't know the answer, just fucking...” and an annoyed tone eventually braced the punchline.

Data 2: Turn Taker

00:52:24 - 00:52:39

Context: Ricky expressed his confusion about the ambiguous sources of racism.

Ricky: *One thing that isn't ambiguous, whether it's nature or nurture, is racism. No one's born racist. You've gotta learn that shit, okay?
I don't wanna divide the room. I'm not a fan of racism ...*

[audience murmuring and laughing]

Ricky: *No, no, hear me out, I... [laugh]*

[audience laughing]

On the data, Gervais employed the DM “No” from the textual category to take his turn after the crowd started murmuring and laughing. In the middle of delivering his jokes regarding racism, he stated that he did not want to divide the room and declared that he was also not a fan of racism. The statement invites a murmur and laughs from the audience. Following the audience's reaction, Ricky said “No” as he started the conversation again. In this context, “No” functions as a turn-taking device, allowing Ricky to regain control of the conversation and redirect the audience's attention as he later said, “**No, no, hear me out, I...**”. It indicates his intention to continue his thoughts and address potential concerns or misunderstandings resulting from the audience's initial response; by saying “No,” Ricky attempts to redirect the audience's attention back to him and the content of his message. This is especially important after the sensitive topic of racism elicited mixed reactions.

Comparably, the usage of “no” in this context parallels with DM “ya” in Indonesian punchlines stated in Yuniar (2013). A response to acquiring back attention after the audience laughter, i.e.

“Tapi gua penasaran tuh gua ketemu angka yang paling lucu sedunia itu adalah angka empat kenapa gitu dia empat yang laen aja satu dua tiga (HHH) ya... masa dia empat (HHHH) iya e-m-p-a-t”

However, I am curious. I find the funniest number in the world. It is number four. Seriously I mean, why should it be four? While others are one, two, three (laughter), yeah... why then it is four? (laughter) yes, f-o-u-r.

As the extension of laughter disrupts the transition for the comic, “ya” appears to recollect the audience. It is a Gervais with his DM “no” to calm the audience before continuing his further statements.

Gervais adopted the hostility theory, where he carried a sensitive topic regarding racism. Ricky discusses the lack of ambiguity regarding the origins of racism, emphasizing that nobody is born racist and that it is something learned as he expresses his stance against racism. In context, Western countries are culturally diverse, and racism is one of the problems they are commonly encountered. With that in mind, He later said, “I don't wanna divide the room. I'm not a fan of racism,” as if implicitly there were two groups of audience, one that is a racist and the other is not. The statement insinuated a reaction from the audience, and Gervais tried to recollect that attention again by pulling out a DM “No” twice. Recollecting the audience's intention is supposed to give Gervais a chance to continue his intention and clarify his statement. However, after regaining their attention by saying, “**No, no, hear me out, I...**” he stopped and laughed, eliciting the punchline and audience laughter again. Indicated he used hostility to implicitly put the assumption that there are groups of racist and non-racist in the audience.

Data 3: Filler

00:42:17 – 00:42:26

Context: Ricky protested as schools tried to ban the word “obese” among school students.

Ricky: *“There was a school that tried to ban the word 'obese.' Because they said it was derogatory to call them, I dunno what to call 'em. Um... round children, right?”*

[audience laughing]

In the data excerpt above, Ricky Gervais employed the discourse marker *um...*, which falls into the textual category of filler/pause marker. Ricky Gervais paused his utterance with the DM *Um...* and displayed a gap, providing him time to think before continuing the segment. Simply, the hesitator itself is to fill the “delay of doubt” between the speaker’s statements. In the first segment, Ricky complained about why the word *obese* should be banned in school areas, and he wondered what to call someone who is overweight, as seen in the utterance, “I dunno what to call ‘em.” After the statement, he paused, occupied by an “*um...*” as a DM filler. After the pause, he continued the idea by saying “*round children*,” revealing a new segment of his utterance.

