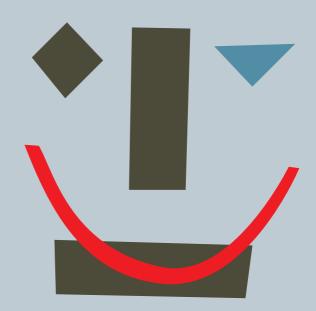
The Dynamics of Interactional Humor

Edited by Villy Tsakona and Jan Chovanec



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The Dynamics of Interactional Humor

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Volume 7

The Dynamics of Interactional Humor Creating and negotiating humor in everyday encounters Edited by Villy Tsakona and Jan Chovanec

The Dynamics of Interactional Humor

Creating and negotiating humor in everyday encounters

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Investigating the dynamics of humor

Towards a theory of interactional humor

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While semanticopragmatic approaches to humor usually view it as stemming from incongruity, many current studies from fields such as discourse analysis, conversation analysis, and pragmatics have moved beyond to underline the significance of other factors defining humor. These factors include the framing devices of humor, the reactions to it, the sociocultural parameters influencing its production and interpretation, its social functions and affective goals, and the genres where it may occur. In view of the above, a broader definition of interactional humor is proposed, emphasizing its dynamic co-construction and including all humorous texts whose meanings are negotiated among interactants. It is argued that such a definition has a number of relevant implications for the theory of humor, where it suitably complements the recent (pragmatic) shift towards a more contextualized understanding of humor production and reception.

Keywords: incongruity, interactional humor, framing devices of humor, reactions to humor, sociocultural parameters, social functions of humor, genre, General Theory of Verbal Humor

Beyond the semanticopragmatics of humor

The idea of humor as dynamically constructed and negotiated in interaction is definitely not a new one. In fact, it underlies most (if not all) of the research on humor coming from fields such as discourse and conversation analysis. Such research does not only consider the intention of the speaker/potential humorist and how this intention is encoded and transmitted to the audience, but takes also into account the ways the audience make sense and eventually react to a (potentially) humorous message. In this sense, studies on humor production and perception view humor as a discoursal phenomenon which provides interlocutors with an(other) opportunity to deploy and develop their collaborative skills through participating in its construction.

However, the focus of investigation often involves either the production of humor or its reception; it is not always feasible to tackle both either within a single paper or monograph or even within a specific theoretical orientation/perspective. As a result, studies concentrating on how humor is produced in semanticopragmatic terms (i.e. viewing humor as stemming from incongruity/script opposition; see among others Raskin, 1985; Attardo, 1994; 2001) and on how a humorous message is verbalized (or represented visually, etc.) for the sake of an audience, may end up

disregarding the importance of such performance variables as posture, gesture, voice, intonation, hesitations, disfluencies, not to mention the relationship between the teller and the listeners, their genders, ages, relative social status and the physical context.

(Norrick & Chiaro, 2009: ix)

On the other hand, studies focusing exclusively on prosodic, performance, and contextual aspects of humor may sometimes underestimate the semanticopragmatic encoding and cognitive aspects of humor.

Early approaches to humor coming from various disciplines of linguistics have often dealt with decontextualized texts which are supposed to be perceived as humorous independently of their context (see among others Raskin, 1985; Attardo, 1994 and references therein). This is the case at least with canned jokes which, for many years and sometimes still today, are examined as "autonomous" texts whose humorous character cannot be compromised no matter where they may appear. In other words, jokes will be jokes – and if somebody finds them "not funny", "offensive", or "inappropriate", this is not something relevant or important for the theory of humor (see among others Davies, 2008: 6; Raskin, 2008: 27). ¹

More recently, and as humor research expanded its scope and applications beyond the study of decontextualized canned jokes, it became obvious that a wide variety of factors need to be taken into serious consideration when analyzing humor and trying to define it. While such factors are not easy to map and classify, any scholar attempting to describe and understand the operation of situated humor is

^{1.} However, Morreall (2009: 98–101) claims that even for canned jokes, which are usually repeated in more or less the same form in different contexts, there is not a "single", "correct" interpretation (see also Pickering & Lockyer, 2005: 2). This position can be taken to imply that there is a necessity to analyze jokes while paying close attention to the local context in which they are produced; that is, to take into account such criteria as the joke teller's motivation, the immediate situation, the current cultural context, and the characteristics of the recipient. In short, although canned jokes are often compiled and presented in collections, and their decontextualized presentation might make it seem that such jokes embody the archetype of self-contained humorous texts, the meaning of canned jokes will also inevitably depend on how they are used in actual interactions. (For a recent pragmatic account of jokes within the relevance theory, which considers the contextual effects of utterances on their recipients, see, for instance, Yus, 2008, 2016.)

bound to address at least one of the various contextual variables involved in the interlocutors' production and reception of humor. Without aiming to provide an exhaustive list, we consider five factors to have a central role in the analysis of humor – future research will certainly complement and refine the present attempt. While the emerging categories are definitely interrelated and, to an extent, overlapping, we can isolate these main elements:

1. Framing devices of humor, which include diverse linguistic and non-linguistic elements that can signal the presence of humor. Included here are, first of all, multimodal markers/indices of humor² that allow the addressees "to identify the humorous intention of the speaker and therefore trigger the inferential work necessary to the processing of humor" (Attardo et al., 2013: 8). Such markers/indices involve laughter and smile, prosodic and intonational features and patterns (pauses, pitch, speed, etc.), gestures, facial expressions, and body movements (see also Archakis et al., 2010; Attardo & Pickering, 2011; Bell, 2015: 10–11 and references therein). In the same category we could add codeswitches (Georgalidou & Kaili, this volume), metalinguistic devices indicating the transference from the serious to the humorous mode and back (Shilikhina, this volume), and in general explicit statements or descriptions concerning the humorous intention or quality of an utterance. Such framing devices are also commonly used in the digital media where they take the forms of unconventional spelling and punctuation, emoticons, emojis, etc. (Marone, 2015; Yus, this volume, and references therein). Many of these elements are intended to signal what is commonly called *humorous intent(ion)* (see Dynel et al., 2016). In other words, they function as contextualization cues (Gumperz, 1982; Dynel, 2011) aimed at hinting at and eventually convincing the addressee to interpret discourse as humorous. To a certain extent, they are negotiable as interlocutors may co-construct their meanings. Hence, they constitute a part of the immediate communicative context within which a communicative act can realize its humorous meaning potential (cf. Bell, 2015: 9).

Relevant research suggests that such cues are also used by the addressees to signal their own humorous interpretation of discourse, whether this interpretation was the one intended by the speaker or not (see Chovanec, this volume; Dore, this volume; Karachaliou & Archakis, this volume; Seewoester Cain, this volume). The fact that framing devices do not come solely from the initial

^{2.} Attardo et al. (2013: 9–10) make a distinction between the term *markers* which is used "for those behaviors that are used intentionally by the speaker to communicate the metamessage 'this is humorous/ironical/sarcastic'", and the term *humorous indices* which "indicate those unintentional indicators of humor (such as spontaneous laughter, gaze aversion, etc.)". There are, however, behavioral features that may belong to both categories.

producer of humor but also from its recipients forces us to reconsider a rather common and recurring assumption that is implicit in many in linguistic, pragmatic, discourse and conversation analytic approaches to humor: the rather "static" attribution of interactional roles to participants (see also Chovanec & Dynel, 2015; Chovanec, 2016). It seems that interactional roles such as "humor producer" or "humorist" and "humor recipient/addressee" are not so easy to distinguish from one another and it may be difficult to assign those roles to specific interactants in real settings. After all, assigning the "recipient" role arbitrarily to particular interlocutors may underestimate their active contribution to the co-construction of humor and its "success".

2. Reactions to humorous discourse are significant since they reveal whether or not the audience understood the intended humorous message, what was their exact interpretation of it (which may more or less deviate from what the speaker initially intended), and whether they evaluate it positively (e.g. they like/agree with it) or negatively (e.g. they do not like/agree with it). Such reactions may be non-verbal (e.g. laughter, smile, facial expressions of approval or disapproval; see above) or verbal (Hay, 2001). In the latter case, the reactions may take diverse forms ranging from short oral utterances such as *That was a good one* or *That's not funny* to extended discussions and debates on the "humorous" or "non-humorous" content of a text (Lockyer & Pickering, 2001; Simpson, 2003: 187–210; Senzani, 2010: 244–246; Kramer, 2011; Laineste, 2011; Stewart, 2013; Tsakona, 2013, 2015, to appear; Hale, 2016; Piata, this volume). Such debates may even take institutionalized forms as was the case with the Danish Muhammad cartoons, the publication of which resulted in the appearance of numerous journalistic and scholarly articles discussing and negotiating, among other things, whether those cartoons were humorous or not, why, to whom, etc. (see among others Lewis, 2008; Smith, 2009; Kuipers, 2011).

What the diverse reactions to humor bring to the surface is the variety of views on what can be considered "humorous" (or not) as well as the confirmation that unsuccessful or failed humor is not as uncommon as the analysis of decontextualized canned jokes had until recently (mis)led us to believe (see Billig, 2005; Priego-Valverde, 2009; Smith, 2009; Bell, 2015 and references therein). It also confirms that being a "recipient" of humor does not mean that one does not actively participate in its construction and negotiation (see also above).

Beyond the functions of acknowledging, appreciating, or negotiating the humorous effect, however, the notion of reaction to humorous discourse also needs to be extended to cover behavior that is conducive to further production of humor (see among others Kotthoff, 1999; Winchatz & Kozin, 2008). For instance, in some monologic genres of humor, such as stand-up comedy,

audience participation in the form of diverse kinds of reactions is crucial for the comedian's performance and further production of humor (see Scarpetta & Spagnolli, 2009; Bell & Gibson, 2011; Dore, this volume; Seewoester Cain, this volume). In conversational encounters, the reaction can take the form of another humorous act, with the recipient reciprocating with his/her own joke or with another humorous anecdote (Norrick, 1993, 1994, 2010). This gives rise to joke-telling sessions involving multiple joke tellers and multiple recipients. A similar kind of creative responsiveness is found in the online environment. In mass media and social media, the ease with which users can respond to, remediate, recontextualize, and modify content results in the emergence of creative sequences where the follow-up reactions serve as acknowledgements of the initial humorous act and, simultaneously, as new humorous prompts inviting further responses (Chovanec, 2017; see also Frobenius et al., 2014; Drauckner, 2015; Marone, 2015). The humorous interaction is, thus, jointly developed by a number of individuals, with their contributions chained (or even threaded) in a manner characteristic of various asynchronous communicative situations (see Chovanec, 2011, 2012; Piata, this volume; Tsakona, this volume).

3. Sociocultural parameters of humor relating, on the one hand, to the social characteristics of those who produce and/or interpret it and, on the other, to the sociocultural particularities of the community where a humorous text is circulated and interpreted. Research has shown that social identities relating to the age, gender/sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, social class, political affiliation, profession, etc. of individuals play a significant role in shaping their preferences and practices concerning humor (see among others Kuipers, 2006; Ford, 2015; Hale, 2016; Georgalidou & Kaili, this volume, and references therein). In addition, different sociocultural communities have different preferences and norms concerning in which contexts humor is expected (or not expected) to be used, which humorous topics and targets are considered appropriate or inappropriate given specific audiences and settings, whether there are institutionalized restrictions on the use of humor, and how they are imposed on the members of the community (e.g. via censorship or court decisions; see among others Lockyer & Pickering, 2001; Simpson, 2003: 187-210; Capelotti, 2016). Humor researchers become more and more interested in such differences. Cultural, sociological, sociolinguistic, and anthropological approaches have shown that people living in different sociocultural environments and historical eras have different practices related to humor and assign different values to them (see among others Palmer, 1994; Bremmer & Roodenburg, 1997; Billig, 2005; Kuipers, 2006; Attardo, 2010; Tsakona & Popa, 2011 and references therein).

All such parameters influence the negotiation and perception of humor, whether in private or in public settings, but also its very creation. Every speaker addressing an audience with specific sociocultural characteristics normally takes (more or less) into consideration those discursive strategies and social norms determining the forms and functions of humor that are considered acceptable and potentially successful each time. Hence the dynamic negotiation of humor pertains both to explicit manifestations and reactions (e.g. feedback, contributions, evaluations from the audience; see above) and to implicit factors (e.g. audience expectations and taste, well-established perceptions on the limits/boundaries of humor, shared background knowledge; Tsakona, 2013, 2015, to appear; Dore, this volume; Saltidou & Stamou, this volume).

4. The *reasons* why humor is employed and the *goals/functions* it is meant or perceived to achieve. Relevant research is immense and reveals a wide variety of social functions and affective goals to be attained by humor in real settings (see among others Norrick, 1993; Antonopoulou & Sifianou, 2003; Archakis & Tsakona, 2005, 2006, 2012; Schnurr, 2008; Norrick & Chiaro, 2009; Locher & Bolander, 2015; Marone, 2015; Tsakona, 2015; Plester, 2016 and references therein). Among other things, humor brings to the surface shared values and views, thus highlighting the boundaries between the ingroup and the outgroup; creates solidarity and reinforces intimacy; contributes to a pleasant atmosphere; expresses criticism; mitigates aggressive or face-threatening moves/acts; disparages the "other"; breaks social relationships; attracts the attention of the audience; enhances the popularity of the humorist; contributes to building specific social identities (e.g. gender, ethnic, political ones), etc. (see Chovanec, this volume; Dynel, this volume; Georgalidou & Kaili, this volume; Karachaliou & Archakis, this volume; Piata, this volume; Tsakona, this volume; Yus, this volume).

Humor is therefore never "innocent" and devoid of emotional impact and social consequences, whether positive or negative ones. On the contrary, it is employed as a tool for testing common ground and shared values, thus bringing interlocutors closer together or driving them further apart. During the process of humor co-construction and negotiation, it is exactly such interactional moves that are performed by interlocutors.

5. Last but not least, an important factor for shaping the form and functions of humor is the *genres* where it is included. Genres are "relatively stable thematic, compositional, and stylistic types of utterances" (Bakhtin, 1986: 64) through which speakers produce typified communicative acts. They constitute cultural artifacts allowing us to construct, interpret, and act within specific contexts: they shape our understandings of reality and enable us to share such understandings with other speakers. Taking their particularities into account could

therefore assist us in making sense not only of a text's content, but also of the purposes served via encoding our perspectives and evaluations in ways that are conventional and acceptable for a given purpose within specific discourse communities. In addition, by becoming familiar with genres circulating in our sociocultural community, we actually learn to use discourse in specific ways so as to be able to participate in specific activities, and we implicitly or explicitly learn to opt for discoursal choices and strategies that are considered "conventional", "appropriate", and eventually effective in achieving certain goals or in completing certain tasks (see Bazerman, 1994; Freedman & Medway, 1994; Johns, 2002; Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010; Bhatia, 2014; Tsakona, 2015, 2017 and references therein).

It is thus evident that genres are directly related to all the previous factors, since generic conventions will lead interlocutors to, for instance, opt for specific prosodic/intonational or written framing devices of humor; will favor/allow for oral or written reactions to humor; will enable participants to perform specific identities and roles (e.g. the same person may have different reactions concerning the potential offence of a humorous text when commenting anonymously on it online and when issuing a court decision during a trial). Finally, social roles, identities, norms, and restrictions usually determine whether humor is going to be used or perceived as aggressive, critical, affiliative, mitigating, supportive, etc. This is clearly demonstrated in each and every one of the chapters of the volume as they deal with different genres allowing interactants different affordances concerning the co-construction and negotiation of humor.

Needless to say, the normativity and conventionality of genres does not constrain speakers' freedom. Quite on the contrary: it can actually provide a meaningful background for their creative communicative activities that involve the production of humor. In other words, the fact that each genre exhibits specific structure and entails specific roles and actions within this structure does not at all eliminate the possibility of bending structural rules (e.g. via role reversals; see Saltidou & Stamou, this volume) or of merging and recontextualizing generic conventions to create new genres (Chovanec, this volume; Seewoester Cain, this volume; Tsakona, this volume). As a result, humor is generated through the playful distortion of generic conventions or contributes to the emergence of new humorous genres (see Tsakona, 2017: 498–499 for a more detailed discussion).

Taking into account all these devices and factors, the analysis of humor could become more comprehensive and result in (even) more insightful observations regarding how humor is dynamically negotiated and perceived in real settings by real people. While giving priority to authentic, interactively constructed data, such an

approach would not in principle preclude or dismiss the investigation of scripted, non-spontaneous data as well (e.g., films, sitcoms, TV series), since the latter are reproducing and reflecting to a significant extent how interlocutors behave when creating humor. In other words, when humor appears in scripted texts, its construction is usually based on widely held assumptions concerning how humor is or should be used in a particular target community, which humorous devices, topics, and targets are deemed potentially funny, how interlocutors are supposed to react or, in general, contribute to a humorous interaction, and in which contexts humor is allowed or not (see Chovanec, this volume; Dynel, this volume; Saltidou & Stamou, this volume).

2. Towards a theory of interactional humor

All the factors discussed in the previous Section pertain to all forms of humor: oral, electronic, and written ones. Given that a significant amount of humorous texts is nowadays circulated via the electronic media and online social networks (even if originally produced in the oral or written medium), individuals have acquired easy access to such texts as well as to platforms or public spaces where they can comment on them and express their opinions. Consequently, humor and its multiple meanings are no longer negotiated exclusively in face-to-face interactions, but also in online or written exchanges even among people who are (more or less) strangers to each other. In other words, all forms/genres of humor (even written ones) may (and do) become the object of public negotiations and their meanings are interactively (re)constructed by participants in online social media, journalists, commentators, scholars, etc. (see among others Baym, 1993, 1995; Lewis, 2008; Kramer, 2011; Laineste, 2011; Stewart, 2013; Tsakona, 2013, to appear; Marone 2015).

Such interactional constructions and negotiations of humor could lead us to revisit well-established concepts within humor research. The terms *conversational humor*, *interactional humor*, and *humor in interaction* are often perceived as near synonyms including spontaneous forms of humor that emerge in interaction and can hardly be reproduced and understood in other contexts. In our view, however, these concepts should be more clearly delimited. *Conversational humor*, thus, is primarily related to the spoken mode of the interaction, with all its characteristic features. Norrick (1993), for instance, identifies three functional categories of conversational humor, namely, *organizational*, *interpersonal*, and *metalinguistic* conversational humor, where formal categories, such as banter, mocking, joke telling, personal anecdotes, wordplay, punning, sarcasm, metalingual comments, and foreign phrases, are subsumed. In a similar vein, Dynel (2009) discusses a wide range of formal categories, such as neologisms, humorous phrasemes, similes, metaphors,

exaggerations, paradoxes, irony, sarcasm, puns, allusions, anti-proverbs, quotations, register clashes, retorts, teasing, banter, putdowns, self-denigrating humor, and personal anecdotes (see also Tsakona, 2017: 490).

The notion of *humor in interaction* appears to have a more general application but tends to be used in a similar way (Norrick & Chiaro, 2009; Norrick, 2010), that is, taking conversation as its primary area of focus. However, in recent years, many linguistic studies of humor have started complementing the traditional approaches of conversation analysis, pragmatics, and interactional pragmatics by paying attention to non-linguistic features of humor production and reception in contexts that involve various forms of interactions, including new and emerging forms of multimodal interactions, particularly as far as computer-mediated and technology-mediated communication is concerned. For this reason, it seems plausible to propose a broader concept of *interactional humor*, which aims to do justice to the co-operative construction of humor in these diverse interactional contexts.

There are several features that characterize our conception of interactional humor. First, it takes a variety of physical forms in *spoken*, *written*, and *technology-mediated communication*. Second, it is based on the principle of *sequentiality*, that is, the minimal structural composition consisting of an act and some reaction (follow-up), whether linguistic or non-linguistic.³ Finally, and most importantly, it involves the *co-participation* of multiple parties, giving rise to more complex humorous macro-acts. These are made up of semiotic interaction that can, in the broadest sense of the word, be described as dialogical or polylogical. What matters, then, is that interactional humor becomes characterized by the joint negotiation of the humorous potential of forms, situations, and utterances.

This further suggests that *interactional humor* should include not only those humorous texts which are co-constructed by more than one interlocutor in face-to-face or online interactions, but also those humorous texts whose meanings are negotiated by more than one interlocutor. Humor addressees may have different perceptions not only of oral forms of humor (e.g. in everyday encounters among intimates) and mediated texts (e.g. sitcoms, ads; Baym, 1993, 1995; Tsakona, 2013, to appear), but also of written ones (e.g. written canned jokes, novels, cartoons; Lewis, 2008; Laineste, 2011; Stewart, 2013). In this sense, all kinds of longer exchanges where interlocutors discuss the different meanings of humor and offer their own perceptions on what humor is, how it is (or should be) used, when, by whom, against whom, etc. become the focus of interest when investigating interactional humor.

^{3.} However, sequentiality is not to be confused with linearity: the non-linear principle of much of technology-mediated communication allows users to engage in quite complex forms of non-chronological and non-linear follow-ups.

In other words, interactional humor includes face-to-face as well as mediated humor, authentic/spontaneous as well as scripted humorous texts and, in general, any form of humor based on sequentiality of utterances that are interactively produced and negotiated. For instance, in cases of oral humorous discourse, it is difficult to imagine how humor could be created in texts such as stand-up comedy or oral anecdotes, if the stand-up comedian on the narrator did not try to elicit or did not receive any kind of feedback from their audience. Audience participation is therefore an indispensable part of some humorous genres, even if humor production appears to emanate from a single individual in a seemingly monologic manner (Rutter, 2001; Dore, this volume; Karachaliou & Archakis, this volume; Seewoester Cain, this volume). The fact that research has often concentrated on the text produced by the stand-up comedian or the narrator of the oral anecdote does not necessarily mean that audience reactions and contributions are not equally (if not more, sometimes) important for the unfolding of discourse and the continuation of the interaction in real time.

Mediated humorous genres such as memes, humorous status updates on Facebook, or humorous tweets, are more often than not meant to generate interaction among participants in the social media. This is achieved either via responding to previous texts using intertextual references, or via explicitly or implicitly inviting the addressees to comment on them, share, forward, or recreate and recontextualize them (Shifman, 2014; Piata, this volume; Tsakona, this volume; Yus, this volume). Something similar could be suggested even for written genres such as cartoons or humorous literature. Even though the cartoonist or the author/novelist may not always receive immediate feedback from the readership or may not have access to all the reactions to or comments on their work, they often have their work reviewed (e.g. book reviews) or commented upon (e.g. online or TV discussions of cartoons or books). In such contexts, readers often propose diverse interpretations and evaluations of the humorous meanings included in such humorous texts. Even though such activities may not be considered as indispensable for the creation of such written texts/genres, they still become increasingly accessible and popular nowadays thanks to the digital media, and are most relevant when investigating the social meanings and functions of humorous texts.

To sum up, when analyzing interactional humor, emphasis is placed not exclusively on the "mechanics" of humor (e.g. the levels of linguistic analysis involved in the production of a humorous utterance), but also on how interlocutors negotiate and eventually agree to entering the humorous mode; on the process of humor production; on the step-by-step co-construction of humorous sequences; and on the diverse reactions to an initial utterance/text intended as humorous. In this sense, any form or genre of humor can be considered interactional as long as there is empirical evidence demonstrating that its production and/or interpretation are the

outcome of the effort of, and interaction between, more than one individual. Even texts or genres traditionally perceived as monological (e.g. canned jokes, cartoons, short stories) can be considered – and approached as – instances of interactional humor when research shows that they do not have a "single" meaning/interpretation (usually the one intended by, or ascribed to, their original producer), but instead may acquire multiple meanings suggested by more than one interlocutor. In such cases, humor research is expected to consider all the different interpretations of humor and not to limit itself to the one intended by the humorist or ascribed to him/her. In our conception, then, interactional humor is a dialogical phenomenon (Bakhtin 1986).

Needless to say, such an approach to interactional humor does not presuppose a certain methodological framework but may draw on various fields such as discourse and conversation analysis, interactional sociolinguistics, pragmatics, media studies, folklore, sociology, and anthropology. Despite the seeming multidisciplinarity of the possible approaches, the notion of *interaction* reflects our understanding of human communication in broad pragmalinguistic terms, where any analysis of a communicative act is strictly contextual, that is, taking into account the overall situation, the participants, as well as other factors affecting the interaction.

3. Implications for the theory of humor

Such a broad definition of interactional humor as well as the various factors contributing to its processing cannot but have significant implications for the theory of humor, and in particular for any theory attempting to account for "what is funny, why it is funny, how it is funny, when it is funny, and to whom it is funny" (Raskin, 2012). Assuming that, for instance, the *General Theory of Verbal Humor* (GTVH; see Attardo & Raskin, 1991; Attardo, 1994, 2001), as one of the currently dominant research paradigms in humor studies, could potentially evolve into such a theory, let us now elaborate on such a possibility in view of the above-mentioned definition of interactional humor. Even though the present volume does not include papers applying the GTVH or discussing its potential and limits, ⁴ this does not mean that the findings and the analytical tools and concepts employed here cannot offer feedback to the theory and contribute to the discussion of its application and expansion. In fact, we consider that the factors identified in Section 1 for defining interactional humor could contribute (and some of them have already contributed;

^{4.} Nevertheless, some of the chapters of the present volume exploit certain concepts or analytical tools of the GTVH (see those by Dore, Georgalidou & Kaili, Karachaliou & Archakis, Piata, Saltidou & Stamou, Tsakona).

see below) to the development of such a semanticopragmatic theory of humor into a more dynamic, interactional one.

Returning to Raskin's (2012) questions (see above), a major theory of humor nowadays should be able to adequately explain which text is funny, why, how, to whom, and when. In other words, it should take into consideration all the factors presented in Section 1. However, 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 the last two of Raskin's (2012) questions, namely "when it is funny" and "to whom it is funny". This is one of the limitations Attardo (2001: 30, 31) himself identifies in the theory when he admits that he proposes "a (partial) theory of the speakers' potential production/interpretation [of humor] on the basis of their knowledge and skills and not a theory of the actual, concrete interpretation/production of a given text"; and he states that he will "say virtually nothing about the role of the audience in this book [i.e. Attardo, 2001]". In other words, neither the reception and interpretations of a humorous text nor the actual context in which both the text and its reception occur are originally accommodated within the GTVH framework. Speakers' negotiations over humor, their reactions to it, and their reception and evaluations are not taken into consideration when analyzing a text in GTVH terms. What is important to note here is that Attardo (2003: 1289) himself stresses the need for an expansion of the GTVH towards this direction and, at the same time, points out how this could be achieved, when he states that "an audience-theory of humor [...] needs to be grounded in the social, anthropological, interactional, etc., determinants of [humorous] action" (for a more detailed discussion, see Tsakona, 2013).

So, what exactly can the GTVH do in its current state? The definition of the humorous text proposed within the GTVH helps researchers to 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. In addition, why and how something is funny or humorous is explained via a set of *knowledge resources* (henceforth KRs):

- 1. the script opposition (SO), see above;
- 2. the *logical mechanism* (LM), namely the distorted, playful logic the script opposition is based on;
- 3. the *situation* (SI) including the objects, participants, settings, activities, etc. of the humorous text:
- 4. the *target* (TA), that is, the persons, groups, ideas, institutions ridiculed in the humorous text:

- 5. the *narrative strategy* (NS) referring to the genre which includes humor and/ or to the speech act performed by the humorist; and
- 6. the *language* (LA) involving the actual wording of the humorous text, the verbal encoding of humor.

Most of the KRs relate to and stem from earlier semanticopragmatic approaches to humor focusing on its content (see the SO, SI, and TA KRs) and its linguistic form (see the LM, NS, and LA KRs; Attardo & Raskin, 1991: 321).

Comparing the list of KRs with the factors defining interactional humor (see Section 1), it is interesting to note both similarities and differences. The NS KR seems most relevant (if not identical) to the genres of/with humor, while the SO and TA KRs are subsumed under the sociocultural context of humor: the SO KR refers to the topics which are considered suitable for humorous exploitation in each sociocultural community, and the TA one to the persons, ideas, objects, institutions, etc. that can be attacked via humor. Other aspects of humor dynamics such as framing devices, reactions to humor, the sociocultural particularities of interactants and the groups/communities they belong to, are not captured by these KRs, hence the theory has often been evaluated as a "static" one which cannot in principle account for interactional forms of humor (but see Antonopoulou & Sifianou, 2003; Archakis & Tsakona, 2005, 2006, 2012).

An attempt to enhance the scope and analytical tools of the GTVH is offered by Canestrari (2010) who highlights the significance of contextualization cues for humor reception and of audience reactions to humor. 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 ibid.: 339, 341, 343). Such signals may be:

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

That is to say, the Meta KR adds factors such as framing devices and reactions (see Section 1) to the analysis of humor in GTVH terms. It is also important to note here that, as Canestrari (2010: 343) herself points out, "[t]he definition of the Meta-Knowledge Resource grew from the need to analyze humorous performance which, as such, involves real spectators", thus concurring with Attardo (2001; see above) on the need to expand the theory to account for humorous texts analyzed in the contexts where they appear and taking into consideration all the factors influencing their production and interpretation. Thus, the theory seems to

make a step closer to performative aspects of humor and take into consideration the audience of humor.

A few years later, an eighth KR is proposed (Tsakona, 2013), the *Context* (CO) one, referring to the sociocultural context of the humorous text and including two different but interrelated kinds of information:

- the sociocultural presuppositions for the production and interpretation of SOs, LMs, and TAs; in simple terms, what participants need to know about the sociocultural context of the text to derive meaning from it;
- 2. speakers' *metapragmatic stereotypes*⁵ on humor, namely their internalized models including ideological assumptions and stances on whether a specific text can be considered humorous or not, why, how, when, and to whom. In other words, speakers' metapragmatic models of humor pertain to the ways they use humor, their social goals, and their evaluations of humorous utterances and texts.

In other words, the CO KR attempts to capture diverse aspects of (interactional) humor included in the sociocultural parameters and the genres of humor (see Section 1). Such information is gathered not only from the humorous text but mostly from audience reactions to it (for a more detailed discussion, see Tsakona, 2013, to appear). Hence, the scope of the GTVH is further broadened to account for actual interpretations of, and negotiations over, humorous texts.

In general, it seems that the GTVH and the subsequent attempts to expand it are compatible with the present proposal concerning the factors determining the dynamics of interactional humor. Even though the aim of the present volume is not, as already mentioned, to expand this particular theory, still our effort has been, among other things, to contribute to this theoretical discussion. Most importantly, we would like to demonstrate how research coming from different fields and concentrating on the analysis of different aspects of the phenomenon of humor could offer constructive and valuable feedback to the major theory of humor nowadays, so as "to gradually turn it from a theory of the speaker to (hopefully) a theory of the audience" (Tsakona, 2013: 43), and eventually to a theory accounting for the dynamic construction and negotiation of interactional humor.

^{5.} The term *metapragmatic stereotype* comes from Agha (1998, 2007) who suggests that speakers seem to have different ideologies on how language is or should be used: they internalize models of language use which guide their own linguistic behavior and enable them to make judgments about their own language use or that of others. Such models influence speakers' linguistic performance and interpretation of discourse and are shaped by the sociocultural context speakers interact in. Furthermore, the metapragmatic stereotype of one speaker may, to a greater or lesser degree, deviate from (or even compete with) that of the other, thus leading to conflicts and negotiations on the "appropriate" and "correct" language use as well as to defending specific interpretations as "the only correct ones" (see also Kramer, 2011; Tsakona, 2013: 30–31).

Overview of the volume

This volume explores how humor is created and/or negotiated in a variety of every-day encounters. The central issue addressed concerns the process of the emergence of various forms of humor in authentic everyday interactions as well as their scripted and unscripted counterparts in various media. Although the majority of contemporary studies on humorous discourse perceive humorous texts as "finished" products carrying a "single" interpretation (and excluding possible others), the emphasis in this book – as already suggested above – is placed upon how speakers collaboratively circulate, reconstruct, and (re)frame either personal or public accounts of social reality with the aim, among other things, of (re)producing humor.

The analysis of such constructions and negotiations, as undertaken by the authors of the individual chapters, sheds light on the processes by which speakers exploit various interactional and, more generally, semiotic resources to build their humorous accounts of reality, whether experienced directly or mediated through various public media channels. The papers also bring to the surface the multiple interpretations of private or public events. This diversity of interpretations and meanings elicited from the same event(s) offers insights on speakers' perceptions and ideologies on what can be considered humorous, why, and in which context(s).

Another explicit aim of this volume is to bring to the surface the differences and, perhaps most importantly, the similarities attested in the production of humor in face-to-face and various technology-mediated interactions (online, broadcast, etc.). It appears that there is a constant and dynamic interplay between such interactions, as speakers more often than not participate in various humorous genres and contexts, whether oral, digital, or mediated ones. In order to achieve the research agenda set out for this volume, the contributions draw on a variety of approaches and methodologies, including discourse analysis, conversation analysis, interactional sociolinguistics, pragmatics, ethnography of communication, and social semiotics.

The papers in the present volume are divided into two parts: the first one includes oral interactions (Chapters 2–6) and the second one deals with mediated interactions (Chapters 7–12). At the same time, the chapters form a continuum: we move from studies investigating how humor is co-constructed and negotiated in spontaneous oral discourse (Chapters 2–4) to studies concentrating on how humor is created in quasi-spontaneous or scripted oral discourse (Chapters 5–9), and then to humor in written/mediated discourse, where the degree of spontaneity seems to be low or cannot actually be determined by the analyst (Chapters 10–12).

In the opening chapter, Rania Karachaliou and Argiris Archakis deal with the issue of recipients' reactions to *jab lines* (Attardo, 2001) in conversational storytelling. Their paper skillfully combines insights from the incongruity theory

of humor and conversation analysis, proposing a classification of responses to potentially humorous acts. The authors operate with the premise that any element in conversational storytelling, as long as it contains some incongruity and is received with laughter, can attain the status of a *jab line*. As a result, the authors identify two types of responses, namely immediate and postponed, while differentiating between jab lines that are framed as humorous by the storyteller and those that are framed as such by the recipients. While immediate responses are realized through laughter, wordplay and evaluative comments of support, postponed reactions are more complicated since recipients typically engage in delay mechanisms such as ritualized disbelief and checks for understanding. These are then followed up by either preferred jab line responses, whereby the recipients align to the humorous frame set up by the storyteller, or dispreferred responses, whereby the recipients demonstrate their unwillingness to accept the humorous incongruity. These findings lead the authors to postulate several sequential patterns through which the interlocutors jointly negotiate humor during narrative storytelling.

In the second paper, and further elaborating on how interlocutors negotiate humor, Ksenia Shilikhina deals with an intriguing metalinguistic phenomenon, namely the speakers' negotiation of the mode of discourse, namely its explicit identification as either bona fide or non-bona fide communication (Raskin, 1985). The moments of such negotiation occur when some incongruous utterance appears in a speaker's discourse or when one of the interlocutors manifests signs of playful behavior. These situations lead to meta-discursive utterances that serve to establish, check, or confirm the speaker's intended mode. In the article, such meta-discursive utterances are classified as akin to pragmatic markers because they indicate the speaker's standpoint. As revealed in the author's analysis of spontaneous conversations and broadcast dialogues, these markers have several pragmatic functions. Thus, for instance, they can explicate the other interlocutor's possible misinterpretation of the speaker's earlier conversational contribution or mark the speaker's retreat from a potential face-threatening act. Actual negotiation of the mode occurs with questions and negative statements that prompt a reaction from the other interlocutor, orienting him/her to the meta-discursive level. The last category consists of utterances that mark the termination of the non-bona fide mode and the speaker's return to the serious mode. Together with the surrounding chapters, this one illustrates how the speaker's stance, the situation, and the addressee's mode of perception are closely involved in the joint negotiation of the humorous or non-humorous mode between interlocutors.

In the third paper, Marianthi Georgalidou and Hasan Kaili take a close look at the emergence of humor in instances of code-switching in bilingual communities. Adopting a combined pragmatic and conversation analytic perspective to what is a quintessentially sociolinguistic phenomenon, the authors analyze everyday

talk-in-interaction in family and friendly gatherings in the bilingual Greek-Turkish community on the island of Rhodes, Greece. The study documents how the overall and sequential organization of talk relates to humorous code alterations by speakers belonging to different generations. Humor-related switches are analyzed along a "switching continuum" in terms of their functions, ranging from the organization of discourse to an orientation to the participants. More specifically, code-mixing and code-switching can contextualize the humorous mode by delimiting the voice of the "other" and, thus, marking reported utterances as funny. Another important discourse organization function of humorous code switches includes the redressing of potential face threats and dispreferred speech acts. Switches also exploit language puns, promote teasing and banter, and generally attend to participant orientation in that they can be aimed at particular addressees, giving rise to momentary interpersonal alignments, and, thus, to distinct identity constructions. Age is involved as well, with the young generation making distinct code choices in their intra-generation talk, and the older generation applying distinct humorous code switches in parent-child talk.

Margherita Dore considers humor negotiation in intercultural stand-up comedy. Analyzing data from live performances of English-language stand-up artists in Rome, she notes how the comedians and the audience deal with humor based on stereotypes about Italians and foreigners living in Italy. The findings indicate that all comedians in the study mock their own ethnicity or culture. This form of self-disparagement is complemented with the comedians' general disparagement of others, such as celebrities and politicians, and serves to attend to the audience's sense of superiority. Comedians accommodate to the audience by exploiting the local context and use a range of routines and performative strategies to obtain the preferred response from the audience (applause, laughter, etc.). They rely on audience involvement through the mocking of the audience and the telling of recurrent jokes that build shared experience. As willing participants in this interaction, the spectators appreciate such potentially face-threatening acts since they are realized as the comedians' humorous jab and punch lines.

In the next paper, Sarah Seewoester Cain deals with comedian-audience teasing in television comedy monologues. The analysis concentrates on the prompts that occasion the teasing of the co-present studio audience, the characteristics of such teasing sequences, and their social functions. It appears that unlike everyday conversation, where teasing is linked to the teaser's interpersonal knowledge of the target, audience teasing in televised comedy derives exclusively from the discursive context, that is, the nature of the audience's responses. Several distinct types of teasing are identified: teasing occasioned by delayed response or silence of the audience; teasing occasioned by audience cheers and applause; and teasing occasioned by mixed response. All of these reactions are treated as somehow problematic by the

comedians, who bring them "on stage" in various ways (e.g. through miming and transposition). The ultimate goal and social effect of teasing is the overcoming of the discursive asymmetry between the comedian and the audience by enhancing their mutual interaction. Additionally, teasing in the comedian's monologic joke setups allows the audience to react in a less constrained manner than after the delivery of joke punch lines. For that reason, setup junctures enjoy a privileged position in which the audiences' "expectation of the unexpected" can be built up.

Opening the second part on mediated humor, Jan Chovanec traces the functions of laughter in instances of conversations among protagonists in TV documentaries. His focus is on the emergence of laughter in situations that do not contain any evident laughable. In other words, despite the absence of any humorous prompt, one or both interlocutors engage in laughter, which can have a humorous as well as a non-humorous nature. Laughter in these situations has an evaluative dimension: it marks embarrassment when something goes wrong and appreciation and triumph at times of success. Humorous laughter emerges when an interlocutor expresses disbelief that is motivated by the incongruity between the person's expectations and the actual state of affairs which is, thus, marked as unexpected, bizarre, or even disgusting. Laughter in the interactions between on-screen interlocutors in documentary programs appears to have several functions. Laughter enables an individual not only to express his/her emotions but also to bond with the other interlocutor. Most importantly, spontaneous humorous and non-humorous laughter has a place in the production design of the program since it complements the scriptedness of the broadcast, supplementing its factual nature with features of informal conversation.

The next two papers deal with televised genres of humor. Adopting a sociolinguistic perspective, Theodora P. Saltidou and Anastasia G. Stamou analyze data from Greek family sitcoms with the aim of identifying how youthfulness is constructed through humorous means. The authors investigate how linguistic varieties, namely youth speech styles, are enregistered in fictional broadcast programs, arguing that these representations of sociolinguistic styles have an ideological dimension. Paying attention to cross-generational interactions, the authors document how youthful identities are constructed on both the inter-character level and the recipients' level. Unexpected role reversals, interpreted as instances of sociolinguistic *crossing*, ⁷ give rise to incongruities that are interpreted as humorous on either (or both) of these levels. For instance, this occurs when the category-bound predicates associated with such roles as "grandparent" and "grandchild" are reversed and contrasted in a script

^{6.} Glenn (2003: 49) defines *laughable* as "any referent that draws laughter or for which [the analyst] can reasonably argue that it is designed to draw laughter".

^{7.} *Crossing* refers to the code alternation by people who are not accepted members of the group associated with the second language they employ (Rampton, 1995).

opposition that involves language, behavior, maturity, etc. It is in these contrasts that the social indexing of the meaning of "youthful styles" becomes particularly noticeable and, eventually, entertaining for the viewers. While the stereotypical construction of youthfulness reproduces negative stereotypes about youth identity and styles, it simultaneously deconstructs the ideology of such age-based stereotypes.

Marta Dynel develops a philosophical pragmatic theory of pretense as a vehicle for conversational humor. In this paper, the author proposes a dual distinction of this notion into *overt pretense*, which has traditionally been equated with irony, and *covert pretense*, which is classified as a form of deception. The distinction is based on whether the hearer is made aware of the pretense or not, and is applicable, among other things, to some scripted TV genres of entertainment. The author documents how overt pretense operates mostly on the character level and how covert pretense affects the humorous situation on the level of the reception of the diegetic interaction by the audience, who are able to appreciate the deception of one character by another. Overt pretense manifests itself through various forms of conversational humor, including role play, impersonation, parody, fantasy humor, absurdity, and trumping (Brône, 2008). It appears that humorous pretense is exploited in friendly teasing and disaffiliative humor through which the speaker manifests his/her wit and denigrates the butt of humor.

The next paper by Villy Tsakona shifts the focus to the online environment. The author explores the phenomenon of online joint fictionalization, which consists of the collaborative construction of a humorous scenario by several participants, who contribute utterances, posts, and messages on the same fictional topic for their mutual amusement. While doing so, they employ the interactional practices of face-to-face interaction and draw on the specific resources and technical affordances provided by the online medium. Just as in face-to-face communication, the online joint fictionalizations have a four-phase structure that consists of initiation (i.e. the opening post that sets up the frame), acknowledgement (i.e. the liking or sharing of this content), creation of the imaginary (i.e. the development of the scenario by other participants), and termination (i.e. the "fading away" of the topic). On the micro-level, online joint fictionalizations have been found to operate with complex sets of humorous incongruities that are skillfully discursively maneuvered by the participants while contributing to the same topic. They thus achieve "interpretative consensus" (Baym, 1995) by establishing and reinforcing shared perceptions and attitudes. In such interactions participants also disseminate and share hyperlinks, photos and cartoons. The multimodality of this form of communication is most evident in the users' production of memes, which form an integral part of this genre of humor.

Another case study of humor in the social media is found in the chapter by Anna Piata, who deals with the humorous representation of Greek national elections on Facebook. She focuses on internet memes, that is, a recent genre of humor constituted by units of text and image that are circulated by users on various platforms of technology-mediated communication. The analysis traces how script oppositions are constructed in memes, both monomodally and multimodally, in order to express one's political stance in a humorous manner. The author notes how manipulated photographs ("maniphotos") provide a common focus for users in their verbal comments, developing the humorous potential in a sequenced series of turns. Internet memes are used in the social media in an interactive way, allowing for interaction between the meme producer and recipients as well as between the recipients themselves. Politically-based internet memes appear to have a dual function. On the one hand, they allow users to critique politics and challenge power relationships through the use of humor. On the other, they encourage solidarity relationships between meme producers and the recipients.

Such solidarity relationships and other non-propositional effects become the focus of the last paper in the volume, which is written by Francisco Yus and offers an innovative theoretical account of internet-based humor. Adopting a cognitive pragmatics and relevance theory perspective (Sperber & Wilson, 1995), Yus proposes that the concept of (non-)intended non-propositional effects should be added to the relevance-theoretical notion of cognitive effects. He argues that, while humor often has little informational value, the lack of content-centered relevance is compensated for by the offset of non-propositional effects, which are not necessarily non-humorous. As a result, relevance is generated beyond the humorous act performed on the internet. More specifically, the non-humorous non-propositional effects are positive on several levels. On the personal level, they contribute to the construction of identity and self-esteem. On the interactive level, humor has the effect of creating an environment in which users feel compelled to participate. They use the relevant discursive conventions of the online medium to co-construct meaning in their virtual online interactions. At medium-sized group level, positive non-propositional effects mark group boundaries and membership, confirm the awareness of shared knowledge, contribute to group bonding and solidarity, and help users obtain feelings of their own value to the community. At the large-sized group level, they affirm cultural specificity and mutual awareness of common values.

5. Future perspectives for humor research

As the overview of the volume illustrates, the individual chapters are united by a number of common themes and approaches. These also indicate some directions of future research in the area of humor construction and negotiation between speakers in face-to-face and mediated interactions (on the implications for the theory of

humor, see Section 3). While there is much overlap between the individual papers, let us selectively tease out some of their common features and suggest several implications for further research in this field.

One of the themes that emerges as promising appears to be the elaboration of various topics along the sociolinguistic dimension, exemplified in the present volume by papers dealing with bilingual communities (Georgalidou & Kaili), intercultural stand-up comedy performances (Dore), and gender and age-based crossings of identity performances (Saltidou & Stamou). Further research in this area is likely to cast more light on how interlocutors in intercultural situations draw on the resources of different languages and cultures and how they negotiate the humor with respect to such points of intercultural contact. In a broader sense, this kind of analysis can be applied to any more or less distinct social groups, where humor emerges out of the tensions arising from the different roles, experiences, and interactional histories of the groups.

Another dominant research paradigm is that of pragmatics. In the present volume, this approach is applied to the study of pragmatic markers as indicators of humor (Shilikina), the theoretical elaborations of relevance-oriented cognitive pragmatics into cyber genres of humor (Yus), and the philosophical pragmatic account of pretense as humorous play in fictional TV programs (Dynel). It is once again attested that linguistic pragmatics, thanks to its interdisciplinary grounding and its attention to the minutiae of interpersonal interactions, is particularly well suited for the analysis of humor since it takes into consideration the potentiality of linguistic forms in terms of the speakers' intentions and the effects on the recipients.

Similarly, various interdisciplinary approaches inspired by conversation analysis are applicable for our understanding of how humorous acts are sequenced and responded to, whether in face-to-face interactions or in users' creative acts in the social media. As shown in the volume, this concerns recipients' reactions to jab lines in authentic conversational humor (Karachaliou & Archakis), the analysis of laughter in both humorous and non-humorous extracts from dialogic interactions (Chovanec), the dynamics of teasing in comedy shows (Seewoester Cain), the joint co-construction of humorous fictional scenarios through a series of sequenced humorous acts in the social media (Tsakona), as well as users' politically-inspired verbal and visual comments on Facebook (Piata). The analysis of interactional humor takes increasingly into consideration the fact that humor is actually constructed in multimodal ways, with interactants creatively combining verbal and visual elements and remediating them to other participants. This means that some of the traditional tools such as those with roots in conversation analysis, will need to be modified to do justice to the complex multi-semiotic ways in which humor is constructed, negotiated and mediated in the older and more recent genres and media.

Finally, the centrality of the concept of *incongruity* as the basic constructional principle of humor is confirmed: it occurs in quite diverse manifestations which can be captured in terms of the traditional (semantic/pragmatic) script oppositions (Raskin, 1985; Attardo, 1994, 2001), as well as in various contrasts arising from speakers' divergent expectations about styles, roles, identities, etc. Furthermore, it appears that humor is a communicatively complex phenomenon that cannot be equated with particular linguistic forms or discursive mechanisms: any humorous act exists as a meaning potential that is ultimately realized in interaction and achieves its effect only upon the performance and co-participation of the parties involved.

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Designing humor in oral interactions

CHAPTER 2

Reactions to jab lines in conversational storytelling

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The aim of this paper is to explore the multiple ways interlocutors negotiate humor in a conversational narrative. In particular, we examine the methodic strategies story recipients employ to respond to jab lines, namely humorous parts of the story that include a script opposition (Attardo, 2001a). Drawing on conversation analytic methods, we argue that story participants "do" humor via (a) *immediate jab line responses*, i.e. responses which immediately follow the presentation of the humorous events and display mutual understanding such as laughter, wordplay and evaluative comments of support; and (b) *postponed jab line responses*, where story recipients first elaborate on the unexpected narrated events through understanding checks or demonstrations of ritualized disbelief, and then express their (non)alignment.

Keywords: narrative, jab line, script opposition, laughter, incongruity, immediate jab line response, postponed jab line response

Introduction

The present paper is concerned with the construction and negotiation of humor in everyday storytelling. By analyzing an extended narrative which occurred in a conversation between three female friends, we intend to investigate the multiple ways story recipients respond to humor. Drawing on literature coming from Conversation Analysis (henceforth CA), we examine the methodic techniques story recipients employ to react to jab lines which are framed as humorous by the storyteller, that is, jab lines which are based on incongruity and are marked with laughter (Archakis & Tsakona, 2005, 2012). In addition, we investigate reactions to incongruous narrative parts which are not directly presented as playful by the storyteller but are interpreted as such by story recipients. In other words, we are also interested in jab lines framed as humorous by story recipients. We will show that

in both cases story recipients engage either in *immediate jab line responses* such as laughter, wordplay or/and evaluative comments of support, or in *postponed jab line responses*, where they first elaborate on the incongruous events of the story via understanding checks or demonstrations of ritualized disbelief and then display their (non)alignment. More specifically, we traced two categories of postponed reactions: (a) *preferred postponed jab line responses*, where story recipients finally express their alignment to incongruity, and (b) *dispreferred postponed jab line responses*, where story recipients remain unready to align with the unexpected narrated events.

In the following section, we present the theoretical background of our work: we refer to studies which investigate humor response and storytelling as joint achievements, and then we attempt to combine these approaches. In Section 3, we present our data and in Section 4 we move to the analysis. Finally, in Section 5 we draw our conclusions.

2. Theoretical background

2.1 Humor and response

Humor plays a significant role in everyday interactions as it enables interlocutors to accomplish a variety of different goals such as amusement, bonding, challenging the norms, licensing behaviors outside what is considered "expected" or "conventional" in a given context, attacking, etc. (Norrick & Chiaro 2009: xvii; see also Chovanec & Tsakona, this volume). But how could we tell whether a text is humorous or not? According to General Theory of Verbal Humor (henceforth GTVH, Attardo, 1994, 2001a), which focuses on the semantic/pragmatic content of humorous utterances, the building block of humor is incongruity, that is, the incompatibility between what is expected to happen and what actually happens. In other words, humor entails "a situation, an idea, an event that contradicts what we know about the world around us, about the reality in which we live" (Archakis & Tsakona, 2012: 77). As Attardo (2001a) suggests, incongruity in humorous texts can be traced in punch lines or in jab lines, that is, words, phrases or sentences that include a script opposition. Punch lines are found at the end of a text (unit) and cause its reinterpretation while jab lines may occur throughout the text without disrupting its flow (Attardo, 2001a: 82-83).

Most research on humor has so far focused on how humor is designed by the speaker. Although several studies have stressed the importance of response strategies to humor in the construction of humorous discourse and in understanding humor (Hay, 2001: 56; Schnurr & Chan, 2011: 20), listeners' role has not received much attention. In the present paper, we intend to investigate humor response by

shedding some light on the ways interlocutors react to jab lines in everyday story-telling. In what follows, we focus on studies which explore reactions¹ to humor, or other interactional phenomena that are highly associated with humor such as irony and teasing (Tsakona, 2004: 22–34).

In her insightful paper, Hay (2001) illustrates that, besides laughter, interlocutors employ a variety of strategies in order to display humor support and maintain a humorous frame in conversation. In particular, her findings show that listeners may respond to humor by contributing more humor, echoing the words of a previous speaker (i.e. repeating part of the previous turn), offering sympathy or contradicting self-deprecating humor, using overlap and/or other devices of high involvement (Hay, 2001: 57–65, 76).

Similarly, irony recipients have a variety of response strategies at their disposal: reacting to the said, reacting to the implied, laughing, or even not reacting by changing the topic (Attardo, 2001b). In the case of reacting to the said, irony recipients may use "mode adoption": they may enter into the possible world that the speaker proposes and use a playful style. Interestingly, different contexts may induce different types of irony response. For instance, as Kotthoff (2003: 1407–1409) observes, in informal conversations listeners tend to respond to the said and to engage in joint teasing, while in public discussions they tend to respond to the implied and, thus, to engage in arguing.

When it comes to teasing, recipients have to discern whether the utterance is aimed at them in a playful or a serious manner and respond respectively. Again, the sociocultural context seems to play a significant role in choosing the type of response: the examination of teasing episodes in a primary school has shown that most of the times participants respond to teasing in a playful manner (Lytra, 2007: 393–401), while in workplace contexts hearers may choose either to play along with the humor via laughing or teasing back, or to respond to the underlying criticism via blaming someone else, pleading to stop the teasing or justifying their behavior (Schnurr & Chan, 2011: 23–27).

2.2 Storytelling and response

Storytelling as an everyday practice constitutes a fertile locus where interlocutors organize human experience, express attitudes and stances, share values, argue with each other, interpret the world, construct identities, establish or strengthen bonds, etc. (Bruner, 1991; Bamberg, 1997; Georgakopoulou, 1997, 2007; Ochs & Capps, 2001; De Fina & Georgakopoulou, 2012). Adopting a broad definition of narrative,

^{1.} We use the terms reaction/response interchangeably.

Archakis & Tsakona (2012: 40) suggest that narrative "refers to purposeful human action and specifically to the sequence of (past) events presented from an evaluative point". Therefore, through stories, storytellers do not only recount a series of events but also project their viewpoint towards them.

Following Labov's (1972: 360–376) model of narrative structure, in our analysis we concentrate on the *orientation*, which gives information about the time, place, characters and the setting of the narrated event, on the *complicating action*, which presents the main events that lead to a climax, and on the *evaluation*, which displays the attitudes and emotions of the narrator towards the narrated events. Emphasis is usually placed on the complicating action, as narrators are expected to be able to present/construct a succession of unexpected/surprising events as noteworthy and tellable/reportable (Labov, 1972; Sacks, 1974, 1992). As De Fina (2003: 12) points out,

[s]tories can be described not only as narratives that have a sequential and temporal ordering, but also as texts that include some kind of rupture or disturbance in the normal course of events, some kind of unexpected action that provokes a reaction and/or an adjustment.

Ochs & Capps (2001: 154) note that breaches of expectation induce "a variety of responses not only at the time of the narrated event but also at the time of the telling". As already mentioned (in Section 1), in the present study, we adopt a CA approach in order to examine the story recipients' responses to jab lines at the time of the telling. In this framework, narratives are considered to be a collaborative achievement that emerges within the joint and sequentially organized activity of *turn-taking* (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998: 131). In other words, narratives may consist of *adjacency pairs* (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973; Schegloff, 2007: 13), with parts of the story as first pair parts (FPP) and story recipients' responses as second pair parts (SPP). As Stivers (2008: 31) remarks, storytelling is considered to be a social action with preferred and dispreferred response types. Preferred actions such as agreements, acceptances, etc. usually occur immediately after the FPP and without hesitation, while dispreferred actions, such as disagreements, rejections, etc. are performed with delay and are accounted for (Pomerantz, 1984; Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998: 45).

Goodwin (1986) notes that throughout the telling, storytellers propose a certain interpretation of their story, and recipients can offer aligning or competing interpretive frameworks. Karachaliou & Archakis (2014) have shown that story recipients may react to the unexpected events of the story through:

a. *immediate surprise responses*, where story recipients express their surprise immediately after the narrator's presentation of the deviant events or aspects of the story; and

b. *postponed surprise responses*, where story recipients first request confirmation for the unexpected event or ask for further information on the story and then express their surprise.

As already mentioned, in this paper, we intend to examine the ways story recipients choose to respond to incongruous narrative parts which are designed or interpreted as humorous.

2.3 Humor and storytelling

In an attempt to correlate humor and storytelling, we observe that both involve a breach of the expected sequence of events. Norrick (2004: 79) notes that both tellability and humor "require a break in frame expectations" so that a represented event may lead to a newsworthy or a humorous story "depending on how it is presented". Given the fact that humor and storytelling presuppose a divergence, an interesting question is raised: what makes (a part of) a narrative which includes a deviation humorous? As Morreall (1983: 47) puts it, "the essence of humor lies in the enjoyment of incongruity". Therefore, (a part of) a narrative is characterized as humorous when the participants adopt a playful perspective towards the deviation and do not feel threatened by it (Archakis & Tsakona, 2012: 77). In this vein, besides incongruity, we consider laughter to be a secondary criterion for identifying humor since its presence denotes a playful, light-hearted attitude among interlocutors (Archakis & Tsakona, 2005, 2006, 2012; see also Archakis et al., 2010). In other words, we assume that a narrative word, phrase or sentence can obtain the status of a jab line provided it contains a script opposition and it is accompanied with laughter, either in its production by the storyteller or in its reception by the story recipients. Therefore, playfulness may be embedded in the telling either by the storyteller or by story recipients.

3. Data

Our data consists of an extended narrative (see Appendix 1) which occurred in a conversation between three female friends and members of an amateur theater group. The recording took place with the participants' consent in the summer of 2011 in the place where the theater group meets for rehearsals (Karachaliou, 2015). A few days before the recordings, most of the members went on vacation, in Aghia Anna, a village in the Greek island of Euboea.² At the time of the recording, Stella,

^{2.} Euboea is the second biggest Greek island, after Crete.

Rena and Matina³ are watching photos of their vacation in a laptop and discuss how they spent their time. After Rena's prompt, Stella and Matina talk about their horse-riding experience. Stella describes her experience as frightening because of the inappropriate behavior of the guide, and narrates incidents that confirm her claim. According to De Fina & Georgakopoulou (2012: 113), this narrative type belongs to *accounts*, namely narratives that have a "strong explanatory component". Gregory, another member of the group, is present but his contribution is limited at the end of the narrative. Rena and Matina, on the contrary, engage actively in the telling by laughing, commenting, asking for further information, etc.

For the purposes of the analysis we have divided the narrative in four humorous episodes. In the first episode, the script opposition is based on the guide's verbal behavior: instead of trying to make the inexperienced rider feel comfortable and enjoy the ride, she refers to incidents of the horse's reactions that frighten the novice rider. In the second episode, the guide reveals that the horse Stella rides is blind. In the third episode, the guide also reveals that she is half-deaf. In the fourth episode, the script opposition lies in the fact that the guide claims that dogs follow them in order to bark at the motorbikes which come close to the horses, but it turns out that the dogs do not bark at all.

4. Data analysis

In this section, we examine the various ways story recipients react to jab lines. As we mentioned in Section 2.3, we rely on two criteria in order to identify jab lines: incongruity and laughter. Since laughter can be initiated either by the storyteller or by story recipients, we distinguish between two categories of humorous jab lines:

- a. *jab lines framed as humorous by the storyteller*, when the storyteller both narrates incongruous events (or aspects) of the story and adopts a playful attitude towards them via laughter, and
- b. *jab lines framed as humorous by story recipients*, when the storyteller narrates the incongruous events (or aspects) with no explicit humorous intention and the story recipients take the initiative to adopt a playful attitude towards them via laughter.

^{3.} All the names are pseudonyms for ethical reasons.

4.1 Reactions to jab lines framed as humorous by the storyteller

After jab lines having been framed as humorous by the storyteller, story recipients may choose to respond to humorous parts of the story either by directly expressing their alignment or not. In the first case, interlocutors engage at once in preferred SPP actions and comply with the storyteller's light-hearted viewpoint. In the data examined here, story recipients respond with *immediate jab line responses*, that is, reactions which immediately follow the presentation of the humorous/incongruous events (or aspects) of the story and display mutual understanding. In our data, we traced three categories of immediate jab line responses: *laughter*, *wordplay* and *evaluative comments of support*.

In the second case, hearers seem to appreciate the playful attitude of the storyteller but have difficulty in accepting the incongruity of the narrated events (or aspects) of the story and respond after some further interactional work is done. Here, story recipients initiate insert expansion⁴ through *understanding checks* or demonstrations of *ritualized disbelief* and then react to humor with a *preferred* or a *dispreferred postponed jab line response*.

4.1.1 *Immediate jab line responses*

In this section, we focus on preferred response types to jab lines which are framed as humorous by the storyteller. Story recipients align directly with what the storyteller proposes as funny and display their mutual understanding through three techniques: laughter, wordplay or evaluative comments of support.

4.1.1.1 Laughter

In our data, the most frequent immediate jab line response is laughter. By laughing the storyteller adopts a playful attitude towards the unexpected events she narrates, and makes laughter a relevant response. In other words, via laughter Stella marks her turn as humorous, and by laughing back story recipients express their alignment to the humorous frame. In our transcriptions, laughter is marked with *heh huh* when it constitutes a separate turn and with (h), as in rid(h)er, when it is incorporated in speech.⁵

^{4.} In the case of dispreferred actions, sequences may be extended through insert expansion, namely, talk that appears between the FPP and the SPP. Insert expansion consists of adjacency pairs which form an insert sequence (Liddicoat, 2007: 143). This sequence is initiated by the recipient of the previous FPP and addresses "matters which need to be dealt with in order to enable the doing of the base SPP" (Schegloff, 2007: 99).

^{5.} The narratives presented here are translated from Greek by the authors. Turns and turn constructional units (TCUs) are numbered as in Appendix 1. For the transcription symbols, see Appendix 2.

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(1)
[1] \Sigma:
        01 Ρε συ εντωμεταξύ
         02 εε::
         03 ξεκίνησε λά:θος η τύπισσα
         04 λοιπόν έχουμε ανέβει πάνω στο άλογο
         05 κι έχει αρχίσει και περιγράφει και λέει
         06 προχτές λέει σ' εκείνη την κοπέλα
         07 που έκατσε το άλογο κάτω
         08 και πήγε να:: κυληστεί μετά ρε παιδί μου ξερωγώ
         09 <συνήθως λέει τ' άλογα δεν το κάνουν αυτό>
        10 >πέφτουν κατευθείαν αριστερά<
[2] P:
        11 Heh huh
[3] M:
        12 Απλά δεν την άκουγα(h) κατ(h) άλ(h) αβ(h) ες;
        13 γι' αυτό ήμουν [ευτυχι(h)σμ(h) έν(h)η]
[4] \Sigma:
        14
                          >[Πέφτουν] κατευθείαν αριστερά<
        15 και της λέω
        16 εε:: και άμα πέσει αριστερά τι γίνεται με τον αναβ(h) άτη;
[5]→P:
        17 Heh huh
[6] \Sigma:
        18 Επά (h) νω στο άλο (h) γο εγώ τώ (h) ρα
[7]→P:
        19 Heh huh
[8] Σ:
        20 Εε:: λέει εντάξει λέει
        21 απλά του σπάει το πόδι το αριστερό (.)
[1] S:
        01 Hey by the way
         02 u::h
         03 she started in the wro:ng way this woman
         04 well we are on the horse
         05 and she starts describing and says
         06 the day before yesterday she says there was that girl
         07 and the horse lied down
         08 and tried to:: roll down afterwards sort of
         09 <usually she says the horses don't do that>
         10 >they fall down directly on the left<
[2] R:
        11 Heh huh
[3] M:
        12 I was simply not listening(h) to her d(h)o y(h)ou g(h)et it?
        13 that's why I was [ha(h)p p(h)y]
[4] S:
                            >[They fall] down directly on the left<
        15 and I tell her
         16 u::h if it falls on the left what happens to the rid(h)er?
[5]→R:
        17 Heh huh
[6] S:
        18 Mean(h)while I was o(h)n the hors(h)e
[7]→R:
        19 Heh huh
[8] S:
        20 U::h she says well she says
         21 it just breaks his ((i.e. the rider's)) left leg (.)
```

Example (1) constitutes the first part of the extended narrative under analysis (episode 1). In episode 1 (see Section 3), incongruity is based on the fact that the guide refers to scaring horse incidents instead of trying to make the inexperienced rider feel comfortable. In turn 1, Stella openly criticizes the behavior of the professional guide who accompanied her during the ride (*she started in the wro:ng way this woman*, TCU 3) and then starts telling a story to prove her claim. After giving some

information concerning the setting (we are on the horse, TCU 4), she moves to the representation of the verbal interactions between the guide and herself through direct speech (and she starts describing and says/ the day before yesterday she says there was that girl/ and the horse lied down/ and tried to:: roll down afterwards sort of/ <usually she says the horses don't do that>/> they fall down directly on the left<, TCUs 5-10). The unexpectedness of the guide's behavior invokes Rena's laughter (turn 2). Matina, besides laughing, adds a playful comment (I was simply not listening(h) to her d(h)o y(h)ou g(h)et it?/that's why I was <math>ha(h)p p(h)y, turn 3). In turn 4, Stella continues her narration at the point it was interrupted (they fall down directly on the left, TCU 14) and then recounts her reaction to the guide's inappropriate information (and I tell her/ u::h if it falls on the left what happens to the rid(h)er?, TCUs 15-16). As shown in TCU 16, Stella adopts a playful stance towards the verbal interaction she represents. Jefferson (1979: 72) remarks that laughter in the completion of an utterance constitutes an invitation for laughter, so, in the present case, Stella invites her addressees to laugh along. In the next turn, immediately after the storyteller's invitation, Rena joins in laughter and indicates a shared viewpoint on what is proposed as funny. In other words, by laughing, Rena expresses her alignment to the humorous frame Stella proposes. The same pattern occurs in turns 6 and 7 (*Mean(h)while I was o(h)n the hors(h)e/ Heh huh*). Here, the incongruity is created by the fact that the guide gives information on frightening horse incidents while the narrator-protagonist is on the horse; although the guide is expected to help and comfort the inexperienced rider, she mentions mostly unpleasant horse-riding experiences.

Through a CA perspective, turns 4–5 and 6–7 constitute adjacency pairs that consist of a jab line as FPP and an immediate jab line response as SPP. In the FPP, the narrator presents the unexpected element of the story (i.e. part of the complicating action) through speech representation (turn 4) or orientation (turn 6) by adopting a funny mode and in the SPPs the story recipient aligns via laughter. The SPP is structured as a preferred next action (Pomerantz 1984: 63), since it occurs immediately after the FFP and displays the hearer's appreciation towards what the storyteller proposes as humorous. Therefore, in this case, narrators and story recipients seem to "do" humor through the following sequence:

Narrator: jab line_{FPPturns4&6} Story recipient: laughter / immediate jab line response_{SPPturns5&7}

Immediate jab line responses via laughter can be an amusing and efficient means of maintaining humor, displaying solidarity and reinforcing existing bonds via aligning with the narrator.

4.1.1.2 *Wordplay*

In this case, the story recipient recognizes the humorous frame proposed by the storyteller and contributes more humor to the telling. More specifically, the hearer's response is triggered by the linguistic choices or the style of the storyteller in designing his/her utterance as humorous. As a result, the hearer elaborates on the wordplay and maintains the playful frame.

