Does Ellen DeGeneres adopt rhetorical strategies in her talk show's monologues for verbal humor?

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Abstract

Verbal humor is a prominent characteristic of talk shows, which has inspired many humor linguists' study enthusiasms from a variety of perspectives. Nevertheless, the rhetorical strategies adopted by the host to achieve verbal humor in talk shows are always complex and not easy to understand by the audience. What's more, the literature on this point is scanty. To address the gap, the current research tries to examine the rhetorical strategies in the host's verbal humor on the Ellen talk show. Sixteen monologues from the Ellen talk show were selected as data resources. After the data was transcribed, the rhetorical fragments that made the audiences laugh were coded as data, and NVivo was used as the main instrument in the study's process of coding and analysing. The findings of the present study reveal that Ellen DeGeneres adopts eighteen kinds of rhetorical strategies to achieve verbal humor in her sixteen monologues: exaggeration, facetiousness, personification, satire, simile, over literalness, metaphor, puns, bombast, ridicule, irony, repartee, misunderstanding, insults, analogy, definition, infantilism, and allusion. Ellen tends to produce verbal humor with the type of single rhetorical strategy, but she also adopts the type of two or three mixed rhetorical strategies to produce verbal humor occasionally. Moreover, the use of rhetorical strategies in samples is unevenly distributed, and the data suggest that Ellen prefers to use the rhetoric of exaggeration, facetiousness, and satire more frequently than other rhetorical strategies.

Keywords: rhetorical strategies; types of rhetoric strategies; monologue; verbal humor; Ellen talk show

1. Introduction

In the past decades, people around the world have witnessed the popularity of talk shows (Feng, 2017). People not only can get a variety of information through watching talk shows, but also can enjoy entertainment, because one of the obvious characteristics of the talk show is humor, and it is a concentrated way of humor expression, which can make the audiences laugh from its humorous discourses.

Most of the talk shows are from America, Britain, China, Germany, and other countries (Feng, 2017). The Ellen Show is an American daytime reality talk show hosted by Ellen DeGeneres, which is one of the most popular talk shows in American talk shows. Ellen's show started on September 8,

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2003. So far, it has been on the air for 18 seasons. The main segments of the talk show include the host's monologue, guest interviews, program performance, game interaction, etc. By 2020, the show has won 61 daily Emmy Awards, including four outstanding talk shows and seven outstanding talk show entertainment. The audience and fans of the Allen talk show come from all over the world, with the popularity of the Ellen show, and it includes lots of verbal humor utterances which successfully engross the attention of scholars.

In 2017, three characteristics of the Ellen show were discussed by Stephanie Lee. First, Ellen's jokes will not hurt others; second, her jokes are naive and funny; and third, her jokes are meant to enhance others' self-esteem. The study indicates that Allen is a master of joking, which can avoid the insecurity of guests and audiences, and highlight a person's self and good qualities, which makes the audiences like her very much. While in the same year, Zebua (2017) studied Ellen DeGeneres' violation of the cooperative principle in her talk show. She observed sixteen stars' interviews, eight male stars and eight female stars, trying to find out how male guests and female guests used cooperative principles differently when they talked with the host on Ellen DeGeneres'talk show. Then, Ruansyah and Rukmini in 2018 examined the politeness strategies of Ellen DeGeneres on the Ellen talk show. They found four politeness strategies in Allen's discourse: bald on record, positive policy, negative policy, and off-record strategy. The results indicated that the politeness principle can make people closer to each other and make people learn how to appreciate others. In addition, Sasri (2020) studied the monologue humor in Ellen's talk show and the purpose of the study was to explore the type of flouting maxims and figurative languages that produced the humor. The study found that Ellen DeGeneres performs nine types of figurative language that defy all types of maxims.

Most of the previous studies examined Ellen's talk show from the perspective of pragmatics and classified the types of humor. They did not investigate what linguistic strategies had been adopted by the host to achieve verbal humor. According to the linguistic relativism hypothesis, this assumption implies that the language itself in which jokes are presented affects the way they are perceived (Whorf, 1956; Wittgenstein, 2001); therefore, talk shows have their own way of arranging humorous language to attract the audience's interest, especially by using some rhetorical expressions to realize the humorous effect. While Hauser (2002) contends that rhetorical situations are not only complex but also dynamic, and their emergent and relative meaning, which is the basis for how we respond, develops out of the interplay between context, message, messenger, and audience. For these reasons, the rhetorical strategies in humorous languages of talk shows should be paid attention to by linguists and humorous researchers to help the audiences gain a better understanding of the show's verbal humor. However, few works of literature have studied the rhetorical strategies of humorous utterances in talk shows. What's more, few studies have studied the rhetorical strategies of the Ellen talk show's verbal humor.

Thus, referring to the aforementioned gaps, this study will focus on the monologue verbal humor of the Ellen Show and aims to identify whether Ellen DeGeneres uses any rhetorical strategies in her verbal humor making, examine the types of rhetorical strategies she uses, and reveal the preferences of the rhetorical strategies adopted in the show, which will help the audience gain a better understanding of the show's verbal humor.