In delivering his jokes, the speaker adopted the incongruity and hostility rule by inserting a pause or hesitator mid-statements. Since the hesitator fills the delay between the speaker’s statements, those who use these DMs do so to signal that they are thinking or creating proper sentences for the utterances. However, Ricky Gervais did the opposite. In this context, the lexicon *obese* describes a specific body weight range higher than what is considered healthy for a given height. It has been deemed offensive and controversial due to its potential to stigmatize and offend specific communities. Furthermore, with the *um...* filler, the audience would think he would correct the word “*obese*.” Instead, he made a more inappropriate mockery nickname, *round children*, which refers to overweight children, as seen in the following utterance: “*There was a school that tried to ban the word 'obese' ... I dunno what to call 'em. Um... round children, right?*”. The marker was deliberately placed to hold the floor momentarily until the speaker finally offered his punchline. Therefore, the incongruity structure spiked with filler words by alluding to the vulnerable/helpless group creates a different expectation than the audience imagined, ultimately inviting laughter.

Data 4: Topic Shifter

00:10:34 - 00:10:46

Context: Ricky mentioned the data on minorities in his country (England).

Ricky: *In this country, we're still only 5% Black, 5% Asian, 5% LGBTQ, you know? Tiny numbers. Now, I'm a white, heterosexual multimillionaire, There's less than 1% of us.*

[audience laughing]

Gervais utilized the DM “now” on the data to introduce and shift to a new topic in the textual category. He initiated the topic with a discourse regarding tiny numbers of minorities in his country (England). However, as the lists went on, he added a new category to shift the topic. Ricky employs the discourse marker “Now” to signal a shift in the premise. This signals to the audience that he is transitioning to a different aspect related to the topic. Following “Now,” Ricky introduces a new category that includes himself: “*I'm a white, heterosexual multimillionaire, There's less than 1% of us.*” This statement diverges from the previous categories of minorities (Black, Asian, LGBTQ) and introduces a new element: the demographic of wealthy white heterosexual individuals.

Correspondingly, the employment of DM “now” in the context similar to the “ya” as a topic shifter in the Indonesian language as proposed in Yuniar (Yuniar, 2013), i.e.

.... Terus gue kasih tau ya, Reno ini udah 8 taun jomblo
'Then I want you guys know if Reno is still single for 8 years'
Audience: Laughing

“Ya” appears to switch the previous discourse to a new topic, the single Reno. This is identical to the application of DM “now” in Gervais, which introduces the audience to a new discourse as a twist of the still interconnected premises.

With the application of incongruity, Gervais inserts a shift in the discourse, creating a twist occupied by the DM “Now.” Following the DM, the new idea of “*I'm a white, heterosexual multimillionaire, There's less than 1% of us*” is notable because Ricky introduces a new topic in a category that contrasts with the traditional understanding of minority groups. This is based on how culturally diverse and liberated his country is. Therefore, people can choose their own will, creating such demographics. Moreover, while the previous categories focused on marginalized communities, Ricky humorously includes himself in a demographic category associated with his privilege and economic stage. The unexpected or surprising nature of the shift and the incorporation of personal details contribute to the entertainment of his punchline.

Data 5: Information Indicator

Context: Ricky expressed his attitude toward death, how the body deteriorates as age increases, not to mention the disease that lurks in the old days.

00:35:56 - 00:36:29

Ricky: *It always gets worse with age. Nothing you can do about that. ... I'm at the end of a healthy weight. I'm just nearly obese... I was prediabetic once. I had to sort that out. **And** now I'm pre-gout.*

[audience laughing]

In the data above, Gervais utilizes the DM “and” to add new information to the preceding premises ruled in the textual category. In this context, the discourse marker “and” is a connective tool to link Ricky's various stages or points about his health. It creates a sequential flow, allowing Ricky to present a series of related information coherently. The use of “and” is effective in dividing the cause-and-effect relationship between different health conditions, as in “... *I'm just nearly obese... I was prediabetic once. I had to sort that out. **And** now I'm pre-gout.*”. Ricky first mentions being at the end of a healthy weight, nearly obese, and prediabetic. The “and” helps separate these statements, building a sense of anticipation for the final punchline regarding gout.

