

**A PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF SELF-DEPRECATING STRATEGIES IN
JOHN MULANEY'S STAND-UP COMEDY PERFORMANCES**

THESIS

By:

Achmad Fauzi

NIM 220302110173



**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LITERATURE
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES
UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI MAULANA MALIK IBRAHIM MALANG**

2026

**A PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF SELF-DEPRECATING STRATEGIES IN
JOHN MULANEY'S STAND-UP COMEDY PERFORMANCES**

THESIS

Presented to

Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Sarjana Sastra (S. S.)

By:

Achmad Fauzi

NIM 220302110173

Advisor:

Dr. Lina Hanifiyah, M. Pd.

NIP 198108112014112002



**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LITERATURE
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES**

UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI MAULANA MALIK IBRAHIM MALANG

2026

STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

I state that the thesis entitled "*A Pragmatic Analysis of Self-Deprecating Strategies in John Mulaney's Stand-Up Comedy Performances*" is my original work. I do not include any materials previously written in the bibliography. Hereby, if there is any objection or claim, I am the only person who is responsible for that.

Malang, 10 June, 2026

The researcher,



Achmad Fauzi

NIM 220302110173

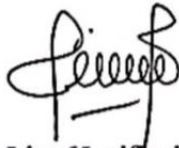
APPROVAL SHEET

This to certify that Achmad Fauzi's thesis entitled "**A Pragmatic Analysis of Self-Deprecating Strategies in John Mulaney's Stand-Up Comedy Performances**" has been approved for thesis examination at Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, as one of the requirements for the degree of *Sarjana Sastra* (S.S.).

Malang, 10 June 2026

Approved by
Advisor,

Head of Department of
English Literature,



Dr. Lina Hanifiyah, M. Pd.
NIP 198108112014112002



Dr. Agwin Degaf, M. A.
NIP 198805232015031004

Acknowledged by



Dean,
Prof. Dr. M. Kholil, M. Ag.
NIP 19411012003121003

LEGITIMATION SHEET

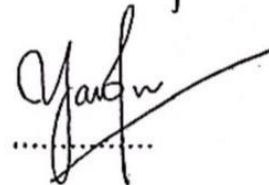
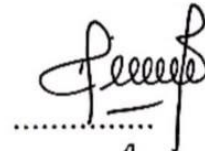
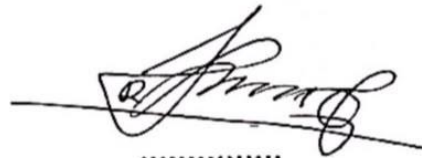
This is to certify that Achmad Fauzi's thesis entitled "**A Pragmatic Analysis of Self-Deprecating Strategies in John Mulaney's Stand-Up Comedy Performances**" has been approved by the Board of Examiners as one of the requirement for the degree of Sarjana Sastra (S.S.). in Department of English Literature.

Malang, 10 June 2026,

Board of Examiners

Signatures

1. Dr. Ribut Wahyudi, M.Ed., Ph.D. (Chair)
NIP 198112052011011007
2. Dr. Lina Hanifiyah, M.Pd. (First Examiner)
NIP 198108112014112002
3. Dr. Yayuk Widyastuti Herawati, M.Pd. (Second Examiner)
NIP 197705032014112002



Approved by

Dean of Faculty of Humanities



MOTTO

“Everything happens with reasons”

DEDICATION

This thesis is proudly dedicated to:

I proudly dedicated this thesis to my parents, Achmad Jais and Umi Kulsum.
Especially for My mom who has supported me in achieving something I choose
and has always supported, encouraged in all things and never forgot also to my
father who has worked hard to meet my needs until today.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

All praises be to Allah SWT for His guidance, mercy, and grace. The researcher was able to complete this research entitled “*A Pragmatic Analysis of Self-Deprecating Strategies in John Mulaney’s Stand-Up Comedy Performances.*” Shalawat and salam are devoted to Prophet Muhammad SAW, who has led humanity from a period of darkness and ignorance toward a life illuminated by knowledge and understanding.

The researcher was completed as partial fulfilment of the requirement for obtaining a Sarjana Sastra (S.S.) degree in the English Literature Study Program, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Throughout the process of writing this thesis, the researcher realizes that it would not have been accomplished without the valuable support, guidance, and encouragement from various parties. Therefore, the researcher would like to express her deepest gratitude and sincere appreciation to:

1. The Rector of the State Islamic University Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Prof. Dr. Hj. Ilfi Nur Diana, M.Si.
2. The Dean of the Faculty of Humanities Islamic State University of Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Prof. Dr. M. Faisol, M. Ag.
3. The Head of the English Literature Study Program at Maulana Malik Ibrahim State University (UIN) Malang, Dr. Agwin Degaf, M.A.
4. To my academic advisor, Dr. Lina Hanifiyah, M.Pd., the researcher would

like to express the sincerest and deepest gratitude for her incredible patience, kindness, and unwavering support throughout the entire process of completing this thesis. She has never made things difficult, and instead always provided guidance with warmth and understanding. Her prompt responses, continuous availability, and encouraging attitude have greatly accelerated the progress of this research. Without her dedication and genuine care, this thesis would not have been completed as smoothly as it has. It is truly a blessing to have her as an advisor, and the researcher could not be more grateful.

5. To Dr. Ribut Wahyudi, M.Ed., Ph.D., as the Chair of the Examination Board, the researcher would like to express the deepest gratitude for his time, attention, and valuable input during the thesis examination. His constructive feedback and insightful questions have greatly contributed to the improvement and refinement of this research.
6. To Dr. Yayuk Widyastuti Herawati, M.Pd., as the Second Examiner, the researcher sincerely thanks her for the thoughtful evaluation, critical suggestions, and encouragement provided during the examination. Her remarks have been invaluable in strengthening the quality of this thesis.
7. To my beloved parents, my father, Achmad Jais and my dearest mother, Umi Kulsum, who have supported and prayed for me in every step of my life until this moment. To my father, thank you for being willing to finance me for 4 years of college and working hard to earn money for my bright future, your services will never be forgotten. To my mother, thank you very

much for being willing to support me in every step of the way, wherever and whatever I choose, thank you for every prayer you always accompany me. I would never have reached this stage without your love and blessings, and thus thesis is a small gift from me to both of you.

8. To myself, thank you for surviving until now, even though there are many obstacles in front from junior high school to senior high school and even until now in collage always get failures but now I succeeded, the path that has not been easy that has been taken is not without reason, but because of the way of God that is so beautiful for me, Thank you little Fauzi, now you have managed to get the bachelor's degree you dreamed of. Thank you for taking this far.
9. To my sister, Jumaati, thank you for your support so far.
10. To my aunt and uncle, Zuhria sus and Romli, thank you for helping a lot and thank you for your prayers as well.
11. To all my lecturers of UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, thank you for your knowledge, guidance, and support.
12. I would also like to thank my geng, descendants of Dugong, Abdul Mohed, Wahbah Zuchayly, who have accompanied and supported me from the first semester until graduation.
13. Thank you also to Tasya Lutfiany Widyadhana, who has become one of my best friends during lectures.
14. Not forgetting Sri Wulandari who contributed a lot in completing this thesis, and also Ima, Safira and Putri Indah who also accompanied me to nugas

together.

15. And also the good friends I have met during the lecture, Fairuz Ainur, Sasa, Faisal, Ingggrid Yayulita, Shella, Akbar Fariz, Shevy Indriani, Putri Sakinah, Kak Nisak, Cece Moli.

16. To bak da and dek ridho who always helped my mother at home.

17. To my senior high school friends who always support, Sodik and also Buk Eni.

18. I also wish to extend my deepest gratitude to Dj. Harris Nugraha, Dj. Hendra 98 Remix, and Dj. Naldy Baik whose music became the quiet constant throughout this journey, filling the long nights of writing, and carrying me all the way back to the very first days I set foot in this place of learning.

ABSTRACT

Achmad Fauzi (2026). A Pragmatic Analysis of Self-Deprecating Strategies in John Mulaney's Stand-Up Comedy Performances. Undergraduate Thesis. Department of English Literature, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Advisor Dr. Lina Hanifiyah, M.Pd.

Keywords: Pragmatics, Self-Deprecating Humor, Positive Politeness, Stand-Up Comedy

The use of self-deprecating humor in stand-up comedy is often used to create humor and build solidarity between comedians and audiences. This study identifies the self-deprecating strategies used by John Mulaney and analyzes how they function as positive politeness in generating humor and audience solidarity. The method used is qualitative research based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, specifically positive politeness. The data was taken from two stand-up comedy videos on YouTube, namely "33 Minutes of John Mulaney" and "New in Town." This study found several positive politeness strategies, such as use jokes, seek agreement, common ground, and include both speaker (S) and hearer (H). Among these, use jokes was the most dominant. The results show that self-deprecating humor serves not only as a comedic tool, but also as a strategy to reduce social distancing, maintain a positive face, and strengthen solidarity. However, this study has some limitations. The data was constrained by limited corpus representativeness, drawn from only two stand-up comedy videos, which may not fully represent the overall comedy style of John Mulaney or other comedians. Additionally, this study only focuses on verbal strategies without examining nonverbal aspects and other pragmatic perspectives such as impoliteness, irony, and sarcasm. Therefore, future researchers are encouraged to expand the data corpus by incorporating a wider range of stand-up specials or cross-comedian comparisons to achieve broader generalizability that this study could not accomplish, as well as adopt a multimodal approach and apply other linguistic theories for a more comprehensive understanding of self-deprecating humor in communication.

ملخص

أحمد فوزي (2026). تحليل براغماتي لاستراتيجيات السخرية الذاتية في عروض الكوميديا الارتجالية لجونمولاني. أطروحة بكالوريوس. قسم الأدب الإنجليزي، كلية العلوم الإنسانية، جامعة مولانا مالك إبراهيم الإسلامية الحكومية في مالانج. المشرفة: الدكتورة لينا حنيفة، ماجستير في التربية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: البراغماتية، الفكاهة الذاتية، الأدب الإيجابي، الكوميديا الارتجالية

غالبًا ما يُستخدم الفكاهة الذاتية في عروض الكوميديا الارتجالية لإثارة الضحك وبناء التضامن بين الكوميديين والجمهور. تحدد هذه الدراسة استراتيجيات الفكاهة الذاتية التي يستخدمها جون مولاني، وتحلل كيفية عملها كأسلوب «اللباقة الإيجابية» في إثارة الضحك وتوطيد التضامن مع الجمهور. وتستند المنهجية المتبعة إلى البحث النوعي القائم على نظرية اللباقة التي وضعها براون وليفينسون (1987)، وبالتحديد مفهوم «اللباقة الإيجابية». وقد استُقيت البيانات من مقطعي فيديو للكوميديا الارتجالية على موقع يوتيوب، وهما «New in Town» و«Minutes of John Mulaney» 33. ومن بين هذه (H) والمستمتع (S) مثل استخدام النكات، والسعي إلى التوافق، وإيجاد أرضية مشتركة، وإشراك كل من المتحدث الاستراتيجيات، كان استخدام النكات هو الأكثر شيوعًا. وتُظهر النتائج أن الفكاهة التي تنتقد الذات لا تُستخدم فقط كأداة كوميدية، بل أيضًا كاستراتيجية لتقليل التباعد الاجتماعي، والحفاظ على صورة إيجابية، وتعزيز التضامن. ومع ذلك، فإن هذه الدراسة تنطوي على بعض القيود. فقد كانت البيانات مقيدة بتمثيلية محدودة للمجموعة النصية، حيث تم استخلاصها من مقطعي فيديو فقط للكوميديا الارتجالية، وهو ما قد لا يمثل بشكل كامل أسلوب جون مولاني الكوميدي العام أو أسلوب كوميديين آخرين. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تركز هذه الدراسة فقط على الاستراتيجيات اللفظية دون دراسة الجوانب غير اللفظية والمنظورات البراغماتية الأخرى مثل عدم الأدب والسخرية والتهكم. لذلك، يُشجّع الباحثون في المستقبل على توسيع نطاق مجموعة البيانات من خلال إدراج مجموعة أوسع من العروض الكوميدية الخاصة أو إجراء مقارنات بين مختلف الكوميديين، وذلك لتحقيق قابلية تعميم أوسع لم تتمكن هذه الدراسة من تحقيقها، فضلًا عن اعتماد نهج متعدد الوسائط وتطبيق نظريات لغوية أخرى من أجل فهم أكثر شمولية للفكاهة التي تنطوي على الاستخفاف بالذات في مجال التواصل.

ABSTRAK

Achmad Fauzi (2026). Analisis Pragmatik Strategi Mengolok-olok Diri Sendiri Dalam Pertunjukan Stand-Up Comedy John Mulaney. Skripsi Sarjana. Jurusan Sastra Inggris, Fakultas Ilmu Budaya, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Pembimbing: Dr. Lina Hanifiyah, M.Pd.

Kata Kunci: Pragmatik, Humor Merendahkan Diri, Kesopanan Positif, Komedi Stand-Up

Penggunaan humor *self-deprecating* dalam stand-up comedy sering digunakan untuk menciptakan humor dan membangun solidaritas antara komedian dan penonton. Penelitian ini mengidentifikasi strategi *self-deprecating* yang digunakan oleh John Mulaney dan menganalisis bagaimana strategi tersebut berfungsi sebagai kesantunan positif dalam menghasilkan humor dan solidaritas penonton. Metode yang digunakan adalah penelitian kualitatif berdasarkan teori kesantunan Brown dan Levinson (1987), khususnya konsep kesantunan positif. Data diambil dari dua video stand-up comedy di YouTube, yaitu "33 Minutes of John Mulaney" dan "New in Town." Penelitian ini menemukan beberapa strategi kesantunan positif dalam humor *self-deprecating*, seperti penggunaan lelucon, mencari persetujuan, kesamaan pandangan, serta melibatkan penutur (S) dan mitra tutur (H). Di antara strategi-strategi tersebut, penggunaan lelucon merupakan strategi yang paling dominan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa humor *self-deprecating* tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai alat komedi, tetapi juga sebagai strategi untuk mengurangi jarak sosial, mempertahankan *positive face*, dan memperkuat solidaritas. Namun, penelitian ini memiliki beberapa keterbatasan. Data dibatasi oleh keterbatasan representativitas korpus, yang hanya diambil dari dua video stand-up comedy, sehingga belum sepenuhnya mewakili gaya komedi John Mulaney secara keseluruhan maupun komedian lainnya. Selain itu, penelitian ini hanya berfokus pada strategi verbal tanpa mengkaji aspek nonverbal dan perspektif pragmatik lainnya seperti ketidaksantunan, ironi, dan sarkasme. Oleh karena itu, peneliti selanjutnya disarankan untuk memperluas korpus data dengan menggunakan lebih banyak video stand-up comedy atau melakukan perbandingan antara komedian yang berbeda guna mencapai generalisasi yang lebih luas yang tidak dapat dicapai oleh penelitian ini, serta mengadopsi pendekatan multimodal dan menerapkan teori linguistik lainnya untuk pemahaman yang lebih komprehensif mengenai humor *self-deprecating* dalam komunikasi.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

THESIS COVER.....	i
STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP	ii
APPROVAL SHEET	iii
LEGITIMATION SHEET	iv
MOTTO	v
DEDICATION	vi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	vii
ABSTRACT	xi
خالصة.....	xii
ABSTRAK	xiii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	xii
LIST OF CHARTS.....	xiv
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION	1
A. Background of the Study	1
B. Research Questions.....	9
C. Significance of the Research.....	9
D. Scope and Limitation	10
E. Definition of Key Terms	11
CHAPTER II REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	12
1. Pragmatics	12
2. Politeness Theory.....	14
a. Positive Politeness	14

1. Use joke	15
2. Seek agreement.....	15
3. Common ground.....	16
4. Include both S and H.....	17
3. Stand-Up Comedy as Discourse.....	17
CHAPTER III RESEARCH METHODS.....	19
A. Research Design	19
B. Data and Data Source	19
C. Research Instrument	20
D. Data Collection	20
E. Data Analysis	21
CHAPTER IV FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS	23
A. Findings	23
4.1 Types of Self-deprecation.....	23
a. Use joke	23
b. Seek agreement	98
c. Common ground.....	100
d. Include both S and H.....	105
4.2 The Function of Self-Deprecating Strategies as Politeness in Generating Humor and Audience Solidarity.....	106
B. Discussion	114
CHAPTER V CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION	120
A. CONCLUSION	120
B. SUGGESTIONS	123

BIBLIOGRAPHY	126
CURRICULUM VITAE	130

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Stand-up comedy has been noted being an influential performing art in contemporary entertainment. The stand-up form of comedy brings together elements of entertainment, personal storytelling, as well as societal commentary in a manner that has been both entertaining and insightful. Not only this, but stand-up comedy also has a completely different delivery mechanism when compared to other similar sources of entertainment, as it involves a lot of direct communication between the comedian and listeners, where timing, presentation, as well as linguistic creativity, are extremely important as far as generating amusement as well as reactions are concerned (Cela et al., 2024).

This form of comedy has been noted as being extremely unprecedented in terms of being immediate as well as spontaneous, providing comedians with opportunities to improvise in response to audience reactions, which has the potential for making a particular form of language a medium not only for entertainment but also for negotiating identity and communication with society. Therefore, stand-up comedy has been described as being a discursive form of performance that has been reflective of various societal issues as well as cultural patterns (Bernabeu & Jia-he, 2023). Scholars have emphasized that humor within this discursive framework is not merely a function of entertainment but is intrinsically tied to ideological inclinations, where utterances serve to portray social identities, relationships, and cultural ideologies (Finali & Ajayi, 2019). Given this

ideologically and socially embedded function of humor, particular attention can be directed toward specific communicative strategies employed by comedians, one of which is self-deprecation.

Related to the ideologically charged function of humor, self-deprecation, or self-deprecating humor, is a communication strategy in which speakers intentionally belittle themselves, either through light criticism, acknowledging shortcomings, or joking about personal weaknesses. This strategy is generally used to create a more relaxed atmosphere, reduce social distance, and build closeness with the interlocutor or audience (Cao et al., 2025; Chen & Yan, 2024). In pragmatic studies, self-deprecation is often associated with politeness theory, particularly positive politeness, proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987). Within this framework, self-deprecation can be understood as a strategy to maintain positive face with the interlocutor, namely a person's desire to be respected and accepted.

Strengthening interpersonal relationships, this perspective remains relevant and is supported by contemporary studies that emphasize the function of self-deprecation in building positive social relationships (Heintz & Ruch, 2021). Furthermore, in the context of humor, self-deprecation also functions as a technique for producing comedic effects. Recent research shows that humor that ridicules oneself tends to be more acceptable because it doesn't attack others, thus creating a sense of security and solidarity among the audience (Cao et al., 2025). This also aligns with findings that self-deprecating humor falls into the category of affiliative humor, namely humor that aims to strengthen social relationships and increase

interpersonal closeness (Heintz & Ruch, 2021; Schneider et al., 2022). This theoretical perspective can be observed in the performances of contemporary stand-up comedians, particularly those who frequently employ self-deprecating humor, one prominent example is John Edmund Mulaney.

Initially, John Edmund Mulaney is an American stand-up comedian, writer, and actor born on August 26, 1982, in Chicago. He is of Irish Catholic descent and holds American nationality. Mulaney pursued his higher education at Georgetown University, where he studied English and religion, a background that contributes to his structured and narrative-driven comedic style. He initially gained recognition as a writer for *Saturday Night Live* from 2008 to 2013, where he collaborated with Bill Hader in creating the well-known character Stefon. Following his departure from the show, Mulaney developed a successful career in stand-up comedy, television, and film, and is often regarded as an influential figure in contemporary comedy. His stand-up specials, including *New in Town* (2012), *The Comeback Kid* (2015), and *Kid Gorgeous at Radio City* (2018), received positive critical reception, with the latter earning him a Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Writing for a Variety Special.

His comedic style is characterized by the integration of personal anecdotes, observational humor, and reflections on social and cultural issues, often delivered through self-deprecating humor that highlights his own flaws and awkward experiences. His work is also shaped by his social and cultural background as someone raised in a middle-class Catholic family, which subtly informs the themes and perspectives present in his performances. Such a self-deprecating style is not

just a tool for making people laugh, but rather a socially significant strategy that helps him build rapport with the audience (Dynel & Siddiq, 2023).

John Mulaney was chosen to be a subject of study due to the fact that his career as a comedian lasts more than two decades for conducting the research because he is actively involved in the development of humor. The international recognition of John Mulaney is among the main factors, allowing to call him a representative of modern humor. Moreover, every of his show receives excellent critical reviews and numerous awards such as the *Primetime Emmy Award*, indicating his talent and role in entertainment. During every show, he demonstrates personal experience in an entertaining way, which creates the sense of involvement in the described situations. In addition, John Mulaney discusses every-day situations, turning them into jokes. While making humor, he tends to use self-deprecation techniques like “*Just too anxious for a lot of things. I get very nervous all the time, not even about major life things.*”. These are techniques when a comedian cracks jokes on himself, and not on somebody else. Thus, the feeling of humility emerges, making it possible to make the audience like him even more. It allows creating stronger relations between the comedian and his audience. Hence, self-centered humor is considered to be more credible and engaging.

The research conducted by Muhassin et al. (2023) emphasizes the importance of presupposition in creating humor in John Mulaney *There's a Horse in the Hospital* performance. Yule's (1996) approach was used to identify six categories of presuppositions found in the comedies' text. From the analysis results, it is found that the dominant category among the findings is existential

presupposition. This implies that the implied meaning conveyed through comedies can generate powerful effects of humor. Thus, this study proves that presupposition is an important linguistic strategy in stand-up comedy.

Afidah and Wahyudi (2014) analyze the opening and closing patterns of Indonesian stand-up comedy performances by three comedians Raditya Dika, Ryan Adryandhi, and Abdel Achrian comparing them with Rutter's (1997) pattern found in British stand-up comedy. The study found that Indonesian stand-up comedy shares structural similarities with British stand-up comedy, particularly in how comedians establish rapport with the audience from the very beginning of the performance. This study is relevant to the present research as it demonstrates that stand-up comedy, regardless of cultural context, relies on specific communicative strategies to engage the audience and build connection a foundation upon which self-deprecating humor as a positive politeness strategy, as examined in the present study, operates.

Other studies conducted by Arlivia et al., (2024) emphasize that impoliteness strategies are consistently used in stand-up comedy. They found that John Mulaney employs sarcasm, mock politeness, and bald impoliteness to create humor. In Indonesian comedy, negative impoliteness strategies are more dominant than other forms. Both studies show that impoliteness is not always offensive but can be an effective pragmatic technique for entertaining the audience. The similarity of these findings demonstrates that impoliteness is a universal strategy in cross-cultural comedy.

The main feature among several other studies carried out by Siddiq et al., (2023) lies in the recognition that self-deprecating humor works well as a way to establish social connections between comedians and their audiences. While there are differences in what they emphasize in the discussion on self-deprecating humor, they include the use of verbal irony, humor as both entertaining and criticizing the society, universality of humor, criticism without offending anyone, and creation of comedic identity, all the studies point towards one thing. That is, self-deprecating humor serves not just as a means to cause laughter but also as an approach for solidarity and relationship building between comedians and their audiences. In essence, self-deprecating humor may be described as a pragmatic approach that is universal and culturally relevant.