```
(2)
[35] Σ: 60 Κάνει αυτό ενα απότομο προς τα::
           61 δεξιά ρε παιδί μου
           62 της λέω ε:: μήπως τρόμαξε;
           63 ναι α δεν ξέρω μου λεει ακούγεται κάποιος ήχος;
           64 >της λέω< μια γουρούνα μάς έχει φτάσ(h) ει σχε(h) δόν
[36] P&M: 65 Heh huh
[37] Σ: 66 Α γιατί εγώ είμαι κωφ(h)ή
[38] P&M: 67 Heh huh
[39] Σ: 68 A(h)πό τ(h)ο έ(h)να αυτί(h) δεν α(h)κούω
[40] P&M: 69 Heh huh
[41] Σ: 70 Κ(h) ουτσοί στρ(h) αβ(h) οί στον Άγ(h) ιο [Παντελεήμονα]
[42] P&M: 71
[43]→M: 72 Στην Αγία Άννα συγνώμη ήτανε(h)
[44] \Sigma: 73 Ki \varepsilon (h) \gamma \dot{\omega} \varepsilon \pi \dot{\alpha} (h) \nu \omega \sigma \tau' \dot{\alpha} (h) \lambda o \gamma o [\gamma \iota \alpha (h) \tau (h) \dot{\iota};]
[45] P&M: 74
                                                   [Heh huh]
[35] S: 60 It makes an abrupt move towards::
           61 the right side guys
           62 I tell her u::h was it scared?
           63 yes oh I don't know she tells me do you hear anything?
           64 >I tell her< a quad6 is al(h)most behind(h) us
[36] R&M: 65 Heh huh
[37] S: 66 Oh because I am dea(h)f
[38] R&M: 67 Heh huh
[39] S: 68 F(h)rom the(h) o(h)ne ear(h) I can't hea(h)r
[40] R&M: 69 Heh huh
[41] S: 70 L(h) ame bl(h) ind(h) at Saint(h) [Panteleimonas]
[42] R&M: 71
                                                   [Heh huh]
[43]→M:
         72 It was at Aghia Anna excuse me(h)
[44] S:
          73 And me(h) on(h) the hor(h)se [wh(h)y(h)?]
[45] R&M: 74
                                               [Heh huh]
```

The above extract comes from the 3rd episode of the narration, where Stella realizes that the guide is half-deaf. Here, incongruity is based on the fact that a guide is expected to be ready to react properly during unforeseen situations in order to ensure the safety of the inexperienced rider. The fact that the guide is half-deaf seems to negatively affect her alertness. In turns 35, 37 and 39 Stella recounts how the guide revealed that she was deaf (*It makes an abrupt move towards::/ the right side guys/ I tell her u::h was it scared?/ yes oh I don't know she tells me do you hear anything?/ >I tell her< a quad is al(h)most behind(h) us, turn 35; Oh because I am*

^{6.} Quad is an all-terrain vehicle (ATV) with four wheels.

dea(h)f, turn 37; $F(h)rom\ the(h)\ o(h)ne\ ear(h)\ I\ can't\ hea(h)r$, turn 39). In the three successive jab lines (turns 35, 37, 39), story recipients respond with immediate jab line responses via laughter (turns 36, 38, 40) showing their alignment to the storyteller's humorous frame. In turn 41 Stella chooses to evaluate the incongruous situation she experienced, namely that she rode a blind horse, under the supervision of a half-deaf guide, by using a wide-spread Greek saying which comes from the Orthodox Christian tradition. The saying originally means that those in need, such as the lame and the deaf, visit a particular Saint, named Panteleimonas, to be cured: his name means "the one who shows compassion to everyone". Stella employs the saying in this particular context to refer to the horse's blindness and the guide's deafness, which coincidentally allude to the saying. Rena and Matina accept the humor invitation and respond immediately with laughter (turn 42). In addition, Matina elaborates on the wordplay and modifies the saying to fit the current context. Particularly, since the incongruous event happened in a place that is named after a Saint (Aghia Anna means "Saint Anna"), Matina smartly replaces the name of Saint Panteleimonas with that of Saint Anna (It was at Aghia Anna excuse me(h), turn 43). Building on the humorous frame, Matina indicates that she does not only align with the funny framing Stella proposes but also actively participates in the verbal (re)construction of humor. In turn 44, Stella adds a playful phrase to the saying and a rhetorical question of wonder (And me(h) on(h) the hor(h)se wh(h)y(h)?) which trigger the recipients' laughter (turn 45).

Through a CA perspective, story participants seem to negotiate humor via the following sequence:

Narrator: jab line_{FPPturns35}, 37 & 39
Story recipients: laughter / immediate jab line response_{SPPturns36}, 38 & 40
Narrator: jab line_{FPPturn41}
Story recipients: laughter / immediate jab line response_{SPPturn42}
2nd story recipient: wordplay/ immediate jab line response_{SPPturn43}
Narrator: jab line_{FPPturn44}
Story recipients: laughter / immediate jab line response_{SPPturn45}

4.1.1.3 Evaluative comments of support

As mentioned in Section 2.2, storytellers do not only recount a succession of events but also display a certain viewpoint towards the unexpected events they narrate. In this sense, storytellers may use humor to criticize behaviors which deviate from the norm (Holmes, 2000, Archakis & Tsakona, 2005, 2012). In GTVH terms, every humorous utterance involves a *target*, namely an object of ridicule such as individuals, a group of people, institutions, ideas (Attardo, 2001a: 23–24). In the script oppositions in the four episodes of the narrative under examination (see Section 3 and Examples 1 and 2), the target of humor is the guide. Via humor Stella manages

to evaluate the guide's behavior as inappropriate and expresses her disapproval using a humorous tone.

```
(3)
[41] Σ: 70 Κ(h) ουτσοί στρ(h) αβ(h) οί στον Άγ(h) ιο [Παντελεήμονα]
[42] P&M: 71
                                                   [Heh huh]
[43] M: 72 Στην Αγία Άννα συγνώμη ήτανε(h)
[44] Σ: 73 Κι ε(h) γώ επά(h) νω στ' ά(h) λογο [για(h) τ (h) ί;]
[45] P&M: 74
                                             [Heh huh]
[46]→P: 75 Κάτι κουλό θα είχε δεν μπ(h)ορεί(h)
[41] S: 70 L(h) ame bl(h) ind(h) at Saint(h) [Panteleimonas]
[42] R&M: 71
                                             [Heh huh]
[43] M: 72 At Aghia Anna it was excuse me(h)
[44] S: 73 And me(h) on(h) the hor(h)se [wh(h)y(h)?]
[45] R&M: 74
                                         [Heh huh]
[46]→R: 75 There must have been something wrong with her
             ((i.e. the guide)) n(h)o dou(h)bt
```

Extract (3) continues Extract (2), where the script opposition is based on the fact that the guide reveals that she is half-deaf. In turn 44, Stella completes the humorous saying by adding an orientation element ($And\ me(h)\ on(h)\ the\ hor(h)se$) and asking a rhetorical question (wh(h)y(h)?). This jab line triggers Matina's and Rena's laughter (turn 45). In turn 46, Rena, besides laughter, chooses to respond with an evaluative comment of support (*There must have been something wrong with her* ((i.e. the guide)) $n(h)o\ dou(h)bt$), which can be paraphrased like this: "From what you presented as a deviant and thus problematic behavior, it comes as no surprise that the guide had some kind of a problem". Via this comment, Rena aligns with Stella in targeting the guide: she reinforces Stella's viewpoint and expresses her agreement on what constitutes incongruous behavior. As Holmes (2000: 167) puts it, shared humor "emphasizes common ground and shared norms".

Through a CA perspective, in this extract the story participants seem to "do" humor via the following sequence:

```
Narrator: jab line<sub>FPPturn41</sub>
Story recipients: laughter / immediate jab line response<sub>SPPturn42</sub>
2nd story recipient: wordplay / immediate jab line response<sub>SPPturn43</sub>
Narrator: jab line<sub>FPPturn44</sub>
Story recipients: laughter / immediate jab line response<sub>SPPturn45</sub>
1st story recipient: evaluative comment of support / immediate jab line response<sub>SPPturn46</sub>
```

So far, we examined immediate jab line reactions to humorous narrative parts, including laughter, wordplay and evaluative comments of support. We should point out here that laughter was embedded in both word-play and supportive comments, displaying the maintenance of the humorous frame. In what follows, we concentrate on postponed jab line responses.

4.1.2 Postponed jab line responses

After a jab line, story recipients may have difficulty in accepting the incongruous events/aspects of the story. Therefore, in order to do some further interactional work, they do not align immediately with the jab line, but engage in delay mechanisms such as understanding checks or demonstrations of ritualized disbelief (Heritage 1984). In the first case, hearers initiate insert expansion through requests for confirmation about a piece of information which was previously mentioned so as to confirm that they have understood correctly. In the second case, the recipients initiate an insert sequence by inviting the narrator to verify the truth of his/her previous utterance (Heritage, 1984: 339). Through these devices hearers do not "so much ask questions as convey a stance": the preceding news is so unexpected that it needs to be confirmed (Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 2006: 169). As we mentioned in Section 1, in our data, we traced two categories of postponed jab line responses: (a) preferred postponed jab line responses, where story recipients after the completion of an insert expansion align with framing the events as incongruous; and (b) dispreferred postponed jab line responses, where story recipients after the completion of an insert expansion remain unready to accept the incongruity.

4.1.2.1 Preferred postponed jab line reactions

In such cases, story recipients display their difficulty to directly align with a jab line and therefore initiate an insert sequence. After the insert sequence is completed, story recipients are ready to show their alignment with the incongruous events/ aspects of the story via a preferred action:

```
(4)
            70 K(h) ουτσοί στρ(h) αβ(h) οί στον Άγ(h) ιο [Παντελεήμονα]
[41] \Sigma:
[42] P&M: 71
                                                               [Heh huh]
[43] M:
           72 Στην Αγία Άννα συγνώμη ήτανε(h)
[44] \Sigma: 73 Ki \epsilon (h) \gamma \dot{\omega} \epsilon \pi \dot{\alpha} (h) \nu \omega \sigma \tau' \dot{\alpha} (h) \lambda o \gamma o [\gamma \iota \alpha (h) \tau (h) i;]
[45] P&M: 74
                                                        [Heh huh]
[46] P:
           75 Κάτι κουλό θα είχε δεν μπ(h)ορεί(h)
[47]→M:
           76 Σοβαρολογ (h) είς;
           77 τη γουρούνα δεν την είχε ακούσ(h)ει;
[48] \Sigma:
           78 Ό:χι(h)
[49] \rightarrow M:
           79 Άντε ρε(h)
[41] S:
           70 L(h) ame bl(h) ind(h) at Saint(h) [Panteleimonas]
[42] R&M: 71
                                                       [Heh huh]
           72 It was at Aghia Anna it was excuse me(h)
[43] M:
[44] S:
           73 And me(h) on (h) the hor (h) se [wh(h)y(h)?]
[45] R&M: 74
                                                    [Heh huh]
[46] R: 75 Something wrong she would have it ca(h)n't be(h)
[47] \rightarrow M:
           76 Are you talking serious(h)ly?
            77 she didn't he(h)ar the quad ((approaching))?
[48] S: 78 N:o(h)
[49] \rightarrow M:
           79 Come on guys (h)
```

Extract (4) continues the turn-taking from the Example (3) (episode 3). In episode 3, incongruity lies in the fact that a professional guide is expected to be capable of immediately reacting to unpredictable circumstances. The fact that the guide who accompanies Stella is half-deaf seems to have a negative impact on her alertness. Here, the interlocutors playfully comment on the guide's deafness. The jab line in turn 44 (And me(h) on(h) the hor(h)se wh(h)y(h)?) triggers a variety of responses. Initially, Rena and Matina respond with an immediate jab line response via laughter and show their alignment to the humorous frame. Then, Rena expresses her affiliation to Stella by making an evaluative comment of support (turn 46; see the analysis of Example 3). In turn 47, with a laughing voice, Matina expresses her difficulty to accept the fact that the guide did not hear the noise of the quad and initiates an insert sequence via ritualized disbelief (Are you talking serious(h)ly?) and an understanding check (*she didn't he(h)ar the quad?*). Here, the use of laughing voice seems to fulfil a twofold goal: it mitigates the dispreferred action of ritualized disbelief/ understanding check and continues the humorous/playful key of the interaction. In turn 48, Stella confirms the unexpected event with a laughing voice and Matina is finally ready to express her alignment to incongruity with a preferred postponed jab line response (Come on guys(h), turn 49). In doing so, Matina displays her alignment with the narrator's assumptions about what counts as incongruity (see also Karachaliou & Archakis, 2014: 19-22). Interestingly, even though in turn 45 Matina acknowledges the funny aspect of the story and joins in laughter, in turn 47 she initiates an insert sequence to request more details on the unexpected events. Thus, we observe that a story recipient may display his/her alignment to playfulness via an immediate reaction and express his/her alignment to the unexpected events via a postponed reaction.

Through a CA perspective, in Extract (4) story participants engage in the following sequence:

Story recipients: laughter / immediate jab line response_{SPPturn45}
1st story recipient: evaluative comment of support / immediate jab line response_{SPPturn46}

[2nd story recipient: ritualized disbelief / understanding check_{FPPins-turn47}

Narrator: confirmation_{SPPins-turn48}] 2nd story recipient: preferred postponed jab line reaction_{SPPturn49}

4.1.2.2 *Dispreferred postponed jab line reactions*

In this case, after the completion of an insert expansion, story recipients remain unready to accept the incongruous events. As a consequence, they respond to the jab line with a *dispreferred postponed reaction*.

```
(5)
[23] Σ:
          41 Κα(h) ι μετά να μου λέ(h) ει
           42 αυτό το άλογο είναι και τυφλό από το ένα μάτι
[24] P:
         43 Heh huh
          44 K(h)αι:: μου λέει γι' αυτό το λόγο
[25] \Sigma:
           45 αν ακούσει ένα θόρυβο
           46 κι ήταν τώρα από το αριστερό μάτι τυφλό
           47 αν ακούσει ένα θόρυβο και προέρχεται από τα αριστερά
           48 θα θέλει να γυρ(h) ίσει α(h) πότομα(h) δεξιά
[26]→P: 49 O I
[27] Σ: 50 Nαι
          49 Ο Ισμούν; ((λάθος όνομα του αλόγου))
[28] M: 51 Σιμούν ((σωστό όνομα του αλόγου))
[29] Ρ&Σ: 52 Σιμούν
[30] Σ: 53 Για να δει [ρε παιδί μου]
[31]→P:
         54
                        [Παιδιά] ήτανε τυφλ(h)ό;
[32] Σ: 55 Ναι
          56 Ναι
[33] M:
          57 εγώ μετά το είδα ((η Σ βήχει))
           58 τότε που κατεβήκαμε
[34]→P: 59 Παιδιά [τι λέτε;]
[35] Σ: 60 [((βήχει))
                     [((βήχει)) Κάνει μετά] αυτό
           61 ένα απότομο δεξιά
[23] S:
         41 A(h)nd then she sa(h)ys
           42 and this horse is blind to one eye
           43 Heh huh
[24] R:
[25] S:
          44 And(h):: she tells me for this reason
           45 if it hears a noise
           46 and meanwhile it was blind to the left eye
           47 if it hears a noise that comes from the left
           48 it abr(h)uptl(h)y tu(h)rns to the right
[26]\rightarrowR: 49 Ismoun? ((wrong name of the horse))
[27] S:
          50 Yes
[28] M:
         51 Simoun ((right name of the horse))
[29] R&S: 52 Simoun
[30] S: 53 To see [yes]
[31]→R:
          54
                 [Guys] was it blin(h)d?
          55 Yes
[32] S:
[33] M:
          56 Yes
           57 I saw it later on ((S coughs))
          58 when we got off
[34]→R:
         59 Guys what [are you talking about?]
[35] S:
                        [((coughs)) It makes then] an abrupt move
           60
              towards::
           61 the right side yes
```

Example (5) is an extract from episode 2 where the guide reveals that the horse Stella is riding is blind. Here, incongruity is based on the fact that horses in a professional riding experience for novice riders are expected to be able-bodied. Therefore, the blindness of the horse appears to put the rider's safety in jeopardy. Turn 23 constitutes a jab line framed by the storyteller since Stella represents incongruous verbal interactions with a playful attitude (a(h)nd then she sa(h)ys/ and this horse is blind to one eye). In turn 24, Rena shows her appreciation of the humorous frame through an immediate laughter response. In turn 25, Stella provides more scaring information the guide gave her while she was riding (And(h):: she tells me for this reason/ if it hears a noise/ and meanwhile it was blind to the left eye/ if it hears a noise that comes from the left/ it abr(h)uptl(h)y tu(h)rns to the right). At TCU 48, by incorporating laugh particles in her intensity marked speech, Stella conveys her amusement towards the incongruity and invites the recipients to align with her viewpoint. As Rena does not seem ready to accept this incongruous aspect of the story, she initiates an insert sequence via employing an understanding check in order to confirm she has understood correctly (Ismoun?, turn 26). Rena's question can be paraphrased like this: "You mean that Ismoun, the horse you were riding, was blind?". In turn 27, Stella confirms that her horse was blind (Yes, turn 27). In turn 28 (Simoun), Matina correctly utters the name of the horse and in turn 29, Rena and Matina accept the repair act by repeating the right name of the horse. In turn 30, Stella returns to the narration but Rena, still having difficulty in accepting the incongruous information of orientation, interrupts her to make another understanding check (Guys was it blin(h)d?, turn 31). Her question can be paraphrased like this: "You mean that the horse you were riding was blind?". By using an address term of solidarity (Guys)⁷ and a laughing voice, Rena seems to mitigate the second dispreferred action she employs. Moreover, the presence of laughter in her turn indicates that she identifies and appreciates the humorous mode proposed by Stella. In the next turns, both Stella and Matina confirm the unexpected information. Additionally, Matina, recognizing Rena's difficulty to accept the unexpected characteristic of the horse, gives some further information in order to verify the accuracy of the incongruous event (Yes/ I saw it later/ when we got off, turn 33). Rena is still not ready to accept the deviant element of the story and initiates another insert sequence via ritualized disbelief in order to express her astonishment towards the surprising element of the story (Guys what are you talking about?, turn 34). Her question can be paraphrased like this: "Guys what are you talking about? Did this really happen?". Again, the address term seems to be used to mitigate the force of the dispreferred action. In the next turn, Stella continues her narration. The

^{7.} In addition, the address term (*guys*) is used as a technique of taking the turn during simultaneous talk so as to ensure that the interruption was successful (Rendle-Short, 2007: 1511).

fact that Matina or Stella do not answer to Rena's question confirms that ritualized disbelief does not so much ask a question as conveys a stance.

Interestingly, even though Rena engages in successive dispreferred actions (turn 26, 31 and 34), in turn 24 she explicitly expresses her appreciation to the humorous frame Stella proposes through an immediate jab line response. It seems that the two components of the jab lines, namely incongruity and playfulness, provide the recipient with opposing options: to comply with the humorous frame while challenging the deviant events/aspects of the story. As Hay (2001: 76) points out, "sometimes a hearer may find the 'humor' of humor funny, while disagreeing with the message".

Through a CA perspective, understanding checks initiate sequences of insert expansion before the dispreferred reaction of ritualized disbelief:

Narrator: jab line FPPturn23

1st story recipient: laughter / immediate jab line response SPPturn24

Narrator: jab line FPPturn25

1st story recipient: understanding check PPPins-turn26

Narrator: answer SPPins-turn27

2nd story recipient: correction PPPins-turn28

Narrator & 1st story recipient: correction SPPins-turn29

Narrator: story SPPins-turn30

1st story recipient: understanding check PPPins-turn31

Narrator: Confirmation SPPins-turn32

2nd story recipient: Confirmation + elaboration SPPins-turn33

1st story recipient: postponed jab line response / ritualized disbelief SPPturn34

Narrator: story Turn35

4.2 Jab lines framed as humorous by story recipients

So far we have explored reactions to jab lines which are explicitly marked as humorous by storytellers, namely reactions to narrative parts that entail both incongruity and laughter at their production. In this section, we investigate responses to jab lines constructed as such by their recipients as they seem to be the ones who detect the deviation from normative patterns; the storyteller does not seem to frame them as jab lines. In other words, the incongruous narrative parts obtain the status of a jab line through the story recipients' laughing reaction. As Holt (2011: 407) suggests, "laughter is not just a reaction to a prior turn, it is an action in itself that appreciates the prior, treats it as laugh-relevant and contributes to a particular action sequence inherent within the prior turn". In what follows, we analyze cases of immediate and postponed humorous reactions to utterances with no direct funny intention but interpreted as jab lines by story recipients.

4.2.1 *Immediate jab line responses*

In this case, story recipients interpret incongruous narrative parts as humorous and react either via plain laughter or via supportive comments combined/framed with laughter. Here, humor is jointly constructed as the storyteller provides the script opposition and story recipients adopt a playful attitude towards it via offering laughter and humorous comments. The fact that laughter is initiated by the audience – a "volunteered" laugh in Jefferson's (1979) terms – and not by the storyteller, may indicate that "the current speaker did not produce talk or action as intendedly laughable" (Glenn, 2003: 86), but talk is interpreted as such by the interlocutors. In other words, the recipients may select to adopt a humorous attitude towards the narrated events, judging that the circumstances allow them to have fun with the inversion of the expectations without threatening the teller (see Archakis & Tsakona, 2012: 77; also Section 2.3).

In the following example, we identify two kinds of immediate response to jab lines: laughter and evaluative comment of support.

```
(6)
[1]
    Σ: 01 Ρε συ εντωμεταξύ
         02 εε::
         03 ξεκίνησε <u>λά:θος</u> η τύπισσα
         04 λοιπόν έχουμε ανέβει πάνω στο άλογο
         05 κι έχει αρχίσει και περιγράφει και λέει
         06 προχτές λέει σ' εκείνη την κοπέλα
         07 που έκατσε το άλογο κάτω
         08 και πήγε να:: κυληστεί μετά ρε παιδί μου ξερωγώ
         09 <συνήθως λέει τ' άλογα δεν το κάνουν αυτό>
         10 >πέφτουν κατευθείαν αριστερά<
[2] \rightarrow P: 11 Heh huh
[3] \rightarrow M: 12 Apilá δεν την άκουγα(h) κατ(h) άλ(h) αβ(h) ες;
         13 γι' αυτό ήμουν [ευτυχι(h)σμ(h) έν(h) η]
[4] \Sigma: 14
                           >[Πέφτουν] κατευθείαν αριστερά<
         15 και της λέω
         16 εε:: και άμα πέσει αριστερά τι γίνεται με τον αναβ(h) άτη;
[1] S: 01 Hey by the way
         02 u::h
         03 she started in the wro:ng way this woman
         04 well we are on the horse
         05 and she starts describing and says
         06 the day before yesterday she says there was that girl
         07 and the horse lied down
         08 and tried to:: roll down afterwards sort of
         09 <usually she says the horses don't do that>
         10 >they fall down directly on the left<
[2] \rightarrow R: 11 Heh huh
[3]→ M:
         12 I was simply not listening(h) to her d(h)o y(h)ou g(h)et it?
         13 that's why I was [ha(h)p p(h)y]
[4] S: 14
                            >[They fall] down directly on the left<
         15 and I tell her
         16 u::h if it falls on the left what happens to the rid(h)er?
```

Extract (6) constitutes the first part of the extended narrative under analysis (episode 1). In episode 1, incongruity is based on the fact that a guide is expected to try making the novice rider enjoy the ride and feel comfortable on the horse. Instead, the guide recounts incidents which frighten the inexperienced rider (see also Example 1). In turn 1, Stella openly expresses her disapproval of the behavior of the professional guide (she started in the wro:ng way this woman, TCU 3) and then starts telling a story to prove her claim. After giving some orientation elements (we are on the horse, TCU 4), she moves to the representation of the verbal interactions between the guide and herself through direct speech (and she starts describing and says/ the day before yesterday she says there was that girl/ and the horse lied down/ and tried to:: roll down afterwards sort of/ <usually she says the horses don't do that>/ >they fall down directly on the left<, TCUs 5-10). The unexpectedness of the guide's behavior invokes Rena's laughter (turn 2), as she seems to imply that the guide was supposed to encourage the novice learner; instead the guide kept telling stories about horse-riding accidents, which renders her behavior incongruous. Matina, who was co-riding with Stella, besides laughter, responds with a playful comment (I was simply not listening(h) to her d(h)o y(h)ou g(h)et it?/that's why I was <math>ha(h)p p(h)y, turn 3). Here, story recipients appear to transform the initial serious/frightening frame of the narrative, which was proposed by the storyteller, into a humorous one. Nevertheless, Stella does not seem to be threatened or offended, since then she smoothly continues her narration in turn 4 (>They fall down directly on the left</ and I tell her/ u::h if it falls on the left *what happens to the rid(h)er?)*

Given the above, an interesting question is raised: why do recipients choose to laugh at this particular point? Focusing on the end of the first turn, we notice that Stella employs prosodic features in her speech: first, there is a differentiation in speed rate between TCUs 9 and 10 (from slow to quick pace), indicating that Stella imitates the guide's voice, and second, emphasis/intensity is placed on the phrase *on the left* (TCU 10). Holt (2011: 208) suggests that, among other resources, speakers may draw on phonetic practices in order to make laughter relevant. In similar vein, Archakis et al. (2010: 208) illustrate that in conversational narratives, such as this one, the presence of pauses before and after jab lines as well as the changes in their speed rate and intensity distinguish jab lines from non-humorous narrative parts.

In this context, the aforementioned prosodic features seem to be used in order to make relevant a surprising and/or a humorous effect. Thus, it depends on the hearers' choice whether they will treat the previous turn as a source of surprise or humor or both. In this case, Rena and Matina select to display their alignment with the incongruity by laughing and thus adopting a humorous mode. Matina, in particular, who had gone co-riding with Stella, adds a supportive comment. By conveying her happiness due to not having heard the guide's words, she displays her understanding and expresses her affiliation in a playful manner.

Through a CA perspective, story participants seem to "do" humor via the following sequence:

```
Narrator: jab line <sub>FPPturn1</sub>
1st story recipient: laughter /immediate jab line response<sub>SPPturn2</sub>
2nd story recipient: laughter & supportive comment /immediate jab line response<sub>SPPturn3</sub>
```

4.2.2 *Postponed jab line reactions*

In this section, story recipients react to jab lines via laughing and simultaneously expressing their difficulty in accepting the incongruous events. After the completion of an insert expansion, story recipients are ready to comply with the incongruous events displaying their alignment.

```
(7)
[8] Σ: 20 Εε:: λέει εντάξει λέει
        21 απλά του σπάει το πόδι το αριστερό (.)
        22 αχά=
[9] P: 23 =Heh huh=
[10]→M: 24 =Είπε τέτοι(h)ο πρά(h)γμα;
[11] \Sigma: 25 N(h)\alphaı
[12]→Μ: 26 Μαλάκα δεν την άκουσα
[13] Σ: 27 >Έτσι λέει δεν παθαίνεις μετά τίποτα<
        28 αρκεί να μην πιαστείς
[8] S: 20 U::h she says well she says
        21 it just breaks his ((i.e. the rider's)) left leg (.)
        22 aha=
[9] R: 23 =Heh huh=
[10]\rightarrowM: 24 =Did she say s(h)uch a th(h)ing?
[11] S: 25 Y(h)es
[12]→M: 26 Dude I didn't hear her
[13] S: 27 >That way she says you don't get injured then<
         28 as long as you don't get trapped
```

Example (7) is an extract from episode 1. The script opposition here lies on the fact that the guide talks about horse accidents while Stella is riding. In turn 8, Stella via direct speech presents the guide's incongruous verbal behavior (*Hu::h she says well she says/ it just breaks his* ((*the rider's*)) *left leg* (.)/ *aha*). By using the word *just* (TCU 21), the guide is portrayed as a person who considers those frightening incidents as mundane and insignificant, thus intensifying the incongruity for the recipients of her talk. Even though Stella does not seem to adopt a playful frame (at least not in an apparent way), her utterance acquires the status of a jab line in retrospect since it is received as humorous by the recipients. Rena responds with an immediate jab line reaction via laughter (turn 9). Matina, on the other hand, has difficulty in believing that the guide actually said all this and with a laughing voice initiates an insert expansion via ritualized disbelief (*Did she say s(h)uch a*)

th(h)ing?, turn 10). Bearing in mind that ritualized disbelief is considered to be a delay mechanism, Matina seems to use laughter with a twofold goal: (a) to adopt/sustain the humorous mode, and (b) to mitigate her action. In the next turn, Stella confirms the unexpected verbal interaction by sustaining the humorous frame the recipients proposed (Y(h)es, turn 11). Matina is now ready to comply with the jab line and express her surprise through a preferred postponed jab line response ($Dude^8 I \ didn't \ hear \ her$, turn 12). Although her reaction is non-humorous, since it is not accompanied with laughter, Matina aligns with Stella's viewpoint about what constitutes incongruous behavior. By using an address term of intimacy at the beginning of the turn (dude), she highlights her surprise at not having heard the guide even though she was riding next to Stella.

Through a CA perspective, story participants seem to negotiate humor via the following sequential pattern:

Narrator: jab line $_{\rm FPPturn8}$ 1st story recipient: laughter / immediate jab line response $_{\rm SPPturn9}$ 2nd story recipient: ritualized disbelief $_{\rm FPPins-turn10}$ Narrator: confirmation $_{\rm SPPins-turn11}$

2nd story recipient: supportive comment / preferred postponed jab line reaction SPPturn12

5. Discussion and conclusions

In the present paper, we explored the multiple ways story recipients respond to jab lines, i.e. humorous parts of the story that include a script opposition, in everyday storytelling. In particular, we examined how story recipients react to jab lines which have either a direct or a potential humorous intention. Our analysis illustrates that in both cases story recipients employ:

a. *immediate jab line responses*, that is, responses which immediately follow the presentation of the humorous events of the story and display the story recipients' alignment with the narrator. More specifically, in the case of jab lines which are framed as humorous by the storytellers themselves, story recipients respond with laughter, wordplay and evaluative comments of support, while in jab lines without direct humorous intention but interpreted as such by story recipients, the latter react with laughter and evaluative comments of support. Thus, story participants seem to "do" humor via the following pattern:

^{8.} Following Vergis & Terkourafi (2015), the Greek address term $\mu\alpha\lambda\dot{\alpha}\kappa\alpha$ could correspond to English "asshole", when it is used to insult, or "dude", when it is used to enhance solidarity.

 $Narrator: jab \ line \ _{FPP}$ $Story \ recipient: laughter \ / \ immediate \ jab \ line \ response \ _{SPPii}$ $wordplay \ / \ immediate \ jab \ line \ response \ _{SPPiii}$ $evaluative \ comment \ of \ support \ / \ immediate \ jab \ line \ response \ _{SPPiii}$

b. postponed jab line responses, that is, responses which come after further elaboration on the incongruity. Here story recipients present themselves as having difficulty in accepting the unexpected events/aspects of the story and rely on delay mechanisms of insert expansion such as understanding checks and demonstrations of ritualized disbelief. After the completion of insert sequences, story recipients are ready to display their alignment or non-alignment with incongruity. Especially in the case of jab lines which are framed as humorous by the storyteller, story recipients may employ either preferred postponed jab line responses, namely final reactions of alignment, or dispreferred postponed jab lines responses, that is, final reactions of non-alignment. In the case of jab lines with no apparent humor intention, story recipients use only preferred postponed reactions. Thus, story participants seem to negotiate humor via the following sequential pattern:

Narrator: jab line _{FPP}
Story recipient: understanding check / ritualized disbelief _{FPPins}
Narrator: answer _{SPPins}
Story recipient: preferred postponed jab line response (alignment) _{SPPi}
dispreferred postponed jab line response (non-alignment) _{SPPii}

Given the above, we observe that the two building blocks of jab lines, namely incongruity and playfulness marked through laughter, provide story recipients with a range of different and combining response activities. Playfulness is achieved with responses of laughter and wordplay while incongruity with evaluative comments of support, understanding checks and ritualized disbelief.

Playfulness via laughter	Incongruity	
Preferred reactions	Preferred reactions	
laughter wordplay	evaluative comment of support	
	Dispreferred reactions	
	understanding check	
	ritualized disbelief	

Focusing on the component of playfulness, laughter seems to be an effective means of displaying active recipiency and alignment with the playful mode the storyteller proposes. Through wordplay, story recipients do not only display mutual understanding about what is considered funny but also convey their intention to sustain humor and jointly (re)construct it. Focusing on the component of incongruity, via the preferred reaction of evaluative comments of support, story recipients endorse the storyteller's viewpoint about what constitutes incongruity and convey their alignment. Understanding checks and ritualized disbelief give story recipients the opportunity to express their doubts and elaborate on the unexpected events/aspects of the story. This combination of playfulness and incongruity enables story recipients to engage in preferred and dispreferred actions simultaneously. For instance, story recipients may adopt the humorous frame proposed by the storyteller via laughter and express their doubts towards the narrated events via understanding checks and ritualized disbelief (see e.g. Example 5).

The findings of our study are compatible with previous research on humor responses (see Section 2.1). In accordance with Hay (2001), we illustrated that, besides laughter, listeners may employ diverse strategies to display humor support such as wordplay and evaluative comments. Interestingly, our findings show that, apart from strategies of humor support, story recipients may sustain and align with the humor proposed by the storyteller even through (seemingly) dispreferred practices such as understanding checks and ritualized disbelief. Moreover, contrary to irony and teasing episodes, where listeners may choose to respond either to the literal or to the implied meaning of the ironic/teasing utterance (Attardo, 2001b, Kotthoff, 2003, Schnurr & Chan, 2011), story recipients may both adopt the playful frame and express their doubts towards the incongruous events of the story. Finally, it seems that in storytelling contexts recipients may engage in a more active role in humor construction by interpreting, and thus framing, an incongruous part of the story as humorous (see also Chovanec, this volume). Therefore, we could suggest that, through initiating humor, story recipients engage in an activity which is not directly dictated by the previous one, namely the narration of the story, and thus "manage to exert agency from within the sequence-responsive position", which is considered a locus of social consent (Clayman, 2013: 290).

With our study, we hope to have shed some light on the area of humor response, particularly in everyday storytelling. As our analysis was qualitative and based on limited data, further research is needed in order to explore the wide array of jab line responses in narratives as well as in other genres and contexts.

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Appendix 1. Narrative

1st Episode

```
[1] S:
          01 Hey by the way
           02 u::h
           03 she started in a wro:ng way this woman
           04 well we are on the horse
           05 and she starts describing and says
           06 the day before yesterday she says there was that girl
           07 and the horse lied down
           08 and tried to:: roll down afterwards sort of
           09 <usually she says the horses don't do that>
          10 >they fall down directly on the left<
[2] R:
[3] M:
          11 Heh huh
         12 I was simply not listening(h) to her d(h)o y(h)ou g(h)et it?
          13 that's why I was [ha(h)p p(h)y]
[4] S:
                              >[They fall] down directly on the left<
          15 and I tell her
          16 u::h if it falls on the left what happens to the rid(h)er?
          17 Heh huh
[5] R:
[6] S:
         18 Mean(h) while I was o(h)n the hors(h)e
[7] R:
          19 Heh huh
[8] S:
          20 U::h she says well she says
          21 it just breaks his ((i.e. the rider's)) left leg (.)
          22 aha=
         23 = Heh huh=
24 = She said s(h)uch a th(h)ing?
[9] R:
[10] M:
[11] S:
         25 Y(h)es
[12] M: 26 Dude I didn't hear her
[13] S: 27 >That way she says you don't get injured then
          28 as long as you don't get trapped
[14] R: 29 Heh huh
         30 >And as it does that thing yes<
[15] S:
          31 it drags you with it
[16] R:
         32 Heh huh
[17] S:
         33 I was telling her are you sure that::
```

```
34 for example::
35 I have to know all these now that I am on the horse
[18] R: 36 Heh huh
[19] S: 37 Because you can analyze it to me when I get off
[20] M&R: 38 Heh huh
[21] S: 39 We got away y(h)e(h)s
[22] M&R: 40 Heh huh
```

2nd Episode

```
[23] S:
         41 A(h)nd then she sa(h)ys
         42 and this horse is blind to one eye
[24] R: 43 Heh huh
[25] S: 44 And(h):: she tells me for this reason
         45 if it hears a noise
         46 and meanwhile it was blind to the left eye
         47 if it hears a noise that comes from the left
         48 it abr(h)uptl(h)y tu(h)rns on the right
[26] R: 49 Ismoun? ((wrong name of the horse))
[27] S: 50 Yes
[28] M: 51 Simoun ((right name of the horse))
[29] R&S: 52 Simoun
[30] S: 53 To see [yes]
[31] R: 54
                  [Guys] was it blin(h)d?
[32] S: 55 Yes
[33] M: 56 Yes
         57 I saw it later on ((S coughs))
         58 when we got off
[34] R: 59 Guys what [are you talking about?]
```

3rd Episode

```
60 [((coughs)) It makes then] an abrupt move towards::
[351 S:
         61 the right side yes
         62 I tell her u::h was it scared?
         63 yes oh I don't know she tells me do you hear anything?
         64 >I tell her< a quad is al(h)most behind(h) us
[36] R&M: 65 Heh huh
[37] S: 66 Oh because I am dea(h)f
[38] R&M: 67 Heh huh
[39] S: 68 F(h) rom the(h) o(h) ne ear(h) I can't hea(h) r
[40] R&M: 69 Heh huh
[41] S: 70 L(h) ame bl(h) ind(h) at Saint(h) [Panteleimonas]
[42] R&M: 71
                                             [Heh huh]
[43] M:
         72 It was at Aghia Anna excuse me(h)
[44] S: 73 And (h) me(h) on(h) the hor(h) se [wh(h)y(h)?]
[45] R&M: 74
                                             [Heh huh]
[46] R: 75 There must have been something wrong with her ((i.e. the
           guide)) n(h)o dou(h)bt
[47] M: 76 Are you talking serious(h)ly?
         77 she didn't he(h)ar the quad ((approaching)) ?
[48] S:
         78 N:o(h)
[49] M: 79 Come on guys (h)
```

4th Episode

```
[50] S: 80 Oh meanwhile she was telling me
         81 these two dogs follow us
         82 because when they hear a motorbike
         83 they go and bark at the motorbike
         84 and [the motorbike stops]
[51] M: 85 [I heard that]
[52] S: 86 Bullshit you saw them barking?
[53] R&M: 87 Heh huh
[54] M: 88 N(h)o(h)
         89 I saw them wandering around
         90 and I guess they were very deaf too
         91 because they went around
         92 and she was calling them hundreds of times
         93 to come where we were
[55] G: 94 You are brave to have stayed there
         95 an:d listened all this stuff
[56] S: 96 But I coul(h)dnt(h) ge(h)t off the hors(h)e
         97 what (h) could I do(h)?
[57] R&M: 98 Heh huh
```

Appendix 2. Transcription conventions

```
fast pace
> <
<>
              slow pace
              emphasis
XZX
;/?
              upward intonation
[ ]
             overlapping talk
             latching
(.)
             micropause
(...)
             part of a turn that has been left out
             point of interest
((xzx))
             comments of the authors
xz(h)x
             laugh particle in speech
heh huh
              beats of laughter
```

CHAPTER 3

Discourse markers as guides to understanding spontaneous humor and irony

Ksenia Shilikhina Voronezh State University

The paper addresses the issue of categorizing and interpreting utterances as either serious or non-serious in spontaneous discourse. The research is based on real-life dialogues and samples of computer-mediated interactions in which discourse participants need to discuss the mode of communication due to unexpected insincerity, use of jokes, humorous or ironic remarks in otherwise earnest and sincere interactions. In this context, the aim of the paper is twofold: firstly, it shows how the mode of communication can be negotiated with the help of discourse markers and, secondly, it demonstrates multiple functions of these markers in dialogue. By explicating the speaker's intention, these phrases guide the process of understanding and indicate how the meaning of the utterance can be integrated in discourse. Discourse markers can also function as signals of social meaning, for example, as signals of implicit conflict or competition.

Keywords: mode of discourse, sincerity, metadiscourse, humor, irony, discourse markers

1. Negotiating the discourse mode

There is a strong academic tradition to treat language as a system of signs used for the sheer purpose of conveying information. The so-called "conduit" theories and models of communication simplify the real process of verbal interaction by describing it as straightforward transmission of data from the sender to the receiver (see among others Narula, 2006). However, everyday discourse is not as smooth as "conduit" models of communication tend to describe it. Language, as it turns out, is not just a system of signs needed to send and receive messages. Rather, it can be viewed as "a set of strategic, often reflexive, socially imbued practices" (Coupland & Jaworski, 2004: 16).

If the transmission of information were the only purpose of speaking or writing, human language would be similar to a formal system of signs with a regular one-to-one form-meaning correspondence. Yet the form-meaning relations in natural languages can be very intricate and versatile. In addition, evidence suggests that people use language for purposes other than the transmission of information (hence the six functions of human language described by Jakobson, 1987; or the metafunctions of language in Halliday, 1985). Therefore, a theory of communication needs to incorporate information *inter alia* about the differences between the serious and the non-serious modes of communication and about the signals that allow language users to interpret utterances as serious, non-serious or humorous.

One of the many sources of potential ambiguity and misunderstanding in discourse is disparity in utterance categorization. This disparity can result from unexpected switching from serious and sincere discourse to non-serious, for example, humorous, ironic or sarcastic ways of using language. If the speaker's words are categorized as *non-serious*, the new discourse mode and new rules of interaction need to be explicitly negotiated (Mulkay, 1988). For example, the following dialogue between Barbara Walters and the ex-president of the USA Richard Nixon illustrates this process of mode negotiation:

(1) BARBARA WALTERS: You know Mr. Nixon, again and again, when people have written books about you, people who have worked for you, people who were close to you in one way or another, they say that you are cold, remote and that they were unable to reach you. Why do you think this is? Do you think this is an apt description?

Pres. RICHARD M. NIXON: Why are you interviewing me then?

BARBARA WALTERS: Why am I interviewing you?

Pres. RICHARD M. NIXON: Yeah.

BARBARA WALTERS: No, I'm not- I'm not talking about- I don't know you very well. I'm not talking about whether I find you cold and remote. I'm talking about even people like- like Henry Kissinger, who knows you very well, talk about this remoteness, this inability to reach you.

Pres. RICHARD M. NIXON: I like Henry very much.

BARBARA WALTERS: Let's go on. In those days-

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)

Although the interview with the politician was intended to provide new information for the audience, in reality part of it turned into a metalinguistic debate. Both speakers negotiate the rules of interaction by using a variety of metalinguistic comments (*Why don't we get serious / I am serious / We have a different idea, perhaps, of what serious is*). In particular, the politician and the journalist concentrate on how their utterances should be categorized. By suggesting that the questions about his personality are not serious, the politician does two things: firstly, he expresses doubts for the sincerity of the journalist whose provocative questions turn the dialogue into verbal competition, thus breaking the rules of the serious mode of discourse. Secondly, Nixon demonstrates his ability to take part in the "contest". The journalist insists on her sincerity and, in order to turn the dialogue back on the informative track, she makes a retreat by suggesting that their understanding of seriousness can be different.

The dialogue also demonstrates the importance of the opposition of serious and sincere vs. non-serious and insincere use of language. Because the interlocutors attribute their utterances to different modes of discourse, a sudden change of the mode by one of the speakers may lead to potential disagreement. To proceed with the interview the participants need to establish common ground in understanding what should be taken at face value and what should not be understood literally.

In this paper, I focus on the role of metacommunication in spontaneous discourse. In particular, I will discuss the differences between the *serious* (or *bona fide*) vs. *non-serious* (or *non-bona fide*) modes of discourse with the aim of showing how these differences affect spontaneous interaction. Then I will turn to the discourse markers used by discourse participants in the process of mode negotiation. Finally, I will address the functions of these markers and pragmatic effects they can produce in the dialogue.

It should be noted here that the differences between *bona fide* and *non-bona fide* modes are important for both everyday communication and discourse analysis. If the differences between the modes are ignored by discourse participants, chances for misunderstanding are very high. If, in turn, discourse scholars ignore these differences in their analyses, they are very likely to face at least two problems:

 the approach to language as a tool for information transmission (see the "conduit" model of communication above) makes it impossible to explain why humor or irony occur in discourse and why some utterances may be interpreted as either serious or non-serious, and ii. the assumption that language users apply the same rules and conventions for interpreting *bona fide* and *non-bona fide* utterances does not allow to explain how people understand insincere utterances, humor or irony. If understanding of all these types of utterances were based on common rules, how would one decide what is funny and what is not?

The analysis that follows is based on the data from the *Corpus of Global Web-Based English* (GloWbE), dialogues taken from the spoken subcorpus of the *Russian National Corpus* (RNC) and *The Corpus of Contemporary American English* (COCA). Keyword search was used for collecting samples. In addition, samples of computer-mediated communication and several transcripts of Russian radio talk shows were also included in the study. Because only transcripts but not the recordings of the dialogues were available, I will consider only the verbal component of the utterances. The role of acoustic cues in discourse mode recognition is not discussed in the paper.

2. On the variety of modes of discourse: What makes them different?

As language users, we are well aware of the two modes of using language: bona fide and non-bona fide (Raskin, 1985; Mulkay, 1988). If the bona fide discourse is "the earnest, serious, information-conveying mode of verbal communication" (Raskin, 1985: 100), the non-bona fide mode can be described as a way of speaking aimed at a special effect – laughter or, at least, amusement. This is demonstrated by Examples (2) and (3) below, where by saying *I'm joking* the speaker "cancels" previous statements and shows that the utterance was not intended as true and sincere:

(2) MCDONALD: Next time you swim with the dolphins, let's not let them drink our margaritas. I had no idea about this information either, and I love swimming with dolphins, and I have shared a drink with dolphins before, so I'm sorry, Dr. Drew. I did not know.

SEDAGHATFAR: Shame on you.

PINSKY: You shared – hold on, you shared a drink with a dolphin?

MCDONALD: No. I'm joking!

(COCA)

(3) CONAN: Mm-hmm. It is going to change. How's your family going to adapt to – we saw on the show, your wife and your two beautiful children, and they're going to have move out to Nevada with you now.

Mr. HARPER: Yeah. It's going to be the struggle of living in Las Vegas – oh, man, it's going to be tough. But no, **I'm joking**. They're going to be great, you know. (COCA)

On the contrary, in situations where an ironic (i.e. *non-bona fide*) interpretation of the utterance is likely, comments such as "I'm not joking" and "I'm serious" function as markers of the speaker's truthfulness and sincerity:

- (4) Whatever else has changed over the past fifty years, self-mastery and control over our lives are still what we want more than anything. My favorite Eastwood film and I'm not joking is the orangutan movie from 1978; it was demolished by critics but remains one of his highest-grossing movies ever. (COCA)
- (5) It was amazing. It works like a charm. Try it sometimes. I'm serious. (COCA)

Another difference between the *bona fide* and *non-bona fide* modes lies in the speaker's desire to mark his/her non-commitment to the truth. According to Partington (who, in turn, bases his reasoning on Raskin's 1985 work), *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) can then 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).

It is important to note that the two modes differ significantly in their general cultural value. On the one hand, for some cultures the sense of humor is a highly-valued component of everyday interaction. For instance, in her description of "typical" English behavior, Fox (2004: 61) comments: "the most noticeable and important 'rule' about humor in English conversation is its dominance and pervasiveness. Humor rules. Humor governs. Humor is omnipresent and omnipotent". There are other motivations for even broader generalizations about the biological, social and cultural significance of humor. According to Palmer (1994: 1), "humanity is the only species with a sense of humor, zoologists tell us, confirming Aristotle's insight that laughter is a distinguishing feature of our species". Finally, the interest in humor research – the area which has enjoyed stable growth in the past decades – is another indicator of the importance of humor.

On the other hand, if by default seriousness is what people treat as the norm, then *non-bona fide* discourse can be categorized as a deviation from the norm. Humorous behavior is sometimes associated with being silly, irresponsible or even antisocial (Morreall, 1983). Hence, every culture imposes restrictions on the non-serious use of language. In the situations where the inappropriateness of the *non-bona fide* verbal behavior is self-evident, joking can be heavily criticized or receive negative feedback.

For language users, the fundamental difference between the *bona fide* and *non-bona fide* modes of discourse lies in specific semantic and pragmatic conventions that should be applied to interpreting utterances as either serious or humorous, ironic, sarcastic, etc. At least two key properties of these two modes of language use lie at the core of these conventions. The first one is the relation between the

utterance and the system of knowledge of the discourse participants. Normally, the *bona fide* utterance complies with interlocutor's knowledge about the world and can be integrated into ongoing discourse without searching for an additional rationale. The utterance in the *non-bona fide* mode usually describes a non-existing situation or presents a real situation in a strange way. As a result, it thwarts the coherence of discourse.

The second property involves our ability to demonstrate a very specific type of linguistic behavior. Play and pretense are often opposed to seriousness (Huizinga, 1971; see Dynel, this volume). As a behavioral 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). Play and pretense are the features shared by humor and irony: pretense 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 our general knowledge. Simply stated, to categorize the utterance as *bona fide* or *non-bona fide* means to evaluate its relation to our system of general knowledge and to see if there are any signals of playful behavior or pre-tense on the part of the speaker.

Before we turn to the metalinguistic explication and negotiation of discourse modes in everyday communication, let us briefly outline the reasons why interlocutors explicitly attribute their utterances to either *bona fide* or the *non-bona fide* mode and what can cause the twofold interpretation of the utterance.

3. Discussing the mode of discourse in spontaneous communication

The answer to the question of why speakers explicitly attribute certain utterances to the *bona fide* or the *non-bona fide* mode might seem simple: these utterances seem to be incoherent with the rest of discourse. The change of discourse mode is a likely explanation for this incoherence. The explicit nomination and subsequent open negotiation of the discourse mode is one of the easiest and most reliable ways to figure out the rules for utterance interpretation. What is more, this explanation entails certain social effects. In humor research these effects are treated as the discursive functions of humor and irony. Numerous attempts to define these functions demonstrate the wide range of options: for instance, both humor and irony can signal a variety of emotions (from aggression to pleasure and joy); they can also be used as tools for establishing and maintaining social relations (Norrick, 1993; Chovanec & Tsakona, this volume).

More specifically, there seem to be two types of situations when people explicitly negotiate the mode of discourse: (i) when the utterance is in some way incoherent with the rest of discourse; and (ii) when one of the interlocutors demonstrates signs of non-serious or humorous behavior in otherwise serious communication; in other words, the speaker uses metalinguistic comments as keys to a specific text understanding (Kotthoff, 1999). In any case, the change of the mode serves as a rational explanation of the incoherent verbal behavior. Let us look at some examples.

Example (6) between two female friends illustrates the situation when the utterance is incoherent in terms of its stylistic properties:

(6) Speaker A: Я недавно у твоих любимых Рогашевых была...

Speaker В: **Что за ирония**? И что у них?

Speaker A: Нет / ну ты просто про них да про них все время / про что бы мы ни говорили ты обязательно что-нибудь да вставишь про них. Ну короче / что я начала-то. (RNC)

Speaker A: I've recently visited your beloved Rogashevs...

Speaker B: Why all this irony? What about them?

Speaker A: Well, it's just that you've been constantly talking about them. Whatever we talk about you should always mention them. Oh, anyway, what was I talking about?

It is Speaker A's transition to the *non-bona fide* mode that is questioned by Speaker B who interprets the adjective πωδυμωιῦ 'beloved' as irony. The unexpectedness of the mode switch triggers the question of whether Speaker A uses irony to convey some additional implicit meaning. As a result, the initiator of non-serious discourse is requested to make her intentions explicit.

Example (7) is a talk between a journalist and the musician Wendy Carlos. The topic discussed is Carlos' love for cats. As the interaction proceeds, the journalist asks a question which seems incoherent to the music star. She retorts by repeating the journalist's question and categorizing it as a joke:

(7) Hansen: I have a picture of you. You're sitting – it looks like your studio. I see one, two, three computer screens, several keyboards, musical keyboards, a Grammy Award, a stuffed monkey and three Siamese cats. What are their names? Carlos: The oldest one is named Subito, who we call Subi. And he's the gray cat who's on the right who's sitting on the black and white monitor. And the smaller cat on the – who's sitting straight up here, her name is Piccala, which we call her Peekie or Peek. And when we got to the big guy, who's sitting in my lap, Nagus, who's the son of the small kitty, we – we call him – we named him after the conductor Kent Nagano, who had done some of my music in Berkeley in the mid-80s.

Hansen: Do you let them in your studio as a rule?

Carlos: Do I let them in the studio.

Hansen: I mean...

Carlos: **Are you joking?** Have you ever had a Siamese cat? Even regular kitty cats – they have their own way, their own mind and they come in and they're on top of you and on top of the equipment.

Hansen: Mm-hmm. Well, we had a very technical question from some of the people on our staff about how do you keep the cat hair off of the equipment? Carlos: We don't. (COCA)

The utterance *Are you joking?* demonstrates the incoherence of the previous question and forces the journalist to explain why this question has arisen at all. Carlos seems to be surprised by the question about letting a cat into the studio. Her knowledge about Siamese cats does not allow him to coherently integrate the question into his understanding of the situation. The only possibility to keep discourse coherent is to establish that Hansen has switched to the *non-bona fide* mode.

In Example (8) the speaker's comment *I'm joking* illustrates how his words should be integrated with the previous discourse:

(8) BROWNING: What was it like in those days being asked to work with – with Sinatra?

Mr. BISHOP: The audience would say, "He must be good; otherwise would Frank have him on the show with him?" Do you understand?

BROWNING: So you took it as a big compliment.

Mr. BISHOP: No, I took it as they thought that he must be good; otherwise would I have him on the show with me? I'm only joking. Frank, if you're watching, I'm joking. (COCA)

The comment explicates the non-serious intention of the speaker and attributes the previous utterances to the humorous mode. With this phrase the speaker points to the "correct" (i.e. intended) understanding of what is being said.

Finally, Example (9) is an example of interaction between a married couple. A wife (Speaker A) and a husband (Speaker B) discuss financial issues. In the dialogue the husband initiates the *non-bona fide* mode and his wife accepts it:

(9) Speaker A: Ну ты дашь мне деньги?

Speaker В: Нет.

Speaker A: Ах ты дрянь.

Speaker В: Ладно я шучу. Сколько тебе надо?

Speaker A: 300 рублей / я же на такси езжу. (RNC)

Speaker A: Will you give me the money?

Speaker B: No.

Speaker A: What a lousy skunk you are!

Speaker B: Ok, I'm joking. How much do you need? Speaker A: 300 Rubles, I usually take a taxi, you know.

The speakers exchange insulting remarks which, however, do not lead to conflict. This kind of interaction reminds us of "playing the dozens" or "sounding" – a traditional genre of ritualized exchanges of insults that exists in African-American communities (Labov, 1974). The rudeness of Speaker A can be justified by the *non-bona fide* interpretation of the phrase *What a lousy skunk you are*. The spouses only pretend to be insulting each other, and they both know that none of what is being said is meant seriously. However, Speaker B still needs to explicate his intention to bring the dialogue back on the *bona fide* track.

The dialogues above illustrate one of the rules of discourse coherence: if what is being said for some reason does not correlate with your knowledge or expectations but you still believe in the rational behavior of your interlocutor, you may interpret his/her words as non-serious. In addition, all the examples involve the use of meta-discursive utterances which contribute to clarifying the mode employed in each case. The following section addresses the issue of meta-discourse and its role in ensuring the general coherence of discourse.

4. Discourse markers as tools for the negotiation of the discourse mode

If the hearer fails to understand the sudden change of mode, the general coherence of discourse is likely to be disrupted. In order to avoid any further misunderstanding, the speaker may need to opt to resolve the ambiguity and restore the general coherence of discourse. This kind of discourse management is usually done with the help of metalanguage. Jakobson (1987: 69) termed the self-directed capacity of language "a metalingual function".

Why is metalanguage so important? According to Verschueren (2004: 53), "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". Coupland & Jaworski (2004: 15) suggest that without metalanguage

speaking would be treated as "behavior", a flow of language forms between speakers and listeners equipped with all necessary processing equipment to play their productive and receptive roles. [...] Linguistic meanings would be inherent in those linguistic forms, and as a result those meanings would be uncontroversial, uncontested and "innocent".

While back in the middle of the 20th century, Jakobson's ideas conformed to the structuralist paradigm, that is, the metalingual function was ascribed not to language users but to language-as-a-system, at present the focus of attention has switched from what users know about language to the ways metalinguistic elements are used in interaction. For modern linguistics, metalanguage is a source of information about the structure of discourse and the processes of dialogue management (Preston, 2004). Metalinguistic 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.

One of the easiest ways for discourse participants to explicate and negotiate the mode of discourse is to use appropriate *discourse markers*. According to Schiffrin (2001: 54), discourse markers are "linguistic items that function in cognitive, expressive, social and textual domains". Traditionally, such 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 & Simon-Vandenbergen, 2011). Researchers suggest that "what discourse markers or pragmatic markers generally do is to indexically point to features of context" (Aijmer & Simon-Vandenbergen, 2011: 224). More specifically, not only do metalinguistic discourse markers point to features of context, but they also connect all components of discourse into a coherent whole.

Researchers of discourse markers tend to focus on single words such as *frankly*, *so*, *however*. These words are syntactically independent elements of an utterance, and their usage is guided by pragmatic rules. In our view, metalinguistic comments in the form of utterances or phrases indicating how the utterance should be understood, also belong to the group of discourse markers, albeit less prototypical ones.

In this paper I take a functional approach and treat English expressions such as I'm joking / Are you serious and Russian phrases such as Я иронизирую 'I'm being ironic', Я серьезно 'I'm serious' or Ты шутишь? 'Are you joking?' as metamessages that mark the transition to/from the bona fide, non-serious and non-bona fide modes of discourse. These multiword expressions share a number of important functional properties of discourse markers: firstly, they are not part of the proposition; and, secondly, their main function is to ensure the general coherence of discourse. Specific pragmatic functions of metalinguistic comments of the discourse modes depend on whether the speaker assesses his/her own utterance as serious or non-serious, or on whether the comment is used to negotiate, accept or reject the change of mode initiated by another interlocutor.

Initiation of a specific mode of communication 4.1

Let us now look at how these markers are used in interaction. When used by the speaker with reference to his/her own utterances, discourse markers of the bona fide mode are examples of regulating metalinguistic tools that strengthen the credibility of an utterance or resolve the uncertainty or ambiguity of what is said (Hyland, 2005). They signal speaker's awareness of the potential ambiguity of the utterance and indicate how it should be interpreted. The speaker can confirm the sincerity of his/her intentions by either explicitly stating that the utterance is made in the serious mode (I am serious / я говорю серьезно), or by denying the possibility of a non-bona fide interpretation of the utterance (*I'm not joking / я не шучу*), for example:

(10) 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)

The comment And I am not joking refers to the utterance The instagramming! The writer feels that this kind of answer to the question about the best part of the job might be incoherent (as unexpected) for the reader, and the metalinguistic comment is needed here to put the utterance interpretation on the right (i.e. the serious) track.

(11) А если ещё батюшка там появится нормальный не пьющий / что для Костромской области редкость / то я уверяю / у новых левых никаких шансов не будет. Ну/ тут есть элемент шутки / но поймите меня серьёзно.

And if some day they can have a normal priest, a teetotaler / which is a rare case for the Kostroma region / you can be sure / the left-wing politicians will have zero chances there. Well / it's a kind of a joke / but please take my words seriously.

In Example (11), the speaker explains two options for interpreting her words as either *non-bona fide* or *bona fide*. As mentioned in Section 2, the *non-bona fide* mode of discourse allows the interlocutors to integrate something that seems strange or even absurd into their knowledge about the world. The metalinguistic comments signal speaker's awareness about the strangeness of her statement about finding a sober priest. But the speaker insists on the bona fide interpretation of her words, since in reality it seems that a lot of village priests tend to be alcohol-addicted.

In Example (12) the discourse marker comes before the utterance to which it refers. By positioning the comment before the informative part of the utterance, the speaker prevents a potential *non-bona fide* understanding of her opinion:

(12) 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 prefer males who are fit and have strong abdominal muscles, not lumps with fat bellies.

Markers of the discourse mode can confirm the speaker's belief in the utterance being true, as in Example (13):

(13) 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*)

The metalinguistic comment in the example above highlights the truth-conditional status of the proposition and expresses the speaker's attitude: because she finds proposing such a law absurd, the only logical way to talk about something as unexpected as the proposed law is to switch to the *non-bona fide* mode. However, since the utterance refers to a real-life situation, the speaker confirms her *bona fide* intention with the discourse marker.

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

(14) Воспринимайте мой вопрос вам в том топике, как сарказм. (RNC) Take my question to you on that topic as sarcasm.

The utterance above is a reference to a previous forum discussion in which the words of the speaker were misinterpreted. By commenting on the mode of his question, the speaker demonstrates that, because it was taken seriously by the other participants of the discussion, he did not get the answers he expected.

In the next dialogue a group of people discuss a photo of Bruce and Emma Willis published by an American fashion magazine *W*. The open demonstration of affection by the Willis becomes the point of discussion:

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

JANELL-SNOWDEN-HO: You know – first, Ben, let's see. I think part of the reason that he wanted to do this is because you just called her 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)

By referring to her own utterance as sarcastic the speaker demonstrates that her opinion should not be taken at face value. Sarcasm is a way of expressing her solidarity with the interlocutor who evaluates the photo negatively.

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 stances towards the upcoming utterances and establish a connection between the utterance and the reality, as in Example (12) above and in Example (16) below:

GUILFOYLE: OK. Let me tell you something. It's just really, Bob, how -I am serious when I ask you this, so please give me a serious answer back. How can the president justify not coming out and answering the question when day after day, there are new developments in the story? He's running for re-election. Answer the American people about this. No press conference.

BECKEL: The answer to your question is the last part of your question. He is running for re-election. Why expose himself to something as complex as this and get himself -

GUILFOYLE: Why should we re-elect him then?

BECKEL: Maybe you won't.

(COCA)

The final position of the comment means that the speaker wants to set a potentially wrong interpretation of an utterance back "on the right track", as in Examples (17) and (18):

- (17) Please specify any age / intellectual restrictions for Internet users. I'm saying this without any irony. (GloWbE)
- 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 the metalinguistic comments refer the hearer to the previous utterances with the purpose of mode disambiguation. Example (18) demonstrates this to the full extent, as the speaker explicates his awareness of the possible misinterpretation of what has been written before. The same applies to Examples (8)–(11): the speakers comment on their intentions after their words were misinterpreted.

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

(19) VICKI-MABREY-1-AB: 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.

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 the general coherence of the dialogue the speaker retreats into the *non-bona fide* mode precisely because it allows a playful, non-serious interpretation of the question.

Overuse of the comment *just joking* / π *nowymu* π can also be a cover for an implicit insult, as in Example (20):

(20) 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.

(Thoughts on Life and Love)

In the utterance above, the writer offers her evaluation of the contexts in which the comment *I was only joking* was used. Retreating to the *non-bona fide* mode enabled the person to disguise insults as humor and justify his behavior.

To sum up, mode disambiguation, guiding the process of understanding, retreating from a face-threatening situation and manipulation can be referred to as the functions of the metalinguistic assessment of the speaker's own utterances. However, two more specific cases of metalinguistic 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.

4.2 Negotiating the mode of discourse

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

(21) 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 (cf. Karachaliou & Archakis, this volume). The speaker checks if both participants apply the same rules, that is, if they are in the same mode of discourse. The discourse marker also ensures that his interpretation of what was previously said goes along with the intentions of the interlocutor.

Another reason for using metalinguistic markers is to negotiate the mode of communication. Example (22) illustrates the process of negotiation:

(22) 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 metalinguistic comment *You're not serious* the speaker simultaneously signals his understanding within the *non-bona fide* mode and tries to control the dialogue by insisting on abiding by the rules of serious communication, and by questioning his interlocutor's cooperativeness.

Interestingly, what language users call "joking" may have nothing to do with the genre of joke. By referring to the utterances as "joking" or "kidding" the speakers mark their difficulty in integrating the utterance into their knowledge. If the participants of the dialogue cannot reach an agreement, the lengthy process of mode negotiation can become the main topic of discussion:

(23) 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)

The dialogue above is an example of a lengthy discussion of the discourse mode. Similarly to Example (1), speakers try to negotiate the rules of interaction. Since the *bona fide* and *non-bona fide* modes require different sets of interpretation rules, the dialogue cannot be continued successfully (or, at least, without leading to an interpersonal conflict) until a common mode is established.

Humor researchers suggest that "[t]he appreciation of humor 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 discourse participant to change the mode of conversation. The following dialogue demonstrates how the discourse mode is not just negotiated but debated. In the computer-mediated dialogue of Example (24), members of a medical Internet forum discuss methods of treating a particular kind of trauma and one of the interlocutors (Alexander Nikolaevich Chesnokov) 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*):

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

Отвечает: Александр Николаевич Челноков

Настаиваю, что иронизировать – мое неотъемлемое право. Насчет "люди просто так ходить не будут" – это что, критерий компетентности? (Medgorodok. Travmatologija i ortopedia)

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 still come to her from all over the region...

Answer: 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?

The debate around the mode arises because the *non-bona fide* comment devalues the first speaker's opinion. By openly denying her interlocutor's irony Lena tries to avoid switching to the *non-bona fide* mode and then she provides serious arguments in support of her point of view. In his reply, the second speaker insists on his right to change the discourse mode and make ironic comments (i.e. be impolite) and continues to criticize his opponent by casting doubt upon the validity of Lena's argument.

4.3 Putting the dialogue back on the serious track

In spontaneous discourse, mode markers can signal the return of the dialogue to the *bona fide* mode after a short unexpected digression to the *non-bona fide* mode. Example (25) – an extract from the dialogue between Larry King, the Russian journalist Vladimir Pozner and a viewer who joined the conversation – illustrates the case:

(25) 3rd CALLER: Copenhagen, Denmark. Good evening. I have a question for 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 satisfies the curiosity of the audience and publicly acknowledges his status of the KGB agent. Nevertheless, his utterances should not be taken at face value. By using the metapragmatic comment *seriously speaking*, Pozner demonstrates that he has been pretending "as if" he was trained as a spy. The discourse marker informs the listeners that his previous answers were in the *non-bona fide* mode and should be interpreted as such.

To sum up, metalinguistic discourse markers allow speakers to ensure correct understanding of their utterances, to negotiate the mode of discourse and either to accept or reject switching from the *bona fide* dialogue to *non-bona fide* interaction.

5. Conclusions

It is common practice in everyday communication to classify discourse as serious or non-serious. While the primary purpose of *bona fide* utterances is to convey information, *non-serious* utterances result from the speaker's insincerity and imply the speaker's non-commitment to the truth of what is being said. Finally, *non-bona fide* utterances are normally produced to convey additional social meaning and to make the hearer laugh.

The bona fide, non-serious and non-bona fide modes require different sets of rules for utterance interpretation. However, in spontaneous conversation the unexpected transition from serious to other modes of discourse (and vice versa) can become a source of ambiguity and potential disagreement. It can be a challenging task for the hearer to figure out the intentions of the speaker and apply the "correct" set of rules. To lower the risk of misunderstanding, speakers often use discourse markers which explicate the mode of communication and delineate the rules of utterance interpretation.

Metalinguistic markers of mode negotiation contribute to the coherence of discourse: they indicate how an utterance relates to the real-life situation or demonstrate the speaker's sincerity and commitment to his/her words. Language offers a range of discourse markers that guide the process of mode negotiation. These words and phrases can help us understand how people manage discourse on linguistic

and interpersonal levels. The variety of speech formulas used as discourse markers for the mode of discourse 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.

Discourse markers of the *bona fide*, *non-serious* and *non-bona fide* modes show that discourse participants try to monitor each other's state of mind. However, the functions of the markers vary depending on whether they are used by to assess speaker's own words or to negotiate the mode change. If used to explicate the discourse mode, the markers function as a lowcost 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 speakers to ensure correct understanding of what has been previously said, and accept or reject mode change.

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CHAPTER 4

The pragmatics of humor in bilingual conversations

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In this study, we analyze conversations recorded during ethnographic research the Muslim community of Rhodes, a Greek island close to Turkey's coast. The community is bilingual in Turkish and Greek. We examine aspects of the overall and sequential organization of talk as well as instances of humor produced by the code alternation choices that speakers of different ethnic origin, generation and social groups make during interaction. Being essentially a conversational practice, code-switching is primarily analyzed in the conversational context in which it appears as a meaningful choice of bilingual speakers. In this context, humorous code-switchings are seen as pertaining to a *continuum* of (a) *discourse related* alternations connected to pragmatic parameters of the organization of talk-in-interaction, and (b) *participant related* alternations strategically used for the construction of aspects of the bilingual identity as well as dynamic alignments among participants.

Keywords: bilingual communities, bilingual humor, code-switching

1. Introduction

In this study, we analyze bilingual conversations with humor within a Conversation Analysis (CA) framework. Conversations were recorded during long-term ethnographic research in the bilingual in Greek and Turkish Muslim community of Rhodes and they comprise recordings of everyday talk-in-interaction during family gatherings (Georgalidou et al., 2010; 2013; 2014). Before we put forth the research questions that are the subject matter of this study, a brief reference to the community is necessary.

Muslims of Rhodes are Greek citizens of Turkish origin who have lived on Rhodes since 1522. In 1912, during the Italian occupation, and then again after the annexation of Dodecanese islands to Greece in 1947, the community underwent a major shift as far as the distribution of power is concerned. After being the

dominant group during Ottoman times, they acquired the unofficial status of a minority community. Nowadays, the estimated population of the Rhodian Muslims is 2,500–3,000 people and the Turkish language is mainly used in speech events within the community. As a consequence, over the last 70 years its members have shifted from near monolingualism in Turkish to bilingualism in Turkish and Greek. As it is the case in many bilingual communities throughout the world, Rhodian Muslims make use of code-switching devices in their everyday-talk-in-interaction. Prototypically defined as "a relationship of contiguous juxtaposition of semiotic systems, such that the appropriate recipients of the resulting complex sign are in a position to interpret the juxtaposition as such" (Auer, 1995: 116), code-switching within the community is a meaningful choice of bilingual speakers.

In particular, the bilingual speakers in the community under scrutiny employ different kinds of code-alternation devices (Georgalidou et al., 2010; 2013; 2014). They switch, mix, insert and borrow/copy elements of the "other" language within the almost completed process of shifting from near monolingualism in Turkish to bilingualism and the use of Greek varieties. During naturally occurring conversations within community networks they display their extended linguistic competence to organize discourse, create and alter alignments and construct more than ethnic or cross-ethnic identities (Georgalidou et al., 2010). The alternating use of their linguistic resources serves both discourse organization functions and identity construction processes.

What is more, there is indication of a possible change in the distribution of code-alternation patterns among different generations of speakers. Older speakers mostly switch to organize discourse or negotiate medium preference, whereas younger speakers mostly mix (Georgalidou et al., 2014: 212). Especially in conversational episodes involving younger members we see a shift between the *we/they* codes, as Greek and the Bilingual Medium are used to construct youth identities, in contrast to the ones constructed by adult members of close-knit community networks through the consistent use of Turkish. Moreover, younger speakers do "being young" rather than signaling participation to any discrete ethnic or cross-ethnic categorization. Adults, on the other hand, function as guardians of crucial aspects of the community identity as they, indirectly in most cases, lead towards a more extensive use of Turkish by systematically initiating turns in Turkish only (Georgalidou et al., 2010: 341). Teasing and humorous attacks also contribute to the construction of the discrete identities of younger and adult participants to events. Also, within friendly family gatherings, the humorous/teasing frames serve as a marker

By Greek varieties we refer to both Greek as used in formal registers and institutional domains and the local varieties (in our case) of Rhodian Greek used by natives in the dialectal area of the Dodecanese islands.

of solidarity and in-grouping (Archakis & Tsakona, 2005) through establishing a frame of "collective pleasurable sociability" (Lytra, 2007: 206).

Thus, in accordance to research questions we have tried to tackle so far, in the present study we focus on the humorous aspect of bilingual conversations among speakers representing different generations within the community under scrutiny. In particular, we examine aspects of the overall and sequential organization of talk as well as issues of identity as these can be approached based on humorous code-switchings that pertain to a *continuum* of (a) *discourse related* alternations connected to pragmatic parameters of the organization of talk-in-interaction, and (b) *participant related* alternations strategically used for the construction of aspects of the bilingual identity as well as dynamic alignments among participants. Aspects of vocabulary and structural discrepancies concerning the contrasted linguistic systems involved are also taken into account. In what follows, in Section 2, we discuss the theoretical underpinnings of the analysis of humorous code alternation practices. In Sections 3 and 4 we present our data and the analysis of excerpts of naturally occurring humorous conversational practices within the bilingual community under scrutiny. Finally, Section 5 summarizes the findings of the present study.

2. Conversation analysis of humorous code alternation practices

2.1 Bilingual conversation analysis

As we have discussed elsewhere (Georgalidou et al. 2010; 2013; 2014), the first attempts to tackle issues of code-switching within the sociolinguistic paradigm dealt with the phenomenon in accordance with the situational parameters of language use within a specific bilingual community. The hypothesis of *domains* (Fishman, [1965] 2000), as well as the *Rights and Obligations Theory* (Myers-Scotton, 1988; Myers-Scotton & Bolonyai, 2001) base their analyses on the assumption that there is a connection between community value systems and language use, albeit adopting an *etic* perception of the sociolinguistic phenomena. A step towards an interactional sociolinguistic perspective is Gumperz's analysis of *situational* and *metaphorical* code-switching practices which takes into serious consideration both contextual and functional parameters (Gumperz, 1982; Blom and Gumperz, 1972). Switching seen as a *contextualization cue* captures the organizational aspect of alternating codes in conversation and offers a preliminary text-bound approach to the relevant phenomena.

However, it is the *emic* perspective of Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis that established the analytic primacy of the bilingual talk-in-interaction and permitted the scrutiny of instances of switching from the point of view of the

bilinguals themselves. Within this perspective, Auer (1995) proposed four patterns of discourse related (patterns I, III) and participant related alternations (patterns II, IV). Discourse related alternations are analyzed in accordance with (a) preference for same language talk, that is, the discourse functional departures from the base language of the interaction to locally organized turns (pattern I) or (b) practices of mixing (pattern III). Pattern III alternations can also pertain to the so-called Bilingual Medium, namely conversational structures involving continuous inter- and intra-sentential alternations so that the resulting mixed code cannot be attributed to any single language. Participant related alternations are analyzed in accordance with (c) the conversational negotiation of contrasting language preference systems exhibited by the interactants (pattern II) or (d) momentary departures, or else transfers, from the language of the interaction that do not alter the language choice pattern (pattern IV). In the same line of thought, Gafaranga (2007) sees alternation as an aspect of the overall order of talk organization of whole conversational episodes and extended conversational events. He also analyzes bilingual talk-in-interaction based on prototypical switching patterns that capture different aspects of the switching and mixing processes. Nevertheless, his analysis is compatible with the prototypical cases of switching that have been described in Auer (1984; 1995).

In tandem with conversation analytic approaches, we see language alternation as an orderly phenomenon; however, preference for the use of the same medium in conversational episodes participated by bilinguals does not always function as an obligatory scheme of interpretation. In the particular community under scrutiny, within what may be perceived as a dynamic process of change, multiple modes of bilingual discourse and *variable medium preference* that accommodates the needs of different generations of speakers can be attributed to the overall order of talk. Variable medium preference and a rather liberal notion of a mixing mode that moves along a *continuum* of discourse to participant relevant switches seems to be at work, as we have also discussed elsewhere (Georgalidou et al., 2010; 2013; 2014). Bilingual repertoires are dynamic and undergo change. A continuum approach captures exactly this aspect of a variable preferences / variable identities overall organizational scheme, albeit within a turn-by-turn sequential analysis of instances of alternation that pertain to the local order of talk. Within this context, in the present paper, we attempt an analysis of the humorous aspect of bilingual talk-in-interaction.

2.2 Bilingual humor

The humorous aspect of code-switching practices is a parameter of bilingual talk that has not been discussed extensively in the relevant literature so far. Despite the fact that research on both the pragmatics of bilingual conversation and the pragmatics of humor is quite abundant, a combination of both has yet to be examined. What

is more, conversational humor in general is an area of humor research that has recently attracted attention. Distinct from joke telling, humor developed across turns in conversation (Holmes, 2006) is seen as co-constructed or else conjoint (Dynel, 2009). Quite often speakers produce teases they do not mean to be offensive towards hearers who might challenge the latter jocularly (Dynel, 2009: 1293). Banter, namely rapid exchanges of humorous lines oriented towards a common theme, is aimed primarily at mutual entertainment rather than topical talk (Norrick, 1993: 290); participants sometimes try to outwit each other by means of unrealistic scenarios introduced successively within humorous sequences. In Mulkay's (1988: 26) terms, humor involves a kind of "controlled non-sense" that judged by the criteria of serious discourse can be seen as nonsensical. Yet, as Dynel (2011) points out, absurdity or impossibilities are not a prerequisite for conversational humor.

One more mechanism involved in the production of humorous sequences are marked register clashes (Attardo, 1994; Dynel, 2011; Venour et al., 2011). They constitute a case relevant to the present discussion, as code-switching and mixing devices contextualized as humorous can be seen as an example of such an incongruity. However, what constitutes incongruity, what kind of incongruity leads to humor or precisely what constitutes register, style or tone remain open questions to be answered via analysis of naturally occurring conversational sequences (Venour et al., 2011). Thus, except for the source of the incongruity *per se*, it is both the interactive mechanism of conversational humor, that is, the organization of first and second turns as in retorts, teasing and banter, the social functions of face-threat management and the establishment of bonds in interpersonal communication that form part of the relevant research questions in the analysis of conversational humor so far (Chovanec, 2011).

More specifically, in CA terms, the question "why this now" takes precedence over the analysis of the linguistic and sociolinguistic mechanisms of incongruity. Humorous sequences form part of the organization of conversation which unfolds as a process of disambiguating intentions inscribed in the linguistic elements employed in the construction of first and second pair parts by conversationalists. In this line of thought, the function of laughter as a carefully organized event in talk has extensively been scrutinized by Jefferson (1979, 1984) who has explored its sequential unfolding. Laughter contextualizes numerous functions apart from humor, but it is also a strong indication for its relevance. It can function as a strong mood indicator contextualizing either first pair parts and/or responses as humorous. Violation of expectations in turns which are not projected by previous talk – departures from the base language of the interaction can be a case in point- and laughter are connected to the management of complicated conversation organizational issues as well as identity construction processes.

Bilingual speech, contact varieties and interlanguage errors are shown to be recontextualized as amusing and stylized to become a source of entertainment in comedy contexts. They are also shown to serve as identity construction strategies in the discourse of second and third generation young bilinguals/immigrants who thus differentiate themselves from both their parents' generation and mainstream monolingual communities. For instance, Jørgensen (2005) and Lytra (2007) examine instances of humorous word-play created by words of similar phonological makeup (in Danish and Turkish the former, in Greek and Turkish the latter) in the discourse of bilingual schoolchildren in Denmark and Greece respectively. They see relevant puns as switches in both code and style that serve the shaping of social relations among bilingual and monolingual children and adolescents through the humorous management of the linguistic resources available in this context.

Other attempts to analyze aspects of bilingual humor deal with insulated sequences of switching as in the case of Kanaksprak and London Greek Cypriot. Deppermann (2007) examines the use of stylized Kanaksprak (an ethnolectal variety of German) as a funcode used in conversations among German adolescents as well as by the media. Prototypically Kanaksprak speakers are mainly Turkish/ German young males who have grown up in Germany, but who are oriented towards a "ghetto" identity. Starting in 1995, Kanaksprak has increasingly become an object of stylization in the media, mainly in various comedy programs (Androutsopoulos, 2001). As a consequence, it has become popular among German youngsters to insert fragments of stylized Kanaksprak into their conversations (Deppermann, 2007: 326). In Auer's (1988) terms, sequences of stylized Kanaksprak are "codetransfers" as they are insulated, mostly short sequences which are inserted into a stream of conversation in the speakers' unmarked colloquial variety (Deppermann, 2007: 349). Georgakopoulou & Finnis (2009) also note a conventional association between the London Greek Cypriot variety that is switched to from English to produce humorous discourse that includes, among others, metalinguistic instances of mock Cypriot. They claim that the use of the variety demonstrates a relationship of ambivalence, a "partly ours partly theirs" status, with the participants carving out a different, third space for themselves that transcends macrosocial categories (e.g. the Cypriots, the Greek-Cypriot community; Georgakopoulou & Finnis, 2009: 467).

Code-switching may also be considered a form of *involuntary humor* (Attardo, 1994: 31). Ervin-Tripp & Lampert (2009) see how bilingual "mistakes" can be recontextualized as anecdotes (2009: 24), whereas Kersten (2009) examines instances of self-disparagement as interlanguage error management in bilingual classes in elementary education. She also examines involuntary incongruity on the part of second language learners – and consequent deprecation by others in the same environment – as humor provoked unintentionally as far as the bilingual student initiating the episode is concerned. She thus makes the distinction between humor initiation and humor response concerning the contextualization of humor.

It should be noted here that, as most humor research has focused on how humor is designed by the speaker, involuntary humor (as it is often the case in interlanguage errors or incongruous switchings; see above) and the recipients' role has not received

much attention so far (see also Karachaliou & Archakis, this volume). This seems to be the case in the framing of howlers (Tsakona, 2013) and gaffes (Chovanec, 2016) as *haphazard* (Nash, 1985) or *unintentional* humor (Chiaro, 1992), errors in second language use or the discourse of bilinguals being no exception. Involuntary humor, therefore, raises the issue of intentionality, since humor as a response to non humorous contributions is framed as such by recipients rather than by speakers (Tsakona, 2013: 71). As Karachaliou & Archakis (this volume) point out, an utterance can obtain the status of a jab line² provided that (a) it contains a script opposition and (b) is accompanied with laughter either in its production *or in its reception* (see also Archakis & Tsakona, 2005). What is more, in the case of mismatches between interactants' perception of frame, putons may arise which is a potential source of amusement from the perspective of other hearers (Dynel, 2011).

Taking the literature on conversational humor and code-switching into consideration, in the present study we examine the humorous impact of switching, that is, departures from the base language of the interaction and code-mixing choices contributing to the construction of humor in bilingual talk-in-interaction. Contrary to studies reported so far, our data consists of everyday family conversations among family members and very close friends. Code alternation in humorous sequences in our data reveals different aspects of switching and mixing practices and their role in establishing the humorous mode. For one, we examine the parameter of intentionality, i.e. humor produced either (a) due to or (b) by means of switching and mixing. In case (a), we examine humor produced as a result of switching and mixing via the recontextualization of such practices as funny by participants in the events. In case (b), we focus on the discourse functional aspect of humorous switching with respect to marking the boundaries of humorous sequences, the construction of the voice of others in narratives, the exploitation of vocabulary discrepancies, as well as the management of face-threat and dis/affiliation and bonding procedures. We also focus on humor as contributing to the construction of identities for the different generation groups of the community under scrutiny.

The data

As already mentioned (in Section 1), the bilingual in Greek and Turkish Muslim community historically resides on the island of Rhodes, Greece for many centuries. Older speakers use a Greek *contact vernacular* (Winford, 2003: 236), based on the local Greek dialect of Rhodes with substantial interference from Turkish. Later

^{2.} Humorous phrases dispersed in either humorous or non-humorous texts are defined as *jab lines* (Attardo, 1994). The notion is complementary to that of the *punchline*, i.e. the single final utterance condensing incongruities in humorous texts.

generations use a variety of Greek with less interference. This interference is gradually fading away to the near or completely native Greek varieties of younger generations (Georgalidou et al., 2011). There are different proficiency levels in Turkish as well. Most members of the grandparent and parent generations are fluent in the local variety of Turkish, whereas contact with standard Turkish is mainly accomplished through television and occasional visits to Turkey. The local variety of Turkish also exhibits substantial interference from Greek (Kaili et al., 2009; 2012). It mostly affects the linguistic performance of young community members when conversing with older generations of bilingual speakers. Levels of proficiency in both Greek and Turkish seem to be a factor in the present discussion.

The data for the present study (approximately 3 hours of talk) were collected during ethnographic research that has been going on for more than 10 years. Based on the theoretical assumption that it is possible to combine ethnographic data collection procedures with a CA framework, provided that an emic perspective is preserved over the informal community organization (Milroy & Wei, 1995), we examine close-knit community family networks residing close or in the city of Rhodes. In the present study we analyze data discussed elsewhere (Georgalidou et al., 2011; 2013; 2014), this time focusing on the organization and function of humorous exchanges in everyday conversations. Recordings comprise naturally occurring conversations among members of family groups, with younger, adult and elderly members. Speakers of the younger generations in our data (aged 15 to 30+), as well as the vast majority of the younger members of the community nowadays, have attended monolingual state schools and graduated from senior high-schools (Lyceum) or Technical/Vocational schools. All younger speakers in our data (15 to 19 years old) had either graduated from or still attended state senior high-schools at the time of the recordings. In the community networks under scrutiny, family gatherings around coffee or dinner time are important everyday social events that aim at preserving the close-knit structure of the family. As we shall see in Section 4, they give family members the opportunity to get together, share experiences and opinions, argue and tease each other.

4. Analysis

Analysis is conducted within the conversation analytic approach of bilingual conversations and switching and mixing practices (Auer, 1998). We adopt a *discourse organization / participant orientation switching continuum* perspective that acknowledges the multifunctional nature of switches (Section 2.1; Georgalidou et al., 2014). In this perspective, humor related switches are seen as either basically oriented

towards the organization of discourse or basically oriented towards identity construction processes. Both orientations also encode patterns of language politics and preference systems. As such, they relate to different generations of speakers and community membership patterns.

4.1 Organizing humorous narratives

Within the continuum perspective, in Excerpts (1) and (2) we examine comparable functional switches as these delimit the voice of the *other* in humorous narratives. In Example (1) though, the humorous result is brought about unintentionally, as interlanguage errors are recontextualized as funny. As reported in the literature on bilingual humor, the bilingual speaker often becomes a source of entertainment (Section 2.2). Unintentional, or else involuntary humor, can be the result of the idiolect of bilingual speakers and/or code switching practices interpreted as incongruous. The humorous mode can be contextualized as such either by the recipients of utterances or the speakers themselves.

Example (1) concerns a narrative often repeated in the discourse of a family network but also as a joke in conversations with non-bilingual friends. It involves the grandmother of one of our informants, a female speaker of a Greek variety with substantial interference from Turkish, representative of the older generation (70+ at the time). Her ten-year-old grandson, a fluent speaker of standard Greek, often urged her to repeat utterances addressed to the female greengrocer of the neighborhood, whom she supplied with the vegetables she produced:

(1) Participants: Grandson and Grandmother³

Grandson: 'Anneanne gene söylesene Areti'ye ne dedin'

'Grandma please repeat what you said to Areti'

Grandmother: 'Αρετή μου α φέρει εσένα αύριο

Areti poss. bring.subj.3sn you.acc tomorrow κολοκυτάκια και κουλουπίτια α πουλήσει' zucchini.pl and cauliflower.pl sell.subj.3sn⁴

'My dear Areti tomorrow I will bring you zucchinis and cauliflowers to sell'

^{3.} Example (1) is not transcribed following CA conventions since it is a personal recollection of one of our informants and not a recorded conversational episode.

^{4.} The following abbreviations are used in the text: ACC = accusative, PL = plural, POSS = possessive, SN = singular, SUBJ = subjunctive.

The grandson in the incident prompts his grandmother to switch to Greek, albeit a Greek variety which exhibits substantial interference from Turkish, in order for the ungrammatical use of Greek by her to serve as a means of entertainment. Her systematic violations of the phonological⁵ and morphosyntactic⁶ rules of Greek constitute incongruity. The incident forms part of the family repertoire of humorous narratives and is repeated as a family joke and thus as intentional humor. In such renditions by other narrators the switching from Turkish (the boy's voice) to Greek (the grandmother's voice) constructs both the different participants and the locus of incongruity, namely the grandmother's performance in Greek. Initially a contingent incident and an unintentional humorous instance, the episode forms part of the often repeated family narratives in which switches are constitutional for the creation of contrasts among linguistic competences and different generations of bilingual speakers. Stylized reproduction of interlanguage talk as an insulated fun-code (as in Kanaksprak and mock Cypriot discussed in Section 2.2) elaborates distinctions among generations and demonstrates a relationship of ambivalence as to the we/they codes compatible with a dynamic process of change within the community (Section 1).

The following example is another instance of code-switching that is constitutional for the elaboration of the humorous mode. It pertains to discourse organizational strategies as it (a) contextualizes the voices of different participants in the narrated incident and (b) maximizes the humorous effect.

