

The Linguistic Art of Rhetoric Devices: Decoding Gill's Comedic Genius

Tamkeen Fatima

Britain International School System, Multan, Pakistan

Abstract: The study explores how humor is created through rhetorical devices in comedy shows. By using a qualitative approach, it examines how language, laughter, and rhetorical techniques are used at once to show humor and comedic effect. The analysis of this study looks at both the rhetorical and linguistic art of Gill's humor. By applying theoretical perspectives of Berger's (1993) and Keraf's (2006), the use of metaphors, irony, hyperbole, and satire is explored from the comedian's selected performances. To engage the audience and also comment on social issues while delivering his comedy, his style combines language and humor in such a way that both enhance the flavor of entertainment and create witty humor in comedy shows.

Keywords: Humor, Linguistic Techniques, Rhetorical Devices, Stand-Up Comedy

Email: fatimaabiha52@gmail.com

1. Introduction

Humor behaviors are usually shaped by emotional, social, and linguistic factors. These are aspects of laughter and humor. They are an important part of everyday life, and they often depend on how people use language. In stand-up shows, comedians use linguistic and extra-linguistic features to make people laugh while posing some satirical situation in the relevant context. Because of this, stand-up comedy is not only a form of entertainment but also a meaningful way of communicating ideas. Papana (2012) offers a brief definition, portraying stand-up comedy as a performing art that directly aims to bring out laughter from the audience. It is typically performed by individuals referred to as stand-up comedians, stand-up acts, or comic routines, and their shows often revolve around brief narratives. One of the concepts of laughter, which Olmwake (1937) [1] provided a comprehensive elaboration on laughter is a predominantly audible expression of various positive emotional states. Camazine (2003) [2] also offered a perspective that defines laughter as an integral element of human behavior, intricately keeping pace with the brain.

Laughter helps to express a comedian's feelings in a lighter tone. Bergson (2009) [3] explains that laughter and humor are closely connected, which often trigger each other. In most settings, laughter arises as a result of hearing something funny because they are both connected. One cannot laugh without hearing something funny. According to Fatona and Riadi (2017), humor

Fatima

includes anything that makes people laugh or feel amused. It means humor can be in many forms, like jokes, funny situations, and even clever use of language. To understand how humans create humor, it is important to look at rhetoric. Brooks and Warren (1970) [4] describe the importance of rhetoric in humor. It is a meaningful skill to use language effectively. It focuses on explaining ideas clearly, which encourages discussion. It also helps people to share and support their views and ideas.

Rhetoric plays an important role in how performances are delivered. Rutter (1997) [5] explains that the ending of a performance is very important. It usually leaves a lasting effect on the audience. Elements like pre-closing lines, audience laughter, and personal opinions, and adding final puns all help make the ending more memorable. Scarpetta & Spagnolli (2009) [6] describe the main parts of stand-up comedy. These parts include the opening interaction with the audience, going toward a new joke, and developing jokes. Adding a punchline in the end that connects directly to the audience. McIlvenny (1993) [7] studied how comedians found their own style in speaking, which is similar to political speeches. This uses language to influence its audience. His study focused on how comedians use different language techniques to make people laugh. Similarly, Zajdman (1995) [8] studied Chris Rock's performance in 'Kill the Messenger' and found that humor is often created through short jokes, interacting with the audience, and it is a mix of simple and more detailed style. Weaver (2012) examined the use of metaphors and rhetorical techniques in humor. It includes sensitive racist jokes. He found that language techniques of jokes are used as rhetoric that persuades and influences the audience.

According to Attardo (2020), studying the use of language in humor includes signs and symbols while expressing speech. This phenomenon creates amusement among the audience. By following this approach, Shehreza (2017) explored Persian Comedy, which uses the rhetorical theories of Berger. His study found that techniques like irony, wordplay, and allusions are witty exchanges. These techniques are commonly used to make the audience laugh. Overall, these studies show that humor is created through a variety of language techniques. It can even take different forms according to various cultures. They also highlighted how people feel connected through comedy, even when they are from different cultures.

These ideas help us to see how comedians connect with their audience. They use an effective way to make them laugh and entertain. This can also be clearly seen in the work of Kanan Singh Gill. He is an English-Speaking Indian stand-up comedian, an actor, and a YouTuber. By gaining

Fatima

recognition and popularity after winning 'The Bangloer Punch line' competition. He is prominently known for his role as co-host in the YouTube series 'Pretentious Movie Reviews,' alongside fellow stand-up comedian, where they provide humorous critiques of Bollywood movies. Additionally, he co-hosted YouTube Fan Fest India and played a significant role in the YouTube Comedy Hunt. In 2017, he released 'Keep It Real,' a one-hour comedy show available on Amazon Prime Video and Netflix. Kanan Gill also marked his debut in mainstream cinema, starring alongside Sonakshi Sinha in the film 'Noor.' Moreover, he performed as a judge on the comedy reality TV show 'Comicstaan' on Amazon Prime Video in 2018.