Research by Kubo et al., (2024) shows that some universal methods of humor, including irony, exaggeration, and self-deprecating jokes, have been used for comedy purposes. Kubo explains that although the cultural background might differ, the same methods of irony, exaggeration, and self-deprecating jokes are used in both Japanese manzai and Indonesian double acts in order to establish a link with the audience. At the same time, it is necessary to state that irony and hyperbole are used to support self-deprecating jokes and maintain the positive atmosphere with the audience. The common point between these two researches is that there are some common linguistic techniques that should be used for this purpose.

According to Bernabéu (2023), stand-up comedy is a performative discourse which not only provides entertainment but also acts as a mode of identity creation and criticism of society. The author highlights the role of self-deprecation

in strengthening the relationship between the performer and the audience via the performer's comic identity. Similarly, Filani (2021) employs an intercultural pragmatics perspective to refer to comedians as egocentric communicators. It is explained how self-deprecation can help in managing egocentric communication behaviors while promoting solidarity with the audience at the same time.

According to another researcher, Arief (2023) analyzes the application of politeness strategies in roasting performed in the stand-up comedy program with the consideration of the Brown and Levinson theory. It was discovered that the comedians use such politeness strategies as compliments, hedging, and off-record strategies like irony and sarcasm for maintaining a balance between the performance and politeness principles while roasting powerful people to ensure that insults can be welcomed without leading to any social conflict. On the other hand, according to Amon Bernabas Tennis (2025), politeness strategies in Pandji Pragiwaksono's stand-up comedy program "Mesakke Bangsaku Part 1" have been analyzed through Leech's principle of politeness and Brown and Levinson's politeness theory. Three maxims are discovered: Tact Maxim, Generosity Maxim, and Agreement Maxim, which help Pandji criticize social problems such as ethnic discrimination and LGBTQ+ in Indonesia. Given the limited number of pragmatic studies specifically examining stand-up comedy, as noted by Lockyer et., al. (2011). While previous studies have examined humor in stand-up comedy, there remains a lack of focus on how self-deprecating strategies operate as politeness strategies and foster audience solidarity. This study aims to address this gap by analyzing the use of self-deprecating strategies in stand-up comedy performances.

Research by Firas et al. (2025) examines pre-joke discourse in stand-up comedy, specifically how politeness and impoliteness strategies function in the preparatory phase before the delivery of humor. Drawing on data from Gabriel Iglesias's comedy specials on YouTube, the study found that positive politeness strategies (42%) and self-deprecation (20%) dominated the pre-joke segments, fostering audience relatability and mitigating potential face threats. The study demonstrates that self-deprecation serves as a critical tool for audience alignment and rapport-building, positioning the comedian as approachable and non-threatening before punchlines are delivered. This finding is directly relevant to the present study, as it highlights the pragmatic function of positive politeness and self-deprecation in building solidarity with the audience the same mechanism examined in John Mulaney's performances.

Unlike previous studies, this study analyzes the self-deprecation techniques used by John Mulaney in his performance videos as the research subject. Furthermore, this study also examines how the most dominant self-deprecating strategies can function as an entertaining form of humor, particularly in relation to the concept of humor that does not cause conflict or social disharmony. Thus, this study offers a new perspective in the study of pragmatics, particularly in understanding the role of self-deprecating humor as an effective communication strategy in stand-up comedy.

Based on the previous studies presented, it appears that research on humor in stand-up comedy remains fragmented in certain aspects. Muhassin et al., (2023) emphasize presupposition as a linguistic strategy, while Arlivia et al., (2024)

highlight impoliteness as an effective pragmatic technique. Siddiq et al. (2023) and Kubo et al. (2024) emphasize the universal role of humor, particularly self-deprecation, irony, and hyperbole, in building solidarity with audiences. Bernabéu (2023) and Filani (2021) focus on the dimensions of identity and egocentric communication, while Arief (2023) and Tennis (2025) examine politeness strategies in roasting and social criticism. However, among these studies, none has specifically and comprehensively examined self-deprecation as the main focus in the context of stand-up comedy, particularly with a specific subject such as John Mulaney. This gap indicates that although humor has been studied from various pragmatic perspectives (presupposition, impoliteness, politeness, irony, hyperbole), the central role of self-deprecation as a communication strategy capable of generating humor without causing social conflict has not been systematically explored.

B. Research Questions

1. What types of self-deprecating strategies does John Mulaney employ in his stand-up comedy performances?
2. How do John Mulaney's self-deprecating strategies function as a politeness that generates humor and audience solidarity?

C. Significance of the Research

Practically, this research is expected to be useful for comedians, researcher, public speakers, content creators, and audiences in understanding the role of language in creating humor and building interpersonal relationships. For comedians and performers, the results of this research can be used as a reference in choosing

the right self-deprecating strategy to create humor that is entertaining, relevant, and does not offend others. For communication practitioners and public speakers, this study shows how humor and humble attitudes can be used as effective strategies to build closeness, maintain audience engagement, and create a positive communication atmosphere. In addition, for readers and audiences, this study provides a better understanding of how self-deprecating humor works in everyday communication and how it can function as a safe, inclusive, and strengthening form of humor rather than causing conflict.

D. Scope and Limitation

The present research investigated the strategies utilized by John Mulaney during his performances on stand-up comedy on YouTube. Specifically, this research is intended to identify and analyze the manner in which the comedian highlights his own flaws and awkward moments in order to entertain and reach his audience. The analysis is performed with regard to Pragmatics, particularly Politeness Theory, and thus only verbal strategies especially self-depreciation is analyzed. The limitations of this study include a small size of the data, comprising only two video clips (33 minutes and 42 minutes), as well as the number of subjects under investigation. This means that the conclusions cannot be extended to apply to other comedians since they can use other strategies and thus be more or less polite.

E. Definition of Key Terms

The researcher provides a simple description of important research keywords to avoid misunderstandings. The terms are defined as follows:

1. Humor: The ability of an individual to perceive something as funny, including the experience, perception, or quality of what is considered amusing.
2. Self-Deprecation: A rhetorical strategy in which a speaker, particularly a comedian, intentionally highlights personal flaws, weaknesses, or embarrassing experiences to generate comedic effect.
3. Stand-Up Comedy: A form of live performance where a comedian delivers a series of jokes and personal stories directly to an audience, relying on verbal creativity, timing, and audience interaction.
4. John Mulaney: An American comedian, actor, writer, and producer, born on August 26, 1982, in Chicago, Illinois. He is internationally recognized for his career spanning more than two decades, his work as a writer for *Saturday Night Live* (2008–2013), and his distinctive comedic style that often employs self-deprecation as a central technique.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter contains several concepts as a literature review to assist in reviewing this research.

1. Pragmatics

Pragmatics is seen as an area of research in linguistics related to language use for constructing meaning in a social setting, not only dealing with the content of the message but also concerned with the intent of the speakers and interpreting messages by listeners (Yule, 2020). In accordance with the philosophical approach in the speech act theory formulated by J. L. Austin (1962) and further discussed by John Searle (1969), any speech act involves three aspects, namely locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts, and at the same time differentiates between various types of speech acts including assertives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives. The significance of the speech act theory is evident in studying the concept of humor, since comedians do not provide information but make statements for entertainment purposes by using illocutionary force, which is known as pragmatics (Dyner, 2023).

The term "face" is another key notion in pragmatics that was introduced by Erving Goffman in 1967 and denotes the image of oneself that people try to maintain in communication with others. Further elaboration of the term has led to the development of the politeness theory by Brown and Levinson in 1987, which reveals how linguistic means are employed to mitigate face-threatening acts (FTAs). Self-deprecating humor is especially relevant to such a theory since

comedians intentionally commit FTAs toward their positive face by exposing their personal weaknesses, shortcomings, or mistakes. Contrary to the usual practice, the speaker's intended victim in this case is themselves; however, self-deprecation is considered a tactful act that is not perceived as an FTA and is viewed as positive politeness, creating solidarity between the comedian and the audience (Siddiq, 2023).

Furthermore, although impoliteness has been defined as an intentional attack on someone's face (Culpeper, 1996; 2011), in this study the concept does not involve an attack on someone else's face, but rather on the speaker's own face. This perspective aligns with the concept of humour as 'safe entertainment' and 'acceptable criticism', where comedians deliver criticism without intending to offend (Constantinescu, 2023). Furthermore, Paul Grice's cooperative principle explains that humour can arise from violations of conversational maxims, resulting in unexpected meanings in interactions. In the context of self-deprecating humour, the speaker intentionally portrays themselves negatively as part of a comedic strategy. However, rather than being perceived as an actual threat to face, this strategy is understood positively by the audience as a way to build solidarity and maintain engagement.

In relation to John Mulaney, a pragmatic approach provides a solid foundation for understanding Mulaney's humour. The analysis of these actions through the theory of politeness reveals that the intention is to increase solidarity within the community. Therefore, applying the aforementioned framework proves that language functions as an instrument used for the creation of humour and the

construction of identity, social negotiation, and the creation of shared understanding between performers and audiences (Attardo, 2020; Dynel, 2023).

2. Politeness Theory

Within the framework of Politeness Theory developed by Brown and Levinson (1987), there are four main strategies speakers use to manage face-threatening acts (FTAs): positive politeness, negative politeness, off-record, and bald on-record. In the context of stand-up comedy, self-deprecating humor can be understood as a form of positive modesty. By humorously exposing one's own weaknesses or shortcomings, comedians demonstrate humility while inviting the audience to feel close and connected. This action reduces the social distance between comedian and audience, fostering intimacy and creating a warm atmosphere without creating conflict.

a. Positive Politeness

Positive politeness is a strategy oriented toward the need for *positive face*, namely the individual's desire to be valued, accepted, and regarded as part of a group. This strategy not only functions to maintain self-image but also to strengthen social bonds through language and actions that emphasize solidarity, familiarity, and togetherness in interaction. In communicative practice, positive politeness can be manifested by showing attention to the interlocutor, using humor to lighten the atmosphere, and engaging in self-deprecation as a sign of humility. This aligns with Goffman's (1967) notion of *face work* and Attardo's (2020) perspective, which highlights the role of humor as a pragmatic mechanism for reinforcing social relationships. Brown and Levinson (1987) indeed outline fifteen strategies of

positive politeness; however, this study limits its focus to four strategies most relevant to the phenomenon of self-deprecating humor in stand-up comedy, namely use jokes, seek agreement, common ground, and include both S and H. These four strategies are considered central to the practice of stand-up comedy because they directly build solidarity, reduce social distance, and transform face-threatening acts into comedic moments that are positively received by the audience.

1. Use joke

The use of jokes or humor is a positive politeness strategy that aims to strengthen solidarity and intimacy between the speaker and the interlocutor. Humor serves as a means to lighten the mood, reduce tension, and emphasize social closeness. When a comedian uses jokes in the form of self-deprecating humor, he not only displays humility but also invites the audience to feel more connected and part of a shared experience. Thus, jokes in positive politeness play a role in interpersonal relationships and reduce social distance. This is in line with Attardo's (2023) view, which emphasizes the function of humor as a pragmatic tool for building relationships, as well as Geoffman's (1967) idea of "face work," which highlights how individuals maintain a social image through interaction (Bernabéu, 2023).

2. Seek agreement

Seek agreement is a positive politeness method in which the speaker attempts to reach an agreement with the other person. Seeking agreement generally takes the form of agreement, mimicking the other person's words, or emphasizing shared experiences. Its primary purpose is to establish a sense of familiarity,

eliminate potential for conflict, and emphasize that both speaker and listener are on equal social levels. Through the use of similarity, speakers strive to create a sense of camaraderie and improve interpersonal relationships. For example, when a student is telling a friend about their difficulty understanding the lecture material, they might say, "I don't understand the language either. I think we should study more seriously." Furthermore, this strategy is often combined with self-deprecating, a way for speakers to discredit themselves in a soft tone to avoid appearing dominant. Both strategies promote fluid interactions, maintain positive face, and emphasize that communication is not a contest but a medium (Wahdani et al., 2023).

3. Common ground

Common ground emphasizes similarities between the speaker and listener, whether in terms of experience, perspective, or social circumstances. By emphasizing that they share the same situation, the speaker seeks to maintain the other person's positive face, namely the need to be valued and accepted as part of a group. This strategy can be realized through expressions that assume shared experiences, such as "We all know how difficult that exam was," or "As students, we must have stayed up late to do assignments." In comedy practice, this form of common ground often emerges through self-deprecation, namely humor that belittles oneself. By humorously highlighting personal weaknesses or shortcomings, the comedian places himself in an equal or even lower position than the audience, thus creating a strong sense of togetherness. For example, a comedian might say, *"I'm actually an athlete... a lying athlete. My record: 12 hours nonstop*

in bed," demonstrating that human frailty can become a common ground. Thus, self-deprecation is not merely entertainment, but also an effective positive politeness strategy in building solidarity, reducing social distance, and maintaining harmonious interactions (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

4. Include both S and H

Include both speaker (S) and hearer (H) in Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of positive politeness is a communication strategy in which the speaker explicitly involves himself or herself along with the listener in an action or statement, thereby creating a sense of togetherness and solidarity. This strategy is usually realized through the use of plural pronouns such as "we" or "us," which emphasize that the speaker and listener are in the same position and share responsibilities or experiences. By involving both parties, the speaker seeks to maintain the other person's positive face, namely the need to be valued and accepted as part of the group, while simultaneously reducing social distance in the interaction. For example, a phrase like "Let's complete this task together" indicates that the speaker is not only emphasizing his or her own participation but also inviting the listener to feel part of the process. Thus, this strategy serves to strengthen social relationships, foster a sense of solidarity, and maintain harmony in the conversation (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

3. Stand-Up Comedy as Discourse

Self-deprecation, unlike other forms of impoliteness directed at others, is a humorous practice in which a comedian attacks their own positive face by emphasizing personal weaknesses or awkward experiences. From a pragmatic

perspective, this is still considered a face-threatening act (FTA). However, within the framework of Politeness Theory, this strategy can be understood as a form of positive politeness because it demonstrates humility and fosters closeness with the audience (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Rather than causing an offensive breach, self-deprecation is instead interpreted as a way to maintain social relationships with the audience, where the speaker's vulnerability is used as a rhetorical tool to elicit laughter and enhance social connection.

Furthermore, recent studies have shown that self-deprecation works since it represents a playful transgression rather than aggression. As Cela et al., (2024) argue, irony and hyperbole play significant roles in defining the responses of the audience, whereas Dynel (2023) has shown that self-deprecation is a cross-cultural phenomenon mediated through notions of humility and vulnerability. Moreover, according to Attardo (2020), humor should be considered both a fun factor and a cognitive and social tool for problem solving. From this perspective, using the theory of politeness, it may be said that self-deprecation represents a politeness strategy based on the principle of Modesty Maxims (Leech, 1983). In particular, the speaker tries to avoid compliments in regard to himself or herself. As a result, self-deprecation serves as entertainment and helps to establish social cohesion between a comedian and his or her audience.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHOD

A. Research Design

This research employed a qualitative design, as this approach appropriately supports the analysis of the implementation of self-deprecating techniques in stand-up comedy performances within a pragmatic framework. A qualitative method is considered suitable due to the nature of the data to be collected, which consist of humorous utterances delivered by John Mulaney in his stand-up performances that employ self-deprecation techniques. The data were interpreted rather than quantified, as the information gathered is contextual in nature rather than numerical. By applying a qualitative methodology, The researcher was able to focus on the types of self-deprecating techniques that were used to evoke humor among audiences. Furthermore, the use of a qualitative approach is appropriate because this research examines the role of language in conveying meaning and building rapport between the speaker and the audience as part of social interaction. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), qualitative research involves exploring the meanings individuals assign to a phenomenon, while Paltridge (2021) argues that pragmatics is inherently social.

B. Data and Data Source

In this research, the data sources were taken from videos of John Mulaney on the YouTube channel @respect stand-up comedians, uploaded on July 21, 2024, titled "*33 Minutes of John Mulaney*," as well as from the @comedycentral stand-up account, uploaded on May 27, 2024 titled "*New in Town*". The researcher

selected data from these two videos based on two main criteria, the first is based on the most watched videos (543,000 views and 2.6 million views) and the second contains numerous utterances of self-deprecation. The selection was limited to these two videos to ensure that the analysis remained focused and manageable. The data analyzed in this study consisted of utterances taken from the selected videos, and the study used these data to examine self-deprecation and its implications in specific contexts, as well as to identify the types of self-deprecation that appeared in these utterances.

C. Research Instrument

In this study, the primary instrument is the researcher himself. This is because qualitative research relies heavily on the researcher's ability to interpret and analyze data, and no external instrument can fully capture the implicit meanings in the utterances studied (Yoon & Uliassi, 2022). As the primary instrument, the researcher functions as planner, data collector, and data analyst. In this role, the researcher is responsible for identifying relevant utterances, categorizing examples of self-deprecating statements, and interpreting their meaning in specific contexts. Through this process, the researcher can examine the pragmatic aspects of self-deprecating humor and uncover the underlying meanings in the data. To support the analysis, the researcher can also use additional tools, such as manual note-taking, if necessary to systematically organize and consistently interpret the data.

D. Data Collection

The data collection process for this study involved several steps. The first step is watching and accessing John Mulaney's stand-up comedy videos on

YouTube. Next, the author downloaded the transcription of all the utterances in the videos to obtain initial data. This transcript included all sentences uttered by Mulaney during the performance. The next step is to identify and select sentences containing elements of self-deprecation. The author then rewatch the videos and matching the transcripts with the videos. Afterward, the author sorted out the utterances relevant to self-deprecation and classified them based on the type of self-deprecation strategy.

E. Data Analysis

The data analysis in this research focused on how self-deprecating strategies are used in John Mulaney's stand-up comedy performances and how they function as a form of politeness to generate humor and build solidarity with the audience. The data analyzed consisted of transcripts of selected stand-up performances. Utterances containing self-deprecation were identified based on characteristics such as the acknowledgment of one's own weaknesses and self-criticism that undermines the speaker's self-image. Each utterance was then analyzed to determine how the speaker intentionally demeans himself in front of the audience. This analysis utilized the politeness theory of Brown and Levinson (1987), specifically the concept of positive politeness, to examine how self-deprecation functions to reduce social distance, demonstrate commonality, and create closeness with the audience. Strategies such as notice/attend to the hearer, the use of humor, and the affirmation of group similarities was analyzed to determine its contribution to building solidarity

Furthermore, each data point was classified based on the type of self-

deprecation strategy used and was then analyzed in relation to the resulting humorous effect. This process also included identifying recurring patterns in the use of self-deprecation in stand-up performances. The results of the analysis were then synthesized to explain how self-deprecating humor functioned not only as a comedic device but also as an effective politeness strategy in building interpersonal relationships between comedians and audiences. The findings of this study were expected to contribute to the field of Pragmatics, particularly in understanding the relationship between humor, politeness, and social interaction in the context of stand-up comedy performances.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the findings and discussion of the research. First, this chapter describes the data that has been analyzed, then elaborates on the results.

A. Findings

This section presents the findings of the research based on the analysis of John Mulaney's self-deprecating speech in his stand-up comedy performances. This analysis focuses on what types of self-deprecation are used and how do John Mulaney's self-deprecating strategies function as a politeness that generates humor and audience solidarity. Each example is discussed based on its pragmatic function.

4.1 Types of self-deprecation

This subsection discusses the first set of data, consisting of John Mulaney's self-deprecating utterances. These utterances were identified based on the Politeness Theory Brown and Levinson (1978), specifically focusing on self-deprecation strategies related to use jokes, noticing/attending to H, in-group identity markers, seek agreement, avoid disagreement, common ground, and including both S and H. The data were analyzed with the aim of showing how these types function in creating humor. Each example is accompanied by an explanation of context and interpretation to highlight the use and effect of the strategy in the context of comedy.

a. Use jokes

Datum 1

John Mulaney: *"I always wanted attention in school like to a sick degree I really I mean I don't know if you guys ever had this feeling ..."* **Timestamp: 0:07**

John Mulaney said this sentence at 0:07 as the opening of the story about his school days. He admitted that he had an excessive obsession with attention in class. From the perspective of the politeness theory of Brown and Levinson (1987), this statement can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy, especially through a form of self-deprecation that is packed with humor. By acknowledging personal weaknesses, he takes a restrained action against the Face Threatening Act (FTA) that arises when a person reveals his or her own bad traits.

The strategy used is "Use jokes" within the framework of positive politeness. By laughing at herself, Mulaney invites the audience to laugh together, not laugh at others. This creates a sense of togetherness and strengthens solidarity between speakers and listeners. In addition, acknowledging personal weaknesses packaged in the form of humor serves as a way to maintain *a positive face*, namely a self-image as an honest, open, and able to laugh at themselves.

Pragmatically, the phrase "*like to a sick degree*" is a form of hyperbole that emphasizes the absurdity of the obsession. This hyperbole amplifies the comedic effect while also showing how the speaker uses positive courtesy strategies to reduce social distancing with the audience. Furthermore, the use of self-deprecation at the beginning of the narrative serves as a marker of solidarity, as it presents itself as an imperfect and vulnerable figure, so that the audience feels closer and connected. Thus, these quotes not only create humor, but also show how positive politeness strategies can be used to build warmer interpersonal relationships between comedians and audiences.

Datum 2

John Mulaney: *“Please kill one of my grandparents so I can get attention too I did I did do that and some of you did too and I...”* **Timestamp: 1:50**

At the beginning of his stand-up special *Baby J*, John Mulaney introduces a story about his childhood by reflecting on his overwhelming desire for attention during his school years. He explains that he constantly wanted to be noticed and admired, even when nothing significant had happened to him. To illustrate this exaggerated need for attention, he humorously admits that his craving for recognition was excessive. This opening functions as a setup for the following stories about his childhood behavior and establishes a self-deprecating tone that invites the audience to laugh at his younger self rather than judge him.

This utterance also reflects the tradition of dark humor or gallows humor, which is relatively common in Western comedic culture. Rather than expressing a genuine desire for harm, the statement humorously exaggerates childhood jealousy and the desire for attention. Within many American comedy contexts, joking about death can function as a way of coping with uncomfortable emotions and transforming them into a source of amusement. This differs from many Asian cultures, including Indonesia, where death is generally regarded as a highly sensitive and sacred topic. Understanding this cultural context helps explain why audiences interpret the statement as humorous rather than offensive.

John Mulaney said this sentence at 1:50 when recounting his childhood experiences full of the desire to get attention. This statement is a form of self-deprecating humor, because he degrades himself by acknowledging the dark and

unnatural thoughts he once had. With a comedic tone, he laughs at his childhood weakness and obsession with attention, thus falling into the category of Using Jokes.

Within the framework of Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, this sentence can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy. He uses humor to reduce the Face Threatening Act (FTA) that arises when someone expresses taboo or inappropriate thoughts. By laughing at herself, Mulaney invites the audience to laugh together, not judge her seriously. This serves as a solidarity strategy, as he presents himself as a vulnerable and imperfect figure, so that the audience feels closer and connected.