With wordplay, Ricky adopted incongruity theory on his punchlines using the DM “and”. Initiated with his health condition history; he built up a series about his disease to bridge the punchline. The punchline, “*And now I'm pre-gout,*” is humorous because it combines the severe notion of health conditions with a play on words. A gout is a form of arthritis that typically occurs when there is an excess of uric acid in the body, leading to the formation of crystals in the joints and causing pain and inflammation. Moreover, “pre-gout” sounds similar to “freak out,” adding a comedic twist and surprise to the statement. The placement of “and” before the mention of being “pre-gout” creates a pause, allowing the audience to process the information and anticipate the upcoming punchline. This structure sets up the final information as a humorous revelation, contributing to the punchlines.

Data 6: Sequence Marker

00:39:35 - 00:39:49

Context: Ricky told the audience about his conflict of interest in his daily workout.

Ricky: *I've got a gym in my house. I got bored with that. But I thought, "If I join the gym, if I pay a year in advance, I'll try and get value for money. That'll make me go." **Then,** I remembered, "I'm fucking rich. It doesn't..."*

[audience laughing]

In the data above, Ricky utilized the DM “then” to mark the last sequence in his premise, which falls into the textual category. He discussed his conflict of interest in maintaining a gym membership, initially considering joining a gym to make the most of his investment. The DM “then” strategically appears after a prior list of conflicts, signaling the last sequence in the narrative. In this subsequent sequence, Ricky reflects on his wealth, realizing that the financial aspect of the gym membership is inconsequential to him, stating, “**Then,** I remembered, *I'm fucking rich. It doesn't...*”. The DM functions as a cohesive link, creating a temporal and logical connection between the two sequences and weaving together disparate elements within the discourse, which contribute to the flow of his premise.

Gervais utilized the incongruity theory with “then” as incorporated DM in his punchlines. The humor in this punchline from Ricky Gervais' stand-up routine stems from an unexpected realization and juxtaposition of ideas. Ricky initially proposes joining a gym to justify the cost and motivate himself to exercise. However, the punchline comes when he openly admits, “**Then,** I remembered, *I'm fucking rich. It does not...*” This unexpected twist capitalizes on the irony that, despite Ricky's initial intention to make the most of the gym membership, his wealth renders the financial aspect irrelevant. The humor stems from the contrast between the common struggle of attempting to get

value for money at the gym and the absurdity of realizing that, due to his wealth, the cost is largely irrelevant. This incongruity between the initial setup and the unexpected punchline contributes to the comedic effect, accompanied by using "then" as a strategic tool in delivering the joke, creating a smooth and unexpected transition that enhances the overall humor of the punchline.

Data 7: Repair Marker

00:04:05 - 00:04:21

Context: Ricky complained about how women can hardly see the "funny" side of a tragedy while men always see the "funny" side of it.

Ricky: *If you're the mother, you probably still find it hard - seeing "the funny side of things."*

*Oh, women! Not all women. **I mean**, the old-fashioned ones. The ones with wombs.*

[audience laughing]

In the data above, the DM "I mean" falls in the category of textual function and is proposed as a repair marker. "I mean" shows a signaling connection between two contradictive segments and was applied to the speaker's previous segment adjustment. This restoration signifies the speaker's orientation to two aspects of speech meaning: idea and intention. The speaker restored the last notion by saying, "Not all women," followed by "I mean," to clarify his intent in referring to the *old-fashioned ones*. A correction or repair marker was affixed to correct the speaker's previous utterance. This shows the speaker's awareness of updating and replacing the last discourse with the supposedly appropriate discourse.