```
(2) Participants: F = Father, M = Mother, D2 = second Daughter^7
```

```
    F: Yemekli mi yapçek bu yaşgününü? ((referring to a fifteen-year-old friend's birthday party))
    D2: Yemekli yapçekmiş.
    M: Doğru mu söylüyorsun?
    D2: Yemek yime de gel [dedi bene, sordum]=
    M: [hahaha]
    D2: =Nα φάω και να 'ρθω ή να μη φάω είπα. O da dedi yimeden gel. Οπότε↓
```

^{5.} Κολοκυτάκια [kolocitáca] instead of κολοκυθάκια [kolociθáca], κουλουπίτια [kulupítça] instead of κουνουπίδια [kunupíðja], in which the phonemes /t/, /l/ and /t/ replace the standard phonemes /θ/, /n/, /ð/ respectively.

^{6. &#}x27;α φέρει-3sn <u>εσένα</u>' instead of 'να <u>σου</u> φέρω-1sn', 'α πουλήσει-3sn' instead of 'να πουλήσεις-2sn', in which person-endings in verbs are confused and the strong form of the personal pronoun is misused.

^{7.} We use italics to mark the use of Greek, plain to mark the use of Turkish and bold to mark English. A loose English translation of the Greek/ Turkish conversations is given. The names used in the analysis are not the real names of our informants.

```
    D2: He is going to serve food.
    M: Are you telling the truth? ((Really?))
    D2: He told me to come [without having eaten]=
    M: [hahaha]
    D2: =Should I eat and come or not I said. He told me come without having eaten. Therefore↓ (Georgalidou et al., 2010: 334)
```

Excerpt (2) is a typical case of discourse organizational code-switching (Georgalidou et al., 2010). The inter- and intraturn switching by the same speaker (turns 4, 6) contextualizes the voices of different speakers, the birthday boy's (Ercan) and the narrator's, who switches to Greek to report her own contribution to a discussion previously held with Ercan and then again to Turkish to repeat his contribution originally reported in turn 4. The humorous mode is contextualized by laughing on the part of the mother (turn 5) as a reaction to her daughter confirming a fifteen-year-old boy's intention to serve food at his birthday party. His choice is considered incongruous with his young age and the informality of the event. What is more, directly reporting her own contribution in Greek and repeating the boy's contribution via switching back to Turkish prolong and maximize the humorous effect of the narrative. At the end of turn 6, the narrator again switches to Greek thus marking the boundaries of the reported chunk and serving as closure to the narration (*Therefore*, turn 6).

4.2 Exploiting vocabulary discrepancies

In Excerpt (3) switching serves the management of divergent linguistic resources. The intraturn switch in turn 3 is a prerequisite for the humorous result, therefore another example of a humor related discourse organizational switch: lexical resources in Turkish do not allow for a pun contrasting *history* as a school subject and *history* ($\iota\sigma\tau o\rho i\alpha$, turn 3) as in life-stories. What is more, the loan word *history* has a similar phonological pattern to the Greek original ($\iota\sigma\tau o\rho i\alpha$) thus maximizing the effect of the pun:

```
(3) Participants: H/M = Hostess/Mother, FR = Ercan<sup>8</sup>
1. H/M: Yarın hangi dersi yazıyorsun?
-2. FR: History.
-3. H/M: Vay vay. Ιστορία της ζωής σου ε:? Άντει
1. H/M: Tomorrow which course are you writing? ((taking exams))
-2. FR: History.
-3. H/M: Vay vay. The history of your life isn't it? Come on ((your life story))
(Georgalidou et al., 2013: 122-124)
```

^{8.} For transcription conventions, see the Appendix.

Excerpt (3) is an instance of humorous bilingual talk-in-interaction, constructed via a jab line addressed by the mother/hostess to the fifteen-year-old friend of her children, Ercan, in turn 3. Mother/hostess initiates the episode by choosing Turkish to ask Ercan about the following day's exam. His choice to respond by switching to English, a code that constructs a youth identity⁹ rather than an ethnic one, establishes the playful mode in the interaction. Mother resorts to a Greek figurative expression to humorously target Ercan and mark the closure of the sequence (turn 3). She initiates her turn with a Turkish marker of playful despair and then switches to Greek to take advantage of the incongruity created by the ambivalent meaning of the word *history*, that is, history as a school subject and history as a story/narrative. The humorous effect could not have been achieved in Turkish due to different lexicon. Moreover, Mother contributes to the construction of Ercan's youth identity by humorously portraying him as a rather negligent school student (Georgalidou et al., 2013).

4.3 The humorous construction of young deviance

In Excerpts (4) and (5), humor constructs deviance on the part of young community members. In particular, Excerpt (4) is an instance of humorous management of youth identities during an extended family dinner conversation. Young deviance is humorously mitigated by a departure from Turkish (turns 8 and 10), the base language of a conversational episode initiated by the parents.

```
(4) Participants: F = Father, M = Mother, D1 = first Daughter, FR = Ercan
```

```
1.
     F:
          Ercan↑
 2.
     FR: Hm?
 3.
    F: Bak. Su mezeden acık al. Kokumluk. Dene len dene.
     M: Utanma bak utanma.
 5.
   F: Hani sofrada ekmek?
 6.
    M:
         Ekmek nerde?
 7.
   FR: Aka istemiyom ekmek.
→8.
    D1: Α συγνώμη έχουμε πατάτες δεν κάνει.
          Kızım iki dilim kesin ekmek.
     F:
→10. D1: Όχι.
 11. FR: Bişey olmaz tamam.
 1.
   F: Ercan↑
 2.
    FR: Hm?
          Look. Take some of this delicacy. Take a bite. Just try it,
     F:
 4.
   M:
          Don't be shy, don't be shy.
 5.
          Where is the bread on the table?
```

^{9.} One word loans are often used by young language users (Jørgensen, 2005).

```
6. M: Where is the bread?
7. FR: No I don't want bread.
→8. D1: Ah, I'm sorry, we are having potatoes, it's not right.
9. F: My daughter, cut two slices of bread.
→10. D1: No.
11. FR: It's ok no problem. (Georgalidou et al., 2010: 331)
```

Ercan makes use of Turkish, the parents' preferred code, in order to redress the dispreferred act of declining their offer for food and construct the status of a guest to a dinner event at the same time (turns 7, 11). On the contrary, disagreement and rejection is done through switching to Greek by the older daughter of the family (turns 8, 10). D1 both declines her parents' request for bread (turns 8, 10) and advices them on healthy eating, thus reversing parenting roles. Despite the fact that opposition and disagreement in family conversations do not necessarily count as dispreferred choices (Kakava, 2002; Williams, 2005), the humorous frame established by the incongruous choice of a child dictating rules of healthy eating to her own parents redresses both the dispreferred act of insubordination and that of departing from the base language of the conversation. However, as we shall also see in Excerpt (5) below, the overall preferred language by the younger members of the group, as well as the language constructing young deviation from community mainstream identities is Greek. What is more, participant related alternations mark the boundaries of teasing sequences between the young interlocutors and those participated by older community/family members.

```
(5) Participants: F = Father, G = Grandmother, D3 = third Daughter, FR = Ercan
 1.
      D3: To (\delta_{lo} \varepsilon (\mu \alpha \sigma \tau \varepsilon; ((teasing him)))
      FR: Το ίδιο είμαστε. Για ένα περισσότερο μάθημα που γράφεις;
 2.
           Για άντε δύο;
 3.
    D3: Εγώ αύριο γράφω δύο μαθήματα.
 4.
    FR: Τι γράφεις;
    D3: Αγγλικά και πληροφορική.
 6.
     FR: Είδες; (2'') Εμείς όλο κι όλο μονές έχουμε.
    G: Azcık cocuğum Turkce konuşun da, Turkce oğrenin//
→7.
 8.
    F: Cocuklar//
 9. G: Oğrenin.
           ((After the children had gone on in Greek for a few more
           turns))
→10. G: Oğrenelim de gonuşalım bile demiyorlar. Biz- Ama:n ↑
11. F: Yarın- yarın para vercekler dillerini oğrenmeye.
\rightarrow12. FR: \Xi\lambda\alpha \alpha \sigmaou \pi\omega.
\rightarrow13. D3: Έλα α μου πεις. Türkçe konuş.
 1. D3: Are we the same? ((teasing him))
      FR: We are the same. For one course you are writing more
 2.
           ((taking exams))? Two at most?
 3.
    D3: I am writing ((taking exams)) two courses tomorrow.
 4.
    FR: What are you writing? ((taking exams))
     D3: English and computer science.
 5.
```

```
You see? (2'') We are only taking exams on the odds. ((odd
 6.
           days, like Tuesday and Thursday))
           Just a little, my child, speak Turkish, to learn Turkish//
→7.
      G:
      F:
 8.
           Kids//
 9.
      G:
           To learn.
           ((After the children had gone on in Greek for a few more
           turns))
\rightarrow10. G:
           They do not even say to learn and speak. We-Ama:n 1
11. F: Tomorrow-tomorrow they will pay to learn their language.
→12. FR: Come here to tell you ((something))
→13. D3: Come here to tell me ((something)). Speak Turkish.
                                              (Georgalidou et al., 2010: 334)
```

In Excerpt (5), the younger daughter of the family and her friend (both aged 15) tease each other comparing their work load during school exams in Greek (turns 1-6). The girl's grandmother, a representative of the older generation of community members with restricted ability in Greek, who overhears their conversation, urges the children to switch to Turkish (turn 7). To do so she addresses them by switching the code. The children ignore her interference (and that of the father in the subsequent turn 8) and continue their conversation in Greek. The grandmother and the father, as overhearing audience, comment on the children's deviance expressing their frustration in Turkish. This time they do not directly address the children (turns 10-11). Ercan chooses to defy their indirect interference. Via discourse also addressed to an overhearing audience, he urges D3 to come closer so that he could tell her something. In doing so, he preserves Greek. D3 on the other hand, acknowledges her grandmother's and father's indirect directives to switch to Turkish by an intraturn switch in turn 13. However, prior to that, in the first part of turn 13, she preserves Greek by means of which she humorously paraphrases Ercan's contribution. She reverses the person reference of both the subject and the object of the imperative verb (*you/me come*, *tell you/me*), thus creating a pun (turns 12-13: come here so that I can tell you something/ come here so that you can tell me *something*). By doing so she preserves her alignment with Ercan, while humorously constructing deviation from community mainstream identities imposed by adults.

4.4 Humorously targeting the young

Contrary to Excerpts (4) and (5), in Excerpt (6), it is adults who switch codes to target younger speakers by means of humor and irony. It is part of a longer episode among parents and teenaged children who negotiate their fifteen-year-old son's intention to attend a party. Both parents construct their disapproval of the event by means of humor and irony (turns 1, 8, 12). They momentarily depart from their chosen code, Turkish, to tease their son by echoing his responses in Greek (turns 3, 10). The son marks their first pair part contributions (turns 1 and 8) as indirect criticism by his disaffiliative switches to Greek (turns 2 and 9 respectively). His

sisters alternate between codes to mark an insertion sequence (turn 4) and construct different alignments (turns 7, 11):

```
(6) Participants: M = Mother, F = Father, S = Son, D1 = first Daughter, D2 = second
    Daughter
```

```
1. M: İnsanlar yani barlarda mı yapıyo şeylerini? Doğum günlerini?
       [Mm?]
2. S: [Κλαμπ-a] - είπα.
3. Μ: Α↑ κλαμπ.
4. D1: \Delta\omega\sigma' μου το \sigma\varepsilon παρακαλώ. ((addressing her brother S))
5. F: Kim vardı yanında?
6. S: Erkan vardı.
7. D1: Μεγάλη ποικιλία. ((ironically))
8. M: Bi dakkika (.) geçenlerde değil miydi daha onun doğumgünü?
       Kaç defa- Kaç defa doğum günü yapıyo bu?
       ((they all laugh))
9. S: Πάρτι.
10. F: Α πάρτι (.) πάρτι dedi doğum günü değil.
11. D2: Geçen seferki doğum günüdü.
12. F: Her hafta \pi \acute{\alpha} \rho \tau \iota oluyo, ayda iki sefer doğum günü oluyo.
1. M: Do people then have their whatever at bars? Their birthday?
       [Mm?]
2. S: [Club-a] - I said.
3. M: Ah↑ Club.
4. D1: Give me this please. ((addressing her brother S))
5. F: Who was with you?
6. S: It was Erkan.
7. D1: What a great variety. ((ironically))
8. M: Just a minute ( .) the other day wasn't it his birthday again?
       How many- how many times does he have his birthday, this guy?
       ((they all laugh))
9. S: Party.
10. F: Ah Party↑ (.) party he said, it wasn't his birthday.
11. D2: The previous one was his birthday.
12. F: Every week there is a party, twice every month it is his
       birthday.
                                           (Georgalidou et al., 2014: 202–203)
```

Turkish is systematically used by both parents to construct first pair parts when addressing their son (turns 1, 5, 8). They momentarily switch the code (turns 3, 10) to echo his disaffiliative responsive second pair parts in Greek (turns 2, 9). By doing so, they resort to humor, as repetitions and rising intonation patterns recontextualize previous talk as incongruous. What is more, by breaching the choice of their preferred code and Grice's (1975) maxim of quantity (i.e. they repeat information that has already been established), they accentuate incongruities, thus producing an extended humorous sequence.

Greek is used by the son in turns 2 and 9 to introduce the dispreferred/disaffiliative action of other-initiated, other-repair, as he contests his parents' humorous – and critical – remarks on peer social events. Greek is consistently used by the older daughter (turns 4, 7). In turn 7, D1 contributes one more humorous comment that despite the

2.

use of her brother's preferred code is in alignment with the parents' indirect criticism. The second daughter's contribution in turn 11 is done through Turkish in alignment with the parents' preferred code and in tandem with the base language of the excerpt. Despite the fact that it confirms and further clarifies information provided in her brother's one-word contributions, it is ambiguous as to her line of alignment towards him. Both parents initiate (turn 1) and further establish the humorous/teasing mode by highlighting incongruities concerning people's birthday celebrations and dates by means of Turkish (turns 1, 8, 12). Turn 12 also serves as the closure of the humorous sequence. Code-alternation in this excerpt is discourse functional as it contributes to the establishment of the humorous mode. It also pertains to participant related alternations with Turkish established by both parents as the base language of the episode despite the fact that departures from it are frequent (altogether 8). On the other hand, Greek is mostly used to construct youth identities.

Excerpts (7) and (8) also comprise intergenerational talk-in-interaction in the humorous mode. Teasing and banter have been established as the overall organizational parameter for the dinner conversation of which Excerpts (7) and (8) are instances. The host family humorously attacks their young guest Ercan for the way his birthday party is being organized recontextualizing his responses as humorous. Switches maximize the humorous effect:

(7) Participants: F = Father, FR = Friend, M = Mother, D2 = second Daughter

Ercan akşam ne var programda? Ona göre.

FR: Programda çok şeyler var.

7. M: [That's great_↑]
8. D2: [Great_↑]

FR: hahaha
 D2: Bravo↑

9. F: Beer ((Plural-diminutive))?

```
3. F: Ne var yani?
4. M: [Süprizler mi var?]
5.
  D2: [Για να 'ρθούμε αναλόγως.]
6. FR: Dvd var, μουσική έχει dişarıda. [Μπυρίτσες//=]
7.
   M:
                                        [hadi yaa↑]
8. D2:
                                       [Όπαα↑]
9. F:
        =Μπυρίτσες;
10. FR: hahaha
11. D2: Μπράβο↑
1. F:
        Ercan, what have you programmed for the night ((for your
        birthday night))? So that we have an idea.
2. FR: The program has many things.
3. F: What has it got then?
4. M: [Are there any surprises?]
5. D2: [To come accordingly prepared.]
6. FR: There will be dvds, there will be music outside.
        [Beer ((Plural- diminutive))//=]
```

(Georgalidou et al., 2010: 337-338)

In Excerpt (7), Father initiates the episode by asking Ercan what he has programmed for his birthday party (turn 1). Ercan responds using Father's preferred language and Father initiates another question/answer sequence by requesting more specific information on the things Ercan intends to offer his guests. Both Mother and D2 take the floor simultaneously to elaborate on Father's question, the mother with a yes/no question as to whether there will be surprises at the party (turn 4) and the daughter with a justification as far as the request for details is concerned (turn 5). Mother preserves the medium used so far in the interaction but D2 switches to Greek, that is, the language generally preferred by members of the younger group. All three contributions are coinitiations framing playful attacks addressed to Ercan. Incongruity is constructed via the marking of his responses as to what he intends to do at his birthday party as incongruous.

Ercan gets the floor in turn 6 and cites the list of the things he has organized for the party by means of the Bilingual Medium (Section 2.1). Both Mother and D2 applaud in Turkish and Greek respectively exhibiting exaggerated surprise (turns 7–8). Marking Ercan's contribution as incongruous, Father momentarily departs from his preferred language and switches to Greek to reintroduce part of Ercan's contribution in the form of a mock request for confirmation (turn 9), as he humorously questions the consumption of alcoholic drinks at a fifteen-year-old's birthday party. His switch highlights the incongruity. Incongruity is also contextualized by laughing as a response to his contribution (turn 10), as well as by D2 repeating her exaggerated applause in Greek (turn 11). Humor is further constructed by continuous switches among the conversationalists' available linguistic means, namely Turkish (turns 1–4), the Bilingual Medium (turn 6) and Greek (turn 5 and turns 7–11), through which the establishment of any code as the base language of the conversation is resisted.

Excerpt (8) belongs to the same extended dinner conversation in which incongruities concerning Ercan's birthday party are repeatedly reintroduced as humorous topics. In this particular excerpt, conversation is organized as banter, that it, teasing nonsense talk. Participants compete in contributing names of elderly community members as potential guests.

```
(8) Participants: M = Mother, G = Grandmother, D2 = second Daughter, FR = Ercan
         Ercan annemi çağırdın mı? (2´´) Anne, seni çağırdı mı?
    D2: A:, anne çocuk kimi isterse- Istersen şeyi de çağırırsı Ayşe
         ablayı da?
3.
    G:
         Oynuyom da ben.
    FR: Ne oynuyon?
 4.
 5. M:
         Çaça oynuyo.
    FR: Ben onu bilmiyom ben. Εγώ ξέρω κάτι ποπ εκεί.
→6.
7. M: Ayşe ablayı çağırdın mı?
    FR: Hangini?
         ((All three women are laughing))
9. FR: Dur bakalım, çağırdımdı.
 10. M:
         Çağırdın mı?
```

```
Annem çağırdı, sormadan yapmadan çağırıyo şeyleri.
11. FR:
12. D2: Ayıp de me Ercan?
→13. FR: Μα ξέρω γω↑
→14. D2: Πες τα ρε Ερτζάν↑
1. M:
         Ercan have you invited my mother? (2´´) Mother, has he
         invited you?
2.
    D2: A:, Mother, the child, whomever he wants/ Do you want him to
         invite even aunt Ayşe?
3. G:
         I can also dance.
 4.
    FR: What do you dance?
 5. M:
         He dances cha-cha.
→6.
    FR: I don't know what this is, I. All I know is some pop dance.
7. M:
        Have you invited aunt Ayse?
8.
    FR: Who?
         ((All three women are laughing))
9. FR: Let me see, I have invited her.
10. M: Have you really invited her?
11. FR: My mother has invited her, she invites people without asking
         ((me)).
12. D2: Shame, isn't it Ercan?
\rightarrow13. FR: I bet it is
→14. D2: Just say so Ercan↑ ((A Greek expression showing profound
         agreement with the previous statement))
                                              (Georgalidou et al., 2010: 327)
```

gruities based on the contrast between a fifteen year old boy's birthday party and (this time) a possible guest list comprising elderly relatives and family friends. In turn 1, Mother asks Ercan whether he has invited her own mother, who is over 65, to his party. Mother's question is constructed as "a rather exaggerated version of the proposed action" making apparent that it is not intended as a real suggestion (Drew, 1987: 232; Georgalidou et al., 2010: 328). Along the same line, D2 takes the floor to question her mother's right to interfere with somebody else's guest list. She bypasses Ercan's right to the floor so as to seemingly "defend" his rights by initiating an insertion sequence that challenges her mother's incongruous attempt to make him invite her own mother to his party. However, her defending Ercan is cancelled in the second part of her contribution where the name of another elderly

In Excerpt (8), the humorous/teasing frame is again constructed through incon-

Mother, daughter (D2) and Grandmother compete in claiming the floor to contribute nonsensical scenarios concerning the event. The second insertion sequence (turns 3–6) initiated by Grandmother further expands banter. She claims the floor to contribute a playful assertion about her dancing abilities. Ercan responds rather seriously, as if ignoring the incongruity aspect of the contribution, ¹⁰ by asking

potential guest is introduced. Banter is maintained by Grandmother in yet another

turn initiating self disparaging humor as she asserts her ability to dance.

^{10.} See also Chovanec (2016) on unintentional humor connected to the incongruity between perceived and actual participation frameworks.

Grandmother what she can dance. The question is answered by Mother with another humorous assertion that she can dance cha-cha, which is in obvious contrast with what a person of her age can actually do. Incongruity is further maximized as the aforementioned dance is outmoded. Ercan maintains the serious mode by stating that he does not know what cha-cha is, immediately followed by a switch to Greek to assert that all he knows is some pop dance. Code-switching in turn 6 therefore, further contributes to the construction of opposition between Ercan's and the women's perception of the conversational framework (Chovanec, 2016), as well as between the things the speaker does or does not know. The choice of initiating his response in Turkish, the base language of the conversational episode so far, further constructs the serious frame on his part.

In turn 7, Mother's switch back to Turkish marks a switch in topic. She reestablishes the humorous mode, as she uses Turkish to reintroduce the incongruous possibility of inviting aunt Ayse echoing the pending second pair part of turn 2. She addresses Ercan with a question as to whether the elderly aunt has actually been invited to the party. His request for confirmation of the identity of the person of reference in turn 8 is contextualized as involuntary humor as all his women interlocutors burst into laughter. Their reaction further contextualizes the episode as banter.

After establishing that old aunt Ayse has been invited by Ercan's mother, without letting him know, D2 mocks rejection and maintains Turkish as the medium of the interaction (turn 12). Again in a serious rather than teasing frame though, Ercan switches to Greek to construct alignment as far as criticizing his mother is concerned as well as their shared youth identity (turn 13). In her responsive contribution D2 also switches to Greek, a potential marker of realignment on her part. However, her switching does not necessarily contextualize a switch to the humorous mode established so far, as her agreement is rather exaggerated and in contrast to her taking part in the banter so far. Yet, it serves as a closure device to the episode.

Humorous "attacks" against Ercan contribute to the construction of a "collective pleasurable sociability" (Lytra, 2007: 206), as well as the sense of closeness and in-grouping. Departures from the base language of the conversation in turns 6 and 13 mark Ercan's departures from the humorous mode established via Turkish jab lines systematically targeting him. They contribute to the construction of his identity as a young partner to the event.. His lack of response in an equally playful manner also reinforces his status not only as a guest, who would not risk involvement in "an inherently ambiguous activity that can produce uncertainty in talk" (Lytra, 2007: 100), but also as a young person addressing his adult hosts (Georgalidou et al., 2010: 329). Mother's switch back to the base language (turn 7) marks maintenance of banter which is further contextualized by laughter. The switching to Greek in the closing sequence of the episode (turns 13–14) by the younger members of the group also reinforces the contrast between young versus adult identities.

4.5 Adult humorous bilingual talk

Excerpt (9) forms part of another extensive family dinner conversation, this time among adults, namely community members of equal social status. Code mixing and switching in this episode also serves as a means of contextualizing the humorous mode in the interaction:

```
(9) Participants: N = Father 60, G = Mother 55, A = Son 31
1.
    N: Έχει αυτό- sucuk
2.
    A: Εγώ νόμιζα ότι είναι αλμυρό sucuk.
3. Ν: Όχι sucuk είναι.
4. A: Γλυκό;
5. N: Ε ναι.
6. G: Lokum sucuğu ρε↑
7. A: Lokum sucuğu demedin ki sen bana. Sucuk dedin.
8. G: Sucuk lokum dedim.
9. A: Lokum demedin anne.
10. N: Sucuk είπες.
11. G: E iyi tamam (.) hadi.
12. A: Ne var bunun içinde? Sucuk dedin sen bana.
13. Ν: Ε:: ή εν πάση περιπτώση εν τ' ακούσαμε.
14. Α: Κόψε ένα κομματάκι τώρα.
15. G: E iyi tamam.
16. Α: Λέει τίποτα;
17. G: Μ' ε: θα λέει;
18. Ν: Ξέρεις τα- τέτοια πράγματα όταν γίνονται στην Ελλάδα είναι
        πιο- θυμάσαι που πέρνα από την Αθήνα; Αλλά μπορεί να ναι καλό
        κι αυτό αλλά το παραψήνουσι. =
19. G: =Bak şeyi de var [asmaya].
20. N:
                         [Οι Τούρκοι] το παραψήνουν.
21. G: Ναι τους κερατάδες τους Τούρκους, ε τους κερατάδες τους
        Τούρκους↑ ((playfully))
22. Α: Μην το κόβεις, ξεραίνεται μετά=
23. G: =E tamam. Yicemiz kadar. Dur bakalım üç tane kesmedim daha.
        Birer tane. Aka↑ (.) Αχ να ναι καλά η αφεντικίνα μας.
1. N: There is this- sucuk. ((ambiguity: Turkish sausage/ sucuk
        delight))
2. A: I thought it was salty sucuk. ((turkish sausage))
3. N: No it is sucuk. ((sucuk delight))
4. A: Sweet?
5. N: Well yes.
6. G: Sucuk delight re\uparrow
7. A: You didn't tell me it was sucuk delight. You said suzuk.
        ((turkish sausage))
8. G: Sucuk delight, I said.
9. A: You didn't say delight mum.
10. N: Suzuk ((turkish sausage)) you said.
11. G: Well, ok (.) come on.
12. A: What is there in it? You said it was suzuk. ((turkish
```

sausage))

```
N: E:: or in any case, we didn't hear it.
13.
    A: Now cut a small piece.
14.
15.
    G: Well ok ok.
16.
    A: Is it any good?
17.
        Wouldn't it be?
    G:
    N: You know the- these things when they are made in Greece they
18.
         are more - do you remember the ones I used to buy in Athens?
         But maybe this is good too but they usually overdo it.=
19.
    G:
        =Look, there is something to hang it [from].
20.
    N:
                                              [The Turks] overdo it.
    G: See the rascals the Turks, ah the rascals the Turks
21.
         ((playfully))
22. A: Don't cut it, it gets dry afterwards =
23.
    G: =E ok. Only the pieces we will eat. Look, I haven't cut three
        pieces yet. One each. Aka (.) Ah God bless our ((lady)) boss.
                                          (Georgalidou et al., 2013: 122-123)
```

In pattern III code-mixing conversational episodes (Auer, 1995; Section 2.1) the direction of switches may be irrelevant, but the contiguous juxtaposition of languages may mark different addressees and contextualize repair, shifts in topic, the introduction of narrative, topic-comment structures, reiterations for emphasis, rejections, as well as different types of semantic contrasts (Georgalidou et al., 2013). In Excerpt (9), switches move along the discourse organizational/participant oriented code-alternation continuum. They comprise teasing targeting the mother (G/Gulsun) as responsible for a misunderstanding concerning a delicacy served during dinner. Disproportionate insistence on maintaining a rather insignificant topic constitutes incongruity and establishes the humorous mode within the extended sequence of turns 6–13. Intrasentential switches adjacent to the term *sucuk* (turns 1–5), as well as its foregrounding in sentence initial positions (turns 6–8, 10, 12) accomplish its thematization and maximize the humorous effect of repeatedly introducing it as the topic of the conversation.

The Bilingual Medium (Section 2.1) is maintained in turns 1–6. The first part of turn 6 comprises the full name of the dish in Turkish offered as a dispute concluding device. The last part of the turn constitutes a vernacular Greek summon in the form of interjection, which, uttered in a high pitch, may contextualize aggravation of tension. In tandem with such an interpretation, in turn 7, A addresses his mother in Turkish to initiate a series of turns that have the structure of a mock argument (turns 7–9, all in Turkish). Father-N, in alignment with the son's challenges, switches to the Bilingual Medium, in turn 10, to which G responds by means of the same medium, in a turn that contains two Turkish agreement markers (*iyi*, *tamam*), that function as tension defusing devices (turn 11). In turn 12, A constructs two turn constructional units in Turkish, the first in alignment with work done in the previous turn, as it marks a shift in topic, and the second reintroducing the dispute for the third time (*you told me it was* suzuk). Father-N switches to Greek in turn 13 with yet another

de-escalating turn to mark the end of the mock argument by sharing responsibility for the misunderstanding (*Ee: or in any case, we didn't hear it*), to which his son aligns both by switching to Greek and shifting the topic (turn 14). The switch to Greek by both father and son (turns 13, 14) marks the end of the extended teasing sequence.

For the rest of the episode, alternations mark shifts in addressee and/or topic (turns 16, 19, 21, 23), contextualizing different modalities (Auer, 2010: 469). The humorous response of Gulsun to her husband's remarks about how the Turks overdo the dish in question (turns 20–21) is constructed via switching to Greek in turn 21. As far as her code choice is concerned, she switches to Greek to contribute a punchline responding to her husband's criticism of the Turks by a mock insult repeated twice (the rascals the Turks, turn 21). She thus accentuates reference to native Turkish people as the they/them group. By doing so, she constructs delayed alignment with her husband's choice of code in order to humorously contest his distancing from native Turks and his criticism as to the quality of the delicacy in question when made by them (turns 18, 20). Despite the fact that the son maintains Greek in the next turn constructional unit that introduces a new topic, she refrains from aligning with his choice. Greek is momentarily chosen by Gulsun as a switch in topic and mode device and its use marks the boundaries of the punch line of turn 21. The episode is concluded by her by means of another switch to the Bilingual Medium (turn 23) which marks the boundaries of one more humorous jab line by means of which she rhetorically blesses the person who presented them with the delicacy, that is, her husband's boss (Ah God bless our ((lady)) boss).

5. Discussion and conclusions

Analysis of excerpts of bilingual conversations discussed in Section 4 was conducted within the conversation analytic approach of code-switching and mixing practices (Auer, 1998). We adopted a *discourse organization / participant orientation continuum* perspective that acknowledges the multifunctional nature of switches (Georgalidou et al., 2014). Therefore, we examined aspects of the sequential organization of talk and identity construction processes as these can be approached based on humorous code-alternations. We focused on the humorous aspect of bilingual conversations among speakers representing different generations within the community under scrutiny. Our informants are shown to make use of patterns of switching and mixing the codes which pertain to the linguistic resources of the community, in order to organize humorous episodes within discourse, to construct aspects of the bilingual identity and dynamic alignments among participants to conversational events. Vocabulary and structural discrepancies of the contrasted linguistic systems, as well as interlanguage errors are also taken into account.

All the examples discussed in the analysis highlight different aspects of humorous events in bilingual conversations. To begin with, switching codes delimits the voice of the other in humorous narratives, thus thematizing direct reported contributions as funny (Examples 1 and 2). It is constitutional for the organization of narratives as switches either form the humorous punch line (Example 1) or maximize the humorous effect via emphatic reiterations (Example 2). Moreover, the switching of codes is a means for the construction of humorous puns in the case of linguistic discrepancies of the languages involved (Example 3). As far as discourse organizational aspects of bilingual conversations are concerned, dispreferred speech acts and consequent face-threats can be redressed through humorous switches. What is more, humorous switches can be employed to mark addressees and topics, as well as variable language preference systems (Examples 4 and 5). In particular, in Example (4), humor is employed as redressive action for the dual infringement of both parent/child roles and language preference systems. In Example (5), on the other hand, switches mark addressees and audiences pertaining to different generations, as well as the boundaries of the humorous mode employed in conversations among young community members via their preferred language, which is different from that of the parent and grandparent generations. Similar processes can be seen in discourse addressed to younger participants to events, in which parental authority can also be managed via the switching of codes (Examples 6, 7 and 8). Adults are seen to employ humor to scold and tease teenaged interlocutors, highlighting their choices, linguistic or otherwise, as incongruous. Again, switches contribute to the construction of teasing and banter, maximize the humorous effect via reiterations and set the boundaries of humorous exchanges. Similar processes are at work in extended conversational episodes among adult community members (Example 9).

In all 9 episodes discussed, humorous switches are employed to create multiple alignments leaving options concerning face-management open, as teasing can prove an inherently risky conversational activity (Lytra, 2007). They mark different generations of speakers, different competences, different identities and language politics even among speakers of the same generation (Example 9). Consequently, humorous code-switching, or switching as a parameter in humorous conversations, proves multifunctional and serves both organizational and participant oriented aspects of the bilingual speech-events. Both orientations also encoded language politics and preference systems related to different generations of speakers and community membership patterns.

Bilingual humor in everyday conversations is a rather unexplored area for both research on humor and bilingual talk-in-interaction. Despite the fact that research on both domains is abundant, little attention has been paid to whether or how switching and mixing devices are constitutive for the establishment of the humorous mode and the construction of incongruity. Contrary to studies mainly dealing

with bilingual classrooms, heteroglossic and media environments (Jørgensen, 2005; Deppermann, 2007; Lytra, 2007; Ervin-Tripp & Lampert, 2009; Kersten, 2009), our data consists of everyday family conversations among members of families and very close friends (see also Georgakopoulou & Finnis, 2009). As far as the latter are concerned, analysis of code alternation in humorous sequences in everyday conversations in the bilingual community under scrutiny revealed different aspects of switching and mixing practices and their role in establishing the humorous mode. First, switches serve the construction of various incongruities and the exploitation of discrepancies among the linguistic systems involved. Moreover, they are connected to the parameter of intentionality and the recontextualization of bilingual discourse as funny. They mark the boundaries of humorous sequences; they construct the voice of others in narratives and serve the management of face-threat and dis/affiliation and bonding processes. Last but not least, humorous switches contribute to the construction of identities for the different generation groups pertaining to the community under scrutiny. Thus, further research on everyday conversations within bilingual communities is deemed necessary since the analysis of the humorous aspect of bilingual talk-in-interaction reveals aspects of both the management of variable linguistic resources and identity construction processes.

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Appendix. Transcription conventions

-	self-repair
//	interruption
(.)	pause

(())extralinguistic information

underlining speaker emphasis

latching

[]simultaneous speech () unintelligible segment

 $\uparrow\downarrow$ rising or falling intonational shift

stopping fall in tone continuing intonation ? rising inflection

CHAPTER 5

Laughing at you or laughing with you?

Humor negotiation in intercultural stand-up comedy

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This study focuses on stand-up comedy in English at Rome's Comedy Club and investigates how the comedians and the audience deal with humor based on stereotypes about Italians and foreigners living in Italy (e.g. culture shock, cultural differences and identity issues). Moreover, this article discusses how comedians and the audience interact (mostly in English and sometimes in Italian) and negotiate humor regarding sensitive topics. The data analysis demonstrates that the comedians consciously exploit the context and accommodate to the audience to guarantee a positive response. In turn, the audience's sense of superiority is fulfilled by the comedian's general disparagement (e.g. of others, celebrities) and self-disparagement (e.g. of comedians in general). Most importantly, the audience shows that it does not take audience-disparagement at face value.

Keywords: stand-up comedy, audience, stereotype-based humor, culture, identity

1. Introduction

Humor does not occur in a vacuum. It is made, received and negotiated constantly within society and in more or less restricted groups (e.g. at work, among friends, at school). According to Raskin (1985: 100–107) and Attardo (1994: 286–290), humorous texts and interaction are perceived as successful communicative acts because speakers and hearers commit to a *non-bona fide* communication mode whereby the hearer suspends his/her disbelief in order to enjoy the humor of the text (cf. also Shilikhina, this volume). S/he accepts something that may or may not be true and s/he reacts accordingly (e.g. laughing or smiling). However, if the hearer refuses to co-operate, the text will not achieve its goals.

In stand-up comedy, which is the focus of the present study, the comedian-audience interaction is semi-scripted as comedians prepare their routines, which can be adjusted according to the context and the audience. In this sense, the comedian-audience interaction is an essential part of the comic performance. According to Lockyer & Mayers' (2011) survey, people enjoy attending stand-up comedy shows because they respect the artist, expect to laugh at the unexpected, feel close to the comedian, like the idea of interacting with him/her and want to share the comic experience with others. As Pérez (2013) observes, the audience tends to accept and laugh at disparaging humor (even when it verges on racism), as stand-up comedy-goers do not take potentially offensive remarks at face value (cf. also Scarpetta & Spagnolli 2009). As a matter of fact, comedy relies heavily on stereotypes concerning race, sexual orientation, ethnicity and religion, which some people may find obnoxious. Most importantly, stand-up comedy allows for a sort of freedom of speech that can rarely be matched by other forms of interpersonal encounters (Seirlis, 2011).

In Italy, stand-up comedy is booming, and many shows entirely based on comic performances are regularly televised on national TV channels (e.g. Made in Sud, Colorado Caffè, Zelig). Comedians (e.g. Maurizio Crozza, Enrico Brignano) successfully perform in large and small venues throughout the year and across the country. Such shows are normally conceived and performed by Italians for (supposedly) an Italian-speaking audience. Yet, to the best of my knowledge, little attention has been paid to the stand-up comedy that native English-speaking expatriates perform in Italy. Therefore, this study analyzes the comedian-audience interaction in English-speaking stand-up comedy at the Rome's Comedy Club (RCC), which usually takes place in Rome once a month. The data has been taken from a one-and-half-hour show performed and recorded on 27th March 2015. I randomly selected this performance for my study, but many clips of other shows can be found on YouTube. One of the features that all the comedians' routines in this corpus share is the inclusion of at least one sketch that mocks their own culture of origin or ethnicity (American, British, Irish, Asian, Mexican, etc.). In addition, they construct and challenge their identity through sketches that play on received stereotypes about Italians and "Italianness". Besides, all their routines cover topics such as sex, body weight, family, and life experiences. Finally, some comedians also mock the audience to get them involved.

Hence, my analysis seeks to shed light on how these comedians and the audience interact (mostly in English and sometimes in Italian) and negotiate humor based on stereotypes regarding identity. Additionally, I investigate how stand-up comedians exploit the context to elicit humor via general disparagement (e.g. of others, celebrities), self-disparagement (e.g. of comedians in general), and even the disparagement of the audience.

Some particularities of stand-up comedy as a genre

As Mintz (1985) observes, stand-up comedy shows are organized according to a fairly standardized structure, although they can dynamically adjust to fit the audience at hand. Comedians start their routines by "working the room" and asking the audience rapidfire questions (which can result in insults or quick punch lines) to verify whether both parties share the same values, thus contributing to setting the mood of the show (Mintz, 1985: 78-79). In Rutter's (1997; 2000) investigation of British stand-up comedy, the "working the room" stage is defined as a sort of "warm-up" that is part of the introduction to comedians' routines. During this introductory part to the whole show, the presenter (a.k.a. compère) announces the comedian(s) and may (positively) evaluate them so as to build up expectations before or while they go on stage. This helps to frame the audience's response towards the appreciation of the comedian, for example, by eliciting applause. Rutter (2000: 477) describes applause as a bridging strategy that helps connect the presenter to the comedian. Both scholars contend that the "warm-up" phase strategically tests the audience's future response, on which the rest of the performance (i.e. main body) may depend. The show ends with a closure, which may or may not include humorous remarks addressing the audience, etc.

In general, the shows at RCC closely match Rutter's description above. However, during the show under scrutiny the host and usual presenter Marsha De Salvatore (an American-Italian woman living in Italy) has left the floor to a guest comedian Kyra, who introduces the six other comedians and also closes the show. Interestingly, Kyra acknowledges her role while on stage by saying that her job is to warm up the audience as if she were their "fluffer". Her choice of words can be considered an act of self-disparaging humor, since in the pornography industry, a "fluffer" is a person in charge of keeping a male adult aroused during the shooting of a porn movie. Sexual innuendos are an important part of Kyra's routine, which comprises a series of jab lines, or humorous triggers that occur within the body of the text (Attardo 2001: 82-90), and a punch line that is placed at the end of the exchange (see also Examples 8 and 11 below). Kyra's intonation also contributes to creating these sexual innuendos. In the case described here, the audience response is mild laughter, but a few people also contributes verbally to confirm they spotted the reference. This brief example shows how comedians try and connect with the audience from the very start of the show.

In his analysis of stand-up comedy and its many and different function(s), Mintz (1985: 79) points out that stand-ups are based on creative distortion and exaggerations of situations that aim at poking fun at people or describing incongruous contexts (see Raskin, 1985 and Attardo, 1994 on incongruity as the basis of humor). More importantly, he maintains that stand-up comedy has a specific social and cultural function

(as least within the American and Western societies at large), since it can be seen as a sort of outlet for the audience's sense of superiority towards the weaker members of society that may be ridiculed (e.g. buffoons, cowards, and the comedians themselves; see Morreall, 1983: 4-37 and Raskin, 1985: 30-41 for a detailed overview of superiority theory).

Mintz (1985) also holds that comedians have started building a so-called comic persona (cf. "the comedian's style" in Pate, 2014: 58), becoming the voice of their contemporary culture, tantamount to counter-culture social commentators who entertain their audience. As Pate (2014: 58) explains, "[t]he pre-persona-era comedy consisted in jokes; in the persona era, the point of view itself presented by the comedian onstage constitutes the humor". For instance, Joan Rivers and Phyllis Diller voiced the feminist movement, dealing with gender issues and stereotyped ideas and expectations (see Lockyer, 2011 for a detailed analysis of Joan Rivers' stand-up routines). Others, like Alan King, gave vent to their frustration caused by bureaucracy, whereas Redd Foxx sought to liberate society by talking about taboo sex-related topics (Mintz, 1985: 75-76). In her analysis, Seirlis (2011) demonstrates how South African comedians develop their routines to raise their audience's awareness about the inequities and disservices in that society.

Clearly, originality helps develop a comic persona as it can ensure professional comedians' career capital and, consequently, a share of the stand-up comedy business (Pate, 2014: 66). Nonetheless, it is the audience that is called on to contribute to the success of the comedian's performance. Therefore, comedians often accommodate their routines to fit the specific context and audience (cf. Seewoester Cain, this volume). As Mintz (1985: 78) rightly observes,

> [p]erhaps the best, if not the only, place to witness stand-up comedy and true social and cultural mediation is in live performance, preferably at one of the small comedy clubs or intimate night club rooms where the interaction between the comedian and the audience is more prominent. (my emphasis)

Humorous interactions are certainly based on social and cultural negotiation. Scarpetta & Spagnolli's (2009) empirical investigation of the live performances of a group of Afro-American comedians in Los Angeles seems to confirm that the context can shape the audience's recognizability and acceptability of a potentially face-threatening act such as stand-up comedy. Interestingly, Scarpetta & Spagnolli (2009: 18) also show that comedians alternate self-disparaging and audience-disparaging humor to ensure acceptability.

Other scholars have concentrated on the ways humor is negotiated and constructed in stand-up comedy. For instance, Rutter (2001) investigates stand-up comedy from a performative point of view and suggests that comedians negotiate the humor of their performance with the audience via four strategies:

- 1. *Re-incorporation*, involving the use of recurring humorous elements (e.g. words, phrases or themes). These elements become a sort of signal that helps the audience laugh at the appropriate moment (cf. Scarpetta & Spagnolli, 2009, who define this phenomenon as "fillers and surveys" and Adetunji, 2013, who calls it "formulaic expressions").
- 2. Alliteration and assonance (or even rhyme) that may or may not occur in the punch line.
- 3. Character footing, which may refer to the comedian's peculiar intonation while performing. It may also refer to any characters (or alter-ego) s/he uses during their routine (with additional accents, mimicry or vocal attributes, e.g. a murderer with a raspy voice).
- *Intonation* (with a fall-and-rise pattern in punch lines) is a performance-specific strategy. Again, it helps the audience "tune in" and laugh at the appropriate time.

As we will see in Section 5, the comedians in my database use some of these strategies more or less consciously to obtain "maximum comedy effect during their live performances" (Rutter, 2001: 308).

In this context, the comedian-audience interaction can turn into an awkward experience. For example, Jaffe et al. (2015: 137) argue that audience response may be the occasion for debate and tension over issues such as belonging and identity, especially when the performers call on the audience to be part of the "ideological formation", which means accepting or refuting the comedian's point of view.

I would suggest that, from an interactional point of view, stand-up routines can be compared to instances of casual conversational humor (see also Seewoester Cain, this volume). They include interlocutors that may support the humor by contributing with more humor (e.g. jointly constructing the scenario, as we will see in Section 4), by echoing the words of the speaker, offering sympathy or contradicting self-deprecating humor (Hay, 2001). Forms of support may include laughter, cheering, whooping and applause as well as jeers, boos, etc. (see Scarpetta & Spagnolli, 2009 for a summary). Such supporting strategies may depend on personal choice or style (e.g. contributing with more humor, irony) while others are socially imposed (e.g. contradicting self-deprecating humor). Furthermore, following Norrick (1993), I contend that comedians seek to elicit their interlocutors' reaction via strategies that can challenge, test and attack the audience and, at the same time, show the speaker's wit. Also, personal anecdotes (be they about humorous or painful experiences) can be cleverly employed to promote the comedian's positive self-image. Finally, stand-up comedy can entertain and create ingroup bonding (see Brodie, 2008 on similar conclusions regarding the use of personal testimonials or biographical events in stand-up comedy to win the audience's affection).

Research has so far shed light on some salient common features across stand-up performances and comedians. However, the new migration waves from more or less developed countries into Europe have resulted in the emergence of a new phenomenon: the creation of international stand-up comedy clubs across Europe, for instance in Barcelona (Spain), Zurich (Switzerland) or Luxemburg. Aside from regular migrant performers, who are mostly speakers of English, these international comedy clubs host comedians who tour around Europe and America. As mentioned in Section 2, in Italy, Marsha De Salvatore together with Stephanie Tyrrell founded the Rome's Comedy Club (RCC), which hosts the performances of a group of regular and guest comedians.

Interestingly, studies devoted to humor entirely performed in languages within a non-native-speaking context are scant. The literature seems to feature mainly research on code-switching and code-mixing of languages. For instance, Adetunji (2013) investigates humor partly performed in English in Nigeria to conclude that code-switching is used by Nigerian comedians to elicit ingrouping with their audience. This strategy marks comedians' willingness to speak with the audience rather than to it. Similarly, Tsang & Wong (2004) analyze how some stand-up comedians in Hong Kong construct a shared identity with the audience via English-Cantonese code-mixing. Perrino (2015) concentrates on the way humor can exploit code-switching from a standard language into a dialect to disparage the target ethnic group that cannot understand that dialect. Harimoto (2011) has shown how a peripheral language such as Pidgin is used during stand-up comedy sketches to mark otherness and poke fun at outsiders. Conversely, Da Silva (2015), Jaffe (2015), Koven & Simões Marques (2015) and Vigouroux (2015) have demonstrated that code-switching and heteroglossia may be deployed to challenge or redefine stereotypes, thus repositioning an ethnic group within a given society. All these studies focus on minorities with low prestige within the host culture. In this light, humor may well consolidate social stigma and risk reinforcing already existing stereotypes (Vigouroux, 2015: 267).

By contrast, the data from the performance under scrutiny here will show how the Anglo-American culture, which is highly regarded and appreciated in Italy, is challenged and subverted via humor by its own members and one Italian comedian speaking English. In their routines, the identity issue is often touched upon, questioned and humorously negotiated with the audience. It will also be shown how code-mixing and code-switching are consciously exploited by the comedians on stage to debate the identity issue regarding the expatriates and the "others". Considering the context, it is not surprising to find that Italians are the target of the humor in almost all comedians' routines in the data.

See respectively Barcelona International Comedy Festival (2016), International Comedy Club (2016), Rao (2014).

Methodology

Humor is a relative, idiosyncratic and generally complex phenomenon, which defies a unified definition (see among others Palmer, 1994; Oring, 2003). As mentioned above, laughter cannot be considered as the sole parameter for gauging humor (Attardo, 1994: 10). Other types of reactions, be they non-verbal (e.g. smiles, facial expressions of approval or disapproval) or verbal (e.g. the audience's jointly constructing the scenario, echoing the words of the speaker, offering sympathy or contradicting self-deprecating humor) can also be found (Hay, 2001; Chovanec & Tsakona, this volume). Stand-up comedy particularly demonstrates that the audience's appreciation may also be expressed by using many of the above strategies. Nonetheless, I consider humor and laughter two intrinsically connected phenomena. This view is also shared by many scholars who analyze stand-up comedy and consider eliciting laughter as the comedians' main objective (see among others Tsang & Wong, 2004: 770; Lockyer & Myers, 2011: 182).

Given the above, here I use verbal and non-verbal reactions occurring during stand-up performances as ways to operationalize Attardo's (1994: 9) broad definition of humor as "whatever a social group defines as such". This is also compatible with Chovanec & Tsakona's (this volume) suggestion that the investigation of what they define as interactional humor should not merely focus on the linguistic analysis of the text, but also on how interlocutors negotiate humor in a broader sense, and by considering the diverse reactions to texts/utterances that are intended as humorous.

The excerpts below are categorized on the basis of the topics used by the comedians to elicit humor (cf. Adetunji, 2013). Moreover, I refer to Rutter's (2001) four performative strategies described above to show how the comedians involve the audience in their routines so as to obtain their preferred response (e.g. laughter, applause, whistling). The data analysis that follows should be seen as involving a continuum that includes clear-cut as well as borderline cases. The clarity of the former and the in-depth analysis of the latter will determine the validity and applicability of the taxonomy used, as in any meaningful classification.

The transcription of the data below is based on Vigouroux (2015), which has proved to be a simplified yet effective way to report on both linguistic and extra linguistic items in my corpus (for transcription conventions, see the Appendix). Before the show, I briefly interviewed all the comedians about their experience as stand-up performers and asked them to grant permission to publish their full names. Due to personal and professional reasons, Kyra asked to be referred to by her first name only. All the other comedians allowed me to report their full names, and they are briefly described with reference to the extracts of their sketches discussed below.

4. Data analysis

The data in this section is operatively divided into four subsections under which I subsumed some recurrent patterns that can be found in the comedians' routines under scrutiny. Subsection 4.1 discusses instances in which the comics mock cultural stereotypes and rely on shared experiences to elicit the audience's amused response. Subsection 4.2 considers general mocking and disparagement involving the comedians' family and friends, whereas Subsection 4.3 includes instances of self-disparagement. Finally, Section 4.4 investigates a set of examples that clearly show how comedians mock the audience to get them involved.

Cultural stereotypes (shared experiences) 4.1

As mentioned earlier, all the comedians (including the guest ones) at this RCC show have included jokes about cultural stereotypes in their routines. They target their native, Italian and other cultures in reference to such aspects as lifestyle and talking style. This strategy of contrasting various cultures and cultural practices is clearly exploited for humorous purposes. They also joke about differences in food, reliability of customer service, etc. The comedians do that because they are aware that their audience includes both English native speakers and Italians (or other foreigners) with a very good command of English. Due to space limitations, only four examples will be discussed here, but they will hopefully suffice to demonstrate my point.

Example (1) is taken from Kyra's "warming up" routine, before introducing the other comedians. Kyra, who self-identifies as a lesbian, is a US citizen of Asian descent currently working in Naples. She exploits a well-known cultural stereotype about Neapolitans (and Italians in general) as reckless drivers. However, she also challenges stereotypes about ethnicity and female drivers:

```
(1)
1 K
        \Anyways It's very nice to be here tonight and I'm from
        /Naples, /as you heard and Naples gets a /bad rap
2
        [=reputation] \it really /does, but I don't think it's that bad
3
4
        because for the first time in my life \as an Asian woman I'm
        considered a /decent driver
6 Aud. ((Laughter)) True!
7 K
        Basically, like [inaud.] I /literally hit a /dumpster the other day
        and /nobody blinked an eye
8
9 Aud. ((Laughter))
10 K
        I'm kidding, they don't they don't have dumpsters.
11 Aud. ((Mild laughter))
12 K
        It's a crazy joke.
```

The audience responds to Kyra's joke with laughter. However, one female member of the audience also contributes to the humor by saying *true* (line 6), which seems to confirm shared experiences. Interestingly, in line (10) Kyra offers a further disparaging comment by saying the there are no dumpsters in Naples, thus implying lack of organization and cleaning. However, after a mild response from the audience she seems compelled to make amends by implying that the joke was not that good (line 12). As can be noticed, intonation and pauses are always strategically used to emphasize punch lines and elicit audience response (see lines 5 and 8).

Example (2) is taken from Ryan Castello's routine. He is a US citizen (although his surname betrays his Italian descent) married to an Italian woman, and they have settled in Italy. His performance is almost entirely based on the differences between Italian and American lifestyles (e.g. eating pasta every day, no Dunkin' Donuts restaurants). In this excerpt, he exploits Americans' alleged ignorance about Italian cultural heritage and their subsequent inability to appreciate it. Cultural heritage is one of the most important drivers of Italy's tourism industry (along with good weather, nice beaches, excellent food, etc.):