The purpose of this paper is to investigate how Kanan Gill utilizes rhetorical devices and linguistic techniques in his stand-up comedy performances, with a focus on understanding their impact on generating verbal humor. By analyzing the linguistic methods used by the comedians and their influence on audience laughter, this study seeks to fill a gap in the comprehension of the intersection between rhetoric, language, and humor in the context of stand-up comedy, which seems to be unique in its kind in Pakistan, while analyzing an English comedian's speeches for his use of rhetorical devices in creating humor.

The main objectives of the study are to highlight the rhetorical devices used by the speaker in his performances for the purpose of creating humor, and also to expose the speaker's hidden intentions through his witty jokes in his performances to create verbal humor. So the study would answer the following questions:

- How does the comedian employ rhetorical devices in his comedy performances to create humor?
- Which linguistic techniques are used by Gill to create verbal humor in his performances?

Within the realm of language, laughter, and rhetoric, there is a notable research gap regarding humor in stand-up comedy shows, specifically focusing on the comedic techniques utilized in English and, more specifically, by stand-up comedian Kanan Gill. This study aims to look closely at Gill's unique comedic style. Aiming to understand how his speeches show humor in his comedic works. How audiences interpret it and how cultural influences shape their experience. It also examines his use of symbolism, satire, and exaggeration. All these contribute to his witty long comedy. For this purpose, the researcher has selected these segments from his 'Keep it Real' series, along with some clips from 'Yours Sincerely'. These examples provide useful insight into his style, but they may not fully represent the full range of his comedic approach.

2. Theoretical Framework

Keraf (2006) [9] Figurative use of language in comedy and Berger's (1993) [10] linguistic techniques are used to explore the rhetorical devices in Gill's selected performances taken from Netflix.

2.1 Application of Keraf's Figurative Language Modal

1. **Metaphor:** Metaphor is a figure of speech whereby one object or idea is compared to another to make the comparison more vivid or meaningful; the comparison is based on common attributes of the two ideas (Keraf, 2006). In this sense, metaphors in Kanan Gill's comedy are cleverly deployed to present a positive spin on relationships. It shows love in ways that the audience easily connect with their real life. For example, he compares relationships to a 'delicately balanced game of Jenga'. He uses metaphors in a way that shows that relationships require careful handling, which is like a Jenga Tower Game. In which moving even a single block can collapse everything. Jenga is built block by block, and when you take one wrong move, it shatters. This, therefore, points to how a relationship can be slowly eroded over time through minor misunderstandings or conflicts.
2. Irony is a figure of speech in which the intended meaning is the opposite of what is literally stated. According to Keraf (2006), the success of this figure of speech depends on the audience's ability to detect the intended ironic meaning as well as the contrast between expectation and reality. In Gill's shows, irony is used to highlight differences in parenting and their expectations. This shows between the first and second children, where he talks about his older sister, who was highly intelligent, and his parents' expectations placed on his sister's shoulders. There is an ironic contrast here since the firstborn child is generally expected to set an example for the younger siblings. Gill's humorous exaggeration is that, in an Indian family, the firstborn child is treated as a "backup plan" or a "project." They have to succeed no matter what, while younger siblings are given freedom to 'follow their dreams'. The audience recognizes this humorous exaggeration as how closely it resembles real-life dynamics.
3. **Hyperbole:** It is a deliberate exaggeration used to create emphasis, humor, or dramatic effect. It is often not meant to be taken literally but helps to intensify meaning (Keraf, 2006). In Kanan Gill's comedy, hyperbole is a key device for creating humor. He

exaggerates the idea of education. Education presents as something that guarantees success and transformation in life. Gill, therefore, creates a comic effect on a subject that is generally treated seriously. There, the unrealistic expectations put on education in society are foregrounded. He further uses hyperbole when joking about weight gain. ‘I’ll be 100 KG. Yeah, its nit even weight anymore. That’s a shipment. This highlights how people use exaggerated language when talking about body weight.

