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Władysław Chłopicki, Dorota Brzozowska (Eds.)

HUMOROUS DISCOURSE

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A foreword on humorous discourse

The present volume was conceived largely as a fruit of linguistic labour. Since nowadays the majority of linguists believe in the primary nature of the use of language and its contextual determination as the essential condition for the emergence of meaningful texts, the editors have called upon humorous scholars to think of humour as a type of discourse. And those who responded to the call, although "many are called and few are chosen" (Matthew 22: 14), were linguists. This was probably so since the notion of *discourse* used at present in many disciplines originates in the Latin and then French term *discours*, which refers to a conversation or an orderly expression of thought. The concept was taken over by mainly French scholars, linguists and philosophers of language (e.g. M. Foucault, P. Ricoeur, P. Bourdieu, R. Barthes, or J. Derrida), who, in gross oversimplification, claimed that it is social, political and other powers beyond our control that shape texts. These ideas developed further into the school of critical discourse analysis, while on the other hand the notion of *discourse* was adapted by mainstream Anglo-Saxon linguistics, which itself evolved in the compatible, although much less political, sociopragmatic direction and needed the term to account for the role of speaker/author and hearer/reader in text interpretation (cf. Shiffrin 1994; notably, German scholarship prefers *text* to *discourse* in the related sense; cf. e.g. Adamzik 2016). At the same time, and partly as a result of these developments, *discourse* became a buzzword not only in humanities and social sciences, but even in some hard sciences where a form of human interaction is involved (cf. Foucault's idea of "clinical discourse" in medicine or psychiatry, cf. Foucault 1999, or discourse analytic nature of archeology, cf. Kendall and Wickham 1999).

Thus, in the English, French, or Polish scholarship among others *discourse* is a complex notion operating in a linguistic, communicative, social and cultural context, and the text is a specific realization of a discourse, it is its centre (cf. Chruszczewski 2011: 205; cf. also Palmer 1996). The discourse is action, so the text-creation process "is always embedded in the non-verbal context, built of communicative situation, the social group which takes part in the communication and the culture in which the process unveils" (Chruszczewski 2011: 208). We think globally, *discoursally*, when planning what to say, so about linguistic action, about our goals, while we think locally, *textually*, about words when we wonder how to say it in lexical and grammatical terms.

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Such a concept is applicable to inherently humorous texts, such as jokes, demotivators, stand-up, etc as well as to humour occurring in non-humorous genres, e.g. everyday conversation, television shows, or sports commentary, since just as linguists find it difficult to identify the unequivocal source of meaning (text or context or both), so humour scholars find it hard to identify the source of humorous effects (text, context or both). The problem with defining humorous discourse is the potential circularity of the notion, which stems from the difficulty in setting it off from non-humorous discourse (cf. the discussion in Nirenburg and Raskin 2004). The "definition of local antonymy, is potentially troublesome [. . .], since it could lead to a vicious circle: if we defined local antonymy based upon the purpose of the discourse (i.e. humor) and then defined humor based on local antonymy, the SSTH [Standard Script Theory of Humor] would collapse." (Attardo 2001: 18). To avoid the circularity a pragmatic solution is proposed, based on the saliency of encyclopedic knowledge; specifically, Attardo postulates "a saliency hierarchy within the material of a script" (Attardo 2001: 19). Indeed, the pragmatic or discoursal solution seems only feasible, so the semantic theory of humour inevitably transforms into a pragmatic one; thus, we need to deal with humorous discourse or *global* humorous action which makes use of *local* means (words and expressions) that direct the thoughts of the audience in particular, not always entirely predictable directions (at least not easily predictable by the speaker). The issue of backgrounded incongruities is thus also relevant here as this collective notion plays a role in determining the funniness of the joke as well as its "cultural pathways" (cf. the special issue of *Humor* 24: 2, 2011, which focused around backgrounded vs foregrounded incongruities).

Humorous discourse has also been interestingly discussed in Ermida (2008), who deals with constructing literary narratives, and in Attardo (2008: 115–121), who provided an overview of discourse analysis of humour, including the functions of humour, construction of humour in discourse, humorous narratives as well as humour styles; the *Encyclopedia of humor studies* (Attardo 2014) brings a related discussion of formal properties of humour and functions of humour in verbal and online interaction (II: 705–708) as well as of verbal and written "humour markers" which signal humour and are removable without affecting humour and "humour factors" which are its constitutive elements (I: 359–361). *The Routledge handbook of language and humor* (Attardo 2017) offers an overview of linguistic aspects of humour approached from all possible paradigms active in linguistics, including structuralist, functional, cognitive, pragmatic, sociolinguistic, psycholinguistic and computational, as well as cuts through various disciplines which verge on linguistics, such as translation studies, stylistics or genre studies. The current volume differs from the former one as here we attempt to discuss selected but thorny issues of humour research which form the major stumbling blocks as well as challenges in humour studies at large and thus merit insightful discussion.

1 Problems of humour research

The purpose of the current volume is to discuss these and other pertinent questions in order to move the debate on the role of contextual and non-contextual meaning in humour a step forward. Furthermore, a number of problem areas currently discussed and sometimes unique for humour studies are tackled in the volume. These are briefly listed below.

1. The issue of the role and status of formal and informal theory of humour and the methods of falsifying statements about humour – what does actually count as a theory and do we need the theory at all? When do we know that a claim that concerns humour has been proved or do we know it at all? This can thus be called a metatheory of humour.
2. The problem of identifying the basic mechanism or mechanisms which are responsible for a humorous effect and the set of factors which are responsible for humorous effects in discourse. This is the essentialist side of humour studies, stimulating the scholars to ask the question: What is humour? (cf. Raskin 1985, Attardo 2001). The related essentialist question concerns the problem of distinguishing humour and non-humour, particularly that of humour and metaphor (cf. e.g. Müller 2007).
3. The problem of formulating a bottom-up theory of humour performance (as opposed to the top-down theory of humour competence; cf. Raskin 1985) based on corpus research, including such varied knowledge resources as systems of beliefs, humour repertoires, and humorous texts as such as well as the way jokes are delivered prosodically.
4. The problem of the structure of humorous discourse, esp. more or less spontaneous conversation interspersed with humour, and the role of metapragmatic comments which identify intended humour and which are means to negotiate the ongoing type of discourse.
5. The related problem of distinguishing *bona fide* and *non-bona fide* modes of discourse (cf. Raskin 1985) and the classification of their potential subtypes. The problem is also manifested in the use of verbal and visual humour as contributions to the entertainment value of written discourse due to its essential playfulness and creativity. It is sometimes seen too in terms of the relation between humorous discourse and other discourses in terms of social and cultural factors it involves and of its resulting anti-discourse status.

6. The problem of constructing and aligning the audience of the humorous performer and target groups in a comic show in terms of their cultural/national/regional identity and sociolinguistic cues that help the audience relate to them and the performer himself (cf. Double 2005). The problem could also be approached from another perspective – that of the humour recipients and it could concern the way they see the humorous/non-humorous quality of a text, the functions and the limits of humour.
7. Last but not least, the highly complicated essentialist and non-essentialist perspectives on humour, as outlined above, can be seen as the background for attempts at solving the thorny problem of computer modelling of implicit inferences in humorous discourse and situation-specific information about the events, objects and persons.

The question could be raised to what extent the set of issues presented above and the ways they are handled by scholars contributes to the already accumulated knowledge on the workings of humour in discourse in such publications as Raskin (1985), Attardo (2001), Martin (2006) or Attardo ed. (2014). The clarity and succinctness with which the problems are formulated and subsequent direct and honest and at the same time scholarly ways of dealing with them make the collection accessible and highly informative. Naturally, not all the questions have been answered, and some chapters end with a call for more research or more interdisciplinary cooperation in specific areas of humour research. Still the greatest asset of the volume is the fact that it has asked most of the important questions and lucidly emphasized the need for the theoretical and empirical studies of humorous discourse to coexist and at the same time emphasized multiple contextual, linguistic, social and cultural, factors which humour scholars have to take into account in order to provide an exhaustive description of the functioning of humorous discourse – a large step for some linguists brought up within the tradition of structuralist or generative paradigms. The linguists contributing to the volume have also shown a commendable degree of open mind, which is an indispensable factor when dealing with humorous discourse; they, perhaps more than any other texts, demand mental flexibility and contextual embedding.

2 Structure of the volume

The order of the chapters in the present volume, contributed by leading scholars in the field of humour studies, reflects the array of problems briefly discussed above. The collection opens with the contribution by **Victor Raskin** who emphasizes the vital nature of theory-building in science as well as in humour research, particularly of the metatheory which would allow the researcher to assess the validity of and, if necessary, falsify the statements made about the nature of humour. This is followed by a series of contributions which handle the essentialist side to the study of humour. **Władysław Chłopicki** provides an overview of the promising notion of metonymy for humour research, which with its related network of notions such as metonymic paths, chains or compression, draws attention to the linguistic and cultural complexity and dynamics of humorous discourse, although it does not necessarily focus on the dichotomies traditionally considered basic for humour as is shown in the detailed analysis of selected jokes pursued in the chapter. **Agnieszka Libura** researches the concept of conceptual integration, widely used in cognitive linguistics and outside of it, and applies it to political discourse in order to find that even though it does explain a great deal of the workings of humorous cartoons, it has a broader application and might underemphasize what is essential for humour. **Sachiko Kitazume** sees the nature of both verbal and visual humour in a twist, or a minor, yet sometimes far-reaching, alteration that yields a comic effect, thus stressing the dynamic nature of humour. At the same time, she addresses an important issue of distinguishing between humour and metaphor, metaphor being deprived of an opposition and being based on an overlap of images, while humour relying on the scripts considered contradictory and overlapping only on the literal reading.

The next set of contributions reach further into contextual study of humorous discourse as they research various aspects of humorous performance and specifically the structure of humorous discourse. **Salvatore Attardo** demonstrates the diversity of factors which affect humour performance, from systems of beliefs and values to humorous repertoires, and shows a number of conversational jokes which failed even though they met all the requirements of General Theory of Verbal Humour, the reasons for failure including the wrong use of language, lack of explicitness or unavailability of scripts, reference to sensitive scripts or the prosodic factors**. Ksenia Shilikhina** is the first one to discuss the structure of corpus-based natural discourse in English, Russian, Polish and German with humorous elements in it, raising the issue of the presence of metapragmatic comments offered by the discourse participants as those elements which help all sides negotiate the nature of the ongoing discourse and resolve it as either *bona fide* or *non-bona fide*, as these modes tend to overlap and compete. As a result of her study she postulates a number of categories of metapragmatic markers, refining the notion of *non-bona fide* communication. The contribution of **Jan Chovanec** takes up the issue of the relationship of the verbal and visual in humour (raised earlier by Kitazume) in the context of sports discourse in the British press and its culturally highly valued entertainment aspect. He discusses this in terms of wordplay creativity and general playfulness as essential categories which explain why the manner of presentation is sometimes more important than the content and why humour in the analysed headline examples can be considered successful.

Another two chapters discuss the most difficult area in the study of humorous discourse, that of the response of the audience to the performance, show or other humorous input. **Marina Santiago and Sarah Seewoester Cain** lucidly report on their study of two stand-up performances by one New York comedian, in a comedy club and in a nationally televised talk show, and argue that he uses two kinds of strategies to develop a relationship with his audience and align them towards various ethnic and other target groups – these are discursive and sociolinguistic cues used differently depending on where he is performing in order to achieve a maximum humorous effect. **Villy Tsakona**, on the other hand, takes account of the differences of the assessment of a controversial, sexist, but humorous advertisement among viewers, who actually took part in a political debate on the subject. In her informative discussion she takes into account the notions of *non-bona fide* communication, normative community of humour, metapragmatic stereotypes and sociocultural presuppositions, and concludes that the viewers fell into two normative communities, one stressing the harmless and the other the harmful nature of the humour in the advertisement.

The collection closes with the contribution by **Julia Taylor Rayz**, who discusses the Ontological Semantic Theory of Humour and its potential application to humorous discourse. Among the problems, which will by now be clear to the reader given all the complexity discussed in the previous chapters, she emphasizes the difficulty in accounting for implicit inferences of all kind as well as text-specific or culture-specific references to events, objects and persons, information about which contained in the database turns out not to be specific enough or fuzzy for the purposes of the computer system which is to model them, as sophisticated as it may be.

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I Approaches at the essence of humorous discourse

Victor Raskin

Humor theory: What is and what is not

1 Introduction

This paper will reiterate my pretty rigid view of what a theory is in general and what, in that light, a theory of humor is. It will acknowledge and urge to ignore the informal use of the word theory as misleading and harmful for humor research. It will also explore the question of the feasibility for such a theory and whether it is worth striving for it, especially so since my view is not widely shared by other humor researchers. In the process, other related issues will be discussed, and one of them is why I do not consider books that consist of jokes and the informal, intuitive, subjective comments on them to be very useful at this mature stage of humor research. So, I will start the body of the paper with a joke and its informal discussion.

2 A joke and its informal analysis

Three American men, a Pole, a Jew, and a WASP, found a bottle with a genie in it on the beach. The genie offered them each a wish. The Pole said that he would like to move to Poland but not the way it was, wrecked by communism, but a free and prosperous Poland. And he was gone. The Jew said that he would like to move to Israel but not to the besieged, endangered place it was but rather to a safe, peaceful place, in good relations with its neighbors, and stable economically, politically, and in every other respect. “How about you?” asked the genie impatiently, “I must be off, you know.” “Is the Pole really in a kind of Poland that he wanted?” the WASP asked. “Yes, of course,” answered the genie. “And the Jew in a peaceful Israel?” “Yes!” “Are they really gone?” “Yes, they are,” answered the genie angrily. “Give me your wish, please!” “Okay,” said the WASP, “May I have a diet coke?”

This is **a** joke and not **the** joke, even though the paper will not analyze another joke, because, of course, it is not the Doctor/Lover joke from Raskin (1985), which is standardly referred to as The Joke in humor research literature. What happens in this joke is slightly more complicated than in The Joke, where the doctor’s wife, incongruously, invited the male patient, seeking to see her

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husband for his health problem, to "come right in" while her husband is away. Related in the American favorite 3-stroke narrative, the diet coke joke gives us the first man's wish that requires the change of his (or his ancestors') native country from ruined to prosperous. It is followed by the second man's wish that requires peace in the Middle East, a standard in Western humor for an impossible task. The wishes are granted, and the two men are gone to those much improved countries.

We have been set up for the third man's wish: we are led to expect to involve, by analogy, a serious transformation for his country. Will he ask for ridding it of crime, drugs, cancer, poverty? He is taking his time and then making sure that his Polish and Jewish countrymen are gone. Reassured on that count, he surprises us by asking for a diet coke, something he can get for a tiny amount of pocket change around the corner (it is, of course, a beach with a corner).

The surprise element in humor has been noticed at least since Kant (1791), who also talked about the juxtaposition of two very different situations as the cause of this surprise, and all the components of that are present in the joke: the third man's wish is different than that of his two friends' in content and especially in scope. So is this what constitutes the joke or is there anything else? With this juxtaposition and its surprise alone, we may still conclude that what is implied – the "message" of the joke – is that the American's country does not need any improvement for him to stay in it, and this is why he chooses a trivial request. But there is something else in the text: while seeing for himself that his friends are gone, he demands reassurance from the genie that it is indeed so, and the trivial request follows immediately after he is satisfied that the Pole and Jew are gone. We "get" the additional implication that America does not need improvement after it is rid of those "ethnics." The joke comes through then as an anti-immigrant one – at least hostile or rejectionist with regard to more recent, less established immigrants than "The Mayflower" descendants or those who like to think of themselves as such.

What else does the joke evoke? The mention of a Pole brings forth, in an experienced humor consumer's mind, the ethnic jokes about Polish Americans, who are standardly, though factually incorrectly represented as dumb (see Davies 1990). This parallel is actually rather unhelpful here: the Pole is doing nothing dumb here. In a similar joke, the Pole goes last and, after his friend have their wishes to be elsewhere are satisfied by a genie, the Pole says that he misses them already and wishes them to be back with him on the uninhabited island. In fact, the joke is clearly not optimized: while the American is essential for it, the choice of ethnics is not fully justified – a Jew may be a perennial outsider but the “Jewish question” is much more of a European than American phenomenon, and the American in the joke must be a skinhead in order to count the Jewish presence in America to be crucial for its being a desirable place to live, and a Pole is simply anachronistic. Speaking of which, putting the joke in the pre-1960s time frame, the ethnics should have been a Black and a Jew, while bringing it closer to the present time, the Pole and Poland should have been replaced by a Mexican and Mexico, given the intensity of the Hispanic immigration conundrum in American politics of the recent decades.

Even more remotely, the joke may evoke a whole layer of three-nationality jokes that all share the 3-stroke narrative structure and use the well-established ethnic stereotypes for mostly West Europeans (British, formally polite; French, lovers; German, literally methodical; Italian, foodies) and an occasional Central (Romanian, will do anything for money) and East European (Russian, heavy drinker (male), inept in love choices (female)). This will probably underscore the perception that none of the 3 characters in the diet coke joke rely on any customary stereotypes, thus lowering the quality of the joke or at least of its verbalization for a demanding and experienced consumer.

3 Here comes the theory

The theory that comes in to offer its formal analysis of the diet coke joke is, of course, the linguistic theory of humor. Its three consecutive stages have been the original Script-based Semantic Theory of Humor (SSTH: Raskin 1985), its expanded successor, the General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH: Attardo and Raskin 1991; Attardo 1994), and its semantic formalization, the ontological semantic theory of humor (OSTH: Raskin et al. 2009). Besides the obvious advantage of having been developed by this author and his associates, it is the only theory – or rather family of theories – that satisfies the requirement for a set of statements to qualify for the status of theory in the proper, formal, technical and even mathematical sense of the term, first developed in Raskin (1999 – reprinted as Ch. 2 in Nirenburg and Raskin 2004).

This view of theory, actually the metatheory, as it were, the theory of theory, should have been developed in the philosophy of science but, unfortunately, never has, primarily because of that discipline’s focus on just a selection of natural sciences and, in those, on the empirical justification of theories. According to this metatheory, a theory includes, besides its body consisting of a number of statements and constituting the most visible part of any theory, a set of premises and goals, a purview, a method for falsifying it, and a justification/evaluation mechanism. The falsification principle, often misunderstood, is pure

Popper (1972), according to whom, every theory is a hypothesis which has not been falsified. A theory that is unfalsifiable, in principle, is a faith, so every theory builder should provide a way to falsify it as part of the theory.

Both the general status of a full-fledged theory and the specific notion of a theory of humor was presented as a plenary lecture at the phenomenally well-organized and supported 2012 Annual Meeting of the International Society of Humor Studies at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow, Poland. A shorter, computationally biased version was presented at the AAAI 2012 Fall Symposium on the Artificial Intelligence of Humor (Raskin 2012a). An expanded version was used in a few keynote addresses since. To quote from Raskin (2012a),

"A well-developed, mature, self-aware, and therefore usable computational theory is characterized by all the properties below – it must be and actually is:

- adequate, if it provides an accurate account of all the phenomena in its purview;
- effective, if it comes with a methodology for its implementation;
- formal, if it submits itself to logical rules, whether it does or does not use a specific formalism–confusing formality with formalism is one of the worst and unfortunately common offenses in discussing a formal theory;
- constructive, if that implementation can be completed in finite time;
- decidable, if there is an algorithm for its implementation in principle;
- computable, if this algorithm can be demonstrated;
- explicit, if it is fully aware of all of its components and provides a full account of each of them."

Each of these properties is not an evaluative adjective – lest it be thought that all of these just praise a theory that is claimed to have them in 7 different ways. In fact, each property has a clear and distinct meaning, and its constructiveness, for instance, means that the theory comes with a methodology that leads to results, for which the theory provides a conceptual format. A linguistic theory is maintained, within the family of linguistic theories of humor, to possess all of the properties above. We will defer a discussion of informal theories of humor to the last section of the paper.

What all the three phases of the family of theories share is the Main Hypothesis, first formulated in SSTH, that the text of a verbal joke is compatible, in full or in part, with two different and often standardly opposite scripts. Typically, the initial script is developed from the start of the joke and then is defeated by the punch line, which typically, again, serves as the triggering device that switches to the second script. According to this theory, then, the initial script has the wish grantees coming up with enormously hard-to-fulfill orders that involve socio-political changes for the whole countries that take decades, if not centuries to accomplish. The diet coke line is the punch line that introduces the opposite script of an extremely trivial, passing wish that does not require the supernatural power of a genie to bring about. All the elements of a joke are, thus, demonstrated to be present, and the text is characterized as a joke. End of story? Well, no, but a pretty auspicious beginning. We are talking!

What we are talking is a pretty high bar that this view of theory sets. A real theory defines a set of necessary and sufficient conditions for a phenomenon that it is the theory of. Thus, for a short verbal joke, it claims that if a text is a joke then its text is compatible with two opposite scripts (necessary condition), and vice versa, if we have a text that is compatible with two opposite scripts, it is a joke. This establishes a reliable method of falsification of the linguistic theory: one counterexample of either a joke that is not compatible with two opposing scripts or of a text that is compatible with two opposing scripts but is not a joke will falsify the theory. The search for a counterexample started straight at the start in Raskin (1985). That it has not yet been produced in several decades seems to demonstrate the validity of the theory.

There are serious issues to consider here. Thus, for the necessary conditions to obtain, the two opposing scripts should always be discovered. Can there be a consistent methodology for doing that or does the fact that it seems always possible trivialize the issue? Within SSTH, Raskin (1985) identified, deductively, 3 archetypes of script opposition, normal/abnormal, actual/non-actual, and possible/impossible. Raskin (1987) listed, inductively, some 17 standard oppositions, such as good/bad, sex/no-sex, life/death, that together seem to cover a predominant majority of all jokes, making it virtually impossible to think of any joke that goes beyond that empirical set. And yet, in the diet coke joke, it is not that easy to identify the opposed scripts even in terms of the archetype oppositions: normal/abnormal is perhaps the strongest candidate but the whole situation is abnormal, so the opposition is more between correct and expected vs. incorrect and unexpected.

We will talk about this in the next section but the universality of this set of conditions is hard to argue about: it is a strong argument in defense of the Main Hypothesis. It seems more promising to look for a counterexample on the sufficient conditions, which are always much harder to identify. Triezenberg (2004, 2008) appears to have moved the furthest and boldest in this direction, arguing that the X is a murderer/X is not a murderer opposition, a legitimate member of the actual/non-actual archetype, underlies all Agatha Christie's detective novels, which are not at all funny, however. The most effective defense here is that GTVH was not set up for longer texts, even though Chłopicki (1997), Attardo (2001) and Ermida (2009) claim that it is extendable. In other words, the best defense against this counterexample is that it violates the purview of the theory it tries to subvert.

There are other, less generous alternative interpretations, one of them being dismissive: who cares? This is a serious alternative: many if not most scholars go about their research, following an established methodology without much concern for the foundations of their activity, that is, why they should be doing what they are doing the way they are doing it. Scholars may improve methodologies and even get better results but it takes a great scholar to question what the others are taking for granted and presenting as an incontrovertible dogma. One such scholar in linguistics, who replaced the presumably completed structuralist agenda with the generative paradigm, was Chomsky (1965), who asserted that a refusal to consider the theory underlying an activity does not eliminate the theory but rather accepts an implicit theory without a chance to consider in consciously. So, theory building becomes simply an attempt to bring the implicit theory into full visibility, to explicate it, and to follow it consciously – or to modify it.

It is worth adding here that the constructivity of a full-fledged linguistic theory, including that of humor, does not pertain to other theories defined with the help of a set of necessary and sufficient conditions. Thus, Searle's (1969) Speech Act Theory defines the speech act of promise (and any other) as set of 9 necessary and sufficient conditions but there is no procedure for establishing that any condition is taking place: thus, a promise is a promise if the hearer would like the speaker to commit the future act that the speaker promises. A series of psychological experiments, extremely well designed a la Ruch (2012), would help to establish that but a philosophical theory would never rely on psychology.

Searle (1969) also differentiates between the necessary and especially sufficient conditions that are constitutive and those that are regulatory. Thus, the chess moves are observed when chess is played (necessary) and whenever a game is played that follows these moves, that game is chess (sufficient). But also, the rules do constitute the game of chess. Contrary to that, the necessary and sufficient rules of gravity do not establish gravity, so they are regulatory. In this context, even if something like the Main Hypothesis expresses a set of necessary and sufficient conditions for humor – and at a certain coarse grain size, it probably does – it does not constitute humor. It is very interesting to explore what makes these conditions regulatory. What does make humor exist? Is it a necessary mode of communication? We will not explore it any further here on a pretty feeble excuse that considering, let alone answering this question goes beyond the scope of a linguistic theory of humor.

4 The purview of a theory

The fact that the linguistic theory of humor has not been falsified as a scientific theory does not mean that it has not been criticized. As a dominant theory in the cognitive study of humor, as opposed to the emotional study that Martin 2007 assigns to psychology, it has been massively subjected to the appropriate treatment, namely, universally cited and not quite universally attacked. A book-length attack, Ritchie (2004) takes it to task for not being expressed in a logical formalism. My book has been widely and critically reviewed but hardly anybody has ever noted that it barely touched the substance of the theory and stopped much shorter of really substantive criticism from inside of the theory.

The theory was set up as conditional. It predicated itself on the pre-existence of a formal/computational theory/system of representation of meaning in natural language but nothing of the kind had yet been developed – it reached the non-conditional status only with the advent of the Ontological Semantic Technology (Raskin et al. 2010; Taylor et al. 2010, Taylor et al. 2011a, Taylor et al. 2011b; Hempelmann et al. 2010; Taylor and Raskin 2011). But the largely "soft," informal, non-constructive, atheoretical community took it for an attempt at the final truth and criticized it as such for something it had not made any claims about. Much of it came from European scholars, seriously affected by phenomenology, while the theory is, of course, a product of analytical philosophy. And while the inside criticism has questioned just about every aspect of the theory formally and agonized about strengthening, the outside criticism accused the theory of not explaining everything about every humorous situation. The standard argument against the theory has been that there is more to humor. And this raises the issue of the purview of the theory and sends us back to the informal analysis section that follows.

What of the information listed there in association of the joke is the theory responsible for? If all the theory is interested in is to discover a pair of opposed scripts in a text that it tests for being a joke, then even SSTH is a complete theory that has never been falsified. Then the theory may be criticized for having a very limited purview but not for being not a valid theory. Within the theory again, it has been exposed as proceeding on a similar idealization – the homogeneity of the community – that most linguistics had used unconsciously until Chomsky (1965) mentioned it in passing: while fully cognizant of the fact that humor affected different people differently, the theory dealt with an idealized homogeneous hearer/consumer of a joke. Carrell (1997a, 1997b) outlined a SSTH/GTVH compatible theory of the humor audience, a theory that still awaits its full development that will clearly combined the cognitive and emotional aspect of humor (see Ruch 1998).

Is the theory also responsible for the "message" implied by the American's non-wish? And for its anti-ethnic extension? How about the evocation of similar jokes with the thoughts about the common stereotypes and even the quality of the text of the joke? Well, it has not been. No theory should be held responsible for every detail, and it is legitimate to limit its purview to what it can do. But it is also legitimate to question, at any stage, whether the purview can and should be extended: this is exactly what the humor researchers of longer text have been trying to achieve.

What has been happening in OSTH (see Raskin et al. 2009; Raskin 2009, Raskin 2011a, Raskin 2012a, Raskin 2012b, Raskin 2013a, Raskin 2013b; Taylor 2009, Taylor 2011, Taylor 2012a, Taylor 2012b, Taylor 2013, Taylor (this volume); Hempelmann et al. 2012; Raskin and Taylor 2013) is reassessment of GTVH body in the direction of formalizing and tightening up the definitions and reformulating some basic tenets of the theory, both because, based on the mature OST, we can do that but mostly because we must do that for computational humor (Raskin 2012a; Taylor 2012a). Most of what is mentioned in the informal analysis above must be accessible to the computer, and to achieve this level of near-human understanding, the appropriate knowledge should be formally and computationally represented on the basis of a linguistic theory of humor with a much larger purview.

5 Quasi-theories of humor

Raskin (1985) claimed, arrogantly but correctly, that the traditionally identified superiority/aggression, release, and incongruity theories of humor were not theories at all. This was stated before the metatheory was developed some 15 years later and the emphasis of the claim was that all of them were partial, not covering all jokes, not independent, and not mutually exclusive. They were, of course, all rather vaguely formulated, which explains why a much tighter SSTH gained its largely undeserved, premature prominence so fast. A much stronger argument would have been that none of those traditional theories formulated the sufficient conditions for a text to be a joke, and SSTH did – or at least aspired to.

What I definitely want in a theory is essentialist, and I owe this correct observation to a casual remark, a somewhat facetious accusation, from Salvatore Attardo a few years ago. I want a theory of X to contain a statement of what it takes for an object or an event to be X. What I find deeply unsatisfying is an associative, comparative statement, "X is like Y." It would work for me if I had an essentialist account of Y and if "like" were defined rigorously as equivalence, identity, a subset relationship or something like that. Other than that, I understand an "informal theory" as a statement, in verbose form, that one entity that I cannot define is, in some equally undefinable way, similar to something else I cannot define.

Like everybody else in the audience, I enjoyed the 2011 Presidential Address that compared humor with art (Oring 2011a): it was, as usual, a subtly and brilliantly argued presentation but it did not provide any insight into humor for me because art is even more poorly explored than humor, and on an enlightened 21st-century view everything is art, and one does not have to travel to Burning Man events to encounter that attitude. "All humor is art" may well be a plausible statement but what follows from it is that it tells me something about humor that I don't already know.

Unfortunately, such statements are catchy – they, apparently, give the hearer/reader a glimpse of hope to grasp a complex phenomenon. It is much more dangerous when such parallels pose as serious science. Hurley at al. (2011 – see Raskin 2014), which gained much more currency than warranted by their claims, let alone by what they deliver, thanks to listing Dennett as a co-author, declares humor, still undefined, to be a sociobiological phenomenon, essential for the human struggle with grasping the ungraspable. An interesting thought but can it be tested, evaluated, falsified? Do all jokes contribute to it somehow? Really? Including Evan Esar's infamous "he is a man of letters, he works at the Post Office"? And what does it actually mean, a useful tool for grasping the ungraspable? How does it do it? And how does it work? I can crack nuts with my laptop but does it help me to understand how it works?

And then there is worse. Oring's (2011b – see also Raskin 2011b) appropriate incongruity, with which he is trying to replace the Main Hypothesis, appears only in jokes, so it is appropriate when the text is funny, and the text is funny when incongruity is appropriate. Incongruity is much more loosely defined script oppositeness but what makes it appropriate and how? When it turns out that it is the funniness of the joke that makes the incongruity in it appropriate, the obvious circularity of the situation makes it cognitively null: funniness and appropriate incongruity become simply two different labels for the same phenomenon and they are devoid of any explanatory power for one another.

The latest in this influx of "theories" is McGraw's (McGraw and Warren 2010) benign violation theory, masterfully promoted in the media by the journalist Joel Warner (McGraw and Warner 2014). It relates each joke to a benign, non-serious violation of a rule. If it is established, psychologically or otherwise, what a violation is and what it takes for a violation to be benign – and if every joke is demonstrated to involve a benign violation (necessary condition) and, conversely, if every independently established benign violation constitutes a joke (sufficient condition) – this would be a valuable theoretical statement. Unfortunately, none of that is true, and then benign violation goes the way of appropriate incongruity, except that, additionally, there is also any number of counterexamples. To quote just one, what benign violation is involved in an old joke about a convicted murderer being led to the gallows at 5 a.m. on a Monday morning, who comments that his week is not starting particularly well?

The moral of this is that, to qualify as a useful theory of humor, a remark that notes a certain property that some humor possesses must pass a theory of tests on its components and universality. In other words, such observations may be appealing and entertaining but do not call them theories or treat them as such. This sets up certain expectations that a quasi-theory will not fail to defeat.

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Władysław Chłopicki

Metonymy in humour

1 Introduction

Metonymy is a conceptual and linguistic phenomenon which has been present in the European reflection on language for centuries, although it has enjoyed a revival in the last decades due to the increasing presence of cognitive paradigm in linguistic research since the 1980s. It came into humour studies in the early 21st century, along with developments in the related metaphor research, in the hope it would offer a solid linguistic background and compatibility with major trends in linguistic and cognitive science research. The basic concern, however, remains the ontological dispute about the nature of cognition as such on the one hand and the specificity of humour on the other. Humour scholars tend to think in terms of uniqueness of humour processing, while cognitive linguists would rather see humour as a special case of general human conceptual capacity. The dispute has not been resolved but still it is worth looking at the role metonymy in humorous discourse from the perspective of humour research and examine the broad insights that the cognitive research is able to offer that humour scholars need to take into account.

2 Approaches to metonymy

The concept of metonymy is complex and various new facets of it have been discovered over the course of the last few decades. The ancient definition of metonymy (known first as *denominatio*) considered it a rhetorical device, a subtype of metaphor, which allowed the speaker to refer to close things in order to allow us to comprehend the intended "proper word" (cf. Koch 1999: 140), while Roman Jakobson (1956) in an excellent classical study considered metonymy as one extreme of the metaphor-metonymy continuum of conceptualization processes, defining it in terms of contiguity rather than similarity.

Nowadays in the cognitive linguistics framework, metonymy is most generally and persuasively defined in terms of "a cognitive process in which one conceptual entity, the vehicle, provides mental access to another conceptual entity, the target, within the same idealized cognitive model" (Radden and Kövecses 1999: 21). The

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more specific definition, quite compatible with the mental access one, considers a metonymy as "a one-correspondence conceptual mapping within a domain where, if the target is a part of the source, the target is not a primary or central subdomain of the source" (Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez 2003: 130); in other words, metonymy points in one direction – towards the centre of the target domain.

Another more dynamic understanding is metonymy as deferred interpretation by Nunberg (2004: 344) "whereby the expressions can be used to refer to something that isn't explicitly included in the conventional denotation of that expression." Nunberg discusses the metonymy rather traditionally though, in terms of meaning transfer, rather than mental access.

Panther (2006) in turns argues that in metonymies we indeed deal with mental access phenomena, the source concept providing access to the target concept, and contextual factors: "metonymic meanings provide generic prompts that are fleshed out on the basis of background knowledge (world knowledge), the situation of the utterance and the linguistic context (co-text) in which the metonymic expression occurs.... [in fact] the target meaning resulting from a metonymic shift is an elaboration of the source meaning. The metonymic shift can be regarded as a substitution operation, but one in which the source meaning does not vanish but remains part of the conceptual structure of the target meaning" (Panther 2006: 149, 151). Panther also refers to his definition of metonymy as semiotic, involving a motivated indexical relationship (pointing-to relationship) which is enriching semantically so that the source concept grows and as a result the target concept appears conceptually more complex (2006: 154). Contrary to some other researchers, he sees certain limitations to the concepts, however, and emphasizes that "not any meaning that is mentally accessible from a certain conceptual reference point gives rise to a metonymic relation", excluding conceptually necessary relations such as entailments or presuppositions (cf. Panther 2006: 154). For example, in his view, in: *The court had to assume that the statement was true*, THE COURT FOR STAFF is not a metonymy, as it is one of four major facets of the court: STAFF, ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT, BUILDING, and INTERIOR OUTFIT. In *The red shirts won the match*, the situation is opposite as no necessary connection obtains between the red shirts and the team wearing red shirts. Furthermore, he stresses that in case of metonymy, it makes better sense to refer to more fleeting mental spaces rather than more stable domains (cf. Panther 2006: 161) since "metonymies are prompts that induce fairly general inferences, which are in need for further inferential elaboration unless the reader has at her disposal a rich knowledge data-base that enables her to fill the details on the basis of the metonymy alone" (Panther 2006: 172).

Thus the fundamental question defining metonymy concerns the properties of centrality. Metonymy is supposed to be peripheral, which allows for the metonymic shift to take place, giving primary status to what is normally, conventionally secondary. These properties include:

- intrinsicness, e.g. physicality of an object, such as shape or weight of a book; generally "it makes no essential reference to external objects" (Langacker 1987: 160), although there are degrees of intrinsicness; when comparison or relations with other objects are concerned, the properties are less intrinsic;
- conventionality, shared by the community, the awareness of the relation being a matter of degree;
- genericity – the more generic a property, the more likely it is to be known across the speech community;
- uniqueness to the class (characteristic nature) (Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez 2003: 127–129; cf. Langacker 1987: 158–161).

Let us consider some examples. According to Mendoza, *Proust is tough to read* is metonymic, because reading is non-central to the category of person (via the above properties), while *The book is heavy* is not metonymic since heaviness is central to the category of book, although one could argue that this is the case if heaviness is considered a matter of degree too. On the other hand, *The book is a history of Iraq* is metonymic, as the content is non-central, although e.g. Croft (1993) disagrees here and considers content central. *I broke the window* is metonymic as it involves domain reduction, the target being the window pane, while *She came in through the bathroom window* is non-metonymic, the opening being central (cf. Ruiz de Mendoza Ibáñez 2003: 127–128). Ruiz de Mendoza's views contrast those of Croft (1993), who claims otherwise – *I broke the window* is non-metonymic as the physical shape is intrinsic to the window, while *She came in through the bathroom window* is metonymic as the shape of the window is a reference to some external domains. Thus the selection of the central, intrinsic properties is a task which is controversial.

There is also a conceptual metonymy approach (used mainly in grammatical analysis e.g. in Panther and Thornburg 2003), which sees conceptual metonymies e.g. RESULT FOR ACTION in sentences like: *What about* [acting in such a way as to] *being quiet*?, or more general GENERIC FOR SPECIFIC or EFFECT FOR CAUSE metonymy in the conversational exchanges such as *What* [kind of bird] *is that bird? A titmouse*.; *What's* [cause of] *that smell? Bread*., not: *A burning smell.*

Metonymy involves such a conceptual shift when we are speaking of "a salient reference point which allows us to access another conceptual entity, the target" (Radden and Dirven 2007: 14), the target being usually independent of the source, and thus the "metonymic expression highlights a facet of a frame that, for some reason or other, serves as the salient reference point" (Radden and Dirven 2007: 15), in other words known, visible, or tangible, as is clear from the examples of grammatical metonymy, e.g. OBJECT FOR SUBSTANCE (We had *octopus* for lunch.) or RESULT FOR ACTION (*Win* two weeks' vacation.).

Langacker considers metonymy a farther-reaching phenomenon than many other scholars, seeing grammar as basically metonymic as conventional expressions never allow the intended precision and what they do is provide a potential mental access points which the hearer needs to utilise on his own. "Explicit linguistic coding gets us into the right neighbourhood, in other words, but from there we have to find the right address by some other means" (Langacker 2009: 46).

Metonymy is defined by Langacker (2008) more concretely and technically as a shift in profile, although he does admit this is a narrow sense of the concept. For example, "a customer who says "I am the tiramisu" to the waiter is not claiming to be an Italian dessert. While this would be the usual referent of *tiramisu*, in the restaurant context its profile shifts from the dessert to the person that has ordered it" (Langacker 2013: 69).

It is important to bear in mind the principles of cognitive salience, which influence our interpretation of the phenomena in question: "a whole is generally more salient than its individual parts; discrete physical objects are generally more salient than abstract entities; and humans and (to a lesser extent) animals are generally more salient than inanimate objects (other things being equal)" (Langacker 2002: 193). Langacker (2008: 501–502) also talks about natural access paths to mental spaces in discourse, where a series of conceptions "naturally" lead one to another, e.g. based on CHRONOLOGY, WHOLE ⇒ PART, CONCRETE ⇒ ABSTRACT, HUMAN ⇒ ANIMATED ⇒ INANIMATED and other specific. The iconic concepts of ordering, directionality, scale etc are responsible for that tendency.

Brône and Feyaerts (2003) illustrate the phenomenon of salience, essential in metonymy, by invoking the familiar concept of scenarios. For instance, in *How did you get to the airport? I waved down a taxi.* a complex scenario of "Going somewhere in a vehicle" is evoked:

1. You have (access to) the vehicle (precondition)
2. You get into the vehicle and start it up
3. You drive (row, fly) to your destination
4. You park and get out
5. You are at your destination (Brône and Feyaerts 2003: 19–21; after Lakoff 1987: 78)

In metonymic expressions "the intended target needs to be inferred metonymically from a prominent reference point (cause)" (Brône and Feyaerts 2003: 5). It includes phenomena previously considered conversational implicatures or inferences, as is clear from this example: *How is her character? Well, she's had a difficult youth.* They support the point of view of Langacker (1993:30) that a metonymy is salient and "evokes – essentially automatically – a target that is either of lesser interest or harder to name.", for instance in the sentence *a ham sandwich is waiting for his check* (Brône and Feyaerts 2003: 21). Interestingly, a "metonymic reference in this context yields maximal contextual effects with minimal processing effort, as formulated in the principle of relevance" (Brône and Feyaerts 2003: 21). In this connection, they draw attention to the stylistic aspect of metonymy noticing stylistic variation in both literary and non-literary language (Brône and Feyaerts 2003: 6–7). Following the line of discussion of the notions of creativity, innovation and expressivity, they develop the notion of expressivity as "a speakers' deviance from purely conventional referential language use for the purpose of expressing attitude or being creative. Although expressivity cannot be viewed as fully isolated from the referential function of language, expressivity and referential transparency can compete as opposing forces. Being creative or stylistically expressive should not stand in the way of referential accuracy" (Brône and Feyaerts 2003: 7).

In this regard Brône and Feyaerts draw on Giora's (2003) account of salience defined in terms of optimal innovation, which is very well compatible with Langacker's more or less conventional paths to mental spaces: "Salience or prominence of a particular meaning of a word or construction, on Giora's account, is a feature coded in the mental lexicon, determined by a number of parameters, like frequency, familiarity, conventionality and prototypicality[1]. Pleasure, it is argued is not the effect of pure novelty, but rather novelty that allows for the recoverability of the familiar/salient" (Brône and Feyaerts 2003: 8). Giora claims that "[f]or innovation to be optimal it should involve a novel response, but such that would also allow for the recovery of a salient meaning from which that novel meaning stems, in order that the similarity and difference between them may be assessable" (Giora 2003: 176). Brône and Feyaerts thus consider optimal innovation as "a reconciliation between expressive and referential forces, since pleasure hinges on simultaneously recognizing the innovation ... without losing track of the referential meaning" (Brône and Feyaerts 2003: 8).[2]

1 Cf. the discussion of Langacker's view of metonymy above in terms of centrality.

2 Indeed in any discourse "each proposition [is] more (or at least not less) informative than the one that precedes it. A message is considered informative to the extent that it has properties unshared by the previous message, which in turn allow it to reduce possibilities by half" (Giora 1995: 244).

Now the question which entities are to be prominent brings a conflict between two opposing needs: that of being precise and accurate in pointing to the participating entities and that of focusing on inherent salience or interest. Still the requirements which ensure our understanding are minimal and this is due to the presence of general knowledge, frames, basic scenarios, familiar aspect from everyday life of our culture. "We know that the whole cake goes in an oven, but that only part of a swan is below the surface of the water. Of course, this default knowledge can always be overridden in special contexts. If we see a swan diving to the bottom of the pond, the swan in the water would be interpreted [differently]" (Langacker 2009b: 45). Such discrepancies are natural, and they again point out to cognitively salient entities, and the whole is always more salient than parts.

In order to describe this phenomenon in grammatical terms, Langacker (1993) introduced the concept of human reference point ability. "This is our ability to invoke one conceived entity through another. The entity accessed in this way is called the *target* in the reference point relationship. The set of entities accessible through a given reference point (the set of potential targets) are collectively referred to as its dominion" (Langacker 2009b: 46). For instance, *fishing pole* – "designates a particular kind of activity, evoking an encyclopedic array of supporting knowledge, one facet of which pertains to the equipment involved. By evoking this body of knowledge, its dominion, the noun fishing provides mental access to a certain kind of pole, which is thus a target" (Langacker 2009a: 53). The activation of a reference point makes it possible to (metonymically) activate all the elements of the dominion, one of which is the target of the scanning activity. The moment the focus moves from the reference point (mental access point) to the target, the focus melts away in the background and the target becomes salient – this linear approach is highly suitable for analysing unveiling spontaneous discourse (cf. Langacker 2008: 83–5) as exemplified in the following example (reference points are marked in bold):

Do you see that ***boat*** *out there on the lake? There is a* ***duck*** *swimming next to it.*

Specifically, Langacker introduces the notion of a *pivot*, usually a focal participant of a proposition, although it can have any role in it. It is defined in terms of point of mental access or reference point relationship: "a reference point relation consists in the mental progression from a reference point (R) to a target (T), accessed through it. The set of entities accessible via R (each a potential target) constitute its dominion (D)" (Langacker 2008: 504). Now, the pivot is a manifestation of R within the proposition, as "a proposition can only be interpreted in R's dominion if R somehow figures in its content”, which is another way of expressing contextual, pragmatic interpretability of propositions. Langacker expresses this visually in the following Figure.

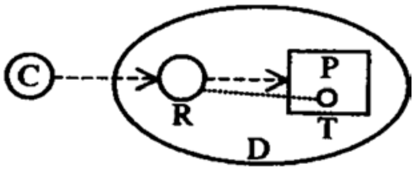

Figure 1: Dominion (after Langacker 2008: 513)

Metonymy is the very skeleton of this kind of essentially pragmatic inferencing, but pragmatic inferencing cannot be reduced to metonymy. There are also general pragmatic principles of iconicity, economy, relevance which cannot be simply reduced to metonymy. Still Barcelona (2003) talks of ubiquity of pragmatic implicatures facilitated by metonymic connections: “the domain, concept or frame presented as source is normally a mental activator of the domain, concept or frame presented as target. Therefore, a general conclusion … is that conceptual metonymies often provide “ready-made” pointers towards plausible inferential pathways in the interpretation of … discourse. These pointers, which are normally automatic, contribute greatly to the ease and speed of interpretation” (Barcelona 2003: 97). They (just like metaphors) also importantly constrain the range of possible inferences and allow us to make connections between distant mental spaces (cf. Ruiz de Mendoza and Hernandez 2003, Coulson and Oakley 2003), which testifies to the stability of conceptual metonymies.

3 Metonymy in humour

Inherent ambiguity of language discussed above is utilized in humour, although naturally it occurs in everyday non-humorous discourse too and this brings us back to the debate on the specificity of humour processing mentioned at the outset. The perspective I adopt in this study supplements the marked construals approach to jokes, as rather convincingly presented by Brône and Feyaerts. Specifically, I apply metonymic analysis of joke setups and punch lines emphasizing the significance of unconventional metonymic connections.