1.1 Theoretic Framework

As this research aims to study the rhetorical strategies of the host's humor discourse in the Ellen talk show, Weaver (2015, p. 332) claims that Berger's humor strategies theory is "the most complete typology of humorous rhetorical devices available". Therefore, Berger's (1976) humor strategy theory will be used as the main theoretical support, while this study modified his theory to form a new

rhetorical strategy table for the current study. Berger (1976) classified humor Strategies into four categories: language humor, logic humor, identity humor, and action humor. These categories also include various specific humor strategies; there are a total of 45 items as follows:

Table 1. Categories and Techniques of Humor by Berger (1976)

Language	Logic	Identity	Action
Allusion	Absurdity	Before/After	Chase
Bombast	Accident	Burlesque	Slapstick
Definition	Analogy	Caricature	Speed
Exaggeration	Catalog	Eccentricity	
Facetiousness	Coincidence	Embarrassment	
Insults	Comparison	Exposure	
Infantilism	Disappointment	Grotesque	
Irony	Ignorance	Imitation	
Misunderstanding	Mistakes	Impersonation	
Over literalness	Repetition	Mimicry	
Puns, Wordplay	Reversal	Parody	
Repartee	Rigidity	Scale	
Ridicule	Theme/Variation	Stereotype	
Sarcasm	Unmasking		
Satire			

Berger (1976) believes that every joke often contains at least two or three humor techniques, one of which is dominant, and the others are secondary. Through the above 45 humor strategies, it can be observed how the speaker uses a certain humor technique to achieve a humorous effect, and we can better understand the style of the comedy by understanding the humor techniques used by the speakers.

Berger (1976) also pointed out that comedians must design their jokes intentionally, sometimes they produce humor intentionally, but sometimes unintentionally. The jokes or humor they make are based on many kinds of situations and factors, and these 45 humor strategies can help us find out which humor skills they like to use and which humor strategies they don't like to use and to help us uncover the mystery of comedy. Berger (1976) has practiced these humorous strategies in the examination of multiple scripts, and he claims that researchers can put these strategies into more comedy scenarios to study, such as TV shows, movie scripts, stand-up comedies, and so on.

Some researchers have applied Berger's theory of humor to the study of humorous language. Harida (2018) analyzed the humorous techniques of the Indonesian comedy program Waktu Indonesia Timur by Berger's humorous strategies. The research purpose is to analyze the humorous language skills of using humor as a linguistic phenomenon so that people can understand the humorous language of Indonesian comedy programs more clearly. In 2017, Rochmawati used Berger's theory to study the rhetorical techniques of written jokes, mainly exploring the use of rhetorical and pragmatic strategies in-jokes and how these strategies help the joke writers to produce jokes.

The current research will focus on examining the rhetorical strategies of Ellen's monologue humor in the Ellen talk show, so the rhetorical strategies of language humor in Berger's theory including allusion, bombast, definition, exaggeration, facetiousness, insults, infantilism, irony, misunderstanding, over literalness, puns, repartee, ridicule, sarcasm, satire will be adopted as the theoretical support for this study, however, Berger ignores that certain facts in logical humor can also

be realized through verbal humor, such as the analogy in his humor strategy. When explaining analogy, he mentioned that simile and metaphor are the two most common ways of using analogy (Berger, 1976), while similes and metaphors are also the most common rhetorical devices. Meanwhile, when he explained impersonation, he pointed out that impersonation means "a character taking on someone else's identity or a profession", which is what we often call personification. Based on this, the study will integrate the four items of analogy, simile, metaphor, and personification into the new rhetorical devices list to form a complete list of rhetorical strategies for this study, see table 2.

Table 2. Modified rhetorical strategies based on Berger's theory

Rhetorical Strategies	Definition
1. Allusion	Allusions often direct our attention to stupid things people have done, to scandals, to famous sexual liaisons (or to sex in general).
2. Bombast	Inflated language and rhetorical exuberance are the basis of bombast.
3. Definition	The definition refers to the humorous definition that defeated expectations.
4. Exaggeration	Exaggeration enhancing reality and blowing things up far beyond the reality of the situation.
5. Facetiousness	Facetiousness refers to a joking, frivolous, nonserious use of language and attitude by a character.
6. Insults	Insults often involve wild comparisons, attacks on sexual aspects of a person, allusions to embarrassing things done in the past, and that kind of thing.
7. Infantilism	Infantilism involves an adult character using the language of a baby and playing around with words, uttering nonsense terms and that kind of thing.
8. Irony	Verbal irony involves saying one thing but meaning the opposite.
9. Misunderstanding	Misunderstandings are primarily verbal and involve characters not communicating effectively with one another.
10. Over literalness	Over literalness involves characters who are stupid and take everything literally or who lack imagination and good sense.
11. Puns, Wordplay	Puns are a specific form of wordplay that uses a word's sound to mean two different things.
12. Repartee	The term repartee involves a character responding to slights, put-downs, and veiled insults in a witty or clever manner.
13. Ridicule	Ridicule involves "making fun" and casting contemptuous laughter at someone or something.
14. Sarcasm	Sarcasm means "tearing the flesh" or "biting the lips in rage" and refers to the use of language that is contemptuous, mocking, and wounding.
15. Satire	Satire is a technique that involves deriding and ridiculing stupidity, vice, and folly in individuals, institutions, and society.
16. Analogy	It refers to a character taking on someone else's identity or a profession.
17. Simile	A simile is a figure of speech in which two essentially dissimilar objects or concepts are expressly compared with one another through the use of "like" or "as."
18. Metaphor	A metaphor is a figure of speech containing an implied comparison.
19. Personification	Personification involves a character taking on someone else's identity or a profession