In delivering the joke, the speaker applied the "I mean" DM through *incongruity* theory. In the context above, the speaker complained about how "women" struggle to see the funny things behind a tragedy. However, the speaker's intention of "women" might be incongruent with the audience's perception. As the definition of "women" varies in modern days according to specific groups, many people believe "A woman" is not specified by their physical and biological appearance. Thus, Ricky further stated, "Not all women..." which elaborated that the women he referred to were all women, both biological and trans women. In the context, he clarified his intention of "women"—who cannot see the funny side of things—using the DM *I mean*. It repaired the idea by specifying the purpose of biological women who have a uterus, which he considers old-fashioned, as follows: "Not all women. **I mean**, the old-fashioned ones, the ones with wombs". Thus, due to the misalignment of perceptions with the audience regarding women and sarcasm, the DM clarified the context and elicited the contradiction in the punchlines.

Interpersonal Category

Data 8: Response Marker

00:04:40 - 00:04:56

Context: Ricky expresses his attitude sarcastically toward today's phenomenon where trans women are also considered a "woman"; meanwhile, "the old-fashioned one" or the real women feel uncomfortable with the notion.

Ricky: *And now the old-fashioned, they go, "Ooh, they wanna use our toilets!" "Why shouldn't they?"*

"For ladies!"...

"What about this person isn't a lady?"

"Well, his penis."

[audience laughing]

Based on the data above, Ricky applied the DM "well" as a response marker to be incorporated in his scenario, which falls into the interpersonal category. In his scenario, using the response marker "well" becomes pivotal in the conversational scenario. As the debate unfolds, the old-fashioned woman argues that the defining factor of being a lady is having male genitalia. Thus, DM "well" functions as a response marker in this context, indicating a shift in the speaker's stance or introducing a new perspective or idea. In this case, the woman logically portrayed her perspective by answering the question with a simple response with the use of DM "well," saying, "Well, his penis." Therefore,

“well” is to claim a reaction to the question and create a smooth transition and link from the ongoing debate.

Comparably, the application of “well” aligns with DM “ya” in Indonesian punchlines in this context, as stated in Yuniar (2013). The DM, despite the language difference, is utilized in a form of response, which is the punchline itself, i.e.,

Arie: Beh, beh kan ada sistem fogging sekarang?

‘beh, beh, don’t we have a fogging system right now?’

Babeh: Iya, kebetulan hari itu nyamuknya lagi pake masker – ya jadi enggak bisa

‘Yeah, the mosquito uses the mask by chance, well, it can’t die.’

Audience: Laughing

The DMs “iya” and “well” mark a response initiation to a question provided, which are inserted in a response that embodies the punchlines of the jokes on the premises.

Gervais incorporated the relief and incongruity with a response marker “well” in the conversational scenario. The humor, in this instance, derives from the incongruity between the taboo nature of mentioning male genitalia and the unexpected logic in the response. By incorporating a response marker like “well,” Ricky Gervais navigates the conversational flow effectively, guiding the audience through the surprising twist. In this instance, the DM “well” functions as a response marker, signaling an answer and a shift in the dialogue, preparing the audience for the unexpected resolution in the punchline. Its usage aids in maintaining coherence in the narrative while infusing a layer of humor through its sarcastic undertone. The abrupt twist in the punchline occurs when contrary to societal expectations; the woman offers a culturally straightforward and logical response: *“Well, his penis.”* The DM “well” serves as a seamless bridge between the buildup of tension in the scenario and the unexpected punchline.

Data 9: Confirmation-seeker

00:23:29 - 00:23:45

Context: Ricky wondered why people put up a sign “Beware of the dog” to prevent strangers from approaching their house. As a dog lover, he makes him want to do the opposite.