```
(2)
1 RC
        It's /hard It's /hard It's hard to be an American here and
        appreciate that shit_ it really /IS when you are from when
2
        you are from /corporate plastic, /mass produced Disney,
3
4
        McDonald's, everything is the /SAME You've to /learn how
5
        to appreciate shit like culture and history <numbering with his
        fingers>
6
7 Aud. ((Laughter))
8 RC
        And real /food.
9 Aud. (Laughter))
10 RC
        This is a lea::rnt thing it doesn't happen /naturally. It's a
11
        difficult /problem for Americans \it can be /serious. You saw
12
        these two American girls who were recently arrested inside the
1.3
        Coliseum
14 Aud. ((Laughter)) Yeah!
        They were arrested inside the Coliseum for etching their names
15 RC
16
        <miming the action> into the /wa::ll of the /COLISEUM
17 Aud. ((Laughter))
        \And then taking a selfie_ _ Right_ You can't really /blame
18 RC
19
        them They /didn't understand what they were doing They
20
        didn't know To them there's no /appreciable difference
21
        between the /INSIDE of an /architectural \marvel of
22
        /ANTIQUITY and the inside of a dressing room at /GAP.
23 Aud. ((Laughter))
24 RC
       No difference.
25 Aud. ((Laughter))
26 RC No difference at all, you know <takes a break and drinks
        water>.
27
28 Aud. ((Laughter; prolonged applause))
```

```
Sure, there's no /remorse about it. <playing the young girl with
29 RC
        squeaky voice> I'm /SO:: /sorry /ohh /SO:: /sorry about \that_
30
        I sort didn't know that two letters /inside thi::s rock would be
31
32
        /such a big \deal
33 Aud. ((Laughter))
34 RC I'm /SO:: /sorry Mr. /Carabinieri Me::n.
35 Aud. ((Laughter))
36 RC
        Hey, listen! Do you think we can take a selfie in this cute little
37
        town jail cell here <miming the action>
38 Aud. ((Laughter))
        <Miming dialing on the phone> Hashtag, just like /Amanda
39 RC
40
         Kno::x
41 Aud. ((Prolonged laughter)) ((mild disapproving tone)) Ohh!
```

The potential humor stems from the incongruity Ryan Costello highlights. In his opinion, the stereotypical American girls cannot tell the difference between "a piece of antiquity" such as the Coliseum and the changing room of a clothing store (lines 19-22). He further comments on the fact that they cannot understand how serious the situation is even when taken to prison (line 36–37). His mimicry of the girls' speaking style (e.g. the so-called "Valley girl" from California) reinforces the humor of his performance (cf. Rutter's 2001 character footing in Example 3). Moreover, he relies on his audience's background knowledge when mentioning the Carabinieri (one of the Italian police forces). The audience responds with prolonged laughter and applause to Ryan Costello's stand-up. However, some members of the audience find themselves in an awkward position when the comedian refers to Amanda Knox (an American girl who was first sentenced and then freed after appeal for the alleged murder of a British student, Meredith Kercher). It seems that, despite their laughing, they also feel compelled to mildly disapprove of his reference to this dreadful incident (line 41). This may be due to a social convention that suggests that fellow citizens should support one another on the basis of their nationality.

Aside from Kyra, Denise McNee is the only female comedian out of seven performers on stage. Denise has been living in Italy with her family for some time because of her husband's job. Her routine is almost entirely about her struggle with her body weight and dieting (see also Section 4.2). However, she also makes fun of the way her Italian friends comment on this issue and uses code-switches to report on it:

```
(3)
       I find my Italian friends when I tell them that I'm twenty
1 DM
2
       kilos overweight they say things like "Ma hai fatto un
       controllo a [sic] tiroide?" ((did you have your thyroid
3
4
       checked?)) <pointing at her throat>
5 Aud. ((Applause)) Yea::h!!!
      <Pointing at the audience> You /there, \aren't you?
7
 Aud. ((Laughter))
      Have you checked your thyroid? And it's /AMA::ZING to
```

```
9
       /me \it's amazing to me Any Italian from /whatever walk of
       life, will know what thyroid is _ and what it /does_ They know
10
11
       it /all they know a thyrod- a /SPLEEN They know what the
12
       /spleen is, where it is and what its function is I've /NO
       FUCKING idea They could remove my spleen and I probably
13
      wouldn't even notice it
14
15 Aud. ((Laughter))
16 DM But Italians They /KNOW IT THEY KNOW IT "It's the
      /THYroid" They talk about your body been a temple For the
17
18
      Italians their body is like their /living-room They know
19
       exactly what's there and what should be
20 Aud. ((Laughter))
21 DM For me my body is like a /mystery Especially, now I've put
      on weight because I can't see /fucking half of it.
23 Aud. ((Prolonged laughter))
```

Denise heavily relies on swearing, which can be seen as a re-incorporating strategy (Rutter, 2001) that also defines her style. She mocks Italians for their obsession with health (lines 9–12), which often leads them to perform self-diagnosis and swap remedies. The audience's loud comments (line 5) give Denise the opportunity to seek confirmation that they all share the same experience (line 6). However, she concedes that British people like herself know very little about their body and, consequently, tend to overlook any potential illness (lines 12–14). Her code-switching in lines (2–3) is once again based on the audience's assumed knowledge of Italian, although she also offers a translation in line (8).

José Salgado is a freelance comedian of Mexican descent who lives in Canada, but is temporarily staying in Italy. He is a guest comedian at the club and feels compelled to joke about Italians and the stereotypical ideas foreigners have about them:

```
(4)
1 JS I was reading an article about Italians and it said that Italians
       are the least frequent users of Twitter in the whole world and
2
       actually that's very easy to understand because there's no
       Italian who can convey a simple message in 120 characters.
  Aud. ((Applause, laughter)) YE::SS!! WHOA!!
```

The stereotype concerning Italians' lack of conciseness is well known and the audience response to José's Twitter joke clearly confirms this. Not only do the members of the audience laugh, but they also applaud and comment loudly (line 5). José's other jokes refer to stereotypes about the Italians' careless parking skills and inability to respect other people's personal space.

General mocking or disparagement 4.2

This category includes jokes and sketches with general targets that include members of the comedian's family, friends, celebrities (e.g. Luis Hamilton, Picasso) and/or politicians (e.g. Berlusconi, Obama, Cameron). Here I analyze only examples that make fun of family members and friends, as they can be seen as forms of indirect self-disparagement. The distancing effect created by the fact that the butt of these jokes falls outside the comedian-audience relationship allows both parties to freely express their sense of superiority by laughing at the targets of the humor. The following extract is taken from the routine of Winter Foenander, an Irish guest comedian at RCC:

```
(5)
1 WF
        My girlfriend, right she's got this lovely tattoo on her lower
        mach [= stomach], a /shag-tag, a /tram-stamp she /lo::ves it
3
        when it- \when I call it that And I'm-
4 Aud. ((Mild laughter))
5 WF
        <Pointing at someone in the audience and smiling> You've got
        a lovely laugh And I say this why this tattoo is lovely It's her
        /grandparents_ _ And it's a bit off-putting when we're having
7
8
        sex
9 Aud. ((Mild laughter)) Uahh
       So we're there <miming sexual intercourse> We're /having
10 WF
11
12 Aud. ((Mild laughter)) ((approving)) ooh!
       <Pointing at someone in the audience> Don't /judge my
13 WF
        /technique
14
15 Aud. ((Laughter))
16 WF <Looking down and pretending he's covering the tattoo> And I
17
       cover /granddad cos he's put me off
18 Aud. ((Mild laughter))
19 WF
        <Still miming sexual intercourse and moves his hand as to</pre>
20
        cover another part of the tattoo> and I'm a bit close So, I
21
       cover /grandma::
22 Aud. ((Laughter))
23 WF <Still miming sexual intercourse and moving his hand from one
24
        side to the other> and then change <faster and faster> and then
25
        change and then /change until we're both finished cos it
26
       helps me last a little bit /lo::nger
27 Aud. ((Laughter))
28 WF Which is /good.
29 Aud. ((Mild laughter))
30 WF And I know she loves her grandparents an awful lot So, I'm
31
       gonna have to meet them /so::meday
32 Aud. ((Mild laughter)) Uh-huh
33 WF It's gonna be a bit /awkward, /isn't it?
34 Aud. ((Burst out laughing))
35 WF And all I can get to think /IS: NOW, /WHERE DID I COME
```

```
36
     ACROSS YOUR FACE BEFO::RE?
37 Aud. ((Laughter; applause))
39
    you very much!
40 Aud. ((Applause; whistling)) Wow!
```

Winter Foenander's comic style is very informal (see also Example 8 in Section 4.3). As for this example, he clearly makes fun of his girlfriend and her tattoo by using the derogative terms *shag-tag* and *tram-stamp* (line 2). Additionally, he jokes about the fact that the tattoo represents his girlfriend's grandparents and describes a future (awkward) meeting with them. The incongruity stems from merging a scenario of sexual intercourse and a family get-together (line 30-36). The positive audience response includes laughter, whistling, applause and comments regarding the sexual scenario projected in their mind by the comedian (lines 9, 12, 31, 33, 35, 39). Winter Foenander also exploits the audience's comment while he mimics his sexual performance to offer indirect self-disparagement (don't judge my technique, lines 13–14). Rather than a fall-and-rise intonation pattern for his punch line, Winter Foenander prefers to raise his voice (almost shouting) to signal it (lines 35–36).

Example (6) is taken once again from Denise McNee's routine. In this extract she comments on her overweight friends' advice:

```
(6)
1 DM I'm sorry I'm sorry I'm not listening to my fat friends
2 Aud. ((Laughter)) O::h!
3 DM I'm just /not doing it \"It's SO:: easy SO:: easy <almost
      whispering>_ You just need to eat cabbage soup /before every
5
      meal" You're like "Yea:h!
6 Aud. ((Laughter))
7 DM It's not working for you though, is it?"
8 Aud. ((Prolonged laughter))
```

Denise McNee's strategy here is to anticipate her negative comment on her friends' advice (line 1), which is reported after the audience's laughter (line 2) only to be challenged in line 7. After the punch line, the audience bursts out laughing and this marks the success of this joke.

Self-disparagement 4.3

The themes that comedians choose for self-disparagement vary and depend on several factors: personality, physical appearance and, most importantly, context. As mentioned earlier, both female characters make fun of their own body weight. Extract (7) shows how Kyra jokes about her weight and Asian features:

```
(7)
      It's good to see you tonight I'm sure the last time you guys
2
       saw an Asian woman on stage, it was probably in Thailand,
       right? Listen! This is not that kind of show, guys... I don't
3
       \do_ /that_ _ /anymore!
5 Aud. ((Laughter))
6 K
      Apparently they don't like Asian women with slow
       metabolisms, it's not-
7
8 Aud. ((Laughter))
       That kind of dancing they were looking for-
```

Although she initially challenges the audience by insinuating that they may well have travelled to Thailand to take part in risqué shows starring Asian girls, Kyra's main target of the joke is herself. She seems to imply that in the past she did perform in sex-related shows in marked contrast to the kind of shows she performs in now and her new professional career (lines 3-4). Interestingly, she later tells the audience her body shape does not fit the standards required for sex-related shows (lines 6–7). Hence, it could be suggested that she self-disparages her failure in the sex industry for humorous purposes. However, she also smartly calls herself a woman "with a slow metabolism", implying in a self-deprecating way that she does not have the right body shape for her earlier job, to which the audience responds with appreciative laughter.

Example (8) is another extract from Winter Foenander's routine while he talks about the fact that he is balding:

```
(8)
      You know, I_ I'm getting old, right_ and so you are getting
       old too so I shaved my head.
3 Aud. ((Laughter))
      No, don't worry, it's OK it happens to all of us but I know
       the party is /over and my /hai::r knows this, /right?
6 Aud. ((Laughter))
7 WF So it's leaving my head and exiting via my /arsehole
  Aud. ((Prolonged laughter))
9 WF
      And you \know I've a girlfriend and she's lovely and she
      says: "Winter, why do you spend so much time in the /toilet?"
10
11 Aud. Ooh
12 WF I said: Look! At my age when an arsehole is /so:: hairy it's like
      shitting through a /wicker basket
14 Aud. ((Prolonged laughter))
15 WF It's true, it's a /horrible image, I know Enjoy your /food,
      madam!
17 Aud. ((Prolonged laughter))
```

Once again, Winter Foenander chooses a taboo topic such as defecation and associates it with the fact that aging leads to an increased production of hair in a man's private parts. The audience particularly laughs at his simile, which compares his anus to a wicker basket, which is typically scratchy (lines 12-13). This jab line triggers the audience's prolonged laughter. However, it is the punch line (enjoy your food, madam, lines 15-16) that successfully concludes Foenander's routine. Unfortunately, it is difficult to say whether this punch line was improvised or premeditated. As a guest comedian, he was not familiar with the venue and probably unaware of the fact that food and drinks were going to be served during his performance. However, as a professional comedian, he may have already experienced a similar situation before and thought he could turn it to his advantage to reinforce his stand-up. Either way, it definitely elicited the intended effect.

Towards the end of the show, Gabriel Gougsa comes on stage. His ethnicity can be referred to as Black-African, although he grew up in Italy as an English-Italian bilingual citizen. He makes fun of his ethnicity but, at the same time, promotes it:

```
(9)
      My whole life is to be as cool as George Clooney
1 GG
  Aud. ((Laughing and whistling appreciatively)) Ooh!
3
       So I bought a dog I don't know how the two things relate
       but-
4
 Aud. ((Laughter))
6
  (...)
      It's white and I had to make sure it was white becau::se_ _
7 GG
      I'm black.
9 Aud. ((Laughter))
10 GG Black and black hum it's too much of a good thing!
11 Aud. ((Laughter))
12 GG Contrasting color is appealing to the eye /So:: the dog's
       white.
14 Aud. ((Laughter))
```

Gabriel Gougsa's performing style is quite different from the others. He is pretty static on stage and rarely changes his voice intonation (line 12). He seems to rely on the content of his jokes rather that his way of uttering them. As can be noticed in the extract above, humor stems from the way he challenges and subverts the usual idea that white people enjoy higher status in Western societies. In his view, black is superior (line 10) and has to be toned down by white, a less precious color that is associated with the dog he bought. The audience appreciatively responds by laughing at his joke.

Extract (10) is taken from Francesco De Carlo's routine. He is the only Italian comedian and the last one to go on stage. He performs in English and is keenly aware of the difficulty of speaking in a non-native language, especially during stand-ups. However, he exploits his difficulty for humorous purposes:

```
(10)
        <He realizes he uttered a joke in not very good English> You
        are not laughing at my joke you're laughing at me.
3 Aud. ((Laughter))
```

```
4 FDC It's not good for me.
5 Aud. ((Applause))
6 FDC I /hate you English teachers!
7 Aud. ((Laughter))
8 (...)
9 FDC It is very hard to do [sic] a serious speech in another
10 language
11 Aud. ((Mild laughter))
12 FDC It's not your language, too cioè ((that is)) It's not English
13 Aud. ((Laughter))
14 FDC It's another language
15 Aud. ((Laughter))
      I speak Italian Questo è italiano ((this is Italian)) You speak
16
      English and this is this is another thing.
17
18 Aud. ((Laughter))
```

Francesco De Carlo's utterance "You are not laughing at my joke, you're laughing at me" (lines 1-2) epitomizes the comedian-audience relationship. There is a fine line that separates these two different reactions, and the comedian can exploit it to enhance the humor of his/her performance. In addition, Francesco De Carlo uses code-switching to mark the incongruity of the situation: while speaking in English, he points out his inability to perform in good English. He can rely on code-switching because he knows that his audience mainly includes native speakers of English with a fair command of Italian (see Section 4.4).

Audience involvement and disparagement 4.4

Audience involvement and mocking is also a feature shared by many comedians in this show. Some prefer light mocking; others use more disparaging strategies. For instance, each time Kyra goes back on stage to introduce a new comedian, she proposes having a possible love/sexual relationship with someone in the audience and a girl in particular. According to Rutter's (2001) strategies, this can be seen as an example of re-incorporation, which proves to be very successful with the audience, who laugh at this recurrent joke. In the extract below, I present some instances of this recurrent joke which help to build a shared practice and common experience that goes beyond the momentary one-off encounter between the comedian and the audience:

```
(11)
      Good looking people here <pointing at the audience>
2
       Any single ladies? <puts her hand over her forehead like a
       sailor scanning the sea and then whistles>
4 Aud. ((Mild laughter))
      And if you guys have /daddy issues or _ _ \maybe some
      /yellow fever_ _
7 Aud. ((Prolonged laughter))
8 K OK. Fair enough_ _
```

```
9 (...)
      Just a question for No one spec- specifically but mostly this
10 K
11
       area <pointing at where the girl she likes is>
12 Aud. ((Laughter))
       Have you ever thought like "/Man! I'm having so:: much
13 K
       fun /tonight I just feel kinda doing something /really different
14
       You know like experimenting sexually <looking at the girl
15
16
       again> or something", but-
17 Aud. ((Prolonged laughter))
       As I said, no one specifically <pointing at the girl again with
18
19
       her elbow> not gonna point elbows, but-
20
       ((Prolonged laughter))
21 K
       Anyway our next comic <moving on stage towards the
22
       girls in the audience> You know I'm just joking with you
       guys unless you want me to be serious
24 Aud. ((Laughter))
       And and then we can talk afterwards <laughing>
25 K
26 (...)
       <After José leaves the stage, looking at the audience> /So
27 K
       cute! Don't worry still gay
29 Aud. ((Prolonged laughter))
      That hasn't changed, right?
31 Aud. ((Prolonged laughter))
```

In Example (11), Kyra tries to hit on the female members of the audience by suggesting that some of them may have been deprived of fatherly affection during their childhood (daddy issues, line 5) and that she is more than willing to help any of these needy girls. Being of Asian descent herself, she can also jokingly use wordplay involving the racist stereotype 'yellow' and the name of a disease (yellow fever, line 6) to imply that she can assist the girls and help them recover, much like a nurse (again, sexual innuendo can be perceived). The audience may choose to laugh with Kyra or at her "in-your-face" exhibition of her homosexuality, which she mentioned almost every time she went on stage and strongly reaffirmed after her appreciation of José's routine (lines 21–23, 28). Homosexuality here can be seen as an example of Rutter's re-incorporation, as mention of it occurs many times and helps Kyra to signal her humorous intent. Although it is more likely that Kyra's ultimate goal is to create in-group bonding, the audience is free to give vent to their sense of superiority as the comedian has exposed herself via self-mocking. Moreover, it should be noted that she playfully uses her body language to support her jokes. For instance, in the first of the three routines she performs before introducing the other comedians, she repeatedly points at female members of the audience and also pretends to be scanning the horizon in order to find another gay woman (lines 2–3). Subsequently, she delivers her lines by pointing at the girl she likes, staring at her and moving towards her while on stage (lines 11, 15-16, 18-19, 21-23). These visual elements feed into the audience's amused response and ensure the effectiveness of Kyra's performance.

In Example (12), Gabriel Gougsa prefers to poke fun at his audience in a more disparaging and apparently offensive way:

```
(12)
1 GG
      I'm gonna talk to you guys So <pointing at a gentleman>
      What do you do?
3 Aud. [Inaud.]
4 GG Aircraft engineer.
5 Aud. Hey! ((positive intonation)) O::ohhh!!
6 GG /Fuck that!
7 Aud. ((Prolonged laughter))
8 GG <Looking at another man> Hello, Sir?
9 Aud. [Inaud.]
10 GG No, no. I didn't ask that What's your name?
11 Aud. Lee.
12 GG Lee. I like the look of you, Lee. You look dangerous. You
      look menacing. I think you can really help me with this
13
14
      What was it? An aircraft engineer guy. You look like you
15
      spent time in a maximum security prison.
16 Aud. ((Prolonged laughter))
17 GG
      So your name is Lee? <the quy nods> Fuck it! You're Rico
18
      now
19 Aud. ((Prolonged laughter)) Rico!
```

Gabriel Gougsa tries to undermine the sense of superiority of some members of the audience by ridiculing them. He uses swearing to challenge their social status, although it is supported by other members of the audience with appreciative heys and ooh (line 5). Gabriel Gougsa also suggests that one person in the audience looks like an ex-convict of Latin American descent (lines 17 and 18). The butt of this disparaging remark laughs, along with the rest of the audience, and repeats Gabriel Gougsa's punch line (line 19), thus confirming that stand-up comedy-goers do not take potentially offensive remarks at face value.

In Example (13), Francesco De Carlo uses a similar strategy:

```
(13)
1 FDC My English sucks and-
2 Aud. ((Laughter))
3 FDC Thank you! Thank you! And it's very 'ard to speak in
       English in front of an audience of /English teachers That's
       what /you are
6 Aud. ((Prolonged laughter))
7 FDC /THAT'S why you are 'ERE today.
8 Aud. ((Laughter))
9 (...)
10 FDC You're not the kind of people who say "Uhmm, what can I do
11
       in my life? How can I make my life /USEFUL for the
      humanity? And and feel satisfied? Uhmm I'll teach English
13
      to the Italians, yes!"
14 Aud. ((Prolonged laugher))
```

```
15 FDC That's /NOT why you're 'ere to like eat our food visit our
      cities, find a lover to ((incomprehensible)) to get a
16
17
      permesso di soggiorno ((visa))
18 Aud. ((Prolonged laughter))
19 FDC Noble purposes /I like you! \I like you.
20 (...)
21 FDC How many of you are 'appy with your life?
22 Aud. ((A few applaud; incomprehensible comment in
23
      Italian))
24 FDC An audience of /depressed English teachers.
25 Aud. ((Prolonged laughter; applause))
26 (...)
27 Aud. ((A lady)) Just gimme me a soggiorno ((visa)).
28 FDC You'd like it but it's not so easy.
29 Aud. ((Laughter))
30 FDC I know what you've to do to get a permesso di soggiorno
31 Aud. ((Laughter))
32 FDC Where are you from?
33 Aud. Chicago?
34 FDC Interesting So you can get me a /green card, too?
35 Aud. ((Laughter))
36 FDC We can work on it _ Totally
37 Aud. ((Mild laughter; applause))
```

Francesco De Carlo is very well aware that a large part of the audience is made up of native speakers of English living in Italy and teaching English as a means to support themselves. He playfully jokes about the fact that this career path is the result of their desire to live in Italy rather than a real vocation (lines 10–13). He further elaborates by targeting the non-Europeans in the audience who need a visa to live in Italy. The audience's positive response confirms that they share the comedian's point of view and do not take mocking at face value. Being challenged by a lady in the audience (line 27), Francesco De Carlo decides to play along and insinuates that there is an opportunity for sexual intercourse and mutual aid in procuring (illegal) work permits (lines 28–36). This again results in positive appreciation with laughter and applause.

5. Conclusions

Stand-up comedy is a fascinating and versatile way of performing humor dynamically negotiated by interactants. Albeit remaining central to comics' performances, verbal routines are supported and enhanced by other features such as facial expressions, gestures and voice intonation, which always deserve consideration. As I pointed out in Section 2, stand-up comedy may deal with lighthearted topics, but it can also serve other purposes, including social criticism and cultural awareness. This is particularly true when stand-up routines are performed by members of

social and cultural minorities. However, to my knowledge, no research has been produced to date on the relatively new phenomenon of expatriates' stand-up comedy acts performed in their native language, especially when these expatriates belong to a dominant culture such as the American or the British one. Hence, this study has concentrated on international stand-up comedy performed mostly by native speakers of English in Italy, as well as some non-native-speakers who used English as the language of their performance. The latter case is proof of the high prestige that English holds for other cultures, and further confirmation, if any is needed, of its relevance in international communication as a lingua franca.

As the data presented above clearly demonstrates, stand-up comedians at RCC set great store by the audience and the context within which they themselves will perform before preparing their routines. It is therefore not surprising that the expatriate or foreign (guest) comedians rely on stereotypes to joke about Italy and Italians (e.g. Kyra, Denise and José in Section 4.1) while the only Italian comic (a regular one) pokes fun at his audience because he knows it mainly consists of English teachers (Francesco De Carlo in Section 4.4). On the other hand, they all seek to promote their comic personas and call on the audience to share (or at least consider) their points of view (e.g. Ryan Costello's joke about American teenagers in Section 4.1). The whole experience becomes all the more enjoyable thanks to the multicultural environment within which this comedy show takes place. Hence, the comedian-audience interaction appears to be essential to the success of the show and comedians easily adjust to the particular context in order to negotiate the humor of their routines. Most importantly, the enthusiastic audience response shows the spectators' willingness to be part of the show. They contribute to and support comedians' humorous jabs and punch lines even when comedians convey potentially offensive ideas. Once again, this shows that the audience does not take such face-threatening acts at face value.

While the data investigated in this article has been limited to one stand-up comedy show in one European city, further research is certainly needed to confirm or refute my findings. It is hoped that subsequent research will contribute to a better understanding of this quickly developing form of entertainment, which is fast growing across Europe, not only in English but in other languages as well.

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Appendix. Transcription conventions

xyz::	prolongation of the immediately preceding sound
_	short pause
	long pause
/	rising intonation
\	falling intonation
[Inaud.]	inaudible utterance
CAPS	loud word
C-	self-interruption
()	omitted section
<xyz></xyz>	delimitation of extra-linguistic notation
((xzy))	extra-linguistic notation
[]	author's intervention

CHAPTER 6

Teasing as audience engagement

Setting up the unexpected during television comedy monologues

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This paper explores teasing – a type of humorous play associated with intimate, everyday conversation – during televised comedy monologue performances. Thirteen teasing instances, which occurred during joke setup sequences and targeted studio audiences, were transcribed/analyzed alongside videos for: (1) what occasioned the teasing, (2) teasing sequence characteristics, and (3) their social functions. Results indicate that teasing in this genre is occasioned by discursive context (audience responses) rather than interpersonal knowledge; exploits miming/transposition, placing audiences' words/actions on-stage; and serves to break down rather than reinforce discursive hierarchical differences (i.e. rights to performance floor), engaging studio audiences more fully into the show. Finally, audience teasing during joke setups contributes to expectations of "expecting the unexpected" (Lockyer & Myers, 2011) for media and studio comedy audiences.

Keywords: teasing, stand-up comedy, comedy audiences, functions of teasing, audience engagement, transposition, miming

Introduction

Teasing is a genre of humorous interaction most commonly associated with every-day conversation that usually occurs among close acquaintances – those in intimate and trusting relationships (see also Chovanec, this volume and Georgalidou & Kaili, this volume, for teasing in non-conversational contexts). This is due to teasing's simultaneously playful and aggressive nature. On the one hand, teasing is often accompanied by interactional cues indicating playfulness, giving an air of lightheartedness to a potentially antagonistic utterance or action; at the same time, teasing can still exude a potentially insulting character if taken seriously. Because of the risk to face that teasing carries and its potential to emerge as aggressive rather than playful, teasing is seen as safer in more trusting relationships. Teasing also

exploits interpersonal knowledge participants have of each other or other contextual factors and is usually evoked for particular interpersonal functions, such as cultivating or indexing intimacy, rapport building, or hierarchy maintenance among interlocutors.

The data presented here show that comedian—hosts of late-night television comedy shows commonly tease their studio audiences despite the more performance-oriented and scripted nature of the interaction and the comedian's lack of intimate audience knowledge. The question then becomes why is this intimate form of interaction used among previously unacquainted participants, and what is its role in the overall goals of the performance?

The data for this study is taken from the comedy monologues of three American comedians: TBS's Conan O'Brien, NBC's Jimmy Fallon, and ABC's Jimmy Kimmel. These comedians host late-night television programs in front of live studio audiences. The programs may include humorous skits, interviews with celebrities, and musical performances, and always begin with stand-up monologues performed by the comedian–hosts. This paper explores the unique yet prolific use of studio audience teasing during these comedy monologue performances and its relationship to the overall goals of the comedian and the show. Specifically, it explores how these teasing sequences which target the studio audience are unique in character and function differently from that in everyday conversational teasing, how teasing during specific monologue moments (setups to jokes) contributes to the overall goals of the comedy show, and finally, how studio audience teasing contributes to the media audience's experience as well.

2. Humor and comedian – audience interaction in stand-up comedy

In stand-up comedy, it is not uncommon for the same joke, jab-line or even lengthy stories to gain different reactions from different audiences. Although the performance material (the text) itself is certainly a factor, more important to attaining humorous outcomes during stand-up performances is how the comedian—audience relationship is built and attended to throughout the performance, as well as how the audience's relationship to the material is discursively managed (see also Chovanec & Tsakona, this volume and Dore, this volume). As Scarpetta & Spagnolli (2009: 229) point out in their study of live stand-up comedy,

[b]eing fun and obtaining affiliation [...] does not just depend on the specific subject selected for the joke, nor on the way in which the joke is articulated per se. It also depends on the relation of the punch lines to the interactional context in which the joke is progressively constructed and delivered.

For stand-up comedy, this involves getting the audience engaged, receptive, and reactive to the comedian and his material; fostering this relationship throughout the performance; and responding to the unique realities of space, audience, and discourse that vary from performance to performance.

During live comedy performances, fostering a favorably interactive environment from the beginning sets the tone for the entire performance (Rutter, 1997, 2000; Scarpetta & Spagnolli, 2009; Double, 2014; DeCamp, 2015). This has been noted as especially important when addressing taboo topics or making social commentary on topics considered controversial, such as race (DeCamp, 2015; Scarpetta & Spagnolli, 2009; Perez, 2003). Even before the comedians take the stage, emcees establish a foundation for the performance by actively engaging the audience and establishing expectations and conventions for the comedy performances that follow (Rutter, 2000).

Comedians themselves can cultivate this favorable environment through rapportbuilding. They may use tactics such as presenting a self that is honest and true through exposure of personal vulnerabilities, self-deprecation, or bringing attention to rather than ignoring "elephants in the room" (such as being the only black person performing for a primarily white crowd; DeCamp, 2015). The use of self-deprecation specifically can reduce the stage-authority of the comedian which helps the audience connect on a more personal level, as a real human being (Adetunji, 2013; see also Dore, this volume, for self-disparagement in intercultural stand-up settings).

Establishing an informal and conversational register can also assist in creating an environment favorable to joke acceptability. This can be done discursively by directly involving the audience in narrations, using colloquial terms, disclosing personal facts, or orienting to the audience through greetings, requests, or (tag) questions. Audience contributions such as answers, laughter, and applause provided at relevant places contribute to this favorable environment as well (Scarpetta & Spagnolli, 2009). The informality of the interaction may also be assisted by spatial considerations, such as smaller audiences or shorter distances between the audience and the stage (Scarpetta & Spagnolli, 2009; Lockyer & Meyers, 2011; Quirk, 2011; Lockyer, 2015).

In addition to more general environmental/relationship factors, the immediate sequential environment also becomes important for the success of comedy performance. As Scarpetta & Spagnolli point out, "regardless of the prepared nature of the joke program and of its repetition in different venues, the event resembles a conversation about the comedian and the audience" (2009: 228), and comedian-audience interactions go well beyond the standard model of public speaking proposed by Atkinson (1984), that is, joke + punchline + audience response then repeated (cf. McIlvenny et al., 1993; Rutter, 1997, 2000; Limon, 2001). As such, comedians and audiences respond in real time to particular interactional developments and prepare a favorable discursive environment for joke receptivity in the joke sequences themselves. This may involve improvisational techniques such as footing shifts (e.g. feigning a private pep-talk) or articulating potential audience objections using a different voice (what DeCamp, 2015 labels as code switching and Double, 2014 terms instant character). These are usually in the service of repairing bombed punchlines or mitigating potentially problematic material, depending on how the audience has responded or the demographics of the crowd. Surveying the audience during the setup of jokes can test their reactions, allowing modifications if needed, while "play continuation" (McIlvenny et al. 1993) or "pags" (i.e. a series of sequentially connected punchlines that rely on the premise of the first) can take care of aspects of the joke that might be questionable to particular audiences (Scarpetta & Spagnolli, 2009). These strategies all attend to creating a favorable local discursive environment in which the joke is told, while also demonstrating the conversational (not prescripted) nature of the interaction.

In addition to interactional practices that foster a favorable environment both generally and in the local discourse, comedians also use a variety of verbal and paraverbal cues that both support and signal humor as well as signpost the relevance of audience responses. This could involve such paralinguistic cues as intonation, tempo, voice quality, or volume (Apte, 1985; Rutter, 2001). But it also involves rhetorical strategies that scaffold the humorous message. These include strategies characteristic to podium talk in general such as contrast pairs, puzzle-solution, lists, headline-punchline, position-taking, and pursuit (Atkinson, 1984; Heritage & Greatbatch, 1986; Clayman, 1993; McIlvenny et al., 1993; Rutter, 2001). They also include strategies specific to stand-up and which anticipate humor resolution and make audience laughter relevant, such as disclaimer devices (e.g. I know I'm just a tourist but...), explicit cues (e.g. wait for it), reincorporations (i.e. returning later to an innocuous portion of a joke), alliteration/assonance, character footing (i.e. impersonations), and fall-rise intonation (McIlvenny et al., 1993; Rutter, 2001; Wells & Bull, 2007; see also Dore, this volume). All of these strategies are linked with laughter responses and seen as comedian requests for such, suggesting that professional humor relies as much on recognizable interactional practices as it does on textual factors/incongruence per se.

Various tactics for fostering an acceptable joke-telling environment, both generally and locally, as well as for making humor recognizable through (para)verbal cues and rhetorical devices have been well cited, like those mentioned above. However, the specifics of audience-directed *teasing* during comedy performances has yet to be explored in detail. For example, teasing as a common tactic may be mentioned in passing (DeCamp, 2015), looked at in terms of its frequency of use based on demographic characteristics (Scarpetta & Spagnoli, 2009), or cited as a rhetorical strategy to scaffold more serious podium interactions (Greatbatch &

Clark, 2002), but specifics as to when, how, and why a comedian may engage an audience in teasing is yet to be unpacked. This paper explores the use of teasing as a discursive strategy in the sequential environment of joke setups during televised comedy monologue performances.

3. What is teasing

In the research presented here, teasing is both an emergent phenomenon and a process. In other words, both the teasers' and the targets' discursive actions play a role in how teasing emerges and whether teasing even occurs at all. As operationalized here, a prototypical example of teasing would have the following characteristics: (1) both serious and playful components, (2) a co-present target as butt of the teasing, (3) contextualization cues which help frame the statement as potentially playful, (4) recognition of teasing by both the teaser and the target (regardless of whether the target eventually orients to the seriousness or playfulness of the endeavor), (5) varying styles, from biting to bonding, and (6) a broader social function beyond the performance value/cleverness of the statement/action (i.e. it does some other work toward the relationship between teaser, the target, and other parties involved).

In order to clarify how teasing is identified and approached, the following example will be explicated below to highlight each of the characteristics of teasing (for transcription conventions see the Appendix):

(1) CO_2012_0221

```
1 Conan: Over the last few months,
2
         Home Dep↑ot is reporting <record profits>.
3
         Record profits for Home Depot?
4
        (.)
5
         .hhhhh
        Home De- --
7
        =Just hold your applause [1for later.
8
       pff °h°1] [2°hhhhhh°2] [3hah hah hah3]
        [1((.7 Laughter))1] [2((.9 Laughter))2] [3((.5 Laughter))3]
9 AUD:
             [2hah hah hah hah hah2] [3hah hah3]
10 Andy:
         ***lines 11-57 deleted***
58 Conan: ft Yeah,
59
         =Home Depot said they'd like to share the profits with their
```

In this example, the joke setup begins (line 1), the teasing insertion sequence occurs as indicated by the arrow (line 7), then the prescripted joke/punchline is returned to later (lines 59–60). In addition, the teasing in line 7 exhibits the following characteristics.

Playful and serious components

One of the most cited characteristics of teasing is its paradoxical nature. On the one hand, the teasing utterance could be interpreted as insulting or face-threatening; but it in some manner carries the potential for a playful interpretation (Radcliff-Brown, 1952). It is aggressive yet nonserious (Alberts, 1992), provocational yet playful (Haugh, 2014), hostile yet friendly (Loudon, 1970).

In the example above, Conan brings attention to the fact that the audience has not applauded (line 7). In essence, it is an indirect evaluation of their performance as an audience, failing to respond at a juncture Conan deems appropriate. On the one hand, the statement could be considered a genuine evaluation of their response; on the other hand, if interpreted light-heartedly, a playful taunt.

Co-present target

Boxer & Cortés-Conde (1997) differentiate teasing from conversational joking in general based on who the target of the teasing is. Conversational joking has a target which is not co-present (other-directed), teasing has a target that is copresent and is not the speaker (participant-directed), and in self-deprecation, the speaker targets him/herself (self-directed).

The target of Conan's commentary in the example above (line 7) is the copresent studio audience. We know it is the studio audience based on visual/ gestural cues apparent in the video data and because "applause", which is directly referenced in the teasing, is a response type used primarily by audience participants (vs. the comedian's side-kick, for example). In addition, there is no evidence Conan is singling out any audience member in particular.

Contextualization cues indicating "play"

Teasing is prototypically accompanied by contextualization cues, such as laughter, changes in prosody, gestural cues (winking/smiling), etc. (Drew, 1987; Haugh, 2014), indicating that the statement should be considered off-record (i.e. suggesting the possibility of non-literal interpretations; Brown & Levinson, 1987; Keltner et al., 2001) or to indicate a play frame (Bateson, 1977), although these signals may not necessarily be obvious or clear. And while a teasing remark could be true or untrue (Kotthoff, 1996), usually teasing is negative in nature (Cortés-Conde, 2014), although less prototypical examples could be non-aggressive/non-critical (Dynel, 2008) or even positive in content (Cortés-Conde & Boxer, 2010).

In this example, Conan uses irony/sarcasm (line 7; see Giora & Attardo, 2014: 398–402) as well as the laughter immediately following the teasing (line 8) to frame his evaluation as a potentially playful endeavor.

Recognition of teasing by both teaser and target

While it might be tempting to analyze teasing solely in terms of the teasing utterance itself or the teaser's intention to tease as indicated through contextualization cues, the teasee/target's role in the emergence of a teasing sequence

must also be considered (Alberts, 1992; Limon, 2001; Sinkeviciute, 2013; see also Dynel, this volume, for teasing as it relates to pretense). In other words, has the target indicated that they also recognize the utterance as having teasing potential? This could be indicated through laughter or other support strategies such as contributing more humor, playing along with the gag, or using echo or overlap, to name a few (Hay, 2001). Alberts (1992) identifies three factors that may influence the interpretive process of teasing: (1) prior knowledge of what a speaker may actually believe and also their propensity to tease, (2) the overall situational context as well as the discursive context being serious/nonserious, and (3) paralinguistic cues. For all the examples here, the comedy/jocular context would be a major influence on interpreting teasing as such, while its occurrence during a joke setup becomes interesting since joke setups are usually in the service of humorous punchlines which follow, rather than being sources of humor themselves. The choice to tease at these rather "serious" moments will be discussed later as it relates to the overall goals and expectations of the show.

In this example, the audience recognizes the lighthearted interpretation and seems to accept this interpretation as is evidenced by their immediate, overlapping, and extended laughter in line 9. In addition, the other participants (Conan and his side-kick Andy) also indicate a shared understanding through their own laughter contributions in lines 8 and 10.

Varying styles

Teasing can also vary by style. Boxer & Cortés-Conde showed that teasing can range from "bonding to nipping to biting" (1997: 276), with biting being aggressive and challenging, bonding emphasizing more collaborative/solidarity aspects, and nipping exhibiting characteristics of both. Schnurr (2009) used this continuum to differentiate among styles of teasing: (1) those which are supportive of the previous speaker, friendly in tone, and exhibit joint laughter (bonding); (2) those which challenge the previous speaker, appear competitive, and are marked by an absence of joint laughter (biting); and (3) those which exhibit characteristics of both (nipping; Schnurr, 2009: 1136).

Conan's teasing in this case exhibits a mixed style as it in some ways challenges the audience's lack of response, yet it also emerges as a mutually lighthearted endeavor, evidenced by the shared laughter. Here, Conan's discursive actions suggest that an audience response is expected during his joke setup. He (1) slows his speech at the end of his intonation unit where response tokens are most likely to occur (line 2), (2) repeats and fronts the newsworthy statement (record profits, line 3), (3) pauses (line 4), and (4) takes a long inbreath (line 5), all of which suggest a response is expected and gives the audience ample opportunity to respond. He then begins the punchline but truncates it (line 6) in order to initiate the ironic teasing (line 7). He uses sarcasm, which by

definition is aggressive (Giora & Attardo, 2014: 398), but all join in shared laughter immediately following the teasing (lines 8–10).

Broader social function

Teasing as an activity must also be distinguished from the way/form one might tease. Teasing might take many forms from irony to hyperbole to mocking, but as Cortés-Conde (2014: 758) points out "unlike irony and sarcasm, the point of the teasing is not the ambiguity itself, but the relationship it establishes between the teaser and the teased". What teasing may be doing in reference to the relationship alludes to the social function of teasing. It goes beyond the performance value or ambiguity itself. Depending on the context, it can be used to reinforce or index intimacy (Betcher, 1981, 1987; Oring, 1984; Baxter, 1992) even in more casual relationships (Martin, 2007). It can also be used to reinforce power and status differences in hierarchical relationships in various ways. In medical workplace relationships Coser (1960) and Pizzini (1991) showed higher-ranking members were more likely to tease lower-ranking members as a means of not only maintaining their status, but also to reinforce the norms of the group on which their status depended. In IT work groups, Schnurr (2009) showed higher-status members teased more aggressively and was used to reinforce power/status differences, while offering preliminary evidence that less aggressive teasing could nurture a collaborative environment, breaking down hierarchical distance rather than reinforcing it. Similarly, Keltner et al.'s (1998) study of fraternity member teasing showed that while both high-ranking and low-ranking members did engage in teasing, low-status members tended to tease in a more positive manner or use self-deprecation teasing while high-status members teased more aggressively and chose others as the target. Teasing can also serve a rapport-building function as part of more ritualistic manners of communicating, both among those who are well-acquainted (Tannen, 1990) and those just getting to know one another (Haugh, 2011). Finally, it can also contribute to idiocultural maintenance of a group, providing a way for members to construct a shared reality, sense of meaning, to reinforce norms, and establish group identity and exclude outsiders (Fine, 1977; Apte, 1985; Alberts, 1992).

In the example above, the form Conan's evaluation of the studio audience takes is irony. But it is not just irony being performed for the sake of irony; rather, Conan's statement is being used to break down discursive status differences in a hierarchical relationship as well as to engage the studio audience more fully into the show using a specific strategy. These functions will be discussed in more detail later.

Methodology

This study takes its data from the televised monologue performances of three comedian-hosts: TBS's Conan O'Brien, NBC's Jimmy Fallon, and ABC's Jimmy Kimmel. These comedians in particular were chosen for the sake of consistency. They are all considered part of the late-night television genre and tend toward the "classic" organizational and topical format, popularized by Johnny Carson (i.e. they begin with a current event monologue, followed by celebrity interviews, comedy sketches, and musical performances). In addition, the comedians are all veterans of late-night television, but are still relatively new to primetime ensuring new and fresh data would be available (compare with CBS's David Letterman, whose tenure at CBS was well over 30 years and was due to retire at the time initial data was collected). Finally, their monologue topics tend to appeal to a more general American audience base, as compared with other late-night talk shows which may orient more specifically to the political.

I collected data from monologue videos available online at the time of data collection. I identified those videos involving studio audience teasing, then transcribed and repeatedly viewed those specifically occurring during joke setups. I chose the joke setup environment for a number of reasons. First, in contrast to other environments such as punchlines, audience-directed questions, or try-marked utterances which structurally favor some sort of audience response, the setups to humorous sequences which primarily serve to inform do not necessarily favor a particular audience response, or any response for that matter. As Schegloff (2007: 218) notes,

> parties may tell jokes or in some fashion indicate that they are doing something 'funny' which projects the relevance of laughter, after which the absence of laughter may be found to amount to the laughter being "missing", and consequentially so.

In other words, whether or not the audience provides a response at junctures such as joke punchlines or following questions could have significant conversational consequences; whereas, during informative joke setups, whether or not audiences respond and/or comedians attend to the audiences' responses or lack thereof is highly variable and acceptably so in most cases. In addition, teasing can be used for multiple relational functions. By narrowing down the data to a particular interactional environment - teasing during joke setups - I am able to hone in on what is unique about teasing's function (as well as form) at these moments in particular.

A total of 13 instances of setup teasing were identified and transcribed using Jefferson's (2004) transcription system, with additions taken from Du Bois et al. (1993) for overlap and adjusted voice quality, and Ikeda & Bysouth (2013) for gesture. These 13 teasing instances occurred during the joke setup and targeted all or the majority of the studio audience. The teasing sequences were then analyzed

referencing both the transcripts and the video performances to evaluate what may occasion the teasing, what relational function the teasing may be serving, and how these moments of teasing during joke setups contribute uniquely to the overall goals of the comedy show.

5. Data analysis

Teasing occasioned by silence/delayed responses 5.1

To recap the first example in Section 2, Conan begins the setup of a joke in lines 1–6. He truncates his speech in line 6 to begin a teasing insertion sequence in line 7. The target of the teasing is the studio audience, the teasing is occasioned by the studio audience's silence (or lack of a response; lines 3–5), and Conan brings attention to their lack of response through ironic chiding (Just hold your applause for later; line 7). Following the teasing, Conan, Andy, and the audience all join in shared laughter (lines 8-10).

This first instance of teasing is fairly prototypical in that it makes use of a form common in humor (irony/sarcasm) and is accompanied by comedian laughter making it easily recognizable as something playful. In addition, the teasing is delivered verbally and expresses Conan's own thoughts (ironically) about how the studio audience should respond. As this same teasing sequence continues, however, we will see two more instances of teasing that take other, less-prototypical forms: nonverbal teasing (beginning in line 19) and transposition (beginning in line 24).

(2) CO_2012_0221

```
7 Conan: =Just hold your applause [1for later.
        pff °h°1] [2°hhhhhh°2] [3hah hah hah3]
        [1((.7 Laughter))1] [2((.9 Laughter))2] [3((.5 Laughter))3]
9 AUD:
                      [2hah hah hah hah hah2] [3hah hah3]
10 Andy:
11 AUD:
        [4((.4 Laughter))4] [5((.9 Fading Laughter. Isolated
         Cheers.))5]
12 Andy: [4hah hah4]
                         [5hah <hah hah hah>5]
13 AUD:
        ((.7 Fading Laughter. Isolated Clapping/Cheers.))
        [7((.8 Fading Laughter. Isolated Clapping/Cheers.))7]
14
15 Andy: [7Alr[8i=ght8]7].
16 Conan: [8hnI lhnike that8].
17 AUD:
        ((.6 Isolated Laughter/Clapping/Cheers))
18
        [((1.0 Isolated laughter/Clapping/Cheers))]
19 →Conan: [*1----->]
        [2*1 -----
20
         ---->21
21 AUD:
        [2[3((.6 Laughter))3] ((.9 Laughter)) [4((.7 Laughter))4]
22
                                             [6((.9 Isolated
                                             laughter))6]2]
```

```
23 Andy: [3hnh >hnh hnh<3]?
                                   [4hnh <hah h[5ah5]>4]
24 →Conan: [5<VOX Who5][6le audience:6].
        [7*1 ---->7]
26
        =[7Du- --
27
         what does that mean for us VOX>7].
28 AUD: [7((1.7 Laughter))7] ((.7 Laughter)) [8((1.2
         Laughter))8]
29 Andy:
                                               [8hah hah hah
                                                ha:h8]
30 AUD:
         ((.1 Fading Laughter)) [9((.9 Fading Laughter))9]
31 Conan:
                               [9<VOX Do we get th9][10at10 VOX>]?
32 Andy:
         [10Ye10][11a:h11].
33 AUD:
                                            [11((.4 Laughter))11]
         ((1.0 Laughter)) =
34 Conan: = < VOX No::[:] VOX>?
35 AUD: [((.1 Gradual Laughter))] ((2.3 Soft Laughter))
*1 Folds arms; mimes bored audience
```

Following the verbal teasing occasioned by lack of audience response, Conan continues the teasing of his co-present audience target, taking on a slouched posture, crossed arms, and bored facial expression, giving a general sense of apathetic indifference (line 19). Instead of using verbal irony like before, Conan uses mime (a common comedic technique which portrays ideas through gestures and bodily movements) to address the audience's actual lack of response, though humorously, highlighting its paradoxical nature.

With regard to the first five criteria for teasing listed above, we can see that (1) the mime exhibits both serious and playful components. On the one hand, Conan's mime of an unresponsive audience is in line with the audience's actual lack of response and in some sense is an evaluation of this as perhaps inappropriate in some manner. On the other hand, the audience could see this as potentially playful, due to its exaggerated and generalized nature. The mime also (2) targets the audience (co-present party) as the butt of the teasing, since they were the ones who did not respond to the newsworthy material about Home Depot's record profits. This example also exhibits (3) contextualization cues in the form of exaggerated body gestures, which bring attention to a playful rather than serious interpretation. In addition, we see evidence of (4) recognition of teasing by both parties, as evidenced by the audience laughter in line 21, Andy's laughter in line 23, and Conan's continuation of his teasing mime through line 25 (and additional teasing later). As Hay (2001) has pointed out, both laughter and continuation of/contributing more humor are humor support strategies. Both parties orient primarily to the humorous potential in this case, rather than to the potential seriousness of the teasing – a characteristic of comedy teasing which contrasts with conversational teasing's tendency for participants to orient to the seriousness of the teasing. This, coupled with unqualified laughter responses by the audience over multiple turns suggests (5) the teasing

style falls toward the bonding end of the style spectrum. The final characteristic, (6) its broader social function, for this example and the ones that follow will be discussed in detail later.

In the final example of teasing above, which cooccurs with the mime teasing, Conan begins by explicitly naming the audience and adjusting his voice quality (line 24) to attribute what he will say next to the *whole audience*. Conan then uses *transposition* to represent on-stage the studio audience's thoughts (lines 26–27, 31, 34). Transposition repositions a prior text, laminating it with points of view and responds to the value of those viewpoints (Bühler, 1934; Haviland, 1996). Here, audience silence is being repositioned, given verbal interpretation, and laminated with notions of boredom and apathy.

Like the miming before, the transposition (1) is simultaneously serious and playful. Conan highlights the actual audience's lack of response, but this time adds more detail as to what they may have been thinking (what does that mean for us, line 27; do we get that, line 31). Again, the audience could take this as a genuine critique; at the same time, they could orient to a playful interpretation given Conan's obvious inability to know exactly what the audience was thinking at the moment being teased upon and the caricatured voice quality he adopts in lines 24, 26–27, 31, and 34. It also (2) targets the audience (co-present party) as the butt of the teasing, but to a greater depth than miming or commentary. Transposition gives further credence to targeting the audience, suggesting an almost omniscient comedian knowledge of what the audience was thinking. The adjusted voice quality through which Conan delivers his transposition also acts as a (3) contextualization cue, that his statements may be interpreted as potentially playful. And like before, (4) the statements are recognized as teasing by both the teaser and target as evidenced by the audience laughter in lines 28, 30, 33, and 35, and Conan's continuation along the same transpositional teasing trajectory. Finally, (5) unqualified laughter and mutual agreement to continue with the teasing across multiple turns (lines 24–35), while still being lightly critical of the audience's failure at its primary function, suggests a style between nipping and bonding. In addition, placing the audience's voice on-stage using transposition also gives a pseudo-collaborative sense to this teasing sequence (rather than a competitive sense characteristic of the biting style).

These first examples above use different communicative modes (i.e. verbal, miming, and transposition) but are all teasing nonetheless. They are paradoxical in nature, bringing attention to the audience's lack of response, while being marked as playful through contextualization cues and received as such by the studio audience and other participants as indicated by their responsive laughter. Importantly, what occasions all three teasing moments (audience responses or lack thereof), as well as the use of miming and transposition modes in particular, contribute to the

unique function of teasing during comedy show performances. This function will be addressed in detail in Section 6.

ABC's Jimmy Fallon also uses varying communicative modes to tease his studio audience as we see in the next example:

```
(3) JF_2015_0501
  Fallon: tsk Uh,
2
           >of cfourse want to say con<gra:ts to Prince William and
           Kate Middleton
3
                who welcomed a baby gi:rl on Saturday,
4
            .hhh
5
           (.7)
           [tsk]
7 AUD1: [Wo]o
8 AUD: ((.3 Isolated cheers/claps)) [((.9 Cheers))]
                                     [You know --
9 Fallon:
10
                                      Naw mm XX.]
11 AUD: ((1.8 Cheering/Clapping)) [2((.6 Fading Clapping))2]
12 Fallon: [2No --
13 No one2] --  
14 \rightarrow  
1No one's ever [3ex3]cited about the <second baby>.
15 AUD1: [3((Isolated Clap))3]
16 AUD: ((1.6 Laughter/Isolated Clap)) [4((.5 Fading Laughter))4]
           ***lines 17- 24 deleted***
25 Fallon: No one cares the shecond bab[v.
          They like,
27
           .. <Q †Uh ok uh good for y]ou† guys.
                  [((1.5 Laughter))]
28 AUD:
29 Fallon: Yeah,
          we already clapped [2for you guys' first X2].
30
31 AUD: [2((.7 Laughter))2] ((.6 Laughter. Clapping.)) [3((1.0
           Fading Laughter))3]
32 Fallon:
                                                     [3Tired now.
```

This example begins with the announcement of the birth of William and Kate's new baby girl. Fallon begins this portion of the setup by overtly mentioning that congratulations are in order (line 2), followed by a long in-breath as well as a pause. These seem to implicate a response in kind (cheers of congratulations for example) and prolong the transition space in which participant turn change could occur. The audience, however, does not offer any response until line 7 overlapping with Fallon's dental ingressive (tongue click – tsk). Even then, it is a single woo followed by the slow uptake of united cheering (lines 7–8). This lacking and delayed response is what occasions the teasing.

=I4] --

[5nhah5]

35 AUD: [4((.3 Isolated Laughter))4] [5((.2 Isolated Laughter))5]

=Got to get to my3] job [4now.

33

34

36 XX:

37 AUD: ((.6 Laughter))

The first instance of potential teasing occurs in line 14, and exhibits most of the characteristics of teasing outlined in this paper (though this could be considered a somewhat marginal case). His comment No one's ever excited about the second baby exhibits (1) both serious and playful characteristics. On the one hand, the audience's lack of response is warranted; after all, it is the first child that becomes a new and exciting experience for parents and seems to be more celebrated at least according to folk practices, not to mention in monarchical structures the first boy is that which will inherit the crown (the royal couple's first child was a boy in fact). On the other hand, Fallon utilizes a generalized statement (aphorism; line 14) which can be exploited for the purposes of humor (Redfern, 2014) to indicate his comment is paradoxically serious and playful. With regard to (2) a co-present party as target, however, this becomes a bit more complicated. Fallon only indirectly implicates the audience in a response that is subpar. After all, the audience is not mentioned or quoted specifically as the potential teasing begins nor is their response referenced, which would implicate the audience. However, in the context of the next one (line 26), which clearly targets the audience, this comment could be interpreted retroactively as placing the audience as target (though at this moment in the discourse it is hard to tell). More likely here, Fallon is testing the waters for placing the audience as a more overt target later on through an indirect and generalized attack at this early juncture. Regarding the additional teasing characteristics, Fallon uses aphorism as (3) a contextualization cue for potential humorous interpretation, and (4) the audience responds with laughter in line 16, indicating that even the (presumed) target has oriented to the playfulness of the statement. Finally, (5) the comedian's use of a generalized statement (framing his teasing as less direct), as well as the audience's unqualified laughter support suggests that this falls toward the bonding end of the teasing style spectrum.

Though the target during this first potential teasing moment may be ambiguous, later in the sequence Fallon repeats almost verbatim the teasing from line 14 stating No one cares the second baby (line 25) thus linking the second reference to the first. This time he immediately clarifies that the target is in fact the audience by initiating a direct quote attributed to the audience (line 26). He directs his eye gaze toward his side-kick, placing the audience as a third party to what he is about to say rather than an addressee, then directly quotes this third party using the quotative they like. Similar to Conan's example from before, Fallon uses transposition to represent the studio audience's fictitious inner dialogue, which their delayed response (the prior text) is presumed to represent. Finally, Fallon references the audience's lack of response specifically (we already clapped for you guys, line 30). The repetition of the ambiguous statement, the immediate clarification of the audience as target, and the specific mention of the audience's lacking response retrospectively implicates the audience as the target in the first instance of teasing, as well as prospectively implicating the audience in what follows.

This second teasing series (lines 27–34), in addition to having a co-present target, also (1) has characteristics of both playfulness and seriousness. Fallon is addressing the audience's actual subpar response, which could be received as a genuine critique or as a playful commentary. Fallon further frames his next turns as playful through the use of (3) contextualization cues: he reintroduces the original teasing statement using the generalization from before (No one cares about the second baby), and the potential negative aspects of his comment are both mitigated (Potter & Hepburn, 2010; Clift, 2012) and marked as playful (Bateson, 1977) by the within-speech laughter (Jefferson, 1979), or what Potter & Hepburn (2010) call interpolated particles of aspiration (IPAs). These are marked in the transcription by 'h's within words (line 25). In addition, Fallon adjusts his voice quality to indicate that he is playfully quoting the audience (starting line 27). The teaser and target (4) indicate that they both recognize the sequence as teasing; the audience through their laughter (lines 28, 31, and 35) and Fallon through his cascade of teasing showing that he continues to play along with the audience's interpretation (lines 29–30, 32–33). Finally, (5) the teasing here would fall toward the bonding end of the style spectrum. While the audience is directly targeted for not clapping and they do not offer rebuttle material to coconstruct the teasing, the audience's voice does appear on-stage through transposition. This gives the teasing sequence a pseudo-collaborative feel as Fallon gives voice to the studio audience, and the audience ratifies this choice whole-heartedly with unqualified laughter.

Teasing occasioned by applause/cheers 5.2

In all the examples thus far, it was the audience's lack of response that occasioned teasing sequences during joke setups targeting the co-present studio audience. In addition, the comedians demonstrated different modes through which they can bring audience responses into their routines: verbal, miming, and transposition. The next two examples focus specifically on the more common mode of teasing (verbal) while demonstrating that other audience responses (not just silence or delay of response) can be commented on to a teasing end.

(4) JK_2015_0108

```
1
 Kimmel: Today by the way,
2
          is both Elvis Presley and North Korean dictator Kim Jong
          Un's birthdays.
3 AUD: ((1.1 Isolated Laughter/Woos))
4
          [((2.5 Woos. Clapping.))]
5 Kimmel: [°What°?
          °Wait°.
6
7
          ((Shakes Head/Finger))]
8 →
          Who are you clhapphing fohr.
9 AUD: ((1.1 Laughter)) =
10 Kimmel: =£Elvis would have been eighty today£
```

In the example above, comedian-host Jimmy Kimmel begins his joke setup announcing two celebrity birthdays. Following this newsworthy announcement, the studio audience replies with isolated laughter and cheering (lines 3-4). This time, it is the cheers and laughter (rather than silence) which occasion the teasing. In lines 5-6, Kimmel questions the response of the studio audience, then in line 7 uses gesture to stop the audience response altogether. In line 8, Kimmel initiates the teasing, questioning the audience's motivation for clapping – are they clapping for Elvis or for Kim Jong Un?

Here, Kimmel's comment suggests (1) both playful and serious components. He could be seriously questioning and critiquing the audience's choice to applaud/ cheer or playfully bringing attention to their potentially ambiguous response. In addition, (2) he directly questions the audience during his teasing, implicating them as the target by using the second-person pronoun (*Who are* you *clapping for*, line 8). Kimmel (3) contextualizes his own playful non-critical intention (or at least mitigates the potential negative aspects of his comment) using within-speech laughter/ IPAs. And the audience (4) recognizes the comment as teasingly playful, which they indicate through their laughter response in line 9. Finally, the comedian is very direct in his criticism of the audience's response, yet the comedian and audience both engage in shared laughter (IPAs in line 8; stand-alone laughter in line 9). This suggests that (5) the teasing style falls between nipping and bonding, as the teasing is not necessarily collaborative but it is supported whole-heartedly by both parties.

Like in previous examples, the use of material provided by the audience (their applause/cheers) allows the comedian to bring the studio audience in some respects onto the stage and into the show material through teasing, and both comedian and audience support this move through laughter.

Teasing occasioned by mixed response 5.3

The final example demonstrates an additional response type, namely booing which transitions to a mixed audience response, that occasions a teasing sequence.

(5) JF_2015_0902

```
Fallon:
1
            >Guys this is< gi:ant sports news,
2
            today a judge overturned Tom Brady's .h four-game
            suspension,
            .h and will let him play in next week's opening game.
3
4
 AUD1:
            Boo.
5
  AUD:
            ((.6 Booing)) [((1.9 Booing))]
 AUD2: [((1.9 Isolated Claps. Cheers.))]
                                              Wo[20::2].
7
 →Fallon: [2I know yo2]u all agr↑ee.
8
            =It's a good idea.
9
 AUD:
           ((1.9 Laughter. Isolated Clap.))
```