This study will apply Berger's (1976) theory combined the rhetorical strategies in table 2 to examine the rhetorical strategies of monologue verbal humor in the Ellen talk show to find out

whether Ellen uses these strategies and what kinds of rhetorical strategies that Ellen prefers to use to achieve humorous utterance.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Verbal humor

Humor is one of the unique characteristics of human beings, but it is a common phenomenon that appears in people's conversations and social life. It is well accepted that it's not easy to define humor (Petraki & Pham Nguyen, 2016); however, many linguists, psychologists, and anthropologists have taken humor to be an all-encompassing category, covering any event or object that elicits laughter, amuses, or is felt to be funny (Attard, 1994). The first attention given to humor can date back to the Egyptians and the Sumerians, and jokes and humorous texts are found (Attardo, 2020). The theory of humor can be traced back to the times of Plato and Aristotle in ancient Greece, and has been continuously revised, tested, and developed in the centuries that followed.

Humor can be classified into verbal humor and non-verbal humor (Harida, 2018). Verbal humor refers to linguistic humor, such as words, phrases, and sentences as laughter-makers, while non-verbal humor refers to everything that can make people laugh, except language. Attardo (2020) points out that language play is an important factor of verbal humor, and it would be the same thing as verbal humor. The two most famous theories of studying verbal humor are Raskin's (1985) Semantic Script Theory of Humor (SSTH), which is the first linguistic-based humor theory, and Attardo and Raskin's (1991) General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH). The SSTH claims that the "script" is the cognitive structure in people's mind and many verbal humors rely on a part of complete overlap of two or more scripts should be opposite in a certain sense. This theory assumes that script opposition is the most important factor affecting jokes but ignores other parameters that affect jokes. Then, Attardo and Raskin (1991) collaborated on a General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH). Raskin's semantic scripting theory is a semantic theory of humor. The general theory of verbal humor is a linguistic theory in a broad sense. It also covers other fields of linguistics, such as text linguistics, narratology, pragmatics, etc. In addition to the framework opposition from the semantic script theory, the General Theory of Verbal Humor also includes five other parameters, which are called knowledge resources. In the order from lowest to highest in the hierarchy, the six knowledge resources are language, narrative strategy, goal, context, logic mechanism, script opposition (Attardo, 1991).

Ritchie (2001) believes that the general theory of verbal humor is more advanced than most other linguistic humor theories, but from a computational linguistic point of view, it is neither specific nor highly formalized. At best, it is a model prototype. Many of his basic constructions have not been strictly defined, and when a certain joke can express a specific script or script opposition, the criterion for its decision depends on the intuition of the analyst. Another influential type of humor research in the field of linguistics is pragmatic research based on Sperber & Wilson's relevance theory. Yus (2003) introduced the contributions of many relevant theory camps to humor research. First, the humor research relevance theory is consistent with the two-stage model of obscurity and resolution applied in psychology and semantics; second, all humor includes pragmatics.

Since the second half of the 20th century, humor has entered a period of multidisciplinary parallel research (Cai & Yi, 2005). Some researchers examined humor's relationship with teaching, emphasized its importance in second language teaching and learning (Bell, 2009), investigated the benefits of humorous language play for students and teachers in the classroom (Forman, 2011), and teacher's perception of humor in foreign language teaching (Petraki & Pham Nguyen, 2016). Different aspects of humor were also examined in cognitive therapy (Dionigi & Canestrari, 2018). The study indicates that humor is an easily incorporated psychological device that can be used to facilitate

positive improvements. Moreover, a few studies also focus on revealing the relationship between neural activity and laughter and humor (Wild et al., 2003). Nevertheless, the major humor studies are combined with linguistics or language analysis, such as A Pragmatic Study of Humor (Ibraheem & Abbas, 2016), Linguistic varieties in style: Humorous representations in Greek mass culture texts (Archakis, 2013), Pragmatic Analysis of Verbal Humor in Friends-Based on Cooperative Principle (Qiu, 2019), etc.

2.2. Talk show humor research

Humor is the sour of talk shows, and it is an inseparable part of a successful talk show program that could activate the audiences' interests, and it would be popularly accepted by audiences. Munson (1993) holds the view that the purpose of talk shows is to deliver useful information to the viewers and entertain them at the same time. The humor of talk shows has been investigated from a different point of view.