In addition, the use of hyperbole in this statement reinforces the comedic effect. The phrase *"please kill one of my grandparents"* is definitely not a literal request, but rather a form of hyperbole that emphasizes the absurdity of his wishes. The ambiguity between serious confessions and jokes leads the audience to interpret this statement as humor, not as a real confession. Thus, Mulaney manages to maintain *a positive face* by showing honesty while creating a comedic atmosphere that strengthens the relationship with the audience.

Datum 3

John Mulaney: *"All right, well. Henry if you've seen me do stand-up before I have kind of a different vibe now when I was a younger man I'd come out on stage and be like..."* **Timestamp:** 7:36 – 7:50

John Mulaney utters this sentence at 7:36 to 7:50 when comparing his stand-up style in his youth with the style he has now. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, this statement can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy, especially in the form of *Using Jokes*.

The analysis, Mulaney is self-deprecating by implying that he is no longer as fresh or energetic as he used to be. He humbled himself through humor, admitting that his old "vibe" or style was gone. In this way, it reduces the *Face Threatening Act* that arises when a performer acknowledges a deterioration in quality or a change that could be considered negative.

Pragmatically, this statement serves as a way to maintain a *positive face* of the audience. Instead of presenting herself as a perfect figure, Mulaney shows vulnerability and natural changes over time. This makes the audience feel closer, because they see comedians as ordinary human beings who experience development and limitations. Furthermore, the use of humor as a medium of comparison between the past and the present creates an effect of solidarity. The audience is invited to laugh together at the changes experienced by the comedian, instead of laughing at himself condescendingly. Thus, Mulaney managed to negotiate his identity on stage: he was no longer a young figure full of energy, but remained relevant and entertaining in a different style.

Datum 4

John Mulaney: "*my prescriptions... I had no business being prescribed them in the first place...*"

Timestamp: 13:53 – 14:11

John Mulaney said this sentence at 13:53 to 14:11 when telling his personal experience regarding prescription drugs. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, this statement can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy, especially in the form of *Using Jokes*.

The analysis, Mulaney performs self-deprecation by acknowledging his weakness: he doesn't deserve a prescription, but still has one. Instead of taking this

confession seriously, he wraps it up in humor so that the audience interprets the statement as a joke, not an embarrassing confession. In this way, it reduces the *Face Threatening Act* that arises when a person reveals personal weaknesses or mistakes. Pragmatically, the phrase "simply because I had no business being prescribed them in the first place" serves as a form of hyperbolism that emphasizes the absurdity of the situation. This statement reinforces the comedic effect because the audience catches the irony: it has an official recipe, but it's not really worth it. The ambiguity between serious confession and humor makes the audience feel safe to laugh together, rather than judge or judge.

Thus, Mulaney managed to maintain his *positive face* as an honest, open, and able to laugh at his own weaknesses. At the same time, it maintains a *positive face* of the audience by inviting them to laugh together, creating a sense of solidarity, and strengthening emotional closeness. This quote shows how the *Using Jokes strategy* can be used to turn an acknowledgment of weakness into a comedic moment that strengthens the relationship between the comedian and the audience.

Datum 5

John Mulaney: "do you know how hard it is to get a doctor to write you a prescription for a pill you don't need it's not hard it's so easy it's so it's so easy" **Timestamp: 14:11 – 14:26**

John Mulaney said this sentence at 14:11 to 14:26 when telling his personal experience regarding trying to get a prescription for medicine. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, this statement can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy, especially in the form of *Using Jokes*.

The analysis, Mulaney again used self-deprecation by admitting that he was trying hard to get a prescription that he didn't really need. However, instead of

conveying this seriously, he wraps it up with humor through irony: he emphasizes how easy it is to get a prescription, even though previously he described it as if it were difficult. The contrast between *the "do you know how hard it is"* claim and the confession *"it's not hard it's so easy"* creates a strong comedic effect.

Pragmatically, this statement serves to reduce the *Face Threatening Act* that arises when someone expresses inappropriate or deviant behavior. By making it a joke, the audience does not judge Mulaney negatively, but rather laughs together at the absurdity of the situation. This maintains his *positive face* as an honest figure and is able to laugh at his own weaknesses, while maintaining a *positive face* of the audience by creating a safe atmosphere for laughter.

In addition, the use of *"it's so easy it's so easy"* repetitions reinforce the comedic effect through rhythm and emphasis. This repetition adds to the impression of hyperbolic, so that the audience catches the irony as well as the absurdity that it wants to highlight. Thus, this quote shows how the strategy of *Using Jokes* can transform the acknowledgment of weakness into comedic moments that strengthen the relationship between comedian and audience, as well as affirm solidarity through lighthearted and inclusive humor.

Datum 6

John Mulaney: "...you're about to be so disappointed... we had this little charade I'd roll up my t-shirt sleeve..." **Timestamp: 18:00**

John Mulaney uttered this sentence at 18:00 when he was building a narrative about a small habit or "ritual" that he performed. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, this statement can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy, especially in the form of *Using Jokes*.

The analysis, Mulaney uses self-deprecation by implying that what he is about to tell may disappoint the audience ("you're about to be so disappointed"). In this way, he humbles himself before continuing the story, thus reducing the audience's expectations and at the same time creating a space for humor. Instead of presenting himself as a confident figure, he emphasizes his weaknesses or inability to meet expectations, which is then wrapped in comedy. Pragmatically, the phrase "you're about to be so disappointed" serves as a mitigation against the potential *Face Threatening Act* (FTA). Admitting the possibility of disappointing the audience can be a threat to *his positive face* as a performer. However, by making it the subject of jokes, the threat turns into a comedic moment that reinforces the closeness with the audience.

In addition, the use of humor in the form of self-deprecation strengthens solidarity. The audience is invited to laugh together for the weaknesses displayed, not laugh at others. This keeps the *audience's face positive*, because they feel safe and don't become the object of jokes. The narrative repetition of "charade" and physical gestures (rolling up the sleeves of a t-shirt) also adds to the comedic effect through absurd visualizations.

Datum 7

John Mulaney: "...maybe there was something about me with my shirt off that stops sexual harassment..." **Timestamp: 18:22 – 18:49**

John Mulaney said this sentence at 18:22 to 18:49 when recounting an absurd experience related to trying to get prescription drugs. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, this statement can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy, especially in the form of *Using Jokes*.

The analysis, Mulaney uses self-deprecating humor by laughing at himself. She admitted that she was willing to do absurd things for the sake of medicine, even insinuating her own body as an "antidote to sexual harassment." In this way, he humbles himself comically, so that the audience does not judge the confession as a serious weakness, but rather as a source of mutual laughter. Pragmatically, the phrase "maybe there was something about me with my shirt off that stops sexual harassment" serves as a form of irony and hyperbole. This statement is clearly not a literal intention, but rather a way to emphasize the absurdity of the situation. The ambiguity between a serious confession and a joke makes the audience catch it as humor, not as an embarrassing confession.

This joke "*stops sexual harassment*" can also be interpreted as a form of body-image self-deprecation. Instead of portraying himself as physically attractive, Mulaney humorously suggests that his appearance is so unimpressive that it would prevent any possibility of sexual harassment. The humor emerges from the reversal of conventional assumptions regarding attractiveness and desirability. By positioning himself as the target of the joke, rather than making fun of others, Mulaney reduces the risk of causing offense while simultaneously creating a comedic image of vulnerability and inadequacy.

Thus, Mulaney managed to maintain his *positive face* as an honest figure and able to laugh at his own weaknesses, while maintaining a *positive face* of the audience by inviting them to laugh together, not laughing at others. This strategy strengthens solidarity, creates emotional closeness, and keeps the atmosphere of the show warm and inclusive.

This quote shows how the strategy of *Using Jokes* can turn an acknowledgment of weakness into a comedic moment that strengthens the relationship between comedian and audience, as well as affirms Mulaney's comedic identity as someone who is able to laugh at himself in a clever and ironic way.

Datum 8

John Mulaney: “...my tolerance for sedatives was super... no matter what they give me they cannot subdue me... I’m like Rasputin...” **Timestamp:** 19:38 – 20:28

John Mulaney said this sentence at 19:38 to 20:28 when recounting his initial experience in rehabilitation. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, this statement can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy, especially in the form of *Using Jokes*.

The analysis, Mulaney uses self-deprecating humor by laughing at himself as an addict who is immune to sedatives. He compared himself to the legendary Rasputin, who was known to be difficult to kill and full of myths about his resilience. This comparison is clearly hyperbolic and ironic, so the audience catches it as dark humor, not as a serious confession. Pragmatically, the admission that he has been awake for 50 hours and cannot be calmed by sedatives has the potential to become a *Face Threatening Act* (FTA), because it exposes weakness and extreme conditions that can be considered embarrassing. However, by wrapping it up in the form of jokes and hyperbole, the facial threats turn into comedic moments that reinforce the closeness with the audience.

The reference to Rasputin contributes to the humor through a widely recognized cultural image. Although Rasputin was a historical Russian figure, he has become a popular cultural symbol associated with extraordinary resilience and

near-immortality. Many audiences are familiar with this image through films, television programs, and popular culture. By comparing himself to Rasputin, Mulaney exaggerates his ability to remain awake despite heavy sedatives, creating a humorous contrast between his ordinary condition and the legendary figure he invokes.

In addition, the use of cultural references (Rasputin) adds a layer of humor while reinforcing the absurdity of the story. The audience was invited to laugh together over the absurd comparison, not to judge Mulaney negatively. Thus, he managed to maintain his *positive face* as an honest figure and able to laugh at his own weaknesses, as well as maintain a *positive face* for the audience by creating a safe atmosphere for laughter. This quote shows how the strategy of *Using Jokes* can transform an acknowledgment of weakness into a comedic moment that strengthens the relationship between comedian and audience, while also affirming Mulaney's comedic identity as someone who is able to process dark personal experiences into inclusive and supportive humor.

Datum 9

John Mulaney: “Doctor walks into my hospital room if you have only been seeing Dr Michael for the past few years a good legitimate doctor is terrifying it's like an...” **Timestamp:** 20:36 – 20:42

John Mulaney said this sentence at 20:36 to 20:42 when recounting his experience in the hospital after entering rehabilitation. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, this statement can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy, especially in the form of *Using Jokes*.

The analysis, Mulaney uses self-deprecation by laughing at himself as a person who is used to dealing with "fake doctors" or unofficial, so that when dealing

with real doctors, he feels afraid. In this way, he lowers his own standards, admits weaknesses and less-than-ideal experiences, but wraps them in humor so that the audience does not judge them negatively. Pragmatically, the phrase "a good legitimate doctor is terrifying" serves as irony. Normally, official doctors are considered to be reassuring and reassuring, but for Mulaney it feels scary because of the contrast to her previous habits. This irony creates a strong comedic effect, while also reinforcing the absurdity of the situation.

Thus, Mulaney manages to maintain his *positive face* as an honest figure and be able to laugh at his own weaknesses, as well as maintain a *positive face* of the audience by inviting them to laugh together at the absurdity of his experience. The *Using Jokes* strategy here strengthens solidarity, creates emotional closeness, and keeps the atmosphere of the show warm and inclusive.

This quote shows how acknowledgment of weakness wrapped in humor can reduce the *Face Threatening Act* and at the same time strengthen the relationship between comedians and audiences through shared laughter.

Datum 10

John Mulaney: "I scream at this doctor I go where's my clopin we cannot give you your you're clopin why not we are a rehab I cannot give you a schedule to..." **Timestamp: 21:29**

John Mulaney utters this sentence at 21:29 when describing his interaction with a doctor at a rehabilitation center. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, this statement can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy, especially in the form of *Using Jokes*.

The analysis, this statement presents implicit self-deprecating humor. Mulaney presents himself as an irrational patient, screaming demanding medication

that is clearly inappropriate to be given in a rehab facility. In this way, he exposes weaknesses and lack of self-control, but wraps them in humor so that the audience does not judge seriously, but rather captures the absurdity of the situation.

The humor here mainly arises from situational irony. The context is that a patient in rehab who is supposed to help people get out of their addiction actually demands medication that is part of their problem. This irony creates a strong comedic effect, as the audience becomes aware of the contradiction between the goals of rehabilitation and the patient's behavior. Pragmatically, shouting "*where's my clopin*" has the potential to become a *Face Threatening Act* (FTA), because it exposes shameful behavior. However, by making it the subject of jokes, the facial threats turn into comedic moments that strengthen the closeness with the audience. Mulaney managed to maintain his *positive face* as an honest figure and able to laugh at his own weaknesses, while maintaining a *positive face* for the audience by creating a safe atmosphere for laughter.

Thus, this excerpt shows how the strategy of *Using Jokes* can combine self-deprecation and situational irony to transform an acknowledgment of weakness into a comedic moment that strengthens the relationship between comedian and audience, as well as affirming Mulaney's comedic identity as someone who is able to process dark personal experiences into inclusive and supportive humor.

Datum 11

John Mulaney: "*Narcotic Under Pennsylvania state law and I said Pennsylvania State Law well what if we go to a pharmacy in New Jersey you see I thought he was telling me about a predicament that we were both caught up in...*" **Timestamp: 21:45 – 21:52**

Within the framework of Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, this quote is included in the strategy of positive politeness through *Using Jokes*. Mulaney presents himself with an implicit self-deprecating humor, that is, laughing at his own flawed weaknesses and logic. He describes himself as an irrational thinker, trying to find absurd legal loopholes in order to get medicine. By proposing to move to a pharmacy in New Jersey, he exposes the absurdity of his reasoning, thereby lowering his own standards.

According to Brown & Levinson, this kind of recognition has the potential to become a Face Threatening Act (FTA) because it exposes shameful and irrational behavior. However, Mulaney uses humor to reduce the threat of face. He wraps up acknowledgment of weakness with comedy so that the audience captures the absurdity of the situation, rather than judging him negatively. In addition, he frames it as if the doctor and himself are both "stuck" in legal issues, creating an ironic sense of togetherness.

The humor here mainly stems from situational irony: the doctor explains the state law seriously, but Mulaney responds to it as if there is a simple solution by moving to New Jersey. The contradiction between the seriousness of the law and the logical humor of an addict creates a strong comedic effect.

Pragmatically, this strategy maintains a *positive face* as an honest figure and is able to laugh at one's own weaknesses, while maintaining a *positive face* of the audience by creating a safe atmosphere for laughter. Thus, this quote shows how a positive politeness strategy can transform an acknowledgment of weakness into a comedic moment that strengthens the relationship between comedian and audience,

as well as affirming Mulaney's identity as a comedian who is smart in processing irony and absurdity.

Datum 12

John Mulaney: *"I would love to give you these pills you are clearly a super chill young man bobbing and weaving in a hospital gown and a pair of new balance sneakers for the past 12 hours but this pesky state of..."* **Timestamp:** 22:10 – 22:19

Within the framework of Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, this quote is included in the strategy of positive politeness through *Using Jokes*. Mulaney uses self-deprecating humor by portraying himself in a ridiculous way: a "super chill young man" who's been pacing for 12 hours in hospital clothes and New Balance shoes. He laughs at his own bad condition, presenting an image that is not glamorous and full of absurdity. According to Brown & Levinson, this kind of recognition has the potential to become a Face Threatening Act (FTA) because it exposes weaknesses and embarrassing conditions. However, Mulaney reduced the face threat by making it the subject of jokes. Humor arises from the irony of the situation: a patient who is clearly not in good shape is instead portrayed in a relaxed and "super chill" style. This contradiction creates a strong comedic effect.

Pragmatically, this strategy maintains a *positive face* as an honest figure and is able to laugh at one's own weaknesses, while maintaining a *positive face* of the audience by creating a safe atmosphere for laughter. Thus, this quote shows how a positive politeness strategy can transform an acknowledgment of weakness into a comedic moment that strengthens the relationship between comedian and audience, and affirms Mulaney's identity as a comedian who skillfully processes absurdity into inclusive humor.

Datum 13

John Mulaney: *"I'm going to run the out of this rehab something about saying that out loud twice to two different staff members had raised a few eyebrows..."* **Timestamp:** 23:20 – 23:36

John Mulaney said this sentence at 23:20 to 23:36 when recounting his experience at a rehabilitation center. He admitted that he irrationally declared his intention to escape from rehab, even repeating it to two different staff. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, this statement can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy, especially through *Using Jokes* in the form of *implicit self-deprecation*. By exposing his flawed weaknesses and judgment, he takes mitigating measures against *the Face Threatening Act (FTA)* that arises when a person expresses embarrassing behavior.

The strategy used is "Using Jokes" within the framework of positive politeness. By laughing at herself, Mulaney invites the audience to laugh together, not laugh at others. This creates a sense of togetherness and strengthens solidarity between speakers and listeners. In addition, acknowledging weaknesses wrapped in humor serves to maintain a *positive face*, namely a self-image as an honest, open, and able to laugh at personal weaknesses. Pragmatically, the phrase *"I'm going to run out of this rehab"* serves as a form of hyperbolism that emphasizes the absurdity of the situation. The irony lies in the fact that a patient who is supposed to be committed to recovery is blatantly trying to escape. The repetition of this statement to the staff adds to the comedic effect because it shows how irrational his actions are.

Thus, Mulaney managed to maintain his *positive face* as an honest figure and able to laugh at his own weaknesses, while maintaining a *positive face* for the

audience by creating a safe atmosphere for laughter. This quote shows how the strategy of *Using Jokes* can turn an acknowledgment of weakness into a comedic moment that strengthens the relationship between comedian and audience, and affirms Mulaney's identity as a comedian who skillfully processes absurdity and irony into inclusive humor.

Datum 14

John Mulaney: *"They have a nurse in my room to make sure I stay asleep she's sitting in a chair next to a bedside table I'm asleep in the bed..."* **Timestamp: 23:43**

John Mulaney said this sentence at 23:43 when recounting his experience at a rehabilitation center. He describes himself as someone who needs constant supervision to stay asleep. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, this statement can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy, especially through *Using Jokes* in the form of *implicit self-deprecation*. By presenting himself as an independent figure and losing his normalcy, he mitigates the *Face Threatening Act (FTA)* that arises when a person reveals personal weaknesses.

The analysis, Mulaney uses humor to laugh at himself. He highlights the absurdity of the situation: an adult patient must be guarded by a nurse not to wake up or act out of control. Instead of taking this seriously, he wraps it up with comedy so that the audience interprets the statement as a joke rather than an embarrassing confession. In this way, he reduces the threat of face and invites the audience to laugh together. Pragmatically, the phrase *"They have a nurse in my room to make sure I stay asleep"* serves as a form of irony that emphasizes the abnormality of the situation. This irony reinforces the comedic effect because the audience catches the

contradiction: a patient who should be able to sleep on his own must instead be closely monitored. The ambiguity between serious confession and humor makes the audience feel safe to laugh together, rather than judge.

Thus, Mulaney managed to maintain his *positive face* as an honest, open, and able to laugh at his own weaknesses. At the same time, he maintains a *positive face* of the audience by creating a sense of togetherness and solidarity. This quote shows how the *strategy of Using Jokes* can turn a confession of weakness into a comedic moment that strengthens the relationship between him and audience.

Datum 15

John Mulaney: "I had nine Pete Davidsons saved in my phone and that's too many Pete Davidson so I started to save him under fake..." **Timestamp: 24:39 – 24:46**

John Mulaney said this sentence at 24:39 to 24:46 when telling about his habit of saving contacts on his cell phone. He admitted that he was careless and absurd because he had nine contacts with the same name. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, this statement can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy, especially through *Using Jokes* in the form of *self-deprecation*. By acknowledging his personal ridiculousness, he mitigates the *Face Threatening Act (FTA)* that arises when someone reveals an unreasonable weakness or habit.

The analysis, Mulaney laughed at himself in a hyperbolic way. The phrase "*that's too much Pete Davidson*" serves as a form of hyperbole that emphasizes the absurdity of the situation. The audience caught the irony: there was no logical reason to keep nine contacts of the same name, so this confession became the subject of comedy. Instead of causing negative judgment, the confession actually invites

laughter together. Pragmatically, this recognition reinforces the comedic effect as the audience sees a contradiction between what should be simple (keeping contact) and Mulaney's exaggerated and inefficient way. The ambiguity between serious confession and humor makes the audience feel safe to laugh together, rather than judge.

Thus, Mulaney managed to maintain his *positive face* as an honest, open, and able to laugh at his own weaknesses. At the same time, he maintains a *positive face* of the audience by creating a sense of togetherness and solidarity. This quote shows how the *strategy of Using Jokes* can turn an acknowledgment of weakness into a comedic moment that strengthens the relationship between comedian and audience.

Datum 16

John Mulaney: “So I started to save him under fake famous people's names just to mix it up like for a while he was saved in my phone as Rodney Dangerfield the week I went to rehab he was saved in my phone as Al Pacino so I'm asleep in bed a nurse is watching over me my phone is next to the...”

Timestamp: 24:53 – 25:08

John Mulaney said this sentence at 24:53 to 25:08 when he told about his habit of keeping contacts on his phone with the names of famous figures. He laughed at his own ridiculous habits, even in serious conditions such as when he was in rehab. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, this statement can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy, especially through *Using Jokes* in the form of *self-deprecation*. By admitting his absurd behavior, he mitigated the *Face Threatening Act (FTA)* that arises when a person expresses careless or unreasonable habits.

The analysis, Mulaney uses humor to laugh at himself. The phrases "*saved in my phone as Rodney Dangerfield*" and "*saved in my phone as Al Pacino*" serve as a form of irony that emphasizes the absurdity of the situation. The audience caught the contradiction: keeping one's contact with the name of a famous figure was not only impractical, but also confusing. Instead of causing negative judgment, this confession actually invites laughter because of its ridiculousness. Pragmatically, this recognition reinforces the comedic effect because the audience sees the abnormality in what should be simple (keeping contact). The ambiguity between serious confession and humor makes the audience feel safe to laugh together, rather than judge.

Thus, Mulaney managed to maintain his *positive face* as an honest, open, and able to laugh at his own weaknesses. At the same time, he maintains a *positive face* of the audience by creating a sense of togetherness and solidarity. This quote shows how the *strategy of Using Jokes* can turn a confession of weakness into a comedic moment that strengthens the relationship between comedian and audience.

Datum 17

John Mulaney: "*What the nurse sees on the phone is that this unconscious patient is getting not one not two but five missed calls from Oscar winner Al Pacino so she wakes me...*" **Timestamp:** 25:16 – 25:53

John Mulaney utters this sentence at 25:16 to 25:53 when recounting the absurd situation in a rehabilitation center. He laughed at himself as a patient who seemed to be "visited" by famous celebrities, even though it was only due to his ridiculous habit of keeping in touch with the names of famous figures. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, this statement

can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy, especially through *Using Jokes* in the form of *self-deprecation*. By admitting his absurd behavior, he mitigated the *Face Threatening Act (FTA)* that arises when a person expresses careless or unreasonable habits.