```
That's right he's gonna let him play.
10 Fallon:
11
             =The judge said after ca- <c↑areful> consideration from
             the evidence
             .h from both parties,
12
             .h I rule in favor .h of my fantasy football team.
```

In this example, ABC's Jimmy Fallon initiates teasing in line 7. His comment brings attention to a potential error in the audience's performance - the expectation that audience members will respond together and congruently, which they have not done in this case. It is the audience's discordant response, which involves booing, clapping, and cheering (lines 5–6), which gains topical significance (line 7).

Like the previous examples, this example includes all the teasing characteristics outlined above. The comment in lines 7 and 8 (1) has both serious and playful potential which (2) targets the co-present studio audience using the second person plural pronoun (you all, line 7). Fallon (3) uses irony/sarcasm (he mentions that the audience agrees, even though they clearly produced a mixed response) to assist the audience in recognizing his comment as potentially playful. The audience (4) ratifies the playfulness of the comedian's remark through their responsive laughter (line 9), and (5) the teasing style falls between nipping and bonding. On the one hand, the teasing is not necessarily collaborative but rather a quick comedian retort which sarcastically pokes fun at the audience's lack of agreement; on the other hand, this move is supported by unqualified laughter by the audience.

This, along with the previous examples, demonstrates moments of studioaudience-directed teasing during joke setups. All of these examples: (1) are occasioned by various audience responses (silence, laughter, mixed responses, cheers, clapping), (2) are treated as playfully problematic by both comedian and audience, and (3) bring attention to the audiences' contributions by placing them "on-stage" using various tactics (verbal, miming, transposition). In addition, all examples have been identified as teasing based on the criteria outlined at the beginning, excluding a discussion a sixth teasing characteristic: its broader social function. This will be addressed now.

Discussion

As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, one of the defining characteristics of teasing is its broader social function. In other words, teasing is teasing because it goes beyond the entertainment value of the form itself and serves some function toward the teaser's and target's relationship. One of the major hurdles for a comedian performing before a live audience is the discursive asymmetry created by physical/ technological factors such as the stage, lighting, and microphone. While these items

are characteristic of and logistically necessary for televised latenight performances, they create a divide when it comes to having discursive rights to the floor. The comedians' speech is prioritized by space, technology, and norms of the genre.

But the way teasing comes about during these comedy performances seems to break down this discursive asymmetry in a particular and nuanced way: it engages the studio audience more elaborately into the show. In Lockyer's (2015) study of arenasized comedy audiences, the lack of interaction with the audience is cited as a major challenge for comedians to overcome. The physical and technological constraints of late-night television comedy performances present similar challenges. By using discursive material that studio audiences themselves provide as a basis for the teasing (silence, clapping, cheers, mixed responses, etc.), comedians not only interact on a more personal level with the audience but use material provided by the audience for humorous effect. In essence, the studio audience becomes an active contributor in the comedy routine and their contributions are placed "on-stage" - a breaching of the discursive divide which so quintessentially defines *monologue* performances.

The data presented here also demonstrate that this divide can be breached to various degrees depending on the tactic the comedian uses. The comedian could simply reference the response material provided or withheld by the audience and what it may mean (Examples 1, 2, 4, 5); he could provide a physical embodiment of the audience's response on-stage through miming (Example 2); or he could use quotatives and first-person accounts of the audience's thoughts or imagined commentary using transposition (Examples 2, 3 and 5). In the latter two cases, the comedian does not just make verbal reference to audience responses, but essentially inhabits the audience's voice and actions by bringing them on-stage with him. Through miming and transposition, the comedian can position his studio audience as not just passive contributors to humorous discourse but co-creators of original material which is performed on-stage.

Teasing during joke setups in particular also seems to bolster a specific audience expectation of comedy performance outcomes. In their research on live comedy audiences, Lockyer & Meyers (2011) found that one of the main attractions of stand-up comedy in smaller venues is its unpredictability or "expecting the unexpected". This includes the unpredictable nature of the comedian's actions, the content of the performance, and the ways in which the stand-up comedian responds to the dynamics of the specific audience. The setup to a joking sequence is not only a time when more "serious" discursive moves are made (i.e. the discourse is often about true world events which merely contextualize the upcoming humor), but it is also a time when audiences can easily respond with a maximum amount of independence. Many different audience responses are perfectly acceptable during these junctures and at the discretion of the audience. While following a punchline, for example, there are clear preferred and dispreferred ways of responding,

whether the audience responds and how they respond are less constrained during setup junctures. Choosing to tease at a locus with a more serious tone, of high response variability (where many types of audience responses may be appropriate), of high audience autonomy (they can respond at their discretion with minimal consequence), and where comedian utterances are contingent on audience responses rather than the other way around, seems less contrived and perhaps less expected than teasing which may follow a dispreferred "booing" by an audience following the joke punchline. Thus, teasing during setups in particular may play into this expectation of "expecting the unexpected".

Additionally, the six classification characteristics used for teasing in this study (serious/playful, co-present target, contextualization cues, recognition of teasing by teaser and target, varying styles, broader social function) seem to generally transcend specific genres. In other words, the characteristics for identifying teasing in conversation are also useful for identifying teasing in an institutional interaction like stand-up comedy as well. This is not surprising given conversation's status as "master institution" (Drew & Heritage, 1992) and the fact that we can often evoke informal conversational modes of communication even in the most formalized institutional forms of talk (Goffman, 1981). Despite this commonality, its sequential shape, design, responses, and overall function are unique to the situation and goals of each genre. In essence, what is teased about, how teasing is responded to, and why teasing is initiated become tailored to the separate constraints/goals of comedy and conversation, and result in interactional functions and outcomes unique to the genre in which they occur.

What is teased about in conversation usually involves exaggerated activities such as extolling, complaining, or bragging (Drew, 1987) or conversational errors (Norrick, 1993; Everts, 2003) such as "errors of fact or speech, social blunders, or displays of naivety" (Glenn, 2003: 125). In addition, "the context and the interpersonal knowledge participants have of each other" (Cortés-Conde, 2014: 757) often play a role in conversational teasing content and in stand-up when a single audience member is questioned and attended to (Dore, this volume). In contrast, stand-up comedians rarely have intimate interpersonal knowledge of their audience to exploit for the sake of teasing and humor. As such, teasing is usually occasioned by discursive context, in particular how the audience has responded, what response they have chosen (clapping, silence, etc.), and what that response may mean. These responses may even be referred to specifically during the teasing sequence (Example 4 who are you clapping for; Example 3 we already clapped for you guys). On the one hand, the discursive context may be simply a convenient trigger for the comedian to initiate teasing. On the other hand, it is a strategic choice considering the limitations of stand-up. The comedian has little interpersonal knowledge of the beliefs and habits of the studio audience members. And even if the comedian did have some interpersonal knowledge to exploit for the sake of teasing, what might be true for one audience member may not be true for another. Thus, when placing the entire audience in the position of a teasing butt as we saw in the data here, unanimous and/or simultaneous responses in the immediate discursive context are a fitting strategy for negotiating the knowledge constraints the comedian may have about his audience for the sake of humor.

How teasing is responded to by the target of the teasing also differs between genres. In conversational teasing, the teasing butt usually attends to the serious rather than humorous aspects of the teasing content. This could involve not acknowledging the teasing as laughable at all to laughing first, then addressing the more serious content. In essence, recipients treat teasing as requiring a serious response despite recognizing its humor (Drew, 1987). In the stand-up data presented here, audiences exclusively respond with laughter. In particular, the design of the laughter is unanimous and simultaneous rather than isolated or sporadic. In essence, it is the laughable nature of the teasing that is exclusively attended to by comedy audiences during joke setups and attended to whole-heartedly at that.

These differences align with the different goals for comedy and conversation or why teasing may be initiated in the first place. Drew (1987) points out that in conversation the teaser's goal is to express skepticism about the interlocutor's exaggerated activities. Thus, serious responses allow the teasing target to reject or correct the teasing while holding on to the truth/validity of their original claims. For stand-up comedy, as just mentioned, the discursive asymmetry between comedian and audience becomes a challenge. Teasing used during setup sequences functions to break down this asymmetry, allowing the audience to actively engage as co-producers of the show's comedic material. Thus, unqualified laughter responses by the audience shows their willingness to comply with this goal while also ratifying their participation as not just responders but active participants and contributors to the show's laughable material. Additionally, the comedian may initiate teasing to comply with the audience's expectation of "expecting the unexpected". After all, comedy itself relies on unexpected actions such as the violation of norms and the element of surprise. While teasing may certainly be unexpected in conversation, it is not in the service of the unexpected that teasing is initiated (though, it could certainly be a serendipitous side-effect). A more likely motivation for conversational teasing would be light-hearted critique or repair, since it tends to sequentially follow exaggerated activities.

A final important consideration when discussing teasing during televised monologue performances is the strategic purpose it serves for engaging other participants. The media audience such as at-home television viewers, while not physically co-present, are nonetheless ratified recipients of the comedy performance (Dynel, 2011). And one could argue that the media audience's experience as well as their

positive reception of the comedian's performance is just as or more important than that of the studio audience. After all, media audiences have the potential to encompass millions of viewers, and television ratings and advertising dollars based on viewership numbers are ultimately what drive the success or failure of the comedy show. Like the studio audience, teasing which is based in the realtime responses of co-present participants gives the performance an impromptu feel, playing into the expectation of "expecting the unexpected". But unlike the studio audience which becomes the target of the teasing and provides the material which occasions the teasing, making them in some ways co-creators of the comedy performance, media audience members are merely observers of this phenomenon. They do not provide the material for teasing, they do not become the teasing target at these more serious junctures, and their own contributions do not become "part of the show". Instead, they are provided with fresh and off-the-cuff material to laugh along with and to experience "together" with the other participants, but they are not implicated as the target themselves, which may render the whole experience at least equally (if not more) enjoyable for them, even if they laugh from a distance.

Although it is not unheard of for media audiences to become the target of humor, it is not a strategy commonly evoked by late-night talk show comedians. Unlike studio audiences, the media audience's ability to communicate through group responses in real-time is severely limited by the technical barriers of television production as well as time delays between the co-present participant and the media audience (recipient) experience. In addition, one of the more important aspects of the studio audience teasing sequences presented here is the ratification of humorous teasing through unqualified laughter - which contrasts with the qualified laughter or pofaced responses to teasing within the genre of conversation (Drew, 1987). For the studio audience, teasing toward the prosocial/bonding end of the teasing style cline (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997; Schnurr, 2009) is a real-time possible outcome given their opportunity to respond with supportive laughter. For the media audience, however, few and technically limited resources for providing real-time responses are available. As such, *teasing of* the media audience may prove a less effective strategy for media audience engagement than laughing "together" with a teased other (the studio audience) in that media moment. The media audience's relationship to studio audience teasing is different, but still provides a unique, impromptu, and laughing together (Jefferson et al., 1987) experience for the viewers at home. More research to this effect is warranted.

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Appendix. Transcription conventions (Jefferson, 2004; *indicates adaptations from Du Bois, 1993)

(0.5) numbers in brackets indicate pause length	
(.) micropause	
: elongation of previous vowel or consonant sound	
- word cut-off	
. falling or final intonation	
? rising intonation	
, 'continuing' intonation	
= latched utterances (two between turns; one within same	urn)
<u>ta</u> lk stress/emphasis	
<u>ta</u> :lk intonation contours that lack the more marked shift in pi	tch
↓ ↑ sharp falling/rising intonation	
CAPS markedly loud talk	
° ° markedly soft	
<> speech which is slower than the surrounding talk	
> < speech which is faster than the surrounding talk	
() blank space indicates uncertainty about the transcription	Į.
(()) transcriptionist's environmental descriptions	
(#) creaky voice	
(~) tremulous voice	
<vox> caricatured voice*</vox>	
.h inhalation (each 'h' approximately .15 sec)	
tsk dental ingressive*	
pt lip smack (bilabial)	

lip smack (labio-dental)

ft

Laughter

- h hearable exhalation, possibly laughter
- (h) within-talk plosive exhalation
- hah laughter with voicing
- £ £ hearably smiling voice or suppressed laughter

Salient Gestures (from Ikeda & Bysouth, 2013)

*1 ----->

Designing humor in mediated interactions

Laughter and non-humorous situations in TV documentaries

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In this paper, I explore the role of laughter in broadcast TV documentary programs. Although the primary design of many TV documentaries is to attend to the smooth transmission of information to the audience, some program formats include components of seemingly unscripted interpersonal interaction between the participants. In these interactions, we frequently find situations that evoke the participants' laughter, even though they are not designed as humorous and may not contain any evident intentional humor. Based on data obtained from a recent British documentary series, this paper documents how laughter emerges within interactions between the presenter and other interlocutors in order to deal with situations of personal failure and success arising from joint collaborative effort. The paper argues that laughter indexes extreme emotional reactions, thus being indicative of an underlying incongruity between the participants' expectations and the actual state. Moreover its presence in the program attests to the hybrid nature of modern documentary formats by actually priming the audience's positive reception and enjoyment of the broadcast.

Keywords: laughter, broadcast talk, TV documentary, footing, laughable

Introduction

The TV documentary is a broadcast genre that has a primarily informational function. Typically, it has the format of a sophisticated discursive event in which a serious, knowledgeable presenter conveys scientific, technical and other facts to the audience or elicits similar kinds of information from experts. It usually does not count as entertainment. Given these characteristics, the documentary genre is a typical example of factual broadcasting (Hill, 2005; 2007). However, since the media are constantly in search of new production formats, various hybrid forms and genres emerge, sometimes giving rise to quite unexpected discursive forms and patterns

of interaction. Factuality, for instance, increasingly combines with entertainment (Van Zoonen, 2005; Lorenzo-Dus and Garcés-Conejos Blitvitch, 2013), which is a trend perceivable in news media as well, where factual content tends to be presented in an entertaining manner (Fowler, 1991; Conboy, 2002; Chovanec, 2008, 2017b).

One of the relatively unexpected elements concerns the presence of laughter in TV documentary programs, a phenomenon that has not so far received much scholarly attention. Since laughter tends to be associated with humor, its occurrence would seem to go counter to the normative expectations about the genre of the TV documentary, which does not take the amusement or entertainment of the audience as its primary aim. Applying the combined approach of conversation analysis (Psathas, 1995; Glenn & Holt, 2013) and interactional/interpersonal pragmatics (D'hondt et al., 2009; Locher & Graham, 2010) to spoken broadcast talk data from a recent British documentary series, this paper documents the appearance of laughter in segments of talk between on-screen participants in TV documentaries, with the aim of identifying the situations that are indexed with participants' laughter – both humorous and non-humorous. In these situations, laughter serves diverse functions - the participants not only express their immediate reactions to the current state of affairs but also use laughter to negotiate their mutual relationship, particularly in order to affiliate in a form of interpersonal bonding.

Apart from these local and social functions of laughter in dyadic interactions, however, the phenomenon of laughter in non-humorous situations is related to a more general issue that concerns the relationship of the media and its audiences. Because of their orientation to the transmission of information, documentary programs risk the danger of appearing too pedagogical and, thus, detached from the audience. However, the genre of the documentary has not been spared from the general trend across the media towards program formats favoring the incorporation of "authentic", "ordinary" and "spontaneous" elements (Tolson, 1991; Bonner, 2003; Montgomery, 2001; Thornborrow, 2001), which are often presented in the form of "conversational" language (Fairclough, 1992). As I argue in this paper, laughter between on-screen participants – as well as some forms of conversational humor that emerge between them – constitutes a reframing of the communicative situation towards a more interpersonal form of interaction that momentarily alleviates the demands of information transmission. In this way, the appearance of laughter can index segments of the program that deviate from the scripted nature of the broadcast, allowing on-screen participants to orient to their own interactions. Through laughter, the participants can express their extreme emotional reactions, ranging from enthusiasm to disgust, as well as deal with situations of personal failure and success. As the data indicate, while such laughter often reacts to some non-humorous stimulus, it often occasions the production of complementary humorous acts (such as conversational joking) by one or both of the interlocutors.

Laughter, pragmatics and broadcast talk

The phenomenon of laughter has been subject to considerable interest in various disciplines that fall within the scope of humor studies. traditionally, laughter has been viewed as a reaction to some stimulus, typically of a humorous nature, and linked to an individual's expression of various emotional states (cf. the relief theory of humor; Freud, 1960[1905]). In the social sciences, laughter has been described as having an indexical function, being indicative of playfulness or the play frame, that is, the non-seriousness of a particular situation, serving as a metamessage (Bateson, 1972) or a contextualization cue (Gumperz, 1982).

From a more discursive perspective, laughter has been described as a reaction to a referent that precedes or is to be found in the immediate environment (cf. Glenn & Holt, 2013: 3). This view is found, for instance, in conversation analysis, which operates with the concept of laughable (Glenn 2003; Holt, 2011). The term refers to a turn that both interlocutors orient to as being funny: it is produced as well as responded to with laugh-relevant sounds and/or bodily displays (Ford & Fox, 2010: 340). However, the concept is also analytically problematic because, as noted by Glenn (2010: 1486), "virtually anything can draw or prompt laughter". This means that laughter not only acknowledges or constructs the humorous nature of the previous turn but assumes some other functions with whatever prompts the laugh response, be it a specific textual form (such as an utterance produced by another interlocutor in a previous turn) or some other non-textual prompt (such as some non-verbal act or simply the situational context).

The responsive function of laughter, then, needs to be complemented by pointing out its social character. Laughter also has a purely affiliative role - it occurs as a sign of rapport and consensus even in situations where there is nothing funny (Adelswärd, 1989). In these non-humorous laughter situations (cf. Morreall, 1983), it assumes a broad range of functions. For instance, laughter in talk marks solidarity, familiarity, as well as amusement and appreciation (Coates, 2007: 45). All of these functions are contextually motivated, with laughter emerging spontaneously or in reaction to some situational prompt. The crucial point is that, regardless of whether it is verbal or non-verbal, the prompt need not be prima facie humorous. Since laughter can be both involuntary and voluntary (or even faked), it is not a reliable marker of humor (Attardo, 2012). Laughter, thus, is not coextensive with humor, as is acknowledged in humor studies (Attardo, 1994; 2015: 170). Just as there can be humor without laughter (Bell, 2015), there can also be laughter without humor.

The combination of responsive/non-responsive laughter with its social role within the small-scale group of interlocutors where laughter emerges forms the perspective that underlies the present study. With a view to the data at hand, this study thus adopts a social interactional and pragmatic approach to laughter (Glenn 2003; Glenn & Holt 2013). In other words, laughter is considered as a device through which the interlocutors not only express their internal states but also establish and negotiate their interpersonal relationships, regardless of the existence of some humorous prompt or prior humorous intention. In this sense, the approach is aligned with psychology-inspired theories of humor that tend to see laughter as a reaction to some stimulus, typically as a relief of tension arising from a changed situation or incongruity, though not always necessarily related to humor (Morreall, 1983). This type of responsive/non-responsive laughter includes non-humorous situations involving physical stimuli (e.g. tickling) and embarrassment (Billig, 2005: 223).

As suggested above, the analysis of how linguistic means are involved in the construction of relations between speakers has been central to interpersonal pragmatics (Locher & Graham, 2010), which explores the dynamics of interaction between social actors with regard to their situated relationships (Arundale, 2006) and diverse other social and cultural variables. While laughter undeniably fulfils the social functions mentioned above, it also helps interlocutors to achieve their personal communicative goals in specific communicative situations. This pragmatic dimension is reflected in the strategic use of laughter. Laughter, then, is more than just a behavioral response; it is a form of communicative behavior since "[a]t times it is faked, produced strategically, or done simply because others are doing the same" (Glenn, 2003: 25).

The interactional perspective on the production and reception of humor has recently enjoyed much attention in pragmatics (Norrick, 2003; Norrick & Spitz, 2008; Norrick & Chiaro, 2009; Dynel, 2011, 2013). Most studies in this vein, however, address cases of intentional humor production in either authentic conversation (Hay, 2001; Kotthoff, 2006) or such humor genres as sitcoms and stand-up comedy (e.g. Dynel, 2012; Seewoester Cain, 2013; Messerli, 2016). These studies make some valuable observations on the presence of laughter, both on the level of the characters and within the audio-track that uses "canned laughter" in order to cue the audience's own laughter response. There is also a strong tradition of research into the production of humorous phenomena in non-humorous genres and situations, such as irony in mediatized news interviews (Weizman, 2013), humorous narratives in political debates (Archakis & Tsakona, 2011) and humor in political talk shows (Ekström, 2011). Yet, there has been comparatively less scholarly attention to documenting the presence of laughter in non-humorous situations. Some of the notable exceptions include Ericksson (2009), who deals with the management of studio audience laughter in political interviews, and Chovanec (2016a), who discusses the emergence of unintentional humor in microphone gaffes in sports broadcasts.

What many of the studies of mediatized occasions of laughter and humor operate with is the concept of the *double articulation of the mediatized speech event* (Scannell, 1991; Montgomery, 2007), which forms an important point of departure

of media broadcast talk analysis (Hutchby, 2006; Tolson, 2006; Montgomery, 2007; Thornborrow, 2015). This concept refers to the dual orientation of the talk between the on-screen participants: they orient to each other as well as towards the absent audiences (see also Fetzer, 2006). As I argue in the analytical part of this paper, this conception is central for my understanding and interpretation of the operation of laughter (and humor, more generally) in TV broadcasts: while seemingly performed by the on-screen participants within their momentary interactional arrangements (Goodwin, 2007), laughter transcends those dyadic frameworks and becomes indexical of the interlocutors' attempt to perform authenticity in what tends to be scripted communicative situations (Haarman, 2001; Thornborrow, 2001). In other words, laughter is the interlocutors' attempt at breaking out - momentarily – from the performance of their "mediated selves" (Thornborrow, 2015) and creating the impression of the interlocutors as being ordinary and authentic. This situation also has consequences for the sociolinguistics of style (Tolson, 1991; Coupland, 2007), since participants in mediatized speech events are caught in the tension between stylized and authentic performance, with the paradoxical outcome that their "spontaneity" is, to a significant extent, a form of stylization as well.

Material for analysis

The data presented in this paper come from the British TV series *How Britain Worked*, a Channel 4 documentary program produced and aired in 2012. The six-part series revolves around the guiding role of the main protagonist, the presenter Guy Martin, who participates in several projects to reconstruct 19th-century technology. While doing so, Martin – a truck mechanic by profession and a successful motorcycle racing champion - documents and explains some of the engineering achievements of the Industrial Revolution, such as railway engines, water turbines, seaside piers, etc. He gets involved in their reconstruction using 19th-century materials, technologies and tools that he sometimes has to produce himself. In this pursuit, he relies on the professional guidance of experts from various fields of technology.

Although it is officially classified as a documentary, the program is actually a genre hybrid. On the one hand, it contains elements that are characteristic of documentary series, as attested by the strong ideational component of the program. Not only do the participants provide a lot of technical and historical information, but this is also complemented by the authoritative voiceover that provides guidance through the program and frames the individual scenes involving the presenter. At the same time, however, this is a personal quest program, where the main protagonist aims at achieving a specific goal, with the program tracing the gradual progression of the reconstruction project. As the data indicate, this genre hybridity

is particularly conducive to the emergence of laughter (and conversational humor stimulated thereby) between on-screen participants because it enables them to engage in seemingly spontaneous interpersonal interactions.

Based on the identification of relevant segments that contain laughter, the next section provides a qualitative analysis of laughter between the presenter and other participants. While tokens of laughter and various forms of humor are distributed throughout the whole series, the extracts analyzed below illustrate some of the most important functions of laughter in non-humorous situations in this program by means of a qualitative conversation analysis of selected samples from several of the program's episodes.

Laughter and non-humor

In the documentary program under analysis, laughter very frequently appears in situations that are not humorous per se. In these situations, it is one or both of the interlocutors who laugh; shared laughter typically develops into a laughing sequence, sometimes motivating the interlocutors to start joking or engage in other forms of conversational humor. Initially non-humorous laughter can then serve as a trigger of humor production or as a meta-signal that can assume a number of pragmatic functions, including the re-interpretation of some non-humorous situation as non-serious and the presentation of the interlocutor in a positive manner.

This section identifies several types of such situations. First, there is laughter occurring in connection with failure (Section 4.1) and triumphant laughter expressing joy and marking the successful accomplishment of a task (Section 4.2). Laughter also appears to have an additional evaluative function in expressing disbelief (Section 4.3) and even disgust and embarrassment (Section 4.4), marking some previous or upcoming action or utterance as unexpected, unusual and out-of-the-ordinary (see also Karachaliou & Archakis, this volume). All of these non-humorous laughter situations occur on the communicative level of the interlocutors within the program, arising from their mutual interaction that relates to the non-spontaneous actions they perform on the camera. As documented by the analysis, this form of laughter is central to the discursive construction of spontaneity through overcoming the scripted nature of the program, while not being primarily aimed at creating humor for the benefit and enjoyment of the audience.

Laughing at failure 4.1

An important non-humorous laughter situation occurs when something goes wrong. Laughter in these cases enables the discourse participants to defuse the tension potentially arising out of someone's responsibility for the failure and helps them reaffirm their relationship as one of cooperation rather than conflict. In collaborative situations involving at least two parties, this phenomenon has several distinct dimensions. First, laughter can originate from the individual not responsible for the failure, being variously directed at the undesired outcome or the other party who failed to perform as expected, and potentially leading to mocking or ridicule. While non-humorous laughables generate laughter tokens from one of the parties, the laugh invitation can be taken up or resisted by the other interlocutor. Another possibility occurs when the failing individual emits tokens of self-directed laughter, either as a way of glossing his/her own ineptitude or overcoming possible embarrassment in the presence of a more experienced individual. Also, there can be mutual laughter that affirms the affiliation between the speakers despite a potentially conflicting issue.

In Example (1), the presenter Guy Martin is trying to produce a sheet of glass for a Wardian case in the presence of an experienced glassmaker, David Quilt. The extract contains several tokens of laughter that occur once it becomes obvious that the production is not proceeding as expected and when Martin is starting to have problems as a result of the difficulty of the task. The segment contains three distinct subtypes of laughter in situations of failure: (a) the expert's laughter at the failed attempt to make a proper sheet of glass (line 33); (b) the presenter's laughter tokens marking the expert's joking as non-funny (line 36); and (c) the interlocutors' joint laughter that ultimately affiliates the two protagonists (lines 37–40).

```
(1) Episode 6, 9.05-10.15 (Glass production)<sup>1</sup>
    (VO = voiceover; GM = Guy Martin, the presenter; DQ = David Quilt, a glassmaker)
1
    VO Having made another cut parallel to the first,
        he removes a strip of glass. The cylinder is
3
       now ready to be flattened.
4
  GM Hey, it's not easy as it looks, I'll tell you
5
       if you've done it. You see. (scratching,
       smiley voice) None of this. (unintelligible,
7
       smiling)
8
   VO The glass now needs to be heated again. David
       Quilt has specialized in this part of the
9
10
       process (.) for almost nine years
11 GM That's too hot (unintelligible) That's six
12
       hundred degrees at the end
```

^{1.} For transcription conventions, see the Appendix.

```
13
   DQ No, no, no, this is just under nine hundred
14
       degrees
15 GM Is it 'ot enough to make it flexible but not
16
      meltin'
17 DQ Yeah. Like I said toughy sort of texture so
18
      you can pick it up on the manipulator ...
19 GM Yeah
20 DQ So (.) just (.) you'll have to walk in and get
       it sort of there and then just get the whole
21
22
       (unintelligible) through (.) to the other
       side, okay.
23 GM Yeah?
24 DQ Yeah, lift it up, pull it back that's it see
       and then roll it, drop it [down and put it
25
26 GM
                                 [Ahh, yeah
27 DQ Okay? (.) Drop it down, try and lift up that
       end that's sticking up there before it (4.0)
28
29 GM Yeah?
30 DQ OK, yeah, keep going, I think it's stuck on
31
      the one end but (.) ehm (.)
32 GM It's stuck down there, innit
33 DQ You might try a little of wangling he he he
34
       (laughing)
35 GM A bit of wangling
36 DQ It's a work of art he he
37 GM Ha ha (2.0)
38 DQ I think that one's had it he he he
39 GM Yeah 'ad it... he he he
40 DQ I think we'll have another go [he he he
41 GM
                                     [ | Yeah. Let's have another go.
  DQ Drop it down on the table [...]
42
```

In the opening part of the extract, the voiceover is interlaced with Martin's reactions. While the voiceover provides a detailed description of the technical process (lines 1–3 and 8–10), Martin reflects on his experience of blowing glass for the first time (lines 4–7). He admits the difficulty (Hey, it's not easy as it looks), substantiating his claim by referring to his experience (I'll tell you if you've done it). The latter part of his utterance is accompanied with an uneasy smile, with Martin scratching his head at the same time. This form of embodied action that correlates with a token of forced laughter is indicative of Martin's embarrassment and awareness of his own limitations in this field of expertise.

The laughter found in the rest of the extract has an evaluative function, although it occurs in an extended conversational interaction where it is, at least partly, jointly accomplished. Starting in line 11, Martin is shown handling a ball of molten glass, trying to flatten it under the guidance of the glassmaker David Quilt. Quilt verbally coordinates Martin's handling of the glass, while the visual track is showing the molten ball being shaped – and misshaped – by Martin. Evidently, things do not go as expected, and Quilt is trying to help avoid the problem by providing advice and coordinating Martin's actions (try and lift up that end that's sticking up there before it; lines 27-28). Martin is unsuccessful, as evidenced by Quilt's comment that is punctuated with two brief pauses and a hesitation marker (I think it's stuck on the one end but (.) ehm (.); lines 30-31). Shortly after Martin announces his failure (It's stuck down there; line 32), Quilt suggests one more possibility of saving the product (You might try a little of wangling; line 33). The tentative modality (might) indicates that the expert considers the chances of Martin's success to be rather hypothetical.

At this point, Quilt emits several brief tokens of laughter, showing his apparent amusement at the result of Martin's lack of experience: he laughs at the inadequate outcome of Martin's effort. With reference to the superiority theory, this can be interpreted as humorous laughter. From a conversational analytical point of view, the laugh tokens constitute a laugh invitation (Jefferson, 1979, 1984). However, while Martin echoes Quilt's suggestion by repeating his words (A bit of wangling; line 35), he does not take up this laugh invitation, with the result that no shared laughter appears at this point (cf. Glenn, 2010: 1486). Instead, Quilt instantly brings the whole non-humorous occasion to an end, evidently abandoning his hope of saving the final product and forestalling the awkwardness of non-reciprocated laughter.

However, the initial non-humorous status of the situation (i.e. Martin's ineptitude and ultimate failure) then becomes renegotiated into an occasion of explicit humor construction. At this point, Quilt refers to Martin's misshapen product as an artistic creation (it's a work of art; line 36), pointing out its uselessness for the intended purpose. By reclassifying the result of Martin's failure in this way, Quilt is, in fact, offering Martin a chance to save some of his face, or at least make his failure appear more acceptable. This is an explicit act of humor construction by Quilt, once again accompanied by the expert's good-natured laughter. At the same time, however, this act affirms the glassmaker's superiority over Martin in terms of their distribution of knowledge and experience, potentially with a damaging effect on the presenter.

That this might be the case seems to be supported by the fact that despite receiving the laugh invitation in line 36, Martin does not join in this kind of humor by reciprocating or appreciating Quilt's joking. His reaction makes it clear that he actually resists the attempt of the other interlocutor to laugh at Martin's expense, as indicated by the exaggerated pronunciation of the interjection ha (line 37). The stringing of this token of staged quasi-laughter (Ha ha) is a conventional way in which interlocutors signal that they either do not share the classification of some act as humorous or intentionally opt out of the humorous effect, essentially conveying the message "that's not funny". Judging from that reaction, the expert's laughter, which is aimed at Martin's ineptitude, constitutes a situation of failed humor (Bell, 2015), or, more specifically, rejected (Priego-Valverde, 2009) or resisted humor (Chovanec, 2016a).

Interactionally, this is a point of conflict between the two interlocutors: by not concurring with the jocular classification of his product as "a work of art", Martin indicates his momentary unease with being turned - albeit indirectly - into the butt of humor. The staged character of the laughter disaffiliates Martin from the other interlocutor – it has a distancing, non-supportive function (cf. Partington, 2006: 19). Clearly, this is not a collaborative moment of humor construction. From Martin's perspective, the "biting" effect of the expert's humor seems to prevail. There is a danger than this form of joking could even be taken as a form of ridicule from the expert.

At this point, the expert does not immediately switch into a non-humorous mode by way of accommodating to Martin's perspective. Instead, he briefly persists with the joking by making another potentially humorous utterance that focuses on the destroyed material without specifying the agency of the destruction (I think that one's had it he he; line 38). The presenter responds by echoing the expert's utterance (Yeah 'ad it... he he he; line 39) and terminating his embarrassment with laughter. Laughter here becomes reciprocal and helps the interlocutors to affiliate once again. Quilt's utterance in line 38 thus helps to bring the talk about Martin's failure to an end without assigning blame or criticism for the failure to anybody.

Being aware of the embarrassing nature of the situation, Quilt then quickly moves on to give the presenter another chance to improve on his performance (I think we'll have another go; line 40). Significantly, the utterance uses the inclusive pronoun we to construct a collectivity out of the two participants, which further mitigates Martin's responsibility for the failure. This utterance becomes an opportunity for both interlocutors to move forward – not only literally from the miscreated product but also symbolically from a potentially embarrassing situation that was beginning to turn increasingly uneasy for Martin. Martin concurs by producing a response indicting willingness to repeat the process (Yeah. Let's have another go; line 41). The seriousness of the tone of the utterance indicates that the embarrassing moment has been overcome and the interlocutors have re-established their co-operative mode.

This part of the dialogue manifests an important shift in the role of laughter. While all the utterances in lines 33-39 are spanned by the expert's prolonged laughter, Martin initially shows resistance but eventually joins in, thereby indicating that his failure is not that serious. This attests to the gradually changing nature of laughter in the sequence: what starts as non-reciprocated and potentially demeaning/aggressive (i.e. superiority) laughter eventually turns into shared affiliative laughter that concludes the whole scene. The simultaneous laughter affirms the interlocutors' momentary bond between them. It marks their joint orientation to another attempt at accomplishing the physical task, thereby resolving the potential conflict arising from Martin's failure that could possibly subject him to ridicule

and embarrassment (cf. Norrick & Spitz, 2008). Once this kind of alignment is established, laughter disappears, marking the shift from an interpersonal to a transactional type of interaction.

The extract illustrates that while the presenter's lack of expertise can motivate the emergence of humorous interactions, with inexperience and its outcomes serving as the butt of the humor, laughter can serve both for playful biting and for ultimately defusing the tension in a sensitive situation. In this way, it combines disaffiliative and affiliative functions. Within the production scheme of the entire program, this kind of on-screen interaction is designed to have the audience align with the non-expert presenter and enjoy the unfolding and developing interaction between the on-screen participants. Since that is a feature commonly found in other program formats (such as in reality TV), the inclusion in the documentary of a scene showing the failure of one of the participants and how that failure is jointly addressed could be interpreted as evidence of the program's hybrid nature.

Laughing at success 4.2

Another type of non-humorous laughter situation occurs when laughter serves as a signal of appreciation, particularly where it appears as a reaction to some successfully performed activity. In the absence of any humorous prompt, the laughter marks the interlocutors' joy at an immediately preceding achievement. The humorous stimulus (a laughable) prompting the laughter is thus coextensive with the actual physical situation and the interlocutors' assessment of the situation as one of success. While laughter can express the appreciation by one of the speakers of the success achieved by the other co-present participant, it also arises as an emotional reaction to some positive outcome resulting from their joint collaborative effort.

That is the case in Example (2), which shows how Guy Martin (GM) and Tony Ralph (TR), a water mill operator, complete the restoration of a water mill turbine by testing the operation of the machinery. This marks the culmination of a lengthy restoration process. While the initial part of the segment is marked by the interlocutors' unease and tension arising from the uncertain outcome of the test, the participants quickly find out that the restoration has been successful, which is rewarded by Guy Martin's multiple tokens of appreciative laughter throughout the sequence.

Episode 2, 39.15–40.30 (Running the water turbine)

```
1
   GM What's the plan now then?
2
   TR It's fingers crossed, get yourself up there,
       don't control her and see what happens.
3
   VO It's time to get this hundred-and-thirty-year
5
       old turbine working again.
   GM I'll strike 'er up.
```

```
7 TR Don't overdo it. Just let her go quietly.
8 GM You ready? (3.0) [GM turning a wheel] erm,
9 give her some throttle
10 VO As Guy opens the control wheel (.) the turbine
11 bursts (.) into life...
12 GM Ho ho ho
13 VO ... and sends power spinning right (.)
14 throughout the mill.
15 GM He he
16 TR It works (smiling)
17 GM It \tau works it works, it \tau really \tau does. He he he
18 He
19 GM (cut to GM reflecting) I didn't know what to
20 expect. You know, I just I did NOT know what
21
      to expect and (.) yeah, I put a bit of water
through I could NOT believe it.
23 GM (cut back to mill) (unintelligible) He he
24 TR Just turn her down a bit, you got [good gear
                                        [he he he
25 GM
26 (unintelligible)
27 TR Fire that's not on ya bloody motorbike. Hold
28 on, yeah?
29 GM Flauntin' (unintelligible) Oh, isn't that nice?
30 TR No, interestin', innit? You've made a rattle
31 of it.
32 GM (unintelligible)
33 TR Give her a bit more then but don't go berserk
34 GM (sound of turbine engine speeding up) ho ho ho
35 ho ho
36 TR Listen that he he
37 GM There's no noise?
38 TR No. Instant.
39 GM That's a joke
40 TR [That's brilliant, and that's [incredible yeah
41 GM [he he he
                                 [He he he I
42 don't believe [that
43 TR
                    [That's a Rolls-royce (smiling)
44 GM Ah It's a Royce
45 TR Yeah, that's a Royce.
```

This extract is noteworthy due to how the presenter's laughter dominates the whole scene of the successful relaunch of the machinery and how this is realized, on the production level, by a skilful juxtaposition of the voices of the participants. In addition, the sample also contains an instance of emerging conversational joking though which the expert teases the presenter.

The scene opens with an introductory segment that provides a context for the experiment and sets up the situation in which laughter is to play a central role. After the voiceover specifies the nature of the activity, Martin announces his active role in the test run of the reconstructed machinery (I'll strike 'er up; line 6). This is followed by a cautious piece of advice from the expert, whereby he coordinates their joint efforts (Don't overdo it, Just let her go quietly in line 7; cf. similar utterances in lines 24, 27-28, 33). This reveals the slight anxiety that the interlocutors have at this point because the outcome of the test is (presumably) uncertain to them. This heightens the expectations of the expert and the presenter, as well as the audience, and attests to the possibly unscripted nature of their subsequent talk.

The scene aptly juxtaposes the expert, who is an old and experienced man, and the presenter, who is more than 30 years his junior and sometimes appears to act in a somewhat rash manner. The interaction could, thus, be read as exploiting the contrast between the guarded restraint arising from the experience of old age (as articulated by the expert) and the enthusiastic abandon and excitement of youth (as represented by Martin). This appears crucial in the subsequent turns where Martin's utterance (erm, give her some throttle; lines 8-9) alternates with the voiceover (As *Guy opens the control wheel (.) the turbine bursts into life*; lines 10–11). As the visual track shows the machine moving, Martin emits several tokens of laughter. The voiceover track, superimposed on the communicative level constituted by the scene, continues by providing additional description (and sends power spinning right (.) throughout the mill; lines 13–14). Martin continues with his triumphant laughter. The smiling expert assesses the positive outcome of the test by saying *It works!* in line 16 and Martin instantly takes up the phrase, repeating it enthusiastically twice with a very agitated intonation contour (It works, it works, it really does; line 17), laughing - almost maniacally - throughout the scene. Several times, the enthusiastic laughter mushes Martin's words into unintelligibility.

The very emotional reaction, coupled with the triumphant laughter of appreciation at one's own successful achievement, has an important place in the overall design of the program. Scenes like these overcome the scripted nature of the documentary and contrast sharply with the pedagogical, restrained tone of the voiceover. They provide the opportunity for 'fresh talk' (Goffman, 1981), increasing the impression that the audience is watching the participants' authentic conversational behavior.

The communicative role of the second participant in this extract has two dimensions. As suggested above, he monitors the presenter and guides him through the testing process. Since his role within the interactional dyad is informed by his superior expertise, it is hardly surprising that he issues a series of commands to the presenter in the form of bare imperatives (Don't overdo it; Just turn her down a bit; Hold on, yeah; Give her a bit more; lines 7, 24, 27–28, 33). At the same time, however, the expert is there also in order to appreciate Martin's emotional outburst and joy at the success of the reconstruction. He acts as a sympathetic and supportive observer of Martin's laughter-imbued performance of triumph. The fact that he does not join in Martin's laughter - which may be related either to his age or prior experience with the operation of the water turbine – does not prevent him from enjoying the occasion – he is smiling with satisfaction at work well done (line 16). He even teases Martin on a couple of occasions, thereby adding a distinct element of conversational humor to the interaction (cf. Kotthoff, 1996; Holmes, 2007). The first of the teases occurs in line 27, where the good-humored expert jokingly cautions Martin in his air of abandon with the historical technology. He does that by referring to Martin's motorcycle racing career, making a jocular parallel between the way Martin operates the water turbine and his motorcycle and formulating a playful, mock reproach (That's not on ya bloody motorbike). Prior to that utterance, there is no laughable in the scene; laughter evidently serves as an externalized emotional expression of Martin's enjoyment of the otherwise non-humorous moment.

After a brief exchange, the expert then encourages Martin to increase the water flow, again with a caution (Give her a bit more then but don't go berserk; line 33). Martin concedes by giving more power to the turbine, once again ecstatically laughing in triumph to the sound of the speeding up engine. At this point, the expert becomes involved in yet another instance of collaborative humor construction: he likens the sound of the running water turbine to a trademarked motor engine (That's a Rolls-Royce; line 43). Martin obliges by echoing this evidently exaggerated classification (Ah, it's a Rolls-Royce; line 44), indicating that he is willing to partake in this kind of joking that involves a playful enactment of dissimulation and fantasy (cf. Partington, 2006: 69). The expert's repetition of the same (Yeah, that's a Royce; line 45) closes the scene that is enacted against the background of positive, dynamic music in the soundtrack. Significantly, the partial overlap of the speakers' turns, the co-constructed utterances and the repetitions are all characteristics of the playfulness of talk and the 'in-tune-ness' of the speakers at this point (Coates, 2007: 46).

The extract documents how laughter is used in the series in order to positively evaluate the outcome of some joint effort. This form of laughter to mark success and achievement is relatively common in the program. It is related to the light-hearted and extrovert personality of the presenter as well as the overall design of the program that favors seemingly unscripted, spontaneous interaction between the presenter and experts. The latter is, arguably, more attractive to watch than a documentary that is excessively concerned with the transmission of information. The jubilant laughter among the participants, which the audience is witnessing in this documentary, attests to the hybrid nature of the program.

Laughing in disbelief 4.3

The third type of non-humorous situations that give rise to laughter is constituted by a speaker's reaction to an earlier utterance by some other interlocutor. Frequently, laughter has a future orientation since it prefaces some activity that the speaker – typically the presenter, in the case of the data analyzed – is about to

perform shortly afterwards. This situation obtains, for instance, where knowledge is shared, expertise is mediated, and instructions are given in expert-to-presenter interactions. This constitutes the laughable, namely the textual set-up that – while itself not necessarily funny or intended to be humorous – occasions the recipient's reaction of laughter. Because of the asymmetry between the roles of the host and the expert in the TV documentary, the laughter need not be shared, which conforms to earlier findings concerning interlocutors' behavior in similar asymmetrical sequential arrangements (such as employment interviews and police interviews; see Glenn, 2010 and Carter, 2011 respectively).

This form of laughter has an evaluative function since it marks the laughable, or more precisely whatever the recipient considers the laughable to be, as so unexpected or out-of-the-ordinary that it provokes laughter. The disbelief associated with this reaction can be explained with reference to an underlying incongruity between the recipient's expectations and the actual state of affairs that comes as a surprise to him/her. In this case, the laughter tokens serve to index the absurdity of the situation (cf. Morreall, 1983; de Jongste, 2013) and the situation qualifies as an instance of humorous laughter.

In the extracts analyzed in this and the next section, laughter is produced by the presenter to express disbelief in what is to follow as well as incredulity in what he is currently doing. In Example (3), Guy Martin is performing an inspection of a railway engine. He describes the procedure, relying on the expert – an unnamed mechanic referred to with the word Monkey² – to supply him with the relevant terminology. Martin is standing in front of the engine with a hammer in his hand and the mechanic is peering out from a small hatch at the bottom part of the engine:

(3) Episode 1, 6.17–6.35 (Preparing for engine inspection)

```
GM And I'm gonna go in there we ... what do we call
       it's not an inspection hammer, what do we call it
2
   Boy It's a stay testing hammer.
3
   GM A stay testing hammer (1.0) (boy nodding) So
4
5
       I'm gonna go in in a firebox and let me take
       the stay testing hammer and then what
6
7
   Boy Bash'er on the stays.
   GM I'm gonna do WHAT?
8
   Boy Bash'er on the stays.
9
   GM Bash'er on the stays he he he it's quite
10
       simple really he he he
11
12 Boy (unintelligible)
   GM Monkey will show me the way he he she's gonna
13
       be a bit cozy in there (laughing)
14
```

^{2.} A shortened form of *grease monkey*, a slang expression denoting a mechanic.

This segment is a part of a scene that deals with the mediation of expertise carried out through metalinguistic terminology negotiation between the expert and the presenter (for more details on this, see Chovanec, 2016b). While the description of the procedure is provided by Martin, he involves the expert in the mediation by prompting him with two separate requests in order to have him specify the terminology and the next step in the process (what do we call it in line 2, and and then what in line 6).

Although there is no potentially humorous situation in the extract, the presenter breaks into laughter. The laughter commences in direct response to the terminology specification and continues until the end of the scene. The laughable in this case is constituted by the mechanic's statement in line 9 (Bash 'er on the stays). Because of the way the utterance is pronounced, it is almost unintelligible, which seems to be the reason why Martin asks the expert to repeat it (I'm gonna do WHAT?; line 8). However, the request for repetition may also be motivated by Martin's disbelief – real or performed – at what the procedure entails. This seems to be supported by the syntactic structure of Martin's utterance, which is conventionally used to this end, and its very emphatic pronunciation with the intonation center on the interrogative pronoun what. The expert then reiterates the utterance and Martin immediately echoes it in a verbatim form, elaborating with an additional evaluative phrase (*It's quite simple really*; lines 10–11).

At this point, there is a change of footing (Goffman, 1981). Lifting his sight upwards from the mechanic inside the engine hatch, Martin glances into the camera and at a member of the production crew who is evidently present in the scene but not shown on the camera. The change of footing breaks the interactional dyad with the expert. Martin's glance reorients the communicative frame at a moment when he echoes the expert's utterance. As a result, the laughter that accompanies and follows the repetition of Bash 'er on the stays becomes addressed to the production crew rather than the expert, whose utterance has occasioned the laughter. This changed perspective is also linguistically manifested in Martin's next utterance, where he refers to the expert in the third person (Monkey will show me the way; line 13), that is, he is talking about the man to the camera crew and the audience of the documentary rather than directly to him as in the preceding turns. That utterance is likewise punctuated with tokens of laughter.

The operation of laughter in this scene reveals several points. First, the change of footing excludes the expert from the expression of disbelief by the presenter: it realizes a switch from the presenter-expert interaction to a communicative frame that involves the presenter and other non-experts (i.e. the production crew and the audience), with the expert being temporarily sidelined into the bystander role (Goffman, 1981; Bell, 1984). This may indicate that laughter is a form of audience-oriented performance rather than an articulation of the participants'

authentic conversational behavior. Second, the laughter is non-reciprocal. The expert does not join in it. Clearly, the expert's utterance operates as a laughable only for the presenter because the procedure specified in it is well known to the expert. The procedure is unusual and out of the ordinary – and thus potentially laughable on account of the disbelief it can generate – only for the outsiders: the presenter, the production crew, and most probably the audience, who are ultimately invited to enjoy the scene by being exposed to the presenter's laughter.

However, the fact that the expert does not partake in the laughter not only indicates that he finds no laughable in the scene but also reflects the power difference between the two interlocutors. Despite his expertise, the mechanic - who is also much younger than the presenter – may feel like the weaker participant in the interaction, particularly since the entire program revolves around the celebrity persona of the presenter. In much of the scene, the boy is merely watching the presenter's performance, respecting the latter's right to structure the communicative event and manage the conversational floor. Thus, the non-reciprocity of the laughter may be illustrative of the mechanic's respect for the presenter and acknowledgement of the presenter's superior status. The implicit power asymmetry in this interaction overrides the possibility that the mechanic would engage in peer bonding through shared, affiliative laughter.

Laughing in disgust 4.4

Closely related to the laughter of disbelief identified in the previous subsection is another kind of laughter whereby the laughing individual evaluatively reacts to some phenomenon. This type of laughter arises as a reaction to something that an individual finds so unusual that it becomes funny on account of its bizarre or abhorrent nature. In that sense, laughter emerges to mark the incongruity between one's ordinary expectations or normative experience and the bizarreness of the reality. It underlies the non-normality of the actual scenario that the individual becomes involved in and from which the speaker wishes to disassociate or, even, disaffiliate.

That is the case with Example (4), which shows the presenter Guy Martin tanning animal hides. For this purpose, he is kneading animal excrements with his hands in rubber gloves, laughing profusely at the embarrassing nature of the bizarre activity:

Episode 2, 34.28–36.04 (Tanning a cowhide)

```
1
       The workers who converted animal hide into leather were
2
        called tanners. And their art relied on one principal
        ingredient (2.5) dog poop (2.0) To find out what tanning was
3
4
        like, Guy's fetched a bucketful of stuff from the local
5
        kennels.
```