In 1987, Buxton stated that joking is one approach to preserving and maintaining opposition to institutional power, and he further analyzed how late-night talk show joking gives American society and culture a similar liberating feature. Besides, Williams et al. (2003) investigated political humor in the late-night show systematically to determine the amount of humor, the essence of humor, and the emphasis of humor, and then they analyzed and graded humor as positive, negative, neutral, or mixed according to the quality of the humor. After this, Jamie Warner (2007) argued that the daily night talk show worked as a platform for politicians to combat serious political branding techniques through funny parodic languages. Except for political humor studies in talk shows, more kinds of humor have been examined by researchers. In 2019, Shade Theory (1996) was used to analyze the kinds of verbal humor, and Verbal Humor General Theory (1991) was used to analyze the kinds of verbal humor contained in both artifacts by Fitri Nurul Azka and Hamzah Hamzah (2019), then they found 10 out of 12 verbal humor types in Ini Talk Show. They were normal vs odd, expectation vs fact, good vs bad, work vs truth, probable vs impossible, true vs false, right vs wrong, cause vs impact, cause vs effect, and actual vs non-existent. On the other hand, Wahyu (2020) classified humor into three types: irony, teasing, and joking. By observing *Mario Teguh Golden Way*, he holds the view that none of the expressions of humor can be classified as "playing with banter or vocabulary," and all the expressions of humor are conceptual humor.

Another research interest in the field of talk show humor is the pragmatic study of verbal humor, which aims to illustrate the reason for humor's generation and language effect. The Oprah Talk Show was studied by Zhang Rui (2018), who aimed to explore the relationship between the corporative principle and its four maxims and subtitle translation in the talk show, while Tustiantina et al. (2019) also used the corporative principle to reveal the cause of the emergence of conversational implicatures that support humor disclosure in the talk show and to reveal the use of elements of superiority in verbal humor that are not facing threat in the oral discourse of television programs. And Chen (2019) from the perspective of Leech's politeness principle to analyze the mechanism of humorous language that violates the politeness principle and explores the content innovation and depth of talk shows. Furthermore, some researchers combined all these pragmatic principles or two of them to have an overall examination of the humor production and effects of talk shows (Lyv, 2014; Guo, 2017; Zheng, 2019; Zhang, 2019).

Of the interest focused on humor construction, many investigators turn to apply different humor theories to explore the humor construction mechanism or strategies of talk shows. In 2015, Kučerová adopted the humor act and the associated terminology introduced by Victor Raskin in the Semantic Humor Process and the three theories of incongruity that are to be found in the stimulus, the attitude of

the speaker, and the psychological response of the hearer to examine the discursive humor strategies of the hosts of American late-night talk shows in the celebrity interview segment. According to the findings of Manalu (2016), ways of creating laughter contained in the humorous talk show were ways of incongruity and superiority, while relief was excluded. Also, he argued that the different subjects of discussion in each show also have an impact on humor production. Then Addinta (2017) uses Allison Ross's theory of language of humor to identify the *Ini Talk Show*'s humor at the linguistic level, and he concludes that incongruity is the main way to produce humor, and its linguistic level often occurs at phonology and syntax. What's more, Raskin's Semantic Script Theory of Humor (SSTH) and Raskin and Attardo's General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH) have also been adapted by Sujono (2017) and Azka (2019) to analyze the humor construction of talk shows.

The above studies have had a significant impact on the study of humor in talk shows, and more and more humor research under different talk shows context are being explored. Despite this, few of them have investigated rhetorical strategies in the humorous language of talk shows, even though rhetorical strategies play a significant role in achieving verbal humor (Rochmawati, 2017). Hence, based on the above study background, the present study tries to use Ellen talk shows' monologue as a corpus to explore its rhetorical strategies and to make a deeper understanding of verbal humor in talk shows.

3. Method

This research aims to examine the rhetorical strategies of the Ellen talk show host's humorous utterances. A qualitative description method was adopted because qualitative research focuses on understanding the process of how things happen in a certain context (Croker, 2009). Through the analysis of the monologue's verbal humor, the audience can figure out the rhetorical strategies behind the host's humorous utterances, so that they can better appreciate the humor that arises from the Ellen talk show.

3.1. Data sources and sample selection

Ellen's monologues are selected as the research corpus. The study uses the YouTube video download tool: https://zh.savefrom.net/7/ to download sixteen of Ellen's monologue fragments randomly from the official channel of the Ellen talk show on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/user/ and these monologue fragments would be used as the research data resources. Even though the samples will be selected randomly, some criteria still need to be followed. Because this study intends to investigate the more recent years' data, we focus on the monologues of Ellen from season 16 to season 18. Then the duration of the monologue should be over 2 minutes, for too short is not regarded as a kind of monologue. More importantly, to avoid some unexpected ethic issues, the topic of the monologue needs to be screened carefully, which only focuses on everyday life, gossip, and entertainment. After selection, the duration of these sixteen monologues ranges from 2 minutes to 9 minutes, and the total duration of the video is 82 minutes. Besides, the video period of Ellen's monologues is from September 2018 to March 2021, mainly from the host's monologue clips from the 16th to the 18th season of the Ellen talk show. Samples' detailed information is presented in the appendix table.