The idea of markedness in language is not new, as it was discussed in linguistics by structuralists and generativists alike, e.g. by Jakobson and the Prague School, Chomsky, and then also by pragmaticians such as Levinson (1983), or Sperber and Wilson (1986). The issue of marked use of language is also at the core of stylistic studies (e.g. Semino and Culpeper 2002). In the area of humour, markedness is the highlighted feature of many comic techniques, which among other things rely on salience and metonymy. Markedness in humour was discussed in numerous articles by Brône and Feyaerts, as well as Veale, whose contributions will be drawn upon repeatedly in this section. Brône and Feyaerts (2004) argue that humour mechanisms are in fact everyday cognitive mechanisms, only used in an atypical manner in humour, marked construals or marked reference point structures in their terms, which then need to be unpacked by the hearer.

Brône and Feyaerts postulate four major types of marked reference point structures in humour:
1. metonymic chain[3],
2. non-salient (unconventional) reference points,
3. compression,
4. absurd causal logic.

They do not seem to form any system and in fact can be argued to be different aspects of the same marked construal underlying the role of the unsaid in humour: "the specific humorous strategy of suppressing salient elements in a frame or scenario… thus creating some sort of "profile gap"" (Brône and Feyaerts 2003: 31). Indeed in a humorous text there is a tendency to use the less salient reference points, since processing non-salient reference-points, when salient ones are suppressed, requires an extra cognitive effort, which in turn may bring pleasurable results. At the same time the relationship between conceptual distance and salience is not always straightforward: "increased conceptual distance does not always seem to imply weaker salience" (Brône and Feyaerts 2003: 30), as the cognitive effects crucially depend on contextual, pragmatic factors.

Giora convincingly shows to what extent we are one-track minds, when processing language and how easily we are trapped into the misapprehending of linear sequences:

> Note how we are caught entirely off guard when we realize that a person who has a *drinking problem* is, in fact, one who spills liquid all over himself while drinking… The stimulus invites the comprehender to process a more salient, familiar meaning first ('drinking alcohol excessively') only to make her discover that a less salient, seemingly unthinkable meaning makes more sense. To let our salience-prone mind go astray, the initial context of a joke is usually unambiguous, compatible with the salient meaning, so that this interpretation is retained exclusively up until the punchline, at which point a sudden incongruity forces a reinterpretation. (Giora 2002: 15–16)

3 Earlier referred to as *spreading activation* chain; cf. Collins and Loftus (1975); currently the *reference point chain* is used to describe it, cf. Langacker (2008); cf. also *marked reference point*.

The *drinking problem* phrase is very convincingly interpretable in terms of interrupted metonymic chains which evoke the humorous effect when left for the hearers to interpret or “decompress”:

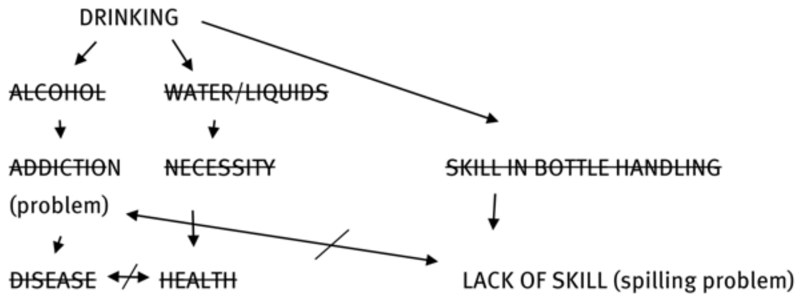

Figure 2: Metonymic chains in the *drinking problem* phrase

The diagram demonstrates the degree of implicitness of the three parallel metonymic chains, which the hearer needs to recover (hence they are crossed out), including the oppositions (disease-health and problem-lack of skill) marked in the graph by means of diagonal lines. Compare the relevant Polish joke where the same drinking and non-drinking chains of metonymies are involved:

(1) Panie Doktorze, trzęsą mi się ręce. Pije Pan dużo? Większość wylewam.
[*Doctor, my hands tremble. Do you drink much, sir? I spill most.*].

That large choice from a set of potential targets (drinking/spilling water, juice, wine, beer, vodka, etc) actually corresponds well to the notion of the phrase’s *dominion* in Langacker’s approach understood as a set of entities (objects or beliefs) accessible through a reference point (cf. Langacker 2009a: 52).

Oring (2003) argues that all humor stems from incongruity that is spurious (non-genuine) but in some way appropriate, and he sees its source in “the perception of an appropriate relationship between categories that would ordinarily be regarded as incongruous” (Oring 2003: 1). He illustrates the notion with an example of a doctor joke:

(2) A man goes to a psychiatrist. The doctor asks him, “What seems to be the problem? The patient says, “Doc, no one believes anything I say.” The doctor replies, “You’re kidding!” (2003: 1)

Oring comments on the joke as follows:

> The phrase "you are kidding" is an expression of surprise and appropriately registers the doctor's scepticism that the situation could be as severe as the patient describes. In some sense, it may even be regarded as a reflexive expression of reassurance. At the same time, "you are kidding" registers the physician's disbelief in the patient's report and seems to affirm the very proposition that the physician seems to be denying – that no one believes anything the patient says. In other words the doctor's denial is incongruous in that it confirms the very problem about which the patient complains. Even the physician to whom the patient turns for help seems to doubt his veracity from the very first moment of their encounter. (Oring 2003: 1)

At the same time he claims (somewhat contradictorily) that the joke is conceptual, rather than linguistic, even though the formulation of the punch line is crucial: "Had the doctor responded "That's impossible," or "Aren't you exaggerating?" or "No way!" a joke would still be discernible that traded on the very same idea. Granted, the phrase "you are kidding" is particularly felicitous in that it is familiar, colloquial, and has certain semantic density that requires some work to unpack. It is however not essential to the creation of the joke." (Oring 2003: 2). The terms unpacking and semantic density actually correspond very well with the area of interest that the present study focuses upon (cf. metonymic chains or compression).

The question of the crucial role of language in most jokes can be brought into focus by quoting the closest Polish version of the joke Oring discusses. It is available online in the following wording (the English translation which is reasonably close to the original wording is provided in italics):

(3) Przychodzi baba do lekarza. [*Comes a woman to a doctor*]
Panie doktorze, nikt nie traktuje mnie poważnie. [*Mister Doctor, nobody treats me seriously*]
Żartuje pani!!!? [*You are joking, madam!*]

while more popular versions, published not only on the Internet but also in joke books (e.g. Sadurski 1993), have a different patient-complaint line and consequently a changed punch line.

(4) Przychodzi baba do lekarza i skarży się: [*Comes a woman to a doctor and complains:*]
Panie doktorze, wszyscy mnie ignorują. [*Mister Doctor, everybody ignores me*]
Lekarz: Następny proszę!! [*Doctor: Next please!!*]

(5) Przychodzi baba do lekarza: [*Comes a woman to a doctor*]
Panie doktorze, nikt mnie nie słucha [*Mister Doctor, nobody listens to me*].
Następny proszę. [*Next please*.]

(6) Przychodzi baba do lekarza.- Witam panią, na co się pani skarży? [*Comes a woman to a doctor. Welcome, madam, what do you complain about?*]
Panie doktorze, kiedy zaczynam mówić – nikt mnie nie słucha. [*Mister Doctor, when I start talking, nobody listens to me*.]
Witam panią, na co się pani skarży? [*Welcome madam, what do you complain about?*]

3 seems equivalent to the English version in the punch line, only the pre-punch line ("nobody believes me") has been replaced by the line which views the same broad concept from a slightly different angle ("nobody treats me seriously"). The "different angle" metaphor is justified here in terms of the notion of mental access. The notion of TREATING SOMEBODY SERIOUSLY seems a larger, more complex concept than that of BELIEVING SOMEBODY (it may also comprise other concepts, such as TRUST or SINCERITY), as the former metonymically entails the latter and not vice versa in the context involving a human relationship. What is even more important, the concept of JOKING (or rather ŻARTOWANIE) is in opposition to the SERIOUS TREATMENT concept, the conceptual distance (or *overlap* – see discussion below) between the two concept schemas being shorter than that between BELIEVING and JOKING concepts from the English version. Because of the greater cognitive distance between the two latter notions, a metonymic chain seems to be evoked. In a simplified form this is the following chain: (NO) BELIEF → (NO) SERIOUSNESS → JOKING, which perhaps contributes to the reception of the joke as more sophisticated, while on the other hand the lack of obvious overlap between the two concepts may give the impression of smaller incongruity and thus reduce the comic effect. Regardless of the reaction of the audience, one may argue for the existence of two types of incongruity: that evoked by overlap (or blend) and the metonymic chain.

In 4 the concept of IGNORING SOMEBODY is selected in the pre-punch line, which seems to be a different "angle" or metonymic access point to the concept of (NOT) TREATING SOMEBODY SERIOUSLY mentioned above – the former constitutes a higher level of generality (a meta-level of sorts) with regard to the latter as it implies lack of treatment, rather than a specific kind of treatment. Because of the metonymic shift, the punch line changes too and the spurious logic described by Oring is followed here under a different guise – IGNORING entails all instances of the patient's interactions (including the meta-interaction, where these interactions are the subject of conversation). This is then a metonymic joke, but it does not involve a metonymic chain as only two elements, the concept and its instantiation, are evoked (INSTANCE FOR TYPE metonymy). Similar is the case of the more specific NOT LISTENING concept in 5, whose instantiation is the punch line, as well as of 6, where the repetition of the words of welcome is an instantiation of the lack of listening too (a meta-joke of sorts).

An interesting aspect of 6 is the opening element of the listening scenario (*when I start talking*) added for some reason. It makes the joke less schematic and also probably less successful, since the implication is that when the speaker continues talking people will listen to him. The schematic relations between the concepts discussed are illustrated in Figure 3 below. These issues will be discussed in more detail in the following examples.

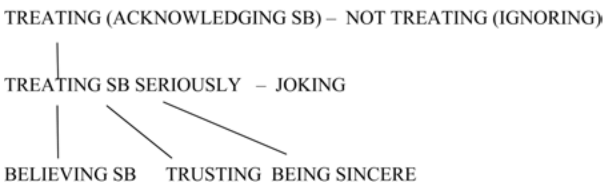

Figure 3: Metonymic structure of jokes 3, 4, 5 and 6

Brône and Feyaerts do make progress towards solving the difficult problem of identifying the specificity of humorous mechanisms (see also the most recent attempt of Tabacaru and Feyaerts 2016), but they do not manage to solve it completely, as their argument is not essentially different from Langacker's (already quoted above) when the latter defines reference point strategies: ”a well-chosen metonymic expression lets us mention one entity [=the reference point] that is salient and easily coded, and thereby evokes – essentially automatically – a target that is either of lesser interest or harder to name” (Langacker 1993: 30). The thorny issue is actually to specify what makes entities “easily coded” or “harder to name” and how this relates to marked construals.

Krikmann argues that in the view of Brône and Feyaerts (2004) “many humorous items can be explained through prototypicality, salience and markedness, that is they do not require a substantial departure from the linguistic level of analysis” (Krikmann 2009: 28). Specifically, “the foregrounding of metonymy as an essential conceptual tool of humour-making [which they propose] is undoubtedly innovative, welcome and valuable, and can eventually invalidate some components of script-based theories, because metonymy is not a between-domain or between-script relation/operation” (Krikmann 2009: 29). This is generally true, but it must be borne in mind that there are cases when metonymy involves different domains (cf. Niemeier 2003).

In his insightful article, Barcelona (2003) goes a step further in specifying the role of metonymies in jokes. He argues that the inferential work in joke interpretation is facilitated by pre-existing metonymic connections in a cognitive frame. Incidentally he also believes in the presence of pre-existing metaphorical connections across frames (cf. Brône and Feyaerts 2006). In his analysis he employs the notion of frames and distinguishes between partial frame overlap and complete frame blend. He uses the example of the following conversation (Barcelona 2003: 86):

(7) Doctor: And does your baby normally hold on tight to your breasts?
Mother: Oh yes, doctor, just as if he were an adult!

Partial frame overlap involves two different cognitive structures which share a "conceptual substructure" (Barcelona 2003: 86), e.g. NURTURANCE and SEXUALITY share a minor sub-frame: THE GRASPING BY A MALE OF A WOMAN'S BREASTS. Frame blend, on the other hand, involves complete overlap[4], "when two mutually independent frames are fused into an imaginary mental scene, or mental space" e.g. when "the mother, in order to highlight her baby's vigour and vitality, merely intends to set up a counterfactual mental scene in which when breastfeeding her baby is simultaneously a baby and an adult" (Barcelona 2003: 86).

He also argues for the existence of a meta-textual frame of ABSURDITY, which is evoked when the truth of counterfactual situations is embraced within REALITY space. Barcelona's point that metonymies "often provide 'ready made' pointers toward plausible inferential pathways in the interpretation of a joke or anecdote" (Barcelona 2003: 97; emphasis mine) is an interesting one, although Attardo (2006: 344) wonders if these "pointers" are any different in humorous and serious texts. Barcelona agrees with Attardo and Raskin that humour comprehension involves some sort of switch from one script to another (or frame adjustment), but he is also interested in listing some of the major inferences (evoked by metonymies) that become available to the hearers when they are exposed to jokes as these demonstrate how such texts are comprehended (cf. Barcelona 2003: 82).

Radden (1999 and 2003) draws attention to the preferences for the HUMAN in metonymy, but there are exceptions to it. Humour has a marked reference point in the sense that it prefers in its metonymies certain tension-provoking

4 Cf. the discussion of the notion of script overlap by Raskin (1985).

or taboo areas, such as sex, money, power, wisdom, cunningness, food, drink, health-related issues, danger/death[5]; it is also marked in its speed of delivery thus it tends to have a fleeting, local application.

Kövecses (2010) also provides a general cognitive linguistic account of humorous expressions, attempting to reconstruct the process of humour comprehension particularly when it involves figurative expressions, stressing the occurrence of metonymy, metaphor or conceptual integration on the conceptual pathways "that leads from the original meaning that has a value (or values) and that is expressed via a more conventional form to an expression with the same meaning but that has the opposite value and that can be expressed by another, less conventional form" (Kövecses 2010: 118).

Salience (and the shift involved in it) does not always have impact on humor, however, as Hamrick (2007) demonstrates. His general argument and tentative conclusion is that neither conceptual blending nor sheer parallelism in structure are inherently funny and can only facilitate script opposition (as in Kövecses's 2010 approach); thus, blending cannot actually be regarded as a necessary or sufficient condition for humour to occur (Hamrick 2007: 145). If any "justification" is to be sought for script oppositions, then it probably can be found in construals and logical mechanisms. Still, construals (such as scalar adjustment) do not always cause humor in the text, but can influence the degree of humour found in a joke. Let us consider the following joke:

(8) Three vampires go into a bar. One orders a glass of blood. The other orders a cup of blood. The last one orders a cup of hot water. When the bartender asked [sic] why, the vampire pulled out a used tampon and said, "I'm having tea." (Hamrick 2007: 146)

Hamrick analyses it in original blending terms and comes up with the following:
- Input Space 1: People consume tea, liquor in bar from a container REAL WORLD
- Input Space 2: Vampires consume blood (often from neck, in non-public location) VAMPIRE WORLD
- Generic Space: Entities consume beverage from source in a location
- Blended space: Vampires consume blood-tea from containers in a bar (BLENDED WORLD)

5 Cf. Fąka and Awdiejew (2010) and their idea of laughter-generating objects.

In his comments he stresses the role of language in constructing jokes:

> although the making of blood-tea is creatively extending the category MAKE TEA, the potential physical similarities between infusing blood into hot water via a tampon and infusing tea into hot water with a tea bag are crucial to *the joke's elegance*.... However, dropping a blood clot into hot water to dissolve is not irreconcilable with making tea.... Therefore, it follows that the introduction of a blood clot variation of the joke does not diminish the humorousness of the joke (as long as it leaves the script opposition intact), but merely diminishes its elegance. (Hamrick 2007: 148).

The argument, sound as it is (cf. the parallel notion of the joke's conditions of elegance by Fąka and Awdiejew 2010) ignores the fact that the two, the humorousness and elegance of the joke, must go together in order to ensure the joke's success and the "justification" of script opposition. While discussing the notion of elegance, Hamrick also draws attention to the fact that "a considerable amount of nonconventionality is tolerated (and often expected) as a normal feature of language use" (Langacker 1987: 69).

All in all, in my view, the justification of the opposition is afforded in jokes by some form of shorter or longer metonymic chains, which allow hearers to access them from an unconventional access point, for example by expanding the word's dominion or unpacking (decompressing) the unconventional scenario. It is worth emphasizing that the setup and punch line have varying roles in that regard, the setup usually making the apparently conventional metonymies salient, the purpose of which is to facilitate comprehension for the audience, whose active role in the process is essential in humour. However, sometimes the punch line utilizes metonymies too.

4 Further metonymic joke examples

The doctor joke selected as an example here has a great many variants both in its English and Polish versions (7 and 11 variants respectively are quoted of the larger corpus). I have chosen it because it illustrates perfectly how metonymic jokes can be and at the same time it illustrates the variety of metonymies involved which form an interesting network. Also a difference, perhaps interpretable culturally, between the prevalent English and Polish joke variants is discussed.

Example 9. English jokes

(9.1) DISTRAUGHT PARENT: ‘Doctor, come at once! Our baby has swallowed a fountain-pen.’

DOCTOR: I’ll come right over. What are you doing in the meantime?

DISTRAUGHT PARENT: Using a pencil (Suls, 1983: 45)

(9.2) Doctor, come quickly. My husband has swallowed a fountain pen!”

“I’ll be right over. What are you doing in the meantime?”

“Using a pencil.”

(9.3) Telephone rings at a Doctors residence

Doctor: Hello!

Respondent: Hello doctor, my son has swallowed up a pencil, can you make it urgently to my place?

Doctor: That’s fine, but what will you do till I come?

Respondent: I will use a fountain pen instead.

(9.4) “Doctor, please hurry. My son swallowed a razor-blade.”

“Don’t panic, I’m coming immediately. Have you done anything yet?”

“Yeah, I shaved with the electric razor.”

(9.5) The tired doctor was awakened by a phone call in the middle of the night. “Please, you have to come right over,” pleaded the distraught young mother. “My child has swallowed a contraceptive.” The physician dressed quickly; but before he could get out the door, the phone rang again.

“You don’t have to come over after all,” the woman said with a sigh of relief. “My husband just found another one.”

(9.6) A doctor got a call from a very excited woman, “My son just swallowed the aspirins, what shall I do?”

He replied, “Give him a headache, what else?”

(9.7) ‘Doctor, doctor, my baby’s swallowed a bullet.’ ‘Well, don’t point him at anyone until I get there!’

Example 10. Polish jokes

(10.1) “Panie doktorze połknąłem długopis!”, a doktor na to “Pisać ołówkiem, nastepny proszę!

[“*Doctor, I have swallowed a/the ballpoint pen!” And the doctor to this: “Write with a pencil. Next one!”*]

(10.2) Pacjent: panie doktorze przez nieuwagę połknąłem długopis. Co mam zrobić? Lekarz: niech pan używa ołówka.

[*Patient: “Doctor, through inattention I have swallowed a/the ballpoint pen. What should I do?”*

Doctor: “Use a pencil, sir.”]

(10.3) Przychodzi baba do lekarza:

Panie doktorze, mój syn połknął ołówek. – To niech pisze długopisem.

[*A woman [a baba] comes to a doctor: “Doctor, my son has swallowed a/the pencil.” “Let him write with a ballpoint pen.”*]

(10.4) Panie doktorze, mój synek połknął stalówkę. Co robić?

Niech wypije litr atramentu, będzie miał swoje własne wieczne pióro. Następny!

[“*Doctor, my son has swallowed a nib. What to do?” “Let him drink a litre of ink, he will have a fountain pen of his own. Next!*”]

(10.5) Do lekarza dzwoni kobieta

Doktorze mój syn połknął staluwkę[6] czy operacja jest konieczna!?

Nie proszę tylko dopilnować by wypił atrament- będzie miał z małego wieczne pióro.

[*A doctor is called by a woman: “Doctor, my son has swallowed a nib, will the operation be necessary!?”*

“No, just make sure please that he drinks ink – he will have a fountain pen of his little [willy].”]

(10.6) Panie doktorze, moja żona połknęła igłę. Co robić?

Zakładać naparstek. Następny.

[*“Doctor, my wife has swallowed a needle. What to do?” “Wear a thimble. Next.”*]

6 Original spelling and punctuation.

(10.7) Baba dzwoni do lekarza:

Doktorze !! Proszę szybko przyjechać mój mąż połknął igłę!!!

Za minutę znowu telefon:

To ja doktorze, już nie trzeba, znalazłam drugą igłę.

[*A woman [baba] calls a doctor: "Doctor!! Please come quickly, my husband has swallowed a needle!!!" A minute later another phone call:* "*This is me, Doctor. No more need. I have found another needle."*]

(10.8) W pogotowiu ratunkowym dzwoni telefon:

Panie doktorze, proszę przyjechać, nasz 3–letni synek połknął korkociąg...

Zaraz będę. A co państwo zrobili do tej pory?

Flachę otworzyliśmy śrubokrętem...

[*In an emergency ward the telephone rings: "Doctor, please come, our 3-year-old little son has swallowed a corkscrew..." "I will be right there. And what have you done so far?" "We have opened the bottle with a screwdriver..."*]

(10.9) W pogotowiu ratunkowym dzwoni telefon:

Panie doktorze, proszę przyjechać, synek połknął otwieracz do butelek...

Zaraz będę. A co państwo zrobili do tej pory?

Otwiaralim[7] o framuge

[*In an emergency ward the telephone rings: "Doctor, please come, our little son has swallowed a bottle opener..." "I will be right there. And what have you done so far, sir and madam?" "We have been opening [the bottle(s)] against the door frame..."*]

(10.10) Panie doktorze! Szybko jechałem motorem i połknąłem kilka much!

Spokojnie, zrobimy zastrzyk i niebezpieczeństwo minie.

Aaaa! Jak boli!

A co Pan myślał. Zastrzyk z muchozolu zawsze boli!

["Doctor! I have driven a motorbike fast and I have swallowed several flies." "Stay calm, we will make an injection and the danger will pass." "Aaaa! That hurts so much!" "And what did you think? The fly killer injection always hurts!"]

7 Original misspelling.

(10.11) Doktor do ojca:

Co? Syn połknął pięciozłotówkę tydzień temu, a pan dzisiaj dopiero z nim przychodzi?

Wie pan, panie doktorze, wcześniej nie potrzebowaliśmy aż tak bardzo tych pieniędzy.

[*A doctor to the father: "What? The son swallowed a five-zloty coin a week ago, and you are coming with him only today, sir?" "You know, Doctor, earlier we did not need the moneys so much."*]

The situation when a baby swallows an object and the worried parents call the doctor or the hospital for advice is an event everyone knows from experience – their own or somebody else's. Children's toys and other objects the baby can potentially have access to are marked as baby friendly and are legally required not to include any small parts the baby can swallow. Another contextual element known to us from experience are the conventional questions that the doctor is trained to ask the patient whenever required to intervene in an emergency: *What are you doing in the meantime? / What will you do till I come? / Have you done anything yet?*. These questions aim at preventing any unintended damage that family members who mean well but are ignorant of medical matters can do (or might have done) to a patient (the child), while waiting for the doctor to arrive or before arriving at the hospital or before making the phone call. The metonymic relation of ASKING A RATIONAL QUESTION FOR PROFFESIONAL CONDUCT is present here. What can be inferred further is a cultural assumption (or model[8]): DOCTOR TRIES TO PREVENT PATIENTS INJURING THEMSELVES that seems to be in operation, the doctor's initiative and responsibility being taken for granted.

The Polish variants are interesting because the corresponding standard question is *Co robić?* [What to do?] or *Co mam robić?* [What am I to do?], usually accompanied by the vocative honorific *panie doktorze* (literally translatable as *Mister Doctor*), is asked by the patient, thus the initiative is with the patient. This has probably to do with the traditional doctor-patient power relations, much more doctor-dominated in Poland and more equal in Britain or the US[9], where more is conventionally and socially expected of the doctor in terms of predicting threats that the patient can put themselves to. Generally, the English jokes feature the concerned doctor and the patient who is not worried about his or his family members' state of health, except 9.6 and 9.7, where the doctor is

8 A cultural model is defined as a proposition taken for granted by speakers across a cultural community; cf. Holland and Quinn (1987).

9 The American colloquial form of address *doc* (present in many jokes) is the best example.

clearly mocking his patient, while in Polish jokes the doctor's mockery and non-advice prevails, again except 10.7–10.9 and 10.11, where the patient shows their greater concern for the lost needle, a drink or money than for their offspring's well-being. Consequently, the doctor's concern about the patient's health and the patient's worry about their or their family members' state of health are a point of access to the serious doctor and patient scripts respectively, while the doctor's mockery of the patient and the patient's ignorance and lack of concern are points of access to the relevant comic scripts. So the joke setup, as expected, activates the serious domains and the punch line contradicts them with the comic scripts. There are elements in some of the joke setups, however, which reveal the comic scripts early on. These are the unlikely objects (e.g. a bullet, a corkscrew) or not really life-threatening objects (e.g. flies) that the victims have swallowed, or the identity of the victim (e.g. a dog) or even the kind of explanation used by the caller (e.g. *through inattention*), which point to certain activities or scenarios.

Given the question-answer setup, the misleading, callous answer in English jokes is given by the patient, while in the Polish jokes it is the doctor that gives a heartless "advice". In this respect, consider the recent debate at the doctor's-only Polish internet portal, where doctors express the unwillingness to call patients by phone, arguing that they should not be looking for patients, finding out whether they are perhaps dead, because "the mouse should not be chasing the mousetrap"[10]. In this connection it is easier to understand why the Polish versions of the joke only rarely include the phone conversation, and when they do (as in 10.8) the joke seems to be a translation from English.

The psychological plausibility of English versions (joke 9) seems much greater, as distraught patients, nervous about the situation they have not encountered before, can (similarly to the drunk patients in joke 1) respond to what they see as the meaning of the question (e.g. What are you *doing* in the meantime?), while from the audience perspective it turns out that they face the choice of objects from the very large dominion of the verb *do*, including both the actions of the parents/caretakers and the patient.

The cases when the situation is reversed are worth commenting on too. In joke 9.6, it is the patient who asks *What shall I* do? and the doctor provides the malicious, metonymically-driven advice (linking swallowing aspirins with *giving* a headache, rather than treating the headache) contrasting with the standard advice, e.g. *Go buy another bottle* (of aspirins). In 9.7 the doctor provides a similarly malicious, metonymic reply, which in addition carries the CONTAINER

10 Cf. http://krakow.gazeta.pl/krakow/1,44425,12620181,Co_o_przygodach_z_pacjentami_pisza_lekarze_w_internecie.html – the portal of Gazeta Wyborcza.

image-schema: a gun (with a bullet inside) pointed at someone is here applied to the baby with the bullet inside.[11] Of course, the doctor's critical attitude is understandable, as the doctor might not have encountered the bullet-swallowing situation before and wonders at the strange circumstances that must have "triggered" it.

In Polish, on the other hand, the jokes which follow the English pattern clearly seem translations of English originals, which is likely given the predominance of English-language joke websites and the general cultural asymmetry between English and Polish (see the relevant discussion in Kwieciński 2001). The series of Polish jokes have the doctor ask the callers: *A co państwo (z)robili do tej pory?* [And what have you done so far, sir and madam?], which is highly unnatural in this context in Polish as this clearly implies non-medical activities, professional achievements etc.; Polish requires the narrowing down of the dominion by asking a more specific question to match the intended (pragmatic) metonymy ASKING A RATIONAL QUESTION FOR PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT, such as *Czy państwo próbowali już pomóc dziecku?* [Have you, sir and madam, already tried to help the child?], *Czy państwo próbowali wyciągnąć korkociąg/otwieracz dziecku z buzi?* [Have you, sir and madam, tried taking the corkscrew/opener out of the child's mouth?] etc. The latter question could also possibly act as the comic connector when followed by: *Nie, znaleźliśmy inny* [No, we have found another], or *Nie, otwarliśmy butelkę śrubokrętem* [No, we have opened the bottle with a screwdriver], which is due to the refocusing taking place within the joke.

The actual replies from joke 10 are even more curious as not only are they not the expected answers to the question, but also they, perhaps intentionally, clash with it in terms of register, evoking the image of rural or working class callers via the access points to the WORKING CLASS script (the use of the augmentative form *flacha* and the rural grammatical form *otwieralim* [*otwiaralim* in the authentic misspelled version I have found]). Thus the metonymy in both cases can be claimed to be COLLOQUIAL FORM FOR WORKING CLASS. They also evoke the stereotypical Polish cultural assumption (model): POLES NEED TO DRINK IMMEDIATELY, regardless of the situation, which a metonymic chain: WORKING CLASS → HABITUAL DRINKERS → POLES. What is more, in 10.8 and 10.9 the important factor is the place where the help is sought – the emergency ward [*pogotowie ratunkowe*]. This is not part of a hospital, but an outpatient

11 This could also be considered a visual blend: holding a gun is one input and holding a baby the second, with the blend merging them and another "interpretative space" being necessary for the doctor's attitude to be derived from the blend; cf. Brandt and Brandt (2005), who suggest the need for more mental spaces than four.

ward where all the emergency situations are handled, and it is common knowledge that the majority of people who seek help there are drunks who have broken their hands or legs, fractured their skulls etc. So the connection made in the punch line between the emergency ward and the priority given by characters to bottles and not to their children is perfectly logical and only supports the above-mentioned cultural model.

In the context of register, it is worth pointing out the brusque infinitive form, which is frequently used in hospital contexts by the Polish staff, doctors and nurses (and could thus be used metonymically in the jokes), in relation to patients, to avoid the polite, personalized forms and to save time as other patients are queuing up to get similar quick advice:

– *Pisać ołówkiem, nastepny proszę*! [Write in pencil. Next please] (10.1)
– *Zakładać naparstek. Następny* [Put on a thimble. Next] (10.6)

These forms can be argued to display grammatical metonymy INFINITIVE FOR IMPOLITENESS. The English infinitive does not exhibit the same brusqueness, although the brevity of the expression gives the sense of impoliteness too, according to the broad principle of iconicity in language: the longer the form, the more polite it is (cf. e.g. Brown and Levinson (1987) or Grundy (2008)).[12]

Parents normally call the doctor about the baby swallowing an object, as the baby cannot do it on its own. But the jokes quoted above twist this habit around and have adults (husbands or wives) swallow objects and not only a pen or pencil, but also other hardly swallowable ones; in English jokes the swallowed objects include razor blades, contraceptives, bullets, (bottles of) aspirins, and in Polish versions: needles, corkscrews, bottle openers, flies and coins. Thus the dominion of the verb *swallow* increases dramatically in the jokes causing a comic effect.

12 One of the reasons the effect arises in Polish is the grammatical form of the Polish infinitive, which ends in *–(a)ć* (e.g. *pisać*) and differs from declined verbal forms (*piszę*, *piszesz*, *piszemy* etc) and the imperative form (sing. *pisz* or pl. *piszcie*); this is not the case in English, where the only distinct form is the third person singular. Another background grammatical facet of the Polish form is the distinction of perfective and imperfective aspect: *pisać* vs *napisać*, *założyć* vs *zakładać*. The imperfective aspect implies iteration of activity while a more polite form tends to refer to a single activity and use some reference to the ability: e.g. *Proszę napisać to ołówkiem* [Please write this in pencil] or *Może Pan napisać to ołówkiem?* [Can you write it in pencil?] or *Mógłby Pan spróbować napisać to ołówkiem?* [Could you try writing in pencil?]. Of course, the polite perfective form is possible too, but must be accompanied at least by *proszę*: *Proszę pisać ołówkiem* [Please write in pencil], if not be expressed indirectly through a conventional reference to the hearer's ability: *Czy może Pan pisać ołówkiem?* (Can you write in pencil?].

In Polish jokes an interesting feature are the first-person utterances of the person who has actually swallowed something, addressed at the doctor (first person utterances generally make it easier for the hearer to ignore the mistake in reasoning or unlikely scenario, hence such narrator-free jokes are referred to as first-person jokes; cf. Hurley, Dennett and Adams 2011), which do not occur in English examples:

- *Panie doktorze, (przez nieuwagę) połknąłem długopis* [Doctor, (through inattention) I have swallowed a/the pen] (10.3)
- *Panie doktorze! Szybko jechałem motorem i połknąłem kilka much!* [Doctor! I was riding the motorbike fast and swallowed a few flies] (10.13)

These comments addressed at the doctor are perhaps plausible in the case of flies, but not likely when a pen was swallowed, given the physical hardship of the situation and probable inability to move and/or speak following the event. Thus the fictitious "virtual plane" is evoked, where a mental space of a person who has swallowed a pen is built: there is he is able to converse freely with the doctor; this mental space in 10.3 comprises also an amusing scenario whereby the swallowing of a pen was due to inattention. Besides, the first-person jokes do not follow the typical third person pattern when somebody calls the doctor on behalf of the afflicted party.

Another feature of several Polish jokes (10.4 and 10.8–10.9) is the usage of the diminutive *synek* [lit. little son] in Polish, which seemingly invokes affection.[13] The affective meaning of the diminutive is in opposition to the blatant indifference of parents to the son's state of health, which is derivable from the context of the joke (thus a potentially comic opposition is evoked). Grammatical metonymy can be argued to be thus evoked (DIMINUTIVE FOR AFFECTION) which strengthens the comic effect. The application of the diminutive is not essential though, as can be seen in 10.3, 10.5 and 10.11, where the expressions *mój syn* [my son] or *syn* [the son] are used, and do not even contribute to the coherence of the joke text.

It is worth drawing attention to the ambiguity of reference in Polish, which is due to the lack of articles in Polish. This grammatical preference makes the joke better in Polish as the ambiguity makes it more plausible for the punch line to refer to the fact that the object is missing, and thus the reference is in fact definite. In English the indefinite reference is invariably used, but in fact it is a device aimed at misleading the hearers, as in many cases the missing object that has been swallowed (the fountain pen, pen, pencil, needle or corkscrew)

13 The usage of diminutives in Polish is very common and has been well researched, and non-affective uses are likely too, e.g. the word can simply point to the youth of the son, cf. e.g. Dąmbska-Prokop (2000).

has to be replaced with another, thus apparently the household does not have any replacement for it, so the reference turns out to have been specific, known to the speaker. The replacement, however, is a non-specific representational generic reference (e.g. *a pencil* or *ołówek*). Thus a grammatical metonymy of the kind DEFINITE FOR INDEFINITE is in operation here and evokes a comic effect.

An essential part of jokes 9 and 10 in any version is the need by the non-afflicted party to pursue the activities which are metonymically implied by the swallowed objects, as explicitly stated by these parties in the punch line. Figure 4 lists these metonymic access points and the implied activities.

Object swallowed	**Activity metonymically implied**	**Joke variant**
pen, fountain pen, pencil	writing	9.1–9.3, 10.1–10.3
nib	writing with fountain pen (metonymic chain: nib-fountain pen-writing)	10.4, 10.5
razor blade	shaving (metonymic chain: razor blade-shaver-shaving)	9.4
contraceptive	making love	9.5
(bottle of) aspirins	treating headaches, pain, flu; poisoning (multiple metonymy)	9.6
bullet	shooting (metonymic chain: bullet-gun-shooting)	9.7
needle	sewing	10.6, 10.7
corkscrew	drinking wine (metonymic chain: corkscrew-wine-drinking)	10.8
bottle opener	drinking beer (metonymic chain: bottle opener-bottle-drinking)	10.9
5 zloty coin	paying	10.11
Flies	none	10.10

Figure 4: Joke objects and metonymies

The conclusions that can be drawn based on the above table are interesting. First, the prototypical structure is evoked, with the pen/fountain pen/pencil joke being the most popular and probably familiar to the audience, at least in the form of a template, schematic joke. The basic image schema of UP/DOWN is a helpful hint as to why this is the case, both the pen and the alimentary channel being vertical in shape and thus easily matching. But in spite of this, the implied connection between the object swallowed and the activity of writing is not very strong, and the degree of obligation/desire to undertake the activity is rather low (just as with sewing), in contrast to some non-prototypical cases of the joke, involving drinking (possible addiction implied), love making (strong physical urge) or even shaving (being well shaved at work might be required) and paying (even though the value of the coin is low and thus the need to use it is small in the non-virtual world). Thus the metonymy OBJECT FOR ACTIVITY underlies all these cases and somewhat justifies the punch line, but since the justification is incomplete, the comic effect arises.

The cases of the bullet, the coin, the nib, the aspirins and the flies require separate comments, because in these cases the punch lines and not setups rely on metonymies. The bullet metonymically implies the gun and then shooting (just like the other three-item metonymic chains marked in Figure 4), which in turn gives the audience a potential access point to the domains of war, hunting, street fighting, family quarrel, etc., thus making the text highly ambiguous – the extra interpreting space is perhaps necessary in the mental space model of the jokes where the contextual relations can be comprised, the possible contexts being highly varied. The punch line does not resolve the ambiguity, but indeed uses the bullet-gun metonymy to work out the CHILD IS A GUN metaphor[14] and thus offer a piece of comic non-advice to the patient's parents.

The coin case (10.11) is highly metonymic as the 5-zloty coin evokes the domain of money, with the access point being the value rather than the shape and size, which are primed when swallowing – the coin is then the access point to the domain of physical objects. The Polish grammar makes the joke particularly successful as money is the plural noun in Polish, and the punch line emphasizes the fact that the need for the swallowed money intensified over the preceding week. Thus a switch is triggered from the PHYSICAL OBJECT to the VALUE domain: *wcześniej nie potrzebowaliśmy tak bardzo tych pieniędzy* [earlier we did not need the moneys so much].

Among the pen-swallowing jokes, the one which has the doctor 'advise' the parents of the child who has swallowed a nib (10.4, 10.5) for him to drink (a litre of) ink so that he will have his own fountain pen, is distinct in both of its versions:

– *Będzie miał swoje własne pióro* [He will have a fountain pen of his own] (10.4)
– *Będzie miał z małego wieczne pióro* [He will have a fountain pen of his little [willy]] (10.5)

This is so because the metonymies NIB FOR FOUNTAIN PEN and SWALLOWED OBJECT FOR BODY PART evoke the UP/DOWN schema again (nib as top part of the pen, and swallowing as top-down activity) as well as give access to the

14 This is then a case of metaphtonymy, specifically metonymy within metaphor.

BODY domain, which also metonymically evokes the WRITING activity in this unusual scenario. The cultural model SOME BODY PARTS ARE TABOO is a necessary driving force behind this metonymic joke (visible through the metonymy LITTLE FOR PENIS or SIZE FOR SHAPE), and is activated through the large dominion of *mieć pióro* [have a/the fountain pen]. The contextualised meaning of the phrase is thus highly discrepant with that of the conventional expression (*to own the pen*), although they share the basic schematic image of the writing implement adjoining the body – this schematic image has a virtual existence in a mental space. The difference in specificity between two versions of the joke punch line is of interest too, as the first version emphasizes the OWNERSHIP domain (pen of his *own*), which evokes a long metonymic chain to get to the BODY domain, although the chain is not necessarily strictly linear as is clear from the elements of the chain, which are also inter-connected (all the crossed-out elements of the chain below are left for the joke's audience to supply):

OWNERSHIP → fountain pen → ~~WRITING → leaving traces (on paper) → holding pen//holding penis (while urinating) → URINATING → leaving traces (on the ground) → BODY~~.

The second version, on the other hand, emphasizes the WRITING IMPLEMENT domain (pen *of* the little willy), with which the BODY domain is ultimately linked, and the OWNERSHIP domain seems to be backgrounded. All the crossed-out elements of the chain are left for the joke's audience to supply too, although the *little* metonymy stands out as it is made directly available to the audience:

~~(OWNERSHIP) → WRITING IMPLEMENT →~~ fountain pen → ~~leaving traces (on paper) → holding pen//holding penis (while urinating) →~~ little [willy] → ~~URINATING → leaving traces (on the ground) → BODY~~

The aspirins joke (9.6) is a rather sophisticated non-advice joke too, which in fact blends the headache-aspirin cause-effect connection, and the two similar schemas, the general accidental object-swallowing and specific intentional aspirin-swallowing, to obtain the reversed aspirin-headache causal connection. In addition, the joke also involves the metaphorical use of the expression *give somebody a headache* (cause problems to somebody), which overlaps with the literal understanding of headache as an "object" that is given to someone, in this case the GIVING schema is filled with an object which does not normally form part of the dominion of giving objects. In sum, this is a complex case of virtual reality, where the doctor's expertise extends beyond his normal medical advice into the psychological assessment of the relations between the patient and her spouse.

The flies joke (10.10) in turn is unique in the sense that no activity is metonymically evoked here (as marked in Fig. 4), but the DOCTOR'S INCOMPETENCE cultural model is evoked; *muchozol* (fly killer) is turned into an access point to two domains: of INSECT KILLING and MEDICAL TREATMENT (e.g. by injection), the latter mediated by the PAIN-TREATMENT metonymy (any treatment must cause pain).

5 Conclusions

What arises from this analysis is complex virtual world where metonymy occurs under different guises and with varying effects including comic effects. Specifically we have observed grammatical metonymy (e.g. DIMINUTIVE FOR AFFECTION, or DEFINITE FOR INDEFINITE), semantic metonymy (e.g. PEN FOR WRITING), or semantic-pragmatic metonymy (RATIONAL QUESTION FOR PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT or SWALLOWED OBJECT FOR BODY PART). Metonymy is evoked in connection with image schemas such as UP/DOWN or CONTAINER, evoked conventional or unconventional cultural scenarios such as standard LISTENING scenario or comic ones such as PEEING AS WRITING or SWALLOWING A PEN THROUGH INATTENTION; it offers new or surprising access points to domains in question, either through different domains (e.g. GUN or 'GIVING A HEADACHE") or through single or multiple parallel metonymic chains which allow for the audience to decompress them in order to reveal the connections (e.g. between BODY and OWNERSHIP or ADDICTION AND LACK OF SKILL). A frequent way metonymy acts is to evoke a comic effect through expanding a dominion of a lexical item in an unconventional way (swallowing – bullets, bottle openers, coins, bottles of aspirins etc) or using a very large dominion and selecting the unlikely object (e.g. *What shall I do? Use a pencil*). These descriptions are a more specific analysis of the language of humorous discourse than simply qualifying them as examples of ambiguity (lexical, syntactic etc). Metonymies are activated in setups mainly as they serve the purpose of making them ambiguous or vague in order for the punch line to work (e.g. NIB FOR WRITING IMPLEMENT), but they are sometimes used as point of access to punch lines too (e.g. POINTING FOR USING AS GUN)

An interesting area of discussion is afforded by a possible classification of metonymies into those which are traditionally "paradigmatic", i.e. pointing outside of the text towards the domains the hearer needs to access (LITTLE ONE FOR 'WILLY', COLLOQUIAL FORM FOR WORKING CLASS), and "syntagmatic" i.e. those where the domain is already (at least partly) revealed in the preceding text (e.g. SPILLING FOR DRINKING or INFINITIVE FOR IMPOLITENESS). Of course, the more obvious and less revealing the metonymy the lower the funniness, so usually in the syntagmatic cases we are dealing with another facet of the already revealed domain; e.g. when a doctor joke is being told in Poland then the stereotype of a doctor involves impoliteness, thus when the metonymy INFINITIVE FOR IMPOLITENESS occurs then it only strengthens the already present stereotype without giving much surprise to the audience and allows the joke to be more coherent or believable. In the same vein, the DIMINUTIVE FOR AFFECTION metonymy allows to strengthen the caring parents script in the setup which is then opposed to uncaring ones in the punch line.

The above analysis of the special techniques used in the humorous discourse demonstrates the key role of language as it is language that allows the audience to enter the points of access to domains, the linguistic traps planned for them by the joke tellers – various types of metonymy afford very easy ways to achieve that. Hence the discussion above of doctor joke examples from two languages and interesting divergence of metonymic paths in seemingly identical jokes. The different cultural assumptions and cultural values (stereotypes) which underline the jokes are one of (perhaps more) reasons these metonymic paths diverge. The virtual plane (referred to informally in the chapter side by side with mental spaces – discussing those in detail was beyond its scope) which is evoked in the minds of the joke listeners compresses all these images schemas, scenarios, metonymic chains, cultural assumptions in a network which the audience is then asked to "decompress".

Given all the above, answering the fundamental question about the essence of the comic mechanisms in humorous discourse (at least in simple jokes, as no other type of humorous discourse have been tackled in that article) is perhaps easier to answer; nonetheless, the distinction between techniques which are essentially comic and those with are shared with other cognitive operations remains difficult to make. The key to explaining the mechanisms of humorous discourse is the understanding of the complex network of dynamic cognitive elements which contribute to the final effect only collectively. The basic humour effect remaining the good old script opposition …

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Agnieszka Libura

Conceptual integration and humor

1 Introduction

The theory of conceptual integration (also called "the conceptual blending theory") was first proposed by Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner (Fauconnier and Turner 1994, Fauconnier and Turner 1998, Fauconnier and Turner 2000, Fauconnier and Turner 2002; Fauconnier 1997, Fauconnier 2007; Turner 1996, Turner 2001, Turner 2007). According to these authors, conceptual integration, which occurs constantly without our awareness, operates below the level of consciousness and involves connecting two concepts to create new meaning. As Anders Hougaard and Todd Oakley (2008: 11) point out, it was Fauconnier who introduced conceptual integration as an elaboration of mental space theory and a tool to analyze discourse and sentence semantics, while Turner elaborated it further into a more general theory of thinking and imagination. "Conceptual integration – blending – is a basic mental operation. It is at the very center of what it means to have a human mind. It plays a profound role in all areas of thought and action, including deciding, judging, reasoning and inventing. It is dynamic, supple, and active in the moment of thinking" (Turner 2001: 16).

Over the last years, numerous researches have advanced the theory of conceptual integration in various disciplines. From the very beginning, it has also proved useful within the field of humor studies.[1] One reason why Fauconnier and Turner's theory was immediately applied to the investigation of humor phenomena is that their theoretical framework was inspired by some influential works of creativity theorists. "After launching this research program in 1993, we were heartened to discover that, coming from another angle and with very different kinds of data, several "creativity theorists" were insisting on the existence of a general mental operation – which Steven Mithen called "cognitive fluidity" – whose result is to bring together elements of different domains" (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: 37). Beside Mithen (see e.g. Mithen 1998), Fauconnier and Turner explicitly point to *The Act of Creation* by Arthur Koestler whom many contemporary humor researchers are much indebted to. Koestler argued that human

1 Researchers such as Kihara (2005) and Ritchie (2006) have also found the mental space theory, which constitutes the immediate predecessor to the theory of conceptual integration, to be a very useful tool for analyzing humor.