Ricky: *It makes me laugh, that sign people put on their house, “Beware of the dog.” That makes me wanna go in the house to meet it. If you wanna keep me out of your house, put up a sign that says, I dunno... “Beware of the AIDS,” you know?*

[audience laughing]

In the data above, the discourse marker, “you know?” has an interpersonal function, which indicates the speaker's attitude toward participants' confirmation of the same understanding (on the same common ground). Initially, Gervais discussed his amusement at the typical “Beware of the dog” sign meant to deter strangers. As a dog lover, he expresses a counterintuitive desire to meet the dog instead. Then, he mentioned a new idea to compare the effectiveness of the sign by putting a controversial sign saying “Beware of the Aids” closed with the utilization of “you know?”. The DM “you know?” is strategically employed at the end of Ricky's statement as in *“If you wanna keep me out of your house, put up a sign that says, I dunno... “Beware of the AIDS,” you know?”*, emphasizing his intent to seek confirmation or agreement from the audience regarding the effectiveness of the controversial sign. The phrase acts as a rhetorical device, prompting the audience to acknowledge a shared understanding or common truth about comparing the dog sign and the provocative AIDS sign.

Additionally, to support the claim, the application of “you know” has similar usage as DM “ya” in Indonesian punchlines, as stated in Yuniar (2013). Both DMs in this context are gaining confirmation through punchlines, i.e.

Babeh: Robin MA na yang rambutnya kribo ya?

‘what kind of Robin has frizzy hair, right?’

Instead of requesting an agreement, the DMs similarly provide an invitation for it. The translation might not be the exact match due to language differences. However, neither comic directly asks the audience for a definitive answer. It only shows that the comics want the audience to be attentive.

In this comedic instance, Ricky Gervais adeptly employs incongruity and the relief rule, navigating a potentially sensitive topic while eliciting laughter through unexpected associations.

Incorporating the confirmation-seeking DM "you know" engages the audience, implicitly prompting them to confirm their shared understanding of the humorous correlation presented. The comedic twist unfolds as Ricky suggests an alternative sign, "Beware of the AIDS," to replace the conventional "Beware of the Dog" sign. This unexpected comparison deliberately misaligns two disparate concepts, contributing to the incongruity. The relief rule comes into play as the topic of AIDS is inherently sensitive due to its severe implications, and joking about it is typically considered taboo. Ricky's implicit message is that the unconventional sign would undeniably deter people from approaching the house due to the gravity of the associated topic. Therefore, "you know" is a conversational cue, inviting the audience to align their interpretation with Gervais' comedic perspective. It creates a moment of shared recognition, encouraging the audience to affirm their understanding of the incongruity and unexpected association presented in the punchline.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, the study reveals that Ricky Gervais strategically employs various DMs, including "I mean," "you know," "well," and others, to enhance the delivery of his punchlines. These markers function within two main categories: information indicators from the textual category and confirmation seekers from the interpersonal category. The dominant categories are information indicators, accounting for 18% of the overall data; meanwhile, the opening marker is not encountered throughout the show. Additionally, other discourse markers in both textual and interpersonal categories manifest various functions, such as closing markers (10%), turn takers (4%), fillers (12%), topic shifters (10%), sequence markers (14%), repair markers (6%), response markers (10%), and confirmation seekers (16%). Furthermore, the presence of discourse markers in punchlines aligns with different patterns of humor theories. The most frequently utilized humor theory in conjunction with discourse markers is the incongruity theory, constituting 46% of the instances. Other patterns include the combination of incongruity and hostility (32%) and incongruity and relief (22%), which also appeared to employ DMs in eliciting the punchline.

According to the presented data and percentages, aligning DMs with various humor theories provides insight into Gervais' nuanced comedic approach. The versatile functions of DMs contribute to effective delivery management in-jokes, suggesting that these linguistic elements play a crucial role in appealing to humor theories and enhancing punchlines supported by cultural association. A brief comparison of English-Indonesian DM usage in several data shows that incorporating DMs within humor theories serves a similar pattern to punchline cues, allowing the speaker to introduce twists in a sequence of premises. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that the dynamic nature of DMs allows them to carry varied meanings and functions, contributing to the intricate landscape of comedic delivery and cross-cultural context. Similar DMs attributed in the data and analysis might not always be the exact tie in diverse contexts. This study underscores the contextual sensitivity of DMs, emphasizing that their functional significance in humor may not uniformly apply across different discourse settings. The findings contribute a slightly more profound understanding of how DMs intricately weave into humor theories.

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