2.2 Application of Berger’s rhetorical devices on Gill’s selected performances

- 1. Satire** is a technique that ridicules or criticizes social practices and conventions through humor and wit, usually exaggerating the faults of the subjects satirized (Berger, 1993). In Gill's shows, he uses satire to highlight the expectations placed on firstborn children in Indian families. He starts talking about his elder sister, who studied seriously and was an intelligent child by birth. According to him, it allowed him to avoid the same level of pressure on him. Because firstborns are supposed to do everything and mock the parental attitude during family get-togethers. He makes fun of how older siblings are asked to perform in front of guests, even if they don’t want to. This highlights how unnecessary expectations are placed on them.
- 2.** Berger (1993) describes ‘**Pun**’ as a simple but clever way of creating humor while playing with words that have more than one meaning. Gill uses this technique often through everyday observations. For example, he talks about the scenario of how people in India don’t really engage in small talk. He makes a point that you can make eye contact with a stranger and just walk without saying anything. The humor comes from how he uses the idea of walking past not just physically, but socially, which is as in ignoring someone. It’s a small detail, but very relatable. Another moment comes when he repeats something obvious like, “Hot outside, isn’t it? It is hot.” This repetition shows the kind of conversations people have just to fill the silence. By saying it in such a direct and unnecessary way, he makes the audience realize how pointless small talk can be, which is what makes it funny.

3. Conclusion

Gill’s comedy is much more than what seems to be packed in one bundle, extending from witty humor to cultural reflections. The humor he creates with language flows so naturally that it seems spontaneous, rather than as if he had worked very hard to build his act through numerous

Fatima

jokes. Rather, the different linguistic resources that support his humor, such as metaphor, irony, exaggeration, wordplay, and satire, feel very natural and not at all forced within the narrative. One of the key aspects of his stand-up is the use of everyday life situations viewed from an unusual perspective. Metaphor helps him represent a relatively common concept with a much more vivid image. Irony allows one to perceive the difference between expectations and reality, which, as we know, often leads to humor. Exaggeration, or hyperbole, allows one to give a simple situation a melodramatic, and thus very amusing, touch. The wordplay and puns introduce lightness and fun into the show. Simple, small linguistic devices also effectively keep the audience's attention. However, Gill's comedic voice is most distinctly heard in his satiric presentation of situations and characters. The satiric edge here is veiled under a humorous surface so that it does not have any uncomfortable factor for the audience. This is true of all the issues he touches on: family, school, social interactions, etc. Satire here gently underscores absurdity in a lighthearted and amusing way. Another important feature of his stand-up is that his material is very easy to relate to, as most of it is based on general experiences and cultural contexts shared by most of his audiences. Such familiarity intensifies the effect of the jokes; the audience does not laugh only because something is funny but also because something funny happens in real life. Such familiarity intensifies the effect of the jokes; the audience does not laugh only because something is funny but also because something funny happens in real life. Finally, Gill's observational skills, enhanced by exaggeration, give him a distinctive voice that can appeal to different audience segments. In brief, Gill's performances show how significant linguistic creativity is in humor. Gill believes that humor is not just about making people laugh; it also offers a different perspective on everyday life. A seamless fusion of several linguistic techniques produces a style that is at once witty and accessible. This combination of relatability, creativity, and intelligent use of language makes his comedy unforgettable and effective.

References

- [1]. Olmwake, L. (1937). A study of sense of humor: Its relation to sex, age, and personal characteristics. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 45(6), 688–704. Doi:10.1037/h0055199.
- [2]. Camazine, S., Deneubourg, J.-L., Franks, N. R., Sneyd, J., Theraulaz, G., & Bonabeau, E. (2003). *Self-Organization in Biological Systems*. Princeton University Press.
- [3]. Bergson, H. (2009). The Comic in General—The Comic Element in Forms and Movements—Expansive Force of the Comic. In *Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*.

Fatima

- [4]. Brooks, C., & Warren, R. P. (1972). *Modern Rhetoric*. *United States of America: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc.*
- [5]. Rutter, J. (1997). *Stand-up as Interaction: Performance and Audience in Comedy Venues*. University of Salford.
- [6]. Scarpetta, F., & Spagnolli, A. (2009). The Interactional Context of Humor in Stand-Up Comedy. *Research on Language & Social Interaction*, 42(3), 210–230.
- [7]. McIlvenny, P, Mettovaara, S., & Tapio, R. (1993). I really wanna make you laugh: Standup comedy and audience response. *Tampere University Finnish and General Linguistics Department Publications 16*, 230–233.
- [8]. Zajdman, A. (1995). Humorous face-threatening acts: humor as strategy. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 23(3), 325 -339.
- [9]. Keraf, G. (2005). *Diksi dan gaya bahasa*. Jakarta, Indonesia: PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama.
- [10]. Berger, A. (1993). *An anatomy of humor*. Transaction Publishers.