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creativity involves bringing together elements from different domains. He labelled this process “bisociation of matrices” and found striking examples of its operation in the sciences and arts as well as in humour. “The sudden bisociation of an idea or event with two habitually incompatible matrices will produce a comic effect, provided that the narrative, the semantic pipeline, carries the right kind of emotional tension. When the pipe is punctured, and our expectations are fooled, the now redundant tension gushes out in laughter (. . .)” (Koestler 1964: 51). Fauconnier and Turner claim that they are simply taking one step further: beginning where Koestler left off, they insist that conceptual integration is ubiquitous in everyday thinking. Along the lines developed by Koestler on the one hand and Fauconnier and Turner on the other, one could maintain – as Seana Coulson did (2005) – that although conceptual integration does not always involve humorous effects, it does seem to be an inherent feature of humor.

This paper is organized as follows: after a brief summary of basic principles of conceptual integration, Vital Relations, governing principles and Human Scale are discussed in relation to humorous examples. Then the phenomenon of emergent structure in humorous blends is explored, beginning with a discussion of compression, which usually accompanies and facilitates the emergence of a new meaning in the conceptual integration network. Finally, the relation of conceptual and formal integration in humor is addressed, followed by some concluding remarks.

2 Basic principles of conceptual integration

Fauconnier and Turner stress conservativeness as well as creativity and novelty of conceptual integration. On the one hand, it operates on input spaces by blending templates that are anchored in existing conceptual structures. In *The Way We Think*, Fauconnier and Turner describe the crucial concept of “mental spaces” as conceptual packets containing fragments of well-known frames and models: “Mental spaces are small conceptual packets constructed as we think and talk, for purposes of local understanding and action. They are very partial assemblies containing elements, structured by frames and cognitive models” (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: 102). Moreover, the overarching goal of conceptual integration is achieving human scale, which is conservative per se. As Turner (2007: 382–383) puts it, ”The most obvious human-scale situations have direct perception and action in familiar frames that are easily apprehended by human beings: an object falls, someone lifts an object, two people converse, one person goes somewhere, and so on. They typically have direct intentionality, very few participants, and immediate bodily effect. They are immediately apprehended as coherent".

On the other hand, conceptual integration, especially the most advanced form of it that requires a double-scope network, is claimed to be a powerful tool for constructing new, emergent conceptual structure. As Fauconnier (2007: 373) stresses, the conceptual integration framework promises to investigate the creative meaning, which certainly contributes to its attractiveness: "This area of research is particularly promising in that it links linguistic and nonlinguistic phenomena in systematic ways that begin to explain how and why there can be imaginative emergent structure in human thought in its everyday manifestations as well as in its most original and singular spurts of creativity".

In the network model of conceptual integration, there are at least two input mental spaces. Typically, they are structured by frames. To better understand the structure of a conceptual integration network, one may consider the example of Historical Conversations discussed by Seana Coulson (2005). There she analyzed a cartoon in which Bill Clinton engages in a counterfactual conversation with George Washington. The latter says *I cannot tell a lie*, while the former offers him advice *If everyone's on record denying it you've got* no *problem*. Both lines were allegedly uttered by the presidents in question. As legend says, George Washington as a boy chopped down a cherry tree on his family's farm, which infuriated his father. He demanded to know who had done it. Although George Washington knew that he would be likely to receive a spanking, he stood up and admitted *I cannot tell a lie. It was I who chopped down the cherry tree*. On the contrary, the line attributed to Bill Clinton was allegedly uttered when he told his subordinate to deny that they had had an adulterous affair. Clinton himself, however, never publicly admitted to having an affair or lying. Remaining *legally accurate*, he managed to survive impeachment.

The conceptual integration network in question has two input spaces. In one space, there is George Washington, his life, his incapability of dishonesty, and the legendary cherry tree story. The second input space is structured by information about Bill Clinton's sexual scandals, his statements and misdeeds. As Fauconnier and Turner (2002: 345) claim, conceptual integration conforms to five constitutive principles. First, a partial cross-space mapping connects counterparts in the input spaces. In the Historical Conversations blend, George Washington is the counterpart of Bill Clinton and chopping down the tree is the counterpart of Clinton's affair. Second, there is a generic mental space that contains what the inputs have in common. In the example given here, there is an unspecified US president in the generic space as well as his failure, his trustworthiness and the decision to make: to lie or not to lie. Third, there is a blended

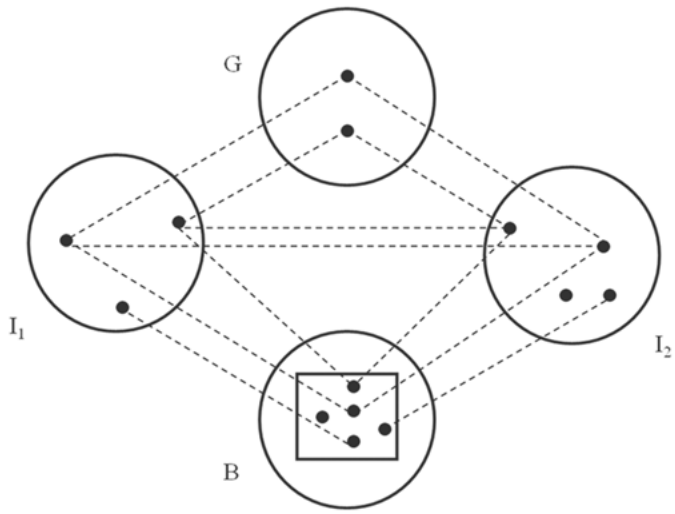

Figure 1: Conceptual integration (based on Fauconnier 1997: 151)

space that blends given elements. In the Historical Conversations blend, two lines uttered at different times are blended and George Washington engages in an imaginary conversation with Bill Clinton. Fourth, there is a selective projection from the inputs to the blend. Not all aspects of structure from each input are projected to the blend. For example, the father's authority, the fact that Washington is dead, as well as some historical features of the context, are not projected. Fifth, the blend develops emergent structure via (a) composition, (b) completion and (c) elaboration. Composition gives rise to relations in the blend that were not present in the separate input spaces. There is only one president in each input but in the blend, there are two of them, so they can interact. Completion brings additional frames and cognitive models to the blend. The scenario of two people speaking in the same place at the same time fits into the familiar conversation frame. Elaboration involves imaginative modification of the scenario in the blend. There are always many possible lines of elaboration. Running the Historical Conversations blend could merely point out the contrast between two presidents. It may also lead to the suggestion that Bill Clinton would attempt to corrupt such a noble figure as George Washington. The typical model of conceptual integration is shown in Fig. 1, where the square inside the blend represents the emergent structure.

3 Vital relations management and global insight

The conceptual integration network is bound together by many conceptual relations which can obtain either between mental spaces in the network or within mental spaces in the network. Fauconnier and Turner call some of them Vital Relations because they are all-important and show up in compression. The list of vital relations includes: CHANGE, IDENTITY, TIME, SPACE, CAUSE–EFFECT, PART–WHOLE, REPRESENTATION, ROLE, ANALOGY, DISANALOGY, PROPERTY, SIMILARITY, CATEGORY, INTENTIONALITY, UNIQUENESS. According to Fauconnier and Turner, the management of Vital Relations in a blend conforms to a set of governing principles: The Topology Principle, The Pattern Completion Principle, The Integration Principle, The Maximization of Vital Relations Principle, The Intensification of Vital Relations Principle, The Web Principle, The Relevance Principle and The Compression Principle (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: 325–334; Turner 2007: 381–382). They are meant to work as optimality constraints. It is worth noting that they are considerably flexible and inextricably intertwined. Various principles cooperate and compete with others. On the one hand, satisfying one principle is usually inconsistent with satisfying a few others. Hence constructing a felicitous blend often depends on finding the best way to relax some governing principles. On the other hand, satisfying one principle can help satisfying another.

"*Topology Principle*: other things being equal, set up the blend and the inputs so that inner-space relations in the blend reflect useful topology in the inputs and their outer-space relations" (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: 327). The Historical Conversations blend easily satisfies The Topology Principle because its input spaces mirror each other; that is, they have the same organizing structure: a misdeed of a US president, an accusation against him and his dilemma how to respond to it. Fauconnier and Turner (2002: 122–126) call the type of conceptual network with the same organizing frame in every space – a mirror network. The sharing of the organizing structure results in an automatic projection of a rich topology from space to space.

"*Pattern Completion Principle*: other things being equal, complete elements in the blend by using existing integrated patterns as additional inputs. Other things being equal, use a completing frame that has relations that can be the compressed versions of the important outer-space vital relations between the inputs" (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: 328). In the Historical Conversations blend, two US presidents speaking could be recognized as a partial pattern to be completed by a fuller conversation frame, which serves as an additional input.

"*Integration Principle*: achieve an integrated blend" (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: 328). In the example discussed here, integration is provided by the shared structure: in every space of the integration network there is a US president, his failure, and the dilemma about telling the truth.

"*Maximization of Vital Relations Principle*: other things being equal, maximize vital relations in the network. In particular, maximize the vital relations in the blended space and reflect them in outer-space vital relations" (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: 330). As Fauconnier and Turner (2002: 329) claim, the recruitment of new frames to the network usually leads to the appearance of new vital relations. The conversation frame brings vital relations of intentionality to the blend analyzed above: now the presidents want to exchange some information or even intend to compare points of view and offer some advice to each other.

"*Intensification of Vital Relations Principle*: other things being equal, intensify vital relations" (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: 330). The main goal of that principle is to sharpen, simplify and strengthen relations in a blend that are transferred from inputs. In the Clinton input space, he attempts to remain legally accurate, never admits to lying, only to misleading others. As Coulson (2005) points out, Clinton's statements do not fit into our cultural models of communication and could be classified as deception or lies as well as hedges or cover-ups. In the Historical Conversations blend, however, his disposition to lie and his intention to encourage others to lie are all too transparent. The unclear intentionally from the input space is simplified and strengthened in the blend.

"*Web Principle*: other things being equal, manipulating the blend as a unit must maintain the web of appropriate connections to the input spaces easily and without additional surveillance or computation" (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: 331). In the Historical Conversations blend, the sharing of the same organizing structure throughout the conceptual network automatically preserves the appropriate connections.

"*Unpacking Principle*: other things being equal, the blend all by itself should prompt for the reconstruction of the entire network" (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: 332). Such a reconstruction is often facilitated by some degree of disintegration in the blended space. As Fauconnier and Turner (2002: 338) demonstrate, mirror networks are typically well integrated at a higher level, but incongruities can be found at lower levels. In the Historical Conversations blend, unpacking is provided by the contrast between eighteenth century and modern figure, their clothes and hairstyles.

"*Relevance Principle*: other things being equal, an element in the blend should have relevance, including relevance for establishing links to other spaces and for running the blend. Conversely, an outer-space relation between the inputs that is important for the purpose of the network should have a corresponding compression in the blend" (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: 333). As in other mirror networks, in the Historical Conversations blend, the organizing structure shared across the network provides an almost automatic satisfaction of the Relevance Principle. Choosing important elements of a well-known shared frame and connecting them to their counterparts in every space do not require a sophisticated mental computation.

"*Compression Principle*: achieve compressed blended spaces" (Turner 2007: 382). Fauconnier and Turner (2002: 312–322) mention several strategies for compressing vital relations: borrowing for compression, single-relation compression by scaling, single-relation compression by syncopation, compression of one vital relation into another, scalability, creation by compression and highlights compression. Mirror networks, such as the Historical Conversations blend, often promote scaling compression, e.g. the outer-space vital relation of time between inputs is scaled down in the blend: an interval of centuries becomes the few minutes of conversation.

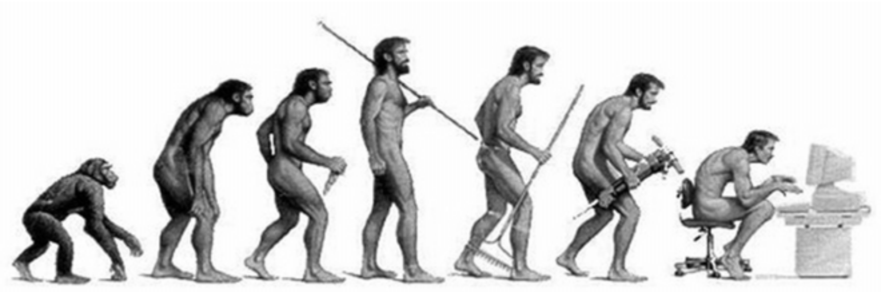

Figure 2: The evolution of man (humorous approach) (from Libura, 2007: 119)

Mirror networks can also use syncopation compression and compression of one vital relation into another, as illustrated by Fig. 2. Syncopation of a vital relations consists in dropping out all but a few key moments of a story. In the case of humorous evolution of man, the vital relations of time and change are compressed by scaling down as well as syncopation: only a few stages of the continuous evolution are picked out and fused. Moreover, there is analogy and disanalogy in the outer-space relations in the network that are compressed into new relations: identity and change in the blended space. So there are various humanoids and human beings in the input spaces but only one being that has undergone some changes in the blend.

Some types of compression can also be found in different types on networks, e.g. borrowing for compression is straightforward in single-scope networks, although it can be found also in double-scope networks with some degree of asymmetry. Consider the conceptual integration network prompted by the cartoon by Arkadiusz Gacparski (Fig. 3). The family frame from one input space offers a tightly integrated scenario with a good compression of cause-effect and direct intentionality. The cartoon uses the tight integration provided by that input to give compression to the blend.

Figure 3: *Our prime minister, your president* (from Libura 2012b: 193)

The principles of conceptual integration are said to be driven by an overarching goal, which is to Achieve Human Scale. The subgoals include: compress what is diffuse, obtain global insight, strengthen vital relations, come up with a story, go from many to one. These subgoals are interdependent.

It seems that the construction of the network with a blend at human scale and the appropriate connections to a complex array of mental spaces is what generates the impression of global insight. Another consequence of the principles of conceptual integration is the strengthening of vital relations, either by making new ones, or by intensifying existing ones, or by converting vital relations of one type into vital relations of another. We have also seen many cases in which the blend itself provides a simple story for the entire network (...) Finally, nearly every network we have seen goes from many elements in the inputs to one or few in the blend (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: 323).

The authors of *The Way We Think* stress that due to the biological and cultural evolution, only simple scenarios with a few agents, direct action, familiar frames and strong intentionality can be considered human-friendly. Blending allows for conversion of diffused or complex scenarios and unclear relations into tightly integrated patterns that are more intelligible and memorable. Thus Fauconnier and Turner claim that conceptual integration is a compression tool par excellence. Playing with compression is also at the heart of humor creativity and for that reason it will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

4 Playing with compression

Conceptual integration appears to be a recursive operation: an output of a given integration can easily become an input for further blending. As an example, consider the humorous presentation of the evolution of man in Fig. 2. In that conceptual integration network, one input space is the conventional blend of the evolution of man. As a material anchor, that well-entrenched blend uses the image of a humanoid creature walking along a path from left to right. Step by step, it looks increasingly human-like. The blend supports a popular, though somewhat simplified, narrative of evolution "from ape to human". The other input space of the humorous evolution of man is structured by information about diseases related to life in modern civilization. The so-called lifestyle diseases include heart disease, stroke, atherosclerosis, asthma, obesity, as well as various posture-related injuries resulting from computer use. The frequency with which they appear is reported to correlate with the degree of industrialization.

In the blend, a quadrupedal creature is gradually straightening as in the conventional image. However, when it becomes an anthropologically modern human being with the perfectly erect body posture the evolution seems to change its direction. Successive stages show a human being increasingly bending downward. The last figure sits at a computer desk with a C-shaped spinal column reflecting the posture of the first creature of the evolution cycle. Despite clashing inputs with incongruous axiology, an integrated blend in that double-scope network is achieved by the cycle schema that completes a composition of elements transferred to the blended space (Fig. 4). As Mark Johnson (1987: 119–121) points out, the cycle schema is one of the image schemata deeply rooted in everyday experience: "We experience our world and everything in it as embedded within cyclic processes: day and night, the seasons, the course of life (birth through death), the stages of development in plants and animals, the revolutions of the heavenly bodies" (Johnson, 1987: 119). In the blend discussed here, the cycle schema overrides the axiology of the progress frame and becomes the structure organizing the whole blend.

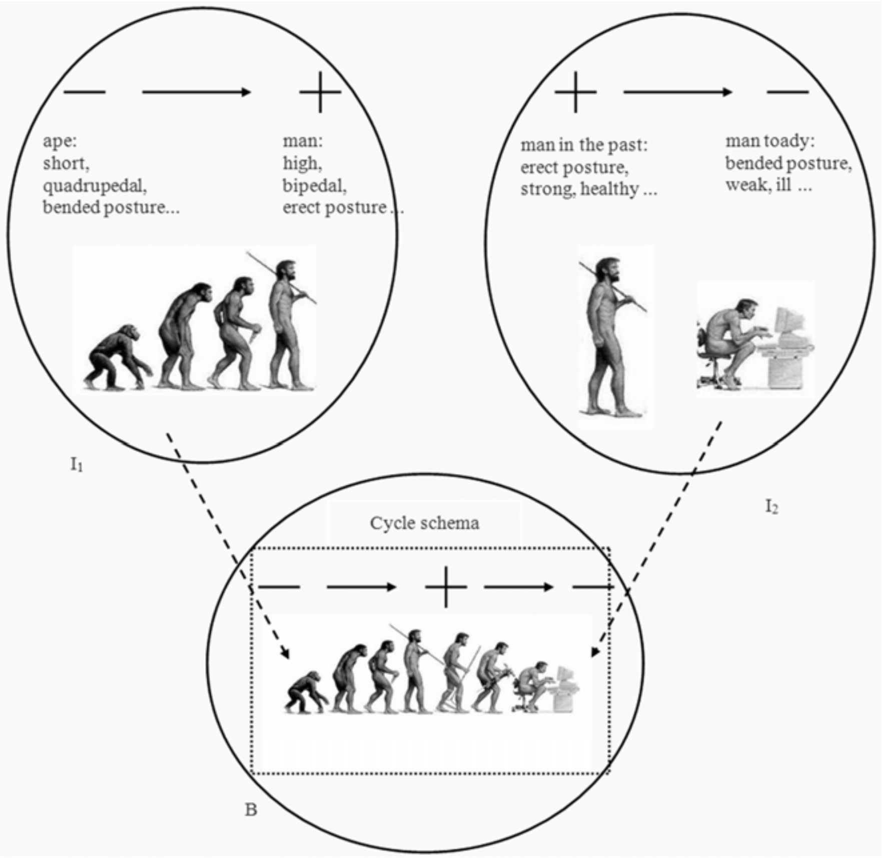

Figure 4: The humorous evolution blend (based on Libura 2007: 121)

Investigating humorous approach to evolution, one can easily discover that the conventional blend of the evolution of man serves as an input space in numerous conceptual integration networks (Libura 2007). The tight compression offered by that blend seems to be very appealing to both professional and anonymous cartoonists that take pride in constructing even more intricate and complex – and equally well integrated – conceptual networks as well as in challenging the axiology of the original blend.

Figure 5: Mr. Chairman, I have not yet achieved my task (from Libura, 2012b: 187)

Another tightly compressed blend – that is repeatedly unpacked and integrated with other inputs by cartoonists – is death the grim reaper. As Fauconnier and Turner (2012: 320) argue, death the grim reaper provides an integrated version of the generic story of death. The highlights of the story of death, which include: being about to die, expiring, burial, decay of a corpse and its final result, are compressed into simultaneous highlights in the blend: arrival of the grim reaper, his scythe, the cowl and the skeleton behind that black garment. The temporal and causal chains of the original story are transformed into part-whole relations in the blended space. Such tightly compressed highlights as the scythe representing the death are often subjects of playful conceptual integration in numerous cartoons.

As an example, consider the cartoon by Henryk Sawka published in *Wprost* magazine in 2008 (Fig. 5). It is a particularly adroit and intricate conceptual blend. The conceptual integration network contains three input spaces, the first of which contains the conventional image of death the grim reaper. The second input space involves the structures of global revolution, especially the Russian October Revolution with Vladimir Lenin, the leader of the Bolshevik Party, deified by the state propaganda of the communist bloc, and Fidel Castro, the leader of the Cuban Revolution who ruled Cuba for half a century. The third space refers to the 2005 presidential election in Poland and the relations between the Kaczyński brothers. When the candidate of the Law and Justice Party, Lech Kaczyński, won the presidential election, he publicly reported to his brother, the leader of the party, informing him, in a military manner, that the objective had been achieved. The blend is counterfactual to the first and third input spaces. In contrast with the grim reaper, it is Lenin who attempts to remove the militant revolutionary from this world. The caption says: *Mr. Chairman, I have not yet achieved my task*, which alludes to the original sentence uttered in 2005 by the president elect: *Mr. Chairman, I am reporting that I have achieved my task.* Lech Kaczyński, after winning the presidential election, informed his brother that his task had been completed. Fidel Castro, on the other hand, does not feel that his role in the world's history is finished.

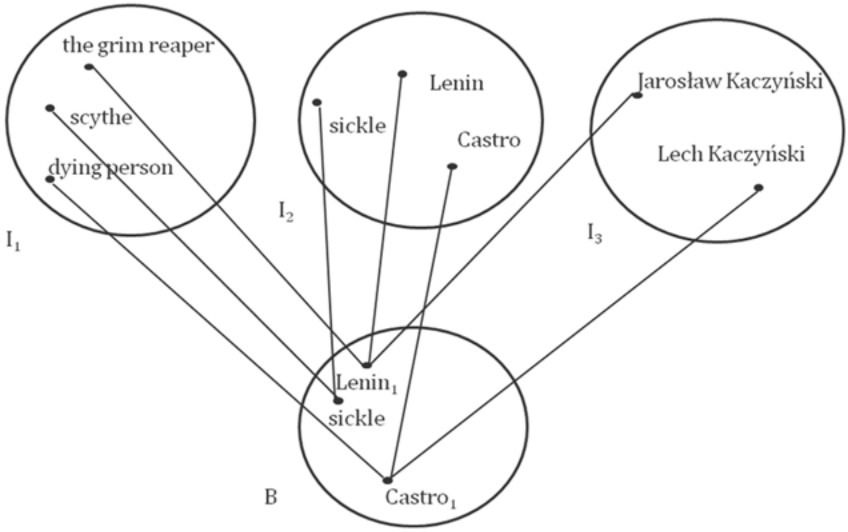

Figure 6: The scythe-sickle integration (based on Libura 2012b: 188)

Putting aside many fine details of this captivating blend, it is worth pointing out that the successful integration of the first and the second input spaces is undoubtedly achieved by blending the two highlights: the scythe as an element representing the moment of death together with the sickle as an attribute of the working classes, placed as an emblem on the flag of the communist Russia (Fig. 6). The tool of the farmers and workers from the turn of nineteenth and twentieth centuries, together with the hammer used as the symbols of the proletarian dictatorship, is integrated with the scythe of the grim reaper. Moreover, it is placed in the hands of Lenin, temporarily returned from the netherworld. One more dangerous tool, the rifle, is visible on Fidel Castro's sickbed. It can be seen as a compressed highlight of the guerrilla skirmishes inspired by El Comandante in Latin American and African countries like Guatemala, Bolivia, Venezuela, Angola, Mozambique and Salvador. One can venture a guess that it symbolizes the unfulfilled goals of spreading the revolutionary cause to the farthest reaches of the world.

Investigating various cartoons concerning foreign affairs, one should be able to find some intricate examples involving unconventional, tight compression of highlights of some complex scenarios into simultaneous highlights in the blend (Libura 2012b). Such a particularly strong compression can be found in the previously mentioned cartoon with the caption *Our prime minister, your president* (Fig. 3). It refers not only to the fatal crash of the presidential plane near Smolensk but also to many aspects of current Polish foreign policy and to the slogan of the 1989 presidential election in Poland. The integration network contains two input spaces: family and Polish foreign policy. The prime minister, Donald Tusk, and the president, Bronisław Komorowski, can be seen as children, the former sitting in the lap of Angela Merkel and the latter in that of Vladimir Putin. Bronisław Komorowski, like Vladimir Putin, is attired in typical politician's outfit, while Donald Tusk is wearing a football kit with a medal around his neck, which alludes to his favourite pastime activity, as well as to his area of competence. The children are holding their toys: Tusk – a pipe, the key element of the construction of the Nord Stream Pipeline which passes around the territory of Poland, while Komorowski – a small plane, symbolizing the crash of the presidential Tu-154 near Smolensk. Two complex stories: the Polish struggle for energy independence and the fatal crash of the presidential plane near Smolensk, as well as the following inquest, are compressed into the key factors that can be represented visually as parts of one image. Such a strong highlights compression eliminates the order of events in time and gives the impression of a time warp.

The blend leads to a simple conclusion: the parents, i.e. Merkel and Putin allow the children – Tusk and Komorowski – to play with specific toys chosen by the parents, who also decide about the way these toys can be played with. By virtue of the family frame, one can run the blend, which results in producing new inferences concerning the Polish politicians' role and their relationship to the neighbouring political powers. The emerging structures can modify the input space of the current political affairs, while the dissonance between the officially declared goals and those constructed in the blend create a comical effect. However, it is possible only if the audience could unpack the tightly integrated simultaneous highlights in the blend into the complex scenarios they stand for.

Human beings are able to create tightly compressed, imaginative blends and humorous conceptual integrations often seem to test the limits and the flexibility of our mental ability to compress conceptual structures. Thus, humor examples tend to promote sophisticated constructions, such as recursive blending, integrating the highlights of different scenarios, as well as intricate, innovative highlights compression of complex stories.

5 Emergent structure

Compression usually facilitates the development of a new, imaginative emergent structure, which is the striking feature of conceptual integration. Moreover, the inputs can be modified by reverse mapping from the blend. In the Historical Conversations blend, Bill Clinton attempts to corrupt George Washington. The attempt can be transferred back to the input space as his clear disposition to lie and corrupt others. What was initially unclear and doubtful in the current event input, becomes certain, strong and transparent in the blend. As Coulson (2005) points out, blends anchored in political cartoons often have a serious rhetorical agenda. On the one hand, they seem to provide a relatively safe arena for expressing radical opinions, socially unacceptable ideas, hyperbolic claims or damaging accusations. On the other hand, human scale achieved in blends, with strong intentionality and clear casual chains, helps – as Liisi Laineste (2003: 7) puts it – “to organize the massive amount of information and experience of contemporary times”.[2]

Consider also a significant emerging structure in the conceptual integration network prompted by the cartoon with the caption *Our prime minister, your president*, such as the dependence of the Polish politicians, portrayed as children, on the neighbouring political powers, which seem to exercise parental authority over them. Careless play with the toys under parental supervision can be elaborated into the emergent meaning which includes the failures and the negligence concerning both the energy independence of Poland and the safety of the fatal flight to Smoleńsk. All these emergent structures can be transferred into the input space of the current political affairs. As a result, one can assume that the actions of Polish politicians concerning both the gas trade contracts and the preparation of the presidential flight to Russia along with the inquest following the crash were controlled by Germany and Russia to some extent. Although there are many ways to elaborate that blend, the emergent scenario with the most prominent politicians as irresponsible children is naturally ridiculous and terrifying.

The reverse mapping of emerging structure from the blend to the input may aim to destroy the very structure of the input. To take just one example, Howell (2007; 2010) investigates conceptual integration in humorous examples concerning the fall of the Berlin Wall and German unification and discovers that they often encourage the audience to reject dominant narratives which constitute the topology of one input space in the given blend. Discussing an extremely

2 Liisi Laineste (2003) refers specifically to topical jokes, many of which can be analyzed in terms of conceptual integration.

complex conceptual integration in Thomas Brussig's novel, *Helden wie wir* [Heroes like us], he reveals how the emergent structure in the blend undermines the popular narrative organizing the input space, namely the view that protests and collective anger of East Germans brought down the Wall. In the novel, a young man named Klaus Uhltzscht becomes a secret police agent and gives his blood to Erich Honecker in an unusual experiment, which also incidentally enlarges his penis. On the 9th of November 1989, Klaus encounters demonstrators at the Bornholmer Street border and helps them by shocking the guards with his penis size so they open the gates and let all protesters through. "In the blend, Klaus is able to do what Radomsky and the other demonstrators (or the masses as he terms them) cannot accomplish. He becomes the 'Missing Link' of German history" (Howell 2010: 81). Once again, humorous conceptual integration proves useful in expressing radical and socially unacceptable opinions, as well as in undermining the mainstream ideas: "Through the impossibility of Klaus' version of events, the reader must question the plausibility of folkloric popular version as being the sole impetus for the fall of the Berlin Wall. The satirical nature of the narrative allows Brussig, channeling through Klaus the Fool, to be critical of a nearly sacred historical event in German history without repercussion" (Howell 2010: 81).

Further exploration of mechanisms responsible for emergent meaning in humorous blends seems to offer a particularly promising perspective for describing and explaining the most sophisticated humorous examples. It is worth noting that even Salvatore Attardo, who has generally been very critical of cognitive linguistic approaches to humor, claims that the theory of conceptual integration has potential in humor research because of the explanatory power of the notion of emergent structure: "one of the observations of blending theory is that some blends exhibit 'emerging' features, i.e. features that belong to neither of the input (mental) spaces. This strikes me as a potentially very useful tool to handle complex examples" (Attardo 2006: 342–343).

6 Formal vs. conceptual integration

The phenomenon of formal blending is not discussed in detail by Fauconnier and Turner. It seems that they find it relatively uninteresting claiming that "Novel conceptual blends do not generally need novel forms of expressions" (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: 365). In the realm of humor, however, it cannot be regarded as an unimportant issue. Behind many jokes, one can discover "The impulse to do formal blending for its own sake, and the corollary disposition to find the conceptual blends behind the formal blends" (Fauconnier and Turner 2002:

368). Klaudia Wengorek-Dolecka's (2006) analysis of the poem *Telefoon* as a blend of contemporary and medieval English can serve as an illustration of this phenomenon.

More interestingly, there are numerous humorous formal blends that parallel conceptual integrations closely, such as the German example discussed by Howel (2010): *BeeRDigung der DDR*, which can be translated as *burial of the East Germany*. The three capitalized letters in *beerdigung* (*burial*) spell the initials of the former West Germany (Bundesrepublik Deutschland), which prompts for the conceptual integration in which one country is buried by another:

> "the West German / BRD is solely responsible for the loss of the East German's / DDR's customs and cultures, as though none of its citizens ever expressed the desire to break free from them themselves. Blending the collapse of the DDR with death and burial – and all of its morbid connotations – is a brilliant juxtaposition of conceptual spaces, resulting in a blend that expresses the mourning of a nation (*Ostalgie*) that took place after the luster of unification wore away" (Howel 2010: 77).

Another example of how closely formal blends can parallel conceptual integration is provided by Libura (2011). A cartoon by Sawka, referring to an incident on a Lufthansa plane, constitutes an interesting example of richly intricate integration, both formal and conceptual. The Polish politician, former prime minister candidate, Jan Rokita, was involved in a heated argument with a flight attendant, which ended in the police forcibly removing him and his wife from the plane. Although Nelly Rokita played a much smaller part in the incident, both of them are depicted as equally involved in the destructive action, and even constituting a threat to the public. Sawka uses a sketch reminiscent of the police facial composite portraits and CCTV camera footing: Jan and Nelly Rokita are depicted in profile, somewhat from behind, both in their characteristic hats (Fig. 7). The wide-brimmed hat and upturned collar portray Rokita as a mysterious figure, perhaps a secret-service agent or a diplomat on a cloak-and-dagger mission, trying to preserve his anonymity. The caption in German: ACHTUNG! POLNISCHE TERROKITEN! contains a reference to terrorism.

From a formal point of view, the neologism *Terrokiten* is a blend of the German plural nominative of *terrorist* and the surname *Rokita*.[3] The cartoon author facilitates the unpacking of the blend, marking the second part of the neologism (*Rokiten*) with red, which makes the surname allusion more transparent. One more indicator of Sawka's sense of humour can be discerned here:

3 Such neologisms are called lexical blends. They have been analyzed in English for the last century as an effect of an unconventional word-formation process that usually involves phonemic overlap and/or clipping (see, e.g., Pound 1914; Bauer 1983).

Figure 7: *Polnische Terrokiten* (from Libura 2011: 123)

the red part of the neologism looks like the plural of the Polish surname Rokita created according to the rules of German grammar. The generic space of this blend is relatively rich although non-continuous: it contains the syllable *ro*, the vowel *i* and the consonant *t* (Fig. 8). In the case of this neologism, the new word contains the majority of the sound substance or – in the written form – the majority of the graphemic content of both words. Taking the latter into account, the word *Terrokiten* consists of 83% of the letters of the surname *Rokita* and 82% of the letters of the German form *Terroristen*. These proportions are also significant, as the formal structure of a blend can be accounted for in terms of information quantity and recognisability of source words (Gries 2004).

The conceptual blend anchored in the cartoon requires fusing two mental spaces: one concerns the terrorist threat, the ways terrorists attack, anti-terrorist safety procedures, while the second – the behaviour of Mr and Mrs Rokita on the plane flying from München to Krakow, the heated argument, manhandling by the police, and, finally, their removing of handcuffed Jan Rokita from the plane. The generic space contains such elements as the perpetrator, threat and safety procedures. The elements of the input spaces are connected by various relations, mainly Analogy and Disanalogy. Undoubtedly, the incident with Mr and

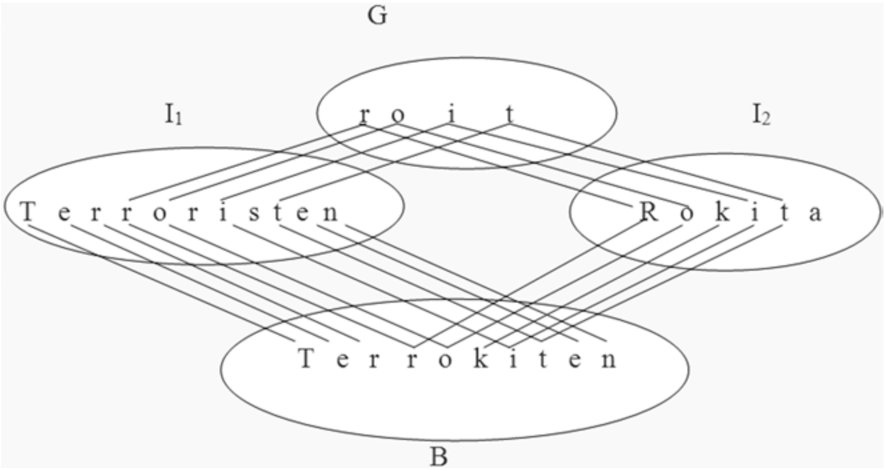

Figure 8: *Polnische Terrokiten*. Formal blend (based on Libura 2011: 124)

Mrs Rokita does contain certain analogies with a terrorist attack: terrorists sometimes attack people on the planes and if an attack is prevented, the potential perpetrator is usually handcuffed and removed from the plane as it was the case in this instance. However, there are also some striking differences between both events: the terrorists are armed and trained for combat while Jan Rokita attacked the flight attendant only verbally and then resisted the Lufthansa employees trying to remove him from the plane. The incompatibility of the means terrorists use and the actions of the Polish politician – offensive words and then desperate holding to his seat to resist being taken away from the plane – is one of the elements of humor in the cartoon.

The conceptual integration network leaves a wide margin for the completion and elaboration of the blend, including the reports of radio and television covering the event, the subsequent court case, or even the history of Polish-German relations. Some recipients of the cartoon will focus on Jan Rokita exclaiming: *The Germans are beating me!*[4] while others – on the ensuing settlement in which Lufthansa agreed to pay the Polish couple 200 000 Euro in damages, or even on Jan Rokita's sending the flight attendant a bunch of roses as an act of good will. In cognitive linguistics the meaning is described as encyclopaedic, we should therefore assume that all those elements can enrich the construction of the

4 Following the event, a recording was published online by one of the passengers of Jan Rokita exclaiming this in rather characteristic shrill voice.

blend and determine which elements, if any, will make the recipient laugh. However, no matter how complex the elaboration of the blend in question would be, a conceptual construction should strictly integrate our knowledge about terrorists and the behaviour of Mr and Mrs Rokita, as it is prompted by the strict formal integration. The alignment of conceptual and formal integration seems to be another source of amusement here.

7 Conclusions

The foregoing discussion is far from exhaustive: there are many other subtleties in the conceptual integration network that seem to be worth investigating and considering in relation to humorous examples. On the other hand, the theory proposed by Fauconnier and Turner is very general and all-embracing. It does not aim primarily at investigating humor. In the future, one could expect either the existing humor theories to be inspired by the work on emergent meaning or – alternatively – Fauconnier and Turner's framework to be improved and enriched by adding new research tools and increasing its functionality within the field of humor research. At any rate, it seems clear that there are good reasons to expect a closer collaboration between the two fields.

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Sachiko Kitazume

The dynamics of humour

1 Introduction

What is humour? One common definition among humour researchers is that humour is “something that makes a person laugh or smile.” Therefore, the next question arises: what causes laughter?

A great number of psychologists and philosophers, as well as linguists, have attempted to explain what causes laughter, expressing varied views on the subject. These theories can be classified into three groups of theories of laughter: the superiority theory, the incongruity theory, and the relief theory. Humour researchers are now seeking a comprehensive theory of humour that explains the essence of humour which covers all the three categories. One of the most noted theories of humour is Semantic Script Theory of Humor (abbreviated as *SSTH*) proposed by Raskin (1979, 1985), which was later developed into General Theory of Verbal Humor (abbreviated as *GTVH*) by Attardo and Raskin (1991).

This paper reveals the insufficiency of Raskin’s (1985) argument in that the expression “overlapping scripts” cannot distinguish between metaphor, ambiguity and humour. In addition, this paper explains the vulnerability of Oring’s (2010) argument in that what he presents as an example of humour is only an absurd statement and not an example of humour. By pointing out that the essence of humour is a “twist,” as proposed by Kitazume (2010), this paper proposes “Twist Theory,” which explains in detail what causes laughter. It further clarifies the main effects of humour and the true intentions of humorists.

2 Humour and laughter

Having outlined the issues above, let us explore the problem with the three groups of humour and laughter theories. The definition “humour is something that makes a person laugh or smile” has misled many humour researchers into equating laughter with humour. It has created the misunderstanding that everything that causes laughter is humour.

Let us illustrate how this problem occurs in Figure 1.

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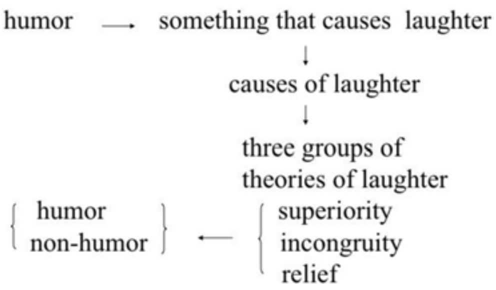

Figure 1: Theories of humor or laughter?

The first line indicates the common definition among humour scholars: humour is something that causes laughter. It has led many humour theorists to figure out what causes laughter, as seen in the second line. A great number of theorists have proposed varied views on the subject. This chart, however, clearly shows that the three groups of theories of laughter are theories of "laughter" and not theories of "humour." Although the response is an important factor to consider something as humour, we should not equate laughter with humour in that what causes laughter involves both humor and non-humor as stimuli, as shown in the bottom left of the figure. In other words, we must keep in mind that not all causes of laughter involve elements of humour.

3 Non-humorous cases that cause laughter

One can find various behaviours that do not necessarily involve humour, although they do evoke laughter. For example, humiliation and belittling others may cause the feeling of superiority over others and hence laughter, but these sentiments do not necessarily involve humour. In other words, we have occasionally seen cases in which purely aggressive remarks result in laughter.

There are other causes of laughter which do not involve humour. When one is given a surprise birthday party, it is natural to be excited and pleased to find that which we did not expect. When we see a magician make an object appear or disappear or when we run into an old friend on the street, we will be pleasantly surprised. These examples do not normally involve elements of humour, yet they cause us to laugh due to the incongruity between what we expect and what actually happens.

Furthermore, explicit sexual descriptions and obscene stories without humorous elements can please speakers and listeners, resulting in smile and laughter. The difference between these stories and sexual humour is whether they have elements of humour or not. The sexual elements do enhance laughter, but at the same time they reduce the social unease caused by sexual talk. Breaking inhibitions and taboos by touching upon major human fears, such as death or illness, and making offensive references to religion may also arouse laughter among listeners by releasing tension. The difference between behaviors that are humorous and not humorous is that the former are more likely to be socially acceptable.

In addition to the causes of laughter proposed by the three groups of theories, entirely different cases of laughter can occasionally be observed. Laughter and smiling can also be a sign of fear or embarrassment, as Ross (1998: 1) points out. For instance, the popular Japanese singer, Ayumi Hamasaki, confessed on her homepage that she burst into laughter when she was told by her doctor that her left ear can no longer function due to her neglect to ensure suitable medical care in time. It may be assumed that her laughter came from her despair and embarrassment as a professional singer. Laughter is sometimes a manifestation of emotions that are extreme and overwhelming.

Kitazume (2010: 14) classifies the elements that cause laughter, as seen in Table 1.

Table 1: Causes of laughter

	Non-humor	Humor
Pleasant case	superiority	aggressive humor (superiority, humorous elements)
	incongruity	incongruous humor (incongruity, humorous elements)
	relief	relief humor (relief, humorous elements)
Unpleasant case	extreme emotions	

(Kitazume, 2010: 14)

The "Non-humour" column in the middle signifies laughter that is not caused by elements of humour and is separated into "pleasant cases" and "unpleasant cases." The feeling of superiority resulting from being victorious by means of physical and verbal aggression, for example, would be listed under "superiority," the incongruity shown in magic under "incongruity," and sexual talk under "relief." "Non-humour" can include unpleasant cases, such as those involving extreme emotions, though these are seldom turned into humour.

The "Humour" column shows causes of laughter produced by humour as well as other causes of laughter. Aggressive humour, for instance, includes "superiority" and "humorous elements," incongruous humour involves "incongruity" as well as "humorous elements, while sexual humour, for example, can be placed under "relief humour" since it has elements of relief as well as the elements of humour. All in all, this chart, with the column for causes of laughter that do not involve elements of humour at all, demonstrates how major humour theories that equate humour with laughter miss their target.

4 Literal meanings and utterance meanings

Pragmatics is a subject very familiar in linguistics today. While semantics is concerned with meanings that come from purely linguistic knowledge, pragmatics is concerned with the study of meaning as communicated by a speaker and interpreted by a hearer. Pragmatists are more concerned with what a speaker means by his/her utterances in a certain context than what the words or phrases might mean. Pragmatists insist that in meaning interpretation, the context plays an important role.

Grice is one of the most noted linguists who insists on the importance of a pragmatic study. Grice (1957, 1989: 222) argues for the importance of context in meaning interpretation, as seen in (1).

(1) Again, in cases where there is doubt, say, about which of two or more things an utterer intends to convey, we tend to refer to the context (linguistic or otherwise) of the utterance and ask which of the alternatives would be relevant to other things he is saying or doing or which intention in a particular situation would fit in with some purpose he obviously has.

In referring to the speaker's intended meaning, Grice (1968, 1989: 117) uses the term "utterer's meaning" and "implicated meaning" and Grice (1975: 43) coins the word "implicature" to express what the speaker wants to convey. Searle (1978: 207) uses the term "utterance meaning" in expressing the same concept.

The term "literal meaning" is defined by Searle (1978: 208) as "the meaning it has independently of any context whatever; and, diachronic changes apart, it keeps that meaning in any context in which it is uttered."

Thomas (1995: 16) explains these two terms quite explicitly, although he uses a different term "abstract meaning" in referring to "literal meaning," as seen in (2).

(2) When in interaction we have resolved all the ambiguities of sense, reference and structure – when we have moved from abstract meaning (what a particular sentence could mean in theory) to what the speaker actually does mean by these words on this particular occasion – we have arrived at contextual meaning or utterance meaning. Utterance meaning can be defined as 'a sentence-context pairing' (Gazdar 1979) and is the first component of speaker meaning.

Thomas in (2) explains that there are two meanings: abstract meaning (what a particular sentence could mean in theory) and utterance meaning (what the speaker actually does mean by these words in a particular context.

In this paper, the term "literal meaning" is used to indicate what a particular word, phrase or sentence could mean in theory, or "abstract meaning" in Thomas's (1995) sense, while the term "utterance meaning" is used to express what the speaker actually means, because they are the terms most commonly used by pragmatists.

5 Humorous elements

Having analyzed the elements of humour in its various types in the preceding section, we will now look at what "humorous elements" actually are. The famous example of humour presented by Raskin in order to illustrate his Standard Semantic Theory of Humour, is the doctor joke in (3).

(3) "Is the doctor at home?" the patient asked in his bronchial whisper. "No," the doctor's young and pretty wife whispered in reply. "Come right in." (Raskin 1985: 100)

Raskin (1985: 105) describes this joke as involving an overlap of two scripts, DOCTOR and LOVER. The three words, "doctor," "patient" and "bronchial" naturally evoke the script DOCTOR. The wife's invitation for the patient to "come right in," while the doctor is not at home, must strike the listener as somewhat odd and he begins to look for another interpretation. As soon as the appropriate script, LOVER, is evoked, all the previously odd pieces of the puzzle fall neatly into place. Raskin claims that these two overlapping scripts are perceived as opposite in a certain sense, and it is this oppositeness that creates the joke (Raskin 1985: 100). The same theory was developed into *GTVH* by Attardo and Raskin (1991).

I argue, however, that the expression of "overlap" in this explanation is problematic and should benefit from some clarification. Figure 3 illustrates how the joke can be interpreted by analyzing the meanings into two levels: "literal meaning" and "utterance meaning."

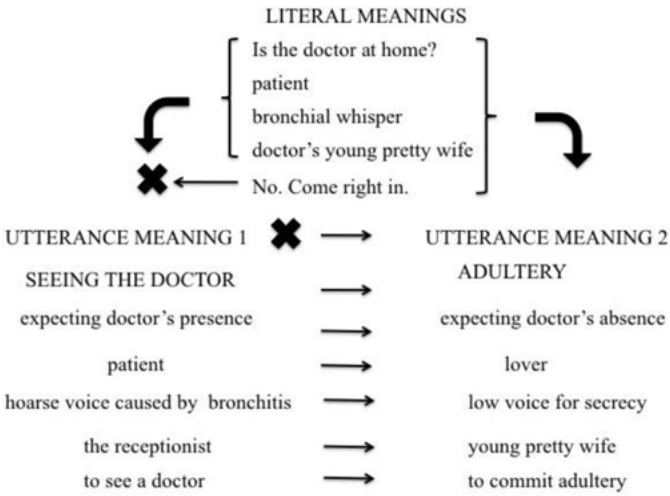

Figure 2: Literal and utterance meanings

The upper half shows five key expressions. Literal meanings are what these sentences could mean in theory or "abstract meaning" in Thomas's (1995) sense. The hearer figures out utterance meaning 1 of SEEING THE DOCTOR on the left, which can be easily interpreted with the words, phrases and sentences, such as "Is the doctor at home," "the patient," and "his bronchial whisper" in the first sentence of the joke (3). These expressions in sequence make the context to interpret the utterance meaning 1. It is the interpretation that the speaker intends to lead the hearer to. If the speaker had intended to convey the utterance meaning 2, he would have used the term "the man" instead of "the patient," "a whisper" instead of "his bronchial whisper."