The analysis, Mulaney uses humor to laugh at himself. The phrase "*five missed calls from Oscar winner Al Pacino*" serves as a hyperbolic and ironic form that emphasizes the absurdity of the situation. The audience catches the contradiction: an unconscious patient looks as if he is being contacted by a legendary actor, when in reality it is just the result of a ridiculous habit of keeping contact under a false name. Instead of causing negative judgment, this confession actually invites laughter because of its ridiculousness.

Pragmatically, this recognition reinforces the comedic effect because the audience sees the abnormality in what should be simple (keeping contact). The ambiguity between serious confession and humor makes the audience feel safe to laugh together, rather than judge. Thus, Mulaney managed to maintain his *positive face* as an honest, open, and able to laugh at his own weaknesses. At the same time, he maintains a *positive face* of the audience by creating a sense of togetherness and solidarity. This quote shows how the *strategy of Using Jokes* can turn a confession of weakness into a comedic moment that strengthens the relationship between comedian and audience.

Datum 18

John Mulaney: "*when I was a little kid no one cared what I thought sometimes people would say uh what do you think you're doing but that just meant stop they didn't actually want to know...*"

Timestamp: 26:01

John Mulaney utters this line at 26:01 when reflecting on his childhood. He laughs at himself by remembering that his opinion is not considered important, even when adults ask "what do you think you're doing," which in reality just means "stop," rather than really wanting to know what he thinks. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, this statement can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy, especially through *Using Jokes* and *Exaggeration*. By acknowledging that he was not noticed in the past, he performs *reflective self-deprecation*, while reducing the *Face Threatening Act* that arises when someone expresses weakness or embarrassing experiences.

The analysis, Mulaney uses humor to laugh at his childhood. The phrase "*no one cared what I thought*" serves as a form of hyperbolism that emphasizes the indifference of others to themselves. The audience caught the irony: a little kid who felt his opinion was never considered important, but now turned it into comedic material. Instead of eliciting serious sympathy, this confession invites laughter because it is wrapped in humor.

Pragmatically, this acknowledgment amplifies the comedic effect as the audience sees the contradiction between the childhood experience of indifference and the way Mulaney now laughs at it. The ambiguity between serious confession and humor makes the audience feel safe to laugh together, rather than judge. Thus, Mulaney managed to maintain his *positive face* as an honest, open, and able to laugh at his weaknesses and past experiences. At the same time, he maintains a *positive face* of the audience by creating a sense of togetherness and solidarity. This quote shows how the strategy of *Using Jokes* and *Exaggeration* can turn a bitter

childhood reflection into a comedic moment that strengthens the relationship between comedian and audience.

Datum 19

John Mulaney: *"they didn't want me to be like well I was going to put this bottle rocket into this carton of eggs so that when I lit off the bottle rocket the eggs would explode everywhere oh well that's very interesting and what brought you to this experiment..."* **Timestamp: 26:17 – 26:24**

John Mulaney uttered this sentence at 26:17 to 26:24 when describing the absurd ideas of his childhood. He laughed at himself as a child with the ridiculous and dangerous thought of putting fireworks in an egg carton so that it would explode. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, this statement can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy, especially through *Using Jokes* and *Exaggeration*. By admitting his childhood foolishness, he performs *self-deprecation* which serves to reduce the *Face Threatening Act* that arises when a person expresses weakness or embarrassing behavior.

The analysis, Mulaney uses humor to laugh at his childhood. The phrase *"put this bottle rocket into this carton of eggs"* serves as a hyperbolic form that emphasizes the absurdity of a child's idea. The audience caught the irony: an experiment that was clearly dangerous and absurd was instead presented as something "interesting." Instead of causing negative judgment, this confession actually invites laughter because of its ridiculousness.

Pragmatically, this recognition amplifies the comedic effect as audiences see the contradiction between childhood innocence and dangerous ideas. The ambiguity

between serious confession and humor makes the audience feel safe to laugh together, rather than judge.

Thus, Mulaney managed to maintain her *positive face* as an honest, open, and able to laugh at her childhood weaknesses and stupidity. At the same time, he maintains a *positive face* of the audience by creating a sense of togetherness and solidarity. This quote shows how the strategy of *Using Jokes* and *Exaggeration* can turn an absurd childhood reflection into a comedic moment that strengthens the relationship between the comedian and the audience.

Datum 20

John Mulaney: “Well you know how I’m filled with rage I’m so horny and angry all the time and I have no outlet for it so eggs like I travel alone sometimes you know...” **Timestamp: 26:31 – 26:45**

John Mulaney said this sentence at 26:31 to 26:45 when describing his emotional state. He humbles himself by admitting to being full of anger and absurd impulses, and then channeling it into ridiculous experiments. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, this statement can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy, especially through *Using Jokes*. By presenting himself as an emotional and unstable figure, he performs *self-deprecation* which serves to reduce the *Face Threatening Act* that arises when a person expresses psychological weakness.

The analysis, Mulaney uses humor to laugh at his own emotional state. The phrases “*I’m filled with rage*” and “*I’m so horny and angry all the time*” serve as hyperbolic forms that emphasize the absurdity of his psychological state. The audience caught the irony: instead of channeling emotions in a healthy way, he associated them with a ridiculous experiment using eggs. This contradiction

amplifies the comedic effect as it displays irrationality wrapped in humor. Pragmatically, this acknowledgment amplifies the comedic effect as audiences see abnormalities in the way Mulaney portrays herself. The ambiguity between serious confession and humor makes the audience feel safe to laugh together, rather than judge.

The phrase “*so horny and angry*” also reflects a broader cultural tendency in contemporary American stand-up comedy, where personal topics such as sexuality, relationships, and private desires are frequently discussed in public as sources of humor. While openly expressing sexual desire may be considered inappropriate or taboo in many cultures, including Indonesia, American comedy audiences generally view such disclosures as acceptable when presented in a humorous context. By openly admitting feelings that are normally kept private, Mulaney employs deliberate oversharing to create surprise and vulnerability. The humor arises not only from the unexpected confession itself but also from the audience's recognition of the social norm being temporarily violated. As a result, the joke functions as a form of self-deprecation that invites laughter rather than moral judgment.

Thus, Mulaney managed to maintain her *positive face* as an honest, open, and able to laugh at her emotional weaknesses. At the same time, he maintains a *positive face* of the audience by creating a sense of togetherness and solidarity. This quote shows how the *strategy of Using Jokes* can turn an acknowledgment of weakness into a comedic moment that strengthens the relationship between him and audience.

Datum 21

John Mulaney: “...roping in cows and getting milk out of them was never anything you were known for John by the most liberal of estimates there have been about eight cows total several...”

Timestamp: 30:34 – 30:42

John Mulaney utters this sentence at 30:34 to 30:42 when he uses the metaphor "cows" to describe his experience in a relationship. He humbled himself by claiming to be inexperienced, even by exaggerated comparisons. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, this statement can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy, especially through *Using Jokes* and *Exaggeration*. By acknowledging his limitations, he performs *self-deprecation* which serves to reduce the *Face Threatening Act* that arises when a person reveals personal weakness.

The analysis, Mulaney uses humor to laugh at himself. The phrase “by the most liberal of estimates there have been about eight cows total” serves as a form of hyperbolism that emphasizes how minimal his experience is. The audience caught the irony: instead of talking about the relationship seriously, he instead used an absurd metaphor about cows and milk. This contradiction amplifies the comedic effect as it displays irrationality wrapped in humor. Pragmatically, this acknowledgment amplifies the comedic effect as the audience sees the abnormalities in the way Mulaney frames her personal experiences. The ambiguity between serious confession and humor makes the audience feel safe to laugh together, rather than judge.

Thus, Mulaney managed to maintain his *positive face* as an honest, open, and able to laugh at his own weaknesses. At the same time, he maintains a *positive*

face of the audience by creating a sense of togetherness and solidarity. This quote shows how the strategy of *Using Jokes* and *Exaggeration* can turn an acknowledgment of weakness into a comedic moment that strengthens the relationship between the comedian and the audience.

Datum 22

John Mulaney: “*And you don’t want to be some old man stumbling around like hey you seen any loose milk...*” **Timestamp:** 31:27 – 31:36

John Mulaney utters this sentence at 31:27 to 31:36 when imagining his future in an absurd way. He laughs at himself with a sad picture of the future, as a confused and directionless "old man". From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, this statement can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy, especially through *Using Jokes* and *Exaggeration*. By presenting a hypothetical version of himself who is helpless, he *performs a self-deprecation* that serves to reduce the *Face Threatening Act* that arises when a person reveals weakness or the possibility of a bad future.

The analysis, Mulaney uses humor to laugh at his possible future. The phrase "*some old man stumbling around*" serves as a form of hyperbolic that emphasizes the absurdity of the image. The audience caught the irony: instead of imagining a wise or calm old age, he instead portrayed himself as a confused figure looking for "loose milk." This contradiction amplifies the comedic effect as it displays irrationality wrapped in humor. Pragmatically, this acknowledgment amplifies the comedic effect as audiences see abnormalities in the way Mulaney frames her future. The ambiguity between serious confession and humor makes the audience feel safe to laugh together, rather than judge.

Thus, Mulaney managed to maintain his *positive face* as an honest, open, and able to laugh at his weaknesses and absurd future possibilities. At the same time, he maintains a *positive face* of the audience by creating a sense of togetherness and solidarity. This quote shows how the strategy of *Using Jokes* and *Exaggeration* can turn a bleak picture of a future into a comedic moment that strengthens the relationship between comedian and audience.

Datum 23

John Mulaney: “Here’s what you do or here’s what I did but don’t do it but if you did do it would totally work...” **Timestamp: 32:24**

John Mulaney utters this sentence at 32:24 when recounting his wrong actions in the past. He explicitly admitted that he had done something inappropriate, then laughed at it. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, this statement can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy, especially through *Using Jokes* and *Exaggeration*. By admitting wrong behavior, he performs *self-deprecation* which serves to reduce the *Face Threatening Act* that arises when a person reveals personal mistakes.

The analysis, Mulaney uses humor to laugh at himself. The phrase “*don't do it but if you did it it would totally work*” presents an ironic contradiction: it advises against imitating his actions, but at the same time acknowledging their effectiveness. This irony amplifies the comedic effect because the audience catches the absurdity of the opposite statements. Instead of causing negative judgments, this confession actually invites laughter because it is wrapped in humor. Pragmatically, this confession amplifies the comedic effect as the audience sees the abnormalities

in the way Mulaney frames his mistakes. The ambiguity between serious confession and humor makes the audience feel safe to laugh together, rather than judge.

Thus, Mulaney managed to maintain his *positive face* as an honest, open, and able to laugh at past weaknesses and mistakes. At the same time, he maintains a *positive face* of the audience by creating a sense of togetherness and solidarity. This quote shows how the strategy of *Using Jokes* and *Exaggeration* can turn confession into comedic moments that strengthen the relationship between comedian and audience.

Datum 24

John Mulaney: "...find the doctor in your area with the lowest number of stars this person needs your business is this a bad doctor? ne this is the best doctor dude you can walk in there and it's like..." **Timestamp: 32:50 – 33:18**

John Mulaney said this sentence at 32:50 to 33:18 when he recounted his experience of seeking a doctor. He laughed at himself as a person who deliberately sought out the doctor with the worst reputation for personal gain. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, this statement can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy, especially through *Using Jokes*. By admitting his absurd behavior, he performs *self-deprecation* which serves to reduce the *Face Threatening Act* that arises when a person expresses an unreasonable act.

The analysis, Mulaney uses humor to laugh at himself. The phrase "*find the doctor in your area with the lowest number of stars*" serves as a form of irony and hyperbolism that emphasizes the absurdity of his actions. The audience caught the contradiction: instead of looking for the best doctor, he went for the worst, calling

him "the best doctor." This irony reinforces the comedic effect as it features reverse logic wrapped in humor. Pragmatically, this confession amplifies the comedic effect as the audience sees the abnormalities in the way Mulaney frames the doctor's quest. The ambiguity between serious confession and humor makes the audience feel safe to laugh together, rather than judge.

Thus, Mulaney managed to maintain his *positive face* as an honest, open, and able to laugh at his weaknesses and absurd actions. At the same time, he maintains a *positive face* of the audience by creating a sense of togetherness and solidarity. This quote shows how the *Using Jokes strategy* can turn a confession of ridiculous behavior into a comedic moment that strengthens the relationship between the comedian and the audience.

Video 2 titled "New in Town"

Use Jokes

Datum 25

John Mulaney: "I was hoping by now that I would look older but it didn't happen. I don't look older, I just look worse, I think. Honestly, when I'm walking down the street..." **Timestamp: 1:05**

John Mulaney said this sentence at 1:05 when reflecting on his performance. He laughed at himself as a person who failed to look mature, instead felt that he looked worse. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, this statement can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy, especially through *Using Jokes* in the form of *self-deprecation*. By acknowledging his weaknesses, he mitigated the *Face Threatening Act (FTA)* that arises when someone reveals embarrassing things about him.

The analysis, Mulaney uses humor to laugh at his physical condition. The phrase "*I don't look older, I just look worse*" serves as a form of irony and hyperbolic that emphasizes the absurdity of the situation. The audience catches the contradiction: instead of aging with authority, he feels that his appearance is deteriorating. This irony reinforces the comedic effect as it features reverse logic wrapped in humor. Pragmatically, this acknowledgment amplifies the comedic effect as the audience sees abnormalities in the way Mulaney frames the aging process. The ambiguity between serious confession and humor makes the audience feel safe to laugh together, rather than judge.

Thus, Mulaney managed to maintain his *positive face* as an honest, open, and able to laugh at personal weaknesses. At the same time, he maintains a *positive face* of the audience by creating a sense of togetherness and solidarity. This quote shows how the *strategy of Using Jokes* can turn a confession of weakness into a comedic moment that strengthens the relationship between comedian and audience.

Datum 26

John Mulaney: "*Look at that man'. I think they're just like 'whoa! That tall child looks terrible. Get some rest, tall child.'*" **Timestamp:** 1:07 – 1:14

John Mulaney utters this line at 1:07 to 1:14 when describing how others perceive him. He laughed at himself by calling himself a "tall child" who looked bad. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, this statement can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy, especially through *Using Jokes* and *Exaggeration*. By acknowledging his weaknesses, he performs *self-deprecation* which serves to reduce the *Face Threatening Act* that arises when someone reveals embarrassing things about him.

The analysis, Mulaney uses humor to laugh at his physical condition. The phrase "*that tall child looks terrible*" serves as a form of hyperbolism that emphasizes the absurdity of the situation. The audience caught the irony: instead of looking mature and authoritative, he felt perceived as a tall and bad-looking child. This contradiction amplifies the comedic effect as it features reverse logic wrapped in humor. Pragmatically, this acknowledgment amplifies the comedic effect as the audience sees the abnormalities in the way Mulaney frames other people's perceptions of her. The ambiguity between serious confession and humor makes the audience feel safe to laugh together, rather than judge.

Thus, Mulaney managed to maintain his *positive face* as an honest, open, and able to laugh at personal weaknesses. At the same time, he maintains a *positive face* of the audience by creating a sense of togetherness and solidarity. This quote shows how the strategy of *Using Jokes* and *Exaggeration* can turn an acknowledgment of weakness into a comedic moment that strengthens the relationship between the comedian and the audience.

Datum 27

John Mulaney: "*I found out that when I was 10, Veronica was 13. So why was she in charge? All she could do was dial the telephone a little better than I could. 13 when I'm 10? That's just like hiring a slightly bigger child.*" **Timestamp: 2:08 – 2:20**

John Mulaney utters this sentence at 2:08 to 2:20 when recounting his childhood experience with a babysitter. He laughs at himself as a kid who isn't much different from a babysitter, so the absurdity is obvious. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, this statement can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy, especially through *Using Jokes* and *Exaggeration*.

By acknowledging that the babysitter is only slightly older than her, she performs a *self-deprecation* that serves to reduce the *Face Threatening Act* that arises when someone reveals an embarrassing childhood experience.

The analysis, Mulaney uses humor to laugh at the absurdity of the situation. The phrase "*that's just like hiring a slightly bigger child*" serves as a hyperbolic form that emphasizes how small the age difference is between him and the babysitter. The audience caught the irony: a 13-year-old was considered "responsible" for a 10-year-old, when both were children. This contradiction amplifies the comedic effect as it features reverse logic wrapped in humor. Pragmatically, this acknowledgment amplifies the comedic effect as audiences see abnormalities in the way adults entrust responsibilities to babysitters who are only slightly older. The ambiguity between serious confession and humor makes the audience feel safe to laugh together, rather than judge.

Thus, Mulaney managed to maintain her *positive face* as an honest, open, and able to laugh at her childhood weaknesses and experiences. At the same time, he maintains a *positive face* of the audience by creating a sense of togetherness and solidarity. This quote shows how the *strategy of Using Jokes and Exaggeration* can turn an absurd childhood reflection into a comedic moment that strengthens the relationship between comedian and audience.

Datum 28

John Mulaney: "*I know it's kind of stupid to complain about a movie that came out 17 years ago. But I wasn't a comedian back then. So I have to do it now. I wish I'd been. I wish I'd been a Def Jam comic when that movie came out. I would have torn it to pieces.*" **Timestamp: 3:34 – 3:42**

Uttered at 3:34 to 3:42 while discussing his commentary on an old film, Mulaney humorously positions himself as someone who is "late" in giving his opinion, acknowledging that he was not yet a comedian when the film was originally released. Drawing on Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, this utterance reflects a positive politeness strategy, particularly through the use of jokes combined with exaggeration. By openly admitting the absurdity of his own timing, Mulaney employs self-deprecation as a means of softening the Face Threatening Act that naturally arises when one discloses something embarrassing or unreasonable about oneself.

The analysis, Mulaney uses humor to laugh at himself. The phrase *"complain about a movie that came out 17 years ago"* serves as a form of hyperbolism that emphasizes the absurdity of his actions. Audiences caught the irony: instead of criticizing the film in its time, it did so almost two decades later. This contradiction is reinforced by the statement *"don't do it but if you did it it would totally work"* which presents the irony between prohibition and the recognition of effectiveness. Pragmatically, this acknowledgment amplifies the comedic effect as audiences see abnormalities in the way Mulaney frames film criticism. The ambiguity between serious confession and humor makes the audience feel safe to laugh together, rather than judge.

Thus, Mulaney managed to maintain his *positive face* as an honest, open, and able to laugh at his weaknesses and delays in his actions. At the same time, he maintains a *positive face* of the audience by creating a sense of togetherness and solidarity. This quote shows how the strategy of *Using Jokes and Exaggeration* can

turn an acknowledgment of weakness into a comedic moment that strengthens the relationship between comedian and audience.

Datum 29

John Mulaney: *"If I was a Def Jam comic when that movie came out. But alas, I was not."*

Timestamp: 4:06 – 4:09

John Mulaney utters this sentence at 4:06 to 4:09 when imagining himself as a comedian in the past. He laughed at himself as a person who never had a chance, as if he "failed" to be a comedian at that time. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, this statement can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy, especially through *Using Jokes*. By admitting that he was never in the position he imagined, he carried out *self-deprecation* which serves to reduce the *Face Threatening Act* that arises when a person reveals personal failures or limitations.

The analysis, Mulaney uses humor to laugh at himself. The phrase *"But alas, I was not"* serves as an ironic form that emphasizes the absurdity of his hopes. The audience caught the contradiction: he imagined himself as a comedian capable of criticizing films in the style of Def Jam, but in reality he didn't have that opportunity. This contradiction amplifies the comedic effect as it features reverse logic wrapped in humor. Pragmatically, this acknowledgment amplifies the comedic effect as the audience sees the abnormalities in the way Mulaney frames his failures. The ambiguity between serious confession and humor makes the audience feel safe to laugh together, rather than judge.

Thus, Mulaney managed to maintain her *positive face* as an honest, open, and able to laugh at past failures and limitations. At the same time, he maintains a

positive face of the audience by creating a sense of togetherness and solidarity. This quote shows how the *strategy of Using Jokes* can turn acknowledgment of failure into comedic moments that strengthen the relationship between comedian and audience.

Datum 30

John Mulaney: *"No one in my family is remotely Asian. I mean, we take our shoes off when we come inside, but that was more of a carpeting thing than anything else. Here's how bad it got, though."* **Timestamp: 5:24**

Mulaney utters this sentence at 5:24 while explaining his family's customs. He humorously admits that his family's habit of removing shoes indoors could easily be mistaken for a cultural practice, when in reality it was driven by nothing more than a practical concern for the carpet. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, this statement reflects a positive politeness strategy, particularly through the use of jokes. By exposing the trivial reasoning behind his family's habit, Mulaney performs self-deprecation directed at his family as an extension of himself which functions to reduce the Face Threatening Act that arises when one reveals something potentially embarrassing or subject to misinterpretation.

In this utterance, Mulaney uses humor to highlight the absurdity of his own family's customs. The phrase *"but that was more of a carpeting thing"* functions as irony, deliberately deflating what might appear to be a culturally significant habit into something mundane and unremarkable. The comedic effect arises from the contradiction between the audience's initial assumption that the custom carries cultural meaning and the anticlimactic reality that it was purely practical. This

reverse logic, wrapped in humor, creates the incongruity that triggers laughter. Pragmatically, the ambiguity between sincere confession and comedic framing allows the audience to laugh comfortably alongside Mulaney rather than at him, reinforcing a sense of shared amusement rather than judgment.

Thus, Mulaney successfully maintains his positive face as someone honest, self-aware, and capable of laughing at the small, ordinary aspects of his life. At the same time, he upholds the audience's positive face by fostering a sense of togetherness and solidarity. This datum demonstrates how the strategy of using jokes can transform an everyday family habit into a comedic moment that strengthens the bond between the comedian and his audience.

Datum 31

John Mulaney: *"And I see a group of eighth graders on one side of the street, I will cross to the other side of the street."* **Timestamp: 06: 10**

John Mulaney said this sentence when describing his behavior towards school children. He laughs at himself as an adult who avoids children for fear of being ridiculed. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, this statement can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy, especially through *Using Jokes*. By acknowledging his social weaknesses, he performs *self-deprecation* which serves to reduce the *Face Threatening Act* that arises when a person expresses fear or insecurity.

The analysis, Mulaney uses humor to laugh at himself. The phrase *"I will cross to the other side of the street"* serves as a form of irony that emphasizes the absurdity of his actions. The audience catches the contradiction: a supposedly confident adult man feels threatened by a group of junior high school kids. This

contradiction amplifies the comedic effect as it features reverse logic wrapped in humor. Pragmatically, this recognition amplifies the comedic effect as audiences see abnormalities in the way Mulaney frames his social interactions. The ambiguity between serious confession and humor makes the audience feel safe to laugh together, rather than judge.

Thus, Mulaney managed to maintain his *positive face* as an honest, open, and able to laugh at his social weaknesses. At the same time, he maintains a *positive face* of the audience by creating a sense of togetherness and solidarity. This quote shows how the *strategy of Using Jokes* can turn an acknowledgment of fear into a comedic moment that strengthens the relationship between the comedian and the audience.