3.2. Data transcription

After the video is downloaded, the data will be transcribed. Primarily, the downloaded video has been uploaded to otter.ai, and the video text was transcribed automatically. Then, manual verification has been done to help to correct the misspellings and some wrong transcriptions. In addition, the study watches and observes the downloaded videos and pays attention to the fragments of the transcribed

data that make the audiences laugh and these fragments are highlighted. Furthermore, the fragments that make the audience laugh are screened, and the fragments with rhetorical expression are marked. For the verification of talk show data, the researcher invited an international teacher with a teacher qualification certificate who comes from the United States to verify English rhetoric expression and coding, to ensure the reliability of the data. After that, the transcribed text is exported and saved as the original data, and the original data is also backed up.

3.3. Data analysis

In the data analysis stage, NVivo is used as the main data analysis instrument. After collecting and screening the research data, the rhetoric phrases that make the audience laugh are coded through NVivo. Then, the coded data would be analyzed by NVivo based on the research objectives, such as the types of rhetorical strategies found in the data, the relationships between these strategies, and so on. Finally, the findings of this study were summarized with a thick description and discussion.

4. Findings

From the collected data of Ellen talk show's monologue videos, given the research questions, the findings are presented as follows.

4.1. Rhetorical strategies used in the humorous discourse of Ellen's monologue

To identify whether Ellen DeGeneres uses rhetorical strategies in her verbal humor making, we observed the downloaded video of Ellen's monologue and compared it with the transcribed text, the rhetorical strategies in Ellen's humorous discourse were identified. The data were imported into NVivo for coding, and coding identified the hierarchical relationship of rhetorical strategy distribution in the data, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Rhetorical strategies used in the humorous discourse of Ellen's monologue
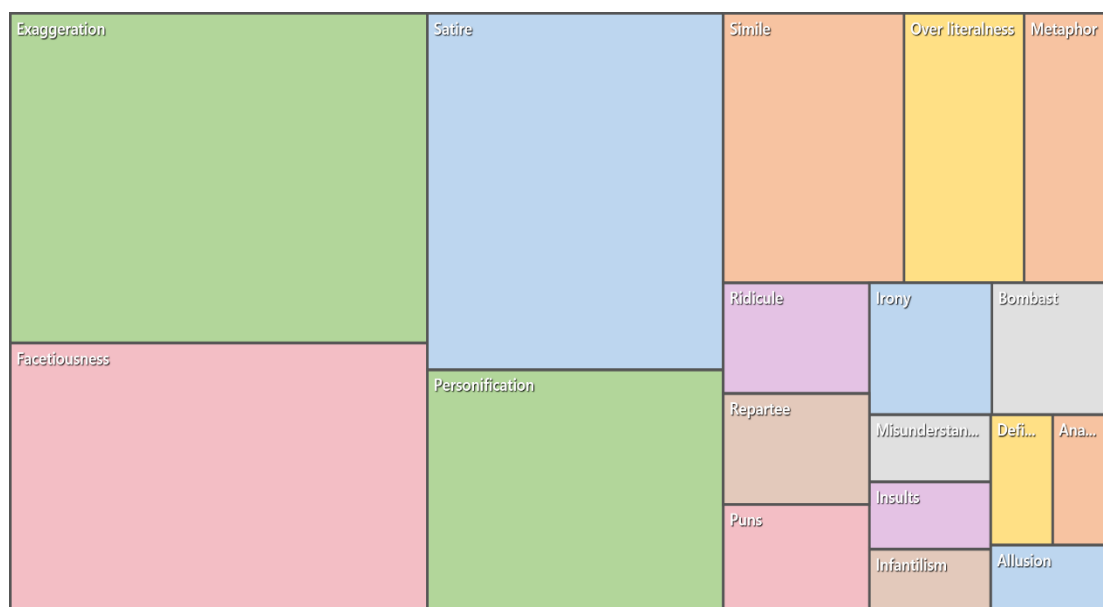
In table 3, Ellen's rhetorical strategies are found in her monologue humorous discourse are exaggeration, facetiousness, personification, satire, simile, over literalness, metaphor, puns, bombast, ridicule, irony, repartee, misunderstanding, insults, analogy, definition, infantilism, and allusion. Compared with the rhetorical strategies list in table 2, only one rhetorical strategy has not been found,

which is sarcasm. From the space occupation on the map, we can find which kinds of rhetorical strategies are used more and less, because the larger proportion on the map represents the number of these strategies, and vice versa. The rhetorical strategies of exaggeration, facetiousness, personification, and satire are used more often than otters. The specific distribution of these rhetorical strategies is shown in table 4.