However, the addition of the last sentence, "No. Come right in," implies that the doctor's wife invites the person to come in while the doctor is not at home. Her invitation negates the originally expected utterance meaning 1 of SEEING THE DOCTOR, necessitating its change to a completely opposite utterance meaning 2 of ADULTERY on the right. Each utterance meaning in utterance meaning 1 should be shifted to a different utterance meaning 2, as shown by arrows: from "expecting doctor's presence" to "expecting his absence," from a "patient" to a "lover," from the patient's "bronchial whisper" or "a hoarse voice caused by a disease" to "not to be heard" or "a low voice for secrecy," from a "receptionist expecting patients" to a "young pretty wife expecting adultery" and from the patient's purpose of "to see a doctor" to "to commit adultery."

Although "the patient's bronchial whisper" and "the doctor's wife's whisper for secrecy" may be considered the same "whisper" at the literal meaning level, at the utterance meaning level (context-bound meaning level) one is a hoarse voice caused by bronchitis (implying a patient seeing a doctor) and another is a low voice for the purpose of not to be heard (implying a young pretty wife expecting adultery). The utterance meanings of the patient's "bronchial whisper" and the wife's "whisper for secrecy" are completely different in that one is the result of disease and another is for the purpose of secrecy and the voices are different in quality. Consequently, it is safe to say that there is no overlap between the utterance meanings of 1 and 2. The most notable action to be taken in the interpretation of this humor is a quick and sudden change from utterance meaning 1 to a completely different utterance meaning 2. The punch line "Come right in" while the doctor is absent works as a "twist," which alters the precedingly interpreted utterance meaning into a completely different one.

6 Metaphor

In order to clarify the term "overlap" more clearly, let us look into an example of the metaphor in this section. (4) is the first half of the famous lyrics sung by Elton John as a tribute to Princess Diana.

(4) Candle in the Wind: A Tribute to Princess Diana by Elton John
Goodbye England's rose
May you ever grow in our hearts
You were the grace that placed itself
Where lives were torn apart
You called out to our country
And you whispered to those in pain
Now you belong to heaven
And the stars spell out your name

And it seems to me you lived your life
Like a candle in the wind
Never fading with the sunset
When the rain set in
And your footsteps will always fall here
Along England's greenest hills
Your candles burned out long before
Your legend ever will

Diana is metaphorically expressed as "England's rose," which has special connotations to British people. Michelle J. Hoppe (1999) writes that "England has always been known for its beautiful gardens. Whether it is the soil, the weather or the loving attention of the gardeners, flowers flourish. The best known of these is the rose, for not only is it a part of everyday life in England, it is a symbol of its royalty."

In this tribute, Princess Diana's life is described as "a candle in the wind," using a figure of speech called "simile." The expression "a candle" describes her affectionate attitude giving rays of hope to the vulnerable and people in pain, while "in the wind" shows that she herself is suffering and struggling in a heartless environment. The expression "your candles burned out" metaphorically denotes her death.

Figure 3 represents the meaning pattern of the first half of this eulogy by analyzing it into two meanings: literal and utterance meanings.

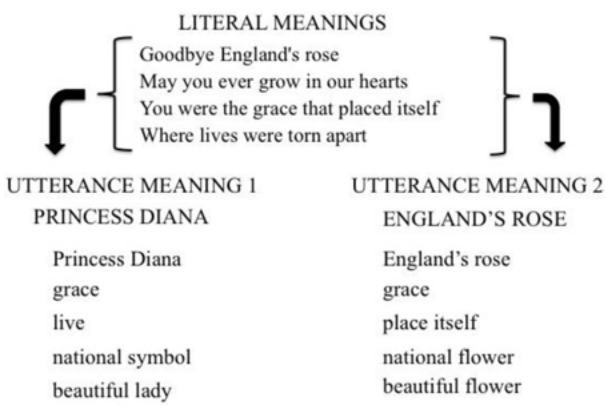

Figure 3: Princess Diana and England's Rose

Figure 3 shows that out of the four key expressions, the utterance meaning 1 of PRINCESS DIANA and the utterance meaning 2 of ENGLAND'S ROSE can be interpreted. Princess Diana is metaphorically called "England's rose." A graceful lady and graceful flower have the similarity of "grace," which connects two utterance meanings in the lyrics without any contradiction. While humor has a contradiction between two utterance meanings, metaphor has two utterance meanings connected by the similarity without any contradiction.

The fact that Diana lived in England is expressed as "grace placing itself where lives were torn apart." A national symbol and a national flower have an overlapping image in that both are connected by the similarity. And so do a beautiful lady and a beautiful flower in that both have the element of "beauty." To sum it up, both utterance meanings of PRINCESS DIANA and ENGLAND'S ROSE overlap in this stanza without any contradiction. Consequently, we can say that metaphor has two overlapping images.

Figure 4 shows the meaning pattern of the latter half of the stanza.

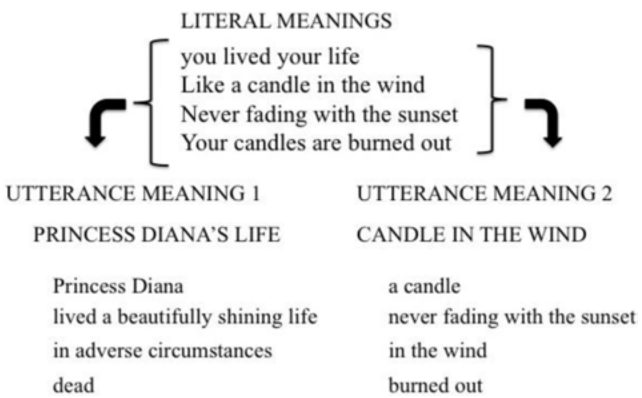

Figure 4: Princess Diana and a Candle in the wind

Figure 4 shows that from four key expressions, a hearer can arrive at two utterance meanings: PRINCESS DIANA'S LIFE and CANDLE IN THE WIND. Diana, who lived a beautifully shining life, is described as a candle "never fading with the sunset." The fact that she had to live in adverse circumstances is expressed by referring to "the wind." Her death is metaphorically expressed as "candles burning out." In this stanza you can see overlapping images of both PRINCESS DIANA'S LIFE and CANDLE IN THE WIND.

Comparison between Figure 2 (humour) and Figures 3 and 4 (metaphor) illustrates the difference between humour and metaphor clearly. While humour involves a quick change in utterance meaning from 1 to 2 in order to solve the contradiction between the two utterance meanings, metaphor does involve the overlap of two utterance meanings.

It is clear that Raskin's notion of "overlap of two scripts" results from confusing literal meanings and utterance meanings. The doctor's joke involves two utterance meanings: one assumed at first and negated at the end, and another one opposed to the first one. The most notable difference that distinguishes humour from metaphor is that the humorous interpretation requires quick reinterpretation of an expected utterance meaning and adopting the opposite utterance meaning to solve the contradiction.

Having explained the problem with the expression "overlap," the explanation of the doctor's joke can be amended as follows.

(5) The joke overlapping fully or in part at the literal level involves two meanings which are perceived as opposite at the utterance meaning level, and it is this oppositeness that creates the joke.

The problem with this definition is that it cannot distinguish between humour and ambiguity which is shown in (6).

(6) a. I buried $100 in the bank. (Lexical ambiguity)

b. The girl hit the boy with a book. (Structural ambiguity)

For example, "bank" in (6a) is ambiguous in that it can be interpreted as either "a financial institution" or "an edge of a river." Two utterance meanings, which are perceived as opposites, overlap fully at the literal meaning level. (6b) is structurally ambiguous in that two opposite interpretations are possible: "with a book" can be an adverb modifying the verb "hit" or it can modify "the boy" as an adjective. This sentence involves two utterance meanings, which are perceived as opposite in meaning.

Another problem with this explanation is that it does not fully explain the most notable elements shown in Figure 3 (humour) and not found in Figures 4 and 5 (metaphor). One is the negation of the first utterance meaning shown by the X sign and another is a quick and sudden change into another completely opposite meaning.

A visual study of humour[1]

It is not easy to define abstract concepts such as "humour" or "humorous elements." On the other hand, we can recognize something when it fits into the pattern of "humour" or "humorous elements. In defining these abstract concepts, we must make evident what is in our collective cognition.

In an attempt to visually show the humorous elements of our cognition, Kitazume (2010a: 17–28, 2010b: 63–71) resorts to visual aids. In order to distinguish characteristics found in humorous paintings, two paintings by the same artist are compared.

1 See also Kitazume (2008, 2010a, 2010b).

Figure 5: Dance in the city

Figure 6: Dance in the country

Figure 5 is a famous painting by Pierre-Auguste Renoir entitled "Dance in the City," while the humorous painting in Figure 6, also by Renoir, is "Dance in the Country." Although "Dance in the Country" has a similar structural outline to that of "Dance in the City," in that a man in a black suit and a woman in a gown are shown as dancing, "Dance in the Country" has elements that are comical. What are the most discernible characteristics in the "humorous" painting?

A notable difference is that while the lady in "Dance in the City" is in a glittering white, formal sleeveless dance gown with fancy white gloves, representing a prototypical image of an "elegant" dance scene, the country woman's long-sleeved dress and inappropriately big hat are "funny" or "out of the norm." The Japanese fan in her hand and the straw hat on the floor result in an incongruity, twisting the "elegant" dance scene into a "comical" dance scene. Kitazume (2010a: 18–19, 2010b: 64–65) concludes that such trivial items, when inserted in the normal scene, produce humorous effects. Kitazume (2008: 135–138, 2010a: 77–79) presents another example of visual humour.

Figure 7: Invasion of Iraq

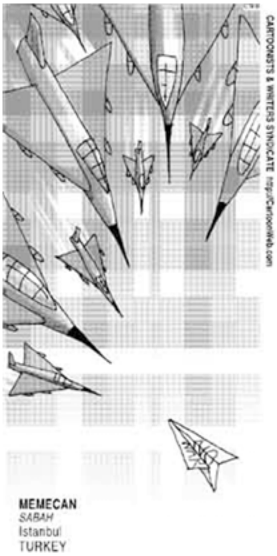

Figure 8: Memecan

Figure 7 is a scene of US aircrafts flying over the desert of Iraq in March 2003. And Figure 8 is a satirical cartoon by Sabah Memecan from Istanbul, Turkey. The picture showing imbalanced military forces expresses criticism of the Coalition Force's attack on Iraq without a UN endorsement. If you look carefully at the airplane at the bottom, you will also find that the Iraqi plane is made of paper. The paper airplane twists the "serious" scene we have seen on television into the "humorous" scene.

Based on the analysis of these Figures, Kitazume (2012: 23) defines the essence of humour as a "twist."

(7) The definition of a "twist"

The essence of "humour" is a "twist." The twist is a minor alteration, which in turn, transforms a "prototypical" scene into a "ludicrous" one. This special incongruity between the two scenes produces laughter.

7 Dynamics of humour

Oring (2010: 20) made a presentation at the 22nd International Conference of International Society for Humor Studies (ISHS) held in Hong Kong in 2010. He objected to the idea of blending when interpreting humour, asserting that the blending theory does not distinguish between metaphor (8) and humour (9).

(8) My lawyer is a shark. (metaphor)

(9) A shark is my lawyer. (humour)

Conceding Oring's argument that the blending theory does not distinguish between metaphor and humour, I would propose that Oring's interpretation of (9) as an example of humour is inappropriate.

While (8) is clearly an example of metaphor, interpretable as referring to the greedy lawyer, (9) in isolation is nonsensical, considering that it is common sense that a shark cannot become a lawyer. It only becomes humorous when it follows (8), that is, they are humorous when together. I argue that this pair provides good insight into the essence of humour.

By swapping "lawyer" and "shark" in the sentence, the prototypical image of a greedy lawyer in (8) is turned into a contradictory image in (9). The change in word order works as a "twist" to create humour.

A close look at this pair of expressions illustrates why humour causes laughter. Incongruity theorists have maintained that laughter is produced by the incongruity between two incompatible meanings. However, the pair above demonstrates that the notion of "incongruity" is not sufficient to explain why humour produces laughter. Laughter occurs when listeners recognize that a minor alteration at the end of the text drastically changes the context-specific scene. The dynamic change triggered by this minor alteration contributes to producing laughter. This observation necessitates the revision of (7) into (10), which explains more clearly why humour causes laughter.

(10) Twist Theory
The essence of "humour" is a "twist." The twist is a minor alteration, which, in effect, transforms a "prototypical" scene into a "ludicrous" one. The dynamics of this drastic change triggered by a minor alteration produce laughter.

When interpreting utterance meanings, we usually resort to background knowledge structure called a "frame," and the context in which the utterance is made. In other words, human beings are constantly trying to interpret various utterances based on the stereotypical knowledge and the context in which the sentences are uttered.

A twist, which often appears at the end, surprisingly turns on the context-based interpretation, suddenly creating a scene which is perceived as "ludicrous" from a stereotypical knowledge we have about the world. It is, therefore, safe to assume that the message of a humorist is a recommendation to be temporarily free from the norms to which we are bounded. Humour shows us that a prototypical concept we have about something can easily be transformed into a ludicrous one with minor alterations.

8 Conclusions

What is humour? What causes laughter? This paper has attempted to provide some answers to these perennial questions amongst humour theorists. It reviews Kitazume's (2010) claim of pointing out the falsity of equating humour and laughter. Kitazume explains that the common definition "humor is something that makes a person laugh or smile" has created the misunderstanding that everything that causes laughter is humour. By classifying the causes of laughter into two types: humorous and non-humorous ones, and then attempting to identify a common element found in all examples of humour, Kitazume (2010) proposes that the essence of humour is a "twist."

Many humour theorists, in attempting to find out the essence of humour and causes of laughter, have proposed various views. Among varied theories of humour, one of the most quoted theories is Raskin's (1979, 1985) *Semantic Script Theory of Humor*. This paper examines his famous doctor's joke by analyzing it into literal meanings and utterance meanings. This analysis reveals that the expression "overlap of two scripts" in Raskin's *SSTH* confuses literal meanings and utterance meanings. The doctor's joke involves two utterance meanings: one assumed at first and negated at the end, and another one opposed to it – and there is no overlap at the utterance level. It also reveals that the most notable feature in humour that is missing in metaphor is a quick and sudden change.

This paper has made a further investigation into the causes of laughter. Oring's (2010) examples of humour and metaphor shown in (8) and (9) have given a clear insight into the causes of laughter produced by humour. By pointing out the inappropriateness of Oring's argument, this paper proposes the *Twist Theory* based on the definition of "twist" argued in Kitazume (2010), as seen below. The essence of "humor" is a "twist." The twist is a minor alteration, which, in effect, transforms a "prototypical" scene into a "ludicrous" one. The dynamics of this drastic change triggered by a minor alteration produce laughter.

The Twist Theory leads to the question of why we overturn context and a stereotypical knowledge about something. It is assumed that human beings are constantly trying to interpret utterances based on the stereotypical knowledge and context in which the sentences are uttered. The intention of a humorist is to offer temporary freedom from these set boundaries, because humour shows us that a prototypical assumption we have about something can easily be transformed into a ludicrous one with minor alterations.

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II Humor as a function of discourse

Salvatore Attardo
The GTVH and humorous discourse

1 Competence and performance

The Semantic Script Theory of Humor (Raskin 1985), which was expanded into the General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH; Attardo and Raskin 1991), is clearly presented and defined as a theory of humor competence. This is significant but has been mostly missed or ignored by the vast majority of the critics of both theories. This is not the place to repeat the fairly detailed discussion of the subject available in Attardo (2008). However, I will briefly summarize the main point: "competence," along with "performance" are the terms introduced by Noam Chomsky to match Saussure's *langue* in the *langue* vs. *parole* opposition. The differences between Chomsky's and Saussure's definitions need not concern us in this context.

The dichotomy is foundational in linguistics: without it no generalizations are possible, no rules can be formulated, no scientific discussion of language is possible.[1] What does the opposition *langue/parole* entail? First, *langue* is abstract and *parole* is concrete. More specifically, *parole* is an instantiation of the *langue*. An instantiation is a concrete manifestation of an abstract entity. Thus the (allo)phone [b] is an instantiation of the phoneme /b/. Without the distinction between *langue* and *parole*, we could not distinguish between all the allophones (instantiations) of the phoneme because some of the instantiations overlap with the instantiations of other phonemes (an unreleased [p] sounds a lot like an unreleased [t]). Second, the *langue* is a set of choices and the *parole* is the outcome of these choices. Structural linguistics calls these "paradigmatic" choices. These are easy to see in closed-class morphemes (in English, one must choose whether to mark the main verb as present or past: *I sing/sang a song*) but the paradigmatic choices exist throughout language: in lexical choices (*dog* or *mutt* or *puppy* or *hound*), in forms of address (*du* or *Herr Doctor Professor Attardo*; the latter being incidentally my preferred form of address at all times). Third, the *parole* is instantiated in a specific time/place/situation, etc. In other words: *parole* is the instantiation (performance) of the abstract *langue* (competence) by a given speaker, with given physical characteristics, with given socio-economic

1 Some approaches, which claim to reject the distinction, reintroduce it surreptitiously.

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status, at a given time, in a given situation, in a given context, etc. To be sure, the context, socio-economic status, gender, time of the performance, etc. often are not relevant, but, as the phenomenon of deixis has taught us, sometimes they matter quite a bit.

1.1 Discourse is performance

A different, but entirely equivalent way of stating what was stated in the preceding section is to say that performance occurs in discourse or that performance *is* discourse. However, we must be very clear about what "discourse" itself means. There have been many, disparate definitions of discourse. This is not the place to review them. I will limit myself to saying that I take discourse to be any verbal (linguistic) interaction, in any medium (spoken, written, etc.), produced by the speakers of a language (or their machines).

It is true that the systems of power and ideology are reflected and possibly enacted within the various discourses that the speakers produce as they go about their lives. To study these subjects is a worthwhile enterprise, but there is a different, and just as worthwhile perspective which is to consider the discourse produced by the speakers as a body of data (a corpus) that needs to be accounted for (or described).

It goes without saying that under this definition of discourse the claim that discourse is performance is tautological. I am defining discourse as the performance of the langue.

1.2 What does (or could) a theory of performance look like?

There are many approaches to discourse. By the definition discussed above, they are therefore theories of performance. Thus one can think of conversation and discourse analysis as a theory of performance of certain oral genres, primarily conversations. Critical discourse analysis, as represented for example by Fairclough (1995), is a different approach that privileges the role of power and society in discourse. While there are many applications of conversation analysis and discourse analysis to humor, no comprehensive theory of humor performance, in the sense defined above, has been presented.

A general theory of discourse performance would need to account for all the factors whereby the text and its context interact, mutually influencing one another. Currently, such a theory is not feasible, because many of the factors involved have not been studied in any detail. However, in the case of humorous interactions, the concept of "humor repertoire" may prove to be helpful in beginning to outline how a theory of performance should look like.

In Attardo (2002), I first used the concept of humor repertoire, defined as "The gamut of possibilities open to S, in a given situation" referring back to Bally. Bally (1909) distinguishes, after Saussure, between "langue" and "parole" but introduces the "langue expressive" i.e., the "possibilities offered" by language to the speakers. The idea was picked up by American sociolinguistics a few decades later as "repertoire."

A linguistic or verbal repertoire is defined as follows: "the verbal repertoire [...] contains all the accepted ways of formulating messages" (Gumperz 1964: 137–138) or "the totality of linguistic forms regularly employed within the community in the course of socially significant interaction" (1965: 85). Platt and Platt (1975: 35) helpfully elaborate the definition as "the range of linguistic varieties which the speaker has at his(/her) disposal."

Repertoires, Gumperz explains, differ from descriptive grammars insofar as they include "a greater number of alternants, reflecting contextual and social differences in speech" (1964: 137) or in other words they define "the social factors which govern the employment of grammatically acceptable alternates" (1965: 84).

In Attardo 2002, I provided the following example of repertoire for reactions to a joke/jab line:

[A]fter S has uttered U and H believes S had the intention for U to be funny. H may:

a) not get the joke and laugh,
b) get the joke, but not react,
c) get the joke and smile,
d) get the joke and laugh,
e) get the joke and comment metalinguistically,
f) get the joke and change the subject,
h) not get the joke and ask for clarification, etc.

The example remains valid, but needs to be clarified: particularly it should be noted that the seven cases listed are classes of behaviors, not actual performance events. A theory of performance is still an abstraction, much like a theory of competence (*langue*). There are many different types of laughter, many different types of smiles, many different types of non-reactions, etc. Furthermore, the observable behaviors may overlap, but the mental states of the participants may be significantly different: one may laugh upon getting or not getting a joke.

Another important issue, which I assumed implicitly in 2002, is that the performance of humor is not limited to the reactions to humor, even though this topic has seen the most interest by researchers, but it obviously includes the decisions by the speaker to utter a humorous turn, by the writer to produce a humorous text, etc. Moreover, performance includes also the actual delivery of the humor – in the sense closest to the meaning of performance as "stage performance." For clarity I will refer to this aspect of performance as "delivery." Delivery includes all the linguistic and paralinguistic choices made by the speakers as they produce the humorous utterance (ranging from the pitch and volume with which the syllables are uttered, to the font choice of the text, for example).

The following graphic representation gives a rough idea of the complexity of the issues that a theory of performance must tackle.

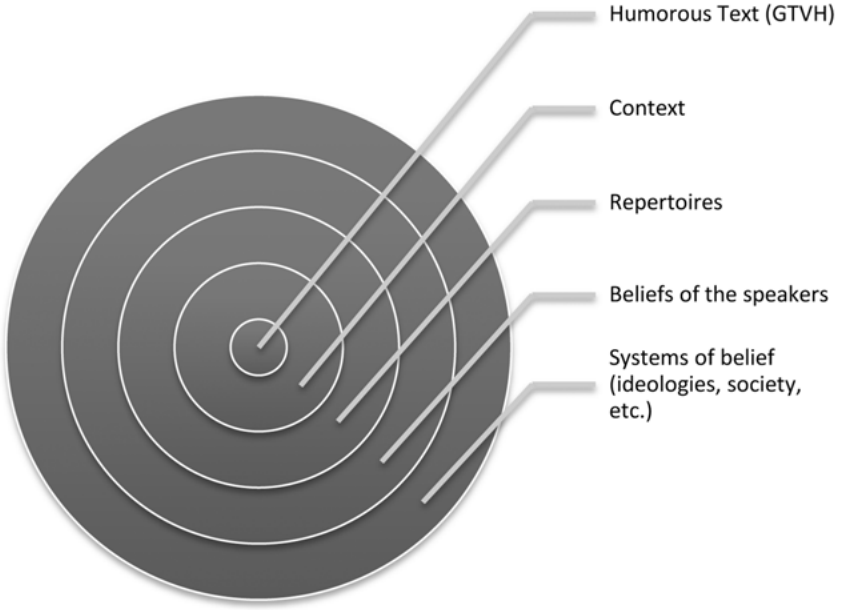

Figure 1: The interplay of factors in a theory of humor performance

One should note that Figure 1 is a gross over-simplification. For example, speakers have beliefs (opinions) about texts, contexts, and repertoires, hence the speakers' beliefs are represented here as a larger circle than the inner three. However, *some* speakers' beliefs are also part of the context in which the text is produced and in fact are "represented" within it, primarily in the presuppositional basis of the text. Consider that any details that are not included in the text, but are somehow relevant to it, are assumed to be shared known information. Finally, the interplay of ideologies, systems of beliefs, societal beliefs, etc. and the other layers are complex and largely unexplored.

The alert reader will have noticed that the delivery-performance is ignored in the graph above, because delivery is an orthogonal dimension which would have made the image all the more complex. Delivery may be considered part of the Language knowledge resource, which depending on how one classifies prosodic phenomena, is clearly part of the context (for example, an utterance produced with a Duchenne smile as opposed to one produced with a look of aversion), obviously part of the repertoire, and part of the speakers' beliefs (witness the existence of the folk-theories of humor, debunked in Attardo and Pickering 2011), as well as presumably ideologies. More discussion of delivery-performance will be found in the final section of the paper.

1.3 The role of the GTVH in a theory of performance

It is tempting to say that, since the GTVH is a theory of competence, it logically has nothing to say about performance. However, that is a reductive view which would be especially misguided in light of recent work that has sought to broaden the GTVH to include "performance" – side aspects of the humor situation within the theory. Canestrari (2010) and Tsakona (2013 and this volume) are two excellent examples of this tendency. Both Canestrari and Tsakona take the approach of broadening the GTVH by adding further knowledge resources that would handle some of the performance aspects of the texts (for example, their metapragmatic status).

An alternative approach, which is the one proposed in Attardo (2002) and in this paper, is to argue that the GTVH is a theory of competence and that a separate theory of performance needs to be developed which may or may not include information from the competence side.

One could argue for or against these two positions, but they are essentially the same, once we recognize that they both seek to address the same problems, albeit from different locations in the metatheoretical space. One way of conceptualizing the difference/similarity of the proposals is to consider that they both want to add two knowledge resources, but Canestrari/Tsakona want to put the two newcomers in the enlarged GTVH, whereas I prefer to incorporate them in the newly formed theory of performance (which we will not name GTPH, for Performance, no matter how much money we are offered).

I will bring a few arguments toward the preferability of segregating the competence and performance sides of the theory, but without much hope of settling the issue. My main objection to expanding the GTVH to include performance issues is the heterogeneity of the resulting super-theory: the GTVH, for all its breadth, was a theory of textual objects. The knowledge resources are elements needed to produce a text. Performance matters are context factors and relationships between context factors (for example, when is a joke admissible, to a given audience, in a given situation). Any theory that handles on the same level textual and contextual factors risks a lack of cohesion.

A second argument is more abstract, but also more powerful, in my mind. The GTVH is based on the idea that six "variables" (the knowledge resources) are the necessary and sufficient parameters to define the abstract text-type "joke," which precedes logically (but in no sense psychologically) all jokes, much like a Platonic ideal or a Kantian noumenon. A theory of performance needs to account for all the relevant contextual information and there is no guarantee, indeed no theoretical reason, to believe that all the relevant contextual information needed to account for performance is organized around the six knowledge resources, or is even in any significant way *related* to the knowledge resources. Indeed, we know that socio-economic factors are very relevant toward the choice of situation and language in a text (for example, middle class speakers are less likely to talk about bodily functions and to use lexical items labeled as "profane" than lower class speakers). It is obvious that this very significant distinction is based on and relevant to the socio-economic status of the speakers, but entirely irrelevant to whether the text is potentially (competence-wise) humorous. To put it differently: a theory of competence and a theory of performance articulate mutually independent categories and therefore cannot mix in principle.

1.4 Exemplification of potential contributions of the GTVH to a theory of performance through failed humor

Having said this, it is also readily apparent that some generalizations can be offered, based on the GTVH, which are at least of passing interest for the creation of a theory of performance. The paragraphs below discuss a few examples, with some generalization on how these might be helpful in building a theory of performance.

1.4.1 Language

Hempelmann (2003) found that the class of "Christian" jokes was in fact held together by very "low level" knowledge resources, such as target and language. Similarly, we can predict that choices at the level of language will affect audience reception of humor in ways predictable from general language usage. Let us consider an example: twenty plus years ago, I was shocked and offended when one of my students, having found out what my then-in-progress dissertation topic consisted of, insisted on telling me a series of “sorority girl” jokes, using the noun “bitch” instead of “girl” in each of the well-known jokes. The use of that derogatory term revealed some not-so-repressed aggression toward women, which I found disturbing (and, needless to say, unfunny). I would expect this sort of reaction to be generalizable. Let us consider another example. In October of 2010, a video of Silvio Berlusconi, then prime minister of Italy, telling a joke to a group of soldiers, was released. The joke is an untranslatable pun (it is available on YouTube http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3uFIMm5nWR4) which ends with a blasphemy on God’s name (God is a pig, translated literally). *Famiglia Cristiana* [Christian Family], the Italian Catholic magazine stigmatized this in very strong terms. Many Catholics were deeply offended. It is clear that what the Catholics found offensive was the public use of blasphemy, not the (feeble) humor per se. Potentially what was also offensive was that Berlusconi seemed to assume that it was OK to joke about blasphemy. However, it remains true that the issue was the blasphemy, not the humor. Hence, we could advance a potential generalization: any humor that uses language found to be offensive by the audience is unlikely to be successful.

1.4.2 Unavailable scripts

Another area where the GTVH might be readily harnessed to producing a useful component of the theory of humor performance is the common enough observation that there are some scripts that are labeled as “unavailable” for humor in a given speech community/culture/social group, etc. The issue is further complicated by the mutable nature of this list. A few weeks after the 2001 9/11 attack, at a Friars’ Club roast, Gilbert Gottfried joked that he could not get a direct flight to California and that the flight had to stop at the Empire State Center. Gottfried was booed by the audience and someone shouted “too soon.” Gottfried saved the day by proceeding to perform the Aristocrats joke, but what is interesting here is the fact that the anonymous voice heard yelling “too soon” was entirely correct. A few years later, jokes about 9/11 are, if not common, at least not unheard of. My point is that the availability of the scripts involved in the 9/11 attacks for humor went to zero in the aftermath of the attack and then, as time passed, presumably to the same levels as before or to a new level prescribed by societal norms.

Each society, group, community, situation, etc. maintains a list of scripts not available for humor. Extreme sexual acts, such as those depicted in the Aristocrats joke for example, are generally not available for humor in society at large, but may be entirely acceptable within the sub-culture of professional comedians, as the reception of Gottfried's performance shows. Dead baby jokes will presumably not fare well at a Lamaze class. Little moron jokes will not be advisable at a children with disabilities support group.

In general, scripts that are associated with very high status objects within a culture/group will tend not to be available for humor. This would be obviously true if we assume that humor is disparaging, i.e., debases its target. However, there is no reason to do so, witness the following joke I produced while in conversation with the staffers of the Italian consulate in Detroit about the problems facing them when the then current consul would go back to Italy, having completed his assignment, and his replacement would not have yet arrived. In reference to the staffers I said: "*Eh, saranno sconsolati*." [Eh, they will be dismayed[2]]. This was met by complete silence. The abject failure of the joke could mean any number of things, such as that the staffers were offended that I did not take their plight seriously, or that they did not understand the joke entirely, or they did not like puns, etc. If they understood the joke, it seems to imply that they did not feel that it was appropriate to joke about the consul. Be that as it may, there was no debasement of the consul, since if anything, the pun implies that being without the consul makes the employees sad. However, debasement or not, the consular employees clearly did not consider the consul to be a valid topic of humor, if they understood the humor.

1.4.3 The Snickers bar ad

Consider the following description of an advertisement for Snickers bars that aired during the Super Bowl in 2007. "Although the ad was ranked in the year's top 10 Super Bowl commercials on some websites, it was perceived as homophobic and attacked by the Human Rights Campaign, the nation's largest gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender civil rights organization. The ad, which depicted an awkward moment between two males biting into a Snickers bar from opposite ends, was pulled by the manufacturers one day after the Super Bowl". (Yoon 2014)

There can be no question that the text (the ad) meets the requirements of a humorous text (Script Opposition: candy vs. homosexual kiss; Logical Mechanism: implied consequence; Situation: irrelevant/mechanics in a garage; Narrative

2 In Italian "console" means consul, the prefix "s-" is a privative, and the suffix "ati" in this case has the meaning of a resultative, here in the plural, so that "sconsolati" can be understood both as "dismayed" and as "made-without-a-consul+plural."

Strategy: visual; Target: none/homophobes; LA: visual) and one could argue, as I would, that the ad targets homophobes, i.e., the two mechanics who because they have "kissed" feel the need to re-establish their masculinity by doing "something manly" such as pulling their chest hair. Regardless, the topic is clearly not available for humor in the system of beliefs of the Human Right Campaign and the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), which according to the press[3] complained about the ad, and condemned it because to "promote and endorse this kind of prejudice [anti-gay] is simply inexcusable." Clearly, GLAAD did not see the ad as humorous. This example differs from the consul or the 9/11 examples in that GLAAD's is presumably not objecting to any and all jokes that involve gay men, but only on those that disparage them, in their view. So this is not a case of the script being unavailable for humor, but rather a clash between systems of belief (obviously, we assume that the Snickers executives that approved the ad and the advertising company that created it thought the ad was funny; if they believed the ad to be offensive when they created it there is no ideological conflict, just basic conflict).

1.4.4 Meena always comes second

This example was collected and first analyzed by Jen Hay:

Meena: I'm the only person in this room who freestyled at nationals and came in second in the women's division

Dan: let's face it Meena always comes second

Meena: yeah I know that's cause Sue Willis always beats me + except at distance

Dan: we were actually making sexual innuendos well I was. (Hay 1994: 46)

In this example of failed humor, chosen because of the unambiguous nature of the text, one of the participants (Dan) metalinguistically comments on his failure to elicit humor by exploiting the ambiguity of the word "come" in "come second": "come" may mean "arrive" but also "have an orgasm." Meena, as is obvious from her second turn, is completely oblivious of the intended sexual innuendo and instead takes the first turn by Dan as a criticism of her swimming performance.

As I said, this example is notable for its clarity, as there can be no doubt that Dan meant his first turn as an allusion to sex. However, even in a straightforward case as this one, it is unclear whether Dan intends his second turn as

3 http://money.cnn.com/2007/02/06/news/companies/snickers/

expressing dismay, or as a critique of the lack of comprehension demonstrated by Meena. Unfortunately, we are unable to determine was caused Meena to miss the humor (she might be obsessed with sports, or naive about sex, etc.). However, this example can serve as a cautionary tale for would be humorists to make sure that the attempt to switch from one script to another be explicit enough that it be "picked up" by their audience.

1.4.5 Associate dean failed humor

As another cautionary tale, I would like to end with yet another example of failed humor, but one that, despite my having been present, I fail to be able to explain fully. The context is one of the meetings of Deans' council, a formal meeting led by the Provost of the university, and attended by the Deans of the academic colleges. This is a fairly important body, as its decisions may affect the careers of all faculty at the university, and the meeting is somewhat formal, as minutes are taken, but humor is not exceptional within it, especially at the beginning of the meeting. In this particular instance, the meeting was led by the Interim Provost, who started the proceedings by explaining that since I was participating in the meeting in my role as Interim Associate Provost, my Associate Dean was participating as the representative of my College, since by virtue of my being Interim Associate Provost I had relinquished in that circumstance my right to vote. At this point, the Associate Dean of my college asked the Interim Provost if he knew why an Interim Associate Provost was like a convicted felon. He did not, so the Associated Dean said: "Because neither can vote." This was followed by a long embarrassed silence, which I broke by saying "Oy vey!" There was no laughter or smiling, until after there was some good-natured teasing of the Associate Dean, along the lines that not everyone can tell jokes and the like.

Why this joke should have failed is an interesting question. It is fairly easy to see that the joke has the potential to be successful: the utterance meets all the requirements of the GTVH, or in other words is a well-formed joke[4], the utterance is not offensive, the situation is adequate to the use of humor, the topic is not taboo, the utterance was understandable, there were no problems hearing it, etc. One could think that it was a gender issue, as the Associate

4 Script Opposition: Actual/Non-Actual, Dean/Felon; Logical Mechanism: False analogy (both lose their right to vote); Situation: Irrelevant; Target: Dean/Interim Associate Provost; Narrative Strategy: Question and answer; Language: Irrelevant.

Dean/joke teller was a woman and both the Interim Provost and Associate Provost were men, but there were other female Deans present and they failed to show appreciation as well. The hypothesis that the joke was too aggressive toward the Dean/Interim Associate Provost is also a non-starter: far more aggressive jokes have been produced and enjoyed in the same setting.

My guess is that this example brings up another of the complex phenomena that a theory of humor performance will need to address, i.e., the problem of the quality of humor. The joke, while well-formed, is not a very good one. For one, the third script of the punch line (LOSS OF THE VOTE), which is supposed to reconcile the first two (ASSOCIATE PROVOST and FELON) was too salient in the situation to be unexpected, since the previous extended turn had been precisely explaining this. Second, the location of the humor was somewhat inappropriate, as the meeting had already commenced. While I don't have hard data to document this, I strongly suspect that in workplace discourse, humor tends to occur in small talk, which itself tends to occur at the beginning and end of meetings. Thus, what might have doomed this joke was the conjunction between a lower quality joke and a mis-placed one.

2 Delivery as performance

A particularly perceptive reader might have noticed that the theory of performance discussed above, except for the delivery-performance aspect, is a top-down deductive model: starting from an abstract characterization of the situation, it attempts to envisage all the possible occurrences/choices of the speakers and categorizes them. The delivery-performance aspect is different and was therefore not treated with the rest of the discussion. The reminder of this paper will briefly characterize the meta-theoretical background of this approach and briefly describe the research conducted by my research group on the subject.

A corpus-based bottom-up inductive model is inevitably faced with a problem: either it finds meta-theoretical, immanent reasons to define its regularities, or it introduces categories that are postulated a-priori and *ipso facto* becomes a top-down model, with the aggravating circumstance that it does so uncritically and often tacitly.

In and of themselves data are meaningless. Consider the problem of cherry-picking. Given a sufficiently large corpus of utterances, a trivial requirement nowadays, it is almost always possible to find an example of any behavior, however deviant. For example, one might be able to find an example of a speaker reacting with profanity to another speaker's telling of a joke. Even if that is the case, and one can attest an actual, ecologically valid, naturally occurring bit of data with that given combination, this tells us very little (beyond the fact that the datum occurs). The questions that a theory of performance needs to ask are: how frequent is that behavior, in relation to other behaviors in that (more or less same) situation? how frequent is the behavior *outside* of the situation? Suppose for example that a speaker is affected by Tourette syndrome. That speaker's baseline for profanity would be very high and this would explain the presence of profanity after (and before) a joke.

Hence the problem with cherry-picking of the data. When a researcher looks at a corpus and picks out the interesting phenomena, he/she is distorting the nature of the data. Specifically, one can make meaningful pronouncements about humor in a corpus only if one analyzes all instances of humor in the corpus and contrasts them to a sufficiently large baseline of non-humorous utterances from the corpus. The remedy to cherry-picking, and more generally to bottom-up approaches, is to have the guarantee of statistical significance to attest that the generalization one arrives at is warranted by the data.

In past few years, some corpus-based studies have been conducted to seek to characterize the "delivery" of humor. The results have been sobering. Pickering et al. (2009) and Attardo and Pickering (2011) showed that canned narrative jokes did not mark the punch lines prosodically or with pauses, unlike what the folk-theory of humor performance, reviewed in Attardo and Pickering (2011), assumed. In fact, punch lines are delivered by average non-professional speakers at lower pitch and volume than the rest of the text. This is due to their position at the end of a paratone (i.e., spoken paragraph) which due to paratone declination (e.g., Tench 2011: 183) is lowest in pitch and volume. Attardo et al. (2011) and Attardo et al. (2013) confirmed these results for conversational humor, with the difference that since conversational humor does not occur at the end of an extended single turn/paratone, there is no reduction in pitch and volume. No evidence has been found of above average pauses marking the humor. Laughter occurs frequently but not significantly with the humor. Smiling seems to occur more frequently with humor.

This kind of research, and the related research presented in a special issue of Pragmatics and Cognition (2011; 19:3 and 19:3), and recently published in volume form as Attardo et al. (2014), holds the promise of a bottom-up, corpus-based theory of the performance of humor, anchored in empirical instrumental data. Whatever the preference of the researchers for deductive or inductive theories, a full-blown theory of the performance of humor, or a discourse theory of humor, remains a distant goal, but no longer a purely programmatic one.

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Ksenia Shilikhina

Metapragmatic markers of the *bona fide* and *non-bona fide* modes of communication

1 Introduction

Our everyday discourse is not as smooth as modern theories and models of communication tend to describe it. One of the many sources of potential ambiguity and misunderstanding is switching from serious and sincere discourse to non-serious, e.g., humorous/ironic/sarcastic ways of using language. In a dialogue, the interlocutor may accept this switch, or it can become an apple of discord that can potentially cause disagreement and explicit mode negotiation. The following dialogue (Example 1) taken from the Corpus of Contemporary America English (henceforth – COCA) illustrates the case:

(1) Pres. RICHARD M. NIXON: **Why don't we get serious**?

BARBARA WALTERS: Well, because I think people are still- **I am serious**. People are interested in you.

Pres. RICHARD M. NIXON: **I know you're-**

BARBARA WALTERS: People are still trying-

Pres. RICHARD M. NIXON: **-serious**.

BARBARA WALTERS: -to understand you.

Pres. RICHARD M. NIXON: Don't overblow it.

BARBARA WALTERS: I'm sorry you find it- that you find these questions unserious. We have a different idea, perhaps, of what serious is. But let me go on. (COCA)

The dialogue between the politician and the journalist demonstrates the importance of the opposition of serious vs. non-serious use of language for communication: to proceed with the interview the participants need to negotiate the rules of interaction and establish common grounds in understanding what should be taken at face value and what should not be understood literally.

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A sudden switch of the mode by one of the interlocutors can cause disagreement or misunderstanding – an example of misunderstanding caused by an unexpected transition to the *non-bona fide* mode is discussed in Priego-Valverde (2009). In any case, mode switching can be crucial for the process of communication, since it involves changes in the conventions of interaction and rules of interpretation of utterances or texts. If the hearer is not sure whether the utterance is meant *bona fide* or *non-bona fide*, misunderstanding is likely to occur. The difficulty in interpreting the utterance as serious or humorous can be illustrated by example (2), where metalinguistic assessment of an utterance (*both serious and joking*) means that the speech can combine properties of serious and humorous communication, and the utterance *"That was my slogan, you know"* can be interpreted both ways:

(2) When Belcher, a professor of materials science and engineering and biological engineering, explained that her biologically based system made it possible to conduct a billion experiments at a time, he interrupted to say, "Really?" Belcher answered, "Yes, we can," to which he quipped, "That was my slogan, you know." Overall, he was "**serious, but kind of joking at the same time**," Belcher says (COCA).

Examples 1 and 2 demonstrate that, as language users, we are well aware of the two ways of using language: serious and humorous. Serious talk is usually described as logical and unambiguous, while humorous use of language is typically associated with playful behaviour, pleasure, joy and laughter (Mulkay 1988; Chafe 2007). Apparently, the two ways of speaking differ significantly both in their general cultural value and in specific semantic and pragmatic conventions that language users apply to interpret utterances as either serious or humorous / ironic / sarcastic, etc. However, none of the existing models of communication – for a survey of models of communication see, e.g., Narula (2006) – takes this distinction into account. The only exception to this statement is Raskin's Semantic Script Theory of Humor (Raskin 1985: 103), and its descendants – General Theory of Verbal Humor (Attardo and Raskin 1991) and the Ontological Theory of Verbal Humor (Raskin 2008, Raskin 2012).

Traditionally, serious and sincere talk is considered to be the default type of discourse, and the differences between serious and humorous ways of language use are completely ignored. There are at least two problems with this tradition: (i) the assumption that language users apply the same rules for interpreting both serious and non-serious utterances, and (ii) the idea that transmission of information is the only reason why people use language. First, if understanding of serious and non-serious utterances was based on universal rules, how would one decide what is funny and what is not? Second, if transmission of information were the only purpose of speaking / writing, human language would be similar to a system of mathematical symbols with a one-to-one correspondence of form and meaning. Yet the form-meaning relation in linguistic signs can be very intricate, and the evidence suggests that people use language for purposes other than transmission of information – hence six functions of language described by Jakobson (1987) or Hallidayan metafunctions of language (Halliday 1985). Therefore, a theory of communication needs to incorporate information about the differences between the two modes and about the signals that allow language users to interpret utterances as *bona fide* or *non-bona fide*.

In this paper I will attempt at setting the criteria for differentiating the two modes of communication and their subtypes. Also I will describe functions of metapragmatic comments used by speakers of English, German, Polish and Russian languages to explicate their intentions and negotiate the *bona fide* or *non-bona fide* types of discourse. The illustrative examples come mostly from five language corpora: the Corpus of Web-Based Global English (GloWbE), Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA), Russian National Corpus (RNC), Polish National Corpus (Narodowy Korpus Języka Polskiego – NKJP) and the DWDS-Korpus of the German language. Computer-mediated communication is yet another source of data for the research.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows: Part 2 is a brief discussion of the social and cultural significance of the serious and humorous use of language. In Part 3, I will take up the issue of the *bona fide* and *non-bona fide* modes of communication. I will argue that, due to the wide variety of subtypes of *bona fide* and *non-bona fide* modes of discourse, the "naïve" dichotomy of "serious vs. humorous" cannot be easily transformed into the opposition of the *bona fide* and *non-bona fide* modes of communication. I will also present a set of criteria that allow for differentiation between the subtypes of the two modes. Part 4 discusses functions of metapragmatic comments that explicitly mark the switch between the *bona fide* and *non-bona fide* use of language. These comments play an essential role in ensuring general coherence of discourse, namely, they signal the speaker's awareness of the potential ambiguity of an utterance and guide the process of understanding. For researchers of humour, these comments can provide information on how language users switch between the *bona fide* and *non-bona fide* modes and how they negotiate the rules of utterance interpretation.

2 Everyday communication: seriousness vs. humour

For language users the opposition of the serious and humorous talk seems obvious: seriousness, sincerity and rationality are considered to be the expected norm, while humorous communication has a somewhat ambivalent status. On the one hand, sense of humour has a high profile in many cultures. In her description of patterns of typical English behaviour Fox comments: “the most noticeable and important ‘rule’ about humour in English conversation is its dominance and pervasiveness. Humour rules. Humour governs. Humour is omnipresent and omnipotent” (Fox 2004: 61). There are other motivations to appreciate humour and make even broader generalizations about its biological, social and cultural significance. According to Palmer, “humanity is the only species with a sense of humour, zoologists tell us, confirming Aristotle’s insight that laughter is a distinguishing feature of our species” (Palmer 1994: 1). Numerous attempts to define the functions of humour demonstrate its versatility in discourse: humorous talk can signal a variety of emotions (from aggression to pleasure and joy); it can also be used as a tool that regulates social relations (Simpson 2003). There is also a special aesthetic dimension of humorous discourse (Morreall 1983): since the ancient times the genre of comedy has absorbed the essence of what people tend to find funny, and, along with jokes, comedy constitutes one of the two genres that are heavily used by the flourishing entertainment industry. Yet another indicator of the importance of humour is the interest in humour research – the area has enjoyed stable growth in the past decades (e.g. Raskin 1985; Mulkay 1988; Attardo 1994, Attardo 2001; Partington 2006; Martin 2007; Raskin 2008; Davies 2011; Hurley, Dennett and Adams 2011; Goatly 2012).