Datum 32

John Mulaney: “Because eighth graders will make fun of you but in an accurate way. They will get to the thing that you don’t like about you. They don’t even need to look at you for long. They’ll just be like ‘ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! hey, look at that high-waisted man. He got feminine hips’. And I’m like ‘no! That’s the thing I’m sensitive about!’” **Timestamp: 6:24 – 6:32**

John Mulaney utters this line at the minutes 6:24 to 6:32 when talking about his fear of being ridiculed by junior high school students. She laughed at her physical weaknesses (feminine hips, high pants) which became the subject of ridicule. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, this statement can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy, especially through *Using Jokes* and *Seek Agreement*. By acknowledging his physical weakness, he performs *self-deprecation* which serves to reduce the *Face Threatening Act* that arises when someone reveals embarrassing things about him.

The analysis, Mulaney uses humor to laugh at his own physical condition. Phrase "*look at that high-waisted man. He got feminine hips*" serves as a hyperbolic form that emphasizes the absurdity of children's mockery. The audience catches the irony: the weaknesses they feel the most are immediately recognized and made into ridicule. This contradiction amplifies the comedic effect as it features reverse logic wrapped in humor. Pragmatically, this acknowledgment amplifies the comedic effect as audiences see abnormalities in the way Mulaney frames her social interactions with middle school children. The ambiguity between serious confession and humor makes the audience feel safe to laugh together, rather than judge.

Thus, Mulaney managed to maintain his *positive face* as an honest, open, and able to laugh at his physical weaknesses. At the same time, he maintains a *positive face* of the audience by creating a sense of togetherness and solidarity. This quote shows how the strategies of *Using Jokes* and *Seek Agreement* can turn an acknowledgment of weakness into a comedic moment that strengthens the relationship between comedian and audience.

Datum 33

John Mulaney: "*I wasn't offended as a boy being confused with a lady. I was offended as a lady who was getting pushed around by this chauvinist asshole that works at Blockbuster Video.*"

Timestamp: 7:39 – 7:47

John Mulaney utters this sentence at 7:39 to 7:47 when recounting his childhood experiences. She laughed at herself by claiming to be a "lady" who was treated disrespectfully by the video store clerk. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, this statement can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy, especially through *Using Jokes*. By acknowledging the

absurdity of the situation, he performs *self-deprecation* which serves to reduce the *Face Threatening Act* that arises when a person reveals an embarrassing experience.

The analysis, Mulaney uses humor to laugh at misunderstood identities. The phrase "*I was offended as a lady*" serves as a form of irony that emphasizes absurdity: she is not a woman, but feels offended as if she is being treated as an harassed woman. Audiences capture this contradiction as comedy, as serious confessions of abuse are combined with the absurdity of mistaken identity. Pragmatically, this acknowledgment amplifies the comedic effect as audiences see abnormalities in the way Mulaney frames her childhood experiences. The ambiguity between serious confession and humor makes the audience feel safe to laugh together, rather than judge.

The use of the expression "*chauvinist asshole*" also reflects a common feature of American stand-up comedy, where profanity is often employed as a rhetorical device to intensify emotional expression and enhance comedic effect. In this context, the word "asshole" is not primarily intended to insult a specific individual but rather to dramatize Mulaney's recollection of the event and emphasize his frustration. Within contemporary American comedy culture, such profanity is generally accepted as part of informal humorous discourse. This differs from Indonesian cultural norms, particularly those influenced by religious values, where public use of offensive language is often considered inappropriate. Therefore, the humor arises not only from the mistaken identity presented in the story but also from the exaggerated emotional language used to narrate the experience.

Thus, Mulaney managed to maintain her *positive face* as an honest, open, and able to laugh at embarrassing experiences. At the same time, he maintains a *positive face* of the audience by creating a sense of togetherness and solidarity. This quote shows how the strategy of *Using Jokes* can transform the experience of mistaken identity into comedic moments that strengthen the relationship between comedian and audience.

Datum 34

John Mulaney: *"I have a girlfriend now myself which is weird because I'm probably gay based on the way I act and behave, and... I've walked and talked for 28 years."* **Timestamp: 14:04**

John Mulaney said this sentence at 14:04 when talking about his relationship. He laughed at himself by admitting that his behavior made him seem "misidentified." From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, this statement can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy, especially through *Using Jokes* and *Exaggeration*. By acknowledging the absurdity in the way he behaves, he performs *self-deprecation* which serves to reduce the *Face Threatening Act* that arises when a person expresses embarrassing or contradictory things about himself.

The analysis, Mulaney uses humor to laugh at himself. The phrase *"I'm probably gay based on the way I act and behave"* serves as a form of hyperbolism that emphasizes the contradiction between identity and behavior. The audience caught the irony: even though he had a girlfriend, he felt that his behavior actually made people misunderstand his orientation. This contradiction amplifies the comedic effect as it features reverse logic wrapped in humor. Pragmatically, this confession reinforces the comedic effect as the audience sees abnormalities in the

way Mulaney frames her identity. The ambiguity between serious confession and humor makes the audience feel safe to laugh together, rather than judge.

These jokes should be understood within the framework of self-directed humor rather than ridicule directed toward LGBTQ+ individuals. Mulaney positions himself as the target of the joke by playfully questioning how his mannerisms might be interpreted according to popular stereotypes. The humor therefore arises from his own perceived mismatch between appearance, behavior, and social expectations. Nevertheless, such jokes can be viewed differently across cultural contexts. While American audiences may interpret them as harmless self-deprecation, audiences from different cultural backgrounds may perceive them as reinforcing stereotypes. Consequently, the joke illustrates the complex relationship between humor, identity, and cultural interpretation.

Thus, Mulaney managed to maintain his *positive face* as an honest, open, and able to laugh at his weaknesses and contradictions. At the same time, he maintains a *positive face* of the audience by creating a sense of togetherness and solidarity. This quote shows how the strategy of *Using Jokes* and *Exaggeration* can transform a confusing confession of identity into a comedic moment that strengthens the relationship between comedian and audience.

Datum 35

John Mulaney: “I think like in heaven they built, like, 3/4 of a gay person and then they forgot to flip the final switch, and they just sent me out and it was like, ‘you marked that one gay, right?’ And it was like, ‘oh, no! Was I supposed to?’” **Timestamp: 4:06 – 14:14**

John Mulaney utters this sentence at 14:06 to 14:14 when talking about his identity in an absurd way. He laughed at himself as a unique "failed product", as if

he were the result of an unfinished process. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, this statement can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy, especially through *Using Jokes* and *Exaggeration*. By acknowledging the absurdity of his identity, he performs *self-deprecation* which serves to reduce the *Face Threatening Act* that arises when a person reveals embarrassing or contradictory things about himself.

The analysis, Mulaney uses humor to laugh at himself. The phrase "*they built, like, 3/4 of a gay person and then forgot to flip the final switch*" serves as a form of hyperbolism that emphasizes the absurdity of the situation. The audience catches the irony: an identity that is usually considered clear and intact is portrayed as an unfinished product, thus giving rise to comedy. This contradiction amplifies the comedic effect as it features reverse logic wrapped in humor. Pragmatically, this confession reinforces the comedic effect as the audience sees abnormalities in the way Mulaney frames her identity. The ambiguity between serious confession and humor makes the audience feel safe to laugh together, rather than judge.

From a socio-cultural perspective, the joke reflects differences in how sexual identity is discussed across cultures. In contemporary American comedy, references to sexual orientation are relatively common and are often used as a means of discussing personal identity, social expectations, and stereotypes. However, such topics may be considered more sensitive in cultures where discussions of sexuality are less openly expressed in public discourse. Therefore, understanding the cultural context is important to avoid interpreting the joke as a direct criticism of LGBTQ+ individuals. Instead, Mulaney uses the stereotype humorously to construct a self-

deprecating image of himself as someone who does not fit conventional expectations of masculinity.

Thus, Mulaney managed to maintain his *positive face* as an honest, open, and able to laugh at contradictions in himself. At the same time, he maintains a *positive face* of the audience by creating a sense of togetherness and solidarity. This quote shows how the strategy of *Using Jokes* and *Exaggeration* can transform confusing identity recognition into comedic moments that strengthen the connection between comedians and audiences.

Datum 36

John Mulaney: *"I was definitely gay when I was a little boy. A lot of little boys are gay. You know, they're very flowy and they have hard opinions on things. I don't mean that I was a sexually active gay man when I was a little boy, that's not what I mean. When I was a little boy, I was more like a 67-year-old gay man that's kinda over it, sexually, you know. I was just like an old queen."*

Timestamp: 14:31 – 14:49

Mulaney utters this sentence at 14:31 to 14:49 while reflecting on his childhood identity in a deliberately absurd and exaggerated manner. He laughs at himself by portraying his younger self not as a typical child, but as a weary, world-worn figure far beyond his years. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, this statement reflects a positive politeness strategy, particularly through the use of jokes and exaggeration. By openly acknowledging the contradictions within his own childhood identity, Mulaney engages in self-deprecation that functions to reduce the Face Threatening Act arising when one discloses something socially sensitive or personally contradictory about oneself.

Culturally and socially, this utterance carries significant weight. Discussions of childhood sexuality and gay identity remain sensitive topics in many social contexts, particularly within conservative American Catholic communities the very background Mulaney frequently references in his performances. By framing his gay identity through the lens of humor and hyperbole rather than vulnerability or confrontation, Mulaney navigates a potentially divisive subject in a way that disarms discomfort and invites the audience into a shared comedic space. The phrase *"a 67-year-old gay man that's kinda over it"* draws on a culturally recognizable archetype the tired, unbothered older gay man and applies it absurdly to a young child, creating humor through the collision of two socially incongruent images. This cultural reference functions as common ground, as audiences familiar with this social archetype immediately grasp the incongruity and find it amusing rather than offensive.

Pragmatically, the deliberate clarification *"I don't mean that I was a sexually active gay man when I was a little boy"* serves as a preemptive face-saving move, both for himself and for the audience. By addressing the potential misreading before it arises, Mulaney controls the social framing of his confession, ensuring that the audience interprets it as humor rather than as an inappropriate disclosure. This strategic management of meaning reflects a sophisticated awareness of social norms and audience expectations.

Thus, Mulaney successfully maintains his positive face as someone honest, self-aware, and capable of laughing at the socially complex aspects of his own identity. At the same time, he upholds the audience's positive face by creating an

inclusive and non-judgmental space where sensitive topics can be discussed through the safety of humor. This datum demonstrates how the strategy of using jokes and exaggeration can transform a socially charged childhood confession into a comedic moment that not only generates laughter but also fosters solidarity and openness between the comedian and his audience.

Datum 37

John Mulaney: *"We've been going pretty hot and heavy lately, I think it's time we bring in two older Catholic people."* **Timestamp:** 16:22 – 16:34

Mulaney utters this sentence at 16:22 to 16:34 while talking about his romantic relationship. He laughs at himself by suggesting that an intense romantic relationship needs to be "balanced" by the presence of older Catholic figures an absurd and counterintuitive solution that directly contradicts the nature of the situation he describes. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, this statement reflects a positive politeness strategy, particularly through the use of jokes and exaggeration. By openly acknowledging the absurdity of his own thinking, Mulaney engages in self-deprecation that functions to reduce the Face Threatening Act arising when one discloses something personally intimate or potentially embarrassing in a public setting.

Culturally and socially, this utterance is deeply rooted in Mulaney's Irish Catholic upbringing, a background he frequently invokes throughout his performances. In American Catholic culture, older religious figures particularly parents are socially associated with moral conservatism, restraint, and the suppression of physical intimacy. By suggesting that bringing in two older Catholic people is the logical response to a passionate romantic relationship, Mulaney

ironically invokes this cultural dynamic as a comedic device. The humor arises from the clash between two socially incompatible worlds: the intimate, passionate space of a romantic relationship and the austere, morally watchful presence of conservative Catholic elders. This cultural contrast is immediately recognizable to audiences familiar with religious upbringings, creating a shared sense of amusement rooted in common social experience.

Pragmatically, the phrase "*bring in two older Catholic people*" functions as hyperbole, exaggerating the role of religious authority figures to an absurd degree. Rather than framing his Catholic background as a source of shame or conflict, Mulaney transforms it into a comedic tool, laughing at the way his upbringing has shaped his instincts even within his most personal relationships. This self-deprecating move disarms the potential awkwardness of disclosing intimate details in front of an audience, replacing discomfort with shared laughter. The ambiguity between sincere confession and comedic framing allows the audience to engage with the topic safely, laughing alongside Mulaney rather than feeling the tension of an overly personal disclosure.

Thus, Mulaney successfully maintains his positive face as someone honest, self-aware, and capable of laughing at the cultural contradictions embedded in his own life. At the same time, he upholds the audience's positive face by creating an inclusive and relatable comedic space, particularly for those who share similar cultural or religious backgrounds. This datum demonstrates how the strategy of using jokes and exaggeration can transform an intimate personal confession into a

comedic moment that not only generates laughter but also strengthens solidarity between the comedian and his audience through shared cultural recognition.

Datum 38

John Mulaney: *"I don't wanna make any generalizations about women 'cause I don't know shit about women."* **Timestamp:** 16:48 – 16:52

Mulaney utters this sentence at 16:48 to 16:52 while sharing his perspective on women. Rather than attempting to speak authoritatively on the subject, he immediately disqualifies himself by admitting total ignorance laughing at himself as someone who, despite being a grown man, claims to understand nothing about women. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, this statement reflects a positive politeness strategy, particularly through the use of jokes. By openly admitting his own ignorance, Mulaney engages in self-deprecation that functions to reduce the Face Threatening Act arising when one publicly acknowledges personal limitations or intellectual shortcomings.

Culturally and socially, this utterance carries notable cross-cultural significance. In many Western social contexts, particularly in contemporary American culture, men who claim authority or expertise over women's experiences are increasingly met with social criticism. Mulaney's preemptive self-deprecation *"I don't wanna make any generalizations"* reflects a culturally aware move, signaling his recognition of the social risk involved in speaking about women as a male comedian. Rather than proceeding with potentially offensive generalizations, he subverts the expectation entirely by confessing ignorance, which in itself becomes the punchline. This strategy aligns with a broader cultural shift in stand-

up comedy where comedians, particularly in American contexts, navigate gender discourse with increasing sensitivity to avoid alienating diverse audiences.

Cross-culturally, the humor in this utterance operates differently depending on the audience's social background. In cultures where male authority over discussions of women is still socially normalized, the confession "*I don't know shit about women*" may read as refreshingly honest and self-aware. In more gender-progressive cultural contexts, it functions as both self-deprecation and social commentary a man acknowledging the limits of his own perspective in a way that signals respect rather than dismissiveness. The use of the expletive "*shit*" further reinforces the comedic register, adding informality and bluntness that amplifies the honesty of the confession across cultural lines, as directness and self-mockery are broadly recognized as markers of authenticity in stand-up comedy globally.

Thus, Mulaney successfully maintains his positive face as someone honest, self-aware, and socially conscious, capable of laughing at his own limitations rather than masking them. At the same time, he upholds the audience's positive face — particularly female audience members — by choosing inclusion and humility over presumption, creating a comedic space that feels safe and non-judgmental. This datum demonstrates how the strategy of using jokes can transform a simple admission of ignorance into a culturally resonant comedic moment that strengthens solidarity between the comedian and a diverse audience.

Datum 39

John Mulaney: "*My girlfriend's wonderful, though. I listen to everything my girlfriend says. I don't mean she bosses me around. I just listen to everything she says because, before I had a girlfriend, I never had someone who's always standing next to me who can just point out obvious things that are*

happening. Like, we'll be in a restaurant, and my girlfriend will be like..." Timestamp: 17:32 – 17:50

John Mulaney said this sentence at 17:32 to 17:50 when talking about his relationship with his girlfriend. He laughs at himself as clueless, unable to realize simple things without his girlfriend's help. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, this statement can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy, especially through *Using Jokes*. By acknowledging his inability to pay attention to small things, he performs *self-deprecation* which serves to reduce the *Face Threatening Act* that arises when a person reveals personal weakness.

The analysis, Mulaney uses humor to laugh at himself. The phrase "*I never had someone who's always standing next to me who can just point out obvious things*" serves as a form of irony that emphasizes absurdity: a mature man who is supposed to be able to understand the situation relies on his girlfriend for simple things. The audience captures this contradiction as comedy, as a serious acknowledgment of incompetence is combined with a humorous way of delivery. Pragmatically, this confession amplifies the comedic effect as the audience sees the abnormalities in the way Mulaney frames herself. The ambiguity between serious confession and humor makes the audience feel safe to laugh together, rather than judge.

Thus, Mulaney managed to maintain her *positive face* as an honest, open, and able to laugh at her weaknesses. At the same time, he maintains a *positive face* of the audience by creating a sense of togetherness and solidarity. This quote shows how the *strategy of Using Jokes* can turn an acknowledgment of incompetence into

a comedic moment that strengthens the relationship between the comedian and the audience.

Datum 40

John Mulaney: “*Before I had a girlfriend, I had no standard for how I should be treated as a human being. You could do anything to me.*” **Timestamp:** 18:09 – 18:12

John Mulaney said this sentence at 18:09 to 18:12 when talking about his life changes after having a girlfriend. He laughs at himself as passive and easily mistreated. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, this statement can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy, especially through *Using Jokes* and *Exaggeration*. By acknowledging his past weaknesses, he performs *self-deprecation* which serves to reduce the *Face Threatening Act* that arises when someone reveals embarrassing things about him.

The analysis, Mulaney uses humor to laugh at himself. The phrase “*you could do anything to me*” serves as a hyperbolic form that emphasizes absurdity: a mature man is portrayed as having no standards at all in how he treats himself. Audiences capture this irony as comedy, as a serious acknowledgment of one's passivity is combined with an unrealistic yet humorous image. Pragmatically, this acknowledgment amplifies the comedic effect as the audience sees the abnormalities in the way Mulaney frames her past. The ambiguity between serious confession and humor makes the audience feel safe to laugh together, rather than judge.

Thus, Mulaney managed to maintain his *positive face* as an honest, open, and able to laugh at his past weaknesses. At the same time, he maintains a *positive face* of the audience by creating a sense of togetherness and solidarity. This quote

shows how the strategy of *Using Jokes* and *Exaggeration* can turn an acknowledgment of weakness into a comedic moment that strengthens the relationship between the comedian and the audience.

Datum 41

John Mulaney: “*And now when I’m not with my girlfriend, you can still do anything to me. I will tolerate any treatment.*” **Timestamp: 18:12 – 18:16**

John Mulaney said this sentence at 18:12 to 18:16 when talking about himself outside of a romantic relationship. He laughed at himself as a person who remained weak and passive even in adulthood. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, this statement can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy, especially through *Using Jokes* and *Exaggeration*. By acknowledging his weaknesses, he performs *self-deprecation* which serves to reduce the *Face Threatening Act* that arises when someone reveals embarrassing things about him.

The analysis, Mulaney uses humor to laugh at himself. The phrase “*you can still do anything to me*” serves as a hyperbolic form that emphasizes absurdity: a mature man is portrayed as remaining passive and easily mistreated. Audiences grasp this irony as comedy, as serious acknowledgments of weakness are combined with unrealistic yet humorous depictions. Pragmatically, this confession amplifies the comedic effect as the audience sees the abnormalities in the way Mulaney frames herself. The ambiguity between serious confession and humor makes the audience feel safe to laugh together, rather than judge.

Thus, Mulaney managed to maintain her *positive face* as an honest, open, and able to laugh at the weaknesses that are still inherent even though she is an

adult. At the same time, he maintains a *positive face* of the audience by creating a sense of togetherness and solidarity. This quote shows how the strategy of *Using Jokes* and *Exaggeration* can turn an acknowledgment of weakness into a comedic moment that strengthens the relationship between comedian and audience.

Datum 42

John Mulaney: *"I was just like a young Motown singer. I was just shiny and dumb and easy to trick."* **Timestamp: 18:16 – 18:19**

John Mulaney utters this sentence at 18:16 to 18:19 when talking about his past. He laughed at himself with an absurd analogy, describing the weakness and innocence of his youth. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, this statement can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy, especially through *Using Jokes* and *Exaggeration*. By acknowledging his innocence and weakness, he performs *self-deprecation* which serves to reduce the *Face Threatening Act* that arises when someone reveals embarrassing things about him.

The analysis, Mulaney uses humor to laugh at himself. The phrase *"like a young Motown singer"* serves as a hyperbolic analogy that emphasizes absurdity: a young person is portrayed as if he were a shiny but naïve Motown singer. Audiences capture this irony as comedy, as a serious acknowledgment of innocence is combined with an unrealistic yet humorous depiction. Pragmatically, this acknowledgment amplifies the comedic effect as the audience sees the abnormalities in the way Mulaney frames her past. The ambiguity between serious confession and humor makes the audience feel safe to laugh together, rather than judge.

Thus, Mulaney managed to maintain his *positive face* as an honest, open, and able to laugh at the weaknesses of his youth. At the same time, he maintains a *positive face* of the audience by creating a sense of togetherness and solidarity. This quote shows how the strategy of *Using Jokes* and *Exaggeration* can turn an admission of innocence into a comedic moment that strengthens the relationship between comedian and audience.

Datum 43

John Mulaney: “My girlfriend is a Jewish woman. Which is I did on purpose. Uh, that sounded creepy. I don’t mean like ‘ah, I got one!’” **Timestamp: 20:20**

John Mulaney said this sentence at 20:20 when talking about the identity of his girlfriend. He laughed at himself as a person who spoke the wrong way, sounded weird, and then corrected with humor. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, this statement can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy, especially through *Using Jokes*. By admitting his mistake in conveying his intentions, he carried out *self-deprecation* which serves to reduce the *Face Threatening Act* that arises when someone speaks the wrong way in a sensitive context.

The analysis, Mulaney uses humor to laugh at himself. Phrase “*Which is I did on purpose. Uh, that sounded creepy*” serves as a form of irony that emphasizes absurdity: intentions that are actually ordinary sound like strange or manipulative actions. Audiences catch this contradiction as comedy, as serious confessions about personal relationships are combined with funny spontaneous corrections. Pragmatically, this acknowledgment amplifies the comedic effect as the audience sees abnormalities in the way Mulaney frames his speech. The ambiguity between

serious confession and humor makes the audience feel safe to laugh together, rather than judge.

Thus, Mulaney managed to maintain his *positive face* as an honest, open, and able to laugh at his mistakes. At the same time, he maintains a *positive face* of the audience by creating a sense of togetherness and solidarity. This quote shows how the *strategy of Using Jokes* can turn missteps into comedic moments that strengthen the relationship between the comedian and the audience.

Datum 44

John Mulaney: *"I'm Irish. And Irish people, they don't tell you a thing. Irish people keep it so bottled up. You know, like, the plan with Irish people is like, I'll keep all my emotions right here. And then one day, I'll die."* **Timestamp: 21:09 – 21:19**

John Mulaney said this sentence at 21:09 to 21:19 when talking about his ethnic identity. He laughed at himself as an Irishman who couldn't express his feelings, just kept them to death. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, this statement can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy, especially through *Using Jokes* and *Exaggeration*. By acknowledging the stereotypes inherent in him, he *performs self-deprecation* which serves to reduce the *Face Threatening Act* that arises when a person reveals cultural or personal weaknesses.