4.2. Types of rhetorical strategies in the humorous monologue of Ellen's monologue

The above finding section presented the rhetorical strategies in the data, and Ellen always used one rhetorical strategy to achieve verbal humor. Besides, the researcher also found the phenomenon of mixed-use of rhetorical strategies contained in Ellen's humorous utterances, in which a humorous sentence or phrase contains two or more kinds of rhetorical devices (See Figure 1).
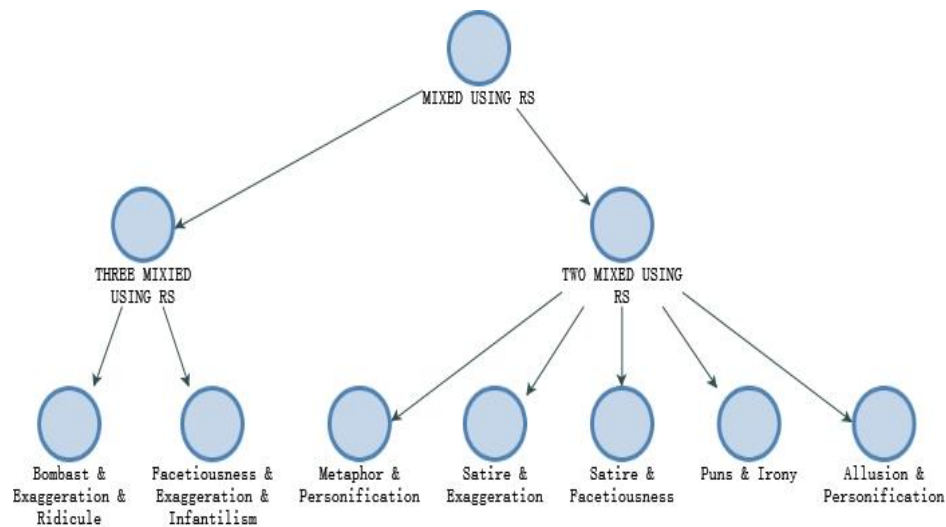

Figure 1. Mixed use of rhetorical strategies in the monologue to achieve verbal humor (RS = "Rhetorical Strategies")

From Figure 1, we can see that there are two or three rhetorical devices mixed together to achieve verbal humor in one humorous discourse of Ellen's talk show. There are five types of two mixed rhetorical strategies to achieve verbal humor: allusion and personification, metaphor and personification, satire and exaggeration, satire and facetiousness, and puns and irony. There are two types of mixed-use of three rhetorical devices. They are facetiousness, exaggeration, and infantilism: bombast, exaggeration, and ridicule. These mixed rhetorical devices appear 8 times in the whole data, of which there are two times of satire and exaggeration, and the other mixed rhetorical strategies appear only once. What's more, the two mixed strategies are used more frequently than the three mixed strategies. The following are examples of mixed-use of rhetoric strategies.

4.3. Ellen's preference for choosing rhetorical strategies to achieve verbal humor

To interpret Ellen's preference for choosing rhetorical strategies to achieve verbal humor, the distribution of rhetorical strategies in the collected samples was explored (Table 4).

Table 4. Distribution of rhetorical strategies in the collected data (RS = "Rhetorical Strategies", S = "Sample", and TT = Total)

RS \ S	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10	S11	S12	S13	S14	S15	S16	TT
Exaggeration	1				5			1			2	1	2	1	3	1	17
Facetiousness	5	1			1		1		1			1			2	2	14
Satire			1	1	1	1					1		1	4	1	2	13
Personification		1			5		1								2		9
Simile							4						1		1		6
Over literalness	1			1						1					1		4
Metaphor	1				1			1									3
Puns		1											1				2
Bombast		1												1			2
Ridicule				1										1			2
Irony						1							1				2
Repartee														2			2
Misunderstanding			1														1
Insults				1													1
Analogy											1						1
Definition														1			1
Infantilism															1		1
Allusion															1		1
TT	8	4	2	4	13	2	6	2	1	1	4	2	6	10	12	5	82

As shown in the table, rhetorical strategies were applied 82 times to achieve verbal humor. However, these rhetorical strategies are distributed unevenly.

From a vertical perspective, almost every sample of the monologue of the host has used rhetorical strategies to achieve verbal humor. Exaggeration, facetiousness, and personalization are the most frequently used rhetorical strategies, which are 17, 14, and 13 times respectively, while other strategies are used less. From a horizontal perspective, exaggeration, facetiousness, and personalization are the most frequently used rhetorical strategies, which are 17, 14, and 13 times respectively. The second ones are satire, simile, over literalness, and metaphor, which are 9, 6, 4, and 3 times respectively. However, puns, bombast, ridicule, irony, and repartee are used twice, and misunderstanding, insults, analogy, definition, infantilism, and allusion are used only once.

In addition, the researchers analyzed the collected data by measuring the total numbers and percentages of each rhetorical strategy. A visualized figure is presented (see figure 2).
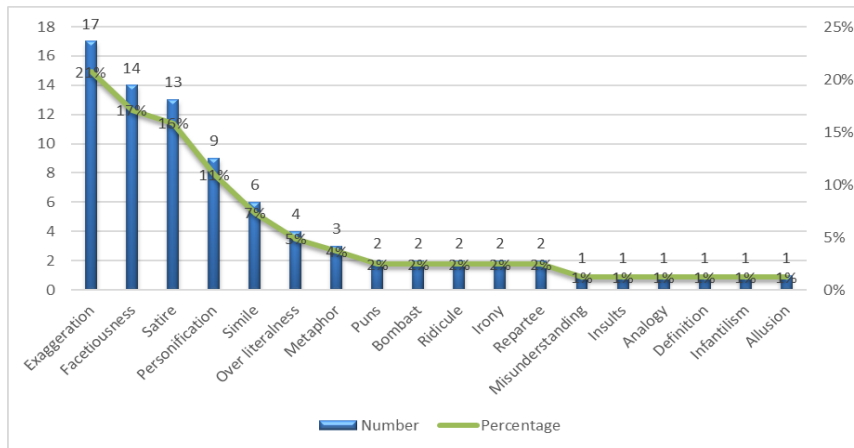
Figure 2. Number and percentage of the rhetorical strategies in the data