On the other hand, if seriousness is the norm, then humorous discourse can be viewed a deviation from this norm. Humorous behaviour is sometimes associated with being silly, irresponsible and antisocial (Morreall 1983). Hence, every culture imposes restrictions on the non-serious use of language. In some situations, joking can be heavily criticized or receive negative feedback, as it is considered irresponsible and inappropriate, as in example 3:

(3) Crossing the Canada/US border can be a stressful experience and changes to the passport requirements in 2009 added to the anxiety for many. Do you have a story about crossing the border? Forget your passport? **Make a stupid joke**? Maybe your story could help someone else, or maybe you just want to get it off your chest. (GloWbE)

Crossing the state border is a canonical example of a situation where only earnest communication is expected: whatever is said should be interpreted at face value, and telling a joke may result in legal problems.

Alternatively, critical evaluation of joking and humorous use of language may result from one's personal perception of the situation, as in examples 4 and 5:

(4) Если будешь шутить **глупые и неуместные шутки**, ничем хорошим это для тебя не закончится. (RNC)

'If you go on telling **stupid and inappropriate jokes**, you'll be in trouble.'

(5) Er führte das Wort, rühmte sich seiner Geschäfte, war laut, lachte grölend über seine eigenen **schlechten Witze**, die wir nicht mit anhören wollten. Mit einem Wort, Dr. Schiermeyer war ein Angeber. (DWDS)

'He took the floor, boasted about his business, he was loud, laughed at his **own stupid jokes**, to which we didn't want to listen. In a word, Dr. Schiermeyer was a braggart'.

Examples 3–5 demonstrate the ambivalent status of humour: despite the fact that generally positive attitude to humorous discourse can be found in many cultures, jokes can also cause a negative reaction. If found inappropriate or silly, non-serious use of language is likely to lead to a conflict. To express their negative evaluation or to warn the addressee about the unwanted consequences of humorous talk, speakers use metalinguistic comments that explicitly mark the inappropriateness of jokes in a particular context.

On the face of it, the binary opposition of "serious vs. humorous" use of language corresponds to a more technical description of the two modes of communication – *bona fide* and *non-bona fide*. However, it would be an oversimplification to talk about one-to-one correlation and to say that humorous discourse is synonymous with the *non-bona fide* mode of communication. The absence of direct correspondence between the two pairs of concepts lies in the fact that the *bona fide* and *non-bona fide* modes of discourse are not homogeneous. The two modes and the subtypes of the *bona fide* and *non-bona fide* communication will be discussed in Part 3.

3 The *bona fide* and *non-bona fide* modes of communication: an overview

The opposition of the *bona fide* and *non-bona fide* modes was first introduced by Raskin, who defined the *bona fide* mode as "the earnest, serious, informationconveying mode of verbal communication" (Raskin 1985: 100). According to Raskin, another important characteristic of the *bona fide* mode is that this type of language use is governed by Grice's Cooperative Principle (Grice 1975). This means that serious and sincere use of language is necessarily rational and cooperative. In contrast, the purpose of the *non-bona fide* communication is not cooperation. Instead the speaker aims at a special effect – laughter (Raskin 1985). According to Partington – who, in his turn, bases his reasoning on Raskin (1985), *non-bona fide* speakers "signal somehow that what they say is not necessarily meant to be taken wholly literally or truthfully" (Partington 2006: 66–67). The *non-bona fide* mode (e.g. humorous or ironic), then, can be described as "a mode in which the speaker is not committed to the truth of what is being said and the hearer is aware of this non-commitment" (Raskin 2007: 99). In other words, it is a flippant and untruthful way of using language that is not fit for the main purpose of communication, that is, transmission of information. The questions to be addressed here are, how can one be sure that the hearer is aware of the *bona fide* or *non-bona fide* intentions of the speaker, and whether non-literalness of meaning, non-truthfulness of the proposition and playful behaviour constitute a full description of the *non-bona fide* mode?

The answers to these questions are somewhat problematic, since it is impossible to talk about the *bona fide* and *non-bona fide* modes of communication in terms of a binary opposition. As mentioned above, these modes are not homogenous and there are different subtypes of serious and non-serious communication. Let me very briefly describe these subtypes.

To the first approximation, the *bona fide* mode comprises explicit and implicit ways of speaking. Explicit communication – the type of language use the majority of models of communication are based on – is the ideal way of transmitting information. The truth-conditional content of an utterance corresponds to a real situation (or, rather, the speaker believes that what she states about the situation is true) and the speaker meaning is in line with the literal sentence meaning.

Implicit *bona fide* discourse suggests that the linguistic form and the meaning of what is being said are related in a more sophisticated way (as in metaphors and metonymies, on the one hand, and standard implicatures, on the other). Unlike metaphors and metonymies, which are classic examples of Maxim of Quality flouting, standard implicatures "are derived from a simple assumption that the speaker is *observing* the maxims" (Levinson 1983: 126). It is the gap between the speaker meaning and the sentence meaning that differentiates the implicit *bona fide* communication from the straightforward explicit transmission of information.

In the *non-bona fide* mode not only do we find humour, but also irony, sarcasm, lies and absurd discourse (the kind of talk that does not make sense). The utterances that fall into one of these subtypes share the property of not corresponding to a real-life situation.

The varieties of the *bona fide* and *non-bona fide* communication listed above can be described in more detail with a set of criteria:

- The relation between the utterance and the world.
- Play and pretence on the part of the speaker.
- The degree of speaker's cooperativeness.
- The possibility for metapragmatic comments of the speaker's own verbal actions.

The first criterion is crucial for the general *bona fide* and *non-bona fide* mode distinction. The major difference lies in the utterance-reality interface: in the *non-bona fide* mode the utterance usually describes a non-existing situation or presents a real situation in a strange way.

The second parameter describes our ability to demonstrate a very specific type of behaviour through language use. Play and its counterpart, pretence, are often opposed to seriousness (Huizinga 1971). As a behavioural pattern, play is based on a set of rules or loose conventions that set the limits of possible actions and "suspend ordinary laws, and for the moment establish new legislation, which alone counts" (Caillois 2001: 10). As a meaningful creative activity, even in its simplest forms, play brings joy and excitement (Huizinga 1971; Caillois 2001).

An element of play and pretence is the property shared by humorous and ironic communication: pretence and acting (the speakers often pretend 'as if' they are serious) explain how a seemingly illogical or inappropriate utterance or a text can still be related to the real world. Partington claims that "in order that others should understand that a particular act or utterance is intended as humorous, it is necessary to somehow signal that the activity one is engaged is playful, that one is acting within a play frame" (Partington 2006: 66). This explains why telling a joke presupposes pretence through imitation of the voice of a character or pronunciation typical for a particular ethnic group. Since play and pretence are crucial for understanding humorous or ironic utterances, the speaker wants the hearer to notice her *non-bona fide* behaviour and interpret it as meaningful. Example 6 – an excerpt from the dialogue between Larry King, a Russian journalist Vladimir Pozner and a viewer who joined the conversation – illustrates the case:

(6) 3rd CALLER: Copenhagen, Denmark Good evening. I have a question of Mr. Pozner

KING: Sure.

3rd CALLER: I've long wanted to ask him how on earth did he learn to speak so excellent American English?

Was he trained by KGB –

Mr. POZNER: Yes.

3rd CALLER: – or whatever?

Mr. POZNER: Yes, absolutely

KING: Trained by the KGB! So!

Mr. POZNER: Absolutely

KING: We've come to this!

Mr. POZNER: That's the way it always works. But **seriously speaking**, I spent the first 15 years of my life in Greenwich Village and if I hadn't learned to speak English after that, it would be a problem

KING: So you speak a kind of English.

Mr. POZNER: A kind of, yes. Most people in England would say it's not English, right. (COCA)

When asked about his surprisingly good command of English, Vladimir Pozner publicly acknowledges his relation with the KGB. Nevertheless, his utterances should not be taken at face value. By using metapragmatic comment '*seriously speaking*' Pozner demonstrates that his previous answers were *non-bona fide* and that he was pretending "as if" he was trained as a spy.

Play and pretence however, do not distinguish humour and irony from yet another type of the *non-bona fide* discourse – lies. To explain what makes lies so different from the other subtypes of the *non-bona fide* mode, I will use the third criterion – the degree of speaker's cooperativeness. For many researchers cooperativeness is a binary concept: one is either cooperative (that is, rational and intentional) or non-cooperative. However, if viewed as a behaviour that is governed by "soft preferences rather than hard demands" (Veale 2012: 44), co-operativeness explains why language users start looking for an implicit meaning rather than reject the utterance as meaningless if its literal meaning does not correspond to a real situation. Because cooperativeness is a gradient notion (Raskin 2007), the speaker can flout a number of constraints (e.g. Grice's Maxims) but still remain cooperative and rational. If applied to the subtypes of the *non-bona fide* mode, the concept of cooperativeness can successfully differentiate humour, irony and sarcasm from lies. While humorous and ironic speakers are cooperative at least to some degree, telling lies is an example of a totally uncooperative behaviour.

So far the *bona fide* and *non-bona fide* modes have been described with the criteria that result from theoretical modelling of the two modes of discourse. The fourth parameter – the availability of metapragmatic comments – is an empirical parameter that can be observed by looking at what language users actually do to explicate the chosen mode of discourse. Speech formulas like *"I'm kidding / joking"* or *"Ich meine es ganz ernst"* or *"Я не иронизирую"* are, perhaps, the most obvious signals that help speakers manage the switch between the modes and guide the process of understanding.

Both explicit and implicit types of *bona fide* communication easily allow for metapragmatic comments, e.g.

(7) LARRY KING: What do you think of your father assuming this position? No, **I am serious**, how do you feel about your dad and the position he is in? (COCA)

(8) Pytanie brzmi: czego więcej dowiedzieliśmy się z Wiadomości niż z innych serwisów informacyjnych? Przeanalizujmy ten fakt na przykładzie losowo wybranego dnia, 1 czerwca. Otóż na przykład tego, że dziewczynki nie lubią sportu i objadają się cukierkami, chłopcy nie myją zębów i są mniej posłuszni, a w ogóle dzieci są zadowolone z życia. **Nie żartuję**. Takie gaworzenie usłyszeliśmy już na początku serwisu. (NKJP)

'The question is: what else have we learnt from "Wiadomości" that is not on other news services? Let's analyse the fact by randomly choosing the day, June 1. Well, for example, girls do not like sports and eat a lot of sweets, the boys do not clean their teeth and are less obedient, and all children are satisfied with their lives. **I'm not kidding**. We can find this kind of talk at the beginning of the service.'

Non-bona fide subtypes allow different degree of freedom in using metapragmatic remarks. While humour, irony and sarcasm can be commented on, lies and absurd talk resist explicit comments. It is practically impossible to imagine someone who would comment on his or her own speech with phrases **Oh, I'm just lying* or **You know, I'm talking nonsense here*. The general rule is, the weaker the connection of the utterance with reality, the less possible metapragmatic comments are.

The array of criteria suggested above allows for multi-dimensional description of the *bona fide* and *non-bona fide* modes and their subtypes. Their properties are summarized in Table 1.

The next step in the description of the two modes and their subtypes is modelling the rules of interaction. The ideal explicit *bona fide* utterance has an almost perfect correlation with the real-life situation, and, because its main purpose is transmitting information, it does not involve any play or pretence. The message is unambiguous, serious and straightforward. The speaker demonstrates the highest degree of cooperativeness and, whenever necessary, *bona fide* intentions can be easily explicated. What's more, some of the markers of intention can even be incorporated into the propositional structure of the utterance (e.g. performatives – ***I request*** *that we never do a group camping trip ever again (COCA)*). To understand the ideal explicit *bona fide* message the hearer needs to know the literal meanings of words. This set of properties explains why explicit *bona fide* mode is the default assumption for all linguistic models of communication – it is absolutely rational and cooperative, and very predictable.

Implicit *bona fide* communication is also rational, but, because the real speaker meaning is disguised, the degree of cooperativeness is lower than in the explicit subtype. What is significant about the implicit serious language use is that it incorporates properties of the *non-bona fide* discourse, namely, elements of play. The play with form and meaning of words can result in metaphors and metonymies, and implicatures on the utterance level are interpretable because the speakers know how to substitute the literal sentence meaning with the implicit speaker meaning in a particular context. As for the availability of metapragmatic markers, the situation is very different from the explicit *bona fide* discourse. Not all types of implicit meanings allow metalinguistic comments. On the one hand, along with the general formulas like '*I'm serious*' and '*I'm not kidding*', the speakers can use other ways to explicate implicatures. For instance, they may do so by referring to the already performed speech act (e.g. *This is not an order, this is a request*). On the other hand, metaphoric use of language cannot be commented by the speaker, i.e. phrases like **I'm being metaphoric / metonymic* or **I'm saying this metaphorically / metonymically* are very unlikely to occur in a conversation or a text.

As it has already been mentioned, all subtypes of the *non-bona fide* mode share the property of referring to a non-existing situation or of presenting a real situation in a strange way, as in example 9:

(9) If I'm asked "Did you get a hair cut?" and I answer "No, they grew backwards over night", then **I am being ironic**. (GloWbE)

Table 1: Properties of the *bona fide* and *non-bona fide* modes of communication

Mode of communication	**The utterance – real world relation**	**The element of play**	**Cooperativeness of the speaker**	**Metapragmatic comments**
Bona fide explicit	The speaker intends the utterance to be true, i.e. it should correlate with the situation in the real world.	No play or pretence on the part of the speaker.	The speaker is highly cooperative, since transmission of information is the main purpose of communication.	Comments widely used to ensure general coherence of discourse.
Bona fide implicit	There is a gap between the literal meaning and the speaker meaning. However, because the difference between the said and the meant is easily recognised, the utterance still correlates with the situation.	Yes, because the intention is disguised and the hearer has to infer the real intention of the speaker.	The speaker is rational and cooperative, though the degree of cooperativeness is lower – the intention is disguised.	Widely used to ensure general coherence of discourse and avoid misunderstanding. However, the comments cannot be integrated into the proposition. Plus, non-literal use of language cannot be commented on.
Non-bona fide humorous	The relation is not straightforward. Additional cognitive effort on the part of the hearer is needed to interpret the utterance as humorous.	Humorous discourse involves a lot of play. The speaker wants the addressee to interpret the utterance within a playframe.	The degree of cooperativeness lessens, though the speaker is still rational and cooperative.	If necessary, humorous intention can be explicated, e.g. “I’m kidding/joking”.
Non-bona fide ironic/sarcastic	The literal meaning of the utterance does not correlate to the situation (the case of verisimilar irony discussed in (Partington 2006) is an exception).	Play and pretence are a necessary condition for irony and sarcasm in discourse.	The degree of cooperativeness lessens, though the speaker is still rational and cooperative.	If necessary, irony and sarcasm can be stated explicitly, e.g. “that was meant to be ironic”.
Non-bona fide lying/hypocrisy	No utterance – situation correlation, because of the nature of lies	Lies involve a lot of pretence on the part of the speaker, but it should not be recognised by the addressee.	The speaker is non-cooperative, since the purpose of the utterance is to mislead and deceive.	Impossible, since self-commenting on lies is an example of an illocutionary suicide.
Non-bona fide absurd	No relation between the utterance and the real world	No play or pretence intended. The speakers are always serious.	The speaker is non-cooperative.	Absolutely impossible. The phrase “I’m talking nonsense” is in itself nonsensical.

Humour, irony, lies and absurd talk differ in terms of the degree of the speaker's cooperativeness (it decreases to total uncooperativeness in lies and absurd talk).

Play and pretence, while definitely present in lies, humorous and ironic communication, are absent in absurd communication.

Finally, metapragmatic explication of the *non-bona fide* intention is possible for humorous, ironic or sarcastic utterances, but is totally impossible if the speaker is telling lies or talking nonsense. In Part 4 I will focus on pragmatic functions of metapragmatic comments and the role they play in discourse management.

4 Metapragmatic comments in the *bona fide* and *non-bona fide* modes: forms and functions

In everyday communication language users easily alternate between the *bona fide* and *non-bona fide* modes. But, because switching between serious and non-serious talk is not always obvious for all participants of discourse, the speaker always faces the risk of misunderstanding. If the addressee fails to understand the change of the mode, the general coherence of discourse is likely to be disrupted. To avoid misunderstanding the speaker needs to resolve mode ambiguity, and the easiest way to do so is to explicate the *bona fide* or *non-bona fide* intention. This kind of discourse management is done with the help of metapragmatic markers.

The major reason why speakers resort to conscious use of metalinguistic comments is that *bona fide* and *non-bona fide* utterances do not differ significantly in their linguistic form. Depending on the context the same expression can be interpreted either seriously or as an ironic / humorous remark. Examples (10) and (11) illustrate the case: the former is a quotation from an interview published by BBC online, the latter is the headline of an Internet blog post:

(10) Housing Minister Yvette Cooper says: “It was a great speech”.

(11) Another Great Speech.

How do we know whether the utterances in (10) and (11) are meant seriously or not?

Apparently, the two tokens are pragmatically ambiguous. Unless accompanied by specific meta-pragmatic comments, these utterances can be interpreted in either way: seriously (as a compliment or praise) or ironically (as a critique).

However, if we look at them in a wider context, it is easy to see that the first speaker is absolutely serious and sincere, while the second is being ironic:

(10.1) Housing Minister Yvette Cooper says: "It was a great speech. It was a serious speech for serious times but also a very personal speech very much about the things Gordon Brown cares about." (Parkinson 2008)

(11.1) Another Great Speech (I'm Being Ironic) (Camden 2009)

Speakers' comments (*serious speech, I'm being ironic*) are signs of language users' metapragmatic awareness. Their main function is to resolve pragmatic ambiguity and facilitate our interpretation of the utterance. The phrases "*it was a serious speech*" are examples of the so-called "context markers" (Bateson 1972): they function as signals that allow to interpret the noun phrase "*great speech*" in two opposite ways: the first context marker shows that what is said should be interpreted at face value, while in the second case the speaker means the opposite of what is said, and the reader needs to make an additional effort to relate the words to the world.

Because of their self-evidence, metapragmatic comments have not become the object of scrutiny in linguistic analysis of verbal humour. But, by looking at these routine speech formulas humour researchers can get insight into at least three things:

1) what language users consider to be serious or non-serious communication;
2) the process of negotiation of the specific mode of communication;
3) how these comments ensure general coherence of discourse.

4.1 Metalanguage and metapragmatic awareness

Since Jakobson the self-directed capacity of language, which he termed "a metalingual function" (Jakobson 1987: 69), has been discussed as a unique semiotic property of human languages. Back in the middle of the 20th century, Jakobson's ideas fitted perfectly into the structuralist paradigm: metalinguistic function was ascribed not to the language users but to the language-as-a-system. No wonder folk linguistics – the research area that is primarily interested in what the so-called "naïve" language users think about language (Niedzielski and Preston 2003) – has focused mostly on the individual's knowledge about internal systemic aspects of language and the use of metalinguistic linguistic means for logical organization of discourse.

Today, however, the focus of attention of folk linguistics has switched from what the users know about the language-as-a-system to the interactional properties of metalinguistic elements. For linguists, metalanguage is a source of information about the structure of discourse and the processes of dialogue management (Preston 2004). According to Verschueren, "metalanguage is an important topic for linguistic research because it reflects metapragmatic awareness, a crucial force behind the meaning-generating capacity of languages in use" (Verschueren 2004: 53). Metapragmatic awareness is reflected in the speaker's conscious use of linguistic means to establish coherent relations between the speaker's stance, the utterance and the addressee.

Traditionally, metalinguistic elements have been termed by linguists as context markers (Bateson 1972), discourse markers (Fraser 1996; Schiffrin 1988), discourse particles (Fischer 2006) or pragmatic markers (Aijmer and Simon-Vandenbergen 2011). These elements do not contribute to the proposition of an utterance but ensure general coherence of discourse. Researchers argue that "what discourse markers or pragmatic markers generally do is to indexically point to features of context" (Aijmer and Simon-Vandenbergen 2011: 224). More specifically, not only do metalinguistic means point to features of context, they connect all components of discourse into the united whole.

Researchers of discourse markers tend to focus on single words like *frankly, so, however*, etc. These words are syntactically independent elements of an utterance, and their usage is guided by merely pragmatic rules. Metapragmatic comments – phrases that indicate how the utterance should be understood – also belong to the group of discourse markers, though less prototypical ones. Speech formulas like *"I'm not joking"*, *"I'm kidding"*, *"mówię poważnie"*, *"Ich meine es ganz ernst"* or *"Я говорю серьезно / искренне", "Я не иронизирую"* reflect our metapragmatic awareness of the *bona fide* and *non-bona fide* modes of communication and govern the process of utterance interpretation in a particular context by indicating whether the speaker intended the utterance to be taken at face value or not.

Pragmatic functions of metapragmatic comments of the *bona fide* and *non-bona fide* modes of communication depend on whether the speaker assesses her own utterance as serious or non-serious, or on whether the comment is used to negotiate, accept or reject the change of the mode initiated by another interlocutor. In my further discussion of the pragmatic potential of comments I will describe these two cases separately.

4.2 Initiation of the mode of communication

When used by the speaker with reference to her own utterances, metapragmatic markers of the *bona fide* mode (e.g. *"I'm serious"*, *"Ich meine es ganz ernst"*, *"mówię poważnie"*, *"Я говорю серьезно / Я не шучу"*) are examples of regulating metalinguistic tools that strengthen credibility of an utterance or resolve the uncertainty or ambiguity of what is said (Hyland, 2005). They signal the speaker's awareness of the potential ambiguity of the utterance and indicate how it should be interpreted.

The speaker can confirm sincerity of her intentions by either explicitly stating that the utterance is made in the *bona fide* mode (*I am serious* / *mówię poważnie* / *я говорю серьезно* / *ich sage das ernst*), or by denying the possibility of a *non-bona fide* interpretation (*I'm not joking* / *nie żartuję* / *я не шучу*), e.g.

(12) But I have worked for myself since our daughter was born so I have actually probably been at home with them more than if I was in an employee situation. My children are 13, 12 and 3 so some very intense times with the struggle for balance and some extremely lovely times. There are so many facets of your job – what's the best bit? The instagramming! And **I am not joking**. (GloWbE)

(13) A ty byś wytrzymał bez jedzenia cały dzień albo dwa? – oburzył się Julek. – Od obiadu do kolacji nie możesz wytrzymać! – Nie wygłupiaj się, dobrze? – zaoponował mu ostro Marian. – Ja **mówię poważnie**. (NKJP)

'– And would you stand without eating for the whole day or two? – Julek asked angrily. – You cannot wait from lunch to dinner! – Don't be silly, ok? – Marian said sharply. – **I'm serious**.'

(14) Говорю это **абсолютно серьезно, без иронии** – женщинам нравится ухоженный, с накачанным прессом мужчина, а не тюфяк с обвисшим пузом. (RNC)

'I'm saying it **absolutely seriously, without irony** – women like men who are fit and have strong abdominal muscles, not lumps with fat bellies.'

(15) **Ohne Ironie**, Ich sage DANKE (DWDS)

'**Without irony**, I'm saying THANK YOU'.

Metapragmatic comments can be used to confirm the speaker's belief in the utterance being true, as in example 16:

(16) So now they are proposing a law that would outlaw sex without a written contract. **No I am not joking. I wish I was, believe me**. (GloWbE)

Metapragmatic comment *I am not joking* in example 16 highlights the truth-conditional status of the proposition and express speaker's attitude: because she finds the situation of proposing the law absurd she would prefer to discuss it in the *non-bona fide* mode.

Ironic, humorous and even sarcastic use of language requires different sets of markers: *I'm joking* / *kidding, I'm being ironic* / *sarcastic*, *я иронизирую* / *это сарказм*. Here are a few examples:

(17) **Воспринимайте** мой вопрос вам в том топике, **как сарказм**.

'Take my question to you in that topic as sarcasm'.

(18) VELEZ-MITCHELL: Yes. Janell, are you embarrassed for him?

JANELL-SNOWDEN-HO: You know – first, Ben, lets see. I think part of the reason that he wanted to do this is because you just called him his girlfriend. But she's his wife and he wants to announce this to the world. And what better way to do it? My god, when I saw this picture –

(CROSS-TALK) VELEZ-MITCHELL: Well, there are other ways.

SNOWDEN: No, **I'm being sarcastic**, of course. I mean, this is like, way to stick it to you (COCA).

The position of the marker in an utterance is also important, as it signals the pragmatic function of the comment: by putting it in the preceding (i.e., thematic) position speakers highlight their personal stance toward the upcoming utterances and establish a connection between the utterance and the real situation.

Final position of the comment means that the speaker wants to set potentially wrong interpretation of an utterance back 'on the right track', as in examples 18 and 19:

(19) Proszę wprowadzić jakieś ograniczenie wiekowo/intelektualne dla użytkowników internetu. **Mówię to bez żadnej ironii**. (NKJP)

'Please specify any age / intellectual restrictions for internet users. I'm saying this without any irony.'

(20) Yes after all the UN and NATO do such a good job… # I am being ironic I thought I better make that clear as you may think I was being serious. (GloWbE)

In both cases metapragmatic comments refer the hearer to previous utterances with the purpose of mode disambiguation. Example 20 demonstrates this to the full extent, as the speaker explicates his awareness of possible misinterpretation of the previous utterance.

Metapragmatic comments can also function as signs of speaker's retreat from a potentially face-threatening situation. In the following dialogue metapragmatic comment is used as a face-saving technique:

(21) VICKI-MABREY-1–AB#(Voiceover) Next up is Ira. Ira's 59, recently engaged and wants to know if he should give into his fiance's request to a $50,000 dream wedding.

SUZE-ORMAN-1FINAN# Did you get her pregnant? **Just joking**. (COCA)

The question *"Did you get her pregnant?"* can be interpreted as potentially face-threatening, since it invades privacy of the hearer and is likely to embarrass him. To avoid a potential conflict and preserve general coherence of the dialogue the speaker retreats into the *non-bona fide* mode precisely because it allows playful non-serious interpretation of the question.

The importance of the possibility to retreat from a face-threatening situation is reflected in metalinguistic "afterthoughts" expressed in a "naïve" definition of the comment *just joking* offered by an online dictionary complied by lay speakers of English:

(22) just joking – something you say after you state the truth and get yelled at ("The Urban Dictionary" 1999–2013).

The definition of the phrase in example 22 reflects major properties of the *non-bona fide* mode: by saying '*just joking*' the speaker states that what was said before is not true and disconnects the utterance from the reality. The retreating function of the metapragmatic comment is explicated by the second part of the definition: if someone gets yelled at, it is an obviously face-threatening situation. Claiming that the utterance was meant *non-bona fide* is a possible way to avoid rude criticism.

Overuse of the comment *just joking / я пошутил* can also be a sign of manipulation, as in example 23:

(23) Eventually I realized that him saying "**I was only joking**" was him being manipulative as it was allowing him to be nasty to me but whilst making him feel ok about it because he would dress it up as something else ("The Question Club" 2010).

To sum up, mode disambiguation, guiding the process of understanding, retreating from a face-threatening situation and manipulation can be referred to as the primary functions of metapragmatic assessment of the speaker's own utterances. However, two more specific cases of metapragmatic commenting need to be discussed here: firstly, a *non-bona fide* use of *bona fide* markers, and secondly, the chain usage of markers within an utterance.

Like any other linguistic sign, metapragmatic comments of the *bona fide* mode can be used to disguise ironic intention, trick the reader and double the effect. Because the border between the two modes becomes blurred, the reader has to make additional effort to understand the ironic intention of the speaker. A passage from the editor's letter from the Russian version of the "*Esquire*" illustrates the case:

(24) Каждый раз, когда я вижу милицейский автомобиль, который вместе с другими автомобилями стоит перед красным сигналом светофора, меня не оставляет ощущение, что эта машина украдена. Я не верю, что обычный отечественный милиционер в ясном уме и твердой памяти по доброй воле согласится стоять вместе со всеми в очереди, вместо того чтобы проехать на красный, развернуться через двойную сплошную или припарковаться в третьем от бордюра ряду. Поэтому предлагаю: выявить всех милиционеров, останавливающихся на красный сигнал светофора, произвести их в генералы и поручить этим генералам подбор офицеров низшего звена. Говорю вам без всякой иронии: я не знаю никакого другого способа отличить хоть сколько-нибудь пригодного к службе милиционера от непригодного (Bakhtin 2010).

'Every time I see a police car that stops at the red light just like any other car, I get the feeling that the car has been stolen. I can't believe that an ordinary policeman will agree to stand in a lane with other cars instead of going on the red light, making a U-turn on the double solid line or parking in the leftmost lane. That is why I suggest we should find all policemen who stop at the red light, make them generals and contract them to hire lower-rank officers. **I am saying this without a trace of irony**: I know no other way to tell policemen who are in the least bit fit for work from unfit ones.'

The text demonstrates double pretence of the speaker who, on the one hand, gives an absurd presentation of the situation, but, on the other hand, claims not to be ironic. The use of metapragmatic comment in its opposite, i.e. ironic sense illustrates how subtle the borderline between the two modes is.

Another interesting question is the linguistic variation of meta-pragmatic markers. For instance, to explicate the *bona fide* mode a speaker of Russian can choose between *Я говорю серьезно (I'm speaking seriously), я говорю абсолютно искренне (I'm absolutely sincere), я не шучу (I'm not joking), я не иронизирую (I'm not ironic)*. The question is, why do language users need alternative ways to explicate the mode of communication? Is the choice of a marker a purely stylistic matter or are there other reasons that guide the speakers' decision? Alternative ways of explicating the mode allow speakers to encode very subtle semantic or pragmatic differences in meaning. This means that meta-pragmatic markers of the *bona fide* and *non-bona fide* modes differ in their pragmatic potential. Their pragmatic variance becomes more apparent when speakers use several markers within one utterance. In the following example, which is a transcript of a radio talk show, the speaker discusses Ksenia Sobchak – a host of several controversial TV talk shows on Russian television and a person involved in multiple public scandals, who is widely criticized for her obnoxious behaviour. To present a different perception of Sobchak as a public figure the speaker uses a chain of three markers of the *bona fide* mode:

(25) Ну, люди-то многие смеются, а я **совершенно серьезно** так считаю и **говорю это искренне, без какой-то иронии**, без ужимок, без всякой ерунды. Я считаю, что Ксения Собчак – это не просто умная девушка, не вот там какая-то « Да, там какая-то дура набитая из Дом-2! » Нет. Ксения Собчак – это не просто умная девушка, а воспитанная, образованная и очень хорошо понимающая, что вокруг нее происходит, и вокруг нее в широком смысле ("Russkij bombardir" 2011).

'Well, a lot of people laugh, but **I seriously think so, and I'm sincere, and I'm saying this without any irony or pretence**, or staff like that. I consider Ksenia Sobchak to be not just a very smart young girl, not just something like "Oh, she's a perfect fool from Dom-2!" No. Not only is Ksenia Sobchak a smart young girl, she is well-brought-up, well-educated, and she understands what is going on around her quite well, in the wide sense".

The sequence of markers allows the speaker to connect different components of discourse: the phrase *I seriously think so* shows that the following message should be interpreted at face value. The second marker (*I'm sincere*) refers to the speaker's personal stance: he sincerely believes in his word being true. Finally, the third comment (*and I'm saying this without any irony or pretence*) explicates the rules of utterance interpretation for the audience, i.e. the meaning of the words should not be reversed. Thus, by using the chain of markers, the speaker connects all major components of the discourse (the utterance, the real situation, the speaker himself and the hearers) into a united whole. In a similar vein the speaker in example 26 reinforces her serious intention by emphasizing her commitment to what is being said and explicating the *bona fide* mode of discourse:

(26) **It's honestly**, and **I 'm not joking** one bit, the worst, most sensationalistic and issueless debate I've ever witnessed. (GloWbE)

To sum up, sequential use of metapragmatic markers demonstrates differences in their pragmatic potential and ensures general coherence of discourse by linking all major components: the speaker's mental state, the utterance, the world and the addressee.

Negotiating the mode of discourse

When used as conversational interventions by recipients, these markers have different pragmatic functions: the first reason to use a metapragmatic marker of the *bona fide* or *non-bona fide* mode is to make sure the intention of the speaker was understood correctly. This kind of use usually has the form of a question:

(27) Mr-ZIEGLER: You know, it's interesting. There actually is. There is a technical definition that's controlled by the ITU, which is a body that's run by the U.N. And people might be amazed to discover that no current network advertising itself as 4G actually meets those requirements. (Soundbite-of-laugh)

FLATOW: **No kidding**?

Mr-ZIEGLER: That's true, that's true. (COCA)

The question is not just a sign of surprise. The speaker checks if both participants play by the same rules, i.e. they are in the same mode, and ensures that his interpretation of what was previously said goes along with the intentions of the interlocutor.

Another reason for using meta-pragmatic markers is to negotiate the mode of communication. Examples 28 and 29 illustrate the process of negotiation:

(28) O'REILLY: All right. So was that a little slap at President Obama? And if so, is she positioning herself if the president continues to have problems to maybe challenge him in the primaries in 2012?

STEPHANOPOULOS: **You're not serious**.

O'REILLY: **Sure I am. I'm always serious**, George. **I 'm serious as a heart attack here**. She comes out on " 60 Minutes " and talks about the economy as Secretary of State, which I've never heard any Secretary of State do, and kind of says hey, you're in the ditch. And you know, hey, what's going on? (COCA)

By using a meta-pragmatic comment *You're not serious* the speaker simultaneously signals his understanding of the *non-bona fide* mode and tries to control the dialogue by insisting on abiding the rules of serious communication.

Interestingly, what the language users call 'joking' has nothing to do with the genre of joke. By referring to the utterances as 'joking' or 'kidding' the speakers mark the absence of the relation between the utterance and the reality.

If the participants of the dialogue cannot reach an agreement, the lengthy process of mode negotiation can become the main topic of discussion:

(29) Hank looked sideways at her. "We're starting with Plan X." "**This is no time for jokes**. And why are you talking?" // "**I'm not joking**." // "**Of course you're joking**. And talking. You never talk." // "**I'm not. Joking, I mean**." (COCA)

Humour researchers suggest that "The appreciation of humour entails mode adoption, i.e. plunging into the non-serious or fictional frame created by the speaker (Dynel 2011: 225). However, this is not always the case. The speaker can deny the right of another participant of discourse to change the mode of conversation. The following dialogue demonstrates how the mode of communication is not just negotiated but debated. In example 30 members of a medical Internet forum discuss methods of treating a particular kind of trauma and one of the interlocutors makes an ironic comment about going to a masseuse. The reaction is a reprimand (*there is no use in your irony*). However, the speaker insists on his right to be ironic (*I insist on irony as my inalienable right*):

(30) Лена: Здравствуйте Александр Николаевич, **напрасно вы иронизируете** по поводу компетентности массажистки, люди просто так ходить не будут, а к ней ездят со всей области...

Александр Николаевич Челноков: **Настаиваю, что иронизировать – мое неотъемлемое право**. Насчет "люди просто так ходить не будут" – это что, критерий компетентности? ("Medgorodok" 2005)

> Lena: Hello, Alexander Nikolaevich. **There is no use in your irony** about the masseuse's competence. People wouldn't go to her for no reason, but they come to her from all over the region...
>
> Alexander Nikolaevich Chesnokov: **I insist on irony as my inalienable right**. As for "people wouldn't go to her for no reason" – is that the measure of competence?

In summary, meta-pragmatic markers allow speakers to ensure correct understanding of the said, to negotiate the mode of discourse and either to confirm or reject switching from the *bona fide* dialogue to *non-bona fide* interaction.

5 Conclusions

Communication is a dynamic trial-and-error process. Unexpected transition from the *bona fide* mode to *non-bona fide* discourse can become a source of ambiguity and potential disagreement. To decrease the risk of misunderstanding and ensure general coherence of discourse language users may explicate their intentions by using metapragmatic markers. If *bona fide* and *non-bona fide* interpretations of an utterance are equally possible, speakers can explicitly mark the chosen mode of communication to ensure intended understanding of an utterance or a text. Metapragmatic markers contribute to the rationality of discourse: otherwise redundant, they indicate how an utterance relates to the real situation or demonstrate the speaker's commitment to the said. The variety of formulas allows the speakers to highlight connections between different components of the situation: the speaker's stance, the situation and the addressee's mode of perception.

Metapragmatic markers of the *bona fide* and *non-bona fide* modes show that participants of discourse constantly monitor each other's state of mind. However, the functions of the markers differ depending on whether they are used by to assess speaker's own words or to negotiate the change of the mode. In the former case, metapragmatic markers function as a low-cost form of discourse management. What is saved is the addressee's effort needed to process the utterance. When used as a signal of mode negotiation these markers allow the speakers to ensure correct understanding of what has been previously said and accept or reject mode change.

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Jan Chovanec

Wordplay and football: Humour in the discourse of written sports reporting

1 Introduction

This chapter is a case study describing the coverage of events involving the England football team in the British mainstream print media. It provides a stylistic account of humorous phenomena identified in the media reports, with a focus on wordplay in headlines and the creative use of verbal and visual means on the frontpages of British daily newspapers. The chapter argues that while printed sports reporting does not constitute a genre of humour, the treatment of the subject matter often involves instances verbal and multimodal play that makes the texts lively and entertaining.

News reports on sports have a somewhat different nature than news stories about other newsworthy events. In terms of its subject matter, sports events are classified as entertainment, which places journalistic accounts of sports encounters somewhat apart from what is considered as traditional 'hard news', i.e., information about business, domestic, and foreign affairs. That separation is also supported by linguistic evidence showing a differential use of certain features, such as noun phrases, in the sports sections of some newspapers, particularly the mid-market and up-market ones (Jucker 1992). Both spoken and written sports reporting are essentially ideational, i.e., oriented towards providing information, even though extensive evaluation and subjectivity is typically present in the reports. Listeners and readers expect the reporting will provide them with factual information about the progress of the sports event, the interpretation of key moments, the background to the game, as well as the contextualization of the entire event with respect to historical statistics, etc.

Although sport qualifies as entertainment, the discourse genres that describe sporting encounters and that revolve around sports events are not co-classifiable with traditional entertainment genres. Sports reporting may be entertaining and a significant amount of humour may be present in the media texts covering the events (as is very common, particularly in the format of live spoken sportscasting), although the generation of humour is not the primary aim of this genre. Obviously, that makes it different from many genres that are found in the media and whose main aim is either entertainment (e.g., stand-up comedy and sitcoms, cf. Dynel 2011) or entertainment combined with social criticism (e.g., 'spoof news

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articles', Ermida 2012). At the same time, the hybridity of discursive aims – to inform as well as to amuse – is common in various other genres, e.g., in advertising (Pinar Sanz 2012).

2 Humour in sports commentary

Surprisingly, little systematic attention has been paid to the forms and functions of humour in sports commentary. Although some cultural studies and sports theorists, as well as journalism scholars, have touched upon the issue (Conboy 2014), there does not appear to have been much linguistically-oriented research in this area, save for passing remarks made in a number of studies that have, however, different aims than the analysis of humour in sports reporting (e.g., Tolson 2006).

Yet, it appears to be a generally acknowledged point that humour is present in sports commentary and, indeed, forms one of the ingredients that make sports commentary successful. Sometimes, the humour produced is unintentional – the commentators are under pressure to formulate their utterances quickly and occasionally make mistakes (Spencer 2013: 13). Many of such unintentionally funny statements, where humour resides in syntactic discontinuities, incongruous lexical combinations, illogical statements, connotative meanings and other blunders, are collected and circulated by fans and the media (Müller 2008a; Taborek 2012). Such memorable lapses may become stereotypically associated with particular sports commentators and may even achieve something of a cult status in the fan community. The verbal gaffes of sports commentators have a special name: they are known as "colemanballs" (after the former British broadcaster David Coleman) or, less specifically, as "commentatorballs". The satirical magazine *Private Eye* even publishes special annual collections of such statements, with funny quotes produced by not only sports commentators but also other public figures (e.g., Fantoni 2010).[1]

1 The utterances constitute a specific category of one-liners, i.e., jokes in which humour is condensed into a single brief utterance. Examples include:

"A game is not won until it is lost." (David Pleat)

"He says that he will walk away from the game when his legs go." (anonymous radio commentator)

"And Seaman, just like a falling oak, manages to change direction." (John Motson).

Source: http://www.footballsite.co.uk/Statistics/Articles/Colemanballs06.htm.
Cf. also *Private Eye*'s special section on 'Mediaballs' at http://www.private-eye.co.uk/sections.php?section_link=mediaballs

In spoken commentary, humour also resides in the dialogical exchanges between the commentator and the pundit (usually a former sportsperson), with the latter providing colour commentary, i.e., adding analysis to the description, interpreting the action and often sharing personal experiences. Such a situation allows the discourse participants to change footing more easily, i.e., to move away from the mere description of the game, which is based on narration, to other verbal activities (Tolson 2006: 107). Thus, the interaction between the journalist and the pundit often involves informal talk – also on matters that are only tangentially (or not at all) related to the sports event being broadcasted. The dyadic interaction enables the appearance of conversational joking, mutual teasing and informal banter that complement the factual description and opinionated commentary of the game. This helps to create the leisurely tone of the sports commentary and greatly contributes to the enjoyment of the spoken report by the audience. Although there are cross-cultural constraints on the amount and type of humour that is to be found in spoken commentary, the presence of humour in this genre has had a history of several decades, starting with the shift of spoken commentary towards entertainment in the late 1960s (Müller 2008b: 72).

In connection with sports reporting, humour also appears in some less institutionalized contexts and is produced by other discourse participants than just the professional journalists who are responsible for the production of the official commentary for the major news channels. This situation occurs in the case of blogging, which allows readers to comment actively and directly on the sports matches rather than be confined to the traditional role of the more or less passive recipients of media messages in the traditional one-way model of media communication. It has been observed that while sports bloggers, i.e., non-professional writers, frequently engage in blogging as a way of reacting to the mainstream coverage of sports reporting in other media, they often do so with a degree of humour in the blog contributions they post online (McCarthy 2014). It seems that humour is an important asset that may help to cement the cohesiveness of the group made up of people who follow such blogs.

Indeed, modern participatory journalism seems to be shifting the balance of interaction towards involving the audience, who are drawn more actively into the media frame and may even participate in the production of humour. The audience's presence may motivate the use of humour as a conscious strategy – as a peculiar form of 'audience design' – by means of which the journalist may reach the audience and sustain their interest. For instance, it appears that some journalists who write live commentaries for online media tend to adopt a more subjective perspective and use humour in order to increase reader involvement.

Having a sense of humour is, thus, an important quality for a live sports commentator (cf. Steensen 2011: 697). Some online media, such as *The Guardian*, produce live written commentaries in which the readers' emailed comments are taken up by journalists, who skilfully weave them into humorous quasi-dialogical exchanges that are rife with various forms of conversational humour, joke-telling, and even joint fantasizing (cf. Chovanec 2009, 2012). Humorous discourse is then not produced in parallel to the official commentary (as in the case of blogging) but jointly between the journalist and select readers who ultimately become, as a result of the co-option of their voices in the live sports report, co-authors of the match commentary.

An interesting linguistic study into the production of humorous discourse by audiences as recipients of media text is also provided by Gerhardt (2009, 2014), who analyses humorous talk produced by spectators of TV broadcasts of football matches. In this case, humorous discourse is created entirely beyond the media frame and in private, although the humour itself is inevitably dependent on the sportscast. Adopting a pragmatic and interactional perspective, Gerhardt notes that such humour – as talk-in-interaction – is often multimodal in that the humorous remarks are, among other things, directly based on the televised images. Although she deals with quite specific material in a different discourse mode from the one analysed in this article, she observes that "the viewing is seen as a past-time in which the viewers want to 'enjoy themselves'" (Gerhardt 2009: 93–94). It can be argued, by extension, that the enjoyment that the audience expects to derive from the sports event and its discursive representation in the broadcast media likewise applies, at least partially, to the written representation of sports matches in the print media.

As mentioned above, previous analyses of humour in printed media have been rather scarce. They have typically concentrated on isolated instances of wordplay and been limited to marginal observations. Thus Simpson (2003: 24), for instance, discusses a phonological joke in a newspaper headline about a football victory, and Chovanec (2005b) traces the creative wordplay and punning based on the nickname of the English football player Wayne Rooney ('Roo'). A more thorough account is offered in Chovanec (2008), who classifies humorous forms in newspaper post-match reports as foregrounding devices and interprets them in the context of the media's increasing orientation towards infotainment. Humour is expressed through various rhetorical devices which, in their totality, attest to the journalists' linguistic creativity on the one hand and, on the other, the presentation of sports events as a spectacle for the enjoyment and amusement of the audience.

The present paper continues this line of reasoning by arguing that the production of humour in the print media constitutes a reader-oriented communicative act that creatively draws on multimodal (i.e., both verbal and visual) means in order to capture the readers' attention and provide grounds for the enjoyment of an otherwise informative text presented in the serious (bona fide) mode. Language play and humour in headlines do not provide for a complete switch to the non-serious (humorous) mode, even though they do signal a change in footing, establishing a more playful key with respect to the sports event being reported. While the content may be presented in a non-humorous way in the rest of the article, the humorous elements present in the headline and the photograph can be interpreted as indicators of the underlying classification of sports as an entertainment undertaking, i.e., a domain that can be essentially taken as non-serious. Humorous forms and the light-hearted tone result in a peculiar merger of content and form in sports reporting: sports as a form of entertainment comes to be presented in a highly entertaining manner, and the language used becomes part of the entertainment itself.

3 Material

The following analysis of humour in written sports reporting is based on a collection of materials obtained from the British press during the 2004 European Football Championship in Portugal. The data set, consisting of the front pages and back pages of various newspapers, was compiled with the intention of tracing the discursive and multimodal representation of the England team before and during the European Football Championship.

The qualitative analysis of the data has focused on headlines and visuals with a humorous content, as manifested through wordplay, punning, innuendo, and other rhetorical figures. Since the humorous presentation of the match results appears in various media across the whole period, it has been decided to present the data in a diachronic way, starting with humorous wordplay shortly before the football championship and then tracing the progression of the England team throughout the championship.

The case study is presented in a diachronic way, starting with humorous wordplay preceding the soccer championship and then documenting humorous reporting of the results of each of the matches played by the England team. This approach to data presentation aims to explain the occurrence of particular humorous forms in the local temporal context of each match and provide ground for the interpretation of the humour with respect to the value of football in the mythology of the English national culture (cf. Alabarces et al. 2001; Bishop and Jaworski 2003; Garland 2004; Young 2007).