The analysis, Mulaney uses humor to laugh at himself. Phrase *"I'll keep all my emotions right here. And then one day, I'll die"* serves as a hyperbolic form that emphasizes absurdity: instead of expressing feelings, he portrays the Irishman as a figure who endures everything until the end of life. Audiences grasp this irony as comedy, as a serious admission of emotional incompetence is combined with an

extreme depiction that is unrealistic yet funny. Pragmatically, this acknowledgment amplifies the comedic effect as audiences see abnormalities in the way Mulaney frames her ethnic identity. The ambiguity between serious confession and humor makes the audience feel safe to laugh together, rather than judge.

This joke “*I’m Irish. And Irish people,*” Irish stereotype exemplifies ethnic self-deprecation, in which comedians humorously reference stereotypes associated with their own cultural background. Mulaney draws upon the long-standing stereotype that Irish men tend to suppress emotions and avoid openly discussing personal feelings. Because the joke targets his own ethnic identity rather than that of an outside group, it is generally interpreted as a form of self-mockery rather than ethnic discrimination. The strategy allows Mulaney to establish solidarity with audiences while simultaneously acknowledging the cultural influences that shape his identity.

Thus, Mulaney managed to maintain her *positive face* as an honest, open, and able to laugh at the cultural weaknesses inherent in her. At the same time, he maintains a *positive face* of the audience by creating a sense of togetherness and solidarity. This quote shows how the strategy of *Using Jokes* and *Exaggeration* can turn an acknowledgment of weakness into a comedic moment that strengthens the relationship between the comedian and the audience.

Datum 45

John Mulaney: “*That surprises a lot of audiences because I don’t look like someone who used to do anything. I look like I was just sitting in a room in a chair eating saltines for like 28 years and then I walked right out here.*” **Timestamp: 22:26 – 22:41**

John Mulaney said this sentence at 22:26 to 22:41 when talking about his appearance in the eyes of the audience. He laughs at himself as passive, boring, and

inexperienced. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, this statement can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy, especially through *Using Jokes* and *Exaggeration*. By admitting his absurdity, he performs *self-deprecation* which serves to reduce the *Face Threatening Act* that arises when someone reveals weakness or embarrassing things about him.

The analysis, Mulaney uses humor to laugh at himself. The phrase "*sitting in a room in a chair eating saltines for like 28 years*" serves as a hyperbolic form that emphasizes absurdity: a grown man is portrayed as if he just sits passively, doing boring things, with no meaningful experience, and then suddenly appears on stage. Audiences caught this irony as comedy, as the serious confession of his appearance was combined with an extreme depiction that was unrealistic yet funny. Pragmatically, this confession amplifies the comedic effect as the audience sees the abnormalities in the way Mulaney frames herself. The ambiguity between serious confession and humor makes the audience feel safe to laugh together, rather than judge.

Thus, Mulaney managed to maintain her *positive face* as an honest, open, and able to laugh at her boring image. At the same time, he maintains a *positive face* of the audience by creating a sense of togetherness and solidarity. This quote shows how the strategy of *Using Jokes* and *Exaggeration* can turn an acknowledgment of weakness into a comedic moment that strengthens the relationship between the comedian and the audience.

Datum 46

John Mulaney: "*I quit drinking 'cause I used to drink too much and then I would black out and I would 'ruin parties'.*" **Timestamp: 24:40**

Mulaney utters this sentence at 24:40 while reflecting on his past drinking habits. Rather than presenting his decision to quit drinking as a serious or somber confession, he frames it through humor by admitting that his excessive drinking led to blacking out and, as he puts it, "ruining parties" a deliberately understated and lighthearted way of describing what was evidently a significant personal struggle. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, this statement reflects a positive politeness strategy, particularly through the use of jokes. By openly acknowledging his past weaknesses, Mulaney engages in self-deprecation that functions to reduce the Face Threatening Act arising when one publicly discloses embarrassing or socially undesirable behavior.

Culturally and socially, this utterance is deeply connected to the role of alcohol in American social culture, particularly within Irish-American communities a background central to Mulaney's comedic identity. In American culture, drinking is widely normalized as a social activity, especially in party and celebration contexts. However, excessive drinking that results in blacking out carries a social stigma, as it signals a loss of control that violates social expectations of responsible behavior. By admitting not only that he drank too much but that he consistently blacked out and disrupted social gatherings, Mulaney exposes a version of himself that fundamentally failed to meet these social norms. The deliberate use of quotation marks around "*ruin parties*" implied through his vocal delivery suggests that this was a label others applied to him, adding another layer of self-deprecation by acknowledging how others perceived his behavior.

Furthermore, within Irish-American cultural contexts specifically, alcohol consumption carries a complex and often contradictory social meaning. Heavy drinking has long been both stigmatized and romanticized within this cultural narrative, simultaneously associated with conviviality, masculine identity, and self-destruction. Mulaney's confession taps into this cultural tension, inviting audiences particularly those from similar backgrounds to recognize the contradiction between drinking as a social bonding tool and its capacity to cause harm and embarrassment. By laughing at this contradiction rather than delivering it with solemnity, Mulaney transforms a culturally loaded admission into a moment of shared recognition and relief.

Pragmatically, the understated phrasing "*ruin parties*" functions as irony, deliberately minimizing what was likely a serious and disruptive behavior into something almost trivially comic. This minimization is itself a self-deprecating move, as it frames his past misconduct as so absurd that it can only be laughed at. The ambiguity between sincere confession and comedic framing allows the audience to engage with a sensitive topic addiction and loss of control without feeling the weight of discomfort, replacing judgment with shared laughter and empathy.

Thus, Mulaney successfully maintains his positive face as someone honest, self-aware, and capable of laughing at his own past failures. At the same time, he upholds the audience's positive face by creating an inclusive and non-judgmental space where personal struggles can be acknowledged through the safety of humor. This datum demonstrates how the strategy of using jokes can transform a confession

of personal weakness into a culturally resonant comedic moment that strengthens solidarity between the comedian and his audience.

Datum 47

John Mulaney: *"I'm standing in the basement, and I'm holding a red cup you see in movies. And I'm standing there and I'm holding a red cup and I'm starting to black out and I guess someone said like 'something something police'."* **Timestamp: 24:56 – 25:00**

John Mulaney said this sentence at 24:56 when recounting his teenage experience. He laughed at his weakness as a drunk teenager and lost control. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, this statement can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy, especially through *Using Jokes*. By acknowledging embarrassing behavior in the past, he performs *self-deprecation* which serves to reduce the *Face Threatening Act* that arises when a person reveals personal weakness.

The analysis, Mulaney uses humor to laugh at himself. The phrase *"holding a red cup you see in movies"* serves as a hyperbolic symbol that emphasizes the stereotypes of American teen parties. The audience caught the irony: instead of enjoying the party, he was instead portrayed as a drunk figure, losing control, and even unconscious when a serious situation arose. This contradiction reinforces the comedic effect because the serious acknowledgment of weakness is combined with absurd yet humorous imagery. Pragmatically, this acknowledgment amplifies the comedic effect as the audience sees the abnormalities in the way Mulaney frames her past. The ambiguity between serious confession and humor makes the audience feel safe to laugh together, rather than judge.

Thus, Mulaney managed to maintain her *positive face* as an honest, open, and able to laugh at the weaknesses of her adolescence. At the same time, he maintains a *positive face* of the audience by creating a sense of togetherness and solidarity. This quote shows how the *strategy of Using Jokes* can turn a confession of weakness into a comedic moment that strengthens the relationship between comedian and audience.

Datum 48

John Mulaney: “...And in a brilliant moment of word association, I yelled ‘fuck da police!’.”

Timestamp: 25:13

John Mulaney utters this sentence at 25:13 when recounting his drunken experience at a party. He laughed at himself as a drunk person who reacted stupidly, just repeating words without context. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, this statement can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy, especially through *Using Jokes* and *Exaggeration*. By admitting the stupidity of his actions, he performs *self-deprecation* which serves to reduce the *Face Threatening Act* that arises when a person expresses embarrassing behavior.

The analysis, Mulaney uses humor to laugh at himself. The phrase “*in a brilliant moment of word association*” serves as an irony that emphasizes absurdity: instead of giving an intelligent reaction, he repeats a popular slogan without understanding the context. Audiences capture this contradiction as comedy, as a serious confession of stupidity is combined with a hyperbolic and humorous way of delivery. Pragmatically, this confession reinforces the comedic effect as the audience sees abnormalities in the way Mulaney frames his actions. The ambiguity

between serious confession and humor makes the audience feel safe to laugh together, rather than judge.

The phrase “*fuck da police*” carries a significant cultural meaning beyond its literal interpretation. It is a reference to “*Fuck That Police*”, a well-known song by the American hip-hop group N.W.A. released in 1988, which became a symbol of resistance against police brutality and racial discrimination experienced by Black communities in the United States. The humor in Mulaney’s narrative emerges from the incongruity between the phrase’s serious sociopolitical background and his own identity as a middle-class Irish-Catholic young man who impulsively shouts it while intoxicated. By presenting himself as someone who blindly repeats a culturally loaded expression without fully understanding its implications, Mulaney reinforces his self-deprecating persona as an individual who loses rational control in embarrassing situations.

Thus, Mulaney managed to maintain his *positive face* as an honest, open, and able to laugh at his past weaknesses. At the same time, he maintains a *positive face* of the audience by creating a sense of togetherness and solidarity. This quote shows how the strategy of *Using Jokes* and *Exaggeration* can turn a confession of stupidity into a comedic moment that strengthens the connection between the comedian and the audience.

Datum 49

John Mulaney: “*I ran into the laundry room and I jumped up on the washing machine and I crawled out through a window into the backyard and now I’m running through the backyard and there was this big chain link fence and I thought I’ve never climbed a fence that high before. And then I woke up at home. On Monday, I went to school.*” **Timestamp: 26:39 – 26:48**

Uttered at 26:39 to 26:48 while recounting a teenage experience of getting drunk, Mulaney laughs at himself by describing how intoxication left him unable to remember his way home, retaining nothing but a sense of panic and absurdity. Drawing on Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, this utterance reflects a positive politeness strategy, particularly through the use of jokes and exaggeration. By openly revisiting this embarrassing episode from his past, Mulaney employs self-deprecation as a means of softening the Face Threatening Act that naturally arises when one publicly discloses moments of personal weakness or loss of control.

The analysis, Mulaney uses humor to laugh at himself. The phrase "*I've never climbed a fence that high before*" serves as a hyperbolic form that emphasizes absurdity: instead of dealing with the situation with logic, he panics and takes absurd extreme actions. Audiences capture this irony as comedy, as serious confessions of panic are combined with unrealistic yet hilarious depictions. Pragmatically, this confession amplifies the comedic effect as the audience sees abnormalities in the way Mulaney frames his drunken experiences. The ambiguity between serious confession and humor makes the audience feel safe to laugh together, rather than judge.

Thus, Mulaney managed to maintain his *positive face* as an honest, open, and able to laugh at his past weaknesses. At the same time, he maintains a *positive face* of the audience by creating a sense of togetherness and solidarity. This quote shows how the strategy of *Using Jokes* and *Exaggeration* can turn an

acknowledgment of weakness into a comedic moment that strengthens the relationship between the comedian and the audience.

Datum 50

John Mulaney: “*Just too anxious for a lot of things. I get very nervous all the time, not even about, like, major life things. Just, like, about in everyday situations.*” **Timestamp:** 32:34 – 32:42

John Mulaney said this sentence at 32:34 to 32:42 when talking about his anxiety. He laughed at his weakness as a person who is easily anxious even in small things. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, this statement can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy, especially through *Using Jokes* and *Exaggeration*. By acknowledging his personal weaknesses, he performs *self-deprecation* which serves to reduce the *Face Threatening Act* that arises when someone reveals embarrassing things about him.

The analysis, Mulaney uses humor to laugh at himself. The phrase “*not even about, like, major life things*” serves as a form of irony that emphasizes absurdity: instead of being anxious about big things, he is instead portrayed as panicking about the little things of everyday life. Audiences capture this contradiction as comedy, as serious acknowledgments of weakness are combined with hyperbolic yet humorous portrayals. Pragmatically, this acknowledgment amplifies the comedic effect as the audience sees abnormalities in the way Mulaney frames her anxiety. The ambiguity between serious confession and humor makes the audience feel safe to laugh together, rather than judge.

Thus, Mulaney managed to maintain her *positive face* as an honest, open, and able to laugh at her emotional weaknesses. At the same time, he maintains a *positive face* of the audience by creating a sense of togetherness and solidarity. This

quote shows how the strategy of *Using Jokes* and *Exaggeration* can turn an acknowledgment of weakness into a comedic moment that strengthens the relationship between the comedian and the audience.

Datum 51

John Mulaney: “*Like, this is my regular speaking voice, but if I’m in a public bathroom and someone knocks too suddenly on the stall door, I go into a whole different speaking voice.*”

Timestamp: 32:45 – 32:52

John Mulaney utters this sentence at 32:45 when talking about his anxiety in everyday situations. He laughs at himself as an absurd person, changing his voice to look like *a carnival barker* just because he panics in the toilet. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, this statement can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy, especially through *Using Jokes* and *Exaggeration*. By acknowledging an unreasonable overreaction, he performs a *self-deprecation* that serves to reduce the *Face Threatening Act* that arises when a person reveals personal weakness.

The analysis, Mulaney uses humor to laugh at himself. The phrase about the change of voice serves as a hyperbolic form that emphasizes absurdity: instead of remaining calm, it reacts with a completely different sound, as if it were a theatrical character. Audiences capture this contradiction as comedy, as serious confessions of panic are combined with extreme depictions that are unrealistic yet funny. Pragmatically, this acknowledgment amplifies the comedic effect as the audience sees abnormalities in the way Mulaney frames her anxiety. The ambiguity between serious confession and humor makes the audience feel safe to laugh together, rather than judge.

Thus, Mulaney managed to maintain her *positive face* as an honest, open, and able to laugh at the absurdity of her emotional reactions. At the same time, he maintains a *positive face* of the audience by creating a sense of togetherness and solidarity. This quote shows how the strategy of *Using Jokes* and *Exaggeration* can turn an acknowledgment of weakness into a comedic moment that strengthens the relationship between the comedian and the audience.

Datum 52

John Mulaney: “*The doctor comes in the room, and the doctor looks at my chart, and he says, ‘oh, you’re here for frequent urination. How many times a day are you urinating?’*” **Timestamp: 35:04 – 35:09**

Uttered at 35:04 to 35:09 while recounting a visit to the doctor, Mulaney laughs at himself by admitting that he lied for an absurd reason, only to find himself trapped by an answer that was far too extreme to be believable. Drawing on Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, this utterance reflects a positive politeness strategy, particularly through the use of jokes and exaggeration. By openly confessing the foolishness of his own actions, Mulaney employs self-deprecation as a means of softening the Face Threatening Act that naturally arises when one publicly discloses behavior that is both embarrassing and difficult to justify.

The analysis, Mulaney uses humor to laugh at himself. A usually serious medical situation is described in an absurd way: he lies about the symptoms, then has to answer the doctor's questions with unrealistic numbers. Audiences grasp this contradiction as comedy, as serious confessions of lies are combined with humorous extreme depictions. Pragmatically, this acknowledgment amplifies the comedic effect as the audience sees abnormalities in the way Mulaney frames her

experiences. The ambiguity between serious confession and humor makes the audience feel safe to laugh together, rather than judge.

Thus, Mulaney managed to maintain her *positive face* as an honest, open, and able to laugh at her past stupidity. At the same time, he maintains a *positive face* of the audience by creating a sense of togetherness and solidarity. This quote shows how the strategy of *Using Jokes* and *Exaggeration* can turn an acknowledgment of weakness into a comedic moment that strengthens the relationship between the comedian and the audience.

Datum 53

John Mulaney: “Cause I couldn’t be like, ‘no, that’s okay. I was lying. It was a lie. To get drugs. You know, like a crime.” **Timestamp: 35:51 – 36:07**

Uttered at 35:51 to 36:07 while continuing his account of a doctor's visit, Mulaney laughs at himself by portraying his own foolishness a man so entangled in his own lies that he nearly confessed to a crime in the process. Drawing on Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, this utterance reflects a positive politeness strategy, particularly through the use of jokes and exaggeration. By openly acknowledging the sheer absurdity of his own actions, Mulaney employs self-deprecation as a means of softening the Face Threatening Act that naturally arises when one publicly discloses behavior that is not only embarrassing but borderline incriminating.

The analysis, Mulaney uses humor to laugh at himself. Phrase “to get drugs. You know, like a crime” serves as a hyperbolic form that emphasizes absurdity: instead of confessing to being honest, he instead portrays himself as almost confessing to a crime in a blatant way. Audiences grasp this contradiction as

comedy, as serious confessions of lies are combined with humorous extreme depictions. Pragmatically, this acknowledgment amplifies the comedic effect as the audience sees abnormalities in the way Mulaney frames her experiences. The ambiguity between serious confession and humor makes the audience feel safe to laugh together, rather than judge.

Thus, Mulaney managed to maintain her *positive face* as an honest, open, and able to laugh at her past stupidity. At the same time, he maintains a *positive face* of the audience by creating a sense of togetherness and solidarity. This quote shows how the strategy of *Using Jokes* and *Exaggeration* can turn an acknowledgment of weakness into a comedic moment that strengthens the relationship between the comedian and the audience.

Datum 54

John Mulaney: “So what I did was, I pulled down my pants and I walked over to the observation table, and I put my hands down on the observation table like this and by the way, part of me was like, whatever, you know?” **Timestamp: 36:14 – 36:22**

John Mulaney utters this sentence at 36:14 to 36:22 when recounting his experience at the doctor. He laughed at himself as a resigned, receiving humiliating treatment for ridiculous lies. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, this statement can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy, especially through *Using Jokes* and *Exaggeration*. By acknowledging the absurdity of his actions, he performs *self-deprecation* which serves to reduce the *Face Threatening Act* that arises when someone expresses embarrassing things.

The analysis, Mulaney uses humor to laugh at himself. The phrase “*part of me was like, whatever*” serves as a form of irony that emphasizes absurdity: instead

of feeling ashamed or rejected, he is portrayed as resigned to face the consequences of his own lies. Audiences capture this contradiction as comedy, as a serious acknowledgment of an embarrassing situation is combined with a humorous extreme imagery. Pragmatically, this acknowledgment amplifies the comedic effect as the audience sees abnormalities in the way Mulaney frames her experiences. The ambiguity between serious confession and humor makes the audience feel safe to laugh together, rather than judge.

Thus, Mulaney managed to maintain her *positive face* as an honest, open, and able to laugh at her resignation in absurd situations. At the same time, he maintains a *positive face* of the audience by creating a sense of togetherness and solidarity. This quote shows how the strategy of *Using Jokes* and *Exaggeration* can turn an acknowledgment of weakness into a comedic moment that strengthens the relationship between the comedian and the audience.

Datum 55

John Mulaney: “*Adult life is already so goddamn weird. So I’m bent over like this on the table, and the doctor comes up behind me. He goes, ‘no, no, no, not on your hands. On your elbows,’ and he knocks me down like that.*” **Timestamp: 36:34 – 36:42**

Uttered at 36:34 to 36:42 while recounting an embarrassing encounter at the doctor's office, Mulaney laughs at himself by portraying his adult self as someone who has simply surrendered to life's absurdities, even in situations that would ordinarily demand dignity and composure. Drawing on Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, this utterance reflects a positive politeness strategy, particularly through the use of jokes and exaggeration. By openly acknowledging the ridiculousness of the situation he found himself in, Mulaney employs self-

deprecation as a means of softening the Face Threatening Act that naturally arises when one publicly discloses a moment that is equal parts humiliating and unavoidable.

The analysis, Mulaney uses humor to laugh at himself. The phrase "*Adult life is already so goddamn weird*" serves as an irony that emphasizes absurdity: adult life is depicted as full of strange situations, including the most undignified moments in the interrogation room. The hyperbolic depiction of a doctor "knocking him down" adds to the comedic effect as the audience catches the extreme yet hilarious abnormality. Pragmatically, this acknowledgment amplifies the comedic effect as the audience sees how Mulaney frames the embarrassing experience in an absurd way. The ambiguity between serious confession and humor makes the audience feel safe to laugh together, rather than judge.

Thus, Mulaney managed to maintain her *positive face* as an honest, open, and able to laugh at the absurdities of adult life. At the same time, he maintains a *positive face* of the audience by creating a sense of togetherness and solidarity. This quote shows how the strategy of *Using Jokes* and *Exaggeration* can turn embarrassing experiences into comedic moments that strengthen the relationship between comedian and audience.

Datum 56

John Mulaney: "So, he pulls his hand out and I thought that I was shitting into his hand, so I yelled, 'I'm sorry!'" **Timestamp: 38:18 – 38:27**

John Mulaney utters this sentence at 38:18 to 38:27 when recounting his experience at the doctor. He laughed at himself as a panicked patient, overreacted, and felt embarrassed. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory

of politeness, this statement can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy, especially through Using Jokes and Exaggeration. By acknowledging the absurdity of his actions, he performs self-deprecation which serves to reduce the Face Threatening Act that arises when someone expresses embarrassing things.

The analysis, Mulaney uses humor to laugh at himself. The phrase "*I thought that I was shitting into his hand*" and the spontaneous reaction "*I'm sorry!*" serve as a hyperbolic form that emphasizes excessive panic: he imagines a normal medical situation as vulgar and embarrassing. Audiences capture this contradiction as comedy, as a serious confession of shame is combined with a humorous extreme imagery. Pragmatically, this acknowledgment amplifies the comedic effect as the audience sees abnormalities in the way Mulaney frames her experiences. The ambiguity between serious confession and humor makes the audience feel safe to laugh together, rather than judge.

The humor in this utterance is also strengthened by the use of vulgar or toilet humor, a common comedic device in Western stand-up traditions. Topics related to bodily functions are often considered taboo in everyday conversation; however, when introduced in a humorous context, they create an element of surprise and incongruity that audiences find amusing. According to humor scholars such as Attardo (2020), humor frequently arises from the violation of social expectations. In this case, the unexpected and highly embarrassing scenario generates laughter while simultaneously creating solidarity because bodily experiences are universally understood. Consequently, the audience shares a common ground with the comedian through recognition of human vulnerability and imperfection.

Thus, Mulaney managed to maintain her positive face as an honest, open, and able to laugh at her ridiculous panic. At the same time, he maintains a positive face of the audience by creating a sense of togetherness and solidarity. This quote shows how the strategy of Using Jokes and Exaggeration can turn an acknowledgment of weakness into a comedic moment that strengthens the relationship between comedian and audience.

Datum 57

John Mulaney: *"So far, he's had to deal with 'ohhhhhh!' And 'I'm sorry!'. And he didn't even let me off the hook, you know?"* **Timestamp: 38:45 – 38:54**

John Mulaney utters this sentence at 38:45 to 38:54 when recounting his experience at the doctor. He laughed at himself as a patient who gave an absurd and undignified response. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, this statement can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy, especially through Using Jokes. By acknowledging the absurdity of his actions, he performs self-deprecation which serves to reduce the Face Threatening Act that arises when someone expresses embarrassing things.