```
GM Yeah, I needed to use something (smiling) quite acidic to alter
6
7
       the chemical make-up of the of the cowhide to be able to
8
       turn it into leather and keep it supple and anyway to stop it
9
       from rotting, really.
10 GM Ooh, sorry we dropped a bit (.) I'm sorry (1.0) Look at that
       (3.0) Thaat (laughing voice) stinks he he he he he ho ho
11
12
       ho ho ho we need to coordinate he he. We'll pour a little
13
       bit of water, just try to make the ehm (wobble) chemical
14
       reaction a little bit faster the the what's it the protein
15
       enzymes of the dog poop is what sets (2.0) (GM kneading the
16
       material) Oh yeah, look at that, what a lovely texture. (long
17
       distance shot, camera receding) You're all stepping back
18
       now, aren't ya? You're all stepping back. This is coming on
       a treat. Oooh oh yes. You know because the only hard
19
       material before the days of rubber, they just used the bare
20
21
       arms he he he he he he they'd mash it with their bare feet
22
       you know it's a mucky job but anyway this is a proper
23
       Victorian graft. She's coming on, watch the splashing, watch
24
       the splashing (3.0)
25 GM I think we've proved ehm hm hm we can see why tanners
        only married tanners. I think that's right, really.
```

In harmony with the standard design of the program, the scene opens with the voiceover providing historical information, introducing the relevant technical vocabulary and dramatizing the key element of the opening part – see the long pause preceding the phrase *dog poop*. In this scene, the presenter is alone, without any conversational partner. The absence of the expert, which is otherwise quite unusual in this program, affects the interactional arrangement of the scene. The presenter performs the activity directly on camera, providing a running commentary in a long monologue on what he is doing.

The segment in lines 6–9 consists of Guy Martin's retrospective reflection on the activity. That is evidenced by the use of the past tense (*I needed to use something*; line 6) as well as the change in the setting of the scene, which is different from where the tanning itself was performed. What is significant here is the smiling pronunciation of the semantically vague word *something*. The word anaphorically refers to the animal excrements that had been mentioned by the voiceover (dog poop; line 3) and shown in the previous cut. As a result, the audience unequivocally knows at this point what Martin's understatement refers to and, consequently, is able to appreciate Martin's unwillingness to name the reality explicitly, particularly since it is accompanied by his knowing smile. The smiling pronunciation of the word is a subtle paralinguistic indicator of the embarrassing reality of the task.

After a cut, Martin is shown handling the excrements, which he accompanies with his own commentary. Once he starts processing the material, he produces an utterance that is evidently meant for the members of the production team, none of whom is actually shown on camera (Look at that; line 10). After a prolonged

pause, Martin starts formulating a comment based on his sensory and olfactory experience. While the opening pronoun is lengthened and uttered in a smiling voice again (*Thaat*; line 11), the verb – which is arguably the pivotal lexeme in this segment (stinks; line 11) - causes an eruption of his own prolonged laughter that lasts, with varying intensity, for seven seconds. Martin's guffaw even comprises a rapidly uttered aside that is, once again, addressed to the production crew (we need to coordinate; line 12). The sentence remains unfinished and becomes drowned in further laughter.

The extract is characterized by a number of switches and changes of footing, almost sentence to sentence. The first of these follows immediately after the prolonged outburst of laughter. It is a switch to a straight-faced description of the procedure (We'll pour a little bit of water; lines 12-13), whereby Martin reverts to his official role in the program as a mediator of factual information. Yet, it is evident that Martin is trying to contain his laughter at this moment, since his voice makes a wobble (on the hesitation marker *ehm*), namely a local modulation of pitch that is usually indicative of a laughable (Ford & Fox, 2010).

The mock seriousness does not last long. With a close-up shot of Martin processing the material, we get his running commentary again, this time with an ironic edge to it (Oh yeah, look at that, what a lovely texture; line 16). This contrasts with the next shot, where the camera distances from Martin, while he is making a jocular reproach to his production team (You're all stepping back now, aren't ya? You're all stepping back; lines 17–18). After this interlude, Martin resumes with the provision of technical information about tanning, as befits the role of presenter in a documentary program. However, he is unable to contain himself and once again starts laughing at a point where the most disgusting fact emerges (they just used the bare arms he he he he he he; lines 20-21).

Once again resuming his straight-faced role, he then claims common ground with the audience by means of the discourse marker you know and expresses appreciation for the work (you know it's a mucky job but anyway this is a proper Victorian graft; lines 22–23). This reads almost as if he feels the need to excuse himself and to dispel the possibility that his laughter might be understood as a sign of disrespect for the disgusting, yet necessary activity. The move is also important within the overall design of the documentary: the program aims to celebrate not only the technological achievements of Britain's glorious past but also the hard life of workers in the Victorian era (to whom Martin refers throughout the program as 'grafters').

In the final shot of the scene, Martin reflects on the activity. He starts formulating his conclusions (I think we've proved; line 25) but momentarily finds himself at a loss for the precise words (ehm hm hm). Holding back his laughter, he then formulates his conclusion in a witty remark whose meaning the viewers can successfully infer after having witnessed the unpleasant realities of tanners' lives (we

can see why tanners only married tanners. I think that's right, really; lines 25–26). The potentially humorous final statement alludes to the embarrassing and disgusting activity shown in the documentary and attests to Martin's willingness to intentionally construct humorous situations.

This scene is particularly testing for Martin. Although there is extensive laughter that arises – presumably spontaneously – from the need to cope with the abhorrent nature of the job, partly based on the embarrassing sensory perception of the activity, Martin keeps his decorum and resists the temptation to fully switch into a negative description of what he is doing. There is a balance between the informational component of the program, with the presenter trying to deliver a disinterested account of the technological process and the historical background, and the experiential element that concentrates on documenting how the main protagonist fares in difficult tasks.

All of this attests to the hybrid nature of this documentary. As already suggested above, the focus on the individual quest, underscored with the entertaining mode of presentation and very frequent laughter, is almost a standard feature of reality TV shows.

Discussion of the findings and conclusion

As the analysis has shown, laughter is a relatively frequent paralinguistic phenomenon that occurs throughout the documentary series under investigation. There are a number of non-humorous situations that give rise to the participants' laughter, which typically has an evaluative function. Thus, laughter emerges as a response to failure as well as success. It indexes the disbelief of one or both of the interlocutors, and marks out-of-the-ordinary experiences that the interlocutors have to cope or come to terms with. Also, the emergence of laughter in non-humorous situations of both failure and success is conducive to the subsequent appearance of some forms of conversational humor, with one or both of the interlocutors producing and mutually responding to joking utterances (see also Chovanec, 2017a.).

The presence of laughter has several motivations. First, laughter constitutes a reaction of the discourse participants to some action at hand, even though the element prompting the laughter need not be humorous. In this sense, laughter constitutes a personal form of self-expression that communicates a range of emotional reactions from appreciation to embarrassment. For that reason, it can also be found in monologic sequences, that is, without the presence of any other conversational partner (save the production crew and ultimately the audience). Second, laughter plays a more social role since interlocutors use it in their interactions in order to align with each other, for instance to overcome a potential conflict and affirm their continued positive relationship. Laughter tokens are then, in the absence of any

prompting laughable, indicators of affiliative and cooperative bonding that can forestall potential threats to the interlocutors' face (Priego-Valverde, 2009). As opposed to the former, this function of laughter is attested in interpersonal encounters, that is in dialogic/polylogic situations where it is typically jointly produced and where laughter tokens can even initiate the production of follow-up humor. The third explanation for the presence of laughter in non-humorous situations transcends the interpersonal dimension between the interlocutors in that it is closely tied to the production design of the actual program genre. On this macro-level, the presence of laughter constitutes a conscious decision of the production team about the appropriate communicative style in which to address the audience.

This multilevel conception of the role of laughter in documentary programs closely relates to the characterization of linguistic performance in various genres of broadcast talk. As noted by other scholars, many media genres strive to employ colloquial and conversational modes (Fowler, 1991; Fairclough, 1992). In TV broadcasts, this form of stylized verbal performance gives rise to "fresh talk" (Goffman, 1981) that resembles interpersonal chat (Tolson, 1991; Thornborrow, 2001) through its emphasis on spontaneous and lively utterances (Lunt, 2004; Thornborrow, 2015). By trying to present some of the interlocutors' verbal behavior as "ordinary", such TV broadcast programs aim to overcome their scripted nature and relate to their audiences. In some TV programs, a similar effect is achieved by means of laughter and humor (Montgomery, 2000; Eriksson, 2009), which is also the case in TV documentaries.

In such cases, laughter serves, among other things, as a contextualization cue from the production team to the audience, indicating that the transmission of information in documentary programs is intended to have an enjoyable dimension. In that sense, laughter produced by on-screen participants primes the audiences' enjoyment of the program, regardless of whether it comes as a follow-up to some humorous stimulus (a laughable) or responds to a non-humorous situation. On-screen laughter constitutes a momentary suspension of the seriousness of the program, which is the default form of presenting information in documentaries, and allows the interlocutors to assume a more spontaneous persona, namely to move away from the scripted nature of their dialogues. All of this may be indicative of the shift towards genre hybridity that is happening in various media formats (Coles, 2000; Hill, 2007; Ekström, 2011), with some types of non-entertainment TV formats – such as documentary programs – moving towards the adoption of a more entertaining form of presentation.

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Appendix. Transcription conventions

(.) a short pause (less than 0.5 seconds)

(2.0)length of pause in seconds

overlapping talk latched utterances

lengthening of vowel sound see:::

he laughter token

laughter token of non-genuine (mock) laughter ha

increased volume WHAT

"Cool children" and "super seniors" cross into youth language

Humorous constructions of youthfulness in Greek family sitcoms

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This article examines the ways in which the sociolinguistic construction of youthful identities is represented in two popular Greek comedy family sitcoms, considering that youth language has gained a prominent position in TV fictional discourse, being used by characters of all ages. Drawing upon a combined analytical framework from sociocultural linguistics, ethnomethodology and interactional sociolinguistics, as part of a wider research project, our analysis focuses on two interactions in which non-young people (i.e. primary school children, older women) engage in youthful scenarios. We conclude that the humorous construction of youthfulness in these TV series reproduces the (adult) stereotypical views of young people and their speech style, and undermines the marketing discourse of perpetual adolescence (Gennaro, 2013).

Keywords: youthful identity, TV series, childhood, ageing, adolescence discourse, discourse of old age, humorous frame

Introduction

The study of sociolinguistic diversity in TV series discourse is a relevantly recent research field, due to the negative stance of the early sociolinguistic community towards popular culture, which, under the influence of the ideology of "authenticity", had rejected the linguistic data coming from popular culture discourse as "non natural" and "non authentic" (Coupland, 2007). However, in the today's "heteroglossic landscape" (Androutsopoulos, 2010), geographical and social varieties have gained a prominent role because of their use in a plethora of TV products, such as TV commercials, TV series, shows, and so on. As a result, the stance of contemporary sociolinguistics has radically changed during the last years in the

framework of social constructionism, which has developed concepts, such as *crossing* (Rampton, 1995) and *stylization* (Coupland, 2001), giving emphasis on linguistic performance and representation. Consequently, sociolinguistic variation is not anymore approached as a mirror of a predefined social reality, but as a "speech style" (Coupland, 2007); in other words, as a resource for meaning construction.

Following Agha (2003), the TV representation of sociolinguistic diversity is considered a metapragmatic practice, by making statements about the social meaning of language (e.g. how young people – should – speak). Hence, TV fictional discourse is one of the ways through which linguistic varieties are "enregistered" (Agha, 2003, 2006). Specifically, *enregisterment* refers to the process through which particular linguistic forms become identifiable as a distinct "register" and index particular social meanings, through a series of cultural associations, norms and expectations (e.g. how a specific way of talking is enregistered as "youth speak"). Against this backdrop, the aim of the sociolinguistic study of TV series discourse is to explore the ideological role of the representations of sociolinguistic style, contributing to the formation of sociolinguistic reality (Stamou, 2014).

In light of these observations, *youth speech styles* (or *youth language*, as it is enregistered in the conscience of the broader society; see Androutsopoulos, 1997, 2001, 2005; Stamou, Agrafioti & Dinas, 2012; Saltidou & Stamou, 2014) have a prominent role in Greek TV discourse, functioning as a "stylistic resource" (Coupland, 2007) of all ages in the fictional discourse of TV series, since they appear to be used not only by young people but also by "non-young" ones, such as primary school children and the elderly (Saltidou, Stamou & Kotopoulos, 2014; Saltidou & Stamou, 2016).² These TV representations of crossings into youth language could be probably attributed to the marketing discourse of perpetual adolescence (Gennaro, 2013), according to which youth is no longer seen as a biological category of age, but it is viewed as a feeling or lifestyle available to all for purchase.

^{1.} In particular, the concept of *crossing* refers to cases of momentary appropriation of another group's speech style, while *stylization* alludes to the artificial use of a linguistic variety on the part of speakers, in order to project identities other than those that are predictably linked to them. Hence, both concepts put a stress on the strategic and creative designing of language use.

^{2.} The concept of *youth language* reflects the dominant view (and the TV portrayal which we study here) which tends to treat it as a single and homogeneous speech style employed by all young people. In contrast, the concept of *youth speech styles* highlights the diversity and distinctiveness among youth practices expressed through certain stylistic preferences regarding music, appearance and speech (Androutsopoulos & Georgakopoulou, 2003). In this view, young people employ a range of speech styles, which express the various cultural practices in which different groups of young people participate, and thus age acts only as a unifying factor (Stenström & Jørgensen, 2009). Henceforth, we will use the term *youth language* when we refer to TV depictions of youth styles of talk.

Hence, the discourse of perpetual adolescence is knitted to the growth of the dominant youth consumer market ideology, which targets consumers with an adult wallet and youthful sensibilities.

Nevertheless, despite the increasing use of youth language in TV discourse, the research data are limited and have focused on alternative and youth-oriented practices, such as hip hop culture (Androutsopoulos & Scholz, 2003; Leppänen, 2007). Besides, limited studies have been conducted on the representation of youth language in mainstream (adult) cultural texts, such as TV commercials (Stamou, 2013) or family sitcoms (Mandala, 2007; Saltidou & Stamou, 2014; Saltidou et al., 2014; Stamou & Saltidou, 2015). On the other hand, outside sociolinguistics, there are numerous cultural and media studies exploring the imagery of youth as depicted in the content of TV (mainly teen) series (see among others McKinley, 1997; Heintz-Knowles, 2000; Brooker, 2001; García-Muñoz & Fedele, 2011) or films (Stern, 2005). Both scientific areas converge to the conclusion that texts of dominant popular culture, being controlled by adults and addressing the general audience, tend to represent young people and their style of talk in a stereotypical manner, drawing upon dominant discourses about youth as a homogenous and incomplete sociocultural experience.

In light of this, drawing on data from the two popular Greek comedy family sitcoms Happy Together (Ευτυχισμένοι Μαζί) and At the Last Minute (Στο Παρά Πέντε), we explore how the youthful identity of primary school children and of the elderly is constructed within the humorous frame of comedy (Dynel, 2011a), in juxtaposition to the identity of the other fictional characters that do not cross into youth language.

Theoretical and analytical framework of the study

A combined model 2.1

For the study of sociolinguistic representations of youthfulness in the TV series Happy Together and At the Last Minute, we draw on Androutsopoulos' model (2012) on the analysis of sociolinguistic style in fictional texts (see also Stamou, 2014), consisting of the repertoire analysis at the macro-level, the characters' analysis at the meso-level, and the scene analysis at the micro-level. In the present study, we focus on the micro-level of scene analysis, by analyzing two fictional interactions of particular sociolinguistic interest.

Specifically, for the purposes of scene analysis, we used a combined analytical framework, drawing from diverse sociolinguistic strands, all putting a stress on the discursive construction of identity, namely, sociocultural linguistics (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005), ethnomethodology (Sacks, 1992), and interactional sociolinguistics (Gumperz, 2001).³ In particular, the identities in interaction model of Bucholtz & Hall (2005) was employed as the backbone of the analysis, supplemented by the ethnomethodological tool of Membership Categorization Analysis (MCA) by Sacks (1992), and by the concept of contextualization cues by Gumperz (2001).

The identities in interaction model of Bucholtz & Hall (2005) allows us to analyze how identity is constructed through talk, relying on five principles: emergence, indexicality, relationality, positionality and partialness. First, the emergence principle, which draws upon social constructionist theory, examines the fluidity of identity as a result of social interaction which is accomplished through language. Hence, the emergence principle allows us to see youth language as a symbolic resource upon which characters draw for the construction of a youthful identity.

Second, the indexicality principle focuses on the stylistic resources which construct an identity. In other words, fictional characters' linguistic choices are "indexical" of the social category of youth to which they want to belong. The term *indexicality*, introduced to linguistic anthropology by Silverstein (1976), refers to the creation of semiotic links between linguistic forms and social meanings, in order to highlight how specific linguistic features are connected with specific identity categories.

The *relationality* principle emphasizes the fact that the construction of identity acquires meaning in relation to the identities of other people, leading us to a separation of the self from the others. As we examine fictional interactions involving characters of different generations, this principle helps us to investigate how the youthful identity of characters that use features from youth language is constructed in relation to the identity of the other characters. Following Bucholtz & Hall (2005), there are three pairs of complementary identity relations, through which every speaker constructs him/herself and others intersubjectively. The two of them have relevance for our study. The one pair, *adequation – distinction*, refers to the relation of similarity and difference, according to which the subjects are constructed as same or different from the others. The other pair, authentication – denaturalization, concerns the confirmation or challenge of one's identity.

The positionality principle concerns the multiple positions in which an individual is simultaneously engaged during a single interaction. This principle helps us to explore the different aspects of characters' identities constructed in the scenes analyzed. Finally, the partialness principle relates the micro-level of conversational interaction to the institutional, ideological macro-level, considering identity as a result of both structure and agency. This principle plays a major role in the case of fictional TV interactions, given the fact that the voices of fictional characters resonate the intentions and the perceptions of TV series creators. Hence, we attempt to

^{3.} For further illustration and application to other TV fictional data, see also Stamou, Maroniti & Dinas (2012), Stamou & Dimopoulou (2015), Stamou & Saltidou (2015).

delve into the ways in which structure in the form of dominant social perceptions about youth as a social category (e.g. discourses about youth) and youth speech styles (e.g. language ideologies) influences agency, that is, the way youthful identity construction is depicted in the scenes under analysis.

The identities in interaction model was combined with MCA, in order to examine the ways youth identity is indexed at scene level, according to the indexicality principle, as well as the multiple ways in which fictional characters are positioned in the interactions, according to the *positionality* principle. MCA is an analytical ethnomethodological framework which has as main goal the exploration of practically oriented and commonsensical cultural reasoning of speakers during their interactions (Sacks, 1992). This framework explores identity as a completion of practical action during the interaction with others, and thus it is compatible with the identities in the interaction model of Bucholtz & Hall (2005). It reveals the categorizations people make for each other throughout an interaction as members of society. These categorizations rely on the recognized social categories (e.g. "father", "son") which are grouped together by members of a culture into broader collections, known as Membership Categorization Devices (MCDs; e.g. the categories "father" and "son" come from the broader MCD of "family"). The major contribution of MCA to our analysis was that the multiple categories into which members of society are inserted include a set of typical activities and characteristics known as category-bound predicates, which constitute the conventional expectations about the normative behavior, for example, of a father or a son. Hence, through a reference to the predicates which are bound to a certain category, speakers are able to categorize one another in a less direct way, compared, for instance, with an explicit allusion to a category label (e.g. "young people").

Finally, our analysis is complemented by the interactional sociolinguistic concept of contextualization cues by Gumperz (2001). Thus, for the purpose of our analysis, we took into account the linguistic, paralinguistic and extralinguistic indices used by characters, such as stress, intonation, look, facial expressions, gestures, etc. (see also Douglas, 2004: 28). These indices signal and form the appropriate contextual frame and the presuppositions needed for the interpretation of the conveyed messages by the interlocutors, facilitating the inferential process (Gumperz, 2001).

Analyzing humor in fictional discourse 2.2

Considering that the TV representations of youth language are examined in the context of comedy family sitcoms, humor evidently plays a prominent role. Thus, our analysis is also informed by the Attardo's (2001) General Theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH) and is supplemented by Miczo's (2014) reading of humor from the perspective of MCA, as well as by Dynel's (2011a, 2011b, 2013) insights into the role of humor in dramatic discourse.

According to Attardo's theory, the *sine qua non* for the production of humor is *script opposition*, in other words, the incongruity between what is expected and what actually happens. Hence, given the fact that our knowledge about the world is organized through scripts, the breaking of our expectations ("script oppositions") leads to the creation of humorous results. When this opposition includes both the description of the world (or of a situation) and of the language variety used, then, we talk about verbal humor. Specifically, when verbal humor focuses on register incongruities, it is called *register humor* (see also Gardner, 2010; Stamou, 2012) or *stylistic humor* (see Archakis et al., 2014). Hence, register humor relies on the use of an unexpected language variety during a situation instead of the expected one. Another crucial feature of humor is the *logical mechanism* which refers to the "local" logic (Attardo, 2001: 39) of the humorous text, in other words, to a logic which may apply only to the text's world and not to the outside one (e.g. juxtapositions, role-reversals, etc.; see Di Maio, 2000, as cited in Attardo, 2001) and revolves around the resolution of the script opposition (see also Tsakona, 2004).

In light of these theoretical observations, MCA is the tool which reveals the categorizations that interlocutors make to each other during an interaction. Thus, throughout an interaction, certain scripts are activated about the membership categories being referred to by conversationalists (Miczo, 2014). However, many of the social categories emerging during the first reading may be violated at the end of the text, as the opposite script of the expected one emerges, leading thus to a re-interpretation of the humorous text. In other words, the membership categories to which interactants are expected to "normally" belong are usually replaced by others, mainly contradictory ones, which are not clear from the start of the conversation, and, as a result, humor is produced.

Moving to the humorous frame of comedies (Dynel, 2011a), we should take into account that fictional discourse includes two levels of communication, the *inter-character level*, which concerns the interactions among fictional characters, and the *recipient's level*, which is related to viewers' interpretation (Dynel, 2013). Both of these levels are carefully constructed by the *collective sender*, whose major goal is to provoke humor mainly at the recipient's level, through participation phenomena which are not usually interpreted as humorous by fictional characters (Dynel, 2011b; this volume).

Furthermore, most humorous phenomena in comedy discourse stem from conversational discourse, that is, from verbal humor, such as register incongruities, irony, use of taboo words, wordplay, etc.; and from non-verbal humor, such as exaggerated contextualization cues used by the characters. All these exhibit similarities with real-life humorous discourse (Dynel, 2013; this volume). Complementary elements which provoke comic effects in fictional discourse are related to "uncanny events", to the "quirky behavior" of characters (Dynel, 2013), or to the use of words

that are connected with specific social groups (González Cruz, 2013). Hence, these groups usually function as the target of the humorous text (Attardo, 2001), through which the ideological role of humor is underlined, as it aims to criticize established ideas about people, institutions or phenomena (Tsakona, 2004; Chovanec & Tsakona, this volume). All these humorous features are highlighted in fictional discourse with the use of appropriate cinematic techniques (e.g. camera movement, focus on characters' facial expressions, etc.; Dynel, 2013).

The material of the analysis

In the present study, we focus on two interactions coming from the popular Greek family sitcoms *Happy Together* (Ευτυχισμένοι Μαζί), broadcast during 2007–2009, and At the Last Minute ($\Sigma \tau o \Pi \acute{\alpha} \rho \alpha \Pi \acute{\epsilon} \nu \tau \epsilon$), broadcast during 2005–2007. Before the economic crisis in Greece, Greek TV series, and especially those broadcast by nationwide private stations, such as Mega TV, were an important part of entertainment programming, always reaching high viewer ratings (Leandros, 2000). However, since the economic recession in 2010, very few new Greek TV series have been broadcast. Instead, TV schedules in Greece now cater for constant repetitions of older Greek series, such as the two family sitcoms under analysis.

The sitcom *Happy Together* revolves around the adventurous life of a newly married couple, Dionyssis and Eleni, who have five children from their previous marriages (Markos, Thanassis and Giannakis are Dionyssis' boys; Eva and Fifi are Eleni's girls) with completely different temperament, background and upbringing. On the other hand, the sitcom At the Last Minute concerns the attempt of five young people to resolve a crime committed many years ago, while two older women take action in order to help the five protagonists, fulfilling, at the same time, their desire for adventure.

Being part of a larger research project, the present study focuses on two scenes in which youth language is represented to be employed by non-young characters, namely, by a primary school child of eleven years old, Thanassis (sitcom *Happy* Together), and by two older women, Sofia and Theopoula (sitcom At the Last *Minute*). In both scenes, the characters engage in humorous youthful scenarios. Moreover, we selected scenes with explicit or implicit metapragmatic discourse (e.g. metadiscursive comments, crossings), where the language ideologies of characters – and mainly of the scriptwriters - may be more clearly expressed.

4. Analysis

4.1 The French Kiss (Το γλωσσόφιλο)

((Dionyssis and Eleni have just got married for a second time and their children from their previous marriages are waiting for them on the doorstep, in order to welcome them. The problems arising from the different upbringing of the children and from the distinct social background of the two families are well evident from the start of their cohabitation))

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(1) Episode 1; 5:19–5:34
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Διονύσης (Δ), Ελένη (Ε), Θανάσης (Θ), Μάρκος (Μ), Γιαννάκης (Γ), Εύα
(Ευ), Φίφη (Φ)
   Θ:
       [Φι-λί, φι-λί, φι-λί, φι-λί] ((Κουνώντας τα χέρια))
       [Φι-λί, φι-λί, φι-λί, φι-λί] ((Κουνώντας τα χέρια))
       [\Phi_l - \lambda \hat{i}, \varphi_l - \lambda \hat{i}, \varphi_l - \lambda \hat{i}] ((Kouvúvtag τα χέρια))
4 Ευ: [Φι-λί, φι-λί, φι-λί, φι-λί] ((Κουνώντας τα χέρια))
      [Φι-λί, φι-λί, φι-λί, φι-λί] ((Κουνώντας τα χέρια))
       ((Ο Διονύσης και η Ελένη περνούν την πόρτα περιχαρείς))
      Αχά. ((Έκπληκτη από την υποδοχή και χαμογελαστή))
6 E:
  Δ: Εντάξει, εντάξει, ντάξει, ντάξει! Φιλί (.) Τι να κάνουμε:;
       Μίλησε ο λαός! ((Άνετος, αγκαλιάζοντας την Ελένη που
       χαμογελάει))
       ((Φιλιούνται στο στόμα))
       Τι είναι αυτά ρε:; Γλωσσόφιλο! ((Με έντονο και επιτακτικό
       βλέμμα και τόνο φωνής. Ο Διονύσης και η Ελένη τον κοιτάζουν
       σαστισμένοι, ενώ ο Μάρκος του ρίχνει καρπαζιά))
9
  Μ: Για ηρέμησε: (.) Έχει και κορίτσια μπροστά:. ((Με θυμωμένο ύφος
       και αυστηρό τόνο φωνής, δείχνοντας προς το μέρος των κοριτσιών.
       Η Εύα και η Φίφη κοιτάζουν απορημένες, ενώ η Εύα έχει και μια
       έκφραση δυσαρέσκειας))
10 E:
       Αποθρασύνθηκε ο λαός! ((Στρεφόμενη προς τον Διονύση, έχοντας
       ύφος και τόνο αποδοκιμασίας. Ο Διονύσης, αμήχανος, κουνάει
       καταφατικά το κεφάλι))
Dionyssis (D), Eleni (E), Thanassis (T), Markos (M), Giannakis (G),
Eva (Ev), Fifi (F)
       [Kiss, kiss, kiss] ((Tapping his hands))
       [Kiss, kiss, kiss] ((Tapping his hands))
       [Kiss, kiss, kiss] ((Tapping his hands))
4 Ev: [Kiss, kiss, kiss] ((Tapping her hands))
       [Kiss, kiss, kiss] ((Tapping her hands))
       ((Dionyssis and Eleni enter the house looking very happy))
6 E: Aha. ((Surprised by the welcome of their children and smiling))
      Okay, okay, okay! Kiss (.) What can we do:? The crowd
       demands it! ((In a cool way, hugging Eleni, who is smiling))
       ((They kiss each other on the lips))
       What kind of kiss is tha:t? French kiss! ((With intense and
8
  T:
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imperative look and voice tone. Dionyssis and Eleni look at him

stunned, while Markos slaps him))

- 9 M: Calm do:wn (.) There are girls here:. ((With an angry grimace and an austere tone, pointing towards the girls. Eva and Fifi look at Thanassis with surprise, while Eva grimaces))
- 10 E: This crowd has a lot of audacity! ((Turning towards Dionyssis, with a look and tone of disapproval. Dionyssis looks embarrassed and nods at her))

At the interaction under analysis, the categories of main characters are emerging through the MCDs of age, family roles and gender. According to the principle of positionality, Thanassis constructs himself as a cool guy and as a modern, sexually liberated son, who is currently old enough to give advice for sexual issues to his parents. At the same time, he is constructed as rude, impulsive and immature, because he does not realize the formality of the situation, the age gap with his parents, and his unfamiliarity with the new members of the family (i.e. his new stepsisters). His brother, Markos, emerges as his counterpoint, as he is constructed as more mature, gentle and conservative, and as the "older brother" who tries to indicate the appropriate behavior to his younger brother. Concerning Eleni and Dionyssis, they are constructed as conservative parents and as honeymooners in love. Finally, Fifi and Eva are constructed as conservative girls, also by disapproving of Thanassis' demanding way to their parents for a French kiss.

Specifically, at the beginning of the interaction, and on the basis of the relationality principle, and especially on the relation of adequation, all the children are constructed as being happy for the marriage of their parents, as they are represented to be waiting for them smiling on the doorstep and to be tapping their hands for a kiss (turns 1–5). In front of this warm welcome, Dionyssis and Eleni are constructed as happy honeymooners. Furthermore, Dionyssis is constructed as a caring father who wants to satisfy the desire of their children (turn 7).

However, Thanassis is represented as being disappointed with the formal kiss that his father gave to Eleni and reprimands them, asking for a French kiss instead (turn 8). As a result, he authenticates himself as an impulsive, sexually liberated, modern young man who is old enough to give sexual advice to his parents. In this way, Thanassis tries to challenge the sexual taboos which dominate in the "adults' world" (Pechtelidis & Kosma, 2012). Hence, he constructs himself based on the category-bound predicates of a young person, putting himself into the social category of youth. The authentication of these predicates is contextualized through the intense and authoritative look he adopts during his talk and through the emphatic tone of his voice.

Markos, however, denaturalizes the predicates which emerged at Thanassis' talk, and through his metadiscursive comment, authenticates him instead as rude and immature, namely by means of category-bound predicates which are related to a traditional conceptualization of youth as "incomplete adulthood", echoing the dominant discourse of adolescence (Bucholtz, 2002). Specifically, he thinks that Thanassis has not realized the formality of the situation and does not show the

necessary respect towards their new stepsisters, in front of whom Thanassis should adopt a more polite style of talk (turn 9). The authentication of Thanassis as an incomplete adult is contextualized through Markos' slap and the severe and angry look at him, accompanied by the request to calm down made in an emphatic tone. Thus, through a relation of adequation, Thanassis and Markos construct themselves through the social category of boys, who typically talk at ease only in the absence of girls. Consequently, at this point of the conversation, the MCD of gender also emerges. Moreover, through his metadiscursive comment, Markos is authenticated as the "older brother" who is more capable of guiding his younger brothers and, through the relation of distinction, he is constructed as more polite and mature than Thanassis.

After Markos' reaction and the explicit reference to them, Eva and Fifi also authenticate the predicates of rudeness and impulsiveness for Thanassis, through the contextualization cues they adopt, such as their surprised look and Eva's disapproving grimace (turn 9). Consequently, they are authenticated as more conservative than Thanassis, perhaps due to their unfamiliarity with their newly formed family and their new stepbrothers.

At the end of the scene, and after the reactions of their children to Thanassis' behavior, Eleni and Dionyssis also denaturalize the predicates of the young person that Thanassis tries to construct for himself. Specifically, through her metadiscursive comment, Eleni authenticates Thanassis in the same way as Markos, Eva and Fifi did (turn 10). Her disapproval is contextualized by her deprecatory tone and facial expression when she talks to Dionyssis. As a result, Eleni's and Dionyssis' (by nodding at Eleni's comment) contextualization cues further authenticate Thanassis through the category-bound predicates of rudeness and immaturity (turn 10). At the same time, they authenticate themselves as conservative parents, who do not accept the "deviant" style of talk of Thanassis. As a result, a "generation gap" emerges and the bipolar distinction "progressive children vs. regressive parents" is underlined.

With regard to stylistic indexicality, it is noteworthy that all the interactants, except for Thanassis, use lexical items from the standard variety. In contrast, Thanassis draws sociolinguistic resources from colloquial and slang linguistic forms (γλωσσόφιλο "French kiss"), which are enregistered here as "youth language". Consequently, in the specific scene, youth language acquires the "indexical value" (Eckert, 2008) of "street smarts", sexual liberation, progressiveness, transition to adulthood, but also of unkindness, immaturity and impulsiveness.

As for the humorous representation of youthfulness in the interaction under analysis, it is constructed at the recipient's level, in other words, for the viewers of the family sitcom, as we notice that Thanassis' interlocutors do not perceive his behavior as humorous. Moreover, it involves register humor, as Thanassis uses a speech style which is incongruous with the formality of the situation. Through the

unexpected speech style he adopts, he probably wishes to signal his disapproval of Dionyssis and Eleni's decision to get married at this age for a second time. The humorous representation of youth language use is achieved by means of the metadiscursive comments and by the contextualization cues which are utilized, not only by Thanassis, but also by his conversationalists. The cinematic techniques, such as the focus of the camera on the characters' face, while using the contextualization cues, enhance the humorous result of the scene (Dynel, 2013).

Consequently, humor is mainly produced because of the adoption on the part of Thanassis of a speech style which is incongruous with his age. Thus, through this crossing, viewers meet an unexpected role reversal (i.e. the logical mechanism of humor here), as they watch the eleven-year-old Thanassis using a taboo word for his age and giving advice to his parents for sexual issues. As a result, this behavior leads viewers to script oppositions concerning parents' and children's conventional roles, as they watch the "traditional" predicates which are bound to parents' and son's social categories to be reversed.

"Bawring" and Ju-Ju-Bungee Jumping («Μπάουρινγκ» και 4.2 Τζα-Τζα-Μπάτζι-Τζάμπινγκ)

((Sofia is Spyros' grandmother and Theopoula is her closest friend and neighbor. The two old ladies want to participate in youthful activities all the time, causing Spyros' nervousness. In the particular scene, Sofia is looking at Spyros who is sitting calm watching TV. Then, she and Theopoula look each other conspiratorially, with Sofia winking at Theopoula and Theopoula nudging her slightly.))

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Σοφία (Σ), Σπύρος (Σπ), Θεοπούλα (Θ)
 Σ: Σπυρά:κο::.
 Σπ: Ναι:. ((Άκεφος))
 Σ: Η κυρα-Δέ:σποινα: απέναντι: (.) μαθαίνει μπάουρινγκ. ((Με
      διστακτικό τόνο φωνής και αθώο ύφος))
4 Θ: Μπόουλινγκ. ((Με σοβαρό και αυστηρό τόνο φωνής και ύφος))
5 Σ: Μπόουλινγκ. ((Περιμένοντας την αντίδραση του Σπύρου))
  Σπ: ((Ο Σπύρος, στο άκουσμα της λέξης, γυρίζει και την κοιτάζει και
       ξαναγυρνά προς την τηλεόραση)) Φαίνεται από την αρχή η συζήτηση.
       ((Με ήπιο εκνευρισμό και δυσαρέσκεια στον τόνο της φωνής και
       στο ύφος. Ξαναγυρίζει προς το μέρος της εκνευρισμένος)) Μπράβο
       στην κυρα-Δέσποινα! (.) Εμέ:να τι: μου το λε:ς; Θε:ς να μά:θεις
      κι εσύ:; ((Με εκνευρισμένο τόνο φωνής))
 Σ: Όχι:, καλέ:! Εγώ: μπο/μπόουλινγκ; Από πού κι ως πού:; ((Με αθώο
      και αδιάφορο ύφος και κινήσεις που δείχνουν ότι δεν την αφορά
      το θέμα))
 Σπ: Μήπως θέλει η Θεοπούλα; Θεοπούλα, θες να μάθεις μπό:ουλινγκ;
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((Με εκνευρισμένο τόνο φωνής))

(2) Episode 3; 20:24–21:35

- Τς. Ό:χι:. ((Με χαμογελαστό ύφος, κουνώντας αρνητικά το κεφάλι))
- 10 Σπ: Ωραία (.) Ούτε εγώ θέλω: (.) Άρα, δε θέλει κανείς να μάθει μπόουλινγκ κι είμαστε εντάξει. ((Με εκνευρισμένο τόνο φωνής και ειρωνικό χαμόγελο))
- 11 Σ : ((Κοιτάζει τη Θεοπούλα και μετά γυρνάει προς το μέρος του Σπύρου)) Η Βού:λα::=
- 12 Σπ: =Η Πατουλί:δου::; ((Με ειρωνικό και εκνευρισμένο ύφος και τόνο φωνής. Η Θεοπούλα δυσανασχετεί))
- 13 Σ: Ω: (.) η:: γραμματέας στα ΚΑΠΗ:= ((Με διστακτικό τόνο φωνής))
- 14 Σπ: =Μάλιστα (.) Τι έκανε:; ((Εκνευρισμένος ανακατεύει έντονα με το καλαμάκι του τον καφέ))
- Να: (.) είπε: ότι πρέπει να: βρούμε: ένα: χόμπι: να έχουμε:. ((Με διστακτικό τόνο φωνής και αθώο ύφος))
- 16 Σπ: Κι εγώ:; ((Με εκνευρισμένο και ειρωνικό τόνο φωνής και ύφος. Η Θεοπούλα ανοίγει το στόμα λόγω δυσανασχέτησης))
- 17 Σ: Ό:χι: (.) εγώ και η Θεοπούλα:. ((Η Θεοπούλα χαμογελάει))
- 18 Σπ: Να βρείτε. ((Με έκφραση δυσαρέσκειας στο πρόσωπο. Η Θεοπούλα χαμογελάει))
- 19 Σ: Α (.) Στάσου:, Σπυρά:κο: (.) ((Ψάχνει στην τσέπη της και βγάζει ένα χαρτί. Ο Σπύρος συνεχίζει να την ακούει εκνευρισμένος, ανασηκώνοντας το ένα φρύδι.)) Να μου πεις, αγό:ρι: μου: (.) ((Ανοίγει το χαρτί και διαβάζει)) το τζα/ τζα/, το μπάτζιτζάμπινγκ ((Με εμφανή δυσκολία στην ανάγνωση. Η Θεοπούλα από δίπλα σιγοψιθυρίζει τη λέξη)) τι: είναι:; ((Ο Σπύρος γυρνάει και την κοιτάζει με έντονα απορημένο βλέμμα, σμίγοντας τα φρύδια από την έκπληξη))
- Σαν το windsurfing; ((Με ύφος και τόνο γνώστριας))
- 21 Σπ: ((Γυρίζει απότομα προς τις γιαγιάδες)) Ποιο bungee jumping, ρε γιαγιά, και <u>ποιο windsurfing</u>; Θα με τρελάνετε: εντελώ:ς; Έχω που έχω τις στενοχώ:ριες μου:! ((Με ιδιαιτέρως έντονο τόνο φωνής και γρήγορο ρυθμό ομιλίας, σμιγμένα φρύδια, εκνευρισμένο και απογοητευμένο ύφος, κάνοντας έντονες κινήσεις λόγω ανανάκτησης))
- 22 Σ: Γιατί:, αγορά:κι: μου:; Κακό: είναι: να μάθουμε πέντε πράγματα:; ((Με ήπιο εκνευρισμό και παράπονο, απορημένη με την αντίδραση του Σπύρου))
- 23 Σπ: Τι να μάθετε:, ρε γιαγιά:; ((Ύφος και τόνος απόγνωσης)) Όλες οι μεγάλες γυναίκες κάθονται σπίτι τους και κεντάνε:, πλέκουνε:, βλέπουν τηλεόραση. ((Έντονα, με γρήγορο ρυθμό ομιλίας, κάνοντας νευρικές κινήσεις. Η Θεοπούλα έκπληκτη ανοίγει το στόμα στο άκουσμα της λέξης «μεγάλες»))
- 24 Σ: Εμεί:ς δεν εί:μαστε: μεγά:λες! ((Με απορημένο ύφος και τόνο φωνής που δηλώνει διαμαρτυρία. Η Θεοπούλα συμφωνεί)) ((Ο Σπύρος την κοιτάζει με ανοιχτό το στόμα. Το κουδούνι διακόπτει τη συζήτησή τους))
- Sofia (S), Spyros (Sp), Theopoula (T)
- Spyra:ko::. ((Diminutive of the name Spyros to express affection))
- Sp: Ye:s. ((Moody))
- De:spina, the woman next doo:r (.), is learning bawring. ((With a hesitant voice tone and innocent face))
- 4 Τ: Bowling. ((With a serious and austere tone of voice and look))

- Bowling. ((Waiting for Spyros' reaction))
- Sp: ((Spyros, hearing this, turns towards her and looks at her, and then he turns back to the TV set)) The topic of the discussion is evident from the start. ((With a slight annoyance and disapproval in his voice and face. Then, he turns back irritated towards his grandmother)) Good for Mrs. Despina! (.) Why: are you te:lling me: this? Do you wa:nt to lea:rn how to bowl too:? ((In an irritated tone))
- S: Me:, learn bo/ bowling? No way:! ((With an innocent and indifferent facial expression, shrugging))
- Sp: Does Theopoula want to learn how to bowl? Theopoula, do you want to learn how to bo:wl? ((In an irritated tone))
- No::. ((Smiling, shaking her head))
- 10 Sp: Fine (.) I don't wa:nt to learn either (.) So, nobody wants to learn how to bowl and we are fine. ((With an irritated voice tone and an ironic smile))
- 11 S: ((First looking at Theopoula and then turning to Spyros)) Vou:la::=
- 12 Sp: =Voula Patouli:dou:? ((A well-known Greek Olympic gold medalist. Sarcastically. Theopoula is getting upset))
- (.) The:: secretary of KAPI: ((Greek seniors' center. With a hesitant voice tone))=
- 14 Sp: =Ok (.) what did she do:? ((He is stirring his coffee with a straw in an irritating way))
- 15 S: We:ll (.) she sai:d that we should fi:nd a: hobby:. ((With a hesitant tone and an innocent facial expression))
- 16 Sp: Do I have to too:? ((With an ironic voice tone and look. Theopoula opens her mouth frustrated))
- No:: (.) Me and Theopoula:. ((Theopoula smiles))
- 18 Sp: So, go and find one. ((With an expression of disapproval. Theopoula keeps smiling))
- 19 S: Spyra:ko: (.) ((She looks at her pocket and then she takes out a paper. Spyros keeps listening to her, irritated, raising his eyebrow)) please, tell me, my: bo:y: (.) ((She opens the paper and reads)) wha:t i:s ju/ ju/ ((Having great difficulty in reading the word. Theopoula, sitting next to her, whispers the word)) bungee jumping? ((Spyros turns to them, bewildering and frowning))
- 20 T: Is it like windsurfing? ((Sounding as an expert))
- 21 Sp: ((Turning abruptly to the grandmothers)) What bungee jumping and what windsurfing are you talking about, grandma? Are you going to drive me completely: cra:zy? I have my o:wn wo:rries! ((Speaking quickly and intensely, he frowns, irritated and disappointed, moving his hands nervously))
- 22 S: Why: do you say that, my li:ttle bo:y? Is it wro:ng to learn new thi:ngs? ((In a slightly irritated and complaining manner, surprised by Spyros' reaction))
- 23 Sp: What do you want to lea:rn, grandma:? ((Desperate face and tone)) Older women stay home and embroide:r, kni:t and watch TV. ((Intensely, quickly, moving his hands nervously. Theopoula surprised, opens her mouth at hearing the word "old"))
- We: a:re not o:ld! ((With a protesting look and tone. Theopoula 24 S: nods)) ((Spyros looks at her with surprise. The doorbell rings and interrupts their conversation))

In this interaction, the fictional characters construct their identities based on the MCDs of family and age. With regard to the positionality principle, Sofia constructs herself as traditional and, at the same time, dynamic older woman, as she wants to join in youthful and adventurous activities, and as immature, superficial and naughty for her age. Theopoula's identity is constructed in a similar way. On the other hand, Spyros' identity is constructed in sharp distinction to the two women's identities, as he is presented as mature, rationalist, judgmental and strict towards their carelessness and absurdity.

Specifically, at the beginning of the interaction, Sofia constructs herself as a traditional grandmother, who is tender towards her grandson and tries to make an innocent conversation with him (turn 1). However, as she winks conspiratorially at Theopoula, the predicate of cunning emerges for her, because her real goal is to gather some information about adventurous activities from Spyros, and to elicit his permission to participate in them. With her unfortunate crossing into the English name of the youthful sports activity of bowling, resulting in hypercorrection (*bawring*), Sofia tries (unsuccessfully) to authenticate herself as a person with knowledge about youthful sports, which is a category-bound predicate of the social category of youth (turn 3). However, Theopoula denaturalizes Sofia's predicate by repairing her, which is contextualized by an emphatic and austere voice tone and facial expression (turn 4). Thus, she authenticates the predicate of familiarity with youthful and adventurous activities only for herself.

As Spyros hears this information, he starts to explode, realizing the real purpose of this conversation and the possible problems that could be created, authenticating indirectly for her grandmother the predicates of immaturity and superficiality (turn 6, 8, 10), which are bound to a dominant conceptualization of youth as "incomplete adulthood" (Bucholtz, 2002). The authentication of these predicates is contextualized through Spyros' nervous and unsatisfied tone, the elongation of vowel sounds and his facial expressions. In this way, he authenticates for himself the predicates of dynamism and determination, as he tries to prevent the two older women from activities incompatible with their age. As a result, he is constructed as a serious and rational adult, who, despite being pretty younger than the two ladies, has more important issues to think at this time, thus authenticating emphatically in this way the predicate of frivolity for Sophia and Theopoula and underlining a reversal of roles between him and the two older women (serious young adult vs. frivolous old adults).

Before Spyros' reaction, Sofia and Theopoula try to authenticate themselves as innocent and traditional older women, who do not want to learn how to bowl, and thus, denaturalize the predicates of dynamic persons who are interested in youthful activities (turns 7, 9). The denaturalization of these predicates is contextualized through Theopoula's shaking of head and smiling, and Sofia's emphatic denial and innocent face look.

Next, Sofia attempts once again to authenticate herself as an old person who is looking for a hobby to pass her time with Theopoula, being prompted by the secretary of the seniors' center (turns 11, 13, 15, 17). The authentication of this identity is contextualized through her hesitant tone of voice, signaled by the pauses and the elongation of final vowel sounds, and through her innocent facial expression. Talking on behalf of Theopoula, Sofia establishes a relation of adequation, by constructing the same identity for her as well. However, Spyros' ironic and nervous tone of voice, combined with his nervous movements and the latching to his grandmother's turn, partially denaturalizes the predicates that Sofia constructs for herself and Theopoula (turns 12, 14, 16). Furthermore, his ironic question about whether Sofia refers to Voula Patoulidou, the Greek Olympic gold medalist, authenticates her as a person who engages in inappropriate activities for her age (see also Dynel, this volume).

Nevertheless, when Sofia gets Spyros' approval to find a hobby with Theopoula (turn 18), she starts to denaturalize the identity of the older woman that she had earlier authenticated for herself and Theopoula, and starts to authenticate a more youthful identity for them, as she tries to collect some information about the adventurous sport of bungee jumping, an activity that she does not even know how to spell, resorting to self-repair (turn 19). Hence, the predicates of superficiality, impulsiveness and sense of adventure, which are stereotypically connected with youth as incomplete adulthood, emerge for her. Next, Theopoula authenticates herself as an expert in extreme sports, such as windsurfing (turn 20). The authentication of this predicate is contextualized by the question of clarification she makes and her voice tone, as though she refers to something normal for her age. Furthermore, the predicate of cunning is authenticated again for Sophia and Theopoula, as they actually achieve to manipulate Spyros and elicit his permission to find a hobby for passing their time. However, the identities of the three characters are constructed on the basis of a patriarchal perception for gender roles as well, as Spyros authenticates himself as a traditional man who is asked to give his approval to the two old women, whereas Sophia and Theopoula are authenticated as traditional women who use indirect ways to achieve their goal, by eliciting Spyros' permission through deception (Malz & Borker, 1982; Holmes & Meyerhoff, 2003).

However, Spyros' explosion denaturalizes the youthful identity which the two women attempt to construct for themselves (turn 21). This denaturalization is highlighted by Spyros' contextualization cues, such as his intense movements, his quick speech tempo, and his knit brows, combined with his annoyed and disappointed facial expression. As a result, he partially authenticates them as older women, but also as naughty, superficial, and thus immature for their age, predicates which are stereotypically bound to youth as incomplete adulthood.

Sofia, trying to mitigate Spyros' reaction, clarifies that they just want to learn new things (turn 22), but then Spyros explicitly authenticates them as old women, by introducing an overt referential identity category into interaction (*older women*) and by referring to the category-bound predicates of traditional older women such as knitting, embroidering and watching TV (turn 23). The authentication of the category "older women" is contextualized through his desperate face expression, voice tone and movements. By his reaction, he authenticates further for himself the predicates of maturity and rationalism which belong to a "serious adult", as he tries to indicate to the two grandmothers the expected and "normal" activities for their age, and therefore he acts in loco parentis. However, both Theopoula and Sofia strongly denaturalize this categorization made by Spyros. Specifically, Theopoula, at the hearing of the characterization "older women", opens her mouth in surprise, whereas Sofia refuses to be categorized as old (turn 24), thus provoking Spyros' awkwardness. Their contextualization cues, such as Sofia's protesting look and voice pitch and Theopoula's nodding, further denaturalize the categorization made by Spyros for them.

With regard to stylistic indexicality, we notice that the two women draw on English names of sports activities, such as bungee jumping, windsurfing and bowling, in order to underline their passion for life and their interest for engaging in youthful activities. Hence, their attempt to embrace sports activities, which are enregistered as "youth lifestyle", is indexed through the use of the corresponding sports language in English. Consequently, sports language associated with trendy adventurous activities is enregistered as "youth language" here, since it contributes to the construction of a youthful identity for the two old ladies.

As for the humorous depiction of youthfulness in the interaction under analysis, it is constructed for the viewers' sake, namely, at the recipient's level. It is based on the script opposition between the two women's speech style and their age, which leads to Sofia's hypercorrection and self-repair. Moreover, it is premised on their incongruous desire to deal with adventurous activities which do not match with their age, while Spyros, though younger enough, is indifferent for these activities, as he deals with more "serious" things (i.e. the discovery of a murder). Contextualization cues contribute to the enhancement of the humorous effect, such as the exaggerated facial expressions and reactions of Spyros when he hears the two women's desires and questions, or the surprised look of Theopoula and Sofia when Spyros explicitly categorizes them as "old". The focus of the camera on the characters' faces while using the contextualization cues further expands the humorous effect of the scene.

Eventually, the logical mechanism causing the humorous result is again the role reversal among the fictional characters, in other words, the reversal of category-bound predicates between the social categories of "grandmother" and of "grandson". This reversal creates a peculiar "generation gap" and a script opposition,

as viewers watch the grandson Spyros, on one hand, to be rational, mature and to give advice to his grandmother Sofia and, on the other hand, his grandmother with her friend Theopoula to be constructed as naughty, superficial, immature, impulsive, prone to fun, and as being unwilling to engage in the conventional activities of their age. Moreover, the humorous effect is enhanced by the sharp incongruity between the physical appearance of the three characters and their behavior, as Spyros, who is physically young, adopts a behavior that typically corresponds to older people, while the two grandmothers, who are physically old, want to embrace a youthful lifestyle and, as a result, they construct a younger identity than Spyros at the whole scene. The uncanny character of this interaction, based on the two women's quirky behavior (see also Dynel, 2013) and Spyros' reactions, is incongruous with viewers' sense of reality, leading to their surprise, and thus provoking humorous effects at the recipient's level.

5. Conclusions

Taking into account that TV creators' intentions are echoed through the voices of characters, and following the partialness principle of the Bucholtz & Hall's model (2005), a question which arises from the preceding analysis is what statements scriptwriters make about language and social reality through humorous TV depictions of youthful identities. In particular, these statements involve the following aspects of the (sociolinguistic) world: youthfulness, youth language, childhood (in the sitcom *Happy Together*) and ageing (in the sitcom *At the Last Minute*).

As it emerged from the analysis of the two interactions, youthfulness is construed through the prism of the "generation gap" for the primary school child (first interaction) and of a "reversed generation gap" for the two older women (second interaction), as the standardized relational pairs of "progressive children vs. conservative parents" and "conservative grandson vs. dynamic older women" are highlighted, respectively. Furthermore, the construction of youthfulness is strongly related to the dominant discourse of adolescence/incomplete adulthood (Bucholtz, 2002), as the negative stereotypes about young people and their lifestyle are present in both interactions (e.g. immaturity, rudeness, impulsiveness, sexuality, having fun).

The mediation of youth language also contributes to the stereotypical construction of youthfulness, as it is enregistered (Agha, 1998, 2003) in viewers' consciousness as a "stylistic complex" (Eckert, 2001) which consists of colloquial/slang language and of an English vocabulary of sports activities associated with a youthful lifestyle (e.g. bungee jumping, windsurfing) while, at the end, it acquires the "indexical value" (Eckert, 2008) of "street smarts", coolness, immaturity, sexual liberation, rudeness, impulsiveness, and inclination to fun. In other words, it is associated with social meanings linked to the discourse of incomplete adulthood. It is noteworthy that Thanassis' crossing into youth language is more stigmatized in relation to the two older women's crossings, since Spyros is judgmental of their desire to participate in adventurous sports and not of their style of talk. Through his speech style, Thanassis attempts to construct the category of "old enough and cool guy" who proceeds to adulthood. In other words, youth language also seems to index for him the abandonment of (innocent/ idealistic) childhood (see below). On the other hand, for the two older women, it probably also indexes vitality and passion for life.

As the two interactions analyzed are contextualized in family sitcoms, both childhood and ageing are discursively constructed in a humorous manner. Specifically, as for the humorous representation of childhood in Happy Together, it relies on the incongruity of parents'/adults' expectations and the "adult-like", "precocious" behavior of Thanassis (Postman, 1994; Kenway & Bullen, 2008). Thus, Dionyssis' and Eleni's expectations of Thanassis' behavior are aligned with the "romantic" discourse of childhood, according to which children are constructed as "innocent" and "pure", while Thanassis' actual behavior echoes the "puritan" discourse, as he is represented as "inherently evil" due to his youthful linguistic behavior which expresses in the mind of his parents his rudeness and his sexual emancipation (Prout, 2008; Pechtelidis & Kosma, 2012; Avgitidou & Stamou, 2013; Gennaro, 2013). Hence, the representation of youthfulness in the first interaction reproduces the dichotomous bipolarity between "perfect/complete" adults and "incomplete/imperfect" children, constructing children as the "cultural other of adulthood" (Pechtelidis & Kosma, 2012: 246). Furthermore, the linguistic choices of Thanassis and his youthful behavior undermine the nostalgic ideas of childhood, which dominate (as a hegemonic discourse), not only in the mind of adult characters but also in the mind of the TV viewers, leading to an ideological incongruity and to script oppositions, and, thus, to the provocation of humorous results at the recipient's level. Consequently, this subversion of adults' expectations about childhood highlights that in the recent TV series landscape "both adult and child roles shift towards a 'middle region', all-age role" (Meyrowitz, 1985: 154), offering an adult perspective and construction of childhood, and creating humorous effects for the TV viewers.

On the other hand, the humorous representation of ageing, in the TV series *At the Last Minute*, resides in the youthful construction of senility, as the TV viewers watch the unexpected construction of the two old women as "super seniors" and of the young grandson as their "guardian" who behaves in an "old" way. This provokes humorous results at the recipient's level, as this script opposition tends to subvert (at least in a first reading) the hegemonic ageist ideas (Gunter, 1998; Nelson, 2002) and the stereotypical ideas about senility associated with passivity and inactivity, in other words, the "discourse of old age" (Gatling et al., 2014), which both Spyros and TV viewers have in their mind. However, the humorous representation of

youthful seniors, based on positive stereotypes about the elderly (e.g. active old ladies), eventually echoes and reinforces ageist discriminations, not only by conveying the meaning that these representations are impossible to happen in the real world, as they are created in order to provoke comic effects (Andrew, 2012), but also by suggesting that successful ageing is associated with the idea of ignoring ageing (Milner et al., 2012).

After all, both children's and older women's crossings into youth language are contextualized as humorous, highlighting that youthfulness is not congruent with either childhood or senility (see also Roy & Harwood, 1997). Thus, cool and sexually liberated children as well as dynamic older women function as the target of humor (Attardo, 2001; Tsakona, 2004). In this sense, the idealization of youthfulness, in the context of the "marketing discourse of perpetual adolescence" (Gennaro, 2013), seems to be undermined here, and more traditional conceptualizations of both childhood and senility are probably promoted instead, as the youthful construction of these social groups aims at the creation of humorous results at the recipient's level and not at the representation of the "real" (or of a believable) world.

In conclusion, the humorous construction of youthfulness is achieved in the two interactions through the adoption of incongruous language behaviors, activities and roles by the fictional characters, at the same time that contextualization cues and cinematic techniques enhance the comic effect of the fictional interactions (see also Dynel, 2013) at the recipient's level. This stereotypical construction of youthfulness tends to reproduce negative stereotypes about youth identity and youth styles of talk in society. In addition, it raises questions about whether such characters could exist in the "real" world and about whether viewers may accept these representations as "normal". Consequently, a reception study about how viewers actually decode the humorous construction of youthful identities would be interesting (see among others Stamou, Maroniti & Griva, 2015). Such a research could explore if and how humor may influence such perceptions, to what extent viewers accept the TV representations of the social groups who are humorously targeted, and, finally, to what extent viewers who are especially identified with these groups shape their self-image and self-perception on the basis of the humorous TV representations of these groups (see also Chovanec & Tsakona, this volume). It may be possible that the humorous frame of the TV series leads to the unintentional adoption and reproduction of specific stereotypes about certan social groups, such as childhood and ageing (see also Andrew, 2012).

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Appendix. Transcription conventions

/ self-repair (.) pause

stressed segment text

clarification points made by the analyst ((text))

overlap

te:xt elongation of a previous sound no pause between intonation units

CHAPTER 9

No child's play

A philosophical pragmatic view of overt pretense as a vehicle for conversational humor

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This chapter sheds some light on the different interpretations of the notion of *pretense* across disciplines. Attention is paid primarily to the pragmatic and philosophical literature where *pretense* is used with regard to two linguistic notions: *irony* and *deception*. These are here conceptualized as *overt* pretense and *covert* pretense respectively. Both of these may serve humorous purposes. The principal objective of this chapter is to examine the interface between overt pretense and conversational humor, including humorous irony. This is done by critically revisiting the relevant literature on humorous pretense and by elucidating a number of forms and specific mechanisms such humor may take, as well as functions it may perform. The discussion is illustrated with extracts taken from the American television series *House*. This chapter thus tacitly supports the idea of verisimilar language use in fictional interactions.

Keywords: covert pretense, irony, overt pretense, overt untruthfulness, pretense, fictional interaction, parody, impersonation, role play, absurdity

Introduction

Pretense has been used as a technical term with reference to a number of diverse phenomena studied in different scholarly disciplines. It has been employed in philosophical studies focused on the status of pretense vis-à-vis sincere acts or imagination (Ryle, 1949; Anscombe, 1958; Austin, 1958) or on the production and/or reception of fictional discourse (Searle, 1975a; Lewis, 1978), where it tends to be seen as joint pretense (Clark, 1996; Clark & Van Der Wege, 2001) or associated with make believing (see among others Currie, 1990). The notion of pretense is addressed also in philosophical cognitive research on imagining and theory of mind (see among others Nichols & Stich, 2000; Gendler, 2003; Carruthers, 2006; van Leeuwen,

2011; Lagland-Hassan, 2012, 2014), as well as developmental studies pursued across disciplines on children's pretend play and make-believe games (see among others Fein, 1981; Howes et al., 1992; Lillard, 1994; Rakoczy, 2008; Sobel, 2009; Friedman et al., 2010). Most importantly, pretense has been proposed as a technical notion that facilitates the explanation of two linguistic phenomena in pragmatics and philosophy, which may promote humor, as will be argued here. Specifically, pretense has served as a definitional basis for irony (see Example 3) and, somewhat contradictorily, it has appeared in the scholarship on *deception* (see Example 2), thereby being tacitly accepted as a phenomenon either overt or covert respectively from the hearer's vantage point. The mismatch between the two understandings of pretense does not appear to have been given much thought. Williams (2002: 73) mentions in passing that pretense may concern both deception and irony, but he does not dwell on this issue. Overall, the notion of pretense has very rarely been the focus of attention in (philosophical) pragmatics and even linguistics in general. Consequently, pretense has not been clearly defined as a linguistic concept, sometimes being understood very loosely (see the different chapters in Parret, 1994). Some clarification is thus in order.

Generally, pretense is perceived as acting as if (see Gendler, 2013). Langland-Hassan's (2014) detailed and all-encompassing definition of pretense is endorsed here. It can be paraphrased as follows: intentionally acting in order to make something function like some other kind of thing while believing that it is not (and will not become) a thing of that kind, without intending to make it into a thing of that same kind.

Langland-Hassan (2014) discriminates between three types of pre-tense: makebelieve pretense (represented by children's games), which is inherently playful; deceptive pretense, by dint of which the pretender aims to hide something from another person; and theatrical pretense, which encompasses actors' work and is neither deceptive nor devoid of seriousness and real-life effects, such as financial compensation. This tripartite division, together with the features of each category, has flaws. As Langland-Hassan (2014) does acknowledge, not considering it a problem, the three types may overlap in particular behaviors, for example a child may both make-believe and act in a theatrical performance at school. Nonetheless, what he does not recognize is that the features are not mutually exclusive. Notably, deceptive pretense may also be "playful" in a sense that it may involve humor (see Dynel, 2013a, 2017a, to appear, and Section 2). Also, acting in front of the audience appears to be too narrow a category. It is not only actors' performance but all forms of creating fiction altogether, in literature and cinematography, that may be conceptualized as pretense.

Unless stated otherwise, the hearer is here used as a generic term with reference to the prototypical individual at the reception end.

In his essay on fiction, Searle (1975a) distinguishes between two categories of pretense: deceptive pretense and non-deceptive pretense, the former corresponding to deception and the latter to fictional discourse. However, fictional discourse does not exhaust all manifestations of non-deceptive pretense (Currie, 1990), which the hearer is meant to recognize. A salient case is make-believe pretense, conventionally associated with children's games. Even these two forms do not do justice to the wide spectrum of forms non-deceptive pretense can take. It will be argued here that such pretense corresponds to a range of communicative phenomena conducive to humor production.

A proposal is put forward here to make a theoretical distinction between two fundamental categories of pretense: overt pretense and covert pretense, depending on whether or not the hearer is made privy to it. The two types of pretense are discussed against the backdrop of the relevant pragma-philosophical literature. It will be shown that both covert pretense and overt pretense may be seen as being conducive to various forms of humor. The main focus of attention here is overt pretense that lies at the heart of conversational humor. A number of forms of pretense-based conversational humor are proposed and illustrated with examples culled from the American series *House*. The type of pretense that is of crucial importance here presents itself in interactions, affecting directly verbal and/or non-verbal forms of expression. An important disclaimer is in order: the notion of pretense related to the production or interpretation of fictional discourse is not taken into account in this article. Some attention is paid, nonetheless, to the viewer's recognition of humor in fictional interactions. This is especially important when humor (contrived by the production crew) arises only for the viewers' benefit and can be appreciated only from their perspective, being independent from characters' intentions to produce it and/or from characters' evaluations (see Dynel, 2011c, 2013b, 2016). Nevertheless, the primary focus of this investigation is the humor as it is constructed and/or received by the fictional interlocutors on screen.

The choice of scripted data as a basis for this kind of analysis of conversational humor is predicated on the premise of the verisimilar character of fictional interactions in contemporary drama films and series (see Dynel, 2011a, 2017b). The diegetic or characters' level of communication is anchored in the fictional world, with the characters communicating as if they were engaged in real-life interactions (see Dynel, 2011a, 2011b). Consequently, conversational humor on the characters' level in a drama series bears resemblance to people's use of humor in real-life interactions in terms of the range of the forms such humor may really take (see Dynel, 2013a). However, whether or not characters manage to induce humorous responses in one another, the humor on screen is contrived for the viewer's pleasure. Importantly, given their embedding in the recipient design (see Dynel, 2011a, 2011b), which determines their availability to the viewer, fictional interactions tend to lend themselves to analysis better than real-life interactions (Coupland, 2004; Rudanko, 2006), which is particularly important when interactants' intentions, frequently complex and multi-layered in humor, come into play. To conclude, fictional interactions are constructed to resemble real language use. For the purposes of this discussion devoted to pretense, it is assumed that this resemblance is indeed achieved, while fictional discourse can give insight into the workings of a whole host of linguistic phenomena, as evidenced by ample literature (see Dynel, 2011a, 2017b for references and further discussion of the (lack of) verisimilitude in scripted interactions).

Covert pretense and humor

In philosophical literature, pretense is sometimes taken to denote any stealthy, deceptive activity. Pretense, by default understood as a covert activity, is orientated towards inducing what the speaker considers a false belief in the hearer. In his seminal paper on pretending, Austin (1958: 268) proposes that in standard, if not in all, cases of pretending, "the pretender is concealing or suppressing something", "for the sake of dissembling" the reality with a view to hoodwinking the audience. In this vein, Vincent & Castelfranchi (1981: 754) define pretending as "an intentionally deceptive move obtained through counterfeiting that which the hearer is intended to assume", and hence they view lying as pretending by means of language. Similarly, Castelfranchi & Poggi (1994) view lying as pretending to give information. Following Austin, Vincent Marrelli (2004) also sees pretending as a strategy of deception. In this vein, Vincent & Castelfranchi (1981) and Vincent Marrelli (2004) put forward the category of "pretending to joke", by dint of which the speaker deceives the hearer by passing off his/her true belief as if s/he were "only joking" in order to amuse the hearer rather than communicating any propositional message (see Yus, this volume). Thereby, the speaker deceives the butt with regard to his/her genuine beliefs and communicative intentions. Since this "pretending" is covert, the phenomenon addressed by the authors may be labeled, more adequately, deceptive pretending to joke, which is synonymous with deceptive autotelic humor (see Dynel 2017a, to appear). This phenomenon is one of the many points of convergence between deception, that is, covert pretense, and humor.

Contrary to popular opinion, covert pretense, which inheres in deception, may be playful and, more generally, humorous, if it is produced only to be duly revealed to the deceived hearer or if it is meant to amuse an individual from whose vantage point the pretense is overt all along (Dynel, 2013a, to appear). In other words, genuine deception may bring about humorous effects for a hearer other than the deceived butt in multi-party interactions. Interestingly, many widely recognized categories of humor, such as put-ons (see Goffman, 1974; Sherzer, 2002) or garden-path jokes (Dynel, 2009), rely on momentary deception of the hearer, which is duly revealed to him/her (see Dynel, to appear for a discussion). Here is an example of put-on humor.²

(1) Episode 23, season 2

[Dr Cuddy has just let House know that there is a man waiting for him. He claims to be House's old friend, about which Cuddy is skeptical. The man, by the name of Crandall, has brought a teenage girl with him.]

- 1. Crandall: G-man! [He runs toward House with open arms as though he is going to hug him, but stops.] You thought I was going to do it, didn't you?
- 2. House: Do I know you?
- 3. Crandall: Come on, it's me, Crandall!
- 4. House: Doesn't ring a bell.
- 5. Crandall: Man, I can't believe you didn't -
- 6. House: Unless you mean Dylan Crandall, the man who'll believe anything. See, I just made you believe that I
- 7. Crandall: You haven't changed. Heard about your leg.
- 8. House: Yeah, pulled a hamstring playing Twister. Just gonna walk it off. So, who's the girl?
- 9. Crandall: Jesse Baker's granddaughter. You always said you'd give your right hand to play like him.

At the beginning of the interaction, the stranger gives an impression as if he wants to embrace House, which he immediately denies (line 1). Whether or not House is indeed taken in, Crandall reveals that his non-verbal gesture was covertly pretended (line 1). This gesture may be considered a non-verbal put-on. In the ensuing part of the interaction, House reciprocates by deceiving his interlocutor into believing that he cannot recognize him as his old friend. House performs this covert pretense in the course of two turns (lines 2 and 4) only to disclose it as soon as he realizes that Crandall seems to have started believing that House cannot remember his old friend (line 6). (Incidentally, the viewers are easily taken in by House's put-on insofar as they know him to be averse to friendships and to have only one friend.) That Crandall has been bamboozled seems to be evidenced by his reply in which he starts wondering why House has no recollection of him (line 5). Whether or not the conversationalists are genuinely amused by the mutual put-ons, their playful, humorous intentions can hardly be questioned.

House's humorous intention is transparent also in his last turn quoted above, which is based on overt pretense. House welcomes his friend's empathetic comment (line 7) with a humorous reply, in which he shows that he is capable of self-deprecation

^{2.} The examples quoted in this chapter are not transcribed according to any conversation analytic conventions. The postulates made in this theoretical, pragma-philosophical paper concern the propositional content of the interlocutors' utterances. The most important non-verbal cues are indicated in square brackets, though, whenever relevant.

and that he can laugh at his illness. He provides an overtly untruthful reason for his limping (induced during a simple game), untruthfully suggesting that it is only temporary. As House is well aware, Crandall must have heard about House's potentially terminal medical condition, which led to surgery on his thigh muscle, leaving him permanently crippled. Crandall must be able to recognize House's overt pretense and attempt at humor. Whether Crandall is amused remains untold, as House's turn ends with a non-humorous question, on which the former focuses. This type of humor based on overt pretense will be the topic of Section 4. First, however, the conceptualization of irony as pretense will be examined.

Overt pretense and irony

The notion of overt pretense, variously perceived, lies at the heart of many approaches to irony. In Grice's (1989a [1975]: 34) classical view, prototypical³ irony stems from flouting the first Quality maxim. Although this flouting must be transparent to the hearer, Grice (1989b [1978]) rightly avers that an ironic utterance cannot be preceded by an explicit indication of its presence, suggesting that it involves pretense. In Grice's (1989b [1978]: 54) words, "[t]o be ironical is, among other things, to pretend," which is in accordance with the etymology of the word "irony". This pretense is to be recognized by the hearer, which is why it represents the overt type, as proposed here. Grice is taken to have meant that an ironic speaker pretends by "making as if to say" in order to implicate a markedly different meaning (see Dynel, 2013c).

Taking as their point of departure Grice's (1989b [1978]) remark that irony involves pretense, Clark & Gerrig (1984: 122) advocate the pretense theory of irony, according to which an ironist pretends to be another "unseeing or injudicious" speaker directing his/her utterance to a pretended "unknowing audience" (hearer), other than the real audience. The speaker wants the audience to discover the pretense (notice its overtness) and his/her real critical attitude to what s/he is saying on the grounds of the utterance's injudiciousness, and the audience is to take delight in recognizing both the pretense and the speaker's real attitude to the imagined speaker, the audience and the utterance. The practical tenability of this explanatory model may be questioned (see also Garmendia, 2013), notably, the imagined dyad: the pretended speaker and the pretended audience. Most importantly, this approach fails to capture the essence of the linguistic mechanics of irony or to distinguish it

Grice's (1989a [1975]; 1989b [1978]) sketchy description of prototypical irony, as widely acknowledged, is not readily applicable to ironic utterances embedded in truthful meanings (but see Dynel 2013c, 2017c).

from other forms of pretense equated with make-believe (Clark & Gerrig 1984: 123, ft.1), but it appears to have inspired other philosophers.

For instance, Currie (2006: 116) suggests that by "pretending to assert or whatever, one pretends to be a certain kind of person – a person with a restricted or otherwise defective view of the world or some part of it". Similarly, Recanati (2004, 2007) claims that the ironist "plays someone else's part and mimics an act of assertion accomplished by that person" (2007: 227). "What the speaker does in the ironical case is merely to pretend to assert the content of her utterance" (Recanati, 2004: 71), and the act of assertion is "staged or simulated rather than actually performed" (Recanati, 2004: 77; emphasis in the original). For his part, Walton (1990), who studies mimesis and simulation, endorses a view that pretense is associated with games of make-believe or pretend-play. Relating pretense to imagination in fiction, Walton (1990) claims that ironic utterances serve as props in games of make-believe, in which the speaker fictionally asserts that p, where p is true within fiction. The hearer is hence invited to imagine a world in which the content of the pretense would be true. Walton (1990) also adds that the ironic speaker mimics or mocks the authors of such claims in order to indicate their absurdity and ridiculousness. What all these approaches have in common is that the ironic speaker pretends to assert (see below), but each approach resorts to a rather elusive (e.g. metaphorical) explanation.

A few other pretense-based proposals are grounded in linguistic theory, and thus they seem more tenable. According to Kumon-Nakamura et al. (1995), all irony involves pragmatic insincerity, which they equate with pretense and ascribe to assertives and the other four types of speech acts (see Searle 1975b). Similarly, Currie (2010: 150) suggests that the ironic speaker pretends to, for example, "congratulate, approve, admire, and, occasionally, to criticize and deplore", and Camp (2012: 588) claims that sarcasm (her term for irony) is based on what the speaker "pretends to mean".

The thrust of all this is that prototypical irony⁴ rests on pretended assertions, or pretending to assert (Williams, 2002; Soames, 2008; Stokke, 2013). An assertion is traditionally understood as an act of making a statement with commitment to its truth, for example, "to assert a proposition is to make oneself responsible for its truth" (Peirce, 1934: 384; cf. Brandom, 1983; Pagin, 2015). The idea of a pretended assertion seems to be related to one of the hallmarks of the prototypical forms of irony. In irony, neither the proposition expressed nor the intended implied proposition (implicature) can qualify as an assertion proper (Williams, 2002; Soames, 2008). However, not all irony capitalizes on pretended assertions; some irony arises

^{4.} However, as several researchers have underscored, irony may be, albeit rarely, based on truthful statements, thereby resting on what is said (see Dynel, 2013c, Dynel 2017c). This type of irony is not addressed here.

from pretended questions or individual lexical items, for example. Following Grice's (1989a [1975], 1989b [1978]) remarks, a conclusion may be drawn that prototypical irony rests on what he dubs making as if to say (pertaining to different speech acts, including making as if to assert)⁵ intrinsically related to the flouting of the first maxim of Quality and that it serves the communication of a negatively evaluative implicature concerning the referent.

Overt pretense in irony, it is here argued, manifests itself as making as if to say, which is essentially synonymous with being overtly untruthful (i.e. uttering what the speaker believes to be untrue). This overt untruthfulness, in tandem with implicated negative evaluation dependent on it, can be regarded as constituting the definitional components of irony (see Dynel, 2013c, 2014).

Overt pretense and humorous irony 3.1

Irony is frequently viewed as a salient category of conversational humor (see Dynel, 2013d for references), but it must be stressed that not all instances of irony are indeed humorous. Previously, a proposal was formulated for a number of factors which make for the humorous potential of this stylistic figure, with one of the key concomitants being creativity (see Dynel, 2013d). Needless to say, humorous irony does reside in overt pretense, just as the non-humorous genre does. 6 Here is an example of surrealistic irony, which invariably exhibits humorous properties (see Kapogianni, 2011; Dynel, 2013c, 2013d). Such irony rests on absurd utterances, which are blatantly false and carry negatively evaluative implicatures, usually concerning an interlocutor's preceding turn.

(2) Episode 21, series 3

[House and Wilson are explaining the need for open-heart surgery, a very difficult procedure, to the teenage patient's parents.]

- 1. Mother: What about the marrow registry? Maybe they'll find a match.
- 2. House: Maybe they'll ride it here on a unicorn.
- 3. Mother: [Looks angry and offended.]
- 4. Wilson: I'm afraid finding a viable new donor isn't something we can realistically depend on.

House welcomes the mother's unfeasible suggestion (line 1) with an ironic comment, which mirrors the structure of the woman's utterance (line 2). He refers to a

^{5.} Nowhere in his writings does Grice state that "saying" is only "asserting", and his examples of conversational exchanges amenable to his model include also other utterance types. Irony, thus need not rely on pretended assertions, but may reside in other types of utterances, or even their parts (see Dynel, 2013c).

^{6.} The same disclaimer as in footnote 4 applies.

non-existent, mythical creature as a vehicle on which the potential marrow donor would be brought. By making an absurd (or surrealistic) utterance, House overtly pretends to be making this proposal/assertion in order to implicate the impossibility of finding a marrow donor. Most importantly, he implicitly criticizes, if not ridicules, the woman's suggestion. Albeit humorous, this creative/witty utterance does not bring about any humorous responses in the hearers (and, admittedly, it is not intended to do so), with the mother being outraged (line 3), and Wilson trying to salvage the situation (line 4). This example indicates the importance of contextual factors facilitating humor experience (such as cognitive safety), and the distribution of different hearer roles in multi-party interactions, where chosen hearers are amused at the expense of the target/butt (Dynel 2013b, 2013d). Given the context at hand, namely the grave circumstances, only the viewers, as long as they do not sympathize with the parents, stand a chance of finding House's utterance amusing. This potential effect may be credited to the viewers' recognizing his wit and superiority over the woman.

Humorous irony is a salient form of humor. Prototypical humorous irony capitalizes on overt pretense, where the speaker only makes as if to say something in order to communicate a markedly different implicated evaluative meaning. Nevertheless, not all forms of humorous overt pretense bear these characteristics and are tantamount to irony (see Dynel, 2014). These other humorous phenomena, which must be carefully distinguished from irony, will be the focus of attention in the next section.

Overt pretense and nonironic conversational humor

This section gives some insight into conversational humor that centers on overt pretense, next to the salient category of humorous irony discussed above. Regardless of the prevalence of covert pretense as a source of humor, in the bulk of humor studies, pretending tends to be taken for granted, and tacitly understood in a commonsensical manner as encompassing overtly untruthful (verbal) activities intended to cause amusement in the hearer (see among others Lampert & Ervin-Tripp, 2006; Brône, 2008; Dynel, 2011d; Haugh, 2016). Whilst humor researchers do not appear to have dwelt on this issue in depth, a number of significant claims can be found in the literature.

Although Vincent Marrelli (2004) regards pretense as a concept integral to deception, in passing, she does acknowledge a different facet of pretense. Claiming that "joking" involves overt non-truthfulness, she suggests that the latter is synonymous with "obvious pretending" (Vincent Marrelli 2004: 102). Indirectly, therefore,

[&]quot;Joking" is not a well-defined humor category, whilst the lay notion is frequently used in reference to conversational humor which does not convey any serious, truthful meanings outside the humorous frame (Dynel, 2011d, 2017a; see also Shilikhina, this volume).

she does allow for the fact that pretending need not show any deceptive potential and can be related to autotelic humorous phenomena. At the same time, Vincent Marrelli (2004: 230) perceives "acting" as a "non-deceptive sister of pretending", which is based on the entertainment of two worlds: the real one and the "imaginary" or "fictional" one, where the utterances produced are true.

Clark (1996) subscribes to a similar view when he proposes layers of action in joint pretense. This proposal appertains to children's games of make-believe, conversational humor, telling canned jokes, as well as viewing films and reading fiction. Layer 1 represents the real actions (which Clark misleadingly calls "serious", whilst these actions may actually involve playful/humorous activities), and layer 2 stands for the imagined, fictional actions. The two layers are also associated with two worlds or two domains of actions, where domain 1, or layer 1, depends on the pretense that the actions on layer 2 (as well more piggy-backed layers in some cases, as in the telling of narrative canned jokes) are taking place. Additionally, Clark (1996: 368) presents teasing⁸ (as well as irony among other figures of speech) as staged communicative acts, wherein the speaker stages for the hearer "a brief improvised scene in which an implied Ann [the speaker] (like an implied author) performs a sincere communicative act toward an implied Bob [the hearer]". Even from this succinct summary, it will be evident that Clark (1996) attempts to offer an all-encompassing model of non-deceptive pretense. Whether or not all of Clark's (1996) notions and suggestions can be supported (see Clark & Gerrig's 1984 work on irony as a staged act), and explanations of specific examples are tenable, the core conceptualization is indeed relevant to some (but not all) conversational humor:

A joint pretense is an activity in which two or more people jointly act as if they were doing something that they are not actually, really, or seriously doing at that moment. [...] When people engage in a pretense, they simulate selective aspects of the narrative world as if it were the actual world. [...] Joint pretense brings out the roles of narrator and listener: the two must coordinate their imaginings in just the right way. And, finally, the layering of joint pretense enables the participants to compartmentalize their as-if expe-riences from their actual experiences (Clark 1996; Gerrig 1993). (Clark & Van Der Wege, 2001: 783)9

According to the authors, joint pretense is an umbrella term for a whole host of activities, and it encompasses, among other things, conversational humor that involves

^{8.} What Clark thus fails to recognize is that teasing can actually carry truthful meanings (see Dynel, 2011d; Sinkeviciute, 2013).

^{9.} Admittedly, in the case of conversational humor, the roles of the "narrator" and the "listener" will change very swiftly for each participant in an interaction. This is something the authors do not acknowledge.

the speaker and hearer engaging collaboratively in an act of pretending. Essentially, however termed, the class of conversational humor at hand resides in the hearer's being made privy to the ongoing pretense and accepts the role assigned to him/her by the speaker. Clark's (1996) and Vincent Marrelli's (2004) postulates seem to be most easily applicable to humorous role playing, as in the following example. Both interlocutors construct pretense-based humor as they take the floor. Also, as this example will show, truthful meanings may also arise from or feed into role-played utterances.

(3) Episode 13, season 2

[House and his team are trying to diagnose a teenage girl. Suspicions have arisen that the girl may have been molested by her father, but only Cameron wants to report on this to the authorities. House is taking an MRI test, as he has not been feeling well. The machine is clicking, with House inside.]

- 1. Wilson: [to the microphone, in a low solemn tone, with an echo] House, this is God.
- 5. House: [stifling a gentle smile] Look, I'm a little busy right now. Not supposed to talk during these things. Got time Thursday?
- 6. Wilson: [continues in the God-like tone] Let me check... Aw, I've got a plague. What about Friday?
- 7. House: [laughing] You'll have to check with Cameron.
- Wilson: [continues in the God-like tone] Oh, damn it. She always wants to know why bad things happen. Like I'm gonna come up with a new answer this time. [Cuddy enters the MRI laboratory.]
- 9. Cuddy: House!
- 10. House: Quick, God, smite the evil witch!
- 11. Cuddy: Are you sitting on evidence that your patient was sexually abused by her father?
- 12. House: God, why have you forsaken me?
- 13. Cuddy: Don't worry. I have contacted child services for you. I let you get away with more than anyone in this hospital. Shielding a child abuser isn't covered. [Inside the MRI machine House silently mimics her "preaching".) Cooperate with this investigation or I'll fire you.

Making use of the fact that House is in a tube but can hear the voice from the outside thanks to the audio system, Wilson playfully pretends to be God by introducing himself in an adequate tone (line 1). Incidentally, Wilson's underlying tacit goal may be to alleviate tension, pending the MRI test results. House's reply (line 2) is partly truthful and does not involve humor (taking an MRI test, one should lie still without talking), but he plays along by pretending to accept the divine interlocutor. House takes on the role of a person with whom God, played by Wilson, can have a conversation. He also overtly pretends to brazenly suggest that "God" should talk to him another day. Wilson responds relevantly, overtly pretending that he has a schedule with "God-like" issues on the agenda, and overtly pretends to suggest another day for a prospective conversation (line 3). House's reply (which alludes to

earlier events) implicitly communicates that Cameron's actions (whether or not she reports on him) will determine whether he will be available to talk with "God" (line 4). Even though the message about House being at Cameron's mercy may be truthful, the plan-making with God is again an act of overt pretense. Similarly, Wilson refers to Cameron's real tendency to sympathize with those who suffer and to question "God's choices" (Cameron seems to be religious), thus overtly pretending to fear that he may need to answer to her (possibly about the girl being molested). When Cuddy has arrived, likely, having been tipped off by Cameron, House continues the role play with Wilson (lines 7 and 9), even though Wilson no longer contributes to the exchange. By resorting to religious parlance, House overtly pretends to seek God's help and protection, whilst truthfully commenting on the arrival of Cuddy (metaphorically called "witch"), whose goal is to rebuke him (line 10). Also, halfway through Cuddy's turn, House, who can be seen only by the viewers, overtly pretends to be the nagging Cuddy, whereby he silently criticizes her.

Role-playing as a form of conversational humor, illustrated in the major part of the example above, relies on a form of impersonation, that is, overt pretending to be someone or something, which is conducive to amusing the interlocutor. Non-parodic impersonation involves the speaker's adoption of an identity (and hence, for instance, a change of accent, or mimicry of vocal attributes) and, consequently, the humorous creation of a role (overtly pretended identity), yet devoid of any critical evaluation of the individual that the speaker overtly pretends to be. On the other hand, impersonation may be deployed for the sake of parody, as manifest in House's mimicking of Cuddy in Example (3). Parody is a literary genre and an artistic form (Rossen-Knill & Henry, 1997 and references therein), as well as a type of conversational humor based on impersonation (see Nash, 1985; Norrick, 1989, 1993). In the latter case, depending on verbal and non-verbal means of expression, the speaker aims to imitate (i.e. pretend to be) and poke fun at or mock a chosen individual, or an unidentified individual representing a specific social group, in order to amuse the interlocutor(s). The speaker overtly pretends to be a chosen individual by mimicking his/her nonverbal behavior and/or expressing his/her thoughts, of which the speaker is usually not supportive, and thus from which s/he dissociates him/herself. The instance below seems to be a case of parody carrying mild criticism.

(4) Episode 4, season 3

[In this episode, House has been refusing to use his office, because Cuddy, Dean of Medicine, will not return his old carpet with a blood stain on it. The scene opens with a view on the hospital's chapel. Two grieving strangers are inside sitting quietly when Cameron, Foreman and Chase come in.]

- [At the podium in the front of the room, talking in a Southern accent with a preacherlike intonation.] Come on in, brothers and sister. Welcome to the House of the Lord!
- Cameron: House, come on, the chapel?

- [One of the strangers leaves. House points to the 3. House: whiteboard next to him on the podium.] We have been blessed with the miracle of a new symptom. Brother, can you testify as to why this poor child's eyeball rolled back into his head? [Uses his cane to point at Chase.] It's consistent with Jimson weed poisoning, ocular 4. Chase:
- paralysis. [The other stranger gets up to leave.] Sorry. The wicked shall deceive ye because they have turned 5. House:
- from the Lord and are idiots. His ocular muscle didn't paralyze, it pirouetted.
- 6. Cameron: MS.
- 7. It is easier for a wise man to gain access to Heaven! House:
- 8. Cameron: Can you stop doing that? Just say not MS.
- Stroke, bleed in the brain.
- [Back to his normal American accent] We'd be seeing other 10. House: symptoms besides a single eye misalignment, like a coma, and you've already testified.

Persistently refusing to use his office, House has invited his team members to convene in the hospital's chapel, in all likelihood to annoy Cuddy, who is bound to find out about this. In the bulk of the interaction, he playfully impersonates a Southern priest addressing the congregation, and thereby he mildly pokes fun at the Catholic Church. What devoted viewers will be able to appreciate is that House is averse to religion in general. However, the criticism of a priest does not seem to be House's primary communicative goal, especially given that he does not address any particular religious notion. He only makes use of the opportunity to have fun irrespective of the other people's religious feelings. House's impersonation manifests itself in a change of accent, intonation, as well as rhetoric. He uses a formulaic expression (modified to suit the context, with Cameron being the only woman on the team; line 1), as well as religious vocabulary, topicality and principles characteristic of a priest (lines 3, 5 and 7) as he is addressing the medical case. Interestingly, by deploying these strategies, House manages to get across truthful (not pretended) meanings concerning the current patient and his teams' suggestions. Whilst the team do recognize the overt pretense, they seem to be displeased with House's humorous attempt, as evidenced by Cameron's overt expression of disgruntlement (lines 2 and 8) and Chase's apologetic utterance addressed to the praying strangers (line 4).

The two examples above depend on the speakers' impersonations, where the "acting as if" (Gendler, 2013) boils down to "overt pretending to be", that is acting as if the speakers were select individuals that they are not. Albeit frequently dependent on the verbal content of utterances, as Example (4) illustrates, impersonations may rely merely on the nonverbal manner of expression, not involving "pretending to say". However, humor based on overt pretense may centre primarily on verbal means of expression, and hence on "overt pretending to say" or, to use Grice's (1989a, 1989b) parlance, "making as if to say". In this vein, presenting an instance of teasing between two spouses, Clark (1996: 353-354) claims that the teaser is only acting "as if she were making an assertion", whilst she is only "pretending to assert". Therefore,

just like prototypical ironic utterances (see Section 3), many other humorous utterances are overtly pretended assertions. They overtly nonfulfill the Gricean first maxim of Quality displaying "making as if to say" and overt untruthfulness. Nonetheless, unlike irony, non-ironic humorous utterances may not carry any truthful meaning in the form of implicature (see Dynel 2017a). Finally, humorous utterances based on overt pretense may make as if to say by deploying not only pretended assertions but also other utterance types, seen for instance as Searle's (1975b) speech act types. Humorous speakers may pretend to say, for instance, by making as if to express some emotions or mental states. The following four examples illustrate the different ways in which the speaker can make as if to say.

(5) *Episode 16, season 7*

[Wilson has come to visit House in a fancy hotel where House is now living lavishly, after his splitup with Cuddy. A concierge, Carnell, comes in, wheeling a food service cart. There's a champagne bottle in a bucket and strawberries, amidst all the food.]

- 1. Carnell: [beaming] Good morning, sir. I've got your deluxe breakfast for two.
- 2. House: [deadpan] Do I have to count the strawberries?
- 3. Carnell: [smiling] Don't worry. You can trust me with anything. Including your food.
- 4. House: [points to Wilson, deadpan] After he and I have sex, [Carnell freezes, as if shocked] I'm gonna slit his throat and then disembowel him in the bathtub.
- 5. Carnell: [enthusiastically] Oh, no problem. I'll cancel the morning maid service. Would you like me to have them clean up later when they come to turn down your bed?

When the concierge has brought him breakfast, House overtly pretends to ask him a question (line 2). It will be quite transparent to Carnell that the hotel guest has no intention of counting the strawberries, whose number is an insignificant matter. Whilst recognizing the overt pretense in the guest's question, Carnell, however, replies in a serious tone, emphasizing his reliability (line 3). House duly chooses to test it by sharing his absurd (and gory) plan (line 4), which he cannot possibly wish to materialize (as a prospective perpetrator would not disclose his plans). Although the first chunk of the scenario relating to homosexual intercourse might have been truthful (note Carnell's non-verbal response indicative of him being aghast in line 4), the unfolding part of the utterance must unequivocally be taken only as an overtly pretended assertion. Once Carnell recognizes this, he must cancel the potential truthfulness of part of House's preceding turn, as well as the meaning he may have (wrongly) inferred from the situational context available to him (the hotel guest and a male stranger in his room). The absurdity of the murder scenario appears to discount the possibility of gay sex between them as equally absurd. ¹⁰ This bears out

^{10.} I would like to thank Jan Chovanec for drawing my attention to this.

that overt pretense may present degrees of transparency to the hearer. Incidentally, if the two men were indeed gay, this would be the epitome of genuine deception performed via humorous overt pretense (see Vincent Marrelli, 2004; Dynel, to appear). Hence, when it has become transparent to the concierge that House cannot possibly have made an assertion, he decides to co-construct the absurd scenario as if House's plan were a genuine one (line 5). This way, Carnell also overtly pretends to communicate, even if he simultaneously attests to his dependability and discretion.