4 Humour in the media and the England team

4.1 Wordplay before the championship

As is usual with any major international sports event, the English participation in the European Football Championship was heralded a long time before the actual commencement of the event. Months before the championship, the papers devoted a number of front page stories to the England team and its charismatic captain, David Beckham (though often doing justice to the tabloid agenda by being more concerned with his (and his family's) celebrity status than his performance on the football field). The media gradually stirred up a level of national enthusiasm that grew to a frenzy immediately prior to the championship. Not surprisingly, the tabloids exploded into a festival of wordplay.

The headlines evidencing such a pre-championship boost to the national ego through wordplay included frequent puns, as in *Buy George! THREE MILLION England flags sold in Euro frenzy* (*Daily Mirror*, 9 June 2004). This instance of wordplay – a pun – relies for its recognition on features of pronunciation: the phrase 'Buy George!' is pronounced in the same way as *By George!* – a dated exclamation of surprise or approval and a mild oath, most likely a replacement of the colloquial taboo expletive *By Jove!* In this headline, the verb 'buy' (a homophone of 'by') is used in its imperative form to stimulate the English to exhibit their patriotism by purchasing the English national flag with the cross of St. George. However, through its reference to the mild expletive 'By George!', the phrase likewise expresses the paper's surprise at the number of flags bought in anticipation of the celebration of English nationalism.

Another headline which exhibits sophisticated wordplay is *B-Day* (*Daily Mirror*, 13 June 2004) with the sub-headline *June 13, 2004: Becks on his dream of victory in Europe* (see Figure 1). The initial letter of the surname of the England team captain, David Beckham (referred to in the tabloids by the familiar nickname 'Becks'), is used in allusion to the expression D-Day, i.e., the Allied invasion of Normandy (the 60th anniversary of which was celebrated by the press just days before and could thus be used as a topical frame of cultural reference). The allusion, however, can also be to V-E Day, i.e., the defeat of Nazism and the ultimate victory of the allied forces in Europe in the 2nd World War.

Figure 1: B-Day. *Daily Mirror*, 13 June 2004. Reprinted with the permission of the copyright holder.

The allusion to 'D-Day' / 'V-E Day' is triggered by the spelling and the phonological parallelism of the ad hoc formation 'B-Day', which functions as the alluding unit on account of the morphological alteration of the most likely target unit(s). The reference of this expression to David Beckham (i.e., *'Beckham's Day') is made clear on both the verbal and the visual levels: the sub-headline, specifying the important date (highlighted in red), also includes Beckham's popular nickname 'Becks', while the picture shows him draped in the English flag.[2]

Allusion, as an instance of wordplay, is a form of deliberate yet implicit intertextuality. As Lennon (2004: 62) explains, it concerns the interaction between two texts – one present and one absent – where "the interaction between the text and the source text is triggered [...] by the alluding or marker segment which (in verbatim or altered form) is common to both texts – this interaction produces intertextual meaning in the form of an 'implicit text'."

Allusion thus increases the reader's engagement in the discourse, calling for his or her active participation in the construction of the intended meaning. The

2 Moreover, by being offered a free flag (cf. the text alongside the news on B-Day), the readers of the *Daily Mirror* have a chance to clothe themselves in the flag in the same manner as David Beckham does in the photograph. A possible metaphorical identification of the readers with Beckham and whatever symbolic values he stands for is thus achieved.

alluding segment, if recognized as such, cues the reader's recognition of the source text and starts the process of inferencing. The reader starts the search for parallels, similarities and differences between the alluding text/event and the source text/event. The active participation of the reader then consists in juxtaposing the primary meaning (of the text 'in praesentia') with the secondary meaning (of the text 'in absentia') and drawing relevant conclusions.

In the case of the front page headline in Figure 1, the parallelism between the alluding segment 'B-Day' and the alluded 'D-Day'/ 'V-Day' starts the inferencing process of finding parallels for comparing the two events: the departure of the England team to the Continent in June 2004 and the departure of the Anglo-American allied troops to the Continent in June 1944. What readily comes to mind are such cultural notions as the 'victory in Europe' (i.e., the ultimate result of the Normandy invasion in June 1944 transformed into the anticipated victory of the England team under Beckham's guidance at Euro 2004), and the 'invasion' (i.e., the allied armies entering Normandy in 1944 paralleled by the departure of the England team for the Continent in 2004). Needless to say, the England team was accompanied to the continent by large numbers of notorious supporters who faced an unwelcome reception with substantial security measures being aimed at them (an 'army' of violent fans facing an 'army' of policemen).[3]

The use of militaristic terminology and metaphors in connection with football is fairly common, since the metaphors of war and sport often overlap (cf. Howe 1988; Romaine 1996; Lule 2004: 185; Taborek 2012: 246). Not only is it used in the 'combat model' of reporting for which "violent and militaristic language is common" (Fowler 1991: 145), but it also has a particularly symbolic significance for English culture. As Alabarces et al. (2001: 557) note, referring to the legendary English victory in the 1966 World Cup held in England, the link between military language and football "captures perfectly the essence of Englishness in the 20th century: a sense of superiority based on victories in World Wars – believed to have been achieved by the British with only minor assistance from their assorted allies – and a World Cup."

The fact that the two events (i.e., Euro 2004 and the 1944 D-Day) also partially share a lexical field – the common metaphorical use of terms such as 'battle,

3 Another 'army' of supporters was watching the games at home; as the *Sun* put it (21 June 2004) before the decisive match with Croatia: *ROON ARMY. 30m to cheer on Wayne and lads. THIRTY million fans will cheer on Wayne Rooney and England tonight as they battle to qualify for the next stage of Euro 2004.* [. . .]. The phrase 'Roon army' is, within the context of football, understood as an allusion to 'Toon army' – the supporters of Newcastle United, although neither the story itself or Rooney have anything in common with this team.

'fight', and 'enemies/opponents' (cf. also the activities of 'shooting', 'defending', 'tackling' and 'attacking') – lends support to the perception of a parallel between the England team (and its supporters) and an invading army, hoping to secure a victory. This underlying conceptual metaphor becomes apparent in a number of other headlines, for instance *Young gun: Rooney shoots England to victory* (*The Guardian*, 18 June 2004) or the *Sun* sub-headlines *Two-goal Wayne blitzes the Swiss; and England blitz after stars snub Sven* (*Sun*, 18 June 2004).

4.2 Wordplay during the championship

It was only once the actual matches started that the British press could employ its language creativity in the covering of the events at Euro 2004. The English team faced three teams in its group – France, Switzerland, and Croatia – before moving to the quarterfinals, where it lost to Portugal and crashed out of the championship. In the reporting of each of the four matches, the tabloids resorted to a widespread use of wordplay which mostly consisted of punning, allusions and creatively coined new expressions (nonce formations).

4.2.1 France – England

With its first opponent and the traditional adversary of the English for centuries – the French – the English team lost an almost won match by allowing the French player Zinedine Zidane to score two goals in the last three minutes of extra time. The shock to the English was made even stronger by the fact that the beloved England captain David Beckham did not score from a penalty kick, which would have assured a draw. Not surprisingly, the post-match reporting provided a vent for much negative emotion.

In the *Sun*, the lost match was headlined *Franks for nothing* (*Sun*, 14 June 2004, see Figure 2). The phonological transformation of the word 'thanks' into 'Franks' does not prevent the recognition of the source phrase which is alluded to: 'Thanks for nothing' (pronounced with the initial [f] in Cockney). Although it may not be immediately obvious to average *Sun* readers, the headline also enriches the source text by identifying the reason for 'not having anything to thank' the England team for – the Franks, i.e., the victorious French players.

From a semiotic point of view, the headline is an instance of wordplay on yet another, this time multimodal, level – it is also to be interpreted in connection with the picture which it accompanies. The photograph features the English footballer Frank Lampard after scoring the only goal for England. The headline thus becomes an almost cynical commentary on the performance of the England team: although Frank Lampard would deserve to be ‘thanked’ for scoring a goal (cf. the structural and phonological allusion to ‘thanks’/‘fanks’), his deed came to nothing: it is ultimately of no use since the entire match was so shamefully lost. The fact that Lampard played for the London club Chelsea at the time of the championship might be an additional (though a bit more speculative) motivation for the potential allusion to the Cockney pronunciation of ‘thanks’.

Figure 2: Allusion and punning after losing to France. *The Sun*, 14 June 2004. Reprinted with the permission of the copyright holder.

The choice of the photograph itself may be interpreted as the desire on the part of the *Sun* to connect the verbal and the visual levels and thus enhance the wordplay. This argument seems to be supported by the ambiguous nature of the photograph: Lampard’s facial expression can be interpreted either as agony at a lost match or triumph at scoring a leading goal. The newspaper uses the photograph in the former manner but the satisfied smile on the face of Lampard’s fellow player Wayne Rooney reveals that the latter is the more probable context in which the picture was taken.

The headline *Franks for nothing* thus functions on at least three levels: as an allusion to the set phrase ‘thanks for nothing’; as a way of linking the verbal and the visual channels while identifying the English hero of the game – Frank Lampard; and as a pun identifying the opponents of the England team – the French. The texts engage the reader's attention by starting his or her inferencing process and having the reader make connections between the printed text, the knowledge of the code, the cultural context and the situational context. It achieves maximum communicative value within a minimal physical space, while introducing into the headline an element of playful humour that appears to diminish the grievance over the lost match.

4.2.2 England – Switzerland

The match with Switzerland – an outsider in the group – was both preceded and followed by much wordplay in the media. In a sense, the media treatment of the match epitomizes its approach to wordplay during the whole tournament: it made heavy use of allusions and started a pattern of word transformation and nonce-formations that proved to be highly productive for the rest of the championship, as well as – in the case of the Roo-morpheme – for many years afterwards.

Thus, for instance, just before the match, the *Daily Mirror* ran a story on the front page about the unlikely reward that was promised to the Swiss team members in order to boost their morale in the match against England: a cow (!) for each team member in the event of the Swiss being victorious. The story may have been made up – as is commonly the case of many stories in the popular press – in order to be able to include a headline heightening the drama and underlying the conflict of the game ('they are out to get us'). In any case, the story made a very good headline opportunity (cf. Harcup and O'Neill, 2001: 275) that allowed for an element of humour to be injected into the pre-match reporting.

The headline accompanying the story, *We shall not be MOOED* (see Figure 3), is an allusion and a play on words heavily imbued with intertextuality. The text of the headline inescapably triggers recognition of the widely-known phrase 'We shall not be moved' which alludes to a number of potential source texts. The alluded texts include, among other, the following:

- An old protest song (originally 'I shall not be moved') which became popular in the 1960s thanks to the group the Seekers (already under the modified title *We shall not be moved*). The slogan has also come to be associated with the Black Civil Rights movement in the USA and its main proponent Martin Luther King.
- A chant of the supporters of the Celtic Glasgow football team – as such, the reference will be familiar to English football fans, constituting a part of their shared cultural context.

Figure 3: Bravado before the match with Switzerland – allusion in the *Daily Mirror*, 17 June 2004. Reprinted with the permission of the copyright holder.

By appealing to an imagined community (‘*we*’), the headline strengthens the national unity and support for the England team. At the same time, it dissociates itself from the opponents who the England team are about to face by showing the prize (the cow) face-to-face with the readers. In this way, the prize for victory actually becomes transformed into a metaphorical image of the opponents themselves. Thus, presented as non-human, they are demeaned.

The modification of the phrase from the absent (and alluded) ‘moved’ to the present (and alluding) ‘MOOED’ provides a link between the headline and the contents of the story. The national stereotype of associating Switzerland with cows thus becomes manifested in three different yet interrelated ways in the front page – word, image and sound: first the verbal mention ‘cows’ as the prize for victory, second the visual image of the prize (and impersonation of the adversaries and, potentially, the Swiss in general), and third the onomatopoeic word used as a verb in the headline. The mutual interplay of these three elements extends mere wordplay into a more complex semiotic play.

Another instance of a modification of the phonological shape of words (cf. also *Franks for nothing* in Section 4.2.1 above) – one which adds an extra layer of information yet does not obscure the original referential meaning beyond recognition – was provided by the *Sun* in its report on the result of the match:

England glee, Switzerland nil (*Sun*, 18 June 2004). The phonological similarity between ‘glee’ and ‘three’ does not, given the verbal context, prevent the recognition of the numerical result, yet communicates the extra information about how valued the victory was. This headline manifests the paper’s poetic preoccupation with the form even at the expense of placing an additional burden on the readers, making their processing of the text somewhat more complex. This extra complexity, however, is balanced out by the ‘added value’ of communicating two pieces of information at the same time and supporting the interpersonal dimension by deploying a device which depends on the readers’ complicity in decoding the two aspects of its meaning and appreciating their simultaneous operation.

Other headlines on the same match exploit a less common form of wordplay: the modification and ambiguity of noun phrase structure. In this particular case, this strategy occurred as an allusion to a set phrase, namely the compound ‘Swiss roll’ denoting a kind of cake, interestingly used by two papers on the same day: *Rooney head over heels, while the Swiss roll* (*The Independent*, 18 June 2004, see Figure 4) and *Two-goal Wayne inspires a Swiss roll-over* (*Daily Mirror*, 18 June 2004, see Figure 6 below). The fact that two papers opted for the clichéd combination indicates that this type of punning is the rule rather than an exception in the daily press – it seems that any opportunity for making such a humorous comment will be snatched by the media, despite the potential ‘groan’ response from the audience (Chovanec 2005a).

The *Daily Mirror* pun consists of an embedding of the noun phrase ‘Swiss role’ within the longer noun phrase ‘a Swiss roll-over’ (cf. the verb ‘to roll over’, i.e., to be defeated easily). The presence of the pun is revealed by the linear manner of processing the text; even though the reference to this kind of dessert is totally meaningless and does not have informational value.

In the *Independent* example, moreover, we find a formal identity (though clearly disambiguated by the conjunction ‘while’) between the noun phrase ‘the Swiss roll’, apparently used to evoke a humorous effect, and the clause ‘the Swiss roll’ referring to their defeat. Although the noun phrase ‘Swiss roll’ is not, in terms of syntactic analysis, explicitly present in any of these examples, the mere physical presence of the two constituents, even across phrase boundaries, is sufficient for creating the desired comical effect. What might, in other written genres, be seen as an undesirable and (most likely) unintentional stylistic infelicity, is turned to maximum advantage in the constrained context of sports headlines.

The *Independent* example intensifies its poetic preoccupation by actually combining the ‘Swiss roll’ pun with another allusion – to the idiom ‘head over heels in love’. However, the meaning of the phrase is partly literal, as shown by the accompanying photograph (see Figure 4) with Wayne Rooney doing acrobatics on the field. The set phrase ‘head over heels’ is clearly allusive but it does not utilise its allusive character to the full since the target text (i.e., the complete idiom) is most likely not intended to add any communicative value. Rather, it is used in sport journalism as a fairly stale phrase for 'delighted'. Just as in the case of the 'Swiss roll' allusion, the readers are misled towards drawing irrelevant conclusions. The only purpose of wordplay resulting in such a garden-path effect is the self-serving presentation of the referential content in an amusing way ('factual representation through amusing presentation').

The fact that the *Independent*, though a quality paper (branded 'The Newspaper of the Year' a year before the championship) engages in this kind of wordplay may serve as evidence that such creative use of language and wordplay is not limited to the popular press. The widespread presence of wordplay in the English quality press may, given the structural precondition of English as an analytical language with a large number of monosyllabic words favouring homonymy, be connected with the English tradition of generally being more playful with the linguistic code possessed by the native English-speaking community (Crystal 1998).


Newspaper of the Year

THE INDEPENDENT

Arts&BooksReview

First position: life with Carlos Acosta Second marriage: remaking The Stepford Wives Ethan Hawke Anna Funder Orbital Joel Coen Youssou N'Dour

INSIDE: 36-PAGE WEEKLY MAGAZINE

Rooney head over heels, while the Swiss roll

Acrimony, brinkmanship and a summit in turmoil

Blair and Chirac at odds over European 'red lines'

Figure 4: Allusions to 'head over heels' and 'the Swiss roll'. *The Independent*, 18 June 2004. Reprinted with the permission of the copyright holder.

The reporting of the match with Switzerland saw the emergence of another significant kind of wordplay, this time based on new word formations involving the name of Wayne Rooney. The young player scored two goals and instantly became the star of the England team, even overshadowing the captain David Beckham. Rooney’s swift rise to fame was paralleled by the quick adoption of his familiar term of reference, the nickname *Roo* or *Roon*, by the media. The obsession of the English press with wordplay involving Rooney eventually became the most memorable linguistic feature of the reporting on the entire championship. Starting with the Switzerland match, the nickname *Roo* or *Roon* came to be used either independently or as a morpheme in numerous blends. The former strategy is illustrated by the headline *Roo the man* (*Sun*, 18 June 2004, Figure 5). The headline is ambiguous: it depends for its effect on the recognition of the homophones ‘Roo’ and the verb ‘rue’. It can thus be read both as a statement about the heroic position of Rooney (with the noun phrase ‘the man’ standing in apposition to his nickname) and as a pseudo-directive addressed to the opponents who were defeated (‘rue the man’).

The latter strategy, i.e., incorporating the morpheme ‘Roo’ into existing words, was applied by the *Daily Mirror* when it reported the same match in its front page headline *Roosult!* (*Daily Mirror*, 18 June 2004, Figure 6). The modification of the spelling of common nouns to include the nickname ‘Roo’ results in establishing a connection between the person and the content of the story in a single word. In terms of information processing, such reader-oriented wordplay is, in fact, a

Figures 5 and 6: The victory over the Swiss in the *Sun* and the *Daily Mirror*, 18 June 2004. Reprinted with the permission of the copyright holder.

strategy of achieving a high economy of expression, as it concentrates two independent and meaningful pieces of information within a single linguistic form.

4.2.3 England – Croatia

With the match between England and Croatia, the press coverage turned into a celebration of Wayne Rooney as he managed to score two more goals. The front pages made reference to him not only before the match (on 21 June 2004, the *Sun* talked of the anticipated 30 million English people who would watch the match on TV as *Roon army*) but especially after England's victory. The victory meant that England qualified for the quarterfinals, which the Sun hailed with the front page headline *We're THROO!* (*Sun*, 22 June 2004) and the *Daily Mirror* with the brief *HEROO!* (*Daily Mirror*, 22 June 2004, see Figure 7). As Rooney's star status was fully established, he became the source of much wordplay in the media – usually involving blending (Chovanec, 2005b). The *Daily Express* even jocularly renamed the championship after Rooney in the headline *Wayne making it Eu-roo 2004* (22 June 2004).

Figure 7: The insertion of Wayne Rooney's familiar name 'Roo' into common nouns, *Daily Mirror*, 22 June 2004. Reprinted with the permission of the copyright holder.

In terms of linguistic treatment, the wordplay continued the trend set after the previous match with Switzerland. Blends and nonce-formations became very much preoccupied with references to Rooney with the ‘roo’ morpheme replacing syllables beginning with the letter r. This pattern of playful word-formation incorporating the morpheme ‘Roo’ survived the context of the football championship and has been used since to refer to all aspects of Rooney’s professional and private life, as some of the examples below illustrate:

- *Roomania* (*BBC*, 22 June 2004)
- Scroo you (News of the World, 1 July 2004)
- CaROObbean Queen (Sun, 15 July 2004)
- *Roon with a view* (*Sun*, 16 August 2004)
- Heroo … or Zeroo? (Daily Mirror, 30 September 2004)

The resulting blends are not merely newly coined lexical items evidencing economy of expression; they also have a pragmatic role. The underlying wordplay and reference to a shared cultural context increase the active involvement of readers of these little texts. This kind of wordplay is so omnipresent in the popular press that it comes close to “verbal exhibitionism”.

Generally speaking, the strategy of incorporating a particular news actor’s name in another, morphologically transformed lexical unit may need to be classified as a cliché. It was even ridiculed by Laura Barton in her *Guardian* article ‘Making the headlines: A Rooney pun for every occasion’ as early as 24 June 2004 (i.e., still with the championship in full swing) with the publishing of a list of made-up humorous headlines on various events involving Rooney (e.g., *Roo Stark!, Wayne Runey! Macca-Roon! Wayne Crooney!*).

4.2.4 England – Portugal

The reporting of the fourth match between England and Portugal in the quarter-final was subject to much the same verbal play surrounding the new national hero, Wayne Rooney, both before the decisive match and after. The *Sun* hyped the national frenzy by headlines such as *Go boys!* in its leading article on 24 June 2004, in which it urged ‘*Where there’s a will, there’s a Wayne*’ in anticipation of the long-awaited chance of the England team to proceed further with the indispensable help of Rooney.

The victory would have a symbolic significance within English culture: the last time England beat Portugal at a major tournament was in the 1966 World Championship – incidentally, the only time England won the world cup. This cultural reference is capitalized on by the Daily Mirror in its headline *Roote 66*, with the additional allusion to the legendary American road travelled by people in search of a better future – 'the road of hope'. Owing to the morphological adaptation and the allusion, Rooney may thus be interpreted as the means through which English hope for ultimate victory in the championship is to be realised. The media's obsession with Rooney's rising star is reflected in the name given to what England was experiencing at the time – *Roo-Mania*[4] or, more jocularly, Roomania[5] (no link between Rooney and the homophonic name of a country being intended).

Before the actual match with Portugal, the *Daily Mirror* ran a story on its front page (see Figure 8) in which it combines wordplay with visual manipulation, relying on readers to make inferences on the basis of their knowledge of the cultural context.


DAILY Mirror
COME ON ENGLAND
WIN ROONEY'S OWN BOOTS
QUARTER POUNDING
ENGLAND v PORTUGAL
Wayne to make Figo and pals pay for burger jibes

Figure 8: Punning and visual play before the match with Portugal, *Daily Mirror*, 24 June 2004. Reprinted with the permission of the copyright holder.

4 *The Sky News* at <http://www.sky.com/skynews/article/0, 30000-13131557,00.html>.
5 The Sun, 23 June 2004: Speedway in Roo-ins (headline) 'ROOMANIA has claimed its first victim: speedway meetings. [...]'

The headline *Quarter Pounding* is a complex pun operating at several levels:

- first, it refers to a 'quarter pounder', a large-size hamburger sold by McDonalds';
- second, it alludes to the idiom 'to get one's pound of flesh', i.e., to take revenge on, or get satisfaction from someone;
- and third, it combines the notions of the quarterfinal and the meaning of the verb 'to pound', i.e., to beat or knock heavily, deliver heavy blows.[6]

As in the previous examples, the phrase, combined with the prominent visual representation, triggers the readers' inferencing process and the application of their knowledge of the cultural context, the situational context and the code itself.

The first allusion of the phrase 'quarter pounding' – to the quarter pounder hamburger – is to be interpreted in connection with the alleged references of the Portuguese press to Rooney as 'McRooney'. This was apparently inspired by his physical characteristics (the circular shape of his face and his thick build) and his alleged preference for fast food. The 'hamburger' allusion thus also explains the otherwise bizarre appearance of the burger in the picture.

The second allusion – to the idiom 'to get one's pound of flesh' – is to be read in conjunction with the sub-headline, which typically rewords and extends the information provided in the headline (cf. van Dijk 1988; Bell 1991). In this case, the sub-headline reads *Wayne to make Figo and pals pay for burger jibes*. On the pictorial level, the same content is expressed visually: Rooney is indeed getting his revenge since he is shown to be forcing a hamburger down the throat of the main Portugal star, Luis Figo. The photograph is not real – it is a montage, i.e., a creative appropriation of visual forms. In this sense, it forms a visual parallel to wordplay because it combines the manipulation of forms with an intended humorous effect. The manipulation of the image – as opposed to the traditional documentary role of photographs – is a feature which readers tend to tolerate more in the popular press than in the broadsheets (cf. Taylor 2005).

Finally, the third level of allusion – to the situational context of the quarterfinal and the desired victory over ('pounding') Portugal – connects the previous two in an intertextual play both on the visual and the verbal levels. The entire front page of the *Daily Mirror* is thus another instance of a complex semiotic play.

However, England eventually failed to beat Portugal in the quarterfinal – it lost the match in a penalty shoot-out. Not surprisingly, some of the reporting of the English participation at the European Football Championship was continued in terms of an intertextual link with the preceding front page headlines (see the

6 Oxford English Dictionary, www.oed.com.

Figures above), notably in the *Sun*, which reported the lost match under the headline *Our dream in Roo-ins* (*Sun*, 25 June 2004). In this case, the new coinage *Roo-ins* is again ambiguous in respect of its meaning: it refers not only to the shattered hopes of England but also to the injury suffered by Wayne Rooney at the beginning of the match and forcing him to quit (he was thus personally and physically 'ruined').

5 Discussion and conclusions

As the data indicate, written sports reporting is riddled with intertextual play, allusions and verbal and visual puns that connect headlines and accompanying photographs. The wordplay is often based on homonymy, nonce-formations, blends, phonological / morphological modifications, and other kinds of creative and playful word formation. It seems that the use of such phenomena has become rather the rule than the exception and that many such strategies are common both in tabloids and in broadsheets (cf. Lennon 2004). We are witnessing an increasing degree of playfulness and creative manipulation of linguistic forms where the manner of presentation becomes as important, if not more important than the meaning.

The omnipresence of humorous, entertaining and engaging language is partly related to the changing nature of the media. Since printed newspapers report news stories with an inevitable time lag, they cannot compete with the instant delivery of news in live broadcasts on the radio and TV (cf. Ungerer 2000; Jucker 2005). There is also rising competition from Internet-based media, which includes the online presence of the very same newspapers. Over the past fifteen years, most newspapers have set up online versions whose content is increasingly updated round the clock. When preparing editorial content for their printed versions, newspapers need to refocus from the main event – which is known to readers from other media already – to some other aspect of the news story in order to provide a point of entry into the article (cf. Ungerer 2000). Printed newspapers need to provide more than a factual documentation of the state of affairs. Hardly anywhere is that need as acute as in the case of sports reporting, because match reports are rather ephemeral in consequence of the entertainment nature of sports events, whose topicality rapidly decreases with the passage of time.

The refocusing from mere "representation" to forms of "presentation" becomes reflected in the humour and playfulness of language. From a more general functional linguistic perspective, what matters in the presentation of news is no longer merely the referential (ideational) content, i.e., news as information, but also the attendant functions of appealing to and involving the reader in the discourse. In other words, stress is laid on the interpersonal function, be it realized as the traditional expressive function (e.g., the choice of emotive and subjective lexis), the conative function (e.g., the direct appeal to the imaginary community of readers using synthetic personalization) or the poetic function (e.g., the playful and humorous manipulation of linguistic forms). In this way, the texts trigger the readers' application of appropriate schemata, cultural knowledge and stereotypes, though this might sometimes be at the expense of communicating the propositional content clearly and directly and, thus, go counter to the pragmatic function of headlines as providing relevant information (cf. Dor 2003).

The playful manner of presentation operates also on the level of visual representation – visual forms may be manipulated in a way parallel to the manipulation of verbal forms in discourse; the resulting images are thus parallels of verbal play on the visual level. Such verbal and visual play is evidence of the growing trend towards infotainment, as well as the multi-semiotic character of some modern news texts, most notably the front pages of printed newspapers. In some media, particularly the popular press, the referential role of language has been weakened. Kress (1996: 25) observes about the *Sun*, for instance, that "the prominence of the verbal has gone, or rather, it has been fundamentally transformed into 'display' rather than 'information' in the traditional sense." Thus, while language has obviously increasingly assumed the role of a visual element, the mutual relationship between the verbal and the visual channels has been redefined into one of close interdependence and symbiosis. Verbal forms assume visual qualities and are used iconically in order to enhance the entertainment potential of the news report. The humorous content of the headlines and the images adds to this function.

Wordplay and humour contribute to the dramatic exaggeration and evaluation evident in the newspaper headlines. In this sense, they also function as another strategy through which the media contribute to the sensationalizing of the content (cf. Molek-Kozakowska 2013). Humour – in the form of the multimodal semiotic play which it often assumes – increases the entertainment value of the sports spectacle and adds to the enjoyment of the audience.

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Marina Santiago and Sarah Seewoester Cain

Audience affiliation, membership categories, and the construction of humor in stand-up comedy

1 Introduction

In stand-up comedy, how a comedian positions him/herself and the audience in relationship to each other (and to the target of the humor) becomes important to the development and outcome of the routine. In accounting for the audience, the comedian discursively constructs potential membership categories for the audience to affiliate with, along with positioning himself within those categories. With each performance, however, audiences, contexts, and modalities (e.g. live vs. televised) may shift, leading the comedian to alter his or her linguistic performance. This study compares two tellings of a similar humorous sequence in order to demonstrate the function of locally situated categories (nationality, ethnicity, and ideology) in the construction of humor.

Here we compare New York-based comedian Hari Kondabolu's 'White Chocolate' routine, performed in a non-televised stand-up comedy venue and on a nationally televised late-night talk show. In particular, we show that: 1) Kondabolu discursively constructs each audience in terms of national, ethnic, and ideological reference groups but aligns each audience differently in terms of these groups, and 2) he scaffolds the discursive categories he creates through the manipulation of particular sociolinguistic variables ([ai] vs. [a] in 'white' and [ɔ] in 'chocolate') and style with relation to prosodic variation. In essence, Kondabolu changes his performance based on who he is performing to in order to elicit the maximum comic effect.

This study provides a formal methodology to account for audience design (Bell 1984/2002) in the performance of comedy on both the discourse level (through Membership Categorization Analysis) and the sociolinguistic level (through phonetic analysis). These findings add to Bell's notion of audience design by incorporating a discourse-level analysis to his phonetic justification, and it also adds to the growing body of research which claims comedy audiences are ratified participants (Dynel 2011a, Dynel 2011b, Dynel 2011c; Cain 2013). Finally,

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it suggests that the notion of “reference group” in superiority/affiliation theories may be more fluid than commonly purported.

2 Literature review

In this study, we will account for possible variation in the performances of Hari Kondabolu through analysis of variables at the phonological level, as has become customary in sociolinguistics and audience design. In addition to this, we will formally account for variation at the discourse level using Membership Categorization Analysis, something frequently used in rhetorical studies but rarely used in sociolinguistics (see Haworth 2013 for another example of discourse-level analysis with regard to audience design). Finally, we will show how phonological and discourse-level variation work hand-in-hand for the purposes of humor, specifically to foster an affiliative relationship between the comedian and his/her audience and to disaffiliate the audience from the target of the humor (Zillman 1996).

2.1 Humor and Superiority Theory

In comedy, the audience’s relationship to both the comedian and target of humor plays a role in how they receive and react to the humor. Being among the first to formalize this relationship for humor in general, Hobbs attributes humorous laughter to feelings of superiority in the misfortunes of others: “Sudden glory is the passion which maketh those Grimaces called LAUGHTER, and is caused either by the apprehension of some deformed thing in another, by comparison whereof they suddenly applaud themselves” (1651: 52). In other words, we find humor in our own feeling of superiority over some Other. Gruner (1997), perhaps one of the greatest proponents of superiority theory, attributes humor to aggression in much the same way: “when we find humor in something, we laugh at the misfortune, stupidity, clumsiness, moral or cultural defect, suddenly revealed in *someone else*, to whom we instantly and momentarily feel ‘superior’ since *we are not*, at that moment, unfortunate, stupid, clumsy, morally or culturally defective, and so on. To feel superior is ‘to feel good’; it is ‘to get what you want.’ *It is to win.”* (1997: 13). Here he places superiority into a “play frame” (Fry 1963), specifically in terms of games, thus approaching human aggression as a source of humor in a much subtler way: “[humor is] a succession of games. The very idea of a game implies fun, leisure, entertainment, recreation, affable human interaction; but it also implies *competitions, keeping “score”* and *a winner and a loser*” (1997: 2).

Others have proposed not general superiority, but superiority over a target with which one does not affiliate as a source of humorous enjoyment (Wolff et al. 1934), or relatively stable attitudes (such as being pro-American or pro-Jewish) regardless of actual affiliation with a particular reference group (Middleton 1959, La Fave et al. 1973). More recently, Zillman (1976/1996) posited a dispositional model of humor as an alternative to reference-group/affiliation formulas. He suggests that the more favorable one's disposition is toward the agent delivering the humor and the less favorable the disposition toward the entity being disparaged the greater the humorous appreciation (1976: 100). Since the original formulation, dispositional characteristics such as ability to control events that affect one's self (Prepost 1993), group membership like political affiliation (Weise 1996), or both (Thomas and Esses 2004; men ranking higher in hostile sexism were more likely to repeat a joke disparaging women but not a joke disparaging men) have shown support for superiority/affiliation models of humor. In essence, superiority/affiliation models claim that the degree to which an audience affiliates with the agent delivering the humor as well as disaffiliates with the humor's target (whether based on reference group or dispositional characteristics) within a frame of play has a role in their enjoyment of the situation.

Adjusting one's speech depending on whom one is talking to has parallels in sociolinguistics and accommodation (Giles and Powesland 1975) and audience design (Bell 1984/2002). As Bell originally presented it, "audience design proposes that intra-speaker or stylistic dimension of language variation can primarily be correlated with the attributes of hearers. That is, speakers design their talk for their hearers" (1984: 105). Since these formulations, others have shown support for audience design in the context of advertising audiences (Bell 1999; Van Gijsel et al. 2008), police interviews (Haworth 2013), and teacher-student interactions (Ladegaard 1995). Even the well-documented phenomenon of the observer's paradox (Labov 1972: 209) attests to the notion of audience design.

2.2 Membership Categorization Analysis

Membership Categorization Analysis (MCA) is a form of linguistic analysis used to make sense of the way speakers create categories through language (Leudar 2004). This method, pioneered by Harvey Sacks (1972, 1992), is used to determine how people categorize the world in relationship to themselves and others. MCA views these categorizations, which are achieved through speech, as being towards a particular end. These categories are considered constructed through talk, and are not inherent (Leudar 2004: 245).

Membership categorization is also a method by which speakers utilize a presumed shared knowledge (Hester and Elgin 1997: 3; Sacks 1984) with their interlocutors. For example, in the following interaction (from Whitehead and Learner 2009) the speaker uses a categorical reference, 'my wife,' which includes in it presumed cultural knowledge that explains the nature of the request and allows the other speaker to understand and respond without further explanation of the individual situation.

[GL:FN:UAL 3/27]
1 Passenger A: I wonder if you would mind trading seats with my wife?
2 Passenger B: Sure.
3 Passenger A: Thank you.

Categories that have been analyzed using MCA include categories seen as "fixed" in conversations, such as familial roles and job status. MCA can also be used to analyze the talk of institutions and political figures, which use talk to construct categories of ally and enemy along moral lines. This construction of categories can be used towards the end of convincing a public to support actions such as going to war (Leudar, Marsland, and Nekvapil 2004).

Leudar, Marsland, and Nekvapil (2004) provide an analysis of the events following September 11, 2001. They discuss the use of the standardized relational pairs *us* and *them* by three politicians: George Bush, Tony Blair, and member of the British parliament Khalid Mahmood. Leudar, Marsland, and Nekvapil show how *us* and *them* can be used to create national and ideological categorizations that work towards a particular end. While Bush, Blair, and Mahmood were in conversation with one another, they created different categories to achieve different goals.

Other studies have looked at the ways in which categories in talk construct or reproduce categories of race and ethnicity. This work includes 'race talk,' in which speakers express racial ideologies and racial prejudice (Bonilla-Silva 2002; Condor 2006; Condor et al. 2006), as well as "incidental" invocations of race in talk-in-interaction (Whitehead and Lerner 2009). Through an examination of natural discourse, Whitehead and Lerner show the way in which race talk is subject to a practical asymmetry, in which one category (white) is taken for granted even when relevant, while others are not. Much like the use of the categorical 'my wife' in the above example, the use of racial categories communicates cultural knowledge between speakers, as does the disuse of these categories. A direct reference to a white racial/ethnic category can be used when the taken-for-granted category becomes necessary for descriptive adequacy

(2009: 629), which shows the use of recipient design when evoking racial categories. The potential for the use or disuse of category-bound racial groupings becomes relevant in the comedy of Kondabolu, who manipulates the taken for granted status of white ethnicity to construct his narrative.

3 Data analysis

3.1 Hari Kondabolu at Seattle Underground

On April 22, 2009, Hari Kondabolu performed a stand-up set at Seattle's Comedy Underground, a live, small-venue performance space. This performance was untelevised, and the primary intended audience were those present in the night club with Kondabolu when the segment was originally performed. Portions of the performance (including the 'White Chocolate' narrative) were filmed using what seems to be amateur equipment. The 'White Chocolate' segment of the performance was later uploaded to Kondabolu's YouTube page.

This venue was notable in size and scope of its audience; the venue also makes clear on its website that they do not welcome sexist, homophobic, or racist content. The explicitness with which Comedy Underground warns against this suggests that they expect their audiences are not welcoming towards these belief systems in general, and that the audiences' preferences should be taken into account when crafting a routine. The audience, venue, and non-televised nature of the performance are thus all reflected in the construction of the 'White Chocolate' narrative.

'White Chocolate' is discursively interesting as it relies on the comedian's meta-linguistic awareness of marked and unmarked categories. The humorous resolution to the narrative involves drawing the audience's attention to the markedness of 'brown' and the unmarkedness of 'white' in certain contexts (with chocolate being a notable exception).

In this performance at Comedy Underground, Kondabolu opens with a discussion of race through cultural resources as well as direct lexical references. The uploaded YouTube video opens with Kondabolu addressing the audience, then suggesting they are wondering about the "obvious question":

HARI: . . . <Q Hari Kondabolu,
why does your skin,
look so <F fu=cking F> good Q>?
AUD: (LAUGHTER)
HARI: . . . No=.

6 .. No,
7 God?
8 No.
9 .. Cocoa butter.
10 AUD: (LAUGHTER)
11 HARI: . . . Ye=ah.
12 . . . I’m using cocoa butter.
13 .. I didn’t use anything on my skin for the longest ti=me,
14 .. (H) ‘cause I noticed that most of the lotion advertisements I saw,
15 only had white people in them.
16 <VOX Oh,
17 .. (H) guess lotion’s not for me then VOX>.
18 AUD: (SOFT LAUGHTER)

Here, Kondabolu invokes a category of race (line 15), which is an exclusive category in which he does not include himself. Through the direct lexical reference ‘white people,’ Kondabolu simultaneously creates another category (nonwhite people), while making the typically unmarked white ethnicity relevant and not assumed. By saying “lotion’s not for me then,” Kondabolu places value on the ethnicity of those represented in advertisements. Since the advertisements portray white individuals, he concludes that they are not aimed at and not relevant to nonwhite people, including himself. By evoking race in this manner, Kondabolu makes his own (unspecified, nonwhite) ethnicity not only relevant to the upcoming humor, but as having broader implications that he will discuss later in the routine.

The use of a direct lexical reference to white ethnicity/white people (line 15) is also notable in that, before going into the ‘White Chocolate’ portion of his routine, Kondabolu questions the unmarkedness of white ethnicity in discourse. Kondabolu creates a discourse in which the white ethnicity of subjects must be specified in order to achieve descriptive adequacy. In other words, by describing the people in the advertisements as white (and dichotomizing them with those in his own nonwhite category), Kondabolu suggests that both white and nonwhite racial categories should not be assumed. By doing so he also suggests something about the discursive needs of his audience – because he has made race relevant, and because they are oriented towards a person-of-color identity, they therefore both require and understand the explicit references to white ethnicity in order to make sense of his humor.

Kondabolu then continues his narrative, describing how he came to use cocoa butter as his lotion of choice. In doing so, Kondabolu uses an indexical cultural reference as well as a direct lexical reference to an ethnic category:

19 HARI: But the=n,
20 .. but then my friends,
21 AUD: (LAUGHTER)
22 HARI: ... I opened up a ^copy,
23 (H) of Ebony ^Magazine.
24 AUD: (LAUGHTER)
25 HARI: ... Saw a person of ^color,
26 holding up a bottle of cocoa butter.
27 ... Fuck yeah.
28 ... Hari Kondabolu gonna be using some ^cocoa butter.
29 AUD: (LAUGHTER)

Kondabolu references a popular publication aimed at an African American audience, yet does not describe this magazine to his audience assuming they are aware of the social meaning of Ebony Magazine (line 23). This assumption appears to be ratified in the audience's laughter (line 24), which occurs before Kondabolu explicitly links Ebony Magazine with people of color (line 25). Through his use of the phrase "person of color," Kondabolu further constructs a categorization system that separates white ethnicity from nonwhite/person of color ethnicity (of which he is affiliated). His reference to Ebony Magazine also links African American identity to other person of color identities, including his own. Kondabolu thus dichotomizes people of color and white people as mutually exclusive but interactively constructed categories. He does so without implicating those who are not people of color as the target of the humor, but nonetheless creates a categorization system that dichotomizes people of color and others. He avoids explicitly critiquing those who are not familiar with this cultural resource by referencing his own previous lack of understanding and discussing his realization that cocoa butter was a product marketed towards people of color. Kondabolu continues to say:

30 HARI: ... So I went to the supermarket to get some cocoa butter,
31 cocoa butter of course,
32 (H) is in the e=thnic nee=ds se=ction of my supermarket?
33 AUD: (LAUGHTER)
34 HARI: ... And I was confu=sed.
35 ... 'Cause I s- –
36 I saw ethnic needs and I immediately thought,
37 oh er,
38 end of police brutality,
39 (H) more access to health ca=re,

40 ... uh more educational opportunities perhaps=,
41 ... right?
42 Right?
43 .. No=.
44 .. Just shampoo and cocoa butter.
45 ... Apparently.

In this section of the narrative, Kondabolu recognizes the contextual use of ‘ethnic’ (line 32) in a supermarket as meaning nonwhite. He then problematizes the idea that the needs of the nonwhite category of people can be reduced and limited to specific types of beauty products (line 44). Kondabolu emphasizes the position of nonwhite people (and nonwhite-affiliated products) as being culturally/linguistically marked through his use of “of course” (line 31). His use of “of course” in this portion of the discourse again positions the audience as a group of people with assumed prior knowledge of this issue. Since he and the audience are both familiar with this issue, he is then able to subvert the notion of marked ethnic-ness by listing what he sees as potential legitimate ‘ethnic needs’ (lines 38–40). The listing of these needs relevant to people of color again evokes the ethnic/racial categorization dichotomy. He also makes ideological categories relevant, as the target of the humor are those adopting the cultural assumption of white unmarkedness, rather than white ethnicity itself. This allows the further potential for audience members who are not people of color to participate in the humor through affiliation with the ideological vs. racial categorization.

As Kondabolu progresses towards the resolution, he returns to the topic of cocoa butter. Here, he discusses the smell of cocoa butter as he transitions into an explicit discussion of ethnic markedness in the United States:

46 HARI: ... I’ve been using the cocoa butter for about a year now,
47 I love it?
48 .. ‘Cause it makes me smell like chocolat=e?
49 ... And I love chocolate.
50 ... And you need to understand why I love chocolate so much.
51 You see=,
52 .. uh in this country,
53 white is the- the assumed,
54 white is the default.
55 If I was to bring a friend home from work,
56 my friend’s Chinese,

57 to meet my white buddies at home,
58 (H) they might be a little confused like,
59 <Q hey man,
60 .. why didn't you tell us your friend was Chinese Q> ?
61 (H) Well you just assumed he was gonna be whi=te.

In this routine, Kondabolu addresses the concept that white is the default ethnicity of Americans without directly excluding members of the audience from the ideological category that holds this belief (lines 52–54). His lack of need to separate his audience from the critiqued category arises from the preceding discourse. Kondabolu uses direct lexical references to white ethnicity, thus suggesting that he and his audience do not presume whiteness is unmarked. It also suggests that race is a relevant category of description for this particular audience. The audience can therefore be more readily assumed to be precluded from the racist ideological category (regardless of their own racial identities) as they are currently participating in an interaction which contradicts the assumption of unmarked whiteness.

Like in the previously discussed portion of his routine (line 15), Kondabolu again questions the unmarkedness of white ethnicity in discourse (lines 55–57). Kondabolu introduces a potential scenario in which he brings a "friend" to meet other "buddies" at home. He first introduces the friend without reference to any racial category, thus suggesting it is not the primary means of identifying the person. Because it is relevant to the point of the narrative, he then must clarify the ethnicity of the "friend" (line 56). However, in the following line (57), he immediately and necessarily describes the "buddies" as having white ethnicity. In doing so he again subverts the notion that whiteness is less marked than other ethnic categories, as their whiteness is considered relevant to their ideological categorization. In this performance, the nationality of the subjects is assumed or irrelevant[1], while the ethnicity or ethnic cultural affiliation is considerably more important to their placement in membership categories.

Kondabolu then addresses those who are members of the racist ideological category through the transposition of a fictitious prior discourse in which he addresses his buddies in the second person "you" (lines 59–61). He is able to more directly critique those who he constructs as being members of a racist ideological category because through prior discourse he has already constructed an affiliation with the audience that assumes they are not being critiqued.

1 Kondabolu appears to be using "Chinese" (line 56) as an ethnic/racial category rather than a national one, as implied by his contrasting of "Chinese" to "white" in lines 60–61 (rather than "Chinese" to "American").

As will be shown in the next analysis, the two performances, which include many of the same topics, utilize very different discursive tactics when categorizing the audience (as well as the comedian) in terms of nationality, ethnicity, and ideology. However, both performances share a good deal of lexical content in the resolution:

62 HARI: And that's why I like chocolate.
63 'Cause when you think of chocolate,
64 (H) you think of something brown.
65 . . . And if you think of white chocolate first,
66 <@ well @>,
67 .. (H) you're a <F ^fucking F> racist.

With the exception of the expletive (line 67), the humorous resolution in both 'White Chocolate' routines is verbatim. In the Comedy Underground performance, Kondabolu primarily constructs categories of ethnicity, focusing on person of color and white identities. These categories are primarily constructed to group people by ethnic identity, but also allow those who culturally affiliate with people of color to be a part of that inclusive group. Kondabolu also constructs categories of ideology, in which racist ideology is affiliated with but not tantamount to white ethnicity. This category is constructed for a small and more intimate comedy club audience with whom he discursively suggests that he shares cultural resources.

3.2 Hari Kondabolu on Conan

The next performance we will look at takes place in a much different setting than the Comedy Underground performance. Hari Kondabolu appeared on the late night talk show *Conan*, hosted by Conan O'Brien, on October 2, 2012. Kondabolu performed a short, less than 10-minute stand-up set beginning with another version of his 'White Chocolate' routine. The week Kondabolu performed, *Conan* averaged .8 million viewers per episode, according to NBC (as cited by http://tvbythenumbers.zap2it.com). Much of the media audience had not tuned in specifically to see Kondabolu perform, as suggested by the disparity between the .8 million per episode viewership of *Conan* and Kondabolu's 3,896 YouTube Channel subscribers (as of June 12, 2013) and .8 million total views of his uploaded YouTube videos between February 16, 2006 and June 12, 2013. Thus Kondabolu performed for a much larger audience than in the previously analyzed performance.