The analysis, Mulaney uses humor to laugh at himself. The phrases "ohhhhhh!" and "I'm sorry!" are described as exaggerated responses that don't fit the medical context, thus emphasizing the absurdity of the situation. Audiences caught this contradiction as comedy, as the serious confession of embarrassing reactions was combined with humorous extreme depictions. Pragmatically, this acknowledgment amplifies the comedic effect as the audience sees abnormalities in the way Mulaney frames her experiences. The ambiguity between serious

confession and humor makes the audience feel safe to laugh together, rather than judge.

Thus, Mulaney managed to maintain her positive face as an honest, open, and able to laugh at her ridiculous responses. At the same time, he maintains a positive face of the audience by creating a sense of togetherness and solidarity. This quote shows how the strategy of Using Jokes can turn a confession of weakness into a comedic moment that strengthens the relationship between comedian and audience.

Datum 58

John Mulaney: *"I was about to ask about Xanax, but then he said, 'all right, your prostate's fine, but we still need to do a blood test'. So I pulled up my pants and shuffled away, feeling different."*

Timestamp: 39:02 – 39:11

John Mulaney said this sentence at 39:02 to 39:11 when recounting his experience at the doctor. He laughed at himself as a person who failed to achieve his goal (getting Xanax), instead ending up with another medical procedure. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, this statement can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy, especially through Using Jokes. By acknowledging the absurdity of his actions, he performs self-deprecation which serves to reduce the Face Threatening Act that arises when someone expresses embarrassing things.

The analysis, Mulaney uses humor to laugh at himself. The phrase "I was about to ask about Xanax" emphasizes an absurd goal that fails to be achieved, while the image of "pulled up my pants and shuffled away" highlights his resignation in the face of unintended consequences. Audiences capture this contradiction as

comedy, as serious acknowledgments of failure are combined with funny and undignified physical imagery. Pragmatically, this acknowledgment amplifies the comedic effect as the audience sees abnormalities in the way Mulaney frames her experiences. The ambiguity between serious confession and humor makes the audience feel safe to laugh together, rather than judge.

Thus, Mulaney managed to maintain his positive face as an honest, open, and able to laugh at his own failures. At the same time, he maintains a positive face of the audience by creating a sense of togetherness and solidarity. This quote shows how the strategy of Using Jokes can turn a confession of weakness into a comedic moment that strengthens the relationship between comedian and audience.

Datum 59

John Mulaney: *"I wake up and I am covered in sweat, lying on the observation table. I wake up, I open my eyes, and I see Batman's face."* **Timestamp: 39:57 – 40:03**

John Mulaney uttered this sentence at 39:57 to 40:03 when recounting his experience at the doctor. He laughed at himself as a weak patient, fainted, and woke up in an embarrassing state. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, this statement can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy, especially through Using Jokes. By acknowledging the absurdity of his actions, he performs self-deprecation which serves to reduce the Face Threatening Act that arises when someone expresses embarrassing things.

The analysis, Mulaney uses humor to laugh at himself. The images of "covered in sweat" and "lying on the observation table" emphasize his physical weakness, while the appearance of "Batman's face" becomes an absurd element that turns a serious medical situation into a comedy. Audiences capture this

contradiction as comedy, as a serious admission of embarrassing conditions is combined with a humorous and unrealistic extreme image. Pragmatically, this acknowledgment amplifies the comedic effect as the audience sees abnormalities in the way Mulaney frames her experiences. The ambiguity between serious confession and humor makes the audience feel safe to laugh together, rather than judge.

Thus, Mulaney managed to maintain his positive face as an honest, open, and able to laugh at his own weaknesses. At the same time, he maintains a positive face of the audience by creating a sense of togetherness and solidarity. This quote shows how the strategy of Using Jokes can turn an acknowledgment of weakness into a comedic moment that strengthens the relationship between comedian and audience.

Datum 60

John Mulaney: *“He’s looking at me and he goes, ‘you gotta go’. And I said, ‘could I please talk to the doctor, though, first? Because sometimes I get nervous on airplanes’.”* **Timestamp:** 40:03 – 40:20

John Mulaney said this sentence at 40:03 to 40:20 when recounting his experience at the doctor. He laughs at himself as the one who keeps trying ridiculous excuses after all the embarrassing experiences. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, this statement can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy, especially through Using Jokes. By acknowledging the absurdity of his actions, he performs self-deprecation which serves to reduce the Face Threatening Act that arises when someone expresses embarrassing things.

The analysis, Mulaney uses humor to laugh at himself. The phrase "because sometimes I get nervous on airplanes" serves as a ridiculous excuse that is irrelevant to the medical context, thus emphasizing the absurdity of the situation. The audience catches this contradiction as comedy, as a serious confession of his desire to talk to a doctor is combined with absurd and funny excuses. Pragmatically, this acknowledgment amplifies the comedic effect as the audience sees abnormalities in the way Mulaney frames her experiences. The ambiguity between serious confession and humor makes the audience feel safe to laugh together, rather than judge.

Thus, Mulaney managed to maintain her positive face as an honest, open, and able to laugh at her own ridiculous reasons. At the same time, he maintains a positive face of the audience by creating a sense of togetherness and solidarity. This quote shows how the strategy of Using Jokes can turn a confession of weakness into a comedic moment that strengthens the relationship between comedian and audience.

b. Seek Agreement

Datum 1

John Mulaney: *"I did do that and some of you I know you did cuz you started laughing from the very beginning of the joke if you did don't feel too bad okay?"* **Timestamp: 01:50 – 02:00**

John Mulaney's sentence *"I did do that and some of you I know you did cuz you started laughing from the very beginning of the joke if you did don't feel too bad okay"* can be analyzed as a form of positive politeness strategy within the framework of Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory. This statement falls into the *category of Seek Agreement*, as Mulaney explicitly invites the audience to admit that they are also doing the same thing, which is laughing from the beginning of the

joke. In this way, he builds a sense of togetherness and solidarity between himself and the audience.

Pragmatically, the phrase "don't feel too bad okay" serves as a mitigation against potential face-to-face threats (FTAs). Instead of making the audience feel guilty or humiliated for laughing too quickly, Mulaney insists that it's normal and even part of the fun of the show. This strategy maintains the *positive face* of the audience, because they feel accepted and not judged, while at the same time strengthening *Mulaney's positive face* as a friendly, inclusive figure, and does not put himself above the audience. In addition, the use of humor in the form of *Seek Agreement* reinforces the effect of solidarity. By highlighting shared experiences, Mulaney creates a warm and inclusive atmosphere for the show. Audiences not only become passive listeners, but also feel emotionally engaged in the interaction. Thus, this quote shows how positive politeness strategies can be used to reduce social distancing, maintain harmony, and strengthen interpersonal relationships between comedians and audiences.

Datum 2

John Mulaney: "...he didn't even let me off the hook, you know?" **Timestamp: 38:54**

John Mulaney utters this sentence at 38:54 when recounting an interaction with a doctor who still affirms his mistakes or weaknesses. He laughed at himself by presenting an image as a patient who was "annoying" or unable to escape reprimand. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, this statement can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy through *Seek Agreement* and *Self-Deprecating*.

The analysis, Mulaney uses humor by emphasizing his weakness: he is portrayed as a patient who does not get leniency, even from doctors. Self-deprecation arises because he openly admits his shameful and helpless position. The Seek Agreement strategy is evident through the phrase "you know?", which serves as an invitation to the audience to agree and share in the experience. In this way, he builds closeness and solidarity with the audience.

Common ground is also formed because the audience can understand a situation in which one hopes to be released from a mistake, but instead is reaffirmed. The use of "you know?" reinforces the sense of community, as if Mulaney is saying: "You must have experienced something like this."

Pragmatically, this recognition reinforces the comedic effect because it combines embarrassing personal experiences with rhetorical strategies that engage audiences. The ambiguity between serious confession and humor makes the audience feel safe to laugh along, rather than laugh at Mulaney from the outside.

Thus, Mulaney managed to maintain his positive face as an honest figure and dared to laugh at his weaknesses. At the same time, he maintains a positive face from the audience by inviting them to agree and creating a sense of togetherness. This quote shows how the Seek Agreement + Self-Deprecating strategy can turn embarrassing experiences into comedic moments that strengthen the connection between comedian and audience.

c. Common Ground

Datum 1

John Mulaney: *"...it feels like you're shitting, because the only thing that's ever come out of your butt before has been shit."* **Timestamp: 38:09**

John Mulaney uttered this sentence at 38:09 when recounting his experience at the doctor. He laughed at himself with an embarrassing medical experience, associating it with the most basic and vulgar things. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, this statement can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy, specifically through Common Ground and Self-Deprecating. By acknowledging the absurdity of his actions, he performs self-deprecation which serves to reduce the Face Threatening Act that arises when someone expresses embarrassing things.

The analysis, Mulaney uses humor to laugh at himself. The phrase "the only thing that's ever come out of your butt before has been shit" serves as a form of common ground with the audience, as everyone understands the biological experience. By equating the medical experience with the universal vulgar, he creates a sense of community while emphasizing the absurdity of the situation. Audiences capture this contradiction as comedy, as serious confessions of medical sensations are combined with humorous extreme depictions. Pragmatically, this acknowledgment amplifies the comedic effect as the audience sees abnormalities in the way Mulaney frames her experiences. The ambiguity between serious confession and humor makes the audience feel safe to laugh together, rather than judge.

Thus, Mulaney managed to maintain his positive face as an honest, open, and able to laugh at his own weaknesses. At the same time, he maintains a positive face of the audience by creating a sense of togetherness through common ground. This quote shows how Common Ground and Self-Deprecating strategies can turn

an acknowledgment of weakness into a comedic moment that strengthens the connection between comedian and audience.

Datum 2

John Mulaney: “...*I thought that I was shitting into his hand, so I yelled, ‘I’m sorry!’*” **Timestamp:** 38:27

John Mulaney uttered this sentence at 38:27 when recounting his experience at the doctor. He laughed at himself as a panicked patient, overreacted, and felt embarrassed. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, this statement can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy, specifically through Common Ground and Self-Deprecating. By acknowledging the absurdity of his actions, he performs self-deprecation which serves to reduce the Face Threatening Act that arises when someone expresses embarrassing things.

The analysis, Mulaney uses humor to laugh at himself. The phrase "I thought that I was shitting into his hand" presents a vulgar image that is easy for everyone to understand, thus creating common ground with the audience. The spontaneous reaction of "I'm sorry!" emphasizes excessive panic that actually becomes funny. The audience caught this contradiction as comedy, because the serious confession of shame was combined with an absurd extreme depiction. Pragmatically, this acknowledgment amplifies the comedic effect as the audience sees abnormalities in the way Mulaney frames her experiences. The ambiguity between serious confession and humor makes the audience feel safe to laugh together, rather than judge.

Thus, Mulaney managed to maintain her positive face as an honest, open, and able to laugh at her ridiculous panic. At the same time, he maintains a positive

face of the audience by creating a sense of togetherness through common ground. This quote shows how Common Ground and Self-Deprecating strategies can turn an acknowledgment of weakness into a comedic moment that strengthens the connection between comedian and audience.

Datum 3

John Mulaney: “...*I pulled up my pants and shuffled away, feeling different.*” **Timestamp: 39:11**

John Mulaney utters this sentence at 39:11 when recounting his experience at the doctor. He laughed at himself as a person who failed to achieve his goal, then ended up with another medical procedure and left the room in an embarrassing state. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, this statement can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy, specifically through Common Ground and Self-Deprecating. By acknowledging the absurdity of his actions, he performs self-deprecation which serves to reduce the Face Threatening Act that arises when someone expresses embarrassing things.

The analysis, Mulaney uses humor to laugh at himself. The "pulled up my pants and shuffled away" image presents a clear physical image that is easy for the audience to understand, thus creating a common ground: everyone can imagine the embarrassment of having to tidy up after an unpleasant experience. The phrase "feeling different" emphasizes the irony that instead of getting what he wants, he comes out feeling defeated and changed. Audiences capture this contradiction as comedy, as serious acknowledgments of failure are combined with funny and undignified physical imagery. Pragmatically, this acknowledgment amplifies the comedic effect as the audience sees abnormalities in the way Mulaney frames her

experiences. The ambiguity between serious confession and humor makes the audience feel safe to laugh together, rather than judge.

Thus, Mulaney managed to maintain his positive face as an honest, open, and able to laugh at his own failures. At the same time, he maintains a positive face of the audience by creating a sense of togetherness through common ground. This quote shows how Common Ground and Self-Deprecating strategies can turn an acknowledgment of weakness into a comedic moment that strengthens the connection between comedian and audience.

Datum 4

John Mulaney: *"I wake up... covered in sweat... I see Batman's face."* **Timestamp:** 39:57 – 40:03

John Mulaney utters this sentence at 39:57 when describing an absurd nightmare experience. He laughs at himself by showing his unglamorous physical condition, waking up in a sweaty state and associating it with something that doesn't make sense, namely seeing Batman's face. From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness, this statement can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy through Common Ground and Self-Deprecating.

The analysis, Mulaney uses humor by emphasizing his weakness: waking up in a chaotic and uncontrolled state. Self-deprecation arises because he openly admits to his shameful and unheroic condition, as opposed to the image of "Batman" that is instead associated with power and control. This creates a funny irony. Common ground is formed because audiences can easily imagine an unpleasant wake-up experience sweating, confused, and feeling strange. By adding Batman's face, he amplifies the absurdity so that the audience feels safe to laugh along. Pragmatically, this confession reinforces the comedic effect because it combines a

common human experience (waking up sweating) with an irrelevant fantasy element (Batman). The ambiguity between serious confession and humor makes the audience feel close to Mulaney, not away from him.

Thus, Mulaney managed to maintain his positive face as an honest figure and able to laugh at his own weaknesses. At the same time, he maintains a positive face of the audience by creating a sense of togetherness through common ground. This quote shows how Common Ground and Self-Deprecating strategies can turn embarrassing personal experiences into comedic moments that strengthen the connection between comedian and audience.

d. Include Both S & H

Datum 1

John Mulaney: “...it feels like you're shitting...” **Timestamp: 38:09**

John Mulaney utters this sentence at 38:09 when describing an uncomfortable medical experience with vulgar language. He laughed at himself through an embarrassing confession, while also engaging the audience directly with the use of the pronoun "you." From the perspective of Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, this statement can be categorized as a positive politeness strategy through Including Both S&H and Self-Deprecating.

The analysis, Mulaney uses humor by emphasizing his weaknesses: he describes the experience of an undignified body, as if he were defecating. Self-deprecation arises because he openly admits to a shameful condition, which is not usually talked about in public spaces. S&H's Including Strategy is evident through the use of "you," which invites the audience to come along to imagine the experience. In this way, he not only tells himself, but also creates a closeness with

the audience. Common ground is formed because audiences can easily understand and imagine uncomfortable physical experiences. As crude as it is, this image creates a common point: everyone knows what it feels like to react in an embarrassing way. Pragmatically, this recognition reinforces the comedic effect because it combines embarrassing personal experiences with inclusive language. The ambiguity between serious confession and vulgar humor makes the audience feel safe to laugh along, rather than laugh at Mulaney from the outside.

Thus, Mulaney managed to maintain his positive face as an honest figure and dared to laugh at his weaknesses. At the same time, he maintains a positive face of the audience by involving them directly and creating common ground. This quote shows how the strategy of Including Both S&H+ Self-Deprecating can turn an embarrassing experience into a comedic moment that strengthens the relationship between comedian and audience.

4.2 The Function of Self-Deprecating Strategies as Politeness in Generating Humor and Audience Solidarity

This section discusses how John Mulaney's self-deprecating strategy serves as *a positive politeness* in generating humor and building solidarity with the audience. In this study, the function of strategy was analyzed based on the same classification as in Research Question 1, namely *use jokes*, *seek agreement*, *common ground*, and *include both S and H*. The results of the study show that each strategy has a different pragmatic function in maintaining *a positive face*, reducing social distancing, and strengthening the relationship between comedians and audiences.

a. Use Jokes

Based on the results of the study, *the use of jokes* became the most dominant strategy with a total of 60 data found in John Mulaney's performance. This dominance suggests that Mulaney uses more self-directed humor to generate laughter and maintain audience engagement. Through this strategy, Mulaney deliberately presents his weaknesses, embarrassing experiences, irrational behavior, and personal failures as comedic material. By making himself the object of jokes, he minimizes the possibility of threatening *the positive face* of the audience.

Within the framework of Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory, this strategy functions as a *positive politeness* because it is able to reduce social distance between the speaker and the listener. Instead of positioning himself as a superior figure, Mulaney presents himself as a figure who is vulnerable, full of flaws, and easy to understand by the audience. This creates a comfortable atmosphere so that the audience feels safe to laugh together. Therefore, the humor that emerges becomes inclusive and non-offensive.

The recurring patterns in the data indicate the excessive use of hyperbole, irony, absurdity, and *self-ridicule*. For example, in datum 1 Mulaney says:

"I wanted attention like to a sick degree"

The speech shows hyperbole because Mulaney exaggerates his need for attention to the point that it sounds abnormal or excessive. By making his obsession

with the speech shows hyperbole because Mulaney exaggerates his need for attention to the point that it sounds abnormal or excessive. By making his obsession with attention the subject of a joke, Mulaney creates humor without attacking others. This strategy serves as *positive politeness* because the audience feels safe to laugh together over the comedian's own weaknesses.

The same pattern is also found in datum 4 when Mulaney says "*my prescriptions... I had no business being prescribed them in the first place...*" this portrays him as someone who is too anxious and unable to deal with the situation normally. He presents himself as a weak and emotionally unstable figure that produces a comedic effect through *self-ridicule*. Humor arises because the audience sees an element of exaggeration and irony in the way Mulaney portrays herself. Moreover, in datum 8 Mulaney says:

"*...my tolerance for sedatives was super... no matter what they give me they cannot subdue me... I'm like Rasputin...*"

In this speech, Mulaney compared himself to Rasputin, a historical figure known to be difficult to kill, to illustrate that his body was considered unsuitable for sedatives. These absurd comparisons create humor through hyperbole and irony because the situation that is actually serious is conveyed in an exaggerated and funny way. By laughing at herself, Mulaney transforms a potentially embarrassing experience into a collective humor that audiences can enjoy together.

Then, on datum 12 Mulaney said "*I would love to give you these pills, you are clearly a super chill young man bobbing and weaving in a hospital gown and a pair of new balance sneakers for the past 12 hours but this pesky state of...*" t

portrays him as an absurd and uncontrollable figure while in the hospital. He narrates his behavior in an exaggerated way that creates a funny and irrational impression. In this context, humor arises because of the contrast between serious situations and the relaxed and exaggerated way that Mulaney uses in telling them.

The four datum show the same pattern, namely John Mulaney uses hyperbole, absurdity, irony, and *self-ridicule* to produce humor while building solidarity with the audience. By making himself the target of jokes, he was able to reduce the threat to *the positive face* of the audience and create an inclusive and comfortable humorous atmosphere to laugh at.

This analysis shows that the function of *use jokes* is not only to entertain, but also to build solidarity with the audience. The audience laughs because the target of humor is the comedian himself, not someone else. As a result, self-deprecating humor becomes a *positive politeness* strategy that is able to create emotional closeness, reduce tension, and produce laughter together.

The amount of *use jokes* data that is much higher than other strategies also reflects the characteristics of stand-up comedy that relies heavily on punchlines, exaggeration, and comedic timing. Therefore, this strategy emerged as the most dominant because it became the most effective and direct way to generate humor while maintaining audience solidarity.

b. Seek Agreement

The results of the study showed that the *seek agreement* strategy was found as many as 2 data. Although the number is less than other strategies, this strategy still has an important function as *positive politeness* in building closeness and

solidarity with the audience. In this strategy, John Mulaney tries to create a sense of mutual acceptance and understanding by inviting the audience to admit that they have similar experiences or feelings to him.

The pragmatic function of this strategy lies in trying to create a sense of familiarity between comedians and audiences. By seeking the approval of the audience, Mulaney reduced social distancing and positioned himself as a figure who had the same experience as others in general. This is in accordance with the concept of *positive politeness* by Brown and Levinson (1987), which states that consent strategies are used to strengthen interpersonal relationships and create a sense of togetherness between speaker and hearer. For example, in datum 1 Mulaney says:

"I did do that and some of you I know you did cuz you started laughing from the very beginning of the joke if you did don't feel too bad okay?"

In the speech, Mulaney indirectly invited the audience to admit that they had done the same thing to him. He stated that some of the audience immediately laughed because they understood the experience being discussed. By saying "don't feel too bad okay?", Mulaney also validates the audience so that they feel comfortable and not judged. This strategy creates humor through a relatable experience while strengthening solidarity because the audience feels understood by the comedian. Another example is found in datum 2 when Mulaney says:

"...he didn't even let me off the hook, you know?"

The expression "you know?" indicates Mulaney's attempt to seek approval and understanding from the audience. Through this expression, he assumes that the audience can understand the situation he is telling. This strategy makes the audience

feel engaged in the narrative because they are positioned as the party who understands the comedian's experience. Humor arises not only from the funny situations told, but also from a sense of familiarity and recognition of the same social experiences.

In contrast to *the use of jokes* that produce more humor through absurdity and *self-ridicule*, the strategy of *seeking agreement* works more through *relatability* and social validation. Humor arises not only from the joke itself, but also from the acknowledgment of the same human experience. This makes the audience feel closer emotionally to the comedian because they feel involved in the experience.

Overall, *the seek agreement* strategy shows that humor can be built through a sense of togetherness and mutual understanding between comedians and audiences. By creating social acceptance and validation, Mulaney successfully uses this strategy as a form of *positive politeness* that strengthens interpersonal relationships and audience solidarity.

c. Common Ground

The results of the study show that *the common ground strategy* was found as many as 4 data. This strategy serves as positive *politeness* by emphasizing the same experiences and social realities between John Mulaney and the audience. Through *self-deprecating humor*, Mulaney presents himself as an ordinary person who goes through embarrassing, awkward, and uncomfortable situations like any audience may have ever experienced.

The pattern found in this strategy is the use of *relatable* and easily recognizable experiences in everyday life. Mulaney does not present himself as a

superior figure, but rather as someone who can feel embarrassed, panicked, and insecure in certain situations. This makes the audience see him as a closer, authentic, and understandable figure. For example, in datum 1 Mulaney says:

“...it feels like you're shitting, because the only thing that's ever come out of your butt before has been shit.”

In the speech, Mulaney explained his medical experience in a vulgar and very direct way. Humor arises because the explanation sounds honest and relatable to the audience. Mulaney uses the universal experience of the human body to build *common ground* with the audience. The phrase "the only thing that's ever come out of your butt before has been shit" suggests that he assumes the audience understands the sensation and experience because it is a common human experience. Thus, the audience feels connected to the story being told because they can imagine the same situation. In this context, *the common ground* strategy serves as a *positive politeness* because it creates a sense of community through experiences that are familiar to everyone. Another example is found in datum 2 when Mulaney says:

“... I thought that I was shitting into his hand, so I yelled, 'I'm sorry!'”