As this example indicates, nowhere else is overt pretense more transparent than in utterances that can be classified as absurdity. Absurdity is a salient notion related to humorous overt pretense, for the overt untruthfulness and lack of (genuine) assertions is most striking, violating universal rules of the world. In humor studies, absurdity has been addressed primarily by literature experts and psychologists, who define it as humor which lacks any coherent meaning and logicality, and whose incongruity cannot be (fully) resolved (Rothbart & Pien, 1977; Ruch, 1992; Oring, 2003). Absurd humor may occur in any discourse type, here represented by interactional turns. It involves the speaker's overt pretense dependent on (objectively available) untruth, not "merely" the speaker's untruthfulness, which need not always be easily understandable to a hearer without the necessary context. Absurdity in conversations qualifies as fantasy humor (Hay, 1995, 2000, 2001) also known as joint fantasizing (Kotthoff, 2007; Chovanec, 2012; Stallone and Haugh 2017), which amounts to interlocutors' co-construction of the absurd picture, as in Example (5) above (see also Tsakona, this volume). Typically, making sense of absurd humor boils down to appreciating that the speaker cannot possibly intend to communicate the literal meanings stemming from the utterances s/he is producing. Absurd utterances may serve as the source of implicatures (based on the flouting of the Gricean maxims), 11 and they may transmit tacit messages outside the humorous frame, as Example (5) also shows. Example (6) presents a different case, namely absurdity that does not carry much meaning:

(6) Episode 10, season 2

[House is with Stacy, his former fiancée. Her mobile rings. She takes the call and passes the phone to House. Wilson is calling from a phone at the nurse's station.]

- 1. Wilson: Do you know your phone's dead? Do you ever recharge your batteries?
- 2. House: [slowly, in a low voice, as if skeptical] They recharge? I just keep buying new phones!
- 3. Wilson: I thought you should know your aphasia guy is tasting metal.

^{11.} Notably, surrealistic irony (Kapogianni, 2011) centers on absurd utterances which give rise to critical implicatures concerning the preceding turns.

Wilson's two reproachful questions (line 1) can be considered rhetorical but House strategically takes them at face value as if he could not recognize Wilson's intended meaning. He thus overtly pretends to have misunderstood Wilson's utterance (see also Section 10) and overtly feigns ignorance and mild surprise at the information that must have been available to him, namely that mobile phones are rechargeable (line 2). Apart from acting as if to express his surprise, House also pretends to be making an assertion that he has an uncanny habit, which can hardly be deemed genuine due to its costliness and inconvenience. Thereby, he means only to amuse the addressee, as well as to deflect the problem of his phone having been dead. Contrary to House's intention, the interlocutor does not seem to find his utterance amusing and returns to serious/non-humorous talk, focusing on the reason for his call (line 3).

By contrast, in the following example, overt pretense is a means of showing one's sly wit. This instance displays a similar repertoire of manifestations of overt pretense, adding to it "making as if to ask":

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(7) Episode 1, season 6
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[House is a patient in a mental hospital. He's now participating in a therapy session and guessing the problems of the other patients.]

- Maybe we can hang some of the new pieces on the wall.
- 2. House: [to Susan] Cut your wrists, huh?
- 3. Beasley: Greg, there are certain topics -
- 4. House: [eyes bulging] Oh, I'm sorry. [naively] Is suicide taboo? [deadpan, brazenly] Gosh, if I've broken a rule on my first day, I will kill myself.
- 5. Beasley: [looks intensely at House] Group's over. [Some of the patients leave immediately.]
- 6. House: That flew by.
- 7. Beasley: You realize you're not the first uncooperative patient on this floor?

Based on common assumptions, House must be well aware that his utterance in which he displays his inferential capacity (line 2) is offensive to the suicidal patient and that the touchy issue must not be raised at all. When mildly reproached by the doctor (line 3), he overtly pretends to have just realized the potential inappropriateness of his preceding utterance (line 4). Specifically, he overtly pretends to apologize (with the lack of genuineness of this apology being transparent given the neighboring utterances) and feigns ignorance by pretending to ask a question, only to perform another overtly pretended apologetic utterance. This one is based on a conventional hyperbolic expression, namely "I will kill myself", which itself also carries overt untruthfulness. House uses this conventional expression purposefully as a form of word-play, a phenomenon normally associated with wit and humor. However, House is cognizant of the fact that there is no hearer within earshot that is likely to find his turn amusing, and so he can only mean to frustrate the doctor, and

possibly offend the other patients. This is supported by lack of humorous reactions on the part of the patients who are shown to run away, and the implicit reprimand on the part of Dr Beasley, who has seen through House's strategy (line 7). It is then only viewers that may reap humorous rewards from this interaction.

The same holds for the following example, which is hinged on the speaker's pretending to be in a certain mental state.

(8) Episode 17, season 1

[House is having a power struggle with Vogler, the hospital's sponsor.]

- 1. Vogler: Eastbrook Pharmaceuticals has developed a new ACE inhibitor. I would like you to extol the virtues of this breakthrough medication.
- 2. House: [frowning, pensively] Eastbrook Pharmaceuticals... wait a second, don't I own that company? [pauses for a moment, still frowning mouth open] [no longer frowning and giving a smile of recognition] Oh, no, that's right, you do.
- 3. Vogler: Viopril is a significant improvement over the old version. All there in the study. [He hands House a booklet of information. 1
- 4. House: I know its price tag is significantly improved.

Responding to Vogler's request (line 1), which he is reluctant to fulfill, House overtly pretends to be thinking out loud and pondering on whether he is the owner of the company that produces the medicine he is supposed to endorse (line 2). House does this only to feign an epiphany and state what he must have genuinely believed from the beginning, namely that it is Vogler who owns the company at hand. The doctor aims to wittily disparage Vogler, as a result of which he stands little chance of being amused, with the viewers being potentially entertained.

Interestingly, although the four examples above rest on overt pretense expressed via various untruthful utterances, that is overtly pretending to say, humorous overt pretense may also originate in genuine saying. For example, a truthful verbal message may be coupled with a pretense-based non-verbal expression of emotion, not involving parody or impersonation (as in Example 4), as in the example below:

(9) Episode 2, season 8

[House, who is back from prison, is sitting on a sofa and picking fruit from a fruit bouquet, most likely not his. Together with Dr Park, he is working on a case of a dying patient. Park looks at House as he indulges in a large piece of cantaloupe.]

- 1. House: Fresh fruit in prison is usually chicken.
- 2. Park: Why aren't you more alarmed? We're running out of time.
- 3. House: [abruptly, yelling] Aahh, she's dying! [speaking normally again] Were you able to figure out what was wrong while I was screaming?
- 4. Park: Infection was the first thing that the transplant team treated for.

In his response to Park's accusation of his indifference in the grave context at hand (line 2), House deploys overt pretense as a rhetorical tool in the topical talk (line 3). He overtly pretends, primarily by nonverbal means of expression, to be emotional about the patient's state, so as to meet Park's expectation, albeit making a genuine assertion, "She's dying". He acts as if he were panicking only to prove to the interlocutor that this is not conducive to finding the solution, and to implicitly dismiss the interlocutor's comment as being unfounded. Whilst this unexpected outburst might induce a humorous reaction in the interlocutor, Park's reaction (line 4) does not seem to be indicative of any amusement on her part. As this example shows, humor based on overt pretense may involve perfectly truthful assertions or otherwise communicated truthful meanings, conveyed verbally or non-verbally.

Another salient humorous strategy involves pretending to have misunderstood the previous turn, which is neatly captured by the notion of trumping based on hyper-understanding (Veale et al., 2006; Brône, 2008). Veale et al. (2006: 319) regard hyper-understanding as a conversational situation when "the hearer demonstrates a fuller understanding of a speaker's argument than the speaker himself". What the authors seem to mean by the "fuller understanding" is actually the speaker's recognition of an alternative reading of the preceding turn. On the other hand, Brône (2008: 2027) proposes that hyper-understanding "revolves around a speaker's ability to exploit potential weak spots in a previous speaker's utterance by playfully echoing that utterance while simultaneously reversing the initially intended interpretation". The "weak spots" seem to be related to where the source of the alternative meaning can be traced, whilst "reversal" means turning the tables on the interlocutor by bringing to the fore an alternative meaning s/he has not envisaged as arising from his/her turn. Although Brône (2008) mentions pretense a few times in the course of his paper, he does not seem to define hyper-understanding as a pretense-based phenomenon. It is proposed here that hyper-understanding resides in the speaker's overtly pretending to have misunderstood the previous turn.

(10) Episode 3, season 3

[Due to surgery, after which he was given ketamine, House experienced no pain in his leg in the previous episode, feeling a relief for the first time for many years. As the scene opens, he pushes the conference room door open with his cane. The team look at him puzzled that he is using the cane again.]

- 1. House: 71 year old cancer research specialist. Minor tremors, localized melanoma removed 2 years ago, cataracts. And he can't breathe. Also, disregard the facial lacerations. They're creepy, but unfortunately irrelevant. [He winks.] Don't you wanna know why?
- 2. Cameron: You... have your cane.

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No, why the lacerations are creepy. He was about to
3. House:
            dissect one of his lab rats when he collapsed. The little
            vermin seized the day, so to speak and went medieval on
            his ass. [The team members stare at him, frowning.] What,
            my fly open?
4. Foreman: So the ... the pain's returned.
5. House:
           There was no pain, he was unconscious. I'm guessing,
           because he wasn't able to breathe.
6. Cameron: We're talking about you.
           Obviously. I'm obviously not. What is it with you people?
7. House:
            I don't use the cane, you're shocked. I use the cane...
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In this interaction, House is preoccupied with the current case, which he finds intriguing, whilst the team members are concerned with House's using a cane. They suspect that he is afflicted with his standard ailment again. When Cameron takes the floor and responds irrelevantly rather than address (line 2) House's question (line 1), he overtly pretends to take her answer as being germane to his query. He elaborates on it, whereby he disregards the sympathizing observation. Similarly, when Foreman makes a comment on House's health (line 4), indirectly replying to House's question (line 3), House overtly pretends to have understood it as concerning the patient (line 5). House duly asserts that the patient is not in pain, something Foreman cannot have suggested. Later, House produces an utterance (line 7) which unequivocally confirms the rather obvious fact that he has recognized his interlocutor's communicative intentions, thereby testifying to his overt pretense and his aim to wittily deflect the empathetic comments in his previous replies.

5. Summary and final comments

This paper has aimed to shed light on the different understandings and applications of the notion of pretense, paying attention primarily to its uses in (philosophical) pragmatics. Consequently, at the outset, two forms of pretense were distinguished and discussed with regard to the relevant background literature: covert pretense coinciding with deception and overt pretense associated with irony, both of which show some affinity with humor. The second goal of this paper was to testify that overt pretense may be conducive to humor other than irony (specifically, its humorous species). It was thus shown how pretense may manifest itself, affecting non-verbal and verbal means of communication, expression of assertions, and emotional or mental states, all in their different forms and configurations. In the course of the discussion, several types of conversational humor were invoked, such as: role play, impersonation, parody, fantasy humor, absurdity, and trumping. This list of potential mechanisms and functions of pretense-based humor was compiled against the backdrop of interdisciplinary literature on humor. Therefore, the notions

and categories of humor shown here to involve overt pretense should be regarded as an open-ended list of potentially overlapping heterogeneous phenomena conducive to conversational humor.

The chapter also accounted for the interpersonal functions humorous pretense may perform. Regardless of its form, even if absurd and devoid of any truthful propositional meaning, humorous utterances may still convey metamessages and exert various interpersonal effects. Many of the cases cited here (Examples 1, 3, 5 and 6) represent benevolent, friendly teasing (see Norrick, 1993; Hay, 2000; Lampert & Ervin-Tripp, 2006; Dynel, 2011d; Sinkeviciute, 2013 and references therein). On the other hand, some other instances (Examples 2, 7 and 8) indicate that overt pretense may serve disaffiliative humor (see Dynel 2013b and references therein). Essentially, such humor revolves around the speaker's manifestation of his/her wit and denigration of the butt, whether for his/her own pleasure and/or in order to amuse hearers other than the butt. In the case of fictional interactions on screen, this may mean that the viewer is the only hearer who can be amused.

This theoretical study on the status of overt pretense (versus covert pretense) as a vehicle for conversational humor showed that pretense is a valid topic and deserves further investigation. More notions known in humor studies may be anchored in overt pretense. This phenomenon also shows more dimensions to be dissected and poses further definitional problems with reference to humor. For example, it is sometimes difficult to tell whether the speaker is just overtly pretending or communicating non-humorous truthful (or covertly untruthful) meanings (see Dynel 2017a). Also, the status of pretense may not be unequivocal in terms of its overtness/covertness, with the speaker's intention being more or less transparent and subject to negotiation in interaction. Alternatively, in multiparty interactions, overt and covert pretense may be deployed simultaneously with respect to different hearers. These and many other issues clearly indicate that the study of overt pretense is no child's play.

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Online joint fictionalization

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Genres are dynamic discoursal structures which are frequently subject to change so as to adapt to speakers' new communicative goals and exigencies. The present paper explores the particularities of a quite recent genre of humor, *online joint fictionalization*, which seems to have emerged from oral joint fictionalization involving the collaborative construction of humorous fictional scenarios in informal face-to-face interactions among peers. The present case study reveals significant similarities between the new digital genre and the initial oral one. Furthermore, it appears that the new genre incorporates other humorous genres such as memes, which are typical of online communication and, in this new context, contribute to the construction of the fictional scenario at hand.

Keywords: humor, joint fictionalization, genre, online interaction, Facebook, fictional scenarios, meme, status update, online networks

1. Introduction

In the framework of the *General Theory of Verbal Humor* (GTVH; Attardo, 1994; 2001), one of the parameters, or knowledge resources, introduced for accounting for the similarities and differences among humorous texts is the so-called *narrative strategy*. Narrative strategy "is in fact a rephrasing of what is known [...] as 'genre'" (Attardo, 1994: 224). As Attardo points out (2001: 23), "[l]ittle work has gone towards this KR [i.e. knowledge resource]", as humor scholars usually focus on different aspects of humor, such as its topics, its targets, its linguistic and logical mechanisms. On the other hand, it is not an easy task to document and analyze *all* humorous genres for various reasons. For example, humor surfaces in most genres: in some of them humor is indispensable (e.g. in canned jokes), while in others it is more or less common but not indispensable (e.g. informal interactions among peers, parliamentary speeches, literary genres; see Tsakona, 2017).

Research on humorous genres could become an even more challenging endeavor if one takes into consideration the fact that genres are dynamic (not static) structures which are frequently subject to change so as to adapt to speakers' new communicative goals and exigencies (see among others Freedman & Medway, 1994; Bhatia, 1997; Johns, 2002; Kotthoff, 2007; Tsakona, 2017). In other words, genres operate within a "convention/invention balance" (Coogan, 2012: 205):

This balance connects to two primal needs – the need for familiarity and the need for novelty. [...] Familiar treatments of [generic] conventions help the reader know what they are getting into. Novelty emerges from invention [...]. Readers want a certain amount of change and newness in what they read, but not too much.

(Coogan, 2012: 207)

Such changes are triggered (and/or sped up) by the new technologies, especially the digital media and the social networks developed therein: "media may play a role in genre form, and the introduction of new media may occasion genre evolution" (Yates & Orlikowski, 1992: 299; see also Thurlow et al., 2004; North, 2006: 229; Shifman, 2014b; Boxman-Shabtai & Shifman, 2015: 522–523; Chovanec & Dynel, 2015: 6–10).

The present paper sets out to contribute to this line of research by exploring the particularities of a quite recent genre of humor, which is here dubbed online joint fictionalization. The analysis of the data is intended to reveal significant similarities between the new genre and what Kotthoff (1999) calls joint fictionalization, which involves the construction of humorous fictional scenarios in informal face-to-face interactions among peers. Concurrently, the new genre incorporates other (humorous) genres which are typical of online communication and, in this new context, contribute to the construction of the fictional scenario at hand. In other words, the new digital genre emerges from the modification of a previous oral one and exploits the affordances offered by online communication. This combination aims, among other things, at creating and disseminating unconventional, humorous perceptions of social reality and at amusing the participants.

In what follows, Section 2 offers a description of the genre of oral joint fictionalization, based on the relevant literature. Section 3 includes a brief overview of some main findings in online humor research, concentrating mostly on interactional humor (e.g. humor in online social networks or communities) and memes. The set of data under scrutiny is described in Section 4, while their analysis follows in Section 5. The data refers to the unexpected discovery of a crocodile on the Greek island of Crete, including the media reports on the subsequent events and, most importantly, the humorous reframing of the events by Facebook participants in the form of online joint fictionalization. The analytical part discusses the sequential structure of the online joint fictionalization (Section 5.1) as well as a thread of online posts, a reframed photo with its comments, and three memes, all contributing to the humorous scenario constructed by participants in Facebook communities (Section 5.2). Section 6 is dedicated to the discussion of the findings and the conclusions of the study.

Joint fictionalization as a humorous genre

The terms joint fictionalization (Kotthoff, 1999; 2007: 278–283; Archakis & Tsakona, 2012: 99-105), joint fantasizing (Kotthoff, 2006: 293-299; Priego-Valverde, 2006; Chovanec, 2012), humorous fantasy (Kotthoff, 2006: 297; 2007: 282; Vandergriff & Fuchs, 2012: 446-448), fantasy humor (Hay, 2001: 62, 65), and comical hypothetical (Winchatz & Kozin, 2008) all refer to a humorous genre involving the discursive construction of fictional scenarios by one 1 or more speakers, usually in informal settings and with the aim of amusing themselves. Speakers use their turns to depart from the ongoing topic and turn-taking system in order to build a fictional story or setting by adding details to it. Such details are more often than not humorous, that is, they are in contrast with what would normally be expected in the specific context, and result in the creation of absurd, incongruous representations or perceptions of the narrated (fictional) events or the described (fictional) settings (on incongruity as the basis for humor, see among others Raskin, 1985; Attardo, 1994; 2001). In Winchatz & Kozin's (2008: 383) terms, this "speech phenomenon [...] forms at the juncture of storytelling, humor, and imagination". Participants thus get the opportunity to come closer by laughing with/at the same things.

Research on joint fictionalizations has shown that such constructions are based on shared knowledge among participants which often involves mass culture contexts, such as TV shows, media registers, and individuals or events that have become popular via the entertainment media (Kotthoff, 1999: 134-135, 144; 2006: 293-299; 2007: 282-283; Winchatz & Kozin, 2008: 395-396, 401-402; Archakis & Tsakona, 2012: 99–105; Chovanec, 2012; see also Baym, 1995). Such intertextual connections enable participants not only to display and share their knowledge on such topics, but also to position themselves towards them, that is, to display their positive or negative stance towards the person, event, register, etc. alluded to. Furthermore, as Kotthoff (1999: 145) observes, "humorous fictionalizations establish unusual perspectives on concrete images and scenes" (my emphasis). Such texts give participants the opportunity to express their evaluations that would not probably be as easily expressed and/or accepted in 'serious' discussions on the same topic.

It is important to note here that, even though the overall effect of such scenarios is humorous, not all contributions need to be humorous: as Kotthoff (1999: 136) suggests, "the topic of joking remarks can also be seriously pursued" (see also Vandergriff & Fuchs, 2009; 2012; Archakis & Tsakona, 2012: 99-105). The non-humorous utterances of a fictionalization may also contribute to the fictional

Even if a single speaker in a group builds the scenario via his/her turn(s), it is still considered a "joint" achievement as long as the others offer signs of acknowledgment and entertainment (e.g. phatic signals, laughter; Winchatz & Kozin, 2008).

scenario (and the evaluation of its content) and do not necessarily suspend or cancel the humorous tone and goal of the interaction. In general, humorous or serious turns adding to the scenario at hand are more often than not supportive of the humorous effect of this kind of interaction (Hay, 2001; Vandergriff & Fuchs, 2009: 35-36, 38-39; 2012) unless, of course, speakers clearly express their disagreement with the content of the previous contribution(s).

Interestingly, joint fictionalizations emerge in online environments in parallel with some other online activity pursued by a group of people. For example, joint fictionalizations may occur in language teaching contexts, as Vandergriff & Fuchs (2009: 33-34, 36-37; 2012) have demonstrated. Their studies concentrate on L2 learners' oral and online interactions aimed at completing tasks assigned to them in class. Although learners' main goal is to follow their teachers' instructions concerning the task at hand, this does not prevent them from simultaneously constructing humorous scenarios by mixing elements from the fictional world (i.e. the task scenario) and the real one. This practice allows them to play with the target-language and to support each others' humorous contributions. What is noteworthy, as Vandergriff & Fuchs (2012) claim, is that the supportive strategies learners adopt are similar to those attested in oral humorous interaction (cf. Hay, 2001), including mostly the contribution of more humor and details to the ongoing fictionalization (see also Section 3).

Similarly, imaginary scenarios may surface during live text commentaries of sports events. Chovanec argues that, in such contexts,

despite being separated in space and time, [participants] collaboratively produce online humor on a common topic, often teasing and mocking each other. Their contributions in this quasi-conversational performance are orchestrated by the journalist; [...] [they] conspire with the journalist and are co-responsible for the enjoyment of the occasion. (Chovanec, 2012: 157)

Humorous scenarios thus contribute to enhancing entertainment and solidarity among participants as well as to keeping the channel of communication open, especially at times when the sports event becomes dull. This phatic function of joint fictionalization helps journalists to maintain audience interest in both the sports event and the live text commentary.

In all cases described above (i.e. oral fictionalizations, language teaching classes, and live text commentaries), speakers are brought together by a non-humorous activity and at some point they briefly abandon the activity frame to enter the fictionalization one. Winchatz & Kozin (2008) suggest that joint fictionalizations are clearly set off from the surrounding talk and sequentially structured, and they identify four phases constituting the genre:

- 1. *Initiation*: A speaker decides to suspend the ongoing talk and at the same time requests permission to "move the conversation from the realm of the real and the concrete [...] to the realm of the imaginary or hypothetical" (Winchatz & Kozin, 2008: 392). This is usually achieved via an utterance which introduces the hypothetical scenario, often based on preceding talk.
- Acknowledgment: One or more recipients show their approval of the initiator's move by offering an appreciation signal (e.g. phatic signals, laughter, evaluative comments) or a creative addition to the scenario introduced by the initiator. Lack of reaction, that is, recipients' silence, can also be considered a kind of acknowledgment allowing the initiator or a third party to proceed with building the scenario.
- 3. *Creating the imaginary*: The fictional scenario is built by the initiator with or without the other participants. They contribute to the ongoing interaction by adding details to the imaginary script, by laughing, and sometimes by leading the fictionalization to what Winchatz & Kozin (2008: 396) call "an absurd extreme, that is, something completely and utterly unbelievable, highly unlikely, and at times almost cartoon-like". Intertextual references to various cultural, historical, relational, etc. contexts are often exploited to construct the scenario.
- Termination: The fictionalization is led to an end when a participant suggests that they (seriously) ponder on the imaginary scenario, or decides to cause a sudden switch back to reality. It may also fade out through participants' shared laughter. After the termination phase, interlocutors continue the previous topic of interaction or begin a new one.

The present case study aims at showing how this generic form emerges in online interactions and practices, and how participants form a group whose main aim is the construction of the fictionalization per se. In the data examined here, participants come together with the aim of building and sustaining the fictional scenario initiated by one of them. Although speakers have kept specific generic characteristics intact (i.e. the absurd, fictional content, the mass culture intertextual allusions, the collaborative and supportive participation, the humorous tone and effect), they have enriched the genre with other practices which are common in online humorous communication. The following Section will try to describe some main findings of research on humorous online practices and genres, which are deemed relevant to the analysis.

Humor in online contexts

Humor surfaces in several online genres and serves various functions. It is used among speakers in their interactions in chatrooms, social network websites, webpages, blogs, etc. Online humor brings speakers together in several ways: via attracting audience attention, encouraging involvement, and thus keeping the interaction alive; via exploring common background knowledge; via conveying specific attitudes and views and helping articulate more or less unconventional perspectives on events or problems of reality; via enabling speakers to present themselves as socially competent, interesting, and attractive individuals; via entertaining the audience (see among others Baym, 1993; 1995; Holcomb, 1997; Goutsos, 2005; North, 2007: 545-548; Frank, 2009; Vandergriff & Fuchs, 2009; Georgalou, 2010; Vandergriff, 2010; Chovanec, 2012; Pennington & Hall, 2014; Bolander & Locher, 2015 and references therein).

Such aspects and functions of online humor are particularly important for groups of speakers who may never meet offline. As many online communities often consist of members who are brought together exclusively by the discourse they produce and circulate among them, humor helps to strengthen the social cohesion among them via underlining their common attitudes and values and via framing their shared knowledge and views in humorous (and commonly acceptable) ways. Thus, participants can reach what Baym (1995) calls interpretive consensus, namely shared meanings and interpretations of reality. Furthermore, as North points out,

> [t]he prevalence of humor in this textually constructed environment, and the linguistic creativity associated with it, may partly stem from the need to keep open the channel of communication. There is no such thing as companionable silence in the chatroom; the longer a thread remains quiet, the further it sinks down the list until it disappears from sight. Humor may therefore serve an additional phatic function in keeping topics 'in play' over a period of time, through the network of cohesive ties that it tends to generate. (North 2007: 553)

A comparison between the social functions and goals of humor in online and face-toface interaction (including joint fictionalization) reveals more similarities than differences. It is not at all accidental that the literature on online humor draws on literature on face-to-face interactional humor and highlights the parallel (if not identical) practices and effects (see the references in this Section). Speakers seem to transfer their oral practices to online (albeit written) genres and to adjust them accordingly. In the present case, it will be shown that such an adjustment simultaneously involves the exploitation of other, digital humorous genres which are also available to speakers.

More specifically, online humor also surfaces in less (or less obviously) interactive humorous genres, memes being the most typical and popular of them. Memes employ

On the particularities of online communities, see Baym (1993; 1995), Thurlow et al. (2004: 107– 111), Ren et al. (2007: 378), Das (2010), LeBlanc (2010: 524-526) and references therein.

"script and sound, static pictures and moving images" (Shifman, 2007: 190) to convey playful messages. They are considered prototypical instances of contemporary internet culture reflecting and enhancing speaker involvement and everyday creativity (see among others Peck, 2014; Shifman, 2014a; 2014b: 342, 354-355; Wiggins & Bowers, 2015). Given that memes are based on the combination of semiotic resources coming from different sources and carrying various connotations, they can be used for the representation and dissemination of complex ideas and values, often in an unconventional manner (Oh et al., 2014; Peck, 2014: 1642, 1657; Shifman, 2014a; Wiggins & Bowers, 2015). Online social networks and websites become the nests for the generation of memes and significantly contribute to their diffusion to large audiences.

Although it would be "unwise to characterize all emergent memes as being humorous" (Wiggins & Bowers, 2015: 1899), humor is identified as the sine qua non for the production of most memes as well as an important reason for their continuous circulation and, hence, success (Peck, 2014: 1641; Shifman, 2014a). This is achieved via mixing real and unreal elements for the creation of humorous incongruities (Shifman, 2007: 205; 2014b: 347). In particular, Shifman notes that, when it comes to memes, "[h]umor augments sharing, as people wish to amuse their friends and to be associated with wittiness" (Shifman, 2014a: 96), while at the same time "meme genres play an important role in the construction of group identity and social boundaries" (Shifman, 2014a: 100; see also Shifman, 2007: 355).

Memes are more often than not perceived, and hence investigated, as autonomous texts whose meaning(s) point to various events, ideologies, stereotypes, texts, etc. Thus research on memes concentrates on specific examples or groups of similar examples which are thematically related and/or morphologically similar (Shifman, 2007, 2014a, 2014b; Ramoz-Leslie, 2011; Peck, 2014; Wiggins & Bowers, 2015; Piata, this volume). The present case study will try to bring to the surface a quite different aspect of memes: their potential to be part of a broader online discussion of a topic of mutual concern and to coexist with other genres, such as Facebook posts, poems, etc. In other words, memes will be here discussed as an integral part of the online joint fictionalization genre, since participants produce and circulate them as their contributions to the construction of a fictional scenario.

In sum, two common threads linking online interaction and digital memes have been identified so far: first, their primary aim to entertain participants, which is associated to the presence of humor in both of them; and second, their potential to bring participants together not only via their humorous content but also via intertextual allusions to already shared background knowledge and to creating new shared knowledge and interpretations of reality.

The analysis of the data collected will attempt to show how, based on interactional practices coming from face-to-face interaction, joint fictionalization is transferred to a new medium and simultaneously draws on resources coming from that medium.

The data collected for the purposes of the present study relate to the unexpected discovery of a crocodile on the Greek island of Crete. From July 4th, 2014 until April 3rd, 2015 I have collected 100 news articles from online sources concerning what happened from the discovery of the crocodile onwards; and 12 humorous texts published online (e.g. commentaries, stories, jokes, poems), inspired by the same story. I have also collected over 1,000 posts, 59 memes, and 18 cartoons on the same topic, coming from 5 different Facebook communities supporting the crocodile and his rights. These communities were created a few days after the crocodile was spotted (i.e. from July 7th until July 12th, 2014) and, until April 3rd, 2015 they had acquired 19,598 followers (see the *Facebook communities* list at the end of the article). The community called *Sifis the Crocodile and His Friends* (2015) was by far the larger one with 16,389 followers. This article will concentrate on the material collected from the Facebook communities and leave the online humorous texts for future exploitation. The following account of the events concerning the crocodile of Crete will be based on the news articles of the corpus.

According to news reports of July 4th, 2014 (e.g. Crocodile almost two meters long in a dam in Crete, 2014), a crocodile was accidentally discovered by two firemen who passed by the Potami Dam Lake in Amari, near the town of Rethymno in Crete. The event was immediately reported to the authorities, as crocodiles do not live free in any part of Greece. In fact, this was reported to be the only crocodile on the loose in the whole of Europe ("World's greatest crocodile hunter" fails to catch "Sifis" - Crete's fugitive reptile, 2014). The issue was evaluated as an important one, as the safety of the inhabitants and the tourists was considered in jeopardy. Hence authorities set out to find and arrest not only the crocodile but also the person who abandoned the reptile in the lake. They also placed fences in several parts around the lake to prevent the crocodile from escaping, as well as traps with dead chickens as baits to entice the animal. By July 10th, the crocodile was already given the name Sifis (In Crete stays "Sifis" the crocodile (?), who may not be alone, 2014), thus acquiring a local identity and a gender one: Sifis is one of the most common male names in Crete.³ The choice of name was indicative of the locals' wish to consider the crocodile "one of their own" and to keep him in the area. While the police could not find the owner of the animal, local people suggested that Sifis should remain in the lake because he caused no harm (provided he was restricted in a specific area by fences). In addition, the animal had already become a tourist attraction: hundreds of tourists (and locals) visited the lake daily hoping they could take a glance at Sifis and feed him.

The emerging Facebook communities fervently supported Sifis' right to stay in Crete, and resisted any idea of capturing and removing him from the lake. Furthermore,

^{3.} In one of the Facebook communities, however, he is called *Manolios*, a name which is equally (if not even more) common among Cretan men (see *Manolios*, 2015).

"[s]ouvenir shops in the area have reportedly recognized the new local celebrity by selling inflatable crocodiles" (Mystery 6ft crocodile appears in middle of Greek lake – leaving local farmers terrified, 2014). The fugitive reptile also attracted the interest of international media.4

In the meantime, "local authorities have enlisted the help of reptile specialists who will try to remove the animal" (Tourist snap: Crocodile on the loose in Crete sparks visitor rush to island, 2014). So, Olivier Behra, a famous herpetologist, was summoned to help capture Sifis. Behra arrived at the island at the end of August 2014. He unsuccessfully tried to capture Sifis twice ("World's greatest crocodile hunter" fails to catch "Sifis" - Crete's fugitive reptile, 2014). Interestingly, his first attempt was sabotaged by locals who tried to warn Sifis and scare him away from the traps and the herpetologist (Crete: "Sifis" originates in the Nile and he is... well-fed, 2014). Even though locals insisted on keeping Sifis in the lake, Behra was summoned again at the end of October 2014 for a final try; he failed again. On the whole, more than 10 attempts to capture Sifis were unsuccessful (Sifis the Cretan crocodile is found dead - defying his hunters to the last, 2015). Sifis remained on the loose, but locals seemed not to be afraid of him: a few of them even dove in the lake for the celebration of the Epiphany (Sifis the crocodile to be part of Epiphany celebration on Crete, 2015). The final act was written at the end of March 2015, when Sifis was found dead at the shore of the lake: "It was a sorry end for a reptile that had fascinated locals and foreigners alike" (Sifis the Cretan crocodile is found dead - defying his hunters to the last, 2015). His death was attributed by the authorities to the particularly long and heavy winter in Crete, while his body was taken for an autopsy to the Natural History Museum of Crete at Herakleion.

The above summary of the news articles of the corpus brings to the surface (at least) the following unexpected events/situations:⁶

^{4.} News articles refer to Sifis in *The Guardian* (Tourist snap: Crocodile on the loose in Crete sparks visitor rush to island, 2014; "World's greatest crocodile hunter" fails to catch "Sifis" -Crete's fugitive reptile, 2014; Sifis the Cretan crocodile is found dead - defying his hunters to the last, 2015), The Independent (Mystery 6ft crocodile appears in middle of Greek lake - leaving local farmers terrified, 2014), News.com.au (Mystery croc turns up in Greek lake in Crete, 2014), Mirror ("Uncatchable" crocodile who terrorized Greek island and evaded world's greatest hunters is found dead, 2015), and Sky News (Crete's crocodile found dead after cold snap, 2015), while his reputation has reached as far as Japan (Tokyo is interested in the crocodile of Crete, 2014).

[&]quot;The custom of the Epiphany (January 6) celebrations is called 'diving for the holy cross' and is performed in all areas near water in Greece. It consists of a Christian Orthodox priest throwing a holy cross in the water to sanctify the water. Then, local men and boys dive in the water to bring it back" (Sifis the crocodile to be part of Epiphany celebration on Crete, 2015).

^{6.} News articles are typically based on news events, that is, unexpected, and hence tellable, events or situations to attract the attention of the readers (see among others Bell, 1991; Archakis & Tsakona, 2010; Bednarek & Caple, 2012).

- 1. A crocodile was found in a lake in Crete. Although the animal does not originate in Greece, it has been assigned a local (Cretan/Greek) identity as well as a gender one (male) by being named *Sifis*.
- 2. Local people disagree with the authorities' proposition to capture and remove the reptile from the lake; even though crocodiles are not endemic to Greece, local people want to keep him there.
- 3. The crocodile has proven difficult to arrest even for an experienced herpetologist.

In the following Section, I will try to show how participants in Facebook communities build their online humorous fictionalization and simultaneously refer to and reframe these unexpected events to create humorous verbal comments, poems, images, and memes (among other things).

5. The analysis of the data

The analysis of the data concentrates on two interrelated topics: the structure of the genre (Section 5.1) and its content, in particular the humorous reframing of, and elaboration on, Sifis' story (Section 5.2). Both aspects of the analysis are intended to show the similarities between the online genre and the initial oral one, as well as the adaptation of the genre to practices which are already popular among internet users, especially when the latter aim at entertaining themselves via humor.

5.1 The structure of online joint fictionalization

In order to describe the structure of online joint fictionalization, I draw on Winchatz & Kozin's (2008) four-phase model emerging from oral data (see Section 2). The model is compatible with earlier approaches to the same genre (see the references in Section 2) and offers a comprehensive and step-by-step description of speakers' actions in such activities.

The first phase of *initiation* involves someone beginning an imaginary scenario related to something mentioned earlier in interaction. In the present case, the imaginary scenario is introduced by the anonymous administrators of the examined Facebook pages, who presuppose that at least some of the Facebook participants are familiar with news reports on the discovery of the crocodile. So, by launching these pages they called for audience attention and simultaneously created spaces for speaker participation and involvement. Furthermore, by naming the crocodile *Sifis* and posting the first photos, cartoons, status updates, links to newspaper articles, etc., they initiated the construction of the humorous scenario, where a personified, male reptile living in Crete and acquiring local features became the protagonist (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. Cover photo and profile photo of the Facebook page The Crocodile of Amari Should Remain in the Potami Dam

The second acknowledgment phase was enacted by those Facebook users who "liked" the relevant pages, "shared" their content, and responded to the administrators' posts. Thus, the online interaction quickly entered the third *creating the imaginary* phase, where participants contributed in various ways (a more detailed analysis of this phase follows in Section 5.2).

The fourth phase of termination was not as abrupt or clearcut as it seems to be in oral fictionalizations. It could rather be suggested that the specific online fictionalization faded away, as no news about Sifis was reported in the media, hence after some time participants lost interest in the subject. After Olivier Behra's failed attempts to capture the animal, the media stopped publishing reports on Sifis, as there was nothing tellable to report (see footnote 6): Sifis spent his days quietly, swimming and eating in the lake. A few months later, a limited number of posts appeared when local people dove in the lake for the celebration of the Epiphany, and later on when the animal passed away because of the harsh weather (see Section 4).

This difference from the oral genre could be accounted for in terms of the relationships between the ongoing fictionalization and the surrounding talk, and between participants. Oral fictionalizations are typically part of extended face-to-face interactions among interlocutors who as a group move from one conversational activity (e.g. casual, informal conversation) to another (i.e. joint fictionalization) and back (see Section 2). On the contrary, participants in online fictionalizations such as the one examined here are often brought together for/by this particular activity: they did not necessarily interact and/or belong to the same group before launching the fictionalization and/or after its termination. In other words, in oral fictionalizations, participants are brought together by activities from which the fictionalization emerges, but in online ones they may be brought together by the fictionalization itself. As a result, when the material used to build the scenario at hand (e.g. media reports, cultural references) seems to run out, the online fictionalization gradually fades away and the relevant webpages become inactive.

It appears that oral and online joint fictionalizations exhibit more structural similarities than differences, the latter stemming mostly from the different medium (i.e. face-to-face interaction vs online social networks). In the following Section, the analysis will concentrate on phase 3, that is, on how the imaginary scenario is constructed, placing particular emphasis on its humorous components.

Constructing Sifis the Cretan crocodile and his story 5.2

The analysis of the data from the Facebook communities shows that the unexpected events presented in Section 4 are treated and reframed as humorous by participants wishing to produce humorous posts or memes. In particular, humor emerges from the opposition between events which are considered "probable" and "conventional" in a specific context and events which actually occur but are more or less "improbable" and "unconventional". Hence the above mentioned events could be rephrased as the following humorous incongruities:

Incongruity 1: exotic dangerous animal/local pet with human qualities

The crocodile is an exotic dangerous animal brought to Crete, Greece from abroad/ Sifis the crocodile has male human attributes and originates in Crete.

Incongruity 2: remove from/keep in the lake

The best and safest solution (suggested by the authorities) is to remove the crocodile from the lake/the best solution (proposed by citizens) is to leave the crocodile in the lake.

Incongruity 3: captivity/freedom

The crocodile should be captured/should not be – and has not been – captured, besides several attempts by experienced specialists.

These incongruities form the basis for the humorous fictionalization built and supported by the participants in Facebook communities defending Sifis and his rights. The first one in particular is highlighted by the mere fact that *all* relevant Facebook pages are administered by people pretending⁷ to be Sifis the crocodile. Thus, the crocodile is not only personified as a local male individual, but also participates in online social networks and interacts with his fans. Moreover, Sifis speaks Greek (and sometimes the Cretan dialect) and refers to himself mostly using the first person

On overt pretense as a source of humor, see Dynel (this volume).

singular (and less often the third person singular). The following list includes the most common types of Sifis' posts, whether humorous or serious (see Section 2):

- hyperlinks to news articles, videoclips or images related to the story of Sifis or framed so as to become relevant to it (see Figures 2a, 3–4 below);
- texts (e.g. poems, memes), images (e.g. children's drawings) and comments sent to Sifis by his fans; they are often accompanied by a thank-you-for-your-support note from Sifis (see Figures 5–6 below);
- 3. phatic comments such as greetings, wishes, advice on various topics (e.g. καλημερα!!!!!!!! 'good morning!!!!!!!!', Σας έλειψα καθόλου; 'Did you miss me?', Μην τρομάζετε τα παιδιά. Την αλήθεια να τους λέτε, πάντα... 'Do not scare the children. Tell them the truth, always..., Χρόνια Πολλά σε όλα τα κροκοδειλάκια της παρέας... Καλά Χριστούγεννα 'Season's greetings to all the little crocodiles of the group... Merry Christmas');8
- 4. comments on Sifis' story as well as on other issues (e.g. politics, sports Όχι άλλα κροκοδείλια δάκρυα από τους πολιτικούς που οδήγησαν την Ελλάδα στο χείλος του γκρεμού... 'No more crocodile tears for the politicians who led Greece on the verge of disaster').

Such activities are indicative of Sifis' effort to inform the audience on recent developments concerning his case as well as to maintain the interest of his supporters via discussing a variety of topics with them. Needless to say, such actions are not typical of a crocodile but of a real person, who seeks to communicate with other people and to establish contact with them (see among others Das, 2010: 75; Georgalou, 2010: 47).

On the other hand, Sifis' fans respond to his status updates via:

- 1. sending their own comments on the relevant events as reported by the media, or on the other topics Sifis initiates (e.g. politics, sports);
- sending greetings, expressing their support, affection, admiration, and offering advice on how to escape captivity (see Figures 2b–2d below);
- uploading memes, hyperlinks (e.g. news articles concerning Sifis, videoclips with crocodiles or other animals from YouTube), photos with crocodiles, poems inspired by him, cartoons, jokes, and other humorous texts.

It is also worth noting in this context that Sifis' fans address him using the second person singular, as if the crocodile could actually read and reply to their contributions.

^{8.} The data was translated into English by the author for the purposes of the present study. The unconventional spelling of some Greek words has not been reproduced in the English translations. Square brackets include additional information for ease of understanding. The names and personal photos of commentators have been erased to protect their anonymity.

They refer to him using the third person singular only when an answer is not expected from him but from the other participants.

The following examples are illustrative. Figures 2a-2d come from the same thread of comments Sifis initiated by posting a news article on his status update (Herpetologist Olivier Behra is here for Sifis the crocodile, 2014; see Figure 2a) and referring to the arrival of the herpetologist and his collaboration with the local authorities in order to capture Sifis. Sifis offers a first comment wondering: $H\rho\theta\varepsilon$ o ερπετολόγος... Και τώρα; 'The herpetologist is here... What now?'. This thread of comments includes 48 responses from Sifis' fans. Here we will concentrate on 14 of them (Figures 2b-2d) which give us a representative snapshot of the fans' reactions to the news. Their analysis will attempt to show how such comments (re)produce and sustain the above-mentioned humorous incongruities.



Figure 2a. Sifis' post on the arrival of the herpetologist



Figure 2b. Comments 1–9



Figure 2c. Comments 10–12

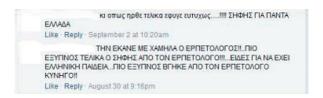


Figure 2d. Comments 13-14

Translation of comments 1-14:

- 'Hang on Sifis'.
- 2. 'what did the poor pet do to them???? it made the area famous!!! they should take advantage of this [i.e. the fame] and leave it [i.e. the poor pet] alone!!!!'
- 'THE HERPETOLOGIST WILL EAT THE CHICKEN [chickens were used as 3. baits to entice Sifis]'
- 'SIFIS IS NOT GOING ANYWHERE'
- 'poor Sifis what do they do to you dear... since the pet does not do any harm 5. why do you torture it! hang on'
- 'the herpetologist will get what he deserves!!!!!'
- 'rather Sifis will get... an exquisite meal: a famous herpetologist...' 7.
- 'what could the herpetologist do [?] Sifis is an important figure and did it again [i.e. he managed to escape]'
- 9. 'go hide Sifis...'
- 10. 'SIFIS YOU CAN DO IT... YOU CAN FIND THE HERPETOLOGIST!!!...9 GO ON AND ENJOY YOUR MEAL!!!'10
- 11. 'Poor [Sifis] I see you leaving Crete...!!!'
- 12. 'Sifis dear you don't need anybody you are a super crocodile... you are not afraid of anything and if he [i.e. the herpetologist] gets to you, eat a leg or a hand just for a change [i.e. instead of eating ducks and chickens all the time]... take care I love you very much...'
- 13. 'he [i.e. the herpetologist] left as he came [i.e. without taking Sifis with him] thank God ... !!!! SIFIS FOREVER IN GREECE'
- 14. 'THE HERPETOLOGIST RUN OFF!!... SIFIS [TURNED OUT TO BE] SMARTER THAN THE HERPETOLOGIST!!!... HE DID IT BECAUSE HE HAS BEEN RAISED [lit. educated] IN GREECE... HE OUTSMARTED THE HERPETOLOGIST HUNTER!!'

All the comments are in favor of the crocodile and against the herpetologist and the latter's effort to arrest Sifis. Some of them (comments 1, 5, 8–12) are encouraging Sifis to resist arrest and expressing sympathy and positive feelings towards him. Other comments constitute (more or less direct) threats against the herpetologist (comments 3, 6, 7, 10, 12) suggesting that Sifis could attack his adversary. Comments (13-14) expressly indicate the participants' satisfaction after the

^{9.} Σήφη μπορείς... τον ερπετολόγο να τον βρεις, here translated as 'Sifis you can do it... you can find the herpetologist', is a rhyming slogan with intertextual links to Greek football ones.

^{10.} Καλή χώνεψη, here translated as 'enjoy your meal', could be glossed as '[have a] good digestion'; it is a common wish among Greeks after an enjoyable meal.

herpetologist' failure to capture Sifis. All these comments evolve around the captivity/freedom incongruity (see Section 4).

Participants in the community also suggest that the crocodile is harmless, hence it should be kept in the lake (comments 2, 5, 11). It is interesting to note here that in order to highlight the benign nature of Sifis, participants use expressions such as (το κακόμοιρο) το ζωάκι '(the poor) pet' (comments 2, 5), καημένε 'poor' (comment 11), and the diminutive $\Sigma\eta\phi\dot{\alpha}\kappa\sigma$ 'Sifis dear, little Sifis' (comment 12). Other participants directly object to Sifis' removal from the lake (comments 4, 13). All such comments reproduce the remove from/stay in the lake incongruity, supporting the crocodile's right to remain where it currently lives despite fears for the safety of the inhabitants and the tourists in the area.

Finally, via addressing the crocodile in the second person singular (comments 1, 5, 9–12), via using address terms typical of human addressees ($\Sigma \dot{\eta} \phi \eta(\varsigma)$ 'Sifis' in comments 1, 5, 9; αρε Σήφη 'poor Sifis' and παιδάκι μου 'dear [lit. my little child]' in comment 5; καημένε 'poor' in comment 11), and generally via referring to him using his Cretan name (comments 1, 4, 5, 7-10, 12-14), participants contribute to the personification of the crocodile by attributing it human qualities it does not really have. They also employ various expressions which are typically used for humans such as μεγάλη μορφή 'important figure' (comment 8) and γίγαντας 'super [lit. giant]', να προσέχεις 'take care', σαγαπάω πολύ 'I love you very much' (comment 12), έξυπνος 'smart', and έχει ελληνική παιδεία 'has been raised [lit. educated] in Greece' (comment 14). Comment (14) also highlights the local -Greek- identity assigned to the crocodile even though crocodiles are not endemic to Greece. Thus, the exotic dangerous animal/local pet with human qualities incongruity becomes salient in these examples.

Besides comments, Sifis' fans upload photos of crocodiles which are (re)framed so as to refer specifically to him. In Figure 3, the photo of a crocodile standing on someone's door is accompanied by a $\mu\alpha\nu\tau\nu\alpha\delta\alpha$ 'mandinada', that is, an impromptu rhyming 15-syllable couplet in Cretan dialect, typical of the area. The poem on the status update goes:

'IT'S MEEEEE WHO'S KNOCKING ON YOUR DOOR, IT'S NOT A STRANGER... IT'S MEEEE SIFALIOO [i.e. Sifis] WHO HAS TRAVELED A LOT!!!!!'

In the poem, Sifis is once again personified (since he talks, knocks on people's doors, and travels a lot), refers to himself in the first person singular, and uses the local dialect (Sifalio is a popular diminutive for Sifis in Crete). Consequently, the crocodile in the photo is assumed to be Sifis asking to let him in, as he is not a stranger to them (he is a harmless friend), even though he has traveled a lot (i.e. he has come from abroad). The humorous framing of the post is signaled by the elongated vowels ($E\Gamma\Omega\Omega\Omega\Omega\Omega\Omega$ 'MEEEEE' instead of $E\Gamma\Omega$ 'ME', $\Sigma H\Phi IA\Lambda IOO$

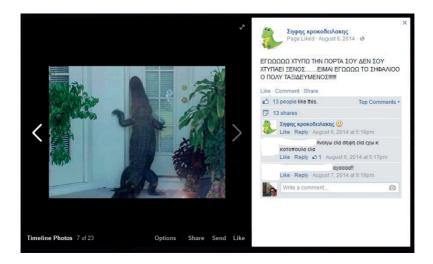


Figure 3. A reframed photo of a crocodile

Figures 4–6 are memes referring to Sifis and built around the same humorous incongruities. In Figure 4, Sifis says: 'Let's go to bed... early today. Tomorrow morning I have to fill in my tax return!', thus implying that Sifis is a Greek citizen who has lived in Crete/Greece for some time now and has income and property of his own (e.g. the lake). A talking and planning ahead crocodile with property and financial obligations towards the Greek state evokes the *exotic dangerous animal/local pet with human qualities* incongruity and enriches it with more (humorous) details.

Figure 5 shows Sifis as part of a fresco dating back to the Minoan civilization in Crete (approximately 2700–1450 BC). The legend says 'Detail of a Minoan fresco', thus suggesting that crocodiles have been on the island since prehistoric times – otherwise they would not have been painted as part of the local landscape. This comes in sharp contrast to the fact that crocodiles have never been endemic to Greece. This meme could be considered as a (humorous) argument in support of the wish expressed by the local people to keep Sifis in the lake, and hence is associated with the *remove from/stay in the lake* incongruity.



Figure 4. 'Let's go to bed... early today. Tomorrow morning I have to fill in my tax return!'



Figure 5. 'Detail of a Minoan fresco'

Finally, in Figure 6, Sifis is personified: he is pictured as a typical traditional Cretan male with a moustache, black boots, and a gun. 11 His assigned family name *Κροκοδειλάκης* 'Crocodilakis' is also used here: the ending -άκης '-akis' is most typical of Cretan surnames. Sifis challenges his addressees (e.g. local authorities, herpetologists) by using the local dialect to say 'If you dare, come to the lake!!!' and by making a challenging gesture with his right hand. Sifis' name, appearance, and verbal behavior directly point to his domestication: Sifis is one of "us, the

^{11.} The use of (mostly) illegal weapons is part of the stereotype surrounding the male inhabitants of Crete, especially in rural areas.

Cretan people". All three incongruities identified are relevant here, but the third one, captivity/freedom, is particularly salient, as Sifis invites the authorities and/or the herpetologists to come and get him, if they dare, and he appears to be ready to defend himself in a stereotypically Cretan manner (i.e. with a gun in his hand).

ΣΗΦΗΣ ΚΡΟΚΟΔΕΙΛΑΚΗΣ



ΑΝΕ ΣΑΣ ΕΒΑΣΤΑ. ΜΠΑΝΤΉΞΤΕ ΣΤΗ ΛΙΜΝΗ!!!

Figure 6. 'Sifis Crocodilakis: If you dare, come to the lake!!!'

In sum, the analysis of all these examples illustrates how participants in Facebook communities reproduce and enrich the incongruities originating in the news articles concerning Sifis, the Cretan crocodile, so as to construct their joint fictionalization. In their contributions, whether verbal comments, images, poems, or memes, they enact a fictional scenario involving the male, Cretan/Greek identity of the crocodile; his innocuous character, and hence participants' preference for keeping him in the lake; the crocodile's resistance against any attempts to capture him and simultaneously participants' expressed support for the animal's right to freedom.

Due to space limits, only a small part of the collected material was presented here. Nevertheless, I have tried to offer a representative description of how speakers participate in joint fictionalizations taking place in social network websites. It seems that humor underlies most of their contributions and keeps the interaction going even though participants may not necessarily be in the same place or may never meet offline.

Discussion and conclusions

[T]he potential for genre modification is inherent in every act of communication. [...] Significant and persistent modifications of genre rules that are widely adopted result in a modified genre. In some cases, these changes may be so extensive that they lead to the emergence of a new and modified genre (either one that is parallel with an existing genre or one that replaces a genre that has broken down).

(Yates & Orlikowski, 1992: 308)

Based on this observation, the present case study has attempted to show how an oral genre, namely joint fictionalization, occurring in face-to-face interactions among peers, mostly for entertainment purposes (see Section 2), has been transferred to online contexts and has subsequently been modified to adjust to the restrictions and affordances of the new medium. The emergence of a "modified", "parallel" genre has thus occurred, which maintains the four-part sequential structure of the original oral one (see Winchatz & Kozin, 2008 in Sections 2 and 5.1) and brings together participants whose main aim seems to be to contribute to the humorous fantasy under construction.

In its new, online form, joint fictionalization has also maintained its humorous and fictional quality, the open floor for any participant to contribute to the scenario, and the intertextual allusions to other media or cultural texts, which are reframed in the new environment. Such intertextual allusions are not, however, exclusively exploited for the creation of humorous effects. As the present analysis has demonstrated, participants use hyperlinks to inform the community on current events as well as to provoke interaction (see the lists including the various kinds of posts in Section 5.2; also Figures 2–3). Their interaction still evolves around the humorous incongruities of the imaginary scenario and simultaneously leads to interpretive consensus (Baym, 1995; see Section 3), namely the establishment and reinforcement of common perceptions and attitudes towards the alluded events.

More generally, the present case study has revealed that online fictionalization functions in parallel with "serious" texts reporting on the same real world events (e.g. news reports in the media). What emerges as an advantage of online joint fictionalizations - compared to "serious" news articles - is that the former allow for the publication of opinions and stances coming from speakers who cannot express themselves via mainstream, institutionalized media. What is worth noting in the present case is that the creation of Facebook communities supporting the crocodile eventually reached some of the news articles of mainstream media, so citizens' perspectives on what should happen with/to Sifis gained wider publicity (see Section 4).

The present study confirms earlier findings suggesting that online social networks constitute a space where participants can articulate their (serious or humorous) views on current issues as well as disseminate artifacts of everyday creativity (e.g. memes, poems, reframed photos; see among others Georgalou, 2010). Focusing on memes, my analysis underlines their intertextual links to social events (i.e. the news story of Sifis) and cultural features (e.g. the typical Cretan name Sifis and the use of the local dialect in Figures 3, 6; the mandinada poem in Figure 3; the allusion to Minoan frescos in Figure 5; the stereotypical representation of the crocodile as a traditional Cretan male in Figure 6). What is important in this context is that memes are not examined as separate, autonomous texts but as a basic ingredient of online joint fictionalizations. The humorous quality of (many) memes renders them compatible with the generic particularities of fictionalizations, hence memes are included as participants' contributions to the humorous scenario under construction, further reinforcing its incongruities. This perspective on memes complements their "autonomous" character as it emphasizes their positioning and function as integral parts of wider genres and communicative activities. Hence, the interpretation of their meaning(s) emerges via their interaction with other meanings proposed by comments, poems, etc. which are part of the same text/genre.

The comparison between oral and online fictionalizations confirms the significant similarities between oral and digital discourse, already attested in previous studies (see Baym, 1993; 1995; North, 2006: 219; 2007: 547; Vandergriff, 2010; Chovanec, 2012; Vandergriff & Fuchs, 2012 and references therein). Faced with new media and exploring new types of interaction and communicative activities, speakers draw on resources already familiar to them and combine them with various resources available in the new media (e.g. memes).

Sifis' popularity and speakers' participation in the respective online communities seem to gradually fade away, as he ceased to attract media attention (see Section 4). This development confirms the strong interdependence between humorous (online) fictionalizations and media texts providing the former with material to build upon (see Section 2). When news articles on Sifis were no longer published, community members had little (if not nothing) to talk about. North's (2007: 553; see Section 3) remark that there is no "companionable silence" in online communication is most relevant here: when interaction stops, the communities practically cease to function. Discourse is what keeps them alive, as it often is the only context speakers share.

The gradual fading of the interest in Sifis and his fan pages even before his death (at the end of March 2015; see Section 4) could probably indicate that by that time Sifis' presence in the Potami Dam lake was no longer a tellable event, that is, something local people perceived as unexpected and incongruous. As stated by an inhabitant in Sifis' neighborhood, "Sifis seems harmless to humans. I see him almost every day out of the dam and when he feels the presence of people, he flees terrified

and dives in the water" (Sifis the crocodile to be part of Epiphany celebration on Crete, 2015). Although Sifis the crocodile had come from abroad, he had become a local creature and part of the Cretan landscape, hence the initial incongruity of his presence seemed no longer incongruous. This development highlights the function of humor as a significant cohesive device among group members (see Section 3): when humorous incongruities uniting people lose their surprise quality, group members lose their interest in the group and the group eventually dissolves.

Needless to say, more research is required along these lines. The present study has brought to the fore (but not exhausted) issues such as the transformation of already existing genres into new ones, the ways social events are recontextualized in the social media, the production of (online) humorous texts as a result of participants' everyday creativity, the incorporation of such texts in larger genres, and the (online) construction of local identities and fictional characters. Humor appears to play a significant role in all these processes and activities, and it is this role that will hopefully attract the interest of future (humor) researchers. Furthermore, although research on humorous genres is not as popular as it could be (Attardo, 1994: 224; 2001: 23; Tsakona, 2017; see also Section 1), it emerges as a promising area of study which will allow us to further explore the contexts where humor surfaces and the forms it takes - that is, in GTVH terms, the "narrative strategies" of humor.

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On-line humorous representations of the 2015 Greek national elections

Acting and interacting about politics on social media

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The recent development of social media platforms has given rise to new forms of digital communication in which humor seems to play a prominent role. This chapter is concerned with humor in such a newly emerged, mediated genre, so-called *internet memes* (i.e. units of image, text, animation, and/or sound spread through the internet), focusing on the memes generated, disseminated, and commented upon on Facebook after the Greek national elections in January 2015. This chapter examines memes along with the responses posted by Facebook users, showing that, being humorous themselves, internet memes enact mimetic responses that are also humorous. This line of research aims to do justice to the interactional aspect of meme-based humor not previously acknowledged in the literature.

Keywords: political humor, internet memes, computer-mediated interaction, multimodality, General Theory of Verbal Humor, Greek national elections

1. Introduction

The advent of the internet and the rise of social media platforms in the recent years has radically changed existing modes of communication and has given rise to a number of new discursive practices. A new, proliferating area of linguistic inquiry has thus emerged under the umbrella term *computer-mediated communication* (CMC), also referred to as *technology-mediated communication* (TMC), to comprise any kind of communication mediated through technological devices, including tablets, mobile phones, etc. Research has shown that CMC/TMC features characteristics of both face-to-face and mass media communication, and lies between the private and the public spheres (Chovanec & Dynel, 2015: 6–10). As expected, humor, both in its verbal and non-verbal manifestation, could not be absent from this new

socio-cultural and communicative landscape. As Shifman notes (2007: 187), "the internet has become a major actor in the production and distribution of humor" in two ways; either it utilizes existing types of humor, such as jokes and home videos, or it gives rise to new ones by exploiting the three fundamental characteristics of the internet: interactivity, multimedia, and global reach. In this sense, "internet functions both as a 'carrier' of old humor types such as jokes and cartoons and as a 'generator' of new humor types" (Shifman, 2007: 187).

Such an exemplar of a new humor type is referred to as internet memes. As Shifman points out (2013: 362), "[i]n the vernacular discourse of netizens, the phrase 'internet meme' is commonly applied to describe the propagation of content items such as jokes, rumors, videos, or websites from one person to others via the internet". The present study is concerned with internet memes, specifically those that were created, circulated and commented upon on Facebook right after the Greek national elections in January 2015. The elections resulted in a coalition agreement between the left-wing Syriza ($\Sigma YPIZA$) and the right-wing Independent Greeks (*Ανεξάρτητοι Έλληνες*), thus succeeding the then-ruling conservative party New Democracy (Νέα Δημοκρατία) and its coalition partner, the Greek Socialist Party PASOK ($\Pi A \Sigma O K$). An event of enormous interest in both Greek and international politics and also a landmark in the contemporary history of Greece, not surprisingly the election results became the object of debating in the public and the private sphere; for the first time a left-wing party won the elections (although not reaching absolute majority) while major political parties and formerly powerful political figures were heavily defeated. Such debating was, as expected, afforded also in CMC/TMC, and humor was used as a means of constructing and negotiating public discourse on the election results. The present study aims to shed some light on how internet memes and the new discursive practices they involve give rise to new forms of interactive humor enabling language users to (re)construct humorous representations of political reality.

As Tsakona & Popa (2013: 2) point out in relation to political humor, "internet memes is one of the most popular and worth-examining genres". However, it is only recently that internet memes have attracted attention, with most research stemming from communication and media studies. Although much of this work draws on semiotics, discourse analysis, and critical discourse analysis, as Dainas admits (2015: 2), "very little work has been done in the linguistics of memes". Previous research (discussed in detail in Section 2) has aimed to do justice to the role of humor (especially political humor) in this new form of digital communication. However, there is an aspect of internet memes that has not been adequately addressed in the literature, relating to the commentary that follows every meme in social media networks (see also Tsakona, this volume). Internet memes seem to exploit all the characteristics of the internet: global reach in that they are made public and

accessible to anyone having access to a particular social media platform; multimedia in that they make use of different modalities, including text, image, sound, and/or animation; and, last, but not least, interactivity, understood as a process of reciprocal communication between a speaker and a hearer. Interactivity seems to have important implications for online humor as it "allows users to 'participate' in the joke telling process" (Shifman, 2007: 204). In this sense, online humor resembles more the traditional oral condition of joke-telling than the experience of reading a scripted humorous text.

The present study aims to address the hitherto neglected interactive aspect of meme-based humor by examining the internet memes of the Greek national elections in January 2015 in combination with the responses produced on them by Facebook users. The proposed analysis will show that such responses actually mimic the humorous stance of internet memes, as well as their content and, less often, their form (see Section 3). Therefore, humor generated in, and by, internet memes will be viewed as online, political, multimodal, and interactive. Unlike face-to-face interactions (see Norrick & Chiaro, 2009), however, in mediated interactions participants may have not interacted directly or may not interact again. Nevertheless, the use of humor allows for sharing some common attitudes and values and for building rapport, thus giving rise to so-called "ambient affiliation" (Zappavigna, 2012). Given the above, this study adds to the existing literature on humor in online interaction, suggesting that online political humor serves as a means of political critique that enacts particular stances toward politics, as well as a tool for establishing social bonding. In this sense, it aims to do justice to humor "both as a discoursal device and a sociolinguistic phenomenon" (Chovanec & Ermida, 2012: 1).

In theoretical terms, finally, the analysis will draw on the General Theory of Verbal Humor (Attardo, 1994; 2001), as well as on accounts of multimodal humor (Tsakona, 2009), aiming to explain how humor is used in the everyday interactions afforded in Facebook's "participation framework" (Chovanec & Dynel, 2015: 1). However, the particular genre in which humor is instantiated in the data under examination necessitates complementing linguistic theories of humor with a typology of internet memes derived from media and communication studies (Shifman, 2013). The theoretical framework of the study is developed in Section 3. In the next section, an attempt is made to sketch previous research on internet memes and political humor.

2. Internet memes and political humor

Historically, the term *meme* was coined by the evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins in his seminal book *The selfish gene* (1976), after the Ancient Greek word $\mu i \mu \eta \mu \alpha$ 'something that is imitated'. It was meant to refer to any cultural unit, be it a slogan, a clothing fashion or a concept (such as God), which, similarly to genes, is spread from person to person through replication or imitation. For Dawkins, only memes that can adjust to their sociocultural environment will be able to spread successfully; all others will be extinct. Aiming to explain cultural evolution, Dawkins thus initiated a whole new field, so-called *mimetics*, which is concerned with the study of the replication, spread and evolution of memes (Shifman, 2013: 363).

In the digital era, the term meme has proved particularly useful as the internet has rendered the dissemination of information highly quick and efficient on a global scale. According to Shifman (2013: 367), internet memes are "units of popular culture that are circulated, imitated, and transformed by internet users, creating a shared cultural experience". As Tsakona & Popa note (2013: 2), "[m]emes include images, videos, audios, or hyperlinks with humorous content, which are created by individuals with online access and easy-to-use software". In this sense, as Shifman points out (2014), the internet meme condenses the essence of Web 2.0 interactivity. Any internet user can create a meme on a meme-generating site and then share it through social media sites, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc., all of them enabling the exponential replication and dissemination of memes (Du Preez & Lombard, 2014). Moreover, although any internet meme may spread in its original form, its mimetic potential is also likely to initiate user-generated derivatives (Shifman, 2013: 362). At the same time, most text types in CMC/TMC transcend the two-participant model of interaction and thus afford "new participatory privileges" (Chovanec & Dynel, 2015: 7): recipients can participate and communicate both with each other and with the producers, thereby shifting from passive receivers to dynamic co-creators. This also holds for internet memes, which now play a key role in public discourse and digital participation. Wiggins & Bowers (2014), for example, consider internet memes to be artefacts of participatory digital culture, while Milner (2013b) talks about the "polyvocal citizenship" that is enacted by mimetic participatory media. Politics, therefore, could not remain intact from the advent and spread of internet memes; as Adegoju & Oyebode (2015) note, politically-oriented internet memes are multimodal artefacts of political communication.

Humor, in particular, seems to be a key feature of internet memes, as acknowledged in Tsakona & Popa's definition above (2013: 2) and also noted by a number of scholars (see among others Knobel & Lankshear, 2007; Shifman 2011). Dainas (2015: 59) comes even to conclude that "memes are a genre of humor and creativity that allow a fascinating dialogue between creators and viewers in which language

and meaning are constantly evolving". Even if one would rather not adhere to such a narrow definition, it would be hard to deny Milner's (2013b: 2359) claim that "[t]he predominant purpose of image memes on these sites is satirical humor for public commentary". In his view, humor in internet memes is part of what he calls, following Burgress (2007), the "vernacular creativity" of participatory media, including image memes, videos, and trending topics that are produced, circulated, and transformed outside traditional media. Milner (2013b: 2365) views humor on social media as an "expression of citizenship" that aims to challenge the authority of what is traditionally perceived as political discourse. Although the present study does not aim to address such implications in terms of so-called digital democracy and netizenship, it certainly endorses the view that internet memes and, in particular, their humor are appropriated for the construction of in-group identity (Adegoju & Oyebode, 2015).

The present study builds, and elaborates, on previous research on internet memes, the most comprehensive being, at least to date, that of Shifman (2011; 2013). Shifman (2011) examines a corpus of 30 prominent mimetic videos on YouTube in order to explain the exponential popularity of mimicking in digital communication. Through a qualitative and quantitative analysis, she identifies six features that are commonly shared in all 30 and highly diversified videos, with humor being one of them along with whimsical content, among others. In her next study, Shifman (2013) again stresses the common characteristics of internet memes but this time she aims to propose a communication-oriented typology. On the grounds of the video meme "Leave Britney alone", she analyzes internet memes in terms of three mimetic dimensions: form, content, and stance (see Section 3). She thus shows that internet memes are not single units that are amenable to being easily (re)produced and spread, but groups of units that are created with common features and with awareness of each other. Building on Shifman's typology (2013), and drawing on Conceptual Blending Theory (Fauconnier & Turner, 2002), Dainas (2015) examines the "Keep Calm and Carry On" internet meme and its user-generated parodies, confirming that they are formed and understood in fairly predictable ways.

Similarly to this chapter, much research has been concerned with internet memes of political content, that is, memes related to political events and socio-political issues, with humor often playing a prominent role in how such memes are constructed and understood. Using multimodal critical discourse analysis, Milner (2013a) looks at the internet memes that were produced during the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement. Derived from different social media networks, such memes enabled interaction among different positions on OWS, which were therefore interwoven into what he calls "a vibrant polyvocal public discourse" (Milner, 2013a: 2357). Drawing on critical discourse analysis, as well as on multimodal discourse analysis and social semiotics, Chandler (2013) focuses on the ideological elements of the First World Problems (FWP) and Third World Success

(TWS) internet memes. Chandler's thesis is that such memes serve to discursively construct binary dichotomies between us and them (e.g. white/black, individualism/collectivism, consumption/lack of food). More relevant to the present study is the work of Adegoju & Oyebode (2015) on the humorous internet memes that relate to the presidential election campaign in Nigeria in 2015. The authors suggest that the political humor afforded in such memes, both visual and verbal, serves as an identity construction tool targeting an out-group while reinforcing the in-group. ¹ Finally, although online political humor is generally considered "harmless" and "playful", hence unable to generate political change (see Tsakona & Popa, 2011; 2013), Chen (2013) has shown how internet memes enabled the empowerment of ordinary people in Singapore when protesting against the incompetence of a public transport provider, which resulted in the resignation of the Chief Executive Officer. Therefore, political humor can occasionally become a powerful tool of criticism and an efficient means of change.

As already noted in Section 1, the post-election internet memes under examination exemplify a case of multimodal political humor. Following Shifman (2011), I suggest that they manifest three key features in defining humor: playfulness (i.e. readers are invited not to take the content seriously), incongruity (i.e. humor results from two opposing scripts), and superiority (i.e. the user perceives him/herself as superior). Such features warrant the use of the GTVH as an appropriate framework for the analysis of humorous post-election memes. Although most of the research on internet memes, as outlined in this section, is concerned with humor, interestingly, and to the best of my knowledge, no attempt has been made to analyze memes using the GTVH; a plausible explanation for this could be that most of these studies are derived from communication and media studies rather than linguistics. In the following section, the theoretical framework of the study will be presented including the GTVH as modified by Tsakona (2009) to account for multimodal humor and Shifman's (2013) typology of internet memes.

The theoretical framework

Building on Raskin's Semantic Script Theory of Humor (1985), Attardo (1994; 2001) developed a full-fledged theory for the analysis of verbal humor, known as the GTVH. The gist of the theory, both in its initial conception and in its subsequent refinement, is that for a text to be humorous it must be compatible (fully or

However, it has been shown that even internet memes that are "keyed as utterly serious" (Gal et al., 2013: 14) can also serve as a tool for collective identity construction, for instance, for the LGBTQ community.

partially) with two scripts that are opposed to each other while they maintain a partial overlap. Such *script opposition*, as it is dubbed, yields the incongruity that is responsible for the humorous effect. Script opposition is considered a necessary precondition of humor and one of the knowledge resources (hereafter KRs) used for the analysis of humorous texts, the other ones being *logical mechanism*, *situation*, target, narrative strategy, and language. Specifically, the KRs are outlined by Attardo (1994: 222-226) as follows:

- script opposition (SO), as mentioned above, refers to the clash between the two scripts that are activated by lexical information in the humorous text. Raskin (1985) identifies three types of script opposition, namely "actual/non-actual", "normal/abnormal", and "possible/impossible", all of them giving rise to the surprise effect included in any humorous text;
- b. *logical mechanism* (LM) accounts for the way in which the two opposing scripts are brought together (e.g. analogy, exaggeration); it is the distorted and playful logic that does not hold outside the world of the joke. Like the script opposition, the logical mechanism also bears a level of abstractness;
- c. situation (SI) includes the objects, participants, activities, places, etc. involved in the humorous text. As Attardo points out (1994: 25), "[a]ny joke must have some situation, although some jokes will rely more on it, while others will almost entirely ignore it";
- target (TA) involves the butt of the joke, whether this is a person, a group or an institution. The target in the GTVH accounts for the aggressiveness that is inherent to humor;
- narrative strategy (NS) is concerned with the organization of the text in which the humorous message occurs (such as a narrative, a dialogue, a riddle, a cartoon), that is, the genre of the humorous text; and
- language (LA) concerns the verbalization of the joke, that is, the exact wording of the humorous text and the placement of the functional elements that constitute it (cf. Antonopoulou & Nikiforidou, 2009 for criticism).

Initially, the unit of the analysis of humor was the *punch line*, namely the final line of the joke that brings about a surprise effect. In order to account for text types other than canned jokes, Attardo (2001: 29) introduced jab lines as an additional analytical unit. Jab lines are also humorous elements, yet they differ from punch lines in terms of textual position and function; they can appear at any point in the text, hence they do not disrupt its flow. More recently, research in the GTVH has attempted to also account for humorous texts that combine different semiotic modes (i.e. verbal and visual); in other words, multimodal humor. In her analysis of cartoons, Tsakona (2009: 1175) has suggested that the Language KR needs to be elaborated accordingly to explain how the verbal and visual modes interact

in multimodal humorous texts. As she points out, "the Language KR, which is responsible for the encoding of humor, should also account for the visual effects causing the script opposition and its resolution" (Tsakona, 2009: 1185). Similarly to cartoons, humor in internet memes can involve both modes (memes 1, 3 and 4 in Section 5) or only the visual one (meme 2 in Section 5), thereby suggesting that the picture is not just an illustration of the verbal joke but is rather essential in the humorous effect.

For the analysis of the humorous effect of post-election internet memes the present study adopts the framework of the GTVH, more specifically in Tsakona's (2009) modification for multimodal humor. At the same time, any attempt to analyze meme-based humor needs to take into account the particular features of internet memes, namely the three dimensions that constitute them and which people can potentially imitate (Shifman, 2013: 367): content, form, and stance. Content refers to the ideas and the ideologies conveyed by memes while form relates to the encoding of the message, including image, text, sound, animation, etc. Last but not least, stance, which is the most communication-related dimension, involves the ways in which producers position themselves in relation to the text, its linguistic codes, the reader/hearer, and other potential speakers. For Shifman, all dimensions of internet memes are potentially mimetic in that users can choose to imitate the content, the form or the stance of the meme. This idea will be particularly useful when analyzing the interactive dimension of the internet memes under examination, that is, the responses to each meme. In particular, the analysis aims to show that readers more often than not respond to the humorous internet memes in a humorous way. Such responsive humor, I argue, functions mimetically by imitating one of the dimensions of the meme; usually the producer's stance but also its content and occasionally its form. In the case of the Greek post-election memes, the producer's stance relates to the communicative intention of humor, while the form refers to the choice of the meme's semiotic mode(s), and the content to the ideological standpoint of the producer (e.g. criticizing a particular politician).

Following Chovanec & Dynel (2015: 7), such audience participation is distinguished into three types: recipient-to-recipient (where the original author is not involved); recipient-to-producer; and recipient-to-producer-to-recipient, whereby the recipient attains the status of a (co-)author. The proposed analysis, finally, will show that the humor afforded in such interactions is both *subversive* and *reinforcing* (see Archakis & Tsakona, 2005 and references therein); it aims to offer a critique of political reality, while it serves as a tool for establishing social bonding in the virtual community of Facebook.

The data

The data were collected right after the national elections that took place in Greece on January 25, 2015 (January 25–27) from the author's Facebook account. Although they cannot be considered representative of all the humorous mediated public discourse about the election outcome, they allow us to get an idea of the political memes created and circulated at that time. The data seem to revolve around particular political figures and the ideologies they represent, which can therefore be considered as the targets of the humor; such figures include the former PM Antonis Samaras and his successor Alexis Tsipras, as well as former PM and leader of PASOK George Papandreou. Contentwise, the collected data point to the political polarization of the time, related to a major change in Greek politics (see Section 1). In total, 11 internet memes were collected, 10 of which are multimodal (i.e. comprising both image and text) and one is monomodal/image-only (Meme 2 in Section 5), all of them often being followed by a caption. Responses to the memes in the corpus range from 2 to 42, with the mean average being about 15. In the following section, 4 memes are analyzed along with the responses they trigger. In choosing these particular memes, two criteria were implemented: (a) the diversity of the modes used (in order to include both monomodal and multimodal memes); and (b) memes eliciting at least 10 responses to ensure that they initiated a significant amount of interaction.

The analysis of the data

The first meme depicts ballot paper of New Democracy being used as toilet paper. As shown below, it is also followed by a comment by the producer of the meme (notably a Facebook page rather than an individual user) that further clarifies the content of the meme; former MP with New Democracy Sofia Voultepsi had made a claim in a TV show a few days before the elections that, if Syriza wins the elections, the country will run short of basic goods, including toilet paper, and she urged people to be supplied with an adequate stock. The caption is explicitly sarcastic (Κανένα πρόβλημα 'No problem'), thereby further pointing to the humorous stance of the meme:²

^{2.} Although one could argue that the caption is part of the meme in that it aligns with its content and stance (as is certainly the case here), I choose not to follow this line of argumentation for two reasons: (a) the text is not contained in the meme but rather comes after, therefore it is not an integral part of the form of the meme (that is, of one of the three dimensions of internet memes as discussed in the previous section); and (b) the meme can still be interpreted without resorting to the caption that follows after.



Figure 1. Ballot paper of New Democracy used as toilet paper (Και έλεγε η Κα Βούλτεψη ότι θα υπάρχει έλλειψη στο χαρτί υγείας... Κανένα πρόβλημα.... 'Mrs. Voultepsi was saying that there will be shortage of toilet paper... No problem...')

The meme offers a humorous solution to the alleged shortage of toilet paper by representing the unused ballot paper of New Democracy as toilet paper. More inferences arise from this humorous representation; there is enough toilet paper for people to use since there is a lot of ballot paper remaining from the elections, meaning that many people did not vote for New Democracy; no reason to worry about shortage of toilet paper since unused ballot paper of New Democracy can offer a solution to the problem; New Democracy ballot paper is worthless/crap, etc. Apparently, all evaluative connotations are negative and therefore the content of the meme relates to criticism of New Democracy for its pre-election campaign discourse and to some kind of satisfaction over its defeat. Moreover, in terms of form, the meme in Figure 1 is what Shifman (2007: 198) calls a "maniphoto", that is, "an explicitly manipulated photograph that is usually combined with other visual forms". Like all new forms of humor, maniphotos can be easily created with the use of technological tools such as Photoshop. However, unlike funny photos (i.e. any photograph that conveys a humorous message, often accompanied by a funny written text), maniphotos have to be immediately recognized as the product of digital manipulation. Finally, the stance of the meme is clearly humorous; the producer has a sarcastic tone (also noted in the caption, as mentioned above) and thus invites the reader to interpret the meme in a humorous way.

Specifically, the humorous effect in (1) results from the clear opposition between two scripts. In our 'normal' script, ballot paper is destined to be used for voting while toilet paper is expected to be used for hygiene purposes (see the Script Opposition KR below). However, through analogy (which thus serves as the Logical Mechanism KR) the remaining ballot paper is now used in an 'abnormal' script for toilet purposes. The ballot paper and the toilet paper blended together, through Photoshop, to stand as one entity constitute the Situation KR of the humorous message, while the Target KR relates to criticism against New Democracy for propagating fearful scenarios in its pre-election discourse. Like in all the data under examination, the Narrative Strategy KR is that of an internet meme. In terms of the Language KR, finally, the meme makes use of both modes; the visual and the verbal, the latter being part of the toilet/ballot paper blend in the maniphoto.

SO: normal/abnormal; ballot and toilet paper conventionally used for different purposes/unused ballot paper used as toilet paper

LM: analogy

SI: New Democracy unused ballot paper used as toilet paper; a toilet

TA: the fearful scenarios in the pre-election campaign discourse of New Democracy

NS: internet meme

LA: maniphoto blending ballot/toilet paper and text contained therein

Published on a public Facebook page, meme (1) recruited 13 responses,³ as shown below:

- (1.1)User 1 Σιγά μην σκουπιστώ με αυτή την βρωμιά !!!! 'No way I clean myself with this dirty thing!!!!'
- (1.2)User 2 Αξίζει, όμως, να το κάνουμε πράξη κυριολεκτικώς. Να μην πάει το ψηφοδέλτιο χαμένο (ειδικά τώρα που η Κα Βούλτεψη έχει απορροφήσει όλο το χαρτί υγείας της ανοράς)... 'It's worth, however, doing this literally so that the ballot paper doesn't get wasted (especially now that Mrs Voultepsi has taken all the toilet paper available
- (1.3)User 3 XAXAXAXAXAXAXA 'нананананана'

in the market)...'

For each meme, the total number of responses is given, however only the responses that are analyzed are cited; those responses that are deemed irrelevant are omitted. Responses are presented in the order in which they were posted while maintaining the spelling and orthographic conventions of the original text. For the purposes of data protection any personal information, such as Facebook users' names, has been removed; the term 'user' is preferred over that of 'recipient' or 'addressee' since recipients may also act as authors, as shown in the data. In the analysis, I refer either to the example using its number (e.g. 1.3) or directly to the user (e.g. User 3).

User 4 Χαχαχαχα πάντα άξιοι. (1.4)'Hahahaha let them be always worthy like that.' Σκεφτηκατε ποτε εσεις που ειστε ολοι Ελληνες οτι ο (1.5)User 5 πραγματικός Ελληνάς ξερεί να σεβεται να τίμα και να εκφραζεται με ευπρεπεια για τους αντιπαλους του; Αυτο επιβαλλει ο πολιτισμος . Και μαλιστα οταν ξερουμε οτι ολοι τους στο ιδιο καζανι βραζουν. 'Have you ever thought, you all Greeks, that a true Greek knows how to respect, honor and rightfully express himself about his rivals? This is what civilization mandates. Even more when knowing that they [all the political parties] are in the same boat.' Υπάρχει και της Β' Αθηνών; (1.6)User 7 'Is there any [toilet paper] from the 2nd constituency of Athens as well?' (1.7)User 8 Και πάλι πολύ τους πάει 'They are not worthy of even that' (1.8)User 9 xaxaxaxaxaXAXAAX 'hahahahahaHAHAAH' (1.9)User 10 Ευτυχώς που το άκουσα και σήμερα μάζευα τα ψηφοδέλτια της νδ απο τα εκλογικά κέντρα για να μη μείνω απο χαρτί. 'Luckily I heard about it and today I collected all the ballot paper of New Democracy from the polling stations, so I won't run out of [toilet] paper.' (1.10) User 11 χαχαχα 'hahaha' (1.11) **User 12** χαχαχαχαχα 'hahahahaha' (1.12)User 13 ⊙ ⊙

First of all, what can be observed is that the responses of Facebook users form what Chovanec & Dynel (2015: 7) call a "recipient-to-producer" interaction, with all readers responding to the producer of the meme rather than to other recipients or to both other recipients and the producer. This is only one of the participation frameworks that can be afforded on Facebook. Turning now to the responses themselves, it seems that 5 out of the 13 responses to meme (1) contain an explicit indication of laughter, expressed through 'haha' ($\chi\alpha\chi\alpha$) as is conventionally the case in CMC/TMC (Users 3, 4, 9, 11 and 12). Given that CMC/TMC often resembles an "oralized written text" (Yus, 2011: xiii; see also Yus, this volume), such expression of laughter bears also a high oral quality in the form of repetition of letters (Users 3, 9 and 12) and capitalization (Users 3 and 9). The use of smileys in the last response (User 13) serves as yet another means of expressing agreement and building affiliation, again using the affordances of orality in CMC/TMC (Yus, 2011: 118). Although it is not surprising that recipients respond to a humorous message with laughter as this is the default reaction to humor, I suggest that such responses actually mimetically replicate the stance of

the meme, that is, the communicative intention of its creators to position themselves in a humorous way and to invite recipients to interpret their artefact accordingly.

In addition to laughter, sarcasm is instantiated in all other responses (apart from Users 5 and 13; see below). Sarcasm is viewed here as one of the many manifestations of humor, which essentially amounts to "an overtly aggressive type of irony, with clearer markers/cues and a clear target" (Attardo, 2000: 795). For example, User 1 finds it appalling using the remaining ballot paper for even such a purpose ($\Sigma i \gamma \dot{\alpha} \mu \eta \nu$ σκουπιστώ με αυτή την βρωμιά!!!! 'No way I clean myself with this dirty thing!!!!'). The expression of sarcasm can actually be combined with that of laughter, as is the case in User 4 (Χαχαχαχα πάντα άξιοι 'Hahahaha let them be always worthy like that') whereby the wish $\pi \dot{\alpha} v \tau \alpha \dot{\alpha} \xi \iota o \iota$, commonly used in the Greek context to praise someone for an accomplishment, is ironically uttered, with irony targeting New Democracy being unambiguous here in that it follows after an explicit manifestation of laughter. A rhetorical question is another way of expressing sarcasm; since the ballot paper depicted in the meme belongs to the 1st constituency of Athens, User 7 sarcastically wonders whether there is any left over from another electoral district (Υπάρχει και της Β' Αθηνών; 'Is there any [toilet paper] from the 2nd constituency of Athens as well?').

Such responses, I wish to argue, imitate not only the stance of the meme (i.e. humorous) but also its content (i.e. criticism to New Democracy and satisfaction over its defeat in the elections), which they comment on in different ways. This is perhaps most clearly evidenced in User's 2 post, which interprets the content of the meme literally (Αξίζει, όμως, να το κάνουμε πράξη κυριολεκτικώς... 'It's worth, however, doing this literally...'). In fact, all such posts instantiate responsive humor in that they constitute an explicit reaction to a humorous message. As Baym (1995: 9) pointed out in one of the first accounts of humor in CMC/TMC, "humor is an important way in which participants connect to one another and create the group's social environment". However, there is one response, that of User 5, that stands as an outlier, apparently denying the humor of the meme and contesting its content (ο πραγματικος Ελληνας ξερει να σεβεται να τιμα και να εκφραζεται με ευπρεπεια για τους αντιπαλους του 'a true Greek knows how to respect, honor and rightfully express himself about his rivals'). Whether this derives from expressing a superior moral stance (the user perceiving the message as humorous and yet deciding to disassociate from it) or from a case of misunderstanding of humor (see Brône, 2008), this post suggests that, as expected, the mimetic potential of internet memes is not all-powerful; it is up to each individual user whether to contribute to cultural transmission or not. The user who remains neutral or hostile towards the meme identifies him/herself as an out-group.

^{4.} Following Attardo (2000), I take sarcasm and irony as referring to essentially the same phenomenon, having only superficial differences.

Again published in a public Facebook page, with the author not being identified, the meme in Figure 2 is another instance of post-election humor. However, it differs from the others in that it is the unique instance of an image-only meme:



Figure 2. Former PM Antonis Samaras leaving the office of the PM while carrying a cupboard with official documents and supplies of toilet paper (Το μόνο που δεν πήρε μαζί του ήταν η αξιοπρέπεια. Γιατί δεν είχε, δεν έχει και δε θα αποκτήσει . 'The only thing he didn't take with him is his dignity. Because he didn't and doesn't have dignity and never will he acquire any'.)

The meme in (2) is also a maniphoto, representing the former PM and then leader of New Democracy Antonis Samaras leaving the governmental office, located in the so-called Maximos Mansion, while carrying a cupboard with official documents and a bag with toilet paper. After his defeat in the elections, it became publicly known that Samaras was not present to pass on the torch to the newly elected PM Alexis Tsipras, while rumor had it that the drawers in the office were found empty and no soap was left in the restroom. This, along with the fearful scenarios for toilet paper shortage (see Figure 1), forms the background context of meme (2), clearly aiming to criticize Samaras' inappropriate, rather contemptuous attitude while leaving the governmental office (see the Target KR below). This is further exemplified in the accompanying caption of the meme, accusing Samaras of lack of dignity ($To \mu \dot{o} vo \pi ov \delta \epsilon v \pi \dot{\eta} \rho \epsilon \mu \alpha \zeta i \tau ov \dot{\eta} \tau \alpha v \eta \alpha \xi \iota o\pi \rho \dot{\epsilon} \pi \epsilon \iota \alpha$ 'The only thing he didn't take with him is his dignity'). For the humorous effect to arise in (2), our expectations for a former PM leaving the governmental office are subverted. To put it in GTVH terms, the picture in (2) is incongruous with our 'normal' script for

PMs leaving their office (see the Script Opposition KR). As shown in the analysis of (2) below, the two scripts are brought together through the logical mechanism of exaggeration; the image of a former PM evacuating the governmental office is clearly exaggerated as suggested by the objects in the Situation of the joke, namely a cupboard of official documents and supplies of toilet paper for the fear of shortage. Finally, the Language KR contains only a pictorial component, namely a maniphoto of a heaver with the face of Samaras.

SO: normal/abnormal; former PM handing over the governmental office to his/ her successor/former PM taking official documents and toilet paper with him while leaving the governmental office

LM: exaggeration

SI: former PM and leader of New Democracy Antonis Samaras; a cupboard with official documents; supplies of toilet paper

TA: the inappropriate, rather contemptuous attitude of Antonis Samaras while leaving the office of PM

NS: internet meme

LA: maniphoto of former PM carrying official documents and toilet paper

Turning now to the interaction initiated by the meme on Facebook, this meme elicited in total 10 responses, as shown below:

(2.1)User 1 χαιρετισματα στον αγ.πετρο 'greetings to Saint Peter'



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(2.2)
      User 2 Να μην ξεχασει να γραφτει στον ΟΑΕΔ μη χασει το
                επιδομα του Γεναρη!!!
               'He'd rather not forget to subscribe to the MUE [the
               Manpower Employment Organization] so that he won't
               miss the January allowance'
(2.3)
      User 3 ρε τον μαλακα!!
               'what an asshole!!'
      User 4 ΑΥΤΌΣ ΠΗΡΕ ΚΑΙ ΤΑ ΧΑΡΤΊΑ ΥΓΕΊΑΣ, ΓΙ'ΑΥΤΌ ΔΕΝ ΕΧΕΊ ΣΤΗΝ
(2.4)
               AFOPA?
                'HE TOOK THE TOILET PAPER AS WELL, THAT'S WHY THERE'S
               NO PAPER AVAILABLE?'
(2.5)
      User 5 Ο έλλειψη αξιοπρέπειας, προσπαθούσε να μας πείσει ότι
               "Λέμε την αλήθεια"
                'The "no dignity" guy was trying to convince us that
                "We are telling the truth"'
(2.6)
      User 6 ΣΤΩΝ ΑΓΥΡΙΣΤΟ !!!!!!! MAZI ME TH ΠΑΡΈΑ ΣΟΥ !!!!!
               'GO TO HELL !!!!!!! YOU AND YOUR COMPANY !!!!!'
(2.7) User 7 efyge opos kubernouse... ap ti piso porta<sup>5</sup>
               'he left just like he was governing... from the back door'
(2.8) User 9 Χαχαχαχαχα
               'Hahahahaha'
(2.9) User 10 ΣΤΑ ΤΣΑΚΙΔΙΑ
                'GO TO HELL'
```