Figure 2 shows that the number of exaggeration rhetorical devices is 17, accounting for 21% of the total number of rhetorical strategies, which means exaggeration is the most frequent use strategy in producing monologue humor on the Ellen show. The second one is facetiousness, which has been used by Ellen 14 times, accounting for 17%. While satire, the third most used rhetorical strategy, has appeared 13 times in the data, accounting for 16% of the total rhetorical strategies, then is the simile (6 times, 7%) and over literalness (4 times, 4%). Other rhetorical strategies are seldom used, especially misunderstanding, insults, analogy, definition, infantilism, and allusion.

5. Discussion

The purpose of this study is to identify the rhetorical strategy types in Ellen's talk show monologue verbal humor and investigate what kinds of rhetorical strategies that Ellen prefers to use to achieve humor. Also, based on the exploration of the research questions and the findings of this research, this part will discuss these issues in depth.

Regarding research question one, the present study found eighteen kinds of rhetorical strategies in the humor monologue discourse of the Ellen show, which shows that Ellen uses a variety of rhetorical devices to achieve verbal humor (see table 3). From the distribution of rhetorical strategies in the collected samples (see table 4), every collected monologue segment contains at least one piece of rhetorical humor, and it is an indispensable strategy for Ellen to realize verbal humor. Therefore, the research indicates that rhetorical humor plays a significant role in the monologue humor discourse of Ellen's talk show. Also, from table 4, the frequency of rhetorical humor is high. In this study, there were 82 times of verbal humor realized through rhetorical strategies, and the total time of the data collected was 82 minutes, which suggests that rhetorical strategies were used to produce humor in every minute of Ellen's monologue.

Regarding research question two, this study found three types of use of rhetorical strategies in producing humorous discourses. Berger (1976) mentioned that a joke often contains more than two kinds of humorous rhetoric, one of which is in the dominant place, and the others are in the second place, which is also reflected in Ellen's talk show. In addition to using a single rhetorical strategy, Ellen also used a mixture of two or more rhetorical strategies to achieve verbal humor (see figure 1). As we have mentioned, there are seven types of mixed rhetorical strategies used in Ellen's monologue to achieve humorous discourse. Although this type is not adopted frequently, it is a good way to produce humor by observing the samples. Take the mixed use of "pun" and "irony", for example: In sample 13, Ellen talks about her experience with the coronavirus. She says, "Obviously, there are a lot of negative things going on. So instead, I want to talk about something positive. "My COVID test.""

Here the words "negative" and "positive" are not only the words' meanings themselves but also refer to the result of the test of COVID-19. The audience would not get the real meaning of her talk until she said the last sentence, which made them feel funny. It is evident that this sentence contains the rhetorical strategy of pun, but the last phrase of the sentence reveals that Ellen's COVID test is positive, which is not good news, and it contrasts to the meaning of positive, so it also contains the rhetorical strategy of irony. Because "verbal irony involves saying one thing but meaning the opposite" to satirize or ridicule things that cannot meet expectations (Berger, 1976), it is a mix of the rhetorical strategy of "pun" and "irony" in this phrase, which makes her words very humorous and stimulates the imagination and laughter of the audience.

Regarding research question three, whether Ellen prefers choosing rhetorical strategies will be discussed in this section. In Ellen's humorous monologue, although there are eighteen kinds of rhetorical strategies used, their presented numbers and using frequency are still different (see figure 2), which proves that Ellen prefers using certain rhetorical strategies. First, in terms of the total number of rhetorical strategies in figure 2, exaggeration, facetiousness, and satire account for the largest proportion, accounting for 44% of the total rhetorical strategies, which shows that Ellen prefers to use these three rhetorical strategies to achieve verbal humor.

Additionally, by observing the distribution of rhetorical strategies in the sample (see table 4), the researcher found that Ellen will use different rhetorical strategies according to the specific content of the topic and the background of the topic, which indicates that Ellen prefers some rhetorical strategy to achieve discourse humor in a certain topic. The rhetorical devices of exaggeration have appeared 17 times in total, and five times in sample 5. The topic of sample 5 is Ellen's hair colouring Nightmare, Ellen used several rhetorical exaggerations to describe his hair dyeing experience. She wanted to achieve the effect of humorous words through humorous exaggeration. Through the observation of the sample video, the effect of exaggerated rhetorical humor was prominent, which stimulated the audience's imagination, and the audience's laughter continued in the festival, which greatly improved the atmosphere of the program. While factiousness appears most frequently in sample 1, and the topic of sample 1 is *Ellen reviews 4 fun facts you never know about Cher*. Ellen comments and discusses Cher's achievements in the field of singing and the characteristics of her works in a less serious way, which makes the atmosphere of the studio more relaxed and pleasant. In sample 14, satire is used more often, while personification appears five times in sample 5. In sample 5, Ellen applies anthropomorphic words to hair, applies human characteristics to hair, endows hair with the ability of life and thinking, which causes the audience to laugh many times. These examples can well explain that Ellen's preference for these rhetorical strategies is closely related to the topic of monologue, which means the design of the rhetorical strategies in her monologues is determined by the specific topic background, and also proves that an ideal humor effect should meet the well-designed rhetorical strategies.