This audience is also different in that it includes a studio audience as well as a presumed national audience. The presence of this audience is shown in the way Kondabolu constructs the categories necessary for the performance of the joke, as he attempts to appeal more broadly to a present (studio) audience that may not be familiar with his particular type of humor as well as a larger (television) audience.

After being introduced to the audience by Conan O'Brien, Kondabolu greets the studio audience and starts his 'White Chocolate' routine. Kondabolu begins by evoking the category of nationality; specifically, he references a trip he took outside of the country (lines 6–8), placing his American identity (line 13) in contrast with another, non-American nationality (line 8):

6	HARI:	I have been tra=veling,
7		a=ll over the world doing stand up comedy,
8		(H) I was in Aarhus Denmark .. last year,
9		(H) where I was heckled in a way I had never been heckled before?
10		(H) A man got up in the middle of my show,
11		... (H) and he yelled out,
12		<F ... hey.
13		... Go back to America F>.
14		... (H) Wo=w (Hx).

As Kondabolu continues, he again sets his American identity in contrast with other nationalities (lines 22–24) further reinforcing an American vs. non-American dichotomy. He never explicitly references his own ethnic/national identity of Indian American, but instead references countries he has been assumed to be from, therefore problematizing the association between white ethnicity and American identity. Kondabolu subverts any assumption on the part of his audience (studio or otherwise) that he is anything but American by his continued referencing of national rather than ethnic category (lines 20, 30). He then clarifies that he was indeed born and raised in the United States, while acknowledging that this fact is overlooked due to his (unstated) ethnicity (line 32):

15	AUD:	(LAUGHTER)
16	HARI:	That's incredible,
17		Because I've been told to go back to so many countries.
18		[A=nd],
19	AUD:	[(LAUGHTER)]
20	HARI:	... never to America,
21		uh,

22		I've been told to go back to Iraq,
23		. . . (H) Afghanistan,
24		. . . (H) Libya,
25		. . . (H) whatever country we're bombing,
26		I'm told to go back there,
27	AUD:	(LAUGHTER)
28	HARI:	. . . at the worst time to go back.
29	AUD:	(LAUGHTER)
30	HARI:	. . . Nice to finally hear America,
31	AUD:	(SOFT LAUGHTER)
32	HARI:	(H) the country I was born and raised.

The segment continues with Kondabolu referencing American national identity. As he does so, Kondabolu uses the first person plural pronoun 'we.' This could be an inclusive use of 'we,' including himself and his audience in the category of American, or a general 'we' that refers to the institution of 'America,' without specifying his audience's identity. Regardless of his audience's identity, the use of 'we' positions Kondabolu within the category of American. This therefore positions his identity in opposition to the previously discussed non-American identities. By saying "whatever country we're bombing," (line 25) Kondabolu creates the categories of 'us' (Americans) and 'them' (non-Americans), reinforcing his position as American. To further emphasize his inclusion in the category of American, he uses supplemental gestural information, pointing to himself as he utters the key pronoun 'we' (line 25).

Now that Kondabolu has solidly placed himself within the national category of American, he begins to evoke ideological categories, which will become important to the eventual humorous outcome of his 'White Chocolate' routine. Kondabolu again notes his inclusion in the American category (line 34) before explicitly saying what was implied in the previous section – that many assume he is not American due to his non-white ethnicity (lines 35–38). As he does so, he segments the American population through the use of the phrase "a lot of people" (line 35). By doing so, Kondabolu allows the audience to disaffiliate themselves from an ideological category he is criticizing (those who presume white is the default), which will eventually become the target of the humor, thus bolstering the humorous potential as superiority theory may predict. Furthermore, Kondabolu constructs the categories in a way that avoids directly critiquing the potential ideological views of the audience by first providing them with the necessary information (that he is an American) before turning his attention to those who would assume otherwise.

34 HARI: ... I was born and raised in this country,
35 but there's a lot of people,
36 that actually don't assume I'm an American.
37 ... Because I think for a lot of people,
38 the average American is still white,
39 (H) and that frustrates me,

The repeated use of deictic, gestural, and other lexical cues to indicate his inclusion in the American category contrasts to his unstated national categorizations in the Comedy Underground routine potentially suggesting the need for Kondabolu to unequivocally establish his national categorization before a broader audience.

After explaining his frustration with the presumed link between national and racial/ethnic identity (line 39), Kondabolu then transitions towards the humorous resolution. He does so by formulating his preference for chocolate (line 40) as a conclusion to the previous discourse. In the Comedy Underground performance, Kondabolu had already introduced his preference for chocolate in the discourse preceding the resolution (Comedy Underground, line 48–50) and introduced the discussion of racial markedness as being relevant to his love of chocolate. The Comedy Underground audience was therefore already supplied with the information necessary to understand the conclusion of his narrative as also being the resolution of a joke (Comedy Underground, line 65–67). In the *Conan* performance, Kondabolu's focus on national categories from the start of his routine doesn't prime the audience for the transition to a discussion of chocolate as we saw in the Comedy Underground performance. Instead, the pause on the part of the comedian (lines 41–44) signals the audience to recast the preceding discourse as vital to upcoming humor. The soft laughter (lines 41 and 43) is further evidence that the audience treats the transition as somewhat abrupt.

40 HARI: (H) and that's why I like chocolate.
41 AUD: (SOFT LAUGHTER)
42 HARI: ((NODS))
43 AUD: (SOFT LAUGHTER)
44 HARI: ((NODS))
45 ... Yeah,
46 'cause when you first think of chocolate,
47 (H) you think of something bro=wn.
48 ... (H) And if you think of white chocolate first,
49 .. (H) well then you're a racist.
50 AUD: (LAUGHTER)

Kondabolu then references the unmarked brownness of chocolate (lines 46–47) compared to the unmarked whiteness of the average American (line 38). He transitions into the conclusion of the 'White Chocolate' routine (lines 48–49) in which he conflates the categories of chocolate and race, allowing him to identify those who think of white before brown in any semantic category as racists.

In the Comedy Underground performance, Kondabolu had excluded the audience from being the critiqued category in his use of membership categories throughout the preceding discourse. In the *Conan* performance this exclusion is less clear, as he has primarily constructed himself as being a member of a specific national category. Kondabolu has also discussed his own feelings towards the assumption of white identity in Americans, and through his reinforcement of his own American identity along with his critique of American white unmarkedness, has made it evident that not all members of the national category share the same racialized ideology. Thus he allows the audience to affiliate or disaffiliate from the category 'you' (lines 46–49) that he is critiquing (line 49).

Kondabolu categorizes people in terms of nationality and ideology, creating both an American vs. non-American dichotomy and a racist vs. non-racist dichotomy. He aligns himself with an American identity while also critiquing an 'American racist' ideology from which he disassociates himself. By associating himself with the American category while disassociating himself from the 'American racist' ideological category, he constructs an avenue for the audience to also disassociate themselves from the target of the humor. This allows the audience to participate in the humorous resolution by laughing at the other Americans who hold racist ideologies. Kondabolu also disassociates himself from a white ethnicity through his narrative about being assumed to be non-American (because the average American is assumed to be white). This implicitly creates white and non-white categories without explicitly linking ethnicity and racist ideology, unlike what was shown in the Comedy Underground performance in which the two were explicitly linked.

Both versions of the humorous sequence discussed above share almost identical lexical content in their conclusions, while uniquely constructing categories throughout the preceding discourse to make sense of the humorous conclusion. This construction of categories can be done through the use of cultural resources and positioning of the audience in a particular category, as shown in the Comedy Underground performance, or primarily through the positioning of the comedian in a particular category while providing multiple potential categories through which the audience can affiliate, as shown in the *Conan* performance. In both instances, the comedian constructs the discourse in a way that takes into account the context of their performance in order to foster a maximally humorous effect.

4 Sociophonetic comparison

As previously discussed, the comedian can construct his audience differently on the discourse level based on who they are and the context in which he is performing. As we will see next, this discursive construction has counterparts on the phonetic level, as the comedian's production of vowels and other fine phonetic features may change. The comedian uses these different variables to further construct his alignment with the membership categories he has created.

Much research in sociolinguistics has linked particular productions of vowels or other phonetic features with some sort of social meaning. In other words, the vowels that are produced by a speaker carry meaning about the identity and cultural category of the speaker. These categories are locally constructed, and reflect the social categories considered salient by the speakers in a given community.

Eckert (2008) and other third wave sociolinguists have shown that along with indexing social class (Labov 1972), ethnicity, and other identity categories, linguistic variation is a part of stylistic practice. A speaker may use different variables not only as a result of more or less formal speaking styles (Labov 1972) but also to perform identities such as social group membership and national/ethnic identification (Mendoza-Denton 2008). What is particularly notable about Eckert's study of pre-adolescent girls is how she showed the same young girls using different phonological variables depending on the attitude towards boys they were displaying. One girl, Colette, used higher and backer /o/ when speaking negatively about boys than when speaking positively. In both examples, Colette was speaking casually to the researcher, so the difference cannot be attributed to formal/informal style but rather to a more subtle social meaning.

In Kondabolu's two stand-up sets, much lexical content of the humorous conclusion remains the same. However, his audience changes, as does his discursive construction of ethnic/racial and national identity. These changes in context are reflected in the phonological realizations of two variables: /ɔ/ and /ai/. It is possible these differences may be also be attributed to changes in Kondabolu's performance style over time, as the two performances used for this analysis were recorded three-and-a-half years apart. However, other videos made available by Kondabolu suggest he has used varying phonetic features dependent on performance context over the course of his publicly viewable stand-up history.

For the sociophonetic portion of the study, audio files were extracted from the original video files then imported to Praat for analysis. Since both were recorded in stereo, the right channel was extracted from each. In both performances, the relevant vowel (/ɔ/ in 'chocolate') and diphthong (/ai/ in 'white') were isolated based on a number of factors including uniformity of intensity and pitch, and appearance of formant 3. This was particularly important in the Comedy Underground analysis to rely on all these factors. While all vowel formants were distinguishable, the recording was of a much lower quality than the *Conan* performance.

Vowels were labeled in a Text Grid and formant 1 and 2 measurements were taken by script formant settings. The maximum formant value was placed at 5500 Hz and the number of formants at 5. The script records formants 1 and 2 along 10 equidistant points through the duration of the vowel. For /ɔ/, measurement 6 was used since presumably this would be the closest midpoint measurement and most stable part of the vowel. For /ai/, measurements 3 and 8 were used since this would exclude any possible transitional information in the acoustic signal while still allowing for the most representative acoustical measurements of the starting and terminal targets of the diphthong. Formant tracking errors were corrected manually. These standards for vowel measurement are based on Nelson (2013).

4.1 /ai/ Monophthongization

The monophthongal pronunciation of the /ai/ diphthong is found in several American English dialects. In particular, this pronunciation is found in both black and white speakers of Southern American English (Bailey and Thomas 1998; Fasold and Wolfram 1970; Wolfram 1994), and is considered a feature of African American Vernacular English across regions (Green 2002; Labov 1972; Rickford 1999). In addition, the monophthongal variant is considered the more marked or informal variant, while the diphthong is more associated with Standard American English (SAE). As Labov has shown, variables that are associated with SAE can be used by speakers from a variety of dialects in formal situations as a means of performing a social identity with more overt prestige. Speakers from the same speech community will adopt the same type of variables in more formal speech situations, though speakers from different social classes will do so to different degrees. In addition, variables which are not associated with SAE may be used by speakers to indicate familiarity with their interlocutors.

Both of the comedian's stand-up sets take place in explicitly performative contexts. In the untelevised version, however, Kondabolu uses considerably different realizations of the /ai/ diphthong in comparison to the televised version. The following graph measures all realizations of /ai/ in the word 'white' in both the televised and untelevised versions. This word was chosen since the same lexical item (and same phonetic environment) appears five and six times in the televised and non-televised versions, respectively.

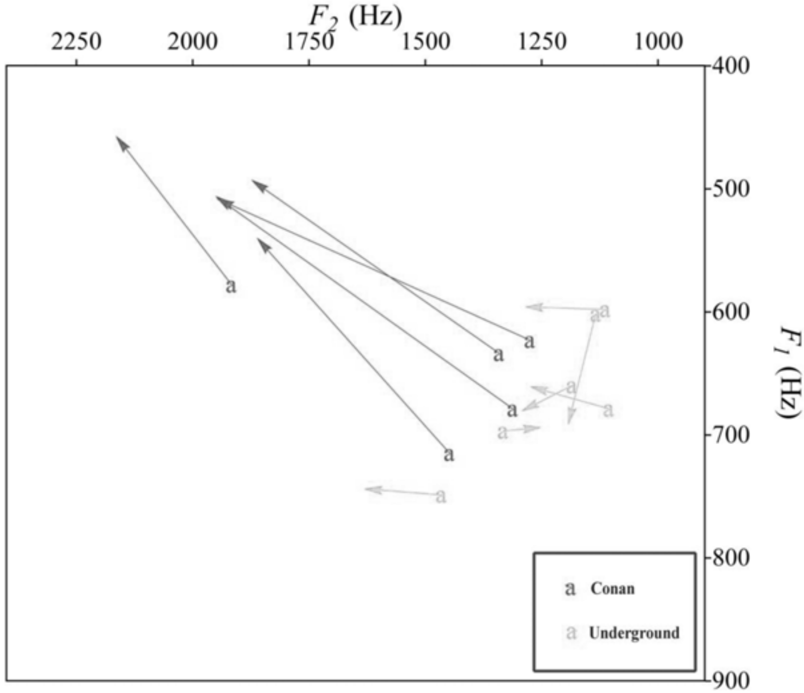

Figure 1: /ai/ realization

Figure 1 shows that in the televised version, Kondabolu displays a pronounced diphthongization that does not appear in the untelevised version. This difference could have several explanations, including the alignment with a person of color identity as shown in the Membership Categorization Analysis. The use of more marked features could be a part of this construction as he aligns himself with his audience. The use of monophthongal /ai/ could also be reflective of the less formal nature of the untelevised performance, leading Kondabolu to use less standard variants. The use of the diphthong in the televised version could likewise be related to his attempt to align himself with a broader audience, thus necessitating the use of more overtly prestigious variants. Either way, this difference suggests an acknowledgement of and adaptation to the comedian's relationship with his audience.

4.2 /ɔ/ Lowering

There is considerably less documentation regarding the dialectal significance of /ɔ/ than the /ai/ diphthong, other than the significance of merged and non-merged /ɔ/ and /a/. Peterson and Barney (1952) put the canonical pronunciation of this vowel at approximately 570 Hz (F1) and 850 Hz (F2) for male speakers. However, few dialects adhere strictly to Peterson and Barney's Hertz measurements. Regardless, in the following Figure it is clear that Kondabolu is lowering and fronting the /ɔ/ vowel considerably in comparison to the canonical pronunciation.

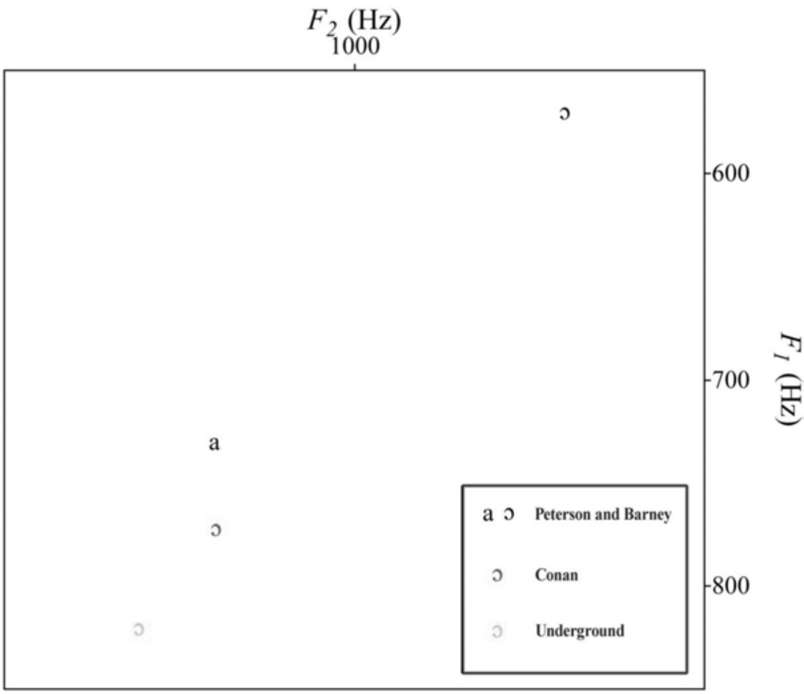

Figure 2: Peterson and Barney (1952) and Kondabolu

While Kondabolu uses an on average lower and fronter variant in both performances, his realization of the /ɔ/ variable differs in the two contexts. Overall, he uses a more lowered and fronted variety in the untelevised, less formal performance. His realizations of /ɔ/ are also more varied than in the televised version, where they show greater consistency of vowel placement.

The greater variation in the untelevised version may be related to internal factors. In the instances where Kondabolu says "white chocolate" (in both versions of the joke) his /ɔ/ pronunciation is higher and backer than when he says "chocolate" by itself in the untelevised version. In the televised version, both "white chocolate" and "chocolate" cluster in the relatively higher, backer position. This suggests a difference in word stress on the NP “white chocolate” found in the untelevised but not televised version of the joke. The following Figure shows all tokens of the /ɔ/ vowel in both “white chocolate” and “chocolate” by itself.

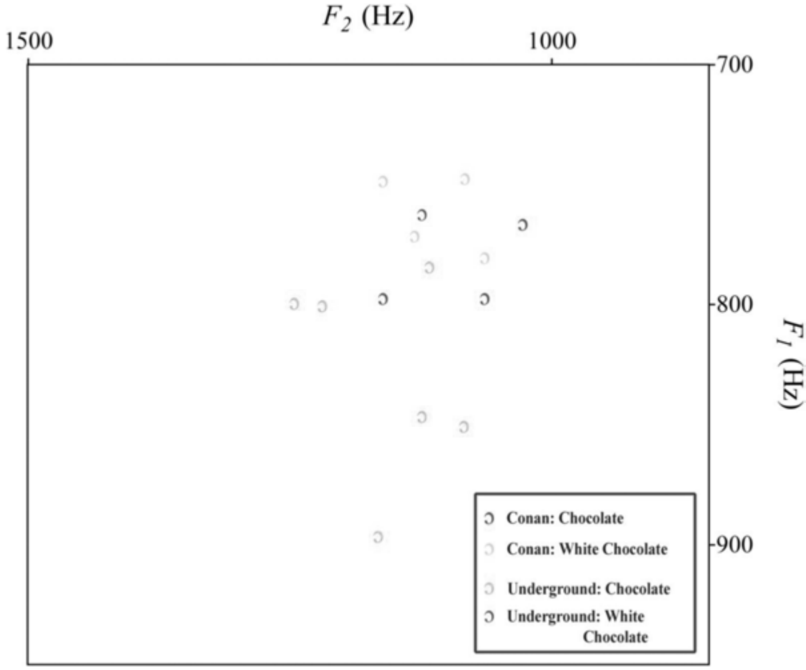

Figure 3: /ɔ/ realizations (all tokens with word stress differences)

Even without the extensive documentation of social meaning that exists for the /ai/ variable, the above shows a move further from the unmarked ‘standard’ in the untelevised informal version. The above also shows an increased dispersion of vowels and differing word stress patterns in the untelevised version.

4.3 Prosodic variation

Wider pitch range, more varied intonation patterns, and non-standard word stress patterns are all considered features of African American English (Wolfram et al. 1993; Rickford 1999). These features are also considered parts of other non-standard, culturally racialized dialects such as Chicano English (CE; Fought

2003) and are often found in speakers of CE who use no other phonological features of the dialect.

A good deal of research (see McConnell-Ginet 1983; Moonwomon 1985; Gaudio 1994) has also been done on the correlation between increased pitch dynamism and perceptions of gender and sexuality. These studies have shown a link between a wider pitch range and the perception of women's and gay men's speech. These studies suggest that wider pitch range is linked to the perception of femininity, which in turn is perceived as reflective on the sexuality of male speakers. Beyond that, they show the positioning of feminine speech as the marked and masculine as the unmarked. Gaudio notes that a change in pitch of 100 Hz in men will be considered more noticeable than a similar change in the speech of women (1994: 38) as a result both of the average frequency of men's speech as well as the social implications of their deviance from the norm. These studies, while not focusing on race, have shown that the marked prosodic features are found in the speech of those with marked gender and sexuality as well as members of marked racial categories.

When Kondabolu uses phonological features associated with African American English (or otherwise non-standard, informal variants), he also uses greater pitch variation. The reverse is true for the nationally televised example where Kondabolu uses more standard, perceptually unmarked vowels. This variation is unlikely an attempt on Kondabolu's part to sound more masculine or feminine in different contexts. What it does show, however, is a link between the marked AAE vowels and the use of marked pitch variation in the less formal, untelevised example.

5 Conclusions

In both of the performances discussed above, Kondabolu constructs, reproduces, and manipulates categories of nationality, ethnicity, and ideology. These categories are locally constructed and situated according to the context of each performance and to Kondabolu's relationship with the audience. Kondabolu's ability to construct overlapping but differentiated categories in these two contexts is indicative of the way a comedian or other performer can adjust their talk to fit the audience for whom they are performing. These changes do not appear to be inauthentic to the performers speech (they are not necessarily an 'act') but are a critical part of interacting with an audience, whether that is an immediately present and visible audience such as in the Comedy Underground club or a potential audience that is suggested through the presence of cameras. This can occur at both a phonetic and discourse level, as demonstrated in this study, and is particularly important in a comedy context as comedy requires the audience to disaffiliate with the target of the humor, which is a membership category constructed and maintained by the performer.

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Villy Tsakona

Humor research and humor reception: Far away, so close

1 Introduction

Humor researchers usually tend to presuppose that humorous texts will normally be perceived as such, namely that both humor producers and recipients will find the same humorous content funny. This, however, is not always the case. Morreall (2009: 98–101) claims that even for canned jokes (i.e. the 'prototypical' humorous genre), there is not a 'single', 'correct' interpretation, although they are usually repeated in more or less the same form in different contexts (see also Billig 2005a: 31–32; Pickering and Lockyer 2005: 2; Willis 2005: 135; El Refaie 2011: 87). Different people happen to have different interpretations of humorous texts, which means that the same humorous text may be hilarious, successful, disgusting, offensive, discriminating, etc., depending on each recipient's perspective and value system (Palmer 1994: 173; Dynel 2011: 217; El Refaie 2011; Stewart 2013).

This discussion is often associated with one of the most hotly debated topics in humor research, that is, whether humor influences and/or reflects reality and public opinion, how, to what extent, and under what circumstances. This topic is usually raised when humorous texts involving discriminatory content (e.g. racist, sexist) are discussed. On the one hand, traditional approaches to humor (see, among others, Raskin 1985, 2008; Davies 1998, 2008) argue that, since humor belongs to *non-bona fide communication*, where nothing serious, sincere, relevant, or accurate is to be expected, the context of jokes and other humorous texts does neither reflect reality nor intend to cause offence. In this sense, humor usually involves already existing fictitious scripts and false beliefs which have nothing to do with humorists' 'true' beliefs and standpoints. As Raskin (2008: 27) succinctly remarks, "the serious-message aspect of humor is marginal and uncommon". In a similar vein, Davies (2008: 6) maintains that "[h]umor does not *give* offence; its recipients *take* offence" (emphasis in the original). As a result, humor, it is suggested, cannot be blamed, for example, for promoting racist, sexist, or other discriminatory views, although it may exploit them to make people laugh. Moreover, the *non-bona fide* quality of humor seems to be directly related to its lack of limits: since humor does not convey 'serious',

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'literal', 'sincere', or 'accurate' messages, anything can be said in a humorous manner without (caring if we are) offending or attacking someone or something. Given the above, any attempt to restrain or ban humor constitutes an act of censorship.

On the other hand, it has been claimed (see, among others, Billig 2005a, 2005b; Lockyer and Pickering 2005) that humor can create and be considered responsible for disseminating prejudicial and discriminatory views by ridiculing specific targets, such as ethnic groups, women (wives, blonds, mothers-in-law, etc.), lawyers, homosexuals, politicians, political institutions, etc. Both superiority and relief theories[1] of humor attempt to capture, and account for, this dimension of humor: in the first case, humor attacks a (supposedly) inferior target, while, in the second, humor allows speakers to express themselves in socially unacceptable and condemnable ways. Thus, humor can undermine the social status of the targeted individuals or entities, and significantly contribute to their negative representation and evaluation. In this sense, contemporary research on humor seems to be more sociopolitically and culturally sensitive: topics such as the limits of humor in specific contexts, the thin line between humor and offense, its sociopolitical repercussions, and its effects on social relations have nowadays become the foci of analysis (see, among others, Lockyer and Pickering 2005; Billig 2005b; Lewis et al. 2008; Tsakona and Popa 2011; Chen 2013).

These two poles are interestingly described by Morreall (2009). On the one hand, humor can be considered an *aesthetic experience* which we can enjoy without worrying whether we are insulting or disparaging our humorous targets (Morreall 2009: 72). On the other, the same author (Morreall 2009: 102–106) recognizes the limits of the aesthetic quality of humor: humor can actually hurt people and damage their relations, since it may stem from, and be a sign of, frivolous behavior, lack of empathy, and bias. Somewhere in the middle of these two poles, Mulkay (1988) claims that it is not humor *per se* that is *pure*, i.e. without important social consequences, or *applied/impure*, i.e. bearing some serious impact on social relations and values; it is speakers who decide whether humor can influence social reality and how it can do so. Speakers' interpretations of, and negotiations over, humor can bring to the surface its 'innocuous' and 'amusing' character (pure humor) or can capitalize on its 'serious', negative consequences (applied/impure humor).

In this context, the present study sets out to investigate what speakers think about humor when they spontaneously comment on it. More specifically, I will try to describe the main humor-related topics raised when speakers participate

1 On superiority and relief theories in more detail, see, among others, Raskin (1985: 36–40), Billig (2005b: 37–56, 86–110), Morreall (2009: 4–9, 15–23, 28–33).

in public debates concerning the interpretation(s) of specific humorous texts. The analysis will also show that diverse and competing perspectives and ideologies on these topics set the boundaries between speakers who disagree on what can be considered humor(ous) and how humor should be used. Furthermore, I will try to establish to what extent speakers' views on humor coincide with, or deviate from, respective positions and findings coming from scholarly literature on humor (such as the ones summarized above). The data examined here comes from the public debate that erupted when a Greek mobile phone seller company launched a television advertisement which was considered sexist by many viewers (see also Tsakona 2013). The theoretical framework of the study involves concepts such as Agha's (1998, 2007) *metapragmatic stereotypes* and Kuipers' (2008) *normative communities of humor*, as well as the General Theory of Verbal Humor (Attardo 1994, 2001).

More specifically, section (2) presents the main theoretical concepts and tools to be used in the analysis, while section (3) offers a detailed description of the data under scrutiny. The analysis of the data is included in section (4), where it appears that the main humor-related topics discussed in this public debate over humor concern (a) the (non) humorous quality of a text (section 4.1); (b) the functions of humor in relation to the dissemination of certain standpoints and biases (section 4.2); and (c) the limits of humor (section 4.3). Finally, section (5) rounds up the discussion of the hypotheses of the study and summarizes its findings.

2 Investigating humor reception: Theoretical considerations

The effect of humor (if any) on social reality in general and on speakers' standpoints and values in particular is not easy to investigate. One of the reasons for this would be because several speakers may not readily admit in public (even anonymously or in laboratory settings) that they are influenced by 'non serious' texts which are often built around bias and bigotry. This happens either because jokes and humor in general are supposed to have a strong fictional dimension and to belong to 'non serious' conduct (cf. *non-bona fide communication* in section 1) or because speakers would not want to be accused of antisocial behavior and views. In other words, research on speakers' positionings towards, and evaluations of, humor would be more or less compromised by what Labov (1972) calls *observer's paradox*, namely the effect the presence of a researcher has on the collected data. Speakers are more or less likely to conform to (what they think are) the expectations of the researcher, whether consciously or subconsciously.

One way to bypass the observer's paradox is to collect speakers' *spontaneous* reactions to humor, namely reactions that are not elicited via interviews, questionnaires, or focus groups, but are part of speakers' interactions in authentic, everyday contexts. Recent research on humor reception coming from fields such as anthropology, sociology, and (socio)linguistics has focused on online interactions among speakers who spontaneously and publicly comment on humor, its functions, its limits, and its presuppositions. Among others, Kramer (2011), Laineste (2011), Stewart (2013), and Tsakona (2013) concentrate on how speakers spontaneously react to humorous texts when participating in public political debates over specific humorous texts that have been considered controversial due to their discriminatory content. Such studies examine in detail speakers' opinions and stances towards what is humor(ous), how, when, and why it is to be used, what its effects are, and how it is (or should be) evaluated.

The most significant finding of such studies is that speakers more often than not disagree on what constitutes humor, how, when, why it should be used, and how it reflects and/or influences people's attitudes and views. Most of the times, some of them exhibit positive attitudes towards a specific humorous text (or kind of humor; e.g. rape jokes in Kramer 2011; ethnic jokes in Laineste 2011), while some others disapprove of it. It therefore seems that speakers have different *ideologies* on humor and its use in real settings. Such ideologies influence their evaluations of humor and eventually shape the ways they themselves employ humor in their interactions. To put it in Agha's (1998, 2007) terms, speakers do not share the same *metapragmatic stereotypes* on humor, namely the same internalized models on what humor is, how it should be used, when, why, and for what purposes (see the relevant discussion in Kramer 2011 and Tsakona 2013).

Such different models of humor use are directly related to different habits and preferences concerning this use, hence they may be considered responsible for the formation of what Kuipers (2008) calls *normative communities of humor*:

> Every group or society has its (mostly implicit) rules and agreements about what can be joked about. People within such a community generally abide by such rules, even if they do not agree with them. [...] Normative communities also have such unwritten rules about, for instance, the propriety of jokes about sex or people in power, or situations where joking is or isn't allowed. [...] All social groups establish some sort of consensus on what can be laughed about (Kuipers 2008: 8).

This kind of consensus, as Kuipers remarks (2008: 8), does not necessarily result from peaceful negotiations, but may instead follow intense, even violent negotiations among the different parties involved (e.g. the targeting and the targeted ones).

Such communities, especially the online ones (which are the focus of the present study), are not always easy to identify and study from an ethnographic perspective: digital media may provide access to what community members think and publicly state, but may hinder the access to their everyday practices and social characteristics (e.g. nicknames may not reveal a speaker's gender, age, ethnicity, profession, sexual orientation, etc.). Furthermore, their members may interact only in digital contexts and never face-to-face, thus challenging the conventional understanding of what a 'community' is. In this sense, Kuipers' *normative communities of humor* resemble what Anderson (1991) and McBride (2005) call *imagined communities* whose members may never meet in person, but are connected via (among other things) written discourse.[2] Imagined communities enable individuals to connect themselves with others by highlighting the differences between different groups:

> community seems to be defined more as what we do *not* have rather than carrying any concrete attributes reflecting what we are a part of. [...] Communities are both personal and interpersonal: they enable ways of being involved with others without losing what makes oneself distinct (McBride 2005: 2–3, emphasis in the original).

These two interrelated characteristics of communities, that is, their "oppositionality" and their "mediation between self and society" (McBride 2005: 3), become most prominent in online debates over humor, where speakers usually wish to publicly declare their own stances towards specific humorous texts and simultaneously to distinguish themselves from those who adopt different stances.

In this context, it has been suggested (Tsakona 2013) that speakers' metapragmatic stereotypes on humor and their interpretations of it can become a part of, and therefore can be investigated via, the major theory of humor nowadays, the *General Theory of Humor* (henceforth GTVH; see Attardo 1994; 2001). In particular, it has been claimed that a revised version of this theory enables researchers to analyze not only the content, the linguistic form, and the textual organization of a humorous text, but also its reception and its diverse interpretations by different recipients.

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2 Originally, Anderson (1991) uses the term *imagined communities* to refer to national communities whose members are sharing (among other things) the same written texts, such as literary texts or printed newspapers: "the newspaper reader, observing exact replicas of his own paper being consumed by his subway, barbershop, or residential neighbors, is continually reassured that the imagined world is visibly rooted in everyday life" (Anderson 1991: 35–36). However, the concept of *imaginary communities* can be extended to refer to all kinds of political communities whose members are connected via the media (see McBride 2005: 13–14). In fact, as Anderson (1991: 6) observes, "all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (or perhaps even these) are imagined" (see also Fairclough and Fairclough 2012: 107–108).

In its original form, the GTVH can adequately explain which text is funny, why, and how, but cannot very easily answer questions pertaining to the reception of humor, namely under which circumstances or in which context(s) something is considered humorous. First of all, the definition of the humorous text proposed by the GTVH helps researchers identify which texts are funny and which are not. Attardo (1994, 2001) actually inherits Raskin's (1985) definition, according to which a text can be characterized as humorous if it is "compatible fully or in part, with two overlapping scripts", while these two scripts "are opposite" in this particular discourse context (Raskin 1985: 99), namely they offer incompatible interpretations of the text. Then, why and how something is funny or humorous is explained via a set of *knowledge resources* (henceforth KRs):

- the *script opposition* (SO), see above;
- the *logical mechanism* (LM), namely the distorted, playful logic the script opposition is based on;
- the *situation* (SI), namely the objects, participants, settings, activities, etc. of the humorous text;
- the *target* (TA), namely the persons, groups, ideas, institutions ridiculed in the humorous text;
- the *narrative strategy* (NS), namely the genre which includes humor and/or the speech act performed by the humorist; and
- the *language* (LA), namely the actual wording of the humorous text, the verbal encoding of humor.

The GTVH is based predominantly on canned jokes and written material (see Attardo 2001; Tsakona 2004, 2007), and thus it cannot in principle account for humor reception.[3] In an effort to bridge the analytical gap between humor production and humor reception, Canestrari (2010) argues for the addition of a seventh KR, the *Meta-Knowledge Resource* (henceforth Meta KR), which involves "the signals that refer to the speaker's intention of being humorous and to the hearer's recognition of such intention" (Canestrari 2010: 330; see also Canestrari 2010: 339, 341, 343). Such signals may be:

- *verbal*, namely explicit comments on (the presence of) humor, such as "I'll tell you a joke", "That was funny";
- *non-verbal*, such as gestures, smiling, winking, blank face;
- *para-verbal*, such as intonation patterns, voice tone, laughter (Canestrari 2010: 339).

3 On the limitations of the theory, see Attardo (2001: 30–31), Willis (2005: 127–128).

As Canestrari (2010: 343) points out, "[t]he definition of the Meta-Knowledge Resource grew from the need to analyze humorous performance which, as such, involves real spectators". Nevertheless, such signals may but do not necessarily lead recipients to opt for a humorous interpretation of a text. Hence, the theory still needs analytical tools which would help researchers account for the diverse interpretations emerging in the diverse contexts where a humorous text is circulated.

The eighth KR proposed (in Tsakona 2013) is called *Context* (henceforth CO KR) and attempts at further expanding the scope of the GTVH by accounting for the sociocultural context of the humorous text. It involves two different but interrelated kinds of information:

- the *sociocultural presuppositions* for the production and interpretation of script oppositions, logical mechanisms, and humorous targets;
- speakers' *metapragmatic stereotypes* on humor (see above), namely their ideological assumptions and stances on whether a specific text can be considered humorous or not, why, how, when, and to whom.

The CO KR is based on the premise that humor reception depends on the degree humor recipients are familiar with specific sociocultural presuppositions as well as on their metapragmatic stereotypes on humor. Both kinds of information are part of the sociocultural context where a humorous text occurs.

To sum up, speakers with different (or even competing) metapragmatic stereotypes on humor and sociocultural presuppositions tend to belong to different normative communities of humor, since they would more or less disagree on what is (or can be) humorous, why, how, etc. (see Kuipers 2008, above). The following analysis is intended to bring to the fore some of the differences between two competing normative communities of humor as emerging in the discourse produced by their members.

3 The data of the study

For the purposes of the present study (see section 1), I intend to analyze extracts from a Greek public debate over humor, so as to describe the humor-related topics discussed among speakers with different metapragmatic stereotypes on humor. The debate evolved around an advertisement which was considered humorous and/or sexist. In the present section, I give an account of the advertisement and its side effects (see also Tsakona 2013).

At the beginning of 2011, the Greek mobile phone seller company "Germanos" launched a television advertisement to promote the following service: customers who would buy a mobile phone and, after a certain period of usage time, would not be satisfied with it and wished to return it to the store, were given the opportunity to do so and take their money back in cash (instead of replacing the product with another one or taking a voucher to spend in the same store). The advertisement was based on a metaphor involving a young, recently married couple: the man was not satisfied with the food his wife cooked for them and dreamt of returning her to her mother, while also asking back the money he had spent for/with her. The advertisement goes as follows:[4]

(1) Ά(ντρας): Τι::::ναυτό; {ειρωνικά προς τη γυναίκα του που φέρνει τις μπάμιες στο τραπέζι}

Γ(υναίκα): Μπάμιες! {με ενθουσιασμό}

Α: Μπάμιες! {με ψεύτικο ενθουσιασμό} Μπάμιες πάλι. {Ήχος που δηλώνει ότι ξεκινά η φαντασίωση του άντρα} **Σήκω πάνω! Σήκω πάνω ρε!** {με θυμό}

{Βλέπουμε το ζευγάρι να πηγαίνει στο σπίτι της μητέρας της και να χτυπούν την πόρτα. Η πεθερά ανοίγει χαρούμενη που τους βλέπει.}

Π(εθερά): Καλώς [τα]

Α: **[Α::::]**χαχα:. Λοιπόν πεθερούλα τη βλέπεις; Ε, στην επιστρέφω όπως την πήρα. Απείραχτη, αφόρετη και στη συσκευασία της.

{Η πεθερά δείχνει έκπληκτη.}

Α: Μου έχει κοστίσει 650 καφέδες, 152 γεύματα, 1 δώρο γενεθλίων και 2 γιορτής, Μαράκι {απευθύνεται στη γυναίκα του}, δε μου λες, εκείνη τη σπουδαία ταινία « Ο έρωτας στη Ζουαζιλάνδη » μαζί δεν τη είδαμε; {η γυναίκα γνέφει καταφατικά} **Ε, και 39 σινεμά**.

4 The translation of all the Greek texts discussed here was made by the author for the purposes of the present study. The transcription of this advertisement was also made by the author and the following conventions are used:

[ ]: overlapping talk
bold: stressed parts of utterances
xx:: x: : prolongation of a sound
{xxxx}: comments and contextual information added by the author
. (full stop): falling intonation
, (comma): ongoing intonation
; (Greek question mark): rising intonation in the original Greek text
? (Latin question mark): rising intonation in the English translation

{Ήχος που δηλώνει ότι τελειώνει η φαντασίωση του άντρα.}

Γ: Μπάμιες! {με ενθουσιασμό}

Α: Ε; {συνερχόμενος από τη φαντασίωση}

Γ: Όπως τις κάν' η μανούλα μου.

Α: Α:::::

(*Germanos Advertisement-Okras [Money Back]* 2011)

M(an): Wha::::t's that? {ironically to his wife who brings okras to the table}

W(oman): Okras! {with enthusiasm}

M: Okras! {with fake enthusiasm} Okras again. {Sound signaling that the man starts fantasizing} **Get up! Get up you!** {in an angry tone}

{We watch the couple go to her mother's house and knock at the door. The husband's mother-in-law opens the door happy to see them.}

Mother-in-law: Wel[come]

M: **[A::::]**haha:. So dear mother-in-law do you see her? Well, I am bringing her back [exactly] as I took her [from you]. Untouched, unworn, and in her packaging.

{The mother-in-law looks surprised.}

M: She has cost me 650 coffees, 152 meals, 1 birthday present and 2 name-day ones, Maria dear {he addresses his wife}, can you tell me, did we watch it together that great movie "Love in Swaziland"? {his wife nods positively} **Well, plus 39 movie tickets**.

{Sound signaling that the man's fantasy is over.}

W: Okras! {with enthusiasm}

M: Uh? {waking up from the fantasy}

W: Like my mum cooks them.

M: U:::::hhhh

The analogy between returning the mobile phone to the store and returning the wife to her mother in the Greek sociocultural context evokes well known phrases such as *Θα σε γυρίσω στη μάνα σου* "I will return you to your mother" or *Αν δε σ' αρέσει, να γυρίσεις στη μάνα σου* "If you don't like [it], go back to your mother". Such male chauvinist phrases are reminiscent of the patriarchal structure of the Greek society and were used (or may sometimes still be used) as threats by husbands who were (are) not satisfied with their wives' behavior or who wanted (want) to respond to their wives' complaints. A few decades ago (and sometimes even today), women (together with their dowries) were (or may still be) part of a financial transaction between the woman's parents and the future son-in-law; women could not (or cannot) have a say in such transactions, and thus they were (are) incapable of defending themselves. Such values and practices form the presupposition of the metaphorical mapping: just as a mobile phone cannot react to its owner's decision to take it back to the store and get his money back, Greek wives can be taken back to their parents and the sons-in-law can ask (and get) their money back.

Okras also seem to carry significant sociocultural connotations that need to be mentioned here. Although okras are part of the famous Mediterranean diet, they are not very popular among Greeks and many Greek children or adults have been forced to eat them by their mothers, on the grounds that they are nutritious and delicious. Thus, okras are stereotypically perceived as an unpopular dish which Greeks are often forced to eat even if they do not like it. The husband's negative reaction to them is not incongruous in this context. On the contrary, many Greeks would find such a reaction expected or even justified.

Within a few days after the advertisement appeared on Greek television, the Greek General Secretariat for Gender Equality of the (then) Ministry of Internal Affairs, Decentralization, and E-Government filed an official complaint against the advertisement, asking the National Council for Radio and Television (NCRTV) to ban it. This is the official text of the complaint:[5]

(2) Υπουργείο Εσωτερικών, Αποκέντρωσης και Ηλεκτρονικής Διακυβέρνησης

Γενική Γραμματεία Ισότητας των Φύλων

Αθήνα, 03 Μαρτίου 2011

ΔΕΛΤΙΟ ΤΥΠΟΥ
ΚΑΤΑΓΓΕΛΙΑ ΣΤΟ ΕΘΝΙΚΟ ΣΥΜΒΟΥΛΙΟ ΡΑΔΙΟΤΗΛΕΟΡΑΣΗΣ

Η Γενική Γραμματεία Ισότητας των Φύλων του υπουργείου Εσωτερικών, Αποκέντρωσης και Ηλεκτρονικής Διακυβέρνησης καταγγέλει [sic] τη νέα διαφήμιση της εταιρίας Γερμανός που προβάλλεται τις τελευταίες μέρες από όλα τα τηλεοπτικά δίκτυα.

Η εν λόγω διαφήμιση ουσιαστικά απογυμνώνει τη γυναίκα από την ανθρώπινη αξία της εξισώνοντάς την με αντικείμενο και εμπόρευμα, για την προώθηση του προϊόντος που διαφημίζεται.

5 The written Greek texts reproduced here (examples 2–9) maintain their original spelling and punctuation conventions.

> Οι προβαλλόμενες απόψεις παραβιάζουν τα ανθρώπινα δικαιώματα, σύμφωνα με την παρ. 1 του άρθρου 2 του Συντάγματος που ορίζει ότι « ο σεβασμός και η προστασία της αξίας του ανθρώπου αποτελούν την πρωταρχική υποχρέωση της πολιτείας » και τις παρ. 1 και 2 του αρθρ. 25, είναι απαράδεκτες, συνιστούν και αναπαράγουν σεξιστικές στερεοτυπικές αντιλήψεις ως προς τους ρόλους, την αξία και τις ικανότητες γυναικών και ανδρών.
>
> Η Γενική γραμματεία ισότητας των Φύλων προσέφυγε σήμερα στο ΕΣΡ, ζητώντας να αποσυρθεί άμεσα η εν λόγω διαφήμιση.
>
> (General Secretariat for Gender Equality 2011)
>
> Ministry of Internal Affairs, Decentralization, and E-Government
> General Secretariat for Gender Equality
> Athens, March 3rd 2011
>
> PRESS RELEASE
>
> COMPLAINT TO THE NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR RADIO AND TELEVISION
>
> The General Secretariat for Gender Equality of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Decentralization, and E-Government denounces the new advertisement of the Germanos company, which has recently been broadcast on all television networks.
>
> The advertisement in question actually deprives the woman of her humanity by equating her with an object and merchandise, in order to promote the advertised product.
>
> The projected views violate human rights, according to paragraph 1 of chapter 2 of the [Greek] Constitution which asserts that "the respect and protection of humanity constitute a primary obligation of the state" and [according to] paragraphs 1 and 2 of chapter 25, [they] are inadmissible, [they] constitute and reproduce sexist stereotypical perceptions of women's and men's roles, value, and abilities.
>
> The General Secretariat for Gender Equality appealed to the NCRTV today, asking to immediately withdraw the advertisement in question.

The request was granted and the advertisement was banned immediately from all television channels. However, it can still be found online (see *Germanos Advertisement-Okras [Money Back]* 2011).

The advertisement and its withdrawal triggered a significant number of official and unofficial reactions from journalists, politicians, activists, and citizens who agreed or disagreed with what had happened, and expressed their views on whether the advertisement was humorous or not, why, etc. The present study is based on a corpus compiled from March 23rd until June 29th, 2011, including comments and reactions which became available online. The corpus consists of 23 articles from newspapers, websites, and blogs, and 277 comments from websites and blogs where speakers discussed the advertisement and the subsequent events in relation to it. Humor was one of the aspects of the advertisement hotly debated by its viewers.[6] In particular, humor is discussed in 11 out of the 23 articles referring to the advertisement (47.82%) and in 90 out of the 277 online comments (32.49%).

A close examination of these texts reveals that the recipients of the advertisement express what they find humorous about it, why, and under what circumstances. More specifically, previous research on the same set of data (Tsakona 2013) has shown that two main metapragmatic stereotypes can be identified in the Greek context and in relation to this advertisement:

- Humor is or should be based on cultural assumptions in order to ridicule them, especially if they are outdated and contradict contemporary values and practices. Such humor is positively evaluated: there seems to be no reason to ban it or feel offended by it.
- Humor referring to 'sexist' views and practices does not constitute quality humor or is hardly worth the name 'humor'. Texts including this kind of 'humor' are negatively evaluated as offensive and inadmissible: it is implied (or sometimes even clearly stated) that it would be better if they were not (re)produced.