The responses to Figure 2 play along with its humor either by expressing laughter (User 9) or by being sarcastic (Users 1, 2, 4 and 7); in this sense, the responses in (2), like in (1), mimic the humorous stance of the meme and also its content pertaining to Samaras' lack of dignity in the handover of power. It is noteworthy, however, that the responses in (2), unlike (1), instantiate aggressive humor with the use of vulgar language and swearing (Users 3, 6 and 10). Again, standard features of CMC/TMC are attested in the responses, such as capitalization (users 4, 6 and 10), punctuation (users 2, 3 and 6) and Greeklish (User 7), thus pointing to the oral quality of the humorous interaction. However, in (2), not only do the responses mimic the content and the stance of the meme (as was the case in the previous meme) but also its form; User 1, apart from the written text, posts also a picture, namely a maniphoto depicting Samaras and Venizelos (the then leader of PASOK) in a coffin. A case of visual metaphor (see Forceville, 2008), the picture conveys the "political death" of the once powerful politicians after the defeating results of the elections. The written text in his/her response further underlies, sarcastically, the meaning of the visual metaphor by making reference to St. Peter, known in the Christian tradition

^{5.} Some turns, like the one here, are written in so-called Greeklish, the latter referring to the use of the Latin alphabet when typing and/or texting in technology-mediated interactions in Greek, a practice that has recently become quite wide-spread, especially among young language users.

for serving as the gatekeeper of Heaven (χαιρετισματα στον αγ.πετρο 'greetings to Saint Peter'). Although uniquely attested in the data under examination (probably because it is more time-consuming and technically demanding to create and/or upload a maniphoto compared to typing text), such a response is significant, suggesting that Facebook users can imitate not only the meme's stance and content, as is the case with all other responses, but also its form (i.e. a maniphoto).

Finally, in terms of the type of interaction instantiated in (2), this is again a recipientto-producer framework. Since there is no indication in the data examined so far that the recipients know each other and given that the producer of the two memes is unknown (both memes were posted on a public Facebook page), we can quite safely assume that humor in this case gives rise to so-called "ambient affiliation" (Zappavigna, 2012: 152). Participants may not have interacted directly or may not interact again; nevertheless, through the use of humor they share common attitudes and values, thus building in-group identity.

The next meme contains both a pictorial and a verbal component, depicting George Papandreou after voting. Papandreou was the former leader of PASOK, the socialist party that was founded by his father, Andreas Papandreou, and at that time he had just created a new political party, the Movement of Democratic Socialists (Κίνημα Δημοκρατών Σοσιαλιστών). In the picture Papandreou is portrayed crying, while the punch line in the meme suggests that he accidentally voted for PASOK rather than for his newly founded party. The accompanying caption further ridicules Papandreou with an aggressive sarcastic comment (βλαμμένος 'idiot'), as shown below:



Figure 3. George Papandreou crying for accidentally voting for the wrong party (- 'George, why're you crying? - I accidentally voted for PASOK.' Βλαμμένος ως το τέλος. 'Idiot until the end'.)

For the humorous effect in Figure 3 to arise, both the verbal and the visual components of the meme are involved, thus enacting an interaction between different semiotic modes. The question in the text activates our 'normal' script about what could make a politician be emotionally challenged (e.g. a natural disaster), taking also into account that it is not common for politicians to express their feelings openly. However, the punch line contradicts our expectations; a politician voting for a party other than his/hers is an 'abnormal' scenario (see the Script Opposition KR below). The two scripts are brought together through exaggeration, clearly exemplified in the picture (see the Logical mechanism KR below). Finally, the Target KR of the meme is evidently George Papandreou and his move to create his own party while he and his family have been identified with PASOK.

SO: normal/abnormal; a politician usually votes for the party s/he participates in/a politician crying for having voted for the wrong party

LM: exaggeration

SI: George Papandreou after voting; an imaginary interlocutor?

TA: Papandreou and his move to create a new political party

NS: internet meme

LA: exaggerated visual representation

When posted on Facebook, the meme in Figure 3 recruited 29 responses. As the data below suggest, such responses instantiate mimetic humorous reactions involving laughter (Users 7, 8, 11, 19, 21, 22, 27 and 29) and sarcasm (Users 2, 5, 6, 8, 18, 20, 28 and 29), expressed, as expected, using the spoken-like conventions of CMC/TMC; capitalization, repetition, punctuation, emoticons, and Greeklish. It is interesting that even responses that are ambiguous and can be understood as non-humorous, such as the ones in Examples (3.17) and (3.18), are prone to be interpreted as humorous, with the emoticon ':P' in (3.18) further corroborating such an interpretation:

```
(3.1)
        User 2 Ειναι νωρις για δακρυα,ως το βραδυ εχουμε χρονο,εκει
                να δεις κλαμα.
                 'It's too early for tears, there's still time until
                tonight [when the final election results will become
                public], more tears then.'
(3.2)
        User 4 [name of User] το δις εξαμαρτειν ουκ ανδρος σοφου.
                Και αυτός γμησε την ελλάδα ζητώντας δημοψηφισμα, και
                ξαναζητάει τώρα
                 '[name of User], to commit the same sin twice is not
                a sign of a wise man. He fucked Greece asking for a
                referendum and he's doing the same thing now'
        User 5 Εμείς κλαιμε τοσα χρόνια τώρα η σειρά σου.!,,
(3.3)
                'We've been crying all these years, now it's your
                turn.!,,'
(3.4a.) User 6 Κλαίει γιατι ψήφισε ΠΑΣΟΚ...το ότι είναι μαλάκας δεν
                τον πείραξε;;;
```

```
'He's crying because he voted for PASOK... the fact
                 that he's a jerk did not bother him???'
(3.4b.) User 7 KAAO...XA XA XA
                 'GOOD... HA HA HA HA'6
(3.5)
        User 8
                Χαχαχαχα το θεμα ειναι οτι θα μπορουσε να τ κανει
                 'Hahahaha the thing is that he could have done it
                 [i.e. he could have voted for the wrong party]'
(3.6)
        User 9
                 [name of User 8]
(3.7)
        User 11 xaxaxa
        User 15 [name of User]
(3.8)
(3.9)
        User 16 Xaxaxa
        User 17 Και λίγα λες [name of User + diminutive] μου!
(3.10)
                 'you could say even more, my little dear [name of User]!'
(3.11)
        User 18 ρε τόσο .....;
                 'he's so.....?'
        User 19 Xaxaxa
(3.12)
(3.13)
        User 20 Θα μπορούσε αλλα πείρε ετοίμο φακελακί από τη μαμά...
                 και στι παρα πεντε γλυτωσε...
                 'He could have done it but got a ready made envelop
                 [for voting] from his mum... and at the very last
                 minute he skipped doing it the wrong way...'
        User 21 Χαχαχαχα τέλειο!!!!;;
(3.14)
                 'Hahahaha perfect!!!!??'
(3.15)
        User 22 κλαιωω...χαχαχα
                 'I'm crying...hahahah'
(3.16a.) User 23 [name of User 24]
(3.16β) User 24 Αγαπητέ [name of user] καλά αποτελέσματα
                 'Dear [name of user], I wish you the best'
        User 25 Δεν σας επιτρέπω λίγο σεβασμό δεν βλάπτει
(3.17)
                 'I don't allow you to say these, show some respect
                 please'
(3.18)
        User 26 και εγω αυτο σκεφτομουν :P
                 'I was thinking the same thing :P'
(3.19)
        User 27 to skeftomoun otan ton eida sto sapiokouti na
                 psifhzei!!!
                 'hahahah it occurred to me when I saw him voting on
                 the silly telly'
        User 28 giorgaras sti vouli na kopsei tin autodinamia twn
(3.20)
                 syrizaiwn
                 'the big George in the parliament will prevent Syriza
                 from securing parliamentary majority'
(3.21)
        User 29 Χαχα απο σενα αγορι μου το περιμενα.
```

'Haha I would expect that from you, my boy.'

^{6.} When users respond to a previous response, all relevant responses are numbered as one unit (3.4 in this particular example) while each post is sub-numbered (a, b...).

The responses in (3) introduce another participation framework in which the recipients interact not only with the producer but also with other recipients and thus attain the status of author (Chovanec & Dynel, 2015: 7). For example, Users 9, 15 and 23 respond to the meme solely by addressing other Facebook users with their Facebook name; in the case of Example (3.16), in particular, this triggers a user to actually respond and participate in the discussion, akin to an adjacency pair. Similarly, User 7 posts a response to User 6 in which s/he explicitly praises his/her sarcastic response (KAAO...XA XA XA XA GOOD... HA HA HA HA'). In other instances, users post a response while addressing other users by their first name, as in Example (3.2), and can even show affection as suggested by the use of a diminutive in Example (3.10). In this sense, these data lend further support to Tannen's claim (2013: 100) that digital media discourse can be understood as "written conversation", resembling conversational style in spoken interaction. In Figure 3, users seem to fully exploit the "new participatory privileges" afforded by Facebook (Chovanec & Dynel, 2015: 7) enabling them to interact both with producers and with other recipients, the latter thus acquiring an active production role.

The last meme presented here again deals with the succession of Samaras by Tsipras in the Maximos Mansion, making use of both image and text but with no accompanying caption:

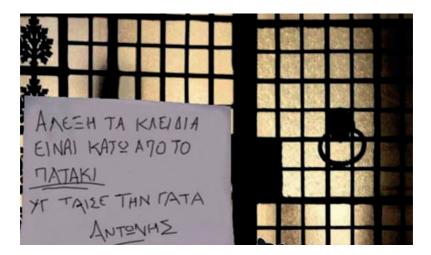


Figure 4. Samaras leaving a casual, hand-written note to Tsipras to feed the cat ('Alexis, the keys are under the mat. PS. Feed the cat. Antonis')

The meme in Figure 4 again involves a script opposition; our script for a former PM passing on the torch to his/her successor does not involve a hand-written post-it with instructions where to find the key and advice to feed the cat, as would be expected between, for instance, two partners or flatmates (this is the 'abnormal'

script in the Script Opposition KR below). In the 'normal' script one would expect, instead, a former PM to hand over official documents, to engage in an in-depth analysis of the current political, financial and social matters, etc. Yet, through analogy (see the Logical Mechanism KR below) the two political leaders appear as addressing each other colloquially and as being concerned with trivial everyday matters rather than the major issues the country is confronted with. The Target KR of humor is therefore the two political leaders, Samaras and Tsipras, while the Situation KR involves them (evoked in the written text), as well as the note and the entrance door of a building contained in the image. However, just as the post-it is far different from the written communication expected between two political leaders, the image also does not allude to the PMs' office but rather to a mundane block of flats. The image thus interacts with the verbal component of the meme, which instantiates low register in Samaras addressing Tsipras by his first name and in the use of the imperative τάισε 'feed', as shown in the Language KR below.

SO: normal/abnormal; former PM officially passing on the torch to his/her successor/former PM leaving a casual, hand-written note on the door as if addressing a partner or a flatmate

LM: analogy

SI: a note on a door; Samaras and Tsipras; entrance door of a building

TA: current political leaders

NS: internet meme

LA: low register paralleled with image

In total, 16 Facebook users responded to the meme, as evidenced below:

```
(4.1)
       User 1 ahahahahahah
(4.2)
               νηστικός ο λάος αλλά και η γάτα ρε αντώνη?
       User 2
                'not only are the people starving but also the cat,
                Antoni?'
(4.3a.) User 3 [names of 3 Users; the first one is that of User 4]
(4.3b.) User 4 yponoume kati?!
                'are you insinuating something?!'
(4.3c.) User 5 KAI TON ΣΚΥΛΟ !!!!
                'THE DOG AS WELL !!!!'
(4.4) User 6 ευτυχώς ήρθε ο Αλέξης να φροντίσει τις γάτες αυτού του
                τόπου..
                'luckily Alexis has come to take care of the cats of
                this country ... '
(4.5)
       User 7 [name of other User] hahahahahahahahahahahahahaha
(4.6)
       User 8 foimes lene oti dn tou edwse oute ton kodiko tou wifi
                'rumor has it that he didn't give him the wifi
                password either'
(4.7) User 9 Τέλειο!!!
                'Perfect!!!'
```

```
(4.8)
       User 10 hahah
(4.9)
       User 11 Πολιτικοί και Γάτες.
                'Politicians and Cats.'
(4.10)
       User 12 [name of other user]
(4.11)
       User 13 ahahahahahah.
(4.12)
       User 14 [name of other user]
(4.13)
       User 15 poli kalo
                'very good'
       User 16 εφτάψυχο το κατοικίδιο του μαξίμου
(4.14)
                'the pet in the Maximos Mansion has seven souls'
```

Recipients appear to respond to the producer, as expected, but they also interact with each other, as is the case of Users 4 and 5 responding to User 3; in fact, User 4 is addressed by User 3 and in this sense is invited to participate. Addressing other Users is to be found in other responses as well, such as those of Users 7, 12 and 14, thus exploiting the interactive framework enacted by the meme. However, as Yus (2011: 127) admits, "interactions on SNSs [i.e. Social Networking Sites] differ from the ones in physical contexts" in that participants do not necessarily know each other; in this sense humor contributes to the formation of ambient affiliation. Such humor is motivated by the humorous content and stance of the meme and takes various forms, ranging from laughter (Users 1, 7 and 13) to puns (User 11) and sarcasm (Users 2, 5, 6, 8 and 16). Along with responses showing appraisal (Users 9 and 15), humorous responses contribute to the formation of in-group identity. Finally, it is worth noting that the mimetic potential spreads even in the wording used in the responses; not coincidentally, Users 2 and 6 refer to Samaras and Tsipras with their first names respectively, just as in the text of the meme.

6. Concluding remarks

This study has embarked on investigating internet memes that were posted and spread on Facebook, commenting on the results of the Greek national elections in January 2015. Either image-only or multimodal (i.e. combining image and text), such memes evoke humorous representations of people's attitudes towards the election results. The analysis aimed to contribute to on-going research on humor afforded in the newly emerged genre of internet memes. In this respect, the data under examination were analyzed along the lines of Attardo's (1994, 2001) GTVH and Tsakona's (2009) modification for multimodal humor, with the aim of explaining how humor, in particular political humor, arises in such instances. Although the humorous effect of internet memes is analyzed in terms of the GTVH - to the best of my knowledge - for the first time, such an account arguably complements - rather

than contradicts - previous analyses based on other approaches in discourse analysis, semiotics, critical discourse analysis, and cognitive linguistics.

Although previous accounts have acknowledged the role of internet memes in serving as "a lingua franca for mediated cultural participation" (Milner, 2013a: 5), the present study takes this a step further in that it examines internet memes in relation to the responses they trigger. Being "a socializing social networking site" that supports informal social interaction among members (Yus, 2011: 116; emphasis in the original) and values interactivity over information, Facebook allows for people expressing their own views on memes. The present study has attempted to shift the focus from internet memes as a genre to internet memes as a discursive practice, comprising both the meme itself and the responses to it (see also Tsakona, this volume). In this respect, I suggest that, being humorous themselves, internet memes enact mimetic responses; such responses commonly mimic the humorous stance of the meme (through laughter), often along with its content (through humor, irony and sarcasm) and, less often, its multimodal form (through the production of relevant memes). In other words, the mimetic potential of memes is exploited within the participation framework afforded on Facebook. In theoretical terms, the study of meme-based humor emerges as an interdisciplinary endeavor, bringing together insights from pragmatics (such as the GTVH in Attardo, 2001) and media studies (such as Shifman's 2013 typology of internet memes; see Section 3).

Such an analysis, I wish to argue, also has significant implications for the study of humor. First of all, it views the humor of internet memes as interactional in nature; it is shown that it arises within Facebook's framework of "mediated quasi-interaction" (Chovanec & Dynel, 2015: 7) that allows for interaction between the producer and the recipients, as well as among the recipients. Moreover, the analysis demonstrates that humor generated in, and by, internet memes has both a subversive and a reinforcing role; it allows for users (both producers and recipients) to critique politics and challenge existing power relationships, while at the same time it encourages solidarity relationships among the participants to the interaction (see also Yus, this volume). Although it is contested whether the critique enacted by political humor can engender any actual change (Tsakona & Popa, 2011; 2013; Adegoju & Oyebode, 2015), it is rather undeniable that online humor contributes to the construction of in-group identity (see among others Locher & Bolander, 2015; Adegoju & Oyebode, 2015). However, such affiliation is commonly "ambient" (Zappavigna, 2012) in that participants do not necessarily know each other.

Finally, it seems that political humor is amenable to different forms, depending on the affordances of new technological advances and the mediated discursive practices involved therein. Although it certainly differs from more traditional and institutionalized forms of political humor, as Tsakona & Popa arguably contend (2013: 2), this study does not corroborate their claim that internet memes should be viewed as "unconventional political humor" (emphasis in the original); rather, both the multimodal forms and the mediated means in which political humor is realized on social media is no less conventional for anyone having access to the internet, while the interactional aspect of meme-based political humor shown in this study further points to conventional conversational patterns. Although its study is still in its infancy, mediated political humor, as Shifman aptly points out (2014: 4), seems to blend "pop culture, politics, and participation in unexpected ways".

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Positive non-humorous effects of humor on the internet

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In this chapter, the term (non-)intended non-propositional effect is proposed and applied to the kind of feeling, emotion, impression, etc. that internet humorous texts generate in the user beyond the proposition-centered humor, and which may not be tightly connected to the act of communication. These effects may be intended as part of the effects of the discourse being interpreted, but the main interest of this Chapter lies in those non-propositional effects which are non-intended, and hence not part of humorous communication proper, but nevertheless leak from humorous communication. These non-propositional, non-humorous and non-intended effects may provide reward to the users at different levels and add to the eventual relevance (or even constitute the main relevance) of internet-based humorous texts.

Keywords: cyberpragmatics, relevance theory, contextual constraint, non-propositional effect, internet humor

1. Introduction: Cognitive pragmatics and relevance theory

This chapter addresses humor on the internet from a cognitive pragmatics, relevance-theoretic perspective (see Sperber & Wilson, 1995; Wilson & Sperber, 2004, 2012; Yus, 2006, 2010b). This theoretical framework aims to describe the mental processes and inferential strategies that humans engage in while making sense of what people communicate. This sense-making operation is meant to fill the gap between (a) what the communicator intends and what s/he actually says, writes or types (i.e. codes), and (b) between what is coded and eventually interpreted. For this gap-filling inferential activity, addressees rely on an evolved psychological ability to select the most relevant interpretation by making comparative judgments among competing interpretations and opting for the one that provides the highest interest (positive cognitive effects in relevance-theoretic terminology) in exchange for the least mental effort devoted to obtaining it.

In general, hearers are expected to opt for the most relevant interpretation that fits these conditions of *effects vs. effort*. However, relevance is pervasive in human cognition beyond the specific application to the interpretation of linguistic inputs. As the so-called *cognitive principle of relevance* states, "human cognition is geared to the maximization of relevance" and therefore we apply this innate predisposition to multiple inputs to cognition. Needless to say, relevance theory (and pragmatics in general) has mainly focused on how intentional propositional content is interpreted in a context, either explicitly communicated propositions (*explicatures*) or implicated conclusions (*implicatures*), or propositional attitudes.

Relevance theory (henceforth RT) has also addressed propositions that are extracted beyond the communicator's intentions (but are nevertheless triggered by the act of communication), by means of the term *weak implicature* or *weak implicature* or *weak implicature*. Unlike *strong implicatures*, which are overtly intended and backed-up by the communicator, these weak implicatures/implications are mainly extracted with the interlocutor's responsibility, but in any case are generated from the act of communication. Clark (2013: 212) illustrates weak implicatures with the following example, in which Ben's utterance in Example (1) implicates (as strong implicatures) the interpretations in Examples (2a)–(b); but his utterance also triggers the derivation of weak implicatures such as the ones in Examples (3a)–(c), perhaps not really intended by Ben but constructed by Ken beyond Ben's intentions:

- (1) Ken: Are you afraid that the price of petrol might go up again? Ben: I don't have a car.
- (2) a. Ben does not buy petrol.
 - b. Ben is not worried about the price of petrol.
- (3) a. Ben does not think he should be worried about cars.
 - b. Ben does not like people who own cars.
 - Ben cares for the environment.

Finally, RT has provided an explanation to the interpretation of *affective attitudes*, that is, the intentional communication of feelings, emotions, etc. that are not propositional but nevertheless count as relevant outcomes of the interpretive process. As typical example is quoted in (4) below:

(4) Mary and Peter are newly arrived at the seaside. She opens the window overlooking the sea and sniffs appreciatively and ostensively. When Peter follows suit, there is no one particular good thing that comes to his attention: the air smells fresh, fresher than it did in town, [...] all sorts of pleasant things come to mind, and while, because her sniff was appreciative, he is reasonably safe in assuming that she must have intended him to notice at least some of them, he is unlikely to be able to pin down her intentions any further.

(Sperber & Wilson, 1995: 55)

In my opinion, these three areas of relevance-theoretic research (intended explicit/ implicated propositional content, weak propositional implicatures and nonpropositional affective attitudes) are not sufficient to explain why humorous acts of communication end up being relevant or irrelevant. This is why two new terms are needed: contextual constraint and non-intended non-propositional effect (see Section 3 below).

The paper is organized as follows: in Section 2, a brief outline of humor under a relevance-theoretic framework is provided, together with a brief comment on cyberpragmatics. Section 3 deals with a proposal of extension of traditional objects of relevance-theoretic research in order to account for non-propositional aspects that may play an important part in the eventual (ir)relevance of humorous communication and internet-mediated communication. Finally, Section 4 addresses non-humorous effects as positive (non-)intended non-propositional effects on the internet. Basically, the aim is to underline the importance of effects not directly related to the humorous act of communication on the net (but triggered by it), and which affect the eventual (dis)satisfaction of the user with online communication.

Humor, internet and relevance

RT predicts that humorous effects are generated because speakers can mindread their interlocutors' minds, predict which inferential strategies they are bound to go through, expect that certain interpretations, sentence arrangements or word senses are inevitably going to be picked up in their search for relevance, which contextual information will be used in order to turn the coded humorous text into a valid interpretation, etc. (see Yus, 2003, 2008, 2011b, 2012, 2013a, 2013b, 2016a, 2017a, 2017b, among others). This control over inferential strategies allows for invalidations of apparently relevant interpretive choices for the sake of humor. For instance, in Example (5) the speaker plays with the apparently relevant referent for "it" (the shoe) and invalidates this choice at a subsequent part of the joke (replaced with "the man's head"):

The village blacksmith finally found an apprentice willing to work hard at low pay for long hours. The blacksmith immediately began his instructions to the lad, "When I take the shoe out of the fire, I'll lay it on the anvil; and when I nod my head, you hit it with this hammer." The apprentice did just as he was told. Now he's the village blacksmith.

Similarly, in Example (6) the speaker plays with the interlocutor's construction of an appropriate scenario for the joke. This scenario (also called frame, schema or script1 in different terminological proposals) was labeled make-sense frame in Yus' (2013a, 2013b) Intersecting Circles Model of humorous communication. In Example (6), the construction of this make-sense frame (roughly "driver being fined by policeman") makes the choice of "contact lenses" as the intended meaning of the ambiguous word contacts inevitable, only to be invalidated at the end of the joke and replaced with a more unlikely (less relevant) but eventually correct meaning of "influential people one knows about":

(6) A policeman in Washington D.C. stops a lady and asks for her license. He says "Lady, it says here that you should be wearing glasses." The woman answers "Well, I have contacts." The policeman replies "I don't care who you know! You're getting a ticket!"

Concerning internet-mediated communication, there is a relevance-centered proposal of research named cyberpragmatics that aims to analyze how users interpret online texts (see Yus, 2001, 2010a, 2011a, 2011b, 2013c). Initially, this application of RT to online communication entails two apparently contradictory statements. On the one hand, internet makes no difference, in the sense that we do not have specific cognitive mechanisms to interpret online discourses that differ from the ones used in face-to-face communication. On the other hand, internet makes all the difference, since the aforementioned inferential gap-filling intended to turn the schematic coded input (e.g. typed utterances) into interpretations is influenced by the interfaces used for interactions.

Other claims within *cyberpragmatics* include the following (Yus, 2013c). Much cyberpragmatic research focuses on the users' ability to connote their messages with different attributes of orality, typically found in the vocal (e.g. repetition of letters and creative use of punctuation marks) and the visual (e.g. emoticons; see Yus, 2014c) channels of oral interactions. Therefore, cyberpragmatics analyzes the challenges that users face when they attempt to compensate for this lack of orality and its impact on eventual processing. Finally, another focus of cyberpragmatic research concerns how advances in the level of contextualization provided by the interface (e.g. webcam added to the instant messenger) generate (or not) better balances of interest (cognitive effects) and mental effort in the user's search for

Frames are stereotypical chunks of information that are retrieved from encyclopedic knowledge in order to understand a new situation. Schemas (or schemata) are basic chunks of information that allow us to engage in daily experiences and classify them as prototypical instances. Finally, the term script is also commonly used in the analysis of this kind of com-monsense information, but it refers more to sequences of actions. However, as argued in Yus (2016a), there is a great deal of overlapping among their scopes in the different definitions available in the bibliography.

relevance. On paper, these improved interfaces should add to relevance by reducing the effort involved in their use and the correct choice of interpretations, but this is not always the case, since users may prefer a more cues-filtered medium if it suits him/her better, for example in terms of control of self-expression on the net and avoiding giving off too much information on him/herself.

Extended relevance-theoretic research

As was mentioned above in passing, RT (and pragmatics in general) typically analyzes how people construct fully contextualized propositional interpretations (explicatures, implicatures, propositional attitudes) from coded content (utterances, written texts, typed messages, etc.). The underlying premise within RT is that comprehension is guided by the presumption that propositional interpretations are bound to be worth the mental effort invested in inferring them, and that our cognitive system will complain if this content does not live up to the expectations of relevance raised initially upon processing it. However, this chapter deals with two areas of human communication, humor and online communication, which often generate relevant interpretive outcomes beyond the objective interest of their content, that is, these are discourses which typically end up being relevant despite not offering objectively relevant content to the addressees, as will be briefly described below.

In the case of humor, the texts themselves are often uninformative: they interrupt serious conversations and demand unnecessary processing effort from the hearer, since humorous texts often involve ostensive manipulations of polysemy, ambiguity, likelihood of word senses, etc. As stated in Yus (2003: 1314), addressees of jokes usually accept violations of normal conversational rules, the existence of totally irrelevant answers to (sometimes stupid) questions and so on for the sake of humor. The precondition to this attitude is an acceptance that some humorous game is about to be played (in canned or framed spontaneous jokes) or has just been played (in non-framed spontaneous jokes), a game in which they agree to take part even though the content of these jokes is not bound to be relevant (see also Shilikhina, this volume). Of course, some other non-propositional effects (besides humorous effects, the explicitly desired ones by the speaker) are also at work and should compensate for the lack of relevance in the content itself (see Section 4 below).

Something similar happens with online communication. Although it is undeniable that there is valuable content on the net, it is highly noticeable that most of the time that users, especially youngsters, spend interacting online involves what many people (especially adults) might consider a significant phatic component (i.e. this form of communication is occasionally disparagingly referred to as "silly", "irrelevant" or "meaningless" by these people). Nevertheless, it keeps users glued to the screens for a number of other reasons that are rewarding for them. Miller (2008: 395, 398) explains this as the shift from significantly relevant content to the increasing value of online communication as supportive of phatic connotations that compensate for the lack of quality in the information exchanged:

content is not king, but 'keeping in touch' is. More important than anything said, it is the connection to the other that becomes significant, and the exchange of words becomes superfluous. Thus the text message, the short call, the brief email, the short blog update or comment, becomes part of a mediated phatic sociability necessary to maintain a connected presence in an ever-expanding social network [...]. We see a shift from dialogue and communication between actors in a network, where the point of the network was to facilitate an exchange of substantive content, to a situation where the maintenance of a network itself has become the primary focus. Here communication has been subordinated to the role of the simple maintenance of ever expanding networks and the notion of a connected presence.

The qualities of these two forms of interaction (humor, online interaction) indicate that the objective value of the propositional content of discourses exchanged is often not the primary source of the eventual relevance obtained by the interlocutors. Rather, certain non-propositional qualities may radically influence the satisfaction from the processing of these discourses. In other words, analysts within cognitive pragmatics are often too focused on judging the effectiveness of communication in terms of objectively interesting information that offsets the effort that processing it demands. But in humorous and online communication there are many kinds of interactions and ways of processing of content that may have little informational value. Eventual relevance does not only depend on the information itself but also on the derivation of certain non-propositional effects and the framing quality of certain attributes of the users and their interfaces. These aspects may even be outside the actual act of communication, but nevertheless affect its eventual (ir) relevance.

In previous research, a way to expand the current relevance-theoretic object of analysis has been sought with the proposal of different terms to cover these qualities that affect relevance beyond the value of content (Yus, 2011b, 2014a, 2014b, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c, 2015d, 2016a). In latest research, two terms have been added to the ones already covered by RT (namely explicatures, strong implicatures, weak implicatures, propositional attitude and affective attitude), and which will be described and exemplified in more detail in the next Sections: the first term is contextual constraint. It is restricted to aspects that underlie or frame communication and interaction (i.e. they exist prior to the interpretive activity) and constrain its eventual (un)successful outcome. By contrast, the term non-intended non-propositional effect refers to feelings, emotions, impressions, etc. that are not overtly intended by the communicator, but are generated from the act of communication, and add

(positively) to the cognitive effects derived from discourse interpretation or add (negatively) to the mental effort required for processing. These effects may be assessed consciously by the addressees, or lie beyond their awareness, but in any case they influence eventual relevance. In sum, the extended relevance-theoretic model would be made up of the following categories:

- 1. The explicit/implicated propositional interpretation, which is "intended" in the act of communication.
- The speaker's feelings and emotions (affective attitude), which are "made manifest" in the act of communication, and also "intended" as part of what is communicated.
- The propositional implications (weak implicatures), which are "triggered" by the act of communication, some of which may be backed up by the communicator, and some of them probably extracted by the addressee's responsibility.
- 4. The positive or negative contextual constraints, which "underlie" or "frame" the act of communication.
- The positive or negative non-intended non-propositional effects, which "leak" from the act of communication.

In this sense, the RT model of communication, which bases the information-centered eventual relevance on the interest (cognitive effects) provided by the information (a set of assumptions) communicated against the mental effort demanded, as covered by the two conditions of relevance quoted in (a) and (b) below, should be complemented with the act of communication-centered notions of (positive) contextual constraint and (positive) non-intended non-propositional effect, as described in (a') and (b'). Needless to say, both contextual constraints and non-intended non-propositional effects may also be negative and detrimental for eventual relevance (Yus, 2015b, 2015c):

The information intentionally exchanged between interlocutors is relevant if...

- The amount of positive cognitive effects (the interest) that it produces is high.
- The mental effort that processing this information demands is low.

The act of communication between interlocutors is eventually relevant if...

- a'. The *non-intended non-propositional effects* add to the positive cognitive effects that the information produces in a specific context (to the extent that they make the act of communication relevant even if the actual content is itself irrelevant).
- b'. The contextual constraints save (or at least do not add to) the addressee's mental effort devoted to the processing of the information in a specific context (to the extent that they threaten the eventual relevance of the act of communication).

Extended humor research 3.1

The addition of contextual constraints and non-intended non-propositional effects (Yus, 2015c, 2015d, 2016a) allows for a more exhaustive account of what is really at stake when a humorous intention ends up successful or unsuccessful (beyond the utterance-centered comprehension of the humorous discourse). Among the constraints, the following aspects may be listed:

- Suitability. If the joke is cunningly inserted into the current topic of the conversation, there will be a relevant offset of non-propositional effects.
- Hearer's background knowledge and beliefs. Telling jokes entails a risk: The possibility that the joke will sharply contradict the hearer's store of beliefs and factual assumptions, and therefore, in cases like this, the joke may end up unsuccessful.
- 3. Interlocutor's sex. For example, women do not usually like to be told highly sexist jokes. There are also issues concerning how jokes are told and received in same-sex versus mixed-sex interactions.
- 4. Sense of humor. The same humorous text may be amusing, disgusting, offensive, etc. depending on overall sense of humor or humor competence of the interlocutor.
- Relationship between the interlocutors. Humor depends on the relationship existing among the interlocutors. Jokes often occur among friends and colleagues, but also between strangers as a discursive tool to break the ice.
- 6. Hearer's mood. People go through different moods (even in the course of a single day) that may also play a part in the outcome of humorous communication.
- 7. Culture and ethnicity. Different cultures exhibit different senses of humor, different sources of laughter and different topics exploited for humorous purposes. In short, humor cannot be easily exported to other cultures.
- Situational factors (context of utterance production). For example, telling jokes in a very serious meeting, or sexist ones when there are women listening in the group, may drastically reduce the chances of a successful humorous outcome.

Similarly, in humorous communication we can isolate a number of (positive and negative) non-intended non-propositional effects. These are generated beyond the act of communication (but leak from it), and produce an offset of effects within/ beyond the communicator's overt communicative intentions. Among the possible positive effects, the following may be listed:

1. Enhanced awareness of mutuality existing between interlocutors. Humorous communication typically demands certain mutuality of information in order to be successful. At the same time, these discourses also foreground areas of mutuality whose existence is vividly made explicit through the successful outcome

- of the humorous intention. In fact, many instances of humor are only intended to generate enjoyment through the mutual sharing of information.
- 2. Feelings of enhanced group membership, group specificity and group solidarity. Discourse is a useful tool for stressing group membership, especially if this discourse entails the use of specific jargons or demands a number of background assumptions that reveal appropriate membership, which aids in a more intense feeling of community membership. Humorous texts may also underline group membership through an ability to retrieve from context the group-specific assumptions that are required for optimal humorous discourse comprehension (see Tsakona, this volume).
- 3. *More fine-grained ability to humorous effects.* Being able to perform the expected interpretive strategies leading to a humorous outcome may generate an offset of personal assumptions regarding the ability to engage successfully in the interpretation of this kind of discourse. Similarly, a greater sense of identity and self-esteem arises from adequate reaction to the intended humor, generated from an adequate inferential enrichment of the humorous text and its appropriate contextualization.

Non-intended non-propositional effects may also be negative to the eventual relevance of the humorous act of communication. Among others, the following are worth mentioning:

- 1. Increased bad opinion about the speaker. Often the choice of certain jokes, the inappropriateness of their use across contexts, etc. may lead to an increased dissatisfaction with the speaker and his/her personality.
- Reduced self-esteem. This non-intended non-propositional effect arises upon being unable to reach the adequate understanding of the joke and its intended effects.
- 3. Feelings of non-belonging to group or community. In the reverse of the aforementioned positive non-propositional effect, the inability to master specific discourses or to retrieve the necessary background contextual information may produce feelings of non-membership in the addressee.
- 4. *Disgust upon hearing aggressive or nasty jokes*. This negative non-propositional effect is tightly related to the aforementioned hearer's background knowledge and beliefs. Upon producing humorous texts, there is likelihood that the underlying intention will be ineffective due to personal traits and susceptibility to certain humorous topics or targets.

Extended cyberpragmatic research 3.2

A similar account of contextual constraints and non-intended non-propositional effects may be performed for internet-mediated communication (Yus, 2017c). However, in this case both terms (either positive or negative) have to be split into those which have to do with the user's activity with the system (e.g. managing an interface) and the ones taking place with other users (e.g. a conversation on a chat room).² Concerning user-to-system interaction constraints, several aspects may be isolated: (a) the familiarity with the interface; (b) the expertise in using web-mediated discourses; (c) the interface usability (good arrangement of text and image, good structure of links, being able to access content without unnecessary effort, etc.); (d) the reasons for surfing the net (work, leisure, looking for a specific item of information or using the web to kill time, etc.); and (e) the presence or absence of effort-increasing elements on the page (pop-up advertisements, problems with bandwidth, etc.).

In the case of user-to-user interactions, contextual constraints include (a) the degree of mutual knowledge existing between interlocutors; (b) the quality of interlocutors (known addressee vs. anonymous addressee); (c) the familiarity with topics, jargons, expected background knowledge, etc.; and (d) the reason for the act of communication (causal chat, formal piece of communication, getting information on a topic, etc.).

Concerning non-intended non-propositional effects from user-to-system interactions, we can list the following: (a) blurring of the physical/virtual divide (impact on the current physical activity of the user, providing cognitive reward in the way the system manages to aid the specific user in a physical place); (b) satisfaction from being able to use the interface appropriately and obtain the expected information; and (c) individuation or personalization (users expect information in a highly personalized way, adapted to personal profiles and preferences).

Finally, effects related to user-to-user communication include: (a) the user's feeling of connectedness (social awareness, feelings of being part of interactions and friendships; to be noticed by others on the net); (b) the user's identity shaping; (c) the feeling of community membership (the management of social identity usually involves feelings of group or community membership, or being welcomed by others as part of the network of friends or relatives); (d) acknowledgment (from the online community) of the user's presence/membership in the group; and (e) actions from

^{2.} In Yus (2015c), a handout was given out with quotes from several 2014 and 2015 publications in which contextual constraints and non-intended non-propositional effects (both user-to-system and user-to-user ones) are reproduced (even if from different approaches and with different terminology). These quotes can be downloaded here: [http://personal.ua.es/francisco.yus/Vca15/ h5-8.pdf]. The bibliographical references are also available here: [http://personal.ua.es/francisco. yus/Vca15/h9-10.pdf].

user to community (feelings arising from one's presence being felt and acknowledged by other users upon some activity from the user to the community of users).

Non-humorous effects as positive (non-)intended non-propositional effects on the internet

In this Section, I would like to focus precisely on those non-propositional effects that are non-humorous and are generated beyond the humorous acts of communication on the internet. These effects compensate, in RT terms, for the non-informative quality of humorous texts exchanged and disseminated on the net, and also for their occasional disruptive quality when produced inappropriately within communicative exchanges. Eventually, they may also make interaction relevant, even if humorous intention itself is not successful.

Such non-propositional effects may be intended by the communicators, in the sense that they had in mind the generation of these effects as part of the eventual relevance of the humorous act of communication. However, my main interest lies in the positive non-propositional effects which are "non-intended" and are generated beyond the act of communication, but nevertheless provide an extra offset of processing reward that results in an overall relevant outcome. These effects may be divided into a number of levels depending on which area of the user's identity is affected by these effects: the personal level (the user as an individual), the interactive level (the user as part of an on-going interaction with other users), the medium-sized group level (the user as part of an internet group such as a forum, a YouTube channel, a WhatsApp group, etc.) and the large-sized group level (the user as part of a nation or similar large-sized population).

Positive non-propositional effects at personal level 4.1

Humorous texts mainly produce these effects in the specific realm of the user's identity shaping and self-esteem. For example, being able to master the expected inferential strategies involved in online humor will affirm the user's self-assurance (Baym, 2005). These strategies often entail finding the right intertextual links or background information that underlies humorous discourses on the net and which test the user's humor competence (Laineste, 2013: 32). Besides, mastering the production and the eventual successful outcome of a humorous attempt is typically associated with labels such as extroversion and high self-esteem (Kurtzberg et al., 2009: 390) and are also generated online. In general, mastering humor makes the person be regarded as socially competent and liked by peers (Pennington & Hall, 2014: 2), an aspect also sought for in virtual environments.

4.2

Online humor produces a number of effects related to virtual interactions and their management. Among others, the following are worth commenting upon:

Positive non-propositional effects at interactive level

4.2.1 *Value of an environment for interactions*

Humor facilitates the maintenance and desirability of choosing certain environments for online interactions, together with an effect on eagerness to participate. Users, then, feel compelled to cooperate and maintain the group's interactional activity through sustained humor-centered participation. This is particularly noticeable in sports live text commentaries (Chovanec, 2011: 244; 2012: 142), in which humor is useful to keep the channel open and the audience interested in remaining on the site, even when nothing worth commenting upon is taking place. Similarly, Marone (2015: 76–77) focuses on internet fora, and remarks that humor can function as a two-way discursive icebreaker: humorous messages are intended to attract comments; but users also produce them as gateways to the conversation. Humorous statements are hence followed up with more comments and this chained discursive reaction keeps the conversation going. In a sense, then, the effects generated are related to the on-going construction and building-up of humorous interactional sequences: "Speakers frequently signal humor appreciation by incorporating or building on the play frame, which can trigger further elaboration in a chain of humor, with humor begetting more humor" (Vandergriff, 2010: 242).

4.2.2 *Exploitation of shared discursive conventions*

Online interactions typically exhibit features of orality to compensate for the lack of vocal information (through repeated letters, capitalization, creative use of punctuation marks) and visual information (through emoticons, emoji) in typed messages. Often the playful or explicitly humorous use of these innovative techniques are the sole purpose and they sustain the development of the whole online conversation, with users humorously building and commenting on these creative conventions, thus producing further in-group sharing of how to use these oralizing strategies (Hübler & Bell, 2003: 279–280). This creative play with genre conventions is particularly noticeable in the viral humor of *LOLCats* (Miltner, 2014), in which expectations on text style (so-called *Lolspeak*) are an integral part of their ultimate humorous (and viral) effect, complemented with text-image combinations and intertextuality. In fact, "participants explained that using the wrong font or diverging from stylistic expectations essentially ruined it for them" (Miltner, 2014).

Encouragement of participation and interaction 4.2.3

Humor on the net can also produce effects on the users' willingness to engage and sustain virtual interactions. For example, online journalists have been encouraged to use humor in their interactions with readers because it fosters engagement and participation. Since people often use humor to seek, gain and maintain connections on social networking sites, the role of humor as a connective device should not be underestimated: "A little humor may go a long way in helping them better connect with current and potential followers" (Holton & Lewis, 2011). Similarly, Hübler & Bell (2003: 280) underline the role of what they call threads of constitutive laughter in mailing list communities, where interactions are fostered by inter-connected participation simply because humor has a capacity to generate more comments and replies than serious topics. Often, these interactions involve the use of *joint* or co-constructed humor, in which users provide instant humorous reactions to each other (Chovanec, 2011). In North's (2007: 51) words, humor

> needs to be choreographed to fit coherently within the unfolding interaction, and when successful, it both builds on what has preceded it and is further elaborated by what follows. As a result, humorous comments are often tied into a network of cohesive relationships, with ambiguities providing links across different lexical chains. The textual cohesion, like the humor, is jointly constructed, and both reflects and helps to constitute the social cohesion of the group.

In a similar fashion, Mak (2014: 266) studies humor in professional and workplace instant-messaging interactions, and concludes that it has relational purposes and effects; even if the content is plainly humorous, it may produce the effect of improving, maintaining, and enriching interpersonal communication and closeness among colleagues, aiding them in maintaining work life balance through amicable bonding and companionship. The same applies to the interactions by students analyzed in Holcomb (1997: 4), who used joking to accomplish a variety of interactional tasks: "to build rapport with other students, to save face, and to explore and negotiate (in a relatively safe way) thresholds between different ways of thinking and behaving."

Positive non-propositional effects at medium-sized group level 4.3

Humor is a constitutive marker of the specificity of medium-sized internet groups (internet fora, blog communities, social networking groups, etc.), which often exhibit humor due to their capacity to stress membership, solidarity, social leveling, and areas of mutuality. Among other aspects, the following should be considered:

Marker of group boundaries and membership 4.3.1

Rules of humor generation and capacity for humor appreciation produce a nonpropositional effect of group belonging and an awareness of differentiation with other groups. Norrick (2003) correctly states that joking establishes and enhances group cohesion, serves as a control on what sorts of talk and behavior are acceptable to participants in the interaction, and the same applies to online environments. For example, in forum-centered internet communities,

discursive threads of laughter help to constitute an online community when individuals come to share as a group the values and knowledge implicit in an ongoing joke. The length and sophistication of these threads help to gauge the power of the constitutive laughter [...]. By laughing at the same joke, individuals can identify with each other and keep the other's interests in mind, common characteristics of ethos appeal to goodwill. (Hübler & Bell, 2003: 280-281)

For these authors, individuals strategically construct jokes that feel appropriate within a group. The non-propositional effect of these jokes on the community establishes discursive boundaries for that group. In a way, humor allows users to fit into the community and simultaneously constitutes or reshapes that community. In a similar fashion, Marone (2015: 67) comments on how users of forum-based communities resort to humor in order to avoid disruptions of the bonding atmosphere, to soothe critiques and to foster dialogues. But humor also builds on the information which can be understood exclusively by the members of the community, a sort of insider's code that

needs to be deciphered in order to achieve a knowledgeable and legitimate participation. [...] [U]sers establish unwritten rules of participation based on specialist knowledge that strengthen the cohesiveness of the community and define its identity by separating insiders from outsiders. (Marone, 2015: 77)

In short, humorous interactions entail social desirability and acceptance of groupmarking specificity, producing a group-connoted offset of affinity, trust, shared enjoyment and satisfaction, what Bormann (1972) labels as in-group-ness.

Besides, the use of certain jargons, styles of text deformation and vocabulary may be used as a barrier of discursive specificity, since only those who "master" the type of discourse exchanged within the medium-sized community will both feel part of the group and accepted by its members. For example, Tunisian youth use combinations of occidental letters and numbers instead of Arabic, forming a striking type of text that only they can understand. A humor-related example would be the LOLSpeak used within LOLCats, which entails the use of very specific jargon and text-deformation, as in this example: "Ohai! I wud like tu b in deh focus groop, if it am alrite wif u" (Hi! I would like to be in the focus group, if that is alright with you; see Miltner, 2014).

Awareness of shared knowledge within group 4.3.2

Humor is an ideal test to check who has access to the necessary background knowledge and assumptions of mutuality needed to get the full extent of humorous effects and which, again, generates positive effects of group membership and identification. Locher & Bolander (2015: 143) are right in pointing out that when humor relies on shared knowledge it creates closeness and an in-group feeling and also maintains a group identity. In the same vein, the same instances of humor can also exclude those who lack access to common ground. Baym (1995) suggests that humor positions members of the internet forum under her analysis (r.a.t.s) as necessarily competent, namely assumed to have detail awareness of intertextual elements mentioned in the postings. Similarly, Holton & Lewis (2011) comment that

messages of humor often require individuals to have at least some prior knowledge of the subject matter being discussed are more readily accepted by those with shared knowledge and shared emotional constructs who can collectively decipher (Holton & Lewis, 2011) their meanings.

The same applies to the "cultural winks" whose tracing is required for the interpretation of internet memes (Tay, 2012: 62) and which may produce an offset of nonpropositional effects upon correct understanding.

A variation of this reliance on mutuality occurs when mutuality is not expected, but rather occurs as a communal discovery. In the same way that, in many stand-up comedy performances, the audience suddenly discover that certain assumptions, habits or ideas are not privately held but widely communal, thus generating a sudden humorous awareness of mutuality (Yus, 2004, 2016a; see also Dore, this volume; on audience's role in televised monologues, see Seewoester Cain, this volume), internet offers the possibility for this sudden realization as positive effect. An example is found in Chen (2014) regarding a website for user-generated comics, where members can express their artistic creativity without technical requirements, and humor is a powerful resource for this mutual discovery, since the members value the community

as a place where they can rant about the issues they face in life and seek solace from a sympathetic audience who also grapple with similar problems [...]. [They gather online] to laugh at each other's misfortunes, not to feel superior to others, but to revel in the fact that many netizens have experienced similar events.

(Chen, 2014: 693–694)

Group bonding and solidarity

It is tightly related to the requirement or discovery of areas of mutuality in humorous communication, since this mutuality enhances or favors bonding and solidarity among the members of a community, both online and offline. For example, Hancock (2004: 58) states that humor enhances bonds between individuals by highlighting a shared sense of humor or common ground, which may be especially appropriate

on the net. Indeed, in offline gatherings and casual conversations, bonds and areas of mutuality among friends are easily emphasized on the fly. However, offline clues are typically inhibited in text-based interactions, since the scenarios for these interactions are virtualized and devoid of much contextual information (Yus, 2007). Therefore, it seems that humor compensates for offline ways of bonding when we do not have the usual trappings of face-to-face interactions to convey interpersonal information and emphasize areas of mutuality.

Jocular mockery or self-deprecating humor are particularly useful to create bonding and solidarity. As Hübler & Bell (2003: 281) correctly state, when laughing at the same joke, individuals can identify with each other and keep one another's interests in mind. And

> the goodwill shown in making oneself the butt of a joke de-emphasizes hierarchy and at the same time subtly incorporates the other primary components of ethos by conveying an intelligent resourcefulness and a modest character.

> > (Hübler & Bell, 2003: 281)

Maíz-Arévalo (2015) also stresses the fact that jocular mockery seems to be essentially phatic and intended to build up solidarity and rapport amongst interlocutors rather than to inform (or perhaps insult). She mainly focuses on social networking sites, where the maintenance of social relationships is their main objective as opposed to other forms of computer-mediated communication like blogs or wikis, whose main goal is often the transaction of information (Maíz-Arévalo, 2013: 50). Similarly, Kurtzberg et al. (2009: 380-381) argue that using a self-depreciating or self-mocking type of humor in an online context helps to de-emphasize the social hierarchy and to signal the ability of a sender to overcome potential adversity. Humor tends to promote positive emotions which, in turn, may encourage greater feelings of trust and satisfaction with online interactions. Needless to say, the capacity of humor to create bonding effects is parallel to its capacity to produce feelings of exclusion for others outside the group (Meyer, 2000: 317).

Feelings of being valuable/valued to/by one's community 4.3.4

One of the trends of today's use of the net is the abundance of *user-generated content*, in which relevance effects mainly lie in the gratification of being productive and useful to the group or community despite the effort involved in the uploading of information. In the case of humor, it is particularly noticeable, since this user-generated content often creates solidarity through audience's co-construction and acknowledgment, that is, a clear positive non-propositional effect. Sites such as *Jokes from Russia*, analyzed by Gorny (2009), base their success on user-generated information for the community, a significant feature that enables users to become co-producers rather than passive readers of the website, and co-responsible for its eventual success.

Positive non-propositional effects at large-sized group level 4.4

Humor generates effects also at large-sized groups such as nations, professions or sexes. These effects may be of a negative quality, when unfair broad stereotypes spread through different online platforms, as happens with sex-role stereotypes (Shifman & Lemish, 2010, 2011). However, humor may also produce positive non-propositional effects at a large scale. The following aspects deserve attention:

Cultural specificity of processing information 4.4.1

Humor on the net may stress broad national values. An example of politics-centered viral spread of memes on the internet involves the discourses analyzed by Baran (2012) on Estonian politics, which can only be understood by those who are aware of the political events which have taken place in that country (on humor and politics, see also Piata, this volume).

The internet also disseminates information globally, and the aforementioned specificity may not be well understood across countries, even though jokes often undergo cultural adaptations and translations and the resulting discourses are acceptable if the topic addressed is universal, as happened with the jokes that spread globally in the aftermath of 9/11 (Boxman-Shabtai & Shifman, 2015: 522). In general, however, humor appreciation provides an insight into the peculiarity of a specific culture or society, since it is often tied to the particular context of creation and with a specific audience in mind, in this case a broad group such as one's own nation.

Mutual awareness of broad values

Humor reveals attributes of our social context and produces the effect of an enhancement of their mutuality. An example is the travel blog *Expatriates' Talk* studied by Cappelli (2008). This blog creates large-group centered solidarity with Italians by laughing at Americans, and maintains group solidarity with co-nationals by laughing at Italians. Interestingly, the blog also produces a medium-sized group's initiation effect

> by increasing commitment to the group of the expatriates who are the only ones who can fully understand the richness of the cultural interplay behind her words, even behind self-deprecation. Through humor and irony, the expatriate confirms that the attitudes expressed are held in common, and affirms the extent of the expat community's common ground. Much of the humor will inevitably escape the average readers. (Cappelli, 2008: 17)

Another example is the humor produced by Tunisians in the aftermath of its revolution (Moalla, 2015: 51): Tunisian users'

rejection to the ex-regime in a humorous way reflected a desire for freedom, justice, and democracy and mirrored a deep-rooted desire for societal changes. It is through their social bonds that the goals of freedom and democracy could be accomplished.

5. Concluding remarks

In this Chapter several positive non-propositional effects have been isolated at several levels (personal, interactive, medium-sized group and large-sized group). These (non-)intended non-propositional effects should be incorporated into the general relevance-theoretic formula of interest (cognitive effects) versus mental effort when judging the effectiveness of humor on the internet. Both online communication and humor in general often exhibit little informational value in the content of the discourse communicated, but this lack of content-centered relevance is clearly compensated for by this offset of non-propositional effects that generate relevance beyond the actual act of internet-mediated communication. The addition of contextual constraints and non-propositional effects to the general relevance-theoretic and cyberpragmatic model opens up promising areas of future research by incorporating to the pragmatic analysis the research undertaken in other disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, ethnography, information science, etc. inasmuch as they shed light on why interactions end up (ir)relevant beyond the objective relevance of the information being communicated. For instance, in Yus (2016b), a proposal of how identity is shaped and expressed online was proposed, in which it was claimed that the intentional, discourse-centered (and proposition-sustained) acts of identity have to be complemented with subtler forms of identity shaping that are displayed and acknowledged through these non-propositional effects, as well as constrained by them.

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This book deals with the construction of diverse forms of humor in everyday oral, written, and mediatized interactions. It sheds light on the differences and, most importantly, the similarities in the production of interactional humor in face-to-face and various technology-mediated forms of communication, including scripted and non-scripted situations. The chapters analyze humor-related issues in such genres as spontaneous conversations, broadcast dialogues, storytelling, media blogs, bilingual conversations, stand-up comedy, TV documentaries, drama series, family sitcoms, Facebook posts, and internet memes. The individual authors trace how speakers collaboratively circulate, reconstruct, and (re)frame either personal or public accounts of reality, aiming - among other things - to produce and/or reproduce humor. Rather than being "finished" products with a "single" interpretation, humorous texts are thus approached as dynamic communicative events that give rise to diverse interpretations and meanings. The book draws on a variety of up-to-date approaches and methodologies, and will appeal to scholars in discourse analysis, conversation analysis, interactional sociolinguistics, pragmatics, ethnography of communication, and social semiotics.

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