Moreover, Berger (1976) argued that comedians could produce humor both intentionally and unintentionally. The result of the study shows that Ellen can freely use rhetorical strategies to produce humor no matter whether through a single rhetorical strategy or a mixed one. However, we can't tell which one is intentionally and which one may be unconscious, because this needs us to conduct a further study to examine the factors which affected the rhetorical strategies chosen by the host, which is not the aim of this study, and we can study these factors in the future.

Concluding, the present study reveals that Ellen tends to use a single rhetorical device to achieve verbal humor, whereas two or more rhetorical devices are also used together by her to achieve verbal humor. From Figure 1, we found that among the mixed rhetorical strategies, two kinds of mixed rhetorical strategies are used more frequently than those three mixed rhetorical strategies, which means combining two rhetorical devices is easier for talk show hosts to present. Therefore, many

studies have examined one rhetorical strategy in a certain humorous context (Piata, 2016; Stoyanova, 2021), because although rhetorical strategies can help people achieve language effects and communication purposes, they need to be well-designed and have higher language skill requirements for the speakers. Therefore, Ellen DeGeneres is an excellent talk show host and humorist (Lee, 2017).

6. Conclusions and Implication

The paper examined the rhetorical strategies in the humorous monologue of Ellen talk show, the study found eighteen types of rhetorical strategies that presented in the monologue verbal humor, they are an exaggeration, facetiousness, personification, satire, simile, over literalness, metaphor, puns, bombast, ridicule, irony, repartee, misunderstanding, insults, analogy, definition, infantilism, and allusion. The art and technique of persuasion using oral and written language is known as classical rhetoric (Polotti & Lemaitre, 2013), in the talk show Ellen wants to achieve verbal humor through these rhetorical strategies and to make the audiences laugh. In the collected samples, the use of rhetorical strategies is unevenly distributed, in all the rhetorical humor strategies, Ellen prefers to use the rhetoric of exaggeration, facetiousness, and satire more frequently than other rhetorical strategies, while the rhetorical strategies of misunderstanding, insults, analogy, definition, infantilism, and allusion are found scanty. Moreover, Ellen tends to produce verbal humor using a single rhetorical device, but she also adopted two mixed or three mixed rhetorical devices to produce humorous utterances in some situations.

Although this paper systematically analyzed the rhetorical strategies of verbal humor in Ellen's monologue, the audience and relevant scholars can now have a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of Ellen's talk show humor, there are still some limitations. On the one hand, this paper only identified the rhetorical strategies of monologue verbal humor in Ellen's talk show but did not investigate the humorous utterances of the whole talk show. Therefore, this study will strengthen the understanding of the humorous utterances and monologue segments of the Ellen Show, but the rhetorical strategies of other parts of verbal humor will still not be tested. On the other hand, this study only identified the rhetorical strategies in the monologue humor of Ellen's talk show and studied which rhetorical strategies Ellen prefers to achieve verbal humor, while it does not conduct in-depth research and analysis on the reasons why Ellen adopts these rhetorical strategies. Based on the above shortcomings, the study suggests that future research can study talk show humor from more perspectives and analyze the hidden reasons that affect the choice of these rhetorical strategies by the host. Furthermore, a comparative study of talk show humor from different countries can also be carried out to help people in different countries understand different kinds of verbal humor, which also contributes to the comparative study of humorous linguistics.

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Appendix:

Appendix table: Detail Information of Ellen Monologue Samples

SAMPLES	SEASONS	TIME	TOPIC
1	Season 16	September 15, 2018	Ellen Reveals 4 Fun Facts You Never Knew About Cher

2	Season 16	October 18, 2018	Ellen's Season 16 Bloopers... So Far
3	Season 16	November 6, 2018	The Pros and Cons of Letting Anyone Run for Office
4	Season 16	December 20, 2018	Stop Drawing Portraits of Ellen on Walls
5	Season 16	April 30, 2019	Ellen's Hair Coloring Nightmare
6	Season 17	September 20, 2019	Test Your Ellen Knowledge with '2 Lies and a Truth'
7	Season 17	September 24, 2019	Ellen Is Hurt!
8	Season 17	November 25, 2019	Ellen Checks Whether She's on the Same Wavelength as Her Audience Members
9	Season 17	January 7, 2020	Ellen Reflects on Her Big Night at the Golden Globes
10	Season 18	September 21, 2020	Ellen's First Monologue of Season 18
11	Season 18	November 3, 2020	Ellen Wants to Help You Get to the Polls!
12	Season 18	November 19, 2020	Ellen's Been Watching Too Much Reality-TV
13	Season 18	January 13, 2021	Ellen Talks About Her Coronavirus Experience
14	Season 18	January 27, 2021	How to Celebrate a Birthday in a Pandemic
15	Season 18	February 26, 2021	Interesting Products to Help Your Posture
16	Season 18	March 3, 2021	Ellen Recaps the Awards, Fashion, and Zooms from the 2021 Golden Globes