To put it in Kuipers' (2008) terms (see section 2), two different normative communities of humor emerge concerning this humorous text, each one proposing its own ideology (i.e. metapragmatic stereotype; see section 2, Agha 1998, 2007) on the use of humor. In the following section, I intend to investigate in more detail the exact topics that seem to bring speakers together or tear them apart.

4 Data analysis

The main humor-related topics discussed during the debate seem to be the following three: the **(non) humorous quality of the text** (i.e. whether it is or it

6 Other topics discussed in the same set of data involve the functions and purposes of advertising, the role models projected therein, the degree of success and offence of the advertisement, and advertising ethics. Furthermore, viewers talked about the freedom of speech in the media and in the public sphere in general, the role of censorship, sexism as a violation of human rights and of the Greek Constitution, and the role of the NCRTV in such cases.

is not considered funny), the **functions** of humor (in relation to the dissemination of bias), and its **limits** (i.e. whether or not some things should be joked about). Here, I will analyze extracts showing that speakers' diverse opinions and positionings in relation to these three topics are what divides them into two opposing normative communities of humor, each of which revolves around a different metapragmatic stereotype of humor.

4.1 The (non) humorous quality of the text

Those who argue in favor of the advertisement and its humor appear to believe that humor exists independently of whether all its recipients (are willing to) recognize it. Moreover, those who do not understand it are more often than not negatively evaluated:

(3) Η διαφήμιση είναι χιουμοριστική. Αυτοί που δεν το καταλαβαίνουν μπορούν να κάνουν μήνυση.
(lunatic 9/3/2011 in *Semfe.gr* 2011)

The advertisement is humorous. Those who do not understand it can press charges [against the advertisers and the selling company].

Here, the speaker has no doubt about the humorous quality of the advertisement and clearly states that there may be some recipients who do not get the humorous message. By suggesting that such recipients can actually sue the advertisers and the selling company, the speaker implicitly portrays them in a negative manner: lawsuits against humorists are rare in Greece and those who file them are considered humorless and/or very easily offended.

On the other end of the continuum, speakers who disapprove of the advertisement and its humor argue that not all people share the same sense of humor, hence they may not laugh with/at the same stimuli:

(4) Εφόσον γελάτε με την ανάλυση έχετε προφανώς πολύ περίεργη, για να μην πω προβληματική, αίσθηση του χιούμορ.
(Dimitris M. 28/2/2011 in Andriotakis 2011)

Given that you laugh with the [sexist] analysis [of the advertisement], you obviously have a very strange, not to say problematic, sense of humor.

This speaker alludes to the existence of multiple senses of humor and explicitly states that some of them may not be 'normal', in the sense that they may put up with or even promote discriminating behaviors and values. In other words, it is implied that a single text may be humorous to some recipients but not necessarily to all of them. In this sense, humorous intent is not enough to qualify a text as humorous, hence humor does not exist independently of its reception.

So far, the 'universality vs. variability' of humor emerges as one of the main parameters dividing the members of the normative communities of humor. Those who defend the advertisement suggest that humor exists no matter how its recipients may interpret it, while those who focus on the sexist dimension of the advertisement suggest that humor exhibits variation: people may not share the same preferences when it comes to producing, interpreting, and evaluating humor.

4.2 The functions of humor

The second point raised by the speakers involves the social functions of humor, in particular its effect on public opinion and social attitudes. The following examples are illustrative:

(5) Είναι πέρα από προφανές ότι η εν λόγω διαφήμηση [sic] σατιρίζει ακριβώς το εν λόγω σεξιστικό στερεότυπο για το οποίο « καταγγέλλεται ». Όλη η δομή του διαφημιστικού σεναρίου κινείται γύρω από την πρόκληση γέλιου για την παρωχημένη συμπεριφορά του συζύγου, ο οποίος αντιλαμβάνεται εργαλειακά το ρόλο της συζύγου του.

Όλος ο λόγος που χρησιμοποιείται είναι χιουμοριστικός: η αναφορά σε αριθμό καφέδων, γευμάτων, περίεργων ταινιών (ο Έρωτας στη Ζουαζουλάνδη [sic]), δώρων γενεθλίων, εντάσσονται ξεκάθαρα σε μια κωμική στόχευση. [...]

Είναι δεδομένο ότι ο σκοπός του διαφημιστικού μηνύματος δεν είναι φυσικά η επικρότηση μιας ακραίας και καταδικαστέας αντίληψης, αλλά η διακωμώδησή της, μέσα από το κλασικό στρατήγημα της σάτιρας που είναι η απόδοση ιδιοτήτων « αντικειμένου » (ή ζώου) σε ανθρώπους. Μέσα από αυτή την ανάλυση είναι σαφέστατο ότι η Γενική Γραμματεία Ισότητας προέβη σε μια άκρως επιφανειακή ανάγνωση του εν λόγω διαφημιστικού, χωρίς να αναζητήσει το κωμικό context και την εφαρμογή συγκεκριμένων κανόνων της σάτιρας, η οποία προφανώς και αποτελεί μεταφορικό κι όχι κυριολεκτικό λόγο.
(*Naked Men on the Beach* 2011)

> It is more than obvious that the advertisement in question satirizes exactly the same sexist stereotype for which it is "attacked" [by those who disapprove of the advertisement]. The whole structure of the advertisement script aims at eliciting laughter at the expense of the outdated behavior of the husband, who perceives his wife's role in a derogatory manner.
>
> The whole discourse used [in the advertisement] is humorous: the reference to the number of coffees [drunk by the couple and paid by the husband], meals, strange films (Love in Swaziland), birthday gifts is clearly part of the advertisement's attempt at humor. [. . .]
>
> It is given that the aim of the advertising message is not at all to applaud an extreme and condemnable view, but to ridicule it through the classic strategy of satire, that is, through attributing "object" (or animal) qualities to humans. This analysis makes clear that the General Secretariat for Gender Equality opted for a most superficial reading of the advertisement in question, without taking into consideration the comic context and the application of specific rules of satire, which obviously belongs to figurative and not literal discourse.

In this extract, a supporter of the advertisement and its humorous potential underlines its humorous and satirical purpose and its non literal meaning. His/her aim is to eventually put forward the claim that the advertisement does not foster sexist, etc. stereotypes, but ridicules them by satirizing the husband's incongruous behavior.

Those who accuse the advertisement of being sexist, on the other hand, highlight the particularities of the Greek sociocultural context where the advertisement is circulated and interpreted:

(6) Κατ' αρχήν ας συμφωνήσουμε: Πράγματι το σποτ είναι χαριτωμένο, ξεκαρδιστικό ίσως για κάποιους, ευρηματικό κ.λπ., κ.λπ. Πράγματι επίσης στην Ελλάδα του 21ου αιώνα πολλές οικογένειες μεγαλώνουν τα παιδιά τους αναπαράγοντας πολύ χειρότερα στερεότυπα απ' αυτό που αναπαράγει, χιουμοριστικά έστω, το σποτ. [. . .] Η αναπαραγωγή στερεοτύπων του παρελθόντος σε μια κοινωνία σαν την ελληνική, που εξακολουθεί όχι μόνο βάσει κοινής αίσθησης αλλά και βάσει στατιστικών στοιχείων να είναι δέσμια αρνητικών συνεπειών αυτού του παρελθόντος, δεν είναι χρήσιμη, είναι αντιθέτως εξαιρετικά άστοχη, θα πρόσθετα, και βαρετή. Όταν δε η ευρηματικότητα και η πλακίτσα έχουν μονομερώς και μονότονα το ίδιο περιεχόμενο τότε και η πλακίτσα χάνεται και το πράγμα αλλάζει. (Apostolaki 2011)

> First of all, let's agree [on something]: Indeed the [advertising] spot is cute, maybe hilarious to some [viewers], creative, etc., etc. And indeed in 21st century Greece, many families raise their children by reproducing much worse stereotypes than the one reproduced -even in a humorous manner- by the spot. [...] The reproduction of stereotypes of the past in a society such as the Greek one, which -it is not only common belief but a statistically confirmed finding- still suffers from the negative consequences of this past, is not useful, but, on the contrary, it is totally pointless, I would add, and boring. Moreover, when creativity and kidding have the same one-sided and monotonous content, then kidding is not funny anymore and the thing changes [i.e. the message of the advertisement is interpreted literally, thus favoring sexism].

Here, the speaker insists on the sexist potential of the advertisement humor. She considers such an interpretation more salient in the Greek context, thus she suggests that such humor can reinforce and perpetuate sexist values and behaviors in a community where people (especially women) still suffer from such discrimination. In other words, in her view, humor may have a negative effect on people's attitudes and views.

To sum up, two different functions of humor are mainly discussed during this debate: humor as a means of satirizing and challenging outdated stereotypes and practices; and humor as a means of confirming and further disseminating already existing stereotypes and practices. The first one is supported by those who argue for the advertisement and its humor, while the second by those who argue against them.

4.3 The limits of humor

The two different normative communities of humor have also diverse views concerning the limits of humor. Those who seem to enjoy the humor of the advertisement are against any attempt to set boundaries to the expression of humor:

(7) Το να υπάρχουν άνθρωποι που βλέπουν την διαφήμιση του « Γερμανού » με τον σύζυγο που αγανακτεί για τις μπάμιες και επιστρέφει τη γυναίκα του στη μάνα της και δεν καταλαβαίνουν ούτε την ειρωνία [sic] της ούτε το πόσο κοροϊδεύει τα στερεότυπα, είναι αναμενόμενο και θεμιτό. [...] Επειδή κάποιοι δεν πιάνουν (ή δεν θέλουν να πιάσουν) το αστείο με την καρικατούρα του φαλλοκράτη «μπάμια», απαιτούν να διακοπεί η μετάδοση της διαφήμισης!
(Zachariadis 2011)

> That there are people who watch the advertisement by "Germanos" with the husband who becomes angry over the okras and takes his wife back to her mother, and do not understand either its irony or how it mocks stereotypes, this is expected and fair. [. . .] Because some [people] do not get (or do not want to get) the joke with the caricature of the phallocrat "okra-man",[7] they demand that the airing of the advertisement be stopped!

(8) Εκνευρισμός από γυναικείες οργανώσεις από τη διαφήμιση της αλυσίδας κινητής τηλεφωνίας. ΡΕ ΤΙΣ ΦΕΜΙΝΙΣΤΡΙΕΣ ΟΥΤΕ ΤΗΝ ΠΛΑΚΑ ΔΕΝ ΕΠΙΤΡΕΠΟΥΝ.
(*Ekdosi.com* 2011)

Women's organizations irritated by the advertisement of the mobile phone seller company. WELL, THESE FEMINISTS, THEY DON'T EVEN ALLOW JOKING.

Both extracts (7) and (8) resist any attempt to censor humor. In the first one, the exclamation mark at the end indicates the speaker's disapproval of people who demand the banning of the advertisement, while, in the second one, the speaker specifically refers to the reactions by the members of women's organizations (including the General Secretariat for Gender Equality), which are also negatively evaluated. Both extracts seem to be based on the premises that humor should have no boundaries and that everyone should be free to joke as s/he wishes.

Those who argue against the advertisement adopt the opposite view: there should be limits to the expression of humor, especially in public. The following extract is indicative of this stance:

(9) Προσθέτει [η γενική γραμματέας Ισότητας των Φύλων κυρία Μαρία Στρατηγάκη] ότι εν προκειμένω οι διαφημιστές έχουν υπερβεί τα όρια του χιούμορ, καθώς «το ιδιωτικώς εκφερόμενο χοντρό αστείο μπορεί απλώς να είναι κακόγουστο, το δημοσίως προβαλλόμενο όμως είναι απαράδεκτο, ειδικά όταν αναπαράγει ακραίες σεξιστικές συμπεριφορές».
(Ismailidou 2011)

[The General Secretary for Gender Equality Mrs. Maria Stratigaki] adds that, in the present case, the advertisers have exceeded the limits of humor, since "the tactless joke told in private settings may just be untasteful, but the one circulated in public is inadmissible, especially if it reproduces extreme sexist behaviors".

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7 *Μπάμιας* "okra-man" is a pun evoking, on the one hand, the husband who hates okras in the advertisement script and, on the other, a swear word in Greek: *μπάμιας* is sometimes used to refer to stupid, naïve people. It may also allude to small male genitals.

In extract (9), it is suggested that not all jokes can be told in public, hence there should be limits to what one is allowed to say, if s/he does not want to be negatively evaluated. We have already seen (in section 4.1, example 4) that those who disapprove of the advertisement and its humor usually claim that there are different kinds and senses of humor. This line of thought is here taken a step further: some utterances intended to be humorous may not be (perceived as) humorous after all; in other words, they may not be considered funny by everybody independently of their sense of humor.

In sum, those who exhibit positive attitudes towards the advertisement and its humor suggest that humor should have no limits, hence they resist any kind of censorship that may be imposed. Those who expressed themselves negatively in their evaluation of the advertisement suggest that there are certain kinds of humor that need to be sanctioned, especially if they happen to be circulated in the public sphere and could be interpreted as disparaging and discriminating. These two groups of speakers can be described as two different normative communities of humor, in each of which different norms concerning the use and evaluation of humor apply.

5 Discussion and conclusions

The analysis of the data reveals some salient points of divergence between those who argue for and those who argue against the advertisement. More specifically, according to the first ones, utterances or texts intended as humorous are expected to be perceived as humorous by most (if not all) recipients; they target and undermine already existing views, values, and attitudes, hence they should not be censored or restrained in any way. According to the second ones, speakers do not find the same things funny, hence some kinds of humor may be negatively evaluated, especially those which reinforce disparaging or discriminating values and stances. In such cases, measures should be taken against the circulation of such kinds of humor (at least) in the public sphere. It could therefore be suggested that two normative communities of humor emerge from this debate, whose members do not share the same metapragmatic stereotypes on humor: they disagree on whether this text is humorous or not, and offer different perspectives on the functions and limits of humor (see section 2; Agha 1998, 2007; Kuipers 2008). The differences between the two normative communities of humor could be summarized as follows (see Table 1):

Table 1: The two normative communities of humor and their metapragmatic stereotypes on it

	Approve of the advertisement	Disapprove of the advertisement
The (non) humorous quality of the text	Something intended as humorous is humorous independently of how its recipients may interpret it.	Speakers do not agree on what is humorous; they may not share the same sense of humor.
The functions of humor	Humor denounces and satirizes stereotypes.	Humor reinforces and perpetuates stereotypes.
The limits of humor	There should be no limits to the expression of humor.	There should be limits to the expression of humor, especially in the public sphere.

What is more, the comparison between the metapragmatic stereotypes on humor retrieved here and the positionings and findings attested in scholarly literature coming from the field of humor research brings to the surface some striking similarities which are worth of further investigation. Table 2 provides a summary of the main suggestions by humor scholars (as presented in section 1):

Table 2: Humor researchers' common positionings and findings concerning the (non) humorous quality of a text, the functions and the limits of humor

	Traditional, context-free approaches to humor	Contemporary, context-sensitive approaches to humor
The (non) humorous quality of the text	Humorous texts have a single interpretation which is reached at and accepted by all recipients.	Humorous texts do not have a single 'correct' interpretation; recipients may extract different meanings from them.
The functions of humor	Humor does not reflect or influence reality and does not offend.	Humor may reflect, and have an effect, on people's social attitudes and beliefs, hence it can cause offence.
The limits of humor	Anything can be said in a humorous way without any sanctions.	There may/can be limits to humorous expression.

The comparison between the two Tables reveals that the similarities between speakers who comment on humor and researchers who analyze it are by far more significant and intriguing than their differences. A possible interpretation of such similarities would involve the fact that humor scholars are *de facto* members of specific normative communities of humor and have their own meta-pragmatic stereotypes, which may influence not only their own research interests but also their research questions, hypotheses, analyses, and results. In other words, the latter can be more or less influenced by researchers' ideologies as well as by the reasons and ways they themselves use humor in their everyday interactions. Furthermore, it is important to underline here that speakers' metapragmatic statements and insights could eventually prove a valuable resource for researchers who wish to formulate hypotheses or confirm their own interpretations and analyses.

A significant point emerging from the present discussion is that a joke *may not always* be a joke. Speakers do not always agree on the humorous quality of a certain text and seem to be aware of the different conceptualizations and evaluations of what is humor(ous) or not. Hence, research on the "universal" aspects, topics, functions, etc. of humor would rather be redirected towards the diverse expressions and understandings of how humor is conceptualized and how it works in different sociocultural communities.

In addition, the present study seems to confirm Mulkay's (1988) observation that it is speakers and their values that set the boundaries between pure (i.e. harmless) and applied (i.e. harmful) humor. Their assessments and negotiations may highlight or downplay its positive or negative aspects in each context. Viewing humor as 'innocuous' and 'mere fun' without taking into consideration the specific context a humorous text is produced, circulated, and interpreted, may be an attractive option underlining humor's positive attributes and functions (cf. Billig 2005b). Nevertheless, such an a-social and a-political view of humor overlooks the fact that its repercussions in real interactions among real people are unpredictable and can eventually be negative (e.g. damaging) for social relations. Moreover, it does not help researchers account for the fact that political debates over humor do take place around the world due to recipients' diverse perceptions of it.

The present study does not wish to suggest that there should be limits to humor imposed by specific institutions or in the form of self-censorship. It does, however, show that such limits do exist in communities and that speakers negotiate some norms concerning humor use in their everyday encounters, whenever they discuss and evaluate the content and social functions of humorous texts. In such cases, speakers' metapragmatic stereotypes come to the surface, namely their ideologies on what humor is, how, when, why it is expected to be used, and how it is interpreted as part of social interaction. Based on such ideologies, normative communities of humor are created and function as imagined communities which "are not to be distinguished by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined" (Anderson 1991: 6), and which eventually "lead people to make concrete decisions and act in particular ways" (McBride 2005: 14).

Finally, the role played by a solid and flexible theoretical framework for humor is significant. The GTVH in its revised version does not only help researchers analyze the particularities of humorous texts, but also provides them with tools enabling them to take into account speakers' own interpretations of, and ideologies on, humor. As a result, the GTVH could be considered a *speaker- and audience-oriented* theory of humor (see also the relevant discussion in Tsakona 2013). More research is definitely required along these lines, so as to bring to the surface more parameters constituting the context of humor production and interpretation (besides speakers' sociocultural presuppositions and metapragmatic stereotypes on humor), as well as more humor-related topics which contribute to the formation of normative communities of humor and help identify "the line in the sand between offensiveness and humor" (Pickering and Lockyer 2005: 12).

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III Computer modeling of humorous discourse

Julia Taylor Rayz

Ontological Semantic Theory of Humor in a context of humorous discourse

1 Introduction

This chapter aims at introducing humorous discourse from the point of view of the Ontological Semantic Theory of Humor (Raskin et al. 2009). Ontological Semantic Theory of Humor (OSTH) is the latest version in the family of script-based linguistic theories of humor, originating with the Script-based Semantic Theory of Humor (Raskin 1985) and followed by the General Theory of Verbal Humor (Attardo & Raskin 1991). According to Raskin (1985), the Script-based Semantic Theory of Humor (SSTH) was envisioned to be based on full semantic theory, possibly implemented, of humorous or non-humorous text. It is thus reasonable to assume that such semantic theory would provide all possible interpretations of text – whether humorous or not – and it is up to the SSTH to determine where the potential humor occurs.

There are two important points here. The first one is, if such semantic theory is available, and all possible interpretations are computed, there should be no argument between scholars whether a text can mean one thing or another, they would simply be able to select from the list of all possible interpretations which one best fits with their point of view. In the ideal world, the only disagreement would be about the ordering of such alternative interpretations in terms of some weighing system – not necessarily frequency-based, though it is the easiest metric to apply, given representative corpora, as to their context-dependent appropriateness. Thus, for instance, *I like your table* will be likelier to be interpreted as complimenting a piece of furniture on entering a living room but in terms of charts when reviewing a student's research paper.

The second point is that, again in that ideal world, the overlapping opposing scripts underlying a joke should be also determined by the assumed fully implemented script-based theory of humor, and then we would not need to worry about their labels because each script would be fully and explicitly represented. This would remove many possible arguments that are triggered by the labeling of the script, in which its only presumed content may be overlooked. Such arguments are understandable but not necessarily fruitful, and it is hoped that explicit representation of both implicit and explicit information of text will take

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us to the next level of discussion. What is perhaps most important here is that since both explicit and implicit knowledge and interpretation are being addressed, the question of whether the theory is semantic or pragmatic also becomes an argument of definitions: no matter what tag/word/term is being used, what the theory addresses doesn't change, and implicit knowledge is being taken into account whether implicitly or explicitly.

The Ontological Semantic Theory of Humor, because it follows a quarter-century progress in semantic theory development, then simply takes the previous theories of humor from the same family and removes all informal implicit assumptions that are made by a scholar of humor or any other person, thus making them all explicitly stated in its representations of text. The theory is based on the Ontological Semantics family of semantic processing systems, most recently on the Ontological Semantic Technology (OST – Hempelmann et al. 2010, Raskin et al. 2010, Taylor et al. 2010). OSTH results can only be as good as the OST input allows it to be, and thus we are taking a humor theory to yet another level of dependencies. The good news there is that OST input that it requires is needed for normal text processing and it can, theoretically, be acquired faster – nobody would argue that it is important to process non-humorous text.

2 OST as input to OSTH

It seems worthwhile to mention *what* Ontological Semantic Technology (OST) is, so that the magic behind OSTH becomes a little less magical. A diagram of OST is shown in Figure 1.

At the core of OST lies its language-independent **ontology**. An ontology is a lattice of concepts, which are also connected with links/edges according to the relations that exist between conceptual pairs. These relations reflect a considerable part of the world knowledge that each person typically carries, no matter what language they speak. This knowledge is typically shared between most speakers of more than one language and is not based on particular observations relevant to individual entities. The ontology describes what is possible in the world (in its technical sense) and orders various possibilities. For example, the ontology would describe an object that is known in the USA as a (generic) *cellular phone* as a *wireless device* that is used to *make phone calls* (and many other things) through a *wireless network*. All objects, as well as events, mentioned in this example will also be defined in the ontology. Again, the ontology is language independent and what this device is called (in various languages, dialects, etc.) is irrelevant as long as it is described unambiguously, as far as the computer is concerned.

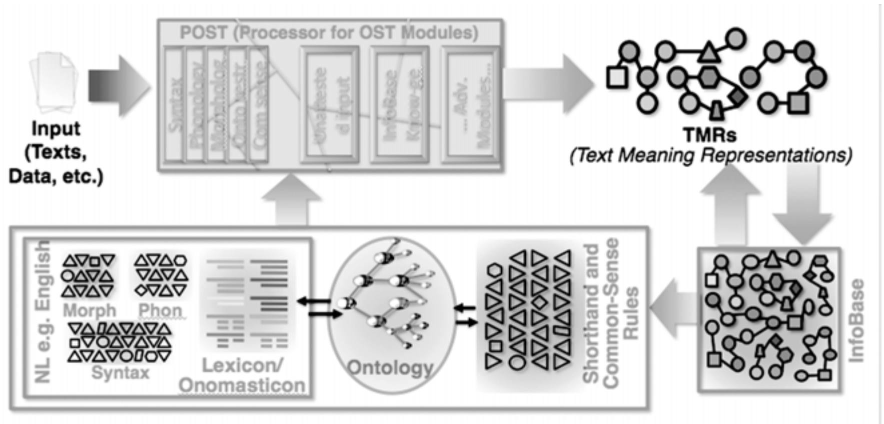

Figure 1: Ontological Semantic Technology components

The OST **lexicon** is a knowledge resource that takes all ontological knowledge and translates it into a natural language of choice. There can be many lexica in OST, one per language of interest, and it captures morphological, phonological, syntactic features of lexical items, in addition to being mapped to the ontology that captures the semantic aspect of them. The *cellular phone*, as a word combination in American English, will then exist in the lexicon as a noun phrase that is mapped to a single concept that corresponds to this expression. All of its synonyms will be added as well, such as *cell phone*, *cell*, *phone*, *mobile*, etc. The word *phone* will, of course, have multiple senses, of which *cellular phone* is only one. Each of the senses will be mapped to a different concept in the ontology and each will have their morphological, phonological, and syntactic features captured in the lexicon.

A lexicon provides a list of possible words that are used in the text. Whenever a word is used it may or may not correspond to the same entity. For example, if a text is about two cats, even though the same word *cat* is used, the system will keep track of two objects that will collect all information about these particular cats (we will leave the task of instance and co-reference out of the discussion). Information about each of these objects is stored in a dynamic knowledge resource, called **InfoBase** (since it receives new information all the time). InfoBase collects knowledge of individual events that are interpreted through the knowledge in the ontology. When a text is read, each word is looked up and the acceptable senses from the lexicon are used in the interpretation. This sense acceptability is based on what is allowed by ontological knowledge. When a sense is accessed it is mapped to a generic template of such object based on ontological knowledge. For example, if a text is about a cat, ontology supplies everything that is known about this animal. Then, as we progress with our reading of the text, some fields are being modified, some are being removed, and others are being emphasized or added. If we read that the cat is white, all other allowable colors will be removed from this particular cat object. When we read that the cat is sleeping on a chair in the sunlight, this information is being added for this particular time to what is known about this particular cat, and is stored in the InfoBase.

Finally, a resource that stores proper names (sometimes called the **onomasticon**, sometimes the **proper name dictionary**) is used in a manner similar to a lexicon with one exception: when it is a person, a country, a club, etc. it is typically treated as a single object, although it is possible to link it to other names. For example, the *United States of America* will be treated as a single object, and instances of *USA*, *US*, *United Stated*, etc. will be mapped to the same object. As with the lexicon, an entry can have multiple sense: *America* doesn't just mean *USA*, but can also mean the continent of *North America* or even the two continents of both *North and South Americas*.

The resources described above are the most important ones for this discussion and others resources, including those that are necessary for processing, are being left out for now. Nevertheless, it is important to understand these resources play a role in what representation is being kept and what is being discarded. The last item seems worth mentioning is POST (processor for OST modules), which carries the task of interpretation of a natural language sentence according to the static and dynamic resources. Since POST can take a book itself, the discussion of various algorithms is left out and the reader is encouraged to read about individual algorithms in previous and future papers.

3 How would it work in a joke?

Let us now process an old joke found in various forms on the Internet. This joke is a convenient example as one can easily see a somewhat similar situation occur as a discourse.

> Mr. Brin, you asked to buy Motorola, here it is.
>
> Thank you, what model is it?
>
> Model?!

The joke works (assuming that it does and one is willing to overlook the absence of an article in one of the senses – it is actually much better in Russian, Polish or any other article-free language) because the word *Motorola* has at least two meanings: one for the company that produces electronic devices and another for any device, in this case a cellular phone, that is being made by Motorola – typically the word *phone* is omitted from a phrase *Motorola phone*, thus contributing to the ambiguity. Other necessary knowledge is that of who Sergey Brin is; the stereotypical knowledge that the owners/founders of the company typically make decisions of what other companies to acquire; knowledge that Google is not shy in acquisition process; common sense knowledge that the founders of a company play a decisive role in important decisions; and knowledge that an executive of a company asks somebody else to perform some tasks, placing orders for their electronic equipment being one of them but rather below the principals' level.

Some of the knowledge will come from the proper name dictionary (such as both senses of *Motorola* and of *Sergey Brin*), some knowledge from the lexicon (such as the two senses of *buy*: the one sense of the purchase of a product, another sense of the acquisition of a company), and some knowledge from the ontology, such as what happens during the events of buying and company acquisition). Figure 2 shows a graphical representation of various meanings (and knowledge) that is being accessed to process the joke. The ontological concepts are represented rectangles with text in bold (objects are darker, summarized events or mini-scripts are lighter). The lexicon senses are shown as rectangles with text in italics. Notice that not all senses are linked to the ontological concepts – there are some senses of *ask* or *buy* that are not needed to process this text. Proper names (onomasticon entries) are underlined and are connected to the concepts that they instantiate. Finally, the attributes that describe the concepts are black rectangles.

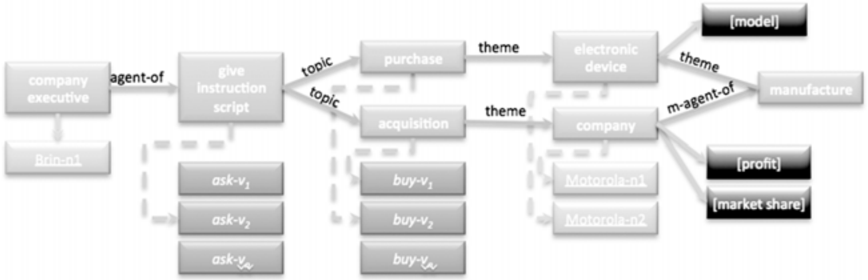

Figure 2: Graphical representation of two interpretations of the joke

In terms of SSTH/GTVH/OSTH scripts, there are two interpretations of text: one as a PURCHASE of an ELECTRONIC DEVICE, another as an ACQUISITION of a COMPANY. These two scripts are activated by exactly the same words: *buy* and *Motorola*. The OST processor will come up with two TMRs for these, both weighted about the same. This means that the ambiguity here is not hidden, as in many jokes. The second line introduces the needed disambiguation – it is the PURCHASE script that is activated, since the attribute MODEL is only relevant to the ELECTRONIC DEVICE concept. The third line throws us back to the script of ACQUISITION. It should be noted here that for the interpretations of these cues to work correctly, one should make a distinction between a value of an attribute and the attribute itself (see Guarino 2013 for the property and quality discussion). It is this distinction that triggers the SSTH-needed oppositeness – the emphasis of the attribute itself in the second cue, rather than its value in the first one – that brings us to a realization that whatever concept should have been activated does not have such an attribute, thus jumping back to the other script.

This joke could have been worded differently:

> Mr. Brin, you asked to buy Motorola. What model did you mean?
>
> Model?!

Notice that the two scripts in this version are reversed: the original request is, apparently, to buy the company, while an employee thinks that the request was to buy a cell phone. What is interesting is that, for the OST resources, there is no difference in processing the static resources, only how the knowledge is combined changes slightly. Both senses of *buy* will still be activated, with the second question of the first cue, apparently, uttered by a Google employee, introduces the needed disambiguation to PURCHASE sense. The second cue, apparently by Brin himself, returns to the sense of *buy* as ACQUISITION. However, depending on which participant's speech triggers activation of a script or sense, the meaning of the joke changes completely. Thus, in the first joke the executive asks what model of the device was purchased, thus signaling the desired interpretation. The roles are reversed in the second joke: the employee triggers the activation of the purchase of the device. Each script plays a salient role either in the setup or punch line without any change whatsoever to the underlying OST resources. It is the order of activation that produces these interpretations of the two jokes that seemingly (especially at some courser grain size) are about the same thing.

An interested reader may want to know how this information gets acquired: after all, it would be very difficult to manually enter all of the needed knowledge into the various static resources. Moreover, as some of the information gets old, or new information should get added, somehow the static resources should be adjusted. The answer to these questions is not that much different from human level acquisition and human level communication. The static resources contain only general knowledge, the specifics are discovered as more texts is processed, and these specifics of the processed texts are entered into the InfoBase, together the corresponding time stamp and the source of the information. It is possible, then, to generalize some information, such as about large companies and possible directives that the executives give, without explicitly entering the generalized data into the static knowledge resources. Thus, as more text is read, more knowledge of the world is acquired, making it possible to attribute such knowledge to the individuals that provide it and create local scripts for particular situations and individuals. This makes it possible for OST(H) to handle "inside joke"-type communication, as well as leverage between different interpretations of the same sentence for different people. Since it is reasonable to equate the required knowledge of the world for getting the joke with the pragmatic aspect of humor, OSTH is, then, the first semantic and pragmatic theory of humor. This also means that it removes the mysterious notion of context (as in "it all depends on the context") from the discussion because this required knowledge is the context.

4 Trying a hand at real-life examples of communication

Throughout OST development, many examples were drawn from communication between friends on Facebook. Facebook provides an interesting venue of humorous discourse, as often enough (as in much of non-verbal communication) what the author of the message had in mind is not necessarily perceived by the readers. Consider the following dialog between two Facebook friends[1]:

> [Friend 1:] So, I'm one of the last dinosaurs who just opened the LinkedIn profile. Not sure if I knew what I was doing but I think it's up and running. I am pretty sure I selected a terrific profile picture and connected with strangers that apparently were in my Gmail account It's great to be connected :))) [...]
>
> [some conversation excerpted here about titles that appear on LinkedIn and how everyone seems to be very important according to these titles]
>
> [Friend 2:] just call yourself a CEO of power solutions junk on LinkedIn [...] but.. u are kind of late in the game. Wanna buy a blackberry?
> [...]
>
> [Friend 1:] I dumped all my cash for Apple, I may spare some change for BB, a few cents now should be enough :)

1 The author is grateful for their permission and willingness to share their interpretation of the dialog

The analysis here is significantly more complicated since a lot of it relies on specific information that has been learned from other sources, such as the poor performance of BlackBerry (the company) recently, the chronology of the peak popularity and acceptance of LinkedIn, etc. Moreover, the comparison between the two companies depends on a personal interpretation of where the salient parts are. The second interlocutor follows up on the first interlocutor's admission that he/she was late in the game joining LinkedIn by comparing it with the disappearing BlackBerries, and the first interlocutor confirms his/her possessing this knowledge and thus getting the joke by indicating that the BlackBerry stock is almost worthless. Interestingly, it was not the first interlocutor's intention (as confirmed in personal communication) to bring up the stock value, but rather to point out in general that both companies are not longer new to the market, and people have done something with them closer to when they were at the peak of their popularity. Notice also that they use the brand names of Apple and Blackberry also to designate the companies rather than their products.

5 Comparing two objects

Recall that according to OST and its representation of concepts, each concept can be represented in terms of a collection of properties $\mathbf{P}_i, \ldots \mathbf{P}_j$, where each property belongs to the property set **P** in the ontology. It is reasonable to assume then that given any two concepts (or objects for that matter) $\mathbf{C}_k$ and $\mathbf{C}_l$ they may have **n** properties that they have in common, from the set **P**. It is also reasonable to assume that whenever they have such common properties, these concepts can be compared using these properties. For example, in the proverbial comparison of apples and oranges, the two, both concepts being, incidentally, the ancestor concept of FRUIT, can be, in fact, compared according to their COLOR, SIZE, TASTE, etc. Most of the time, we can deduce the property that is being used in the comparison from the word choices, such as *this one is sweeter than that one*. From the OST point of view, the property selection in this example is easy as the lexical sense of sweet is anchored in the property TASTE that both concepts, APPLE and ORANGE, inherit from their common ancestor, and the property has an allowable range of values. However, property recognition is not always easy as some range values can belong to meta-properties, such *as this one is better than that one*. Here, the question that needs to be solved is: better according to what property, or if we put it in other terms, which property dominates the comparison – or, in still other terms, is salient (Taylor et al. 2010). Such domination does not have to be, and rarely is, universal. Thus, for each concept, there is an individual (for a particular person) weighting value that determines the importance, salience, priming, etc. of this property in the conversation. It is likely that the weights are dynamic, and thus have to be adjusted in real time.

In mathematical terms, each concept is then represented not only as a collection on properties $\mathbf{P}_i, \ldots \mathbf{P}_j$, but as a collection of weighted properties $\mathbf{w}_i{*}\mathbf{P}_i, \ldots, \mathbf{w}_j{*}\mathbf{P}_j$ and the $\mathbf{w}_i, \mathbf{w}_j \in \mathbf{W}$, where $\mathbf{W}$ is the set of all allowable weights, likely in the [0, 1] range. Moreover, in a sentence where a lexical item may be pointed to various properties that a concept is described by, a single property can be selected by finding a maximum weight value from a set of weights used with this concept, and selecting the property with the corresponding max weight. Theoretically, then, a sentence *this one is better than that one*, while it can be explained differently for each person, is calculated by computing their individual weights for the concepts in question. For example, suppose person A prefers sweet fruit, while person B prefers large fruit. Then, if an *orange* is described only in terms of COLOR, SIZE, TASTE, and an apple is described only in terms of COLOR, SIZE, TASTE, and each of these properties is weighted as w_{COLOR}, w_{SIZE}, w_{TASTE}, we can not only compare apples and oranges, but also understand the result of a particular comparison. If orange is sweeter than apple, then person A, when declaring that *this orange is better than this apple* means that it is sweeter, because for person A, $w_{TASTE} \gg \max\{w_{COLOR}, w_{SIZE}\}$. On the other hand, if person B declares that *this orange is better than this apple*, it means that it is bigger in size as for person B, $w_{SIZE} \gg \max\{w_{COLOR}, w_{TASTE}\}$. Note, that while it may not be important in cases where people agree, it can help understanding why they disagree and find common ground: if A thinks that orange is better than apple, and B thinks that apple is better than orange, by calculating which property they prefer, the system can see why an agreement is not reached (and, perhaps, can even suggest a third fruit that appeals to both).

6 Object comparison in humorous discourse

The same line of reasoning can be applied to jokes, and can explain various interpretations and emphasis of a setup, which would lead to different punch lines or jab lines. More importantly, it can represent an accessibility of understanding or acceptance of different trails of thought.

Let us ignore the intricacies of opening a LinkedIn account and the steps that one follows to do that, and concentrate on the comparison of two companies and their products. Following the previous section, we will attempt to outline various properties that one may take into account when comparing the companies and the product. Throughout this comparison, we will not make any distinction between the company itself and the product, to simplify the matter.

For those with more formal mind set, a connection between the company and the product can be easily made though a concept such as MANUFACTURE, as we have done it in the first joke.

The following descriptions emerged though a discussion in the class on the Semantics of Humor, Fall'13, with strong participation from the students that took the class.

- Value of a company, it's stock value
- Rate of adaptation of a company product
- Acceptance of product at a particular time (chronology)
- Related prestige of acquiring the service
- Success of company's leadership (company officers' turnover)

Each of these bullets represents a somewhat different point of view, and, interestingly, they all outline where the companies differ from each other in the present time. We will keep the points as outlined by the class participants as the only relevant points, and put an OST(H) perspective on it.

First, and most obvious, is the value of the company. Such information can be easily obtained from the search engine of your choice with a simple query (stock value [linkedin, blackberry]). Figure 3 shows the graphical results of the corresponding queries. From these graphs, one can easily observe that LinkedIn stock is going up, while BlackBerry's stock is going down. We will need this information to reason about the last line of the dialog. Note, that while the information on the graph is helpful, the stock is not costing cents, as the last line in the dialog says. There are two mechanisms that may be employed here to process such inconsistencies and get to the exaggerated information: one is to project the fall of the value in time, until it comes to "a few cents". The other one is to use comparison between the two companies. Either way, to process the line, OST(H) needs to handle information that somewhat modifies the factual information, and such modification has to be handled dynamically.

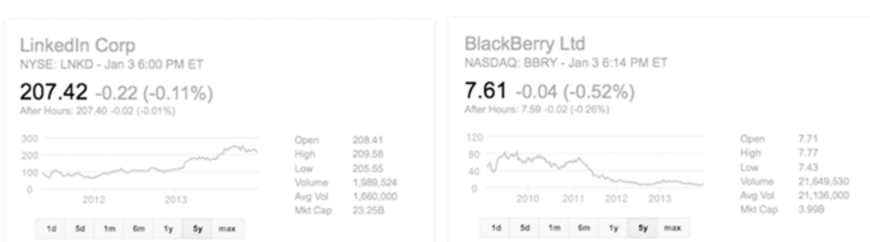

Figure 3: LinkedIn and BlackBerry stock value (5 years)

The other bullets are more problematic: while information on the first one can be easily obtained (and modified once one has it), the others have to be inferred from various sources, ordering them in time posted. Another difficulty here comes from the fact that comparing the rates of adaptation and other chronologies in LinkedIn and BlackBerry is somewhat similar to comparing apples and oranges. On the surface of it, the products are very different: one you need to purchase (most of the time), while the other one you can sign up for for free. However, they can be directly compared by rating with their corresponding peers, or by looking at the number of new "customers" they attract, based on newly opened accounts, or indirectly compared by the amount of social media postings on them, including the numbers of tweets on the subject that an increasing number of TV programs actually show as a graph at the bottom of their picture frames.

Assuming that the data collection is successful and stored in the InfoBase, the temporal trends can be then retrieved according to the somewhat imprecise properties outlined in the class and showed in Figure 4. Any reader then may compare the companies according to their own rating of these properties, without ever vocalizing which property they select and only producing the result suitable for the reasoning. The procedure is identical to that of comparing apples and oranges, using more specific properties.

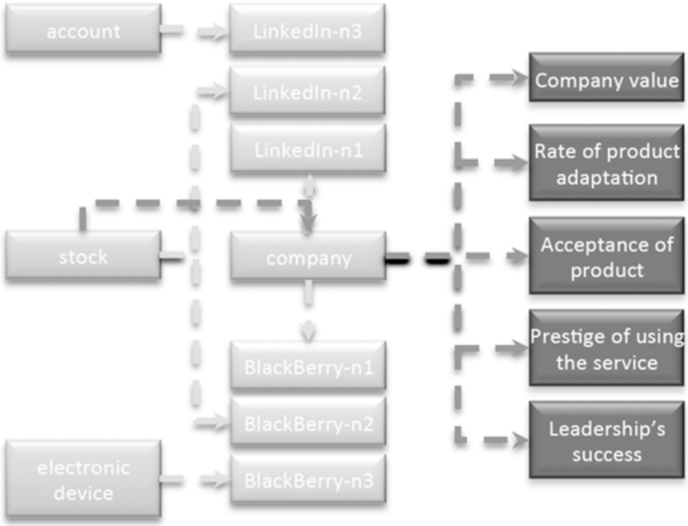

Figure 4: Imprecise properties and some relations to concepts and instances

Similarly to fruit properties, the descriptions of any company, shown in green in Figure 4, can lead to various comments, not always acceptable for all properties.

For example, a comment on a new CEO of one company may relate to how much more promising this company's performance may become, but it in no way relates to the prestige of using the company's service in the past. On the other hand, the comments made by one person may be compatible with another interpretation, given by a different property, and thus, a misunderstanding can be created where a person A can describe a value of one property, and person B may think that the description fits another property, which is weighted higher in their mind, thus ignoring the intended meaning of person A. A path of comparison suitable for the LinkedIn/BlackBerry dialog is shown in Figure 5.

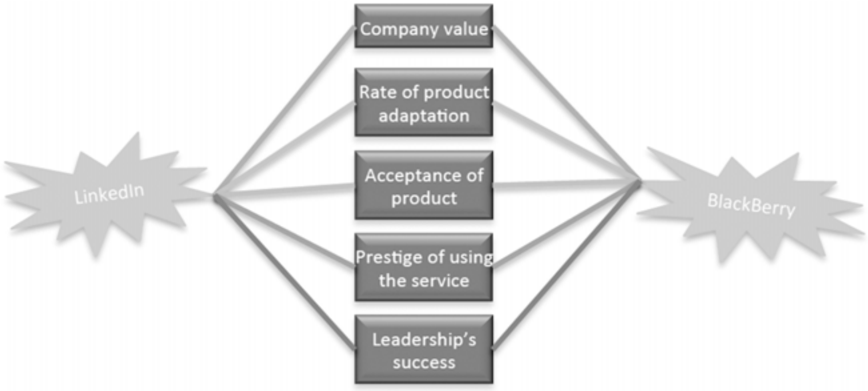

Figure 5: Possible paths of comparison (the links from the top are: orange, following by dark blue, light blue, red, and olive)

We will concentrate on the last part of the response of Friend 2, namely, "but u are kind of late in the game. Wanna buy a blackberry?" The intent of the person was to point out that both BlackBerry and LinkedIn were popular some time ago, and if somebody is that late into signing up for a service that everyone uses, perhaps they may be also interested in buying a device, in this case, a BlackBerry smart phone, that, at the time of the discussion, is practically obsolete (and whose manufacturer is failing) but that was very hot 10 years ago. In this case, the comparison is largely made following the darker blue lines in Figure 5, although the other links may contribute to the comparison as well. As a side note, if that is the case, instead of taking the highest weighted property, we are considering either *n* highest properties or all properties whose weights are higher than some value. Both models are easily implementable.

The response of Friend 1, while fully compatible with the text supplied by Friend 2, takes us to a different property, namely that of a stock/company value (shown in orange in Figure 5). Note that the property that was activated in the mind of Friend 2, is absent in the response of Friend 1. The only way to test the hypothesis that it was the darker blue link that was activated is to ask the person involved. Since the orange link was also acceptable to Friend 2, after they read the response, the conversation progressed further. If for whatever reason the orange link was not acceptable to Friend 2, it is possible that we would get to puzzlement (Suls 1972), rather than a successful resolution of a humorous exchange.

What is of interest to us here, is that neither property is explicit in the dialog, yet to understand all interpretations they must be traced. It was pointed out by a class participant that another property may be at play and fully open to interpretation, which can be activated by the knowledge that BlackBerry recently announced changes to its leadership which was not viewed favorably by the market and is often seen as yet another manifestation, along with the low stock value, of the company's crisis. This interpretation is fully absent from the text and can only be activated by a person who pays attention to these news and who is familiar with the "script" of bankruptcy (cf. Raskin et al. 2003 on a computational approaching-bankruptcy script, from which the leadership change aspect is missing). It means that the weights of properties depend on local knowledge (which could lead to local scripts, see Raskin 1985), which could be traced from paying attention to what a particular person reads online and collecting such knowledge for each such person in the InfoBase. Thus, to an extent, if there is enough knowledge about a person in the InfoBase, the local script activation can be predicted, or at the very least, realized by the system.

7 Conclusion

This chapter looked at two examples of discourse by two participants and its analysis through Ontological Semantic Theory of Humor. The dialogues between participants contained both explicit and implicit information. Moreover, depending on which participant of the dialogue verbalized a particular sentence, the entire interpretation of the situation changed. This is an important observation for the OSTH and OST in general, since it is normally concerned with the meaning of particular utterances and their compositional properties, rather than the role of a participants on the shift of the situation interpretation.

We have also outlined how OST(H) handles implicit information, especially as it contributes to an interpretation of a humorous remark. The success of such interpretation by and large depend on the complexity of knowledge and reasoning involved in making the link from one explicit utterance to the next. In other words, the system would have to read the person's mind – what he was thinking about that lead to the produced utterance – which is not an easy task. From the example shown, in addition to common sense knowledge, it appears that humans do not have this ability either, but can adjust to such utterances post-factum. The question that needs to be raised is, does any interpretation of the utterance make sense relative to the previous cue(s). This task is substantially simpler for a machine, but the result, even with a perfect algorithm, would depend on the knowledge previously collected about the event discussed and any inferences that follow, as well as knowledge about the person making the remarks. And, thus, while the enterprise is promising on the theoretical level, it is yet again, a case of "the proof of the pudding is in the eating" with the practical implementation.

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