In this datum, Mulaney recounts his panicked and embarrassed reaction to an embarrassing situation. Humor arises because the audience can understand the awkwardness and fear he feels at the time. Saying "I'm sorry!" shows a person's spontaneous response when they feel that they have done something embarrassing in front of others. The situation feels relatable because many people are likely to react in the same way if they were in a similar situation. Therefore, humor comes

not only from the absurdity of the situation, but also from the closeness of the emotional experience shared with the audience.

Through these two datums, it can be seen that *the common ground* strategy produces humor by building emotional closeness and shared experiences between comedians and audiences. The audience laughs not only because the situation is funny, but also because they recognize the same human experience in the story. Thus, *the common ground* functions as a *positive politeness* that strengthens solidarity through *relatability* and shared experience between speakers and hearers.

d. Include Both S and H

The results showed that the strategy *of including both S and H* was the least successful strategy, which was only 1 data. This strategy serves as positive *politeness* by involving the speaker and audience in the same experience. In this strategy, John Mulaney uses a universal experience so that the audience feels involved in the situation being told. For example, in the datum Mulaney says:

“... it feels like you're shitting...”

The use of the word "you" in the speech not only refers to itself, but also invites the audience to imagine and understand the same experience. Mulaney explains the sensation he feels by using the experience of the human body that is common and easily recognizable by many people. As a result, the audience not only becomes a passive listener, but also feels that they are experiencing the situation being told.

The function of this strategy as *positive politeness* is to create a sense of community and collective participation in humor. By engaging the audience in the

experience, Mulaney reduces the boundaries between performer and audience so that the interaction feels more inclusive and close. Humor arises because the audience can immediately understand and imagine the experience described, thus creating a shared understanding between the comedian and the audience.

Although only one data was found, this strategy still shows how humor can be built through shared engagement in the same social experience. In contrast to the *use jokes* strategy that relies more on absurdity and *self-ridicule*, the *include both S and H* strategy emphasizes more on a collective experience that can be understood by the audience. Thus, this strategy still contributes to strengthening audience solidarity because it puts comedians and audiences in the same position of experience, so that humor feels more inclusive and interpersonal.

B. Discussion

This study discusses the types and functions of *self-deprecating* strategies used by John Mulaney in his stand-up comedy performances. Based on the results of the study, four types of *positive politeness strategies* were found, namely *use jokes*, *seek agreement*, *common ground*, and *include both S and H*. Of the total 67 data found, as many as 60 data were included in the *use jokes* strategy, 4 data included *common ground*, 2 data included in *seek agreement*, and 1 data included in *both S and H*. These results show that *use jokes* is the most dominant strategy used by John Mulaney.

The dominance of *the use of jokes* strategy shows that Mulaney builds more humor through *self-ridicule*, irony, hyperbole, and absurdity. In many speeches, he deliberately portrays himself as an awkward, irrational, embarrassing, and unstable

figure to create comedic effects. For example, in datum 1 Mulaney says that he wants attention "like to a sick degree." The hyperbolic statement exaggerates his weaknesses and turns them into humor. The same pattern is also found in datum 8 and datum 12 when Mulaney describes himself through absurd and exaggerated descriptions. These findings suggest that *self-ridicule* is directly a key technique in Mulaney's stand-up comedy performances.

The high frequency of use *jokes strategies* also reflects the characteristics of stand-up comedy that relies heavily on *punchlines*, hyperbole, irony, and spontaneous humor. Compared to other strategies, *use jokes* are faster to generate audience laughter because the humor is direct and absurd. Meanwhile, *seek agreement* and *common ground* emerge less because both strategies rely more on audience recognition, mutual understanding, and *relatability* than direct *punchlines*. In addition, *including both S and H* is the least invented strategy because Mulaney rarely uses collective expression that directly engages the audience in humor. His comedic style focuses more on *personal storytelling* and *self-mockery* than the collective humorous interaction with the audience.

The findings of this study align with Attardo and Dynel (2023), particularly in the observation that self-deprecating humor enhances audience engagement by making comedians appear more relatable, humble, and approachable. This alignment is evident in the way Mulaney's use of positive politeness strategies especially use jokes consistently positions him as vulnerable and imperfect, qualities that Attardo and Dynel identify as central to the effectiveness of self-deprecating humor in reducing social distance between

performer and audience. However, while Attardo and Dynel approached this phenomenon from the perspective of humor theory and audience reception, the present study extends this understanding by specifically examining how self-deprecating humor is pragmatically realized through Brown and Levinson's (1987) positive politeness strategies in stand-up comedy performances, demonstrating that the relatable effect noted by Attardo and Dynel is not incidental but is systematically constructed through deliberate linguistic strategies.

The findings of this study show that the self-deprecating humor used by John Mulaney not only serves as a source of entertainment, but also as a positive politeness strategy that helps build solidarity with the audience. Through the strategy of use jokes, seek agreement, common ground, and include both S and H, Mulaney is able to reduce social distance, maintain a positive face, and create emotional closeness with his audience. These findings support the view of Brown and Levinson (1987) that positive politeness is oriented towards maintaining a positive face and strengthening interpersonal relationships through shared experiences, a sense of familiarity, and inclusivity.

The results of this study are in line with the research of Siddiq et al. (2023), who found that self-deprecating humor can build solidarity between the speaker and the audience by presenting the speaker as a humble and approachable figure. Similarly, this study shows that Mulaney's willingness to reveal weaknesses, flaws, and embarrassing experiences leads audiences to view him as a relatable figure rather than as a superior figure. Thus, humor serves as a means to strengthen the social relationship between comedians and audiences.

The findings of this study extend the arguments of Bernab   (2023) and Filani (2021), who emphasized the role of humor in identity formation and audience engagement. Specifically, this study demonstrates that in Mulaney's performances, self-deprecating humor systematically constructs a comedic persona characterized by vulnerability, imperfection, and authenticity qualities that Bernab   and Filani identify as central to how humor shapes a performer's identity in the eyes of the audience. What this study adds, however, is the pragmatic dimension: it shows that this identity construction is not accidental but is realized through deliberate positive politeness strategies, particularly use jokes and common ground, which invite the audience to identify with Mulaney's experiences and sustain emotional engagement throughout the performance.

Similarly, the findings of this study corroborate Kubo et al. (2024) in a specific and demonstrable way: where Kubo et al. established that self-deprecation, irony, and hyperbole function as effective strategies for generating humor while preserving positive audience reception, the present study confirms this pattern within Mulaney's performances and further specifies the politeness mechanism through which it operates. The use of excessive self-criticism, ironic framing, and absurd exaggeration in Mulaney's routines consistently produces humor that targets only the comedian himself, which as both Kubo et al. and the present findings suggest creates a comedic atmosphere that is perceived as safe, non-threatening, and inclusive by the audience.

Nevertheless, the study also produced findings that expanded on previous research. Previous studies by Siddiq et al. (2023), Kubo et al. (2024), Bernab  

(2023), and Filani (2021) generally demonstrated that self-deprecating humor helps comedians build solidarity and social connection with their audiences. However, these studies did not explain in detail the specific pragmatic mechanisms through which solidarity is achieved. This study identified four positive politeness strategies employed by John Mulaney, namely use jokes, seek agreement, common ground, and include both S and H. Each strategy contributes differently to generating humor and strengthening audience solidarity. Use jokes build solidarity through shared laughter and self-ridicule, seek agreement through acknowledgment of similar experiences or feelings, common ground through mutually understandable social experiences, while include both S and H through direct involvement between the comedian and the audience in the same humorous experience.

These findings provide a different perspective from the research of Muhassin et al. (2023) and Arlivia et al. (2024). Muhassin et al. focus on presupposition as a linguistic mechanism in generating humor, while Arlivia et al. examine the strategy of impoliteness in stand-up comedy. Instead, this study shows that humor is not always built through violations of politeness or certain linguistic mechanisms, but can also be built through positive politeness strategies centered on self-deprecation. Thus, this study makes a new contribution to the pragmatic study of humor by not only proving that self-deprecating humor is able to build solidarity, but also explains how this solidarity is built through various positive politeness strategies that have different interpersonal functions. Therefore, this study enriches the understanding of the relationship between

humor, politeness, and social interaction in the context of stand-up comedy.

Beyond its alignment with and extension of previous studies, this study also presents a distinct novelty that has not been addressed in prior research. While Siddiq et al. (2023), Kubo et al. (2024), Bernab   (2023), and Filani (2021) examined self-deprecating humor in terms of its general social functions, none of these studies systematically mapped the specific positive politeness strategies through which self-deprecating humor operates as a pragmatic mechanism in stand-up comedy discourse. This study is the first to apply Brown and Levinson's (1987) positive politeness framework specifically to self-deprecating humor in stand-up comedy, thereby providing a structured pragmatic taxonomy of how comedians linguistically construct vulnerability and solidarity. Furthermore, unlike Muhassin et al. (2023) and Arlivia et al. (2024), who approached humor through presupposition and impoliteness respectively, this study demonstrates that humor in stand-up comedy can be systematically built through politeness-oriented strategies rather than violations of politeness norms. This represents a novel theoretical contribution, showing that self-deprecating humor occupies a unique pragmatic space where comedy and positive face-work converge, a dimension that previous studies have acknowledged but never explicitly theorized within a unified politeness framework.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This section outlines the conclusions drawn from the analysis of the research that has been presented earlier. In addition, this section includes some suggestions for future readers and prospective researchers related to the same topic.

A. Conclusion

This research was conducted to identify the types of self-deprecation strategies used by John Mulaney in stand-up comedy performances and analyze how these strategies function as a form of positive politeness in producing humor and building audience solidarity. The analysis of this research is based on the Theory of Politeness by Brown and Levinson (1987), especially the concept of positive politeness.

The results of the study showed that John Mulaney used four positive politeness strategies in conveying self-deprecating humor, namely use jokes, seek agreement, common ground, and include both S and H. Among the four strategies, use jokes was the most dominant strategy found in the data, with 60 out of 67 total data belonging to this category, followed by common ground (4 data), seek agreement (2 data), and include both S and H (1 data). Through these strategies, Mulaney often turns his personal weaknesses, embarrassing experiences, irrational behavior, addictions, insecurities, and personal failures into humor. Instead of presenting himself as a superior figure, he deliberately portrays himself as a vulnerable, flawed, and imperfect individual. This self-deprecating approach allows him to create humor while simultaneously maintaining a positive and

inclusive relationship with the audience.

The results of the study also show that self-deprecating humor not only functions as a comedy device, but also as a form of effective positive politeness strategy. By making himself the target of jokes, Mulaney minimizes the possibility of threatening the audience's positive face. Instead of directing criticism, ridicule, or sarcasm at others, he directs the humor at himself. As a result, audiences can enjoy the show without feeling attacked, judged, or excluded. These findings support the view of Brown and Levinson (1987) that positive politeness serves to reduce social distance and strengthen interpersonal relationships between participants in communication.

In addition, the study found that each positive politeness strategy operates through a distinct mechanism in generating humor and building audience solidarity. The use jokes strategy builds solidarity primarily through shared laughter and self-ridicule, making Mulaney's personal flaws and irrational behaviors the comedic target. The seek agreement strategy builds solidarity by inviting the audience to recognize experiences, feelings, or views similar to those experienced by the comedian, thereby creating mutual validation. The common ground strategy strengthens solidarity through shared social experiences and universally recognizable situations that both the comedian and the audience can relate to. Meanwhile, the strategy of including both S and H builds solidarity by directly involving comedians and audiences within the same humorous experience, creating a sense of community and collective participation in the performance.

Another important finding is that the effect of humor in John Mulaney's

performance is amplified through the use of hyperbole, irony, absurdity, and relatable personal experiences. These elements allow topics that are actually sensitive or embarrassing to be transformed into humorous narratives that audiences can comfortably enjoy. Thus, the humor is not only generated from the joke itself, but also from the way Mulaney strategically displays his vulnerability and imperfections

The results of this study are generally in line with previous studies that emphasized the role of self-deprecating humor in building solidarity and generating positive audience responses, such as Siddiq et al. (2023) and Kubo et al. (2024). However, this study also expands on previous research by demonstrating that solidarity is not built through a single mechanism, but rather through a range of positive politeness strategies, each with distinct interpersonal functions. Therefore, this research contributes to the pragmatic field by explaining in greater detail how self-deprecating humor operates as a systematic politeness strategy within stand-up comedy discourse, providing a more structured understanding of the relationship between humor, politeness, and social solidarity.

Overall, it can be concluded that self-deprecating humor in John Mulaney's stand-up comedy is an effective pragmatic strategy to generate humor, maintain a positive face, reduce social distance, and strengthen solidarity between comedian and audience. The findings of this study demonstrate that humor does not merely function as a vehicle for entertainment, but also serves as an important communicative and interpersonal resource. By deliberately positioning himself as a vulnerable, flawed, and relatable figure, Mulaney successfully constructs a

comedic persona that is both engaging and socially inclusive. This study ultimately affirms that language, humor, and politeness are deeply intertwined in the context of stand-up comedy, and that self-deprecating humor represents a particularly effective convergence of these three dimensions in building meaningful human connection.

B. Suggestions

Based on the results and conclusions of this study, and considering the scope and limitations identified during the research process, there are several suggestions that can be offered to readers, comedians, communication practitioners, and future researchers in order to further develop the understanding of self-deprecating humor and its pragmatic functions.

For readers, this research is expected to broaden the understanding of pragmatic studies, particularly in relation to politeness strategies and the communicative role of self-deprecating humor. Readers are encouraged to recognize that humor not only serves as entertainment, but also as a means to create social closeness, maintain positive interpersonal relationships, and reduce social distance in daily interactions. In addition, this research can help readers to better understand the communicative functions contained behind humorous speech that often seems simple or spontaneous.

For comedians, performers, content creators, and public speakers, the results of this study show that self-deprecating humor can be an effective strategy to build audience engagement without causing feelings of offense. By using personal experiences and weaknesses as a source of humor, speakers can create a more

comfortable, inclusive, and close communication atmosphere to the audience. Therefore, self-deprecating humor can be used as one of the effective communication strategies to build relationships, increase audience engagement, and create a positive atmosphere.

For communication practitioners and educators, this study shows the importance of positive politeness strategies in public communication. The findings of this study indicate that humility, self-awareness, and the ability to laugh at oneself can contribute to more effective communication and are more acceptable to the audience. Therefore, the principles found in this study can be applied not only in comedy performances, but also in the context of education, public speaking, media, and interpersonal communication.

For future researchers, this research can be used as a reference to develop studies on humor and pragmatics. Subsequent research is suggested to examine self-deprecating humor using different theoretical perspectives, such as Impoliteness Theory, Relevance Theory, Speech Act Theory, General Theory of Verbal Humor, or Conversation Analysis. The use of different theories can provide a broader understanding of how humor is constructed and interpreted in social interactions.

The next researcher is also advised to examine other humor strategies that are often used in stand-up comedy, such as sarcasm, irony, presupposition, hyperbole, roasting, impoliteness, and the audience's response to the humor conveyed by comedians. The study of these aspects can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the linguistic and pragmatic mechanisms underlying humor.

In addition, further research can compare the use of self-deprecating humor by comedians who come from different cultural, linguistic, or country backgrounds. Given that humor is heavily influenced by cultural values and social norms, this kind of comparative research can show similarities and differences in how self-deprecating humor is used in various cultural contexts. Thus, the understanding of humor as a communication phenomenon that is universal and influenced by culture can be further enriched.

Finally, because this study only focused on John Mulaney's two stand-up comedy performances, subsequent research is recommended to use broader data by involving more shows, comedians, or media platforms. The use of a larger data corpus is expected to lead to more comprehensive findings regarding the use of self-deprecating humor and its role in creating audience humor, politeness, and solidarity.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adhari, S., Yendra, & Sesmiyanti. (2022). Politeness strategies in classroom interaction at EFL class. *Journal of Language, Literature, and English Teaching (JULIET)*, 3(2). <https://doi.org/10.31629/juliet.v3i2.4172>
- Afidah, L., & Wahyudi, R. (2014). How it starts and ends: A study of Indonesian stand-up comedy. *Bahasa & Sastra*, 14(2), 170–189.
- Al Arief, Y. (2023). Politeness in roasting: When humour meets power. *Journal of Linguistics, Culture and Communication*, 1(1), 67–78. <https://doi.org/10.61320/jolcc.v1i1.67-78>
- Arlivia, Z., & Sembodo, T. J. P. (2024). Impoliteness strategies in John Mulaney's stand-up comedy. *Lexicon*, 11(1), 63–72. <https://doi.org/10.22146/lexicon.v1i1.87082>
- Attardo, S. (2020). *Humor in language*. Oxford University Press.
- Austin, J. L. (1975). *How to do things with words*. Oxford University Press.
- Bernabéu, E. L. (Ed.). (2023). *The pragmatics of humour in interactive contexts*. John Benjamins. <https://doi.org/10.1075/pbns.335>
- Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge University Press.
- Cao, Y., Li, H., Jiang, T., Dang, J., & Hou, Y. (2025). Laughing off cyber spoofing: The role of self-deprecating humor in enhancing celebrities' interpersonal likeability. *BMC Psychology*, 13, 501. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-025-02841-7>
- Cela, A., Veit, M., & Wood, J. (2024). Irony and exaggeration in self-deprecating humor. *Humor: International Journal of Humor Research*, 37(2), 245–263.
- Chen, R., & Yan, H. (2024). UGC's self-deprecation humor and sustainable brand support attitude on social media. *Behaviour & Information Technology*, 44(8), 1493–1520. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0144929X.2024.2361349>
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). Sage Publications.
- Culpeper, J. (1996). Towards an anatomy of impoliteness. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 25(3), 349–367. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166\(95\)00014-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166(95)00014-3)

- Culpeper, J. (2005). Impoliteness and entertainment in the television quiz show: The Weakest Link. *Journal of Politeness Research*, 1(1), 35–72.
- Culpeper, J. (2011). *Impoliteness: Using language to cause offence*. Cambridge University Press.
- Dynel, M. (2023). *Humour in pragmatics*. Routledge.
- Filani, I. (2021). The stand-up comedian as an egocentric communicator. *Intercultural Pragmatics*, 18(1), 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.1515/ip-2021-0001>
- Finali, A., & Ajayi, T. (2019). Humor and ideology in discourse. *Discourse & Society*.
- Firas, A., Bowen, X., Asary, L. H., & Azman, I. N. (2025). Prehumor politeness and impoliteness strategies by an American stand-up comedian on YouTube. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 9(2), 107–114. <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.90210008>
- Goffman, E. (1967). *Interaction ritual: Essays on face-to-face behavior*. Anchor Books.
- Grice, P. (1975). Logic and conversation. In P. Cole & J. L. Morgan (Eds.), *Syntax and semantics* (Vol. 3, pp. 41–58). Academic Press.
- Hafisa, A., & Hanidar, S. (2020). Impoliteness strategies in Trevor Noah's Afraid of the Dark stand-up comedy show. *Lexicon*, 7(2), 215–223. <https://doi.org/10.22146/lexicon.v7i2.66571>
- Heintz, S., & Ruch, W. (2021). Can self-defeating humor make you happy? *Journal of Positive Psychology*, 16(2), 155–168. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2020.1725604>
- Jia-he, L. (2023). Stand-up comedy and cultural discourse. *Asian Journal of Humor Studies*.
- Kim, J. (2019). *Qualitative research methods*. Routledge.
- Kubo, I. K. (2024). Humor strategy in Japanese Manzai & Indonesian double act: A humor discourse study. *Japanology: The Journal of Japanese Studies*, 11(2), 103–117. <https://doi.org/10.20473/jjs.v11i2.66029>
- Kusmanto, H., & Widodo, P. (2022). Positive politeness strategies during online learning: A cyberpragmatic study. *Studies in English Language and Education*, 9(3), 1170–1182. <https://doi.org/10.24815/siele.v9i3.24021>

- Leech, G. (1983). *Principles of pragmatics*. Longman.
- McGraw, P., & Warren, C. (2010). Benign violations: Making immoral behavior funny. *Psychological Science*, 21(8), 1141–1149.
- Muhassin, M., Dwidandi, M. Z., Kholid, M. R., & Hidayati, D. A. (2023). Analysis of presupposition in John Mulaney's stand-up comedy. *INTERACTION: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa*, 10(2), 632–644. <https://doi.org/10.36232/jurnalpendidikanbahasa.v10i2.4768>
- Mulyadi, M., Setia, E., Mbete, A. M., & Artawa, K. (2021). Verbal humor in Indonesian stand-up comedy: A General Verbal Theory of Humor perspective. *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, 8(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2021.1943927>
- Nurmawati, N., Atmowardoyo, H., & Weda, S. (2019). An analysis of positive politeness strategies to promote effective interaction in the classroom. *ELS Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, 2(2), 171–181. <https://doi.org/10.34050/els-jish.v2i2.6340>
- Paltridge, B. (2021). *Discourse analysis: An introduction* (3rd ed.). Bloomsbury.
- Schneider, L., Voracek, M., & Tran, U. S. (2022). "A joke a day keeps the doctor away?" Meta-analytical evidence of the relationship between humor and mental health. *Current Psychology*, 41, 7455–7471. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-021-01920-5>
- Searle, J. R. (1969). *Speech acts: An essay in the philosophy of language*. Cambridge University Press.
- Sharma, A., Sharma, A. M., & Batra, D. (2025). Abusing for laughs: Self-deprecation and profanity in contemporary Indian stand-up comedy. *Lex Localis: Journal of Local Self-Government*, 23(S4), 1851–1864. <https://doi.org/10.52152/800826>
- Siddiq, M. (2023). Self-deprecation in Indonesian stand-up comedy. *Journal of Pragmatics and Humor Studies*.
- Tenis, A. B. (2025). Politeness strategies in Pandji Pragiwaksono's stand-up comedy. *Indonesian Journal of Language and Society*.
- Wahdani, T. D., Paturohmah, P. S., & Sakinah, R. M. N. (2023). Positive politeness strategies in Jay Shetty podcast YouTube channel: An interview with Will Smith. *Linguistica*, 12(4), 213–229. <https://doi.org/10.24114/jalu.v12i4.52488>

- Yoon, B., & Uliassi, C. (2022). "Researcher-as-instrument" in qualitative research: The complexities of the educational researcher's identities. *The Qualitative Report*, 27(4), 1088–1102. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2022.5074>
- Yule, G. (1996). *Pragmatics*. Oxford University Press.
- Yule, G. (2020). *The study of language* (7th ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Yusuf, A. (2023). Politeness strategies in roasting comedy. *Journal of Language and Humor Studies*.

CURRICULUM VITAE



Achmad Fauzi was born in Probolinggo on June 15th, 2003.

He graduated from SMA Darul Ulum in 2021. He started his

education in 2022 at the English Department of UIN

Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang and finished in 2026. During

his education at the university, he joined the 2023 HMPS

English Department. Then in 2024, he joined the Jaka Rara

Humaniora of the Faculty of Humanities. This helped him gain new insights, new

experiences and